



# Master of Fine Arts in English

Rev. June 2023

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

## CONTENTS

I. Admissions.....	1
II. Degree Requirements.....	1
Required coursework.....	1
Fiction & Poetry .....	1
Non-Fiction .....	2
Coursework Policies.....	2
III. The Final Manuscript .....	2
Formation of the Final Manuscript Committee .....	3
General Manuscript Requirements .....	3
Statement on Privacy.....	4
Admission to the PhD Program in Critical & Cultural Studies.....	4

## I. ADMISSIONS

Individuals with at least a bachelor's degree or its equivalent from an approved undergraduate institution may apply for admission to the English MFA program. Applicants need not have been undergraduate Writing or English majors but should be prepared to submit a sample of writing in the genre in which they wish to specialize.

Applicants will be evaluated on their personal statement, writing sample, grades in prior degree programs, and letters of recommendation.

## II. DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

The MFA in Writing will be awarded for completion of a minimum of 36 credit hours of coursework, with a minimum grade point average of 3.0, plus the completion of an acceptable final manuscript (see "Final Manuscript" below). MFA students must fulfill the coursework requirements of the genre to which they are admitted, or to which their transfer has been approved. Transfers to another genre must be approved by the Director of the Writing Program in consultation with the student's coursework advisor & faculty in the new genre. Transferring may involve completing additional coursework.

### REQUIRED COURSEWORK

The following are the requirements for each genre in the MFA Program (Fiction, Poetry, and Non-Fiction):

---

#### FICTION & POETRY

MFA students in the Fiction & Poetry genres must take the following courses:

1. Three graduate writing workshops (9 credits), at least two of which must be in the student's genre.
2. Two graduate readings courses (6 credits), at least one of which must be in the student's genre
3. Three seminars (9 credits) in Literary & Cultural Forms:
  - a. Genres & Genre Theory (ENGLIT 2608), 3 credits, typically taken in an MFA student's first semester in the program. If ENGLIT 2608 is not being offered, another seminar in Literature, Composition, or Film can be substituted with approval by the Director of Graduate Studies. Students who wish to get an alternate seminar approved should send an email outlining their request to the DGS with the Graduate Administrator copied. If approved, the Graduate Administrator will keep a record of the approval in the student's file.
  - b. Two seminars (6 credits) in English Department courses in Composition, Film, or Literature, or courses in other departments that focus on literature, theoretical approaches to literature and culture, or other cultural forms. ENGLIT 2500 (Seminar in Pedagogy) may count as one of these seminars.
4. Four seminars (12 credits) of electives
  - a. A maximum of 6 elective credits may be taken outside the English department if they are relevant to the student's program and approved by their coursework advisor and/or manuscript committee chair.
  - b. A 3-credit internship course may count towards elective credits. However, no more than one internship course from a particular internship site or project may be counted towards MFA degree requirements.

---

## NON-FICTION

MFA students in Non-Fiction must take the following courses:

1. Three graduate writing workshops (9 credits), at least two of which must be non-fiction workshops.
2. Two graduate-level readings courses (6 credits), at least one of which must be in the student's genre.
3. ENGWRT 2403: Structures & Techniques (3 credits)
4. Three seminars (9 credits) in Literary & Cultural Forms:
  - a. Genres & Genre Theory (ENGLIT 2608), typically taken in an MFA's first semester in the program. If ENGLIT 2608 is not being offered, another seminar in Literature, Composition, or Film can be substituted with approval from the Director of Graduate Studies. Students who wish to get an alternate seminar approved should send an email outlining their request to the DGS with the Graduate Administrator copied. If approved, the Graduate Administrator will keep a record of the approval in the student's file.
  - b. Two seminars (6 credits) of English department courses in Composition, Literature, or Film, or courses in other departments that focus on literature, theoretical approaches to literature and culture, or other cultural forms. ENGLIT 2500 (Seminar in Pedagogy) may count as one of these seminars.
5. Three seminars (9 credits) of electives
  - a. A maximum of 6 elective credits may be taken outside the English department if they are relevant to the student's program and approved by their coursework advisor and/or manuscript committee chair.
  - b. A 3-credit internship course may count towards elective credits. However, no more than one internship course from a particular internship site or project may be counted towards MFA degree requirements.

## COURSEWORK POLICIES

1. In their last semester, most students will enroll in ENGWRT 2900 (Manuscript Writing for the MFA). This is a course which allows students time to work on their final manuscript project. ENGWRT 2900 can count towards 3 credits (1 course) of electives. Students may only count it towards their electives once, even if they enroll in this course multiple times throughout their degree or for more than 3 credits at a time.
2. MFA students may not use a Directed Study to replace one of the three required courses in Literary and Cultural Forms.
3. MFA students may take upper-level undergraduate courses for graduate credit by petition only. Only 1000-level undergraduate courses may be taken, and students cannot take more than 2 classes (6 credits). The student must obtain permission from the instructor for the course, their advisor, and the Director of Graduate Studies. The student will submit a rationale to the DGS explaining why the undergraduate course is necessary. If approved by the DGS, a graduate component in the form of additional and advanced readings and writings must be devised by the instructor. Students must inform the Graduate Administrator to register for 3 credits of ENGLIT 3910 (Comprehensive Exams) or ENGLIT 3000 (Dissertation Research), in addition to enrolling in the undergraduate course to receive credit towards the PhD. An outline of the graduate component and the student's rationale should be placed in the student's file.

## III. THE FINAL MANUSCRIPT

The capstone project of the MFA program is the final manuscript, a book-length manuscript of the student's best work in their genre & area of major interest. Students may begin working on their final manuscript at any point during the program, but most dedicate their third and final year in the program to its composition and revision. The writing & revision of the Final Manuscript is directed by a student's Manuscript Committee.

#### FORMATION OF THE FINAL MANUSCRIPT COMMITTEE

1. Each student will form a final manuscript committee consisting of three English department faculty members: two graduate Writing faculty members in the student's genre, one of whom will serve as committee chair, and a third member either from the graduate Writing faculty or the graduate faculty in Composition, Film, or Literature. Committees may include a fourth member from within the department, from another department within the University of Pittsburgh, or from another university, if another faculty member is deemed to have expertise that relates to a student's particular subject matter.
2. Students are required to identify the faculty member who will serve as their manuscript committee chair no later than the end of their second semester in the program. Once a Manuscript Committee chair is selected, they must inform the Graduate Administrator.
3. Students are required to complete the MFA Manuscript Committee Form outlining their committee members, and signed by those committee members, no later than the beginning of their third year in the program. This form must be sent to the Graduate Administrator and kept in the student's file.
4. Manuscript Committees are approved by the Writing Program Director.

#### GENERAL MANUSCRIPT REQUIREMENTS

1. The final manuscript committee must accept the student's manuscript as a work of professional quality. "Professional" does not necessarily mean "commercial"; it does mean that the manuscript should be of sufficient excellence to deserve an intelligent and literate audience.
2. The student's manuscript committee shall decide what constitutes a "book-length" manuscript, but the suggested minimum page count is 50 for poetry, and 150 (typed, double-spaced, standard format) for fiction and nonfiction.
  - a. For poems, short stories, and articles, a table of contents with page numbers should be included.
  - b. In the case of fiction and non-fiction manuscripts, a committee may allow the 150 pages to be part of a longer book. In such cases the manuscript must be accompanied by a comprehensive outline or synopsis for the entire book project.
  - c. Poetry manuscripts must be single-spaced; nonfiction and fiction manuscripts must be double-spaced.
  - d. All MFA manuscripts must have single-sided printing (printed on one side only), must have numbered pages, and must be hard-bound or spiral-bound.
  - e. The final manuscript and the Manuscript Approval form signed by the members of the student's manuscript committee, is due to the Graduate Administrator by the last day of undergraduate classes in the semester in which the student has applied to graduate.
4. A substantially complete draft of all manuscripts must be submitted for approval to all committee members no later than the end of the term preceding the term in which the degree is expected in order to allow time for revisions. The department emphasizes the importance of revision in all writing and thus the necessity of allowing ample time for this process.

5. Customarily, the final manuscript will require revisions determined by the final manuscript committee together with the student in meetings and in individual conferences. When a majority of the manuscript committee approves the state of the manuscript, the manuscript has been approved for submission.

#### STATEMENT ON PRIVACY

The Writing Program is a small community. In the interest of comity and good manners, we ask you to refrain from invading the privacy of any of your fellow students. We especially ask that you don't write about others in such a way as to embarrass or demean them. And if you write about them at all, please do so with their permission.

#### ADMISSION TO THE PHD PROGRAM IN CRITICAL & CULTURAL STUDIES

The MFA in Writing is a terminal degree. MFA students should be aware that an MFA degree from our department does not in any way lead to guaranteed acceptance into the English department's PhD program. An MFA student who matriculates in the PhD program may transfer, with the approval of the director of Graduate Studies, up to 24 credits of graduate Literature, Film, and Composition courses taken during their study for the MFA degree in our department toward fulfillment of the PhD credit requirements. Transfer of credit will not be approved for courses in which a grade lower than a B or its equivalent was received. Students should be aware that any credit applied toward the PhD degree here may affect the number of years of support they can expect from the department and may also affect the pace at which they need to pass certain milestones towards the degree.