

# Creative Writing

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*Web: [creativewriting.uchicago.edu](http://creativewriting.uchicago.edu)*

Students at Chicago pursue creative writing within the larger context of academic study. While the purpose of the program is, above all, to give students a rigorous background in the fundamentals of creative work by providing them with the opportunity to study with established poets and prose writers, it differs from the professional, free-standing creative writing programs at other universities in seeing itself as an integral part of the intellectual life of the University of Chicago, and most particularly in providing opportunities for interdisciplinary work. A playwright working through University Theater under the auspices of Interdisciplinary Studies in the Humanities may take writing workshops in fiction or poetry as part of the process of developing scripts. Students in the visual arts join forces with writers in work on graphic novels. And students in non-English languages and literatures may find themselves taking not only literature courses but also poetry or fiction writing workshops as part of developing translation projects. It is this commitment to interdisciplinary work, coupled with the program's insistence on teaching the elements of creative writing that underlie all genres, that accounts for the program's vitality, as well as explains why creative writing at Chicago is currently the largest initiative in the humanities for the College.

Students can pursue their creative writing interests within the formal requirements of the two interdisciplinary majors below; within the formal requirements of the minor program in English and Creative Writing described below; in other programs of study, with approval to count writing courses toward requirements; or among the eight to eighteen electives available to students across the range of other programs of study.

**(1) Interdisciplinary Studies in the Humanities.** Students wishing to engage the dialogues between creative writing and other studies in the humanities, including artistic mediums (e.g., dance, film, theater, visual arts), may apply to explore writing opportunities through one of the options in this major.

**(2) English Language and Literature.** Students majoring in English Language and Literature may choose to produce a creative writing thesis to satisfy part of the requirement for honors. Prior to Winter Quarter of their fourth year, students must complete at least two creative writing courses in the genre of their own creative project. In Winter Quarter of their fourth year, students will work intensively on their project in the context of a designated creative writing thesis seminar.

Minor Program in English and Creative Writing

Students who are not English majors may complete a minor in English and Creative Writing. Such a minor requires six courses plus a portfolio of creative work. At least two of the required courses must be Creative Writing (CRWR) courses, with at least one at the intermediate or advanced level. The remaining required courses must be taken in the English department (ENGL) and must include ENGL 11100 (Critical Perspectives). In addition, students must submit a portfolio of their work (e.g., a selection of poems, one or two short stories or chapters from a novel, a substantial part or the whole of a play, two or three nonfiction pieces) to the Associate Chair for Undergraduate Studies in the English department by the end of the sixth week in the quarter in which they plan to graduate.

Students who elect the minor program in English and Creative Writing must meet with the Associate Chair for Undergraduate Studies in the English department before the end of Spring Quarter of their third year to declare their intention to complete the minor. Students choose courses in consultation with the associate chair. The associate chair’s approval for the minor program should be submitted to a student’s College adviser by the deadline above on a form obtained from the adviser. NOTE: Students completing this minor will not be given enrollment preference for CRWR courses, and they must follow all relevant admission procedures described at *creativewriting.uchicago.edu*.

Courses in the minor (1) may not be double counted with the student’s major(s) or with other minors and (2) may not be counted toward general education requirements. Courses in the minor must be taken for quality grades, and at least half of the requirements for the minor must be met by registering for courses bearing University of Chicago course numbers.

Summary of Requirements for the Minor Program:

2	CRWR courses (at least one at the intermediate or advanced level)
1	ENGL 11100 (Critical Perspectives)
3	CRWR or ENGL electives
—	a portfolio of the student’s work
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Samples follow of two plans of study:

- CRWR 10200. Beginning Fiction Workshop
- CRWR 12000. Intermediate Fiction Workshop
- CRWR 26001. Writing Biography
- ENGL 11100. Critical Perspectives
- ENGL 10700. Introduction to Fiction
- ENGL 16500. Shakespeare I: Histories and Comedies
- a portfolio of the student’s work (two short stories)
  
- CRWR 13000. Intermediate Poetry Workshop
- CRWR 23100. Advanced Workshop in the Practice of Poetry
- ENGL 11100. Critical Perspectives
- ENGL 10400. Introduction to Poetry
- ENGL 15800. Medieval Epic
- ENGL 25600. The Poet in the Novel
- a portfolio of the student’s work (ten short poems)

Program Structure

Creative Writing courses are cross listed to enable students to apply to courses based on their level of preparation rather than on their level in the degree program. Classes are organized in the following way:

**Beginning.** Beginning courses are intended for students who wish to gain experience in a particular genre. Admission requires consent of instructor based on submission of a writing sample. Enrollment in each class is limited to twelve students.

**Intermediate.** Intermediate courses are intended for students with some writing experience in a particular genre. Admission requires completion of a beginning class in the same genre and/or consent of instructor based on submission of a writing sample. For specific submission requirements, see course descriptions. The submission process must be completed online in advance of the term by the deadline. Enrollment in each class is limited to twelve students.

**Advanced.** Advanced courses are intended for students with substantive writing experience in a particular genre. Admission requires completion of an intermediate class in the same genre and/or consent of instructor based on submission of a writing sample. For specific submission requirements, see course descriptions. The submission process must be completed online in advance of the term by the deadline. Enrollment in each class is limited to ten students.

**Thesis/Major Projects Seminar.** Enrollment preference is given to students who are working on their BA or MA thesis in fiction, poetry, or creative nonfiction. If space permits, these seminars may also be open to advanced students who are interested in writing or revising a major project. Students must obtain consent

of instructor in advance. Enrollment in each class typically is limited to eight students.

**Special Topics.** Several special topics courses are offered each year. These courses vary in terms of subject matter, requirements for the submission of writing samples, and enrollment limitations.

**Cross-Listed Courses.** Courses originated by other departments that include creative writing components are cross listed by Creative Writing (CRWR).

## Required Writing Samples

Consent of instructor is typically required to enroll in Creative Writing courses, based on faculty review of student writing samples. For specific sample submission requirements, see course descriptions. Submission deadlines are: Autumn Quarter, September 1; Winter Quarter, December 1; and Spring Quarter, March 1. For more information on Creative Writing courses and opportunities, visit [creativewriting.uchicago.edu](http://creativewriting.uchicago.edu).

## Faculty and Visiting Lecturers

For a current listing of Creative Writing faculty, visit [creativewriting.uchicago.edu/faculty](http://creativewriting.uchicago.edu/faculty).

S. Buffam, D. Raeburn, S. Reddy, J. Scappettone, M. Slouka, Staff

## University Creative Writing Advisory Committee

K. Austin, H. Coleman, B. Cormack, T. Gates, L. Ghandi, S. Ghahremani, J. Grunebaum, J. Knight, L. McEnerney, M. Payne, S. Reddy, J. Scappettone, B. Shallcross, M. Slouka, C. von Nolcken

## Courses: Creative Writing (CRWR)

For a current listing of Creative Writing courses, visit [creativewriting.uchicago.edu/courses](http://creativewriting.uchicago.edu/courses).

**10200/30200. Beginning Fiction Workshop.** *PQ: Consent of instructor.* This beginning-level fiction writing class uses a wide range of exercises and activities to help students discover their oral and written voices. Point of view, seeing-in-the-mind, gesture, audience, and other aspects of story are emphasized so that students can attempt to incorporate basic storytelling principles, forms, and techniques into their own writing. The major goals of the class are to guide students to discover and use the power of their individual voices, heighten their imaginative seeing and sense of imaginative options, and develop their overall sense for story structure and movement. Students select at least one of the assignments undertaken, rewrite it extensively, and attempt a complete story movement (short story or novel excerpt) of publishable quality. *Autumn, Winter, Spring.*

**10300/30300. Beginning Poetry Workshop.** *PQ: Consent of instructor.* The principal texts for this workshop are those written by the students during the quarter, and class discussion centers on those works. In addition, several other texts may be examined, primarily to enable students to begin criticizing and editing their own works. This is a class in which everyone is free to experiment. The goals by the end of the quarter are that students have a clearer idea of what they want to be doing and how they want to be doing it. *Autumn, Winter, Spring.*

**10400/30400. Beginning Creative Nonfiction.** *PQ: Consent of instructor.* In this course, students focus on the interaction between nonfiction and literary elements that constitute creative nonfiction through writing exercises and readings. *Autumn, Winter, Spring.*

**12000/32000. Intermediate Fiction Workshop.** *PQ: Consent of instructor.* The principal texts for this workshop consist of the students' own writings, though outside texts augment student learning. Form, story, character, dialogue, aspects of style, and other elements of craft are discussed; careful attention is paid to the individual student's voice as well as to the process of revision. *Autumn, Winter, Spring.*

**12101. Reading As a Writer: Chicago Stories.** *PQ: Open bid through cMore. Sign up for wait list by contacting instructor at [gcycho1@uchicago.edu](mailto:gcycho1@uchicago.edu) if class is full.* This course invites writers to reconsider the influence of Chicago's public and private spaces on genre and artistic form. How does one tell a "Chicago story"? Is the "City on the Re-Make" best told in prose or poem? Is there a "Chicago epic"? Working through these questions, students analyze and explore the technical vocabularies of other writers' responses in a variety of literary genres. Examples here include how political or social conflicts have shaped fiction writers' definition of characters and point of view in Chicago writing. Similarly, how have the city's historical geographies of South Side, the Great Migration, and the suburb influenced form in poetry and creative nonfiction? What theoretical approaches have been particularly influential in understanding "place" among Chicago writers? Using workshop format, students develop their own creative responses, building connections to their adopted critical approaches. To these ends, we examine work by writers including Nelson Algren, Gwendolyn Brooks, John Conroy, Aleksandar Hemon, and Sterling Plummpp, as well as the city's rich legacies in drama, the visual arts, and music. *G. Cycholl.*

**12102. Introduction to Genres: Writing and Performance.** *PQ: Open bid through cMore. Sign up for wait list by contacting instructor at [megan@mygreenlife.org](mailto:megan@mygreenlife.org) if class is full.* This course examines how writing and performance intersect, inform, and inspire each other. Using techniques from literary, theatrical, and storytelling traditions, we explore how to get a well-crafted story first on and then off the page. How does telling a story aloud fuel the writing process? How does the writing heighten the performance? How does the students' understanding of audience, voice, point of view, scene, and character development influence both disciplines, and how does storytelling play a part in our daily lives, whatever career paths we find ourselves headed for? The class focuses on personal narrative

storytelling and incorporates a wide range of models—literature, podcast, video, and live performance—as well as a wide range of assignments—writing, journal reflection, reading out loud, and theatrical technique—and culminates in a final storytelling performance. Student collaboration, feedback, and discussion are priorities. *M. Stielstra.*

**13000/33000. Intermediate Poetry Workshop.** *PQ: Consent of instructor.* Principal texts for this workshop consist of the students' own writings. *Autumn, Winter, Spring.*

**14000/34000. Intermediate Creative Nonfiction.** *PQ: Consent of instructor.* In this course, students focus on the interaction between nonfiction and literary elements that constitute creative nonfiction through writing exercises and readings. *Autumn, Winter, Spring.*

**22100/42100. Advanced Fiction Workshop.** *PQ: Consent of instructor.* In this course, students' own writings are the primary texts for analyzing and developing the elements that constitute fiction. Outside readings illuminate particular issues related to students' work. *Autumn, Winter, Spring.*

**23100/43100. Advanced Poetry Workshop.** *PQ: Consent of instructor and prior experience with poetry writing.* The principal texts for this workshop consist of the students' own writings. *Autumn, Winter, Spring.*

**24100/44100. Advanced Creative Nonfiction Workshop.** *PQ: Consent of instructor.* The principal texts for this workshop consist of the students' own writings. *Autumn, Winter, Spring.*

**27101/47101. Beginning Screenwriting.** (=TAPS 25400) This course introduces the basic elements of a literate screenplay (e.g., format, exposition, characterization, dialog, voice-over, adaptation, vagaries of the three-act structure). Weekly meetings include a brief lecture period, screenings of scenes from selected films, extended discussion, and assorted readings of class assignments. Because this is primarily a writing class, students write a four- to five-page weekly assignment related to the script topic of the week. *J. Petrakis. Autumn, Winter.*

**27103/47103. Advanced Screenwriting.** (=TAPS 25500) *PQ: TAPS 27311 and consent of instructor based on eight-page writing sample in screenplay format. Class limited to eight students.* This course requires students to complete the first draft of a feature-length screenplay (at least ninety pages in length), based on an original idea brought to the first or second class. No adaptations or partially completed scripts are allowed. Weekly class sessions include reading of script pages and critique by classmates and instructor. *J. Petrakis. Winter, Spring.*

**27105/47105. Theater and Performance Studies Colloquium.** (=TAPS 29800) *PQ: Consent of Director of Undergraduate Studies and Chair of TAPS. Required of fourth-year students who are majoring or minoring in TAPS. Creative Writing or MAPH students who are preparing theses for performance may participate with consent from their home department and the Director of Undergraduate Studies.*

*Students participate in both Autumn and Winter Quarters but register once. Autumn, Winter.*

**29200/49200. Thesis/Major Projects Seminar: Fiction.** *PQ: Students not working on BA or MA thesis in fiction must obtain consent of instructor.* This course focuses on the extended development necessary for the completion of longer material, specifically the creative thesis. Students should already have a body of work in process (this can be in different stages) and be prepared to discuss their plans for their final manuscript in lieu of a formal proposal. Intense peer reading, critiquing, and editing is required. *Winter.*

**29300/49300. Thesis/Major Projects Seminar: Poetry.** *PQ: Students not working on BA or MA thesis in poetry must obtain consent of instructor.* This course is an advanced creative writing seminar intended for students writing BA and MA theses in poetry (there is, however, usually enough room in the class to accommodate additional students, so all qualified students are encouraged to apply). Because it is a thesis seminar, this course focuses on various ways of organizing larger poetic “projects.” We consider the poetic sequence, the chapbook, the long poem, the poetry collection, and the book-length poem as ways of extending the practice of poetry beyond the individual lyric text. Because this class is designed as a poetry workshop, the work of students is the primary text over the course of the quarter. *Winter.*

**29400/49400. Thesis/Major Projects Seminar: Creative Nonfiction.** *PQ: Students not working on BA or MA thesis in creative nonfiction must obtain consent of instructor.* This course focuses on the extended development necessary for the completion of longer material, specifically the creative thesis. Students should already have a body of work in process (this can be in different stages) and be prepared to discuss their plans for their final manuscript in lieu of a formal proposal. Intense peer reading, critiquing, and editing is required. *Winter.*