

CREATIVE WRITING, MASTER OF FINE ARTS

The Graduate Program in Creative Writing offers an MFA in Genre Fiction, Nature Writing, Poetry, or Screenwriting. Western's curricula differs from other low-residency programs by emphasizing intense training in craft, building of a writing community, close study of historically underrepresented writers, and exposure to the business of being a writer.

All MFA programs in the Graduate Program in Creative Writing use a low-residency format that engages students in two ways:

1. through rigorous online curricula and regular virtual classes spanning the Summer, Fall, and Spring semesters, during which students work closely with faculty and with members of their peer community;
2. through a one-week residency at the end of each summer semester that facilitates connection and community.

All programs require a high degree of commitment and excellence from candidates, who must maintain at least a 3.00 course average to complete the program. A minimum grade of B- in each course is required.

In all three summer semesters, MFA candidates complete a 3-credit intensive course in their concentrations. In their first summer, they take a first-year intensive course and also complete two credits of CRWR 600, The Common Read & Writing Craft. In their second summer, they take a second-year intensive course and also earn two credits for starting their thesis project. In their third summer, they take a final intensive course, plus a 1-credit elective which allows them to explore other concentrations.

During the Fall and Spring semesters of their first year, full-time students take two 6-credit courses for a total of 12 credits per semester. Students may anticipate spending between 25 and 30 hours per week on assigned coursework. The coursework typically consists of readings and viewings, asynchronous discussions, and writing assignments for which instructors offer online feedback. Students also participate regularly in live virtual classes and one-on-one meetings with faculty.

In the Fall semester of their second year, full-time students take one 6-credit course, plus three credits of mentor-guided thesis work, for a total of 9-credits, so that they can focus on the thesis project. In the Spring semester, students return to taking two 6-credit courses in their concentration, plus one final credit of mentor-guided thesis work.

Program Information

Western's low-residency MFA in Creative Writing offers a rigorous, terminal degree in the field, involving intensive creative work, development of critical and pedagogical skills, and study of the business of being a writer. Students select one of four concentrations, Genre Fiction, Nature Writing, Poetry, or Screenwriting, and are required to take a 1-credit elective during their final summer semester.

Full-time students require 25 months to finish the program, which comprises four academic semesters and three summer semesters. During the Fall and Spring semesters, students engage in courses using both live virtual classrooms and online learning tools. In each of the three summer semesters, students take courses online and attend an on-campus residency at the end of the summer term.

Total Credits for the MFA in Creative Writing

First two summer residencies @5 hours/term = 10 credits

Third summer residency @4 hours/term = 4 credits

First two academic semesters @12 hours/term = 24 credits

Third academic semester @9 hours/term = 9 credits

Fourth academic semester @13 hours/term = 13 credits

Total Credits: 60

Requirements for Full Admission to the MFA in Creative Writing

Candidate must submit:

- An official transcript of the bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited college or university showing recommended 3.0 cumulative GPA or higher.
- An 800- to 1,000-word personal statement describing the applicant's experience and commitment to writing. This statement should include a self-assessment of qualifications for admission to Western's Graduate Program in Creative Writing for the chosen degree and concentration.
- A writing sample in the appropriate genre, double spaced and numbered, or properly formatted for the appropriate genre:
 - The Genre Fiction concentration sample should include 20 to 25 pages, ideally from a single work.
 - The Screenwriting concentration sample should include a screenplay of 15-30 pages.
 - The Nature Writing concentration sample should include 20 to 25 pages, in any genre or a mix of genres.
 - The Poetry concentration sample should include 10 to 15 pages of poetry.
 - The Publishing concentration sample should consist of a 3- to 5-page critical assessment of a story's suitability for publication (story to be provided to applicant during application process).
- Two letters of professional recommendation from those capable of assessing the applicant's preparation to succeed in graduate-level work. All letters must be originals submitted on letterhead, must be signed by the person giving the recommendation, and must be less than a year old.
- Payment of university application fee

Provisional Admission to the MFA in Creative Writing

An applicant who does not meet the requirements for full admission to the Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing may be considered for provisional admission upon the recommendation of the program director and approval by the Dean of Graduate Studies. A provisionally admitted student will have a maximum of one calendar year to complete any pre-requisite academic coursework. The program director or Dean of Graduate Studies may set additional timeline requirements.

Concentration in Genre Fiction

The Concentration in Genre Fiction includes instruction in writing for such forms as science fiction/fantasy, the mystery, romance, and other forms of mainstream commercial fiction. Study includes short and long written

forms, as well as strategies and techniques for the effective teaching of creative writing.

The MFA Concentration in Genre Fiction requires the following 60 credits:

Code	Title	Credits
CRWR 600	The Common Read & Writing Craft	2
CRWR 601	Fundamentals of Writing Genre Fiction I	3
CRWR 602	Fundamentals of Writing Fiction II	3
CRWR 604	Career Planning for Genre Writers	3
CRWR 608	Genre Writing I- Romance and Mystery Fiction	6
CRWR 609	Genre Studies I-Romance and Mystery	6
CRWR 618	Genre Studies II- Western, Speculative, and Young Adult Fiction	6
CRWR 619	Genre Writing II- Western, Speculative, and Young Adult Fiction	6
CRWR 620	Short Forms Genre Fiction Writing	6
CRWR 621	Business Fundamentals for Genre Writers	6
CRWR 626	Pedagogy & Practicum	6
CRWR 697	Special Topics	1
Six credits of:		6
CRWR 694	MFA Thesis (must be taken for a total of six credits)	
Total Credits		60

Genre Fiction as a Second Concentration

Students pursuing this second MFA concentration must earn 30 credits as follows:

Code	Title	Credits
CRWR 604	Career Planning for Genre Writers	3
CRWR 608	Genre Writing I- Romance and Mystery Fiction	6
CRWR 609	Genre Studies I-Romance and Mystery	6
CRWR 618	Genre Studies II- Western, Speculative, and Young Adult Fiction	6
CRWR 619	Genre Writing II- Western, Speculative, and Young Adult Fiction	6
CRWR 693	Master's Capstone	2
CRWR 697	Special Topics	1
Total Credits		30

Concentration in Nature Writing

The Concentration in Nature Writing brings students into the contemporary and complex conversation of environmental writing, introducing them to a wide range of authors, literary techniques, and styles relevant to the field. The concentration provides readings and training in all major literary sub-genres including memoir and personal essay, fiction, nature writing, science and advocacy writing, and hybrid and experimental work. Courses include significant reading in primary and secondary sources, workshop, and writing extensive short- and long-format work. As the culmination of their work, MFA students complete a creative thesis, which consists of part of a book-length manuscript, and engage in professional development for future publication and career opportunities.

The MFA Concentration in Nature Writing requires the following 60 credits:

Code	Title	Credits
CRWR 600	The Common Read & Writing Craft	2
CRWR 680	Writing Place: New Forms and Techniques	6
CRWR 681	Introduction to Nature Writing	3
CRWR 682	Book-Length Considerations	3
CRWR 683	Thesis Seminar in Nature Writing	3
CRWR 685	Craft of Creative Nonfiction	6
CRWR 686	Genres of Nature Writing	6
CRWR 687	Nature Writing Workshop	6
CRWR 688	Writing about Nature and Society	6
CRWR 689	Special Topics in Nature Writing	6
CRWR 695	Professional Development in Nature Writing	6
CRWR 697	Special Topics	1
Six credits of:		6
CRWR 694	MFA Thesis (must be taken for a total of six credits)	
Total Credits		60

Nature Writing as a Second Concentration

Students pursuing this concentration as a second area of emphasis must earn 30 credits as follows:

Code	Title	Credits
CRWR 680	Writing Place: New Forms and Techniques	6
CRWR 682	Book-Length Considerations	3
CRWR 685	Craft of Creative Nonfiction	6
CRWR 686	Genres of Nature Writing	6
CRWR 688	Writing about Nature and Society	6
CRWR 693	Master's Capstone	2
CRWR 697	Special Topics	1
Total Credits		30

Concentration in Poetry

The Concentration in Poetry brings students into the ongoing conversation of poetics, introducing them to the ideas, questions, approaches, and techniques that have been the concerns of poets across time and cultures. The Poetry curriculum includes workshop-style courses focused on developing voice and expanding range, as well as courses on contemporary authors, poetic craft and technique, special topics in poetry, and professional development. MFA students also take one elective during their final summer residency.

As the culmination of their work, MFA students complete a creative thesis, which consists of a book-length manuscript of original poetry. Students work on this year-long, capstone project under the close guidance of a faculty mentor and present it to the GPCW community during their third Summer Residency.

The MFA Concentration in Poetry requires the following 60 credits:

Code	Title	Credits
CRWR 600	The Common Read & Writing Craft	2
CRWR 630	Foundations of Poetry	3
CRWR 634	Poetry Now	6
CRWR 635	Poetry Workshop I	6
CRWR 640	From Thesis to Book	3

CRWR 644	Poetic Lineages	6
CRWR 645	Poetry Workshop II	6
CRWR 648	Poetry Craft and Technique	6
CRWR 649	Special Topics in Poetry	6
CRWR 650	Graduate Poetry Seminar	3
CRWR 653	The Writing Life	6
CRWR 697	Special Topics	1
Six credits of:		6
CRWR 694	MFA Thesis (must be taken for a total of six credits)	
Total Credits		60

Poetry as a Second Concentration

Students pursuing this second MFA concentration must earn 30 credits as follows:

Code	Title	Credits
CRWR 634	Poetry Now	6
CRWR 635	Poetry Workshop I	6
CRWR 640	From Thesis to Book	3
CRWR 644	Poetic Lineages	6
CRWR 648	Poetry Craft and Technique	6
CRWR 693	Master's Capstone	2
CRWR 697	Special Topics	1
Total Credits		30

Concentration in Screenwriting

The Concentration in Screenwriting teaches screenwriting for both film and television. Each semester pairs an intensive analytical course with an intensive generative writing course. The concentration emphasizes story and scene structure, visual storytelling, character development, development of concept and theme, genre, dialogue-never forgetting that a screenplay is a document that will ultimately be translated to the screen. Through regular mentorship, students refine and consolidate their own best writing practices.

The MFA Concentration in Screenwriting requires the following 60 credits:

Code	Title	Credits
CRWR 600	The Common Read & Writing Craft	2
CRWR 660	Scenes & Sequences	3
CRWR 664	Adapting the Feature	6
CRWR 665	Feature Structure & Genre	6
CRWR 667	Writing the Television Screenplay	6
CRWR 669	TV Structure & Genre	6
CRWR 670	Visual Storytelling	3
CRWR 672	Screenwriting Workshop I	6
CRWR 673	The Concept & The Pitch	6
CRWR 674	Screenwriting Workshop 2	6
CRWR 679	Screenwriting Thesis Production	3
CRWR 697	Special Topics	1
Six credits of:		6

CRWR 694	MFA Thesis (must be taken for a total of six credits)	
Total Credits		60

Screenwriting as a Second Concentration

Students pursuing this second MFA concentration must earn 30 credits as follows:

Code	Title	Credits
CRWR 664	Adapting the Feature	6
CRWR 665	Feature Structure & Genre	6
CRWR 667	Writing the Television Screenplay	6
CRWR 669	TV Structure & Genre	6
CRWR 670	Visual Storytelling	3
CRWR 693	Master's Capstone	2
CRWR 697	Special Topics	1
Total Credits		30