

**The M.F.A. Program
in Creative Writing**

**Office of Graduate Studies
Department of English
205 Roy Cullen Building
University of Houston
Houston, Texas 77204-3013**

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M.F.A. in Creative Writing Overview of the Program

Building on emerging excellence in creative writing, the M.F.A. student should work toward increased sophistication in his/her art. Correspondingly, the M.F.A. student should have training in literary history and the intellectual and artistic debates that inform current literature. The M.F.A. constitutes solid preparation for creative publication, expert teaching in creative writing and literature, leadership in communications for business, education and arts organizations, or entrance into a Ph.D. program in literature and creative writing.

Minimum requirements for admission

- B.A.
- 3.0 g.p.a. in undergraduate studies
- One foreign language (Student can complete this requirement while in residence.)
- GRE general test

Requirements of the degree

- 36 hours of coursework
- Foreign language. Students must demonstrate reading knowledge of a foreign language.
- 6 hours of M.F.A. thesis

Distribution of coursework

- 15 hours in creative writing, including 9 hours in the primary genre, 3 hours of Master Workshop, and 3 hours of Poetic Forms and Techniques for poetry students, Fiction Forms and Techniques for fiction students, or Nonfiction Forms and Techniques for nonfiction students. Students are strongly encouraged to take the course in Forms and Techniques early in the M.F.A. program.
- 3 hours of Writers on Literature
- 12 hours in English or American literature or other literary studies (Students should divide their courses between early and later literatures. Early British literature is defined as British literature before 1800 and early American literature is defined as American literature before 1865.)
- 6 hours of elective courses (literature or other literary studies, workshop in the primary genre, workshop in a crossover genre, Writers on Literature, or coursework in another department that complements the student's program)

General Requirements

The M.F.A. handbook sets forth the general requirements for M.A. students in the Department of English. Students must also be familiar with the college and university policies and regulations governing graduate study and can find this information at www.uh.edu/grad_catalogue/garr/index.html. After being admitted to the M.A. program students must complete their coursework toward the degree according to the guidelines in this handbook.

Enrollment and Residency

Graduate students must enroll in a minimum of three credit hours in each long semester (spring and fall) until completion of the M.F.A. program, unless granted a leave of absence. Failure to maintain continuous enrollment may result in dismissal from the program.

Program of Study

M.F.A. students are required to complete 36 credit hours of graduate coursework according to the requirements of the degree plan set forth on page 8 of the M.F.A. handbook. Students must complete all requirements for the degree within five years of matriculation.

Foreign Language

Students must demonstrate reading knowledge of a foreign language in one of the following ways: (1) completing two years of college-level study in one foreign language, (2) receiving a grade of B or higher in an upper-division literature course in a foreign language department, not including literature in translation; (3) receiving a score of 450 on the Graduate School Foreign Language Test, (4) completing ENGL 8390: Studies in Literary Translation, (5) having a native language other than English, or (6) receiving a grade of B or higher in a graduate-level foreign language reading course for non-majors. A graduate-level foreign language reading course for non-majors may not be used to fulfill course requirements for the M.F.A. curriculum.

Students are encouraged to fulfill the foreign language requirement as early as possible in the graduate program.

Course Load

The University of Houston currently defines full-time graduate study as nine credit hours of graduate coursework in the fall and spring semesters. Six credit hours constitute full-time study in each six-week summer semester. In the long semesters, full-time students must enroll in at least six hours of formal courses. The remaining three hours may be Reading and Research hours (see pages 5 and 6), College Teaching of Language and Literature, a course for new teaching assistants.

Course Selection

Course selection is governed by the specific requirements of the M.F.A., the objective of which is to work toward increased sophistication in his/her art and increased understanding of the literary history and intellectual and artistic debates that inform current literature.

Students will meet with the Graduate Advisor each semester to select courses for the subsequent semester. Students must obtain the Graduate Advisor's permission to enroll in graduate courses in the Department of English and other departments at the University of Houston.

Curricular Disciplines

The Department of English offers courses in a variety of disciplines: literature, literary theory, rhetoric and composition, language and linguistics, folklore, literary translation and creative writing. These categories are distinct for purposes of M.F.A. studies. For example, creative writing workshops may not substitute for literature seminars and *vice versa*.

Writers on Literature

Writers on Literature, a seminar taught by faculty in creative writing, examines fiction, poetry, nonfiction, or a combination of genres from a writerly perspective, with an eye toward craft and construction that an artist brings to a consideration of the work. The writing component of this seminar often takes both critical and creative forms.

Master Workshop

The Master Workshop is open only to students who have completed all other workshop requirements. The workshop focuses on the shaping and refinement of the M.F.A. thesis, and is central to each student's work in the program. The student's body of creative work is closely considered in consultation with the instructor and with a small group of fellow students.

Introductory Seminars and Preseminars

Introductory seminars and preseminars offer graduate students reading experience in a specific area of English studies and a survey of the current critical theories and methodologies of the area. The following is a list of introductory seminars and preseminars in the Department of English:

Introductory	6330: General Linguistics 6360: Old English 7370: History of Rhetoric
Preseminars	7362: Middle English Literature 7363: Renaissance Literature 7364: Restoration and Eighteenth-Century British Literature 7365: Nineteenth-Century British Literature 7366: Modern British Literature 7367: American Literature to the Civil War 7368: American Literature since the Civil War

Introductory seminars and preseminars are offered on a regular basis in each of the areas.

Seminars

Graduate seminars are designed for students who have substantive academic preparation in a specific discipline. Graduate seminars offer students the opportunity to develop intensive knowledge in a specific field, and to do scholarly research and scholarly writing on a specialized topic in that field. In addition to reading and discussing primary and secondary texts, seminar assignments typically include student presentations and a writing requirement of 6,000 to 10,000 words.

Transfer Credit

Students may petition to transfer a maximum of nine credit hours of graduate coursework to the M.F.A. A course taken more than five years prior to graduation may not be applied to the M.F.A.

Postbaccalaureate Credit

Students may petition to apply a maximum of twelve credit hours of graduate coursework taken at the University of Houston to the M.F.A. A course taken more than five years prior to graduation may not be applied to the M.F.A. To petition to apply postbaccalaureate courses to the M.A. degree plan, students must submit an Academic Record Course Adjustment form to the Office of Graduate Studies and the Office of the Dean for approval.

Graduate Courses Outside of the Department of English

Students may be permitted to take a maximum of six hours of graduate courses outside of the Department of English. These courses would be considered electives on the M.F.A. degree plan. Students must consult with the Graduate Advisor prior to enrolling in courses outside of the department to determine if such courses will be applied to the M.F.A.

Individual Study Courses

The heart of graduate studies is independent research. Unlike the undergraduate curriculum in which almost all of a student's work is confined to discrete, three-hour organized classes, the graduate curriculum is built on a complement of organized seminars and independent research. Formal seminars provide an important foundation for subsequent learning and the faculty who conduct them offer students valuable professional models. However, reading, research and writing undertaken outside the organized seminar increasingly define the nature and quality of graduate education as students move toward completion of the M.F.A.

Students have the opportunity for individual study courses under two rubrics: English 7398: Special Problems and English 8198-8698: Reading and Research. Special Problems courses and Reading and Research hours are distinct course categories and are not interchangeable in our course catalog and on the M.F.A. degree plan. The distinctions are explained below. When a student and professor agree to work together on either of these courses, both should be clear about the kind of course they are planning and about their expectations of each other's involvement. They should also be clear with the Graduate Studies Office about their intention; otherwise, students may be unable to receive the appropriate credit for the course.

Special Problems Courses offer students an opportunity to (1) conduct substantive research in a specialized area of scholarship or (2) concentrate on a specific aspect of creative work with an individual member of the faculty. Such courses should not overlap with formal seminars or workshops within the graduate curriculum, but provide the means for students to devote time to an exceptional project that complements their previous coursework.

Special Problems Courses are weighted equally with formal classroom courses, and they fulfill degree requirements in a student's program. Depending on their structure, content, and goals, they could potentially satisfy any of the degree requirements for the M.F.A. Because they are weighted equally with graduate seminars and satisfy degree requirements, Special Problems courses are given letter grades and require an amount of reading and writing commensurate with formal courses. While they don't absolutely require a weekly meeting, they do require a degree of interaction between student and professor that is commensurate with formal courses. The form required for these courses (available in the Graduate Studies Office) asks the student to provide a detailed course description. The description of a special problems course in literature should include a reading list of literary and critical texts, a statement of the number and focus of writing assignments, the frequency of meetings, and the specific degree requirement that the proposed course fulfills. The description of a special problems course in creative writing should include a

statement of the number and focus of writing assignments; a list of literary and critical texts, where appropriate; the frequency of meetings; and the specific degree requirement that the proposed course fulfills.

M.F.A. students are allowed to apply one Special Problems course to their degree plan.

Research and Reading Hours afford students the opportunity to pursue, as a part of their minimum course load requirement, an independent study of various areas and topics in literature and language under the guidance of a member of the faculty. Typically, students enroll for Research and Reading hours when they would profit from time and faculty consultation to read additional texts from a prior seminar, complete a creative manuscript or revise an article for publication. The expectation is that the students will take the initiative in using Research and Reading hours to become familiar with the areas of expertise and scholarly interests of individual faculty members and to identify their own areas of concentration. Research and Reading hours can be important in preparing a student for the kind of independent reading and writing that is expected of a thesis student and writer. Research and Reading hours are, thus, an important opportunity for students to shape their graduate study and to select the faculty who will guide and supervise their work.

Unlike Special Problems courses, Research and Reading hours are not weighted equally with formal classroom courses, and they neither fulfill category requirements in a student's program nor count toward the student's academic program. Accordingly, the formal requirements for Research and Reading hours are less than those for Special Programs courses. The student and professor are expected to meet at least three times during the semester of enrollment in Reading and Research hours. Students will receive a grade of (S) Satisfactory or (U) Unsatisfactory for Research and Reading hours.

Because Research and Reading hours do not count toward the student's academic program, they should be used sparingly before the thesis phase. They are nonetheless very useful if used to productive ends. When students wish to enroll in Research and Reading hours, they must complete a form (available in the Graduate Studies Office) that identifies the specific project for the Research and Reading hours and the faculty member who will supervise the project.

M.F.A. students are permitted to enroll in Research and Reading hours only after they have completed 18 hours of graduate coursework in the Department of English.

M.F.A. Thesis

The M.F.A. thesis is an extended creative work, a novel or a collection of short stories or novellas for fiction writers, a collection of essays or a memoir for nonfiction writers, and a collection or cycle of poems for poets. The thesis should include a substantive reflective afterward that discusses the literary context of the thesis and other influences on the creative work. Students develop the M.F.A. thesis under the guidance of a faculty member in the Creative Writing Program of the Department of English who chairs the thesis defense committee.

Students should adhere to the most recent edition of the *MLA Style Manual* in writing the thesis and should consult the college and university regulations concerning the format of the M.F.A. thesis before final preparation of the document. This information, available at www.uh.edu/grad_catalogue/garr/index.html, provides instructions for the reproduction of the thesis, deadlines for each semester for submitting the document to the Dean's office, and regulations for graduation.

M.F.A. Thesis Committee

The M.F.A. thesis committee consists of three persons: the director, a member of the faculty of the Creative Writing Program of the Department of English; a second reader who is a member of the faculty of the Department of English; and an outside reader. The outside reader should be a member of the faculty of the University of Houston outside of the Department of English, a member of the faculty of another university, or an individual whose professional

expertise and reputation qualify the individual to assess the M.F.A. thesis in creative writing. For the purpose of this document, members of the faculty of the Department of English are understood to be tenured or tenure-track professors, professors emeriti, and distinguished visiting professors.

Once a student requests a member of the faculty to direct the M.F.A. thesis, the student should select the second reader in consultation with the thesis director. The outside reader is selected by the Director of Graduate Studies in consultation with the thesis director and the Director of Creative Writing.

The student must formally request that the Graduate Studies Office appoint the thesis committee, and must do so in advance of the first semester in which the student enrolls in ENGL 7399 or 7699: Master's Thesis.

M.F.A. Thesis Defense

The thesis defense is held following the completion of the thesis and prior to the submission of the dissertation to the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences. Prior to scheduling the thesis defense, the candidate will ensure that all substantive revisions requested by the thesis director have been made. The dissertation should then be submitted to all members of the thesis committee at least two weeks prior to the defense. Public notice of the defense will be posted at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting, and all members of the department will be invited to attend. The defense will generally last one hour with ample time for a presentation of the project, questions concerning the document, discussion of future plans for the manuscript, and deliberation.

M.F.A. students will enroll in ENGL 7399 or 7699: Master's Thesis while writing the thesis. Students must enroll for six hours of thesis credit the semester of defense and graduation.

Graduation

M.A. students must meet all department, college and university requirements for the degree prior to graduation. The department requirements are set forth in this handbook and the college and university requirements are found at www.uh.edu/grad_catalogue/garr/index.html.

Students must be enrolled for graduate credit in the semester in which they graduate, and must submit an application for graduation to the Graduate Advisor. The current academic calendar will provide the application deadline.

M.F.A. Program Review

The Graduate Studies Committee of the Department of English will regularly review the requirements and policies for the M.F.A. in Creative Writing. Upon review, if the Graduate Studies Committee determines the need for a revision of requirements or policies as stated in the M.F.A. Studies Handbook, it will bring its recommendation to the faculty of the Department of English for their approval.

Degree Plan
M.F.A. in Creative Writing

Name _____ Admission Date _____

Creative Genre _____

Creative Writing (15 hrs.)

Number	Course	Semester	Professor	Grade
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Major genre (9 hrs.)

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Forms and Techniques (3 hrs.)

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
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Master Workshop (3 hrs.)

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
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Writers on Literature (3 hrs.)

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Courses in Literature (12 hrs. in British and American literature or other literary studies, divided between early and later literature)

Number	Course	Semester	Professor	Grade
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_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Electives (6 hrs. in literature or other literary studies, workshop in the primary genre, workshop in a crossover genre, Writers on Literature, or coursework in another department that complements the student's program)

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

M.F.A. thesis (6 hrs.)

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Foreign Language _____

Rationale _____

General Requirements Satisfactory Progress Toward the M.F.A.

All students who are enrolled in the M.F.A. program in the Department of English are expected to make continuous, satisfactory progress toward the degree as specified by the criteria below. A student who does not meet these criteria may be dismissed from the graduate program.

Grades

1. Students must maintain a minimum g.p.a. of 3.0 for all graduate courses attempted at the University of Houston.
2. Students must receive a grade of B- or higher in each course that is applied to the degree program.
3. Students who receive a grade of C+ or lower in 12 hours of graduate course work at the University of Houston will be ineligible for the M.F.A.

Rate of Progress

1. Students must successfully complete at least 12 credit hours of seminars or special problems courses in any two-year period.
2. Students must successfully complete 75% of all seminars or special problems courses attempted for graduate credit.
3. Successfully completed courses include only those assigned grades of S or B- or higher.
4. Students must fulfill any conditions of admission within two years of matriculation. Exceptions to this rule must be specified on the letter of acceptance or Graduate Approval/Disapproval form.

Continuous Enrollment

1. Students must enroll in at least three credit hours of graduate coursework each long semester. For an exemption of this requirement, students must apply for a leave of absence from the M.F.A. program.
2. Students who fail to maintain continuous enrollment must petition for re-entrance into the M.F.A. program.

Time Limitation

Students must complete all requirements for the M.F.A. within five years of matriculation. No course—from the University of Houston or transferred from another institution—taken more than five years prior to graduation may be applied to the M.F.A.

Department, College and University Requirements

Students who fail to meet the above requirements and all general requirements of the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences and the University of Houston may be dismissed from the program. The general requirements for graduate study at the University of Houston are found at www.uh.edu/grad_catalogue/garr/index.html.

CLASS Grievance Procedure for Graduate Students

Graduate students and involved faculty should make every effort to settle their differences amiably and informally. In the event that an informal resolution is not possible, students are required to resolve any grievance according to the grievance procedure established the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences. The CLASS Grievance Procedure for Graduate Students is found at www.class.uh.edu/advising_grad_gpolicy.html.