Portland State
UNIVERSITY

BFA in Creative Writing

Handbook 2023-24

for current and prospective students

http://www.pdx.edu/creative-writing/

All information is subject to change. Students are responsible for checking University websites for current deadlines and updates.

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BFA Overview

The Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) in Creative Writing is a significant step toward a career in writing, editing, publishing, journalism, teaching, arts administration, advertising, and other creative fields. It is also an excellent foundation for work in the sciences, law, medicine, technology, and business. By developing their writing skills, students learn to be more attentive, critical, and empathic. They come to recognize and value precision, concision, the evocative detail, and the expressive possibilities in language. They learn the value of narrative in communicating with clients, colleagues, patients, and readers, and of the insights possible with making creative leaps. They learn to listen both to the world they live in and to themselves. If you can write well, doors open to a diverse range of fields.

The BFA curriculum includes workshops and seminars in craft and technique that are designed to provide introductory-level experience writing in the three customary genres: fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. They are also conceived to help students give constructive criticism, and receive it graciously, while learning to distinguish between what is useful to them and what is not. While many students work intensively in one or two of those genres, the program also encourages students to explore the porosity between genres, and to challenge themselves, both in their reading choices and in the directions their writing develops.

Students' experience is further enriched by exposure to the work of established writers through reading and discussing their works, and with a reading series that brings writers of national and international reputation to PSU. Students work closely with a supportive and ambitious community of peers, and with faculty who are committed to working with students as they develop and hone their writing and critical skills.

I. Enrollment and Funding

1. Declaring the Major

You can declare the BFA major through an Academic Program Change on Banweb. Instructions for doing this are available at https://www.pdx.edu/registration/major-change. We also recommend that you discuss the BFA major with your pathway advisor before declaring.

2. Declaring a Strand

There are three strand concentrations available in the BFA: fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. When you have attained junior status, you will be asked to fill out a form choosing your strand concentration. This will determine what courses will fulfill your upper-division requirements.

3. Establishing Residency

For information regarding residency requirements, including the classification criteria and the process by which residency classification is determined, see residency requirements.

4 Financial Aid (including scholarships and employment)

Some scholarships, grants, and student loans require full-time student status. At PSU, a full-time undergraduate course load is 12 credits or more. Please visit the links below for important information on financial aid:

- Paying for college – overview and links
- Financial Aid
- Scholarships
- Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE): tuition reduction program for out-of-state students who are legal residents of one of the 16 participating western states and territories.
- Four Years Free for eligible Oregon high school residents who are full time students.
- Peer Mentor Program: Undergraduate peer mentors receive an Oregon Laurels Scholarship that pays in-state tuition up to 12 credits at the Standard Base Rate

(excluding fees). They also receive a monthly Educational Leadership award (similar to a stipend.) Please note that out-of-state and international Undergraduate Peer Mentors will be billed for tuition exceeding the cost of 12 in-state credits per term.

- Learning Center Tutor. The Learning Center, housed on the second floor of Millar Library, hires tutors for some subjects, not including writing, on an ongoing basis throughout the academic year as existing tutors graduate.
- Federal Work Study Positions. If you qualify for the federal work-study program, you may apply for a variety of jobs on campus outside of the English Department, including writing, website development, and office work. These jobs are also posted on the Career Center website.

II. Communication, Community, and Advising

1. Computer Accounts and BFA Listserv

Before your first term begins, establish your university **ODIN** account and email address. To get started, read the instructions on your university letter of admission or call 503-725-HELP (4357), email help@pdx.edu, or stop by Smith Memorial Student Union Room 18.

The BFA program uses a listserv to communicate important information to our students. We will add your official PSU email address to our listserv for all correspondence, so if you prefer to use a non-PSU email account for your routine business, you will need to set up your PSU email to forward to your personal e-mail. To set a mail forward, follow the instructions here.

2. Orientation, Community, and Campus Resources

A community event for BFA students is typically held at least twice per academic year. At these events you will meet other BFA students and BFA and English Department faculty, and learn more about the program, and about resources available both at the University and in Portland. The event may take the form of a BFA student reading or an informal coffee or lunch.

Students in the Creative Writing Program are encouraged to get involved in our student-edited publications:

- *Pathos Literary Magazine*: A creative publication, staffed entirely by students, that exclusively publishes student work in three issues per year.

- *Vanguard*: A weekly print and digital newspaper distributed for free throughout the PSU campus area. Entirely student-run, employing about 60 paid student reporters, multimedia contributors, photographers, graphic designers, and editors, its publishing body is the Portland State Media Board, consisting of four students, four faculty members, and one community member. The newspaper and its staff have earned several collegiate journalism awards, including the Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association General Excellence Award and the Columbia Scholastic Press Association Gold Circle Award.

- *Pacific Sentinel*: A monthly student-run magazine.

- *Portland Review*: Founded in 1956, the *Portland Review* is produced by graduate students in the PSU English Department and publishes prose, poetry, visual art, and translations.

Campus support services include:

- The Career Center, which offers valuable guidance on graduate education and professional development

- The Writing Center, a service to help students improve their writing and understand strategies to gain critical thinking skills they can adapt to all their writing projects. Writing center staff support students by acting as consultants rather than copyeditors, guiding students through their work by asking questions rather than editing specific text, with the goal of ensuring that the student-writer maintains agency over their writing.

- The Disability Resource Center: At the DRC help is available in identifying, evaluating, and reducing or eliminating barriers to student access and equity.

3. Advising

You can direct questions about your course of study to cw-advising@pdx.edu. For more general questions about the program, email the English Department's Program Coordinator or the Creative Writing Director. This Handbook, the contact page, and the English Department website may also help with your questions.

III. Course of Study

1. Degree Requirements

In addition to meeting university B.A. degree requirements, students must meet the following requirements for the BFA degree:

- Required Writing Courses
- Writing Electives
- Literature Courses
- Historical Literacy (8 credits)
- Culture, Difference, and Representation
- English Electives
- Fine Art Electives
- Final Portfolio

As part of a large and diverse university, students can choose from a wide array of department electives in creative writing, literature, composition, and technical writing, and may further explore interdisciplinary connections through the College of the Arts, including courses in Architecture, Art, Art History, Film, Music, and Theater.

Courses in the areas listed above provide students with the opportunity to explore different historical periods, regions, and genres, thus enabling them to find connections between multiple topics and cultural moments.

Note that the difference between a writing seminar and a workshop at the 300-level and above is that while both typically include a combination of readings, classroom discussion, writing, and critique, a workshop places significantly more emphasis on student writing and the peer critique.

- No more than 12 credits taken for the Minor in English may be applied to the BFA degree.
- A minimum of 24 credits in English and/or Writing at PSU is required to graduate from PSU with a BFA in Creative Writing.
- If you are unsure of whether a particular course fulfills a degree requirement, first check with your advisor. With advisor approval, and within the University and program guidelines, some courses not specifically noted in the BFA requirements might be applicable. If your advisor is unsure, consult with the Creative Writing director.
- Only courses taken for a letter grade, and in which a student receives a C or above can count for the BFA degree.

Use the Bachelor of Fine Arts in Creative Writing Advising Worksheet (Catalog Year 2025 or later) to track your credits.

Required Writing Courses (12 credits)

- Wr 212 Introductory Fiction Writing (4)
- Wr 213 Introductory Poetry Writing (4)
- Wr 214 Introductory Nonfiction Writing (4)

Writing Electives *(32 credits).*

Includes 16 credits of additional upper-division WR courses in any genre (fiction, nonfiction, or poetry), at least 8 of which must be at the 400-level.
Note: Wr 312, Wr 313, Wr 412, Wr 413 may be repeated for credit.

- Wr 312 Intermediate Fiction Writing (4)
- Wr 313 Intermediate Poetry Writing (4)
- Wr 328 Media Editing (4)
- Wr 399 Special Studies (1-5)
- Wr 407 Writing Seminar (1-6)
- Wr 412 Advanced Fiction Writing (4)
- Wr 413 Advanced Poetry Writing (4)
- Wr 428 Advanced Media Writing (4)
- Wr 456 Forms of Nonfiction (4)
- Wr 457 Personal Essay Writing (4)
- Wr 458 Magazine Writing (4)
- Wr 459 Memoir Writing (4)

Historical Literacy (8 credits)

These courses give students the opportunity to explore different historical periods, regions, and genres, thus enabling them to find connections between multiple topics and cultural moments.

Creative Writing students must complete two courses from the following list:

- Eng 301U Topics in Shakespearean Genre (4)
- Eng 320U The English Novel I (4)
- Eng 340U Medieval Literature (4)
- Eng 341U Renaissance Literature (4)
- Eng 342U Eighteenth-Century Literature (4)
- Eng 343U Romanticism (4)
- Eng 351 African American Literature (4)
- Eng 360U American Literature and Culture I (4)
- Eng 416 History of Rhetoric (4)
- Eng 426 Advanced Topics in Medieval Literature (4)
- Eng 441 Advanced Topics in Renaissance Literature (4)
- Eng 450 Advanced Topics in Eighteenth-Century Literature (4)
- Eng 458 Advanced Topics in Romanticism (4)
- Eng 460 Advanced Topics in American Literature to 1800 (4)
- Eng 491 History of Literary Criticism and Theory I (4)

Culture, Difference, and Representation (4 credits)

These courses explore the politics of representation in the contexts of identity and subject formation, cultural encounter and domination, and canon formation and contestation.

Creative Writings students must complete one course from the following list:

- Eng 326 Literature, Community, and Difference (4)
- Eng 327 Culture, Imperialism, and Globalization (4)
- Eng 428 Canons and Canonicity (4)

English Electives (12 credits)

Creative Writing students must complete 12 upper division English credits (With adviser approval, one upper-division WLL literature course may be applied to this requirement.)

Fine Arts Electives (7 credits)

Creative Writing students must complete two courses (7 credits) in arts appreciation, theory, or performance. This requirement is fulfilled through courses in the College of the Arts prefixed Arch, ArH, Art, D, FILM, Mus, and TA.

NOTE that the BA requirements include a minimum of 3 credits in Fine and Performing Arts

TOTAL CREDIT HOURS: 75

2. Basic Learning Outcomes

- Demonstrate knowledge of literary craft terms, techniques, forms, and genre-specific conventions in one's chosen strand (fiction, poetry, or nonfiction). Students acquire and apply this knowledge in 200-, 300-, and 400-level writing workshops and WR 407 seminars.
- Demonstrate familiarity with literary forms and genres outside one's chosen strand. Students gain this familiarity in introductory (200-level) writing workshops and cross-strand seminars (WR 407).
- Analyze published texts with attention to form, structure, voice, language, and audience. Students build analytical skills in writing workshops, seminars, and literature courses.
- Produce cogent written and oral critiques of peers' work in progress, using detailed textual evidence. Students hone critical and expressive skills in writing workshops and seminars.
- Demonstrate the ability to revise texts in response to feedback from peers and instructors. Students practice revision techniques and strategies in writing workshops at all levels.
- Demonstrate the ability to write a library research paper. BFA majors without prior training in research papers are encouraged to take WR 222.
- Produce a final portfolio containing a critical essay that reflects on artistic intent, development, and revision of the creative work; and 20-30 pages of poetry or 30-50 pages of fiction or creative nonfiction.

3. The Final Portfolio

The Final Portfolio is submitted for approval by the end of the third week of the term in which a student intends to graduate. For summer graduates, the deadline is the end of the third week of spring term. Portfolios will not be accepted over the summer.

The portfolio is a clean revised copy of the student's creative writing: Need to provide new page count or # of words to address mixed genre portfolios.- and a 6 to 10 page statement of artistic intent. This statement should provide an overview and analysis of the development and revision of the student's portfolio work. Email the portfolio and introductory statement as a Word docx to grdstudy@pdx.edu.

The portfolio must include a Title Page, a Table of Contents, a Statement of Artistic Intent, and your Creative Writing. All pages must be proofread. Prose work should be properly formatted with 1-inch margins and double-spaced in a readable standard 12-point font. All pages except the Title Page should be numbered.

- Title Page must include name, date, student ID #, email address, and identify itself as the BFA in Creative Writing Portfolio. Students may also title or subtitle the collection if they choose.

- Table of Contents must include page numbers, and titles for each piece in your Writing section.

- The Writing section may consist of a single or multiple works, and a single or multiple genres. They may be thematically connected, but this is not required. Pieces written within courses may be used; in fact, this is encouraged, but they must be clean revised copies. Each piece in the Writing section should be numbered and titled.

The creative work is expected to meet a high standard of artistic achievement and craft. Work will not be judged by its subgenre or subject matter per se, nor on its aesthetic leaning, whether experimental or conventional. Both the Statement and the Creative Work should comply with the University standards of academic honesty.

Your Statement of Artistic Intent is a formal statement of your goals and your craft, not a letter or a personal essay. It should supplement your selection of creative writing and be a critical assessment of your own writing from artistic, intellectual, emotional, and critical perspectives. Please address each of the following prompts in succession:

- Articulate your goals and intentions as a writer and discuss the craft decisions and textual strategies at work in relation to your artistic goals. This might include discussion of narrative structure, point of view, chronology, diction, syntax, pacing, rhythm, sound, dialogue, and other decisions you made as a writer. How do your choices about form, craft, and structure relate to your current goals as an artist and to the content of your work? Speak to the broader context of your work by describing some of the texts that influenced the writing selection in your portfolio: how do you see your work in conversation with these writers, and in what ways are their influences felt within your writing?
  Finally, in what ways do you see your work as distinct from that of the writers you read, and how does your work engage with your own sense of identity, philosophy, language, and the world around you?

- Discuss the process by which you wrote the work in your portfolio: did your conception of the structure, content, or voice change significantly as you were writing? How would you approach the research or writing process differently in the future?

- Describe your plans for the work that you've submitted: Are you considering eventually revising or expanding it into a different form? What additional material would you want to generate, cut, or further develop?

Your portfolio will either be approved or returned without approval by the end of the 4th week of your quarter of graduation. If only minor corrections are necessary, a portfolio may be approved on the condition that those corrections be made by the student, but without necessarily requiring resubmission.
If more significant revisions are needed, your portfolio will be returned without approval; graduation that quarter will require resubmission of the revised portfolio by the end of the 6th week of the quarter, and subsequent approval by the departmental committee.

4. Pre-admission Credit and Transfer Credit

If you have questions about whether credits transfer, contact cw-advising@pdx.edu.

IV. Graduation and Beyond

1. Forms and Deadlines

Undergraduate students must apply for a degree two quarters prior to their expected date of completion. You are encouraged to first consult with your academic advisor about submitting a DARS report to verify that all of your degree requirements have been or will be met before submitting the degree application. For more information about degree applications, visit Degree Requirements in Fariborz Maseeh Hall or call 503.725.3438.

2. Student Checklist

The checklist assumes a full-time schedule (12 credits per term).

First Term

- ✔ Confirm that the English Department staff has your contact information, including your ODIN (PSU) email address and OAM account.
- ✔ Meet with your assigned faculty advisor soon after you enter the BFA, to discuss a plan of classes.
- ✔ Familiarize yourself with the program information in the BFA Handbook and in the PSU Bulletin.
- ✔ Confirm with your advisor that any prior applicable credits from non-PSU institutions have been applied towards your degree.

Second Term

- ✔ Check in with your advisor if you have any questions or concerns. Make a note to check in at least twice/year.

Completing the Program

- ✔ Consult with your advisor and run a DARS report to confirm that you are on track to finish on schedule.
- ✔ Confirm that your advisor and department staff have your personal email so you can keep in touch with your PSU community, including news about your cohort, literary readings, and professional development opportunities.

3. Professional Development

The BFA is a versatile degree. We prepare our students to be adaptable, creative, and thoughtful, subtle, and bold communicators. Possessing excellent language skills, combining analytical with creative, will give you confidence and the ability to pursue any number of directions in your life.

Professional-development offerings at PSU include:

WR 331 Book Publishing for Writers

The course provides an overview of the book publishing process, organized around the division of labor typically found in publishing houses. Through readings, discussion, and participation in mock publishing companies, students learn about editorial, design, production, marketing, distribution, and sales.

WR 394 Writing Careers for English Majors

The course covers career possibilities, internships, and community service. Each student gets individual attention and the goal is to identify possible career paths. This course is particularly helpful for those who wish to pursue non-teaching careers. Contact Dan DeWeese at deweesed@pdx.edu for more information.

WR 416 Screenwriting

In this course, students will be introduced to the process of conceiving, structuring, writing, rewriting, and marketing a screenplay for the contemporary American marketplace.

WR 424 Grant Writing for Professional Writers

This course introduces students training for careers as professional writers to the best practices in writing grants and managing the grant writing process across multiple sectors of the non-profit world and in academia. Students will work collaboratively and individually to develop business plans, identify potential funding sources, and begin preparing grants.

WR 458 Magazine Writing

This course examines the development of both long- and short-form magazine pieces, as well as the business and economics of magazine publishing. Students write and peer-critique articles in the styles and formats of a variety of publications and magazine departments.

The PSU Career Center
The Career Center has a wide range of resources and can help you plan a job search, prepare application materials, and explore career options. Visit the website at http://www.career.pdx.edu/ and the Center in 402 University Services Building.

4. BFA Graduation and PSU Commencement

Typically there is an annual culminating event to celebrate our BFA graduates, with their families, friends, and the entire BFA community. All students who have graduated in the year prior— whether in Fall, Winter, or Spring—are encouraged to read from their work.

The College of Liberal Arts & Sciences at PSU holds general commencement exercises at the end of finals week in Spring. Check commencement deadlines on the University's commencement web page if you wish to take part in the ceremony.

5. Guidelines for Requesting Letters of Recommendation

It's likely that you will be asking your advisor and other faculty for recommendations, not just soon after graduation, but for some years. Here are guidelines to make the process smooth for everyone.

- Give 3-4 weeks of notice, if possible, even if you know that the instructor has a letter already on file. Letters may need significant revision to fit the purpose.
- If your instructor is not currently listed on the faculty page, please contact the Creative Writing Director, who will seek to put you in contact with them.
- With your request, include the date by which the recommendation is due, and a description/information about the graduate program/job/fellowship, etc.
- Provide links to any information your recommender needs to be informed about what you are applying for.
- List the classes you have taken with the professor and roughly when.
- It can also be helpful to the recommender to include a sample, if you still have it, of work you submitted for their course.
- Fill out any forms as completely as you can.
- Provide a résumé and copy of your transcript, as pertinent.
- If a written statement is required by you, the applicant, also send that to your recommender.
- If you are notified that your recommendation has not been received, politely remind your recommender of your request and of the deadline.