

CREATIVE WRITING

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Overview

The Creative Writing program offers a four-year course of study for talented and disciplined students who aspire to be writers. The faculty selects students on the basis of demonstrable writing promise, overall academic performance and enthusiasm for literature. Love of language and literature is essential. Most of the students' time will be spent reading and discussing literature, and writing and revising original work in multiple genres, including poetry, short fiction, and creative nonfiction. Students must show open-mindedness, discipline, maturity, imagination, and strong self-motivation in respect to their creative work and to their education as a whole.

Grounded in the belief that the qualities of good writing remain consistent regardless of literary form, faculty teach all aspects of the curriculum. They also rotate instruction among all classes so that students have the benefit of receiving a variety of approaches, while instructors remain involved with all students in the department.

The benefits students receive from focusing on creative self-expression, technique, and critical reading help them pursue a variety of careers. Students who have completed the program pursue studies in undergraduate and graduate programs and find such outlets for their writing as literary journals, magazines and books. Students should have a lifelong dedication to literature and writing and leave NOCCA as valuable supporters of the literary arts with a lasting appreciation for the written word.

Admission to the Program

In addition to NOCCA's general application, students complete the Creative Writing application which includes a writing prompt, essay, list of books they've read in the past three months, and a writing sample. Current grades are important and a minimum 3.0 GPA is preferable. The quality and variety of what students are reading is important. Students are encouraged to read challenging books in addition to those required at school and should be able to discuss examples of classic and contemporary literature. Students who are invited to an in-person audition are asked to bring a ten-page portfolio of original creative work (poetry, short fiction, dramatic writing, graphic novel, etc.). At the audition a faculty member will meet one-on-one with the student for a half-hour conversation about language and literature, and the student's writing life and goals. In some cases, students will be asked to participate in a follow-up audition. Please note, only incoming freshmen, sophomores and juniors are eligible to apply. All new students enter at Level I.

Semester-long creative writing courses for middle-school students are offered as noncredit workshops and do not require completion of the NOCCA application. Enrollment information about these workshops is sent by email at the start of each semester to families that have expressed interest in creative writing opportunities.

General Requirements and Guidelines

Creative Writing classes are held Monday through Friday, 1:15 – 3:45 p.m. This is an intensive program that models its curriculum after rigorous college-level writing programs across the country. NOCCA writing students conduct a close study of the formal properties of poetry, prose, and creative nonfiction, as well as read contemporary and classic literature. Students move from crafting formal poetry to writing experimental fiction to offering critical feedback in peer workshops. Level II, III and IV students are required to teach one challenging novel each year, which includes creating and grading the test, and leading a substantial discussion about elements of craft. In addition to rigorous writing assignments and projects, Level III and IV students who are undertaking a certificate of artistry are required to complete a creative thesis, oral and written exams, and a

yearlong independent study on a single author's body of work.

Curriculum/Courses of Instruction

Level I (CW1) 3 credits

Enrollment Guidelines: *Audition required; open to incoming high school freshmen, sophomores, and juniors.*

The primary goal of this class is to immerse students in good writing in order to introduce basic techniques and approaches to writing poetry and prose. Over the course of the year students read roughly sixteen novels, dozens of short stories and hundreds of poems. Daily writing exercises focus on both the imaginative properties of language and the practice of specific technique. In addition to students' extensive creative work, the study of film and various nonfiction material is also used to develop their critical sensibility.

Level II (CW2) 3 credits

Enrollment Guidelines: *Successful completion of Level I and consent of instructors.*

Through a more specialized and intensive curriculum, Level II students broaden and deepen their knowledge of literature, closely examine the formal properties of writing, master advanced writing skills, and study the characteristics of major art movements. Students also lead class discussions and are required to teach one novel. With the guidance of a faculty mentor, juniors planning to undertake a certificate of artistry have the option to complete a yearlong independent study of a single author's body of work as Level II students.

Level III (CW3) 3 credits

Enrollment Guidelines: *Successful completion of Level II and consent of instructors.*

Level III writers continue their close study of the formal properties of poetry, short fiction, the prose poem, nonfiction and dramatic prose, as well as their historical surveys of American and international literature. They should also have a basic understanding of what being a professional writer entails, including the current situation in publishing, career possibilities, and the role of the writer in contemporary culture. With the guidance of a faculty mentor, Level III juniors and seniors undertaking a certificate of artistry complete a yearlong independent study of a single author's body of work.

Level IV (CW4): 3 credits

Enrollment Guidelines: *Successful completion of Level III and consent of instructors.*

Level IV is primarily an independent course of study designed by each individual student. Students continue a close study of one or more genres, produce publishable work in the genre of their choice, are encouraged to design a community service project incorporating creative writing, and collaborate with students from other arts disciplines.

Please note: Upper-level juniors and seniors have the option to edit *Umbra*, NOCCA's literary journal.

Extracurricular Activities

Students in the Creative Writing Department are encouraged to participate in Press Street Poets, a student-run spoken-word club; join the editorial board of *Umbrat*, the department's online literary journal (note: editing *Umbra*, NOCCA's literary journal in print, is an integral part of the upper-level curriculum and not an extracurricular activity); become a teaching assistant for the middle-school workshops; start long- or short-term collaborations with artists in other disciplines; and become involved in the writing community across the city.

Certificates

The Creative Writing awards certificates in the following three categories.

Certificate of Artistry is awarded to seniors in Level III or IV who have completed oral and written exams, a publishable creative thesis, and a yearlong independent study.

Certificate of Achievement is awarded to seniors in Level II or III who have completed all their course requirements but have not undertaken a yearlong independent study, submitted a creative thesis, or taken the oral and written exams.

Certificate of Recognition is awarded to seniors in Level II who have shown artistic growth and dedication during their time at NOCCA.

In all cases, the judgment by the core faculty regarding the awarding of certificates is final.