

New Academic Program: BA Creative Writing

Program Proposed Start Date

Fall 2020

Program Description

The foundations of the creative writing major are the study of the craft of creative writing combined with rigorous study of literature. Students must develop their expertise in reading literature in conjunction with their development of writing craft. At the introductory level our program will require writing workshops in all three genres we currently offer—fiction, poetry, and creative nonfiction—as well as two introductory literature classes. At the upper division, students will focus on either one or two genres, taking the appropriate 300- and 400-level workshops. Literature offerings will represent a range of eras, continents, ethnicities, and sensibilities, as the major will require one pre-1800 and one post-1800 literature class at the upper division as well as three upper-division electives in literature, writing, and/or film.

Students in the major will be taught writing by a faculty actively publishing in the genres they're teaching—fiction, poetry, and creative nonfiction. They'll choose from a rigorous and diverse curriculum of literature and film courses taught by accomplished and active scholars. Students will benefit from a robust Master of Fine Arts (MFA) Program in Creative Writing already in the School of Writing, Literature, and Film (SWLF), the most competitive graduate program of appreciable size at OSU with nearly 400 applications each year for only 9-12 spots. Established and ongoing opportunities include the Visiting Writers Series, Literary Northwest Series, Critical Questions Lecture Series, Stone Award events, Editorial Festival, Graduate Student Reading Series, two undergraduate creative writing clubs, and other co-curricular activities.

Our program objectives are to produce majors who can think and write creatively and with imaginative power. They'll have highly trained analytical, critical, technical, and editorial skills, preparing them for graduate work in a range of fields, from the MFA to law school, or for a job market with an increasing demand for imaginative thinkers and skilled writers who can construct masterful, meaningful narratives.

Program Context

The proposed Creative Writing major is a natural companion to OSU's robust Master of Fine Arts Program in Creative Writing. The success of the MFA degree informs advisability of the BA degree because the supportive infrastructure for creative writing at OSU is solidly in place. The courses taught by our nationally prominent faculty have been offered as electives for OSU students—at introductory to advanced levels—for years, showing strong enrollment even absent a degree program. Although we won't offer a creative writing minor, majors will still have the option of pursuing any of the existing SWLF offerings: minors in English, writing, film studies, applied journalism, and the certificate in scientific, technical, and professional communication. This proposal comes at a time when English majors are declining nationally. The latest ADE (Association of Departments of English) report, 2016, shows a ten-year decline in the English major, from 55,000 to 42,000 annual conferrals. This represents a 24% decline. At OSU, in the

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same period, the number of majors declined from 234 to 164, a 30% drop. Since then, we have gained a handful of majors back (188 in January 2020), but anticipate that numbers will remain depressed compared to historical averages.

Program Purpose/Relationship to University Mission and Strategic Plan

Through excellent teaching, outreach, and engagement, the proposed major will train OSU graduates to confront our most pressing economic, social, cultural, and environmental issues, bringing creativity and imagination to overcoming obstacles to progress. Creative minds, coupled with the powerful tools of observation, articulation, critical thinking, and the ability to write well, will give students a valuable and influential voice across Oregon, the nation, and the world. The MFA in creative writing attracts diverse students from a national and international pool. The addition of an undergraduate degree in creative writing would strengthen OSU's influence and renown in Oregon and beyond by providing a prestigious and desirable degree path for undergraduates, and also by being one of the few public universities in the region to offer such a degree. The state of Oregon will solidify its reputation as a place where students come to study creative writing. Within the state, this sought-after degree will become more accessible.

Creative writing is both a growing professional field and an emerging academic field of study that promotes economic growth in the humanities and social progress. Through internships, symposia, and collaborative courses, creative writing at OSU already has ongoing relationships with professionals (e.g., collaboration with Corvallis medical doctors in the course Poetry and Medicine) and community/government (e.g., MFA teaching internships at the Oak Creek Youth Correctional Facility and book discussions at public libraries as part of the Stone Award for Literary Excellence events). Undergraduates will now benefit from these many programs that currently enrich the graduate program.

Need for the Program

Nationwide, creative writing degrees lean toward private institutions (only 37% are in public universities). Some private colleges and universities in the Northwest offer a BA in creative writing or a creative writing concentration within the English major. OSU would become the only public university in the state to offer a creative writing BA. PSU and SOU offer the BFA in creative writing; these are studio degrees with high credit requirements (76 credits at PSU) and that also require students to apply to the program for acceptance. OSU's BA responds to its land grant mission of accessibility, and with credit requirements more in line with a humanities BA (53 credits), offers students the option of double majoring or adding minors to their degree.

Demand for the undergraduate degree is robust, as measured internally (39.2% of 232 students in OSU writing classes indicated they would be "very interested" in a creative writing major) and externally (creative writing degrees conferred have grown, nationwide, by 5% since 2012). Additionally, research on a subset of adjacent fields that would be served by the degree (writer, technical writer, copywriter, editor, proofreader, and reporter) shows that market demand has grown by 14.37% in the regional market since 2012.

Program Financials

Certain start-up costs potentially associated with undergraduate degrees do not apply to this one. The established MFA in Creative Writing means that no new faculty hires are required, and co-curricular programs (visiting writers and editors, administrative office support) are already well-organized around the discipline of creative writing. The SWLF advisor has capacity to add up to 50 new majors to his advising load, and the recent reduction of our advising FTE to .75 could be returned to 1.0 to accommodate an additional 75 majors. The start-up costs that do apply to this degree involve initial expenses for marketing materials. Revenue growth is expected as the degree draws students to OSU.

The anticipated need for additional upper-division creative writing courses can be covered without additional hiring. Faculty in creative writing currently teach a number of sections of ENG courses (i.e., courses in literary history), even as enrollments in ENG courses are declining at the approximate rate of the national trend (~30%). Additional capacity among the creative writing faculty and among tenure-line literary studies faculty (the primary deliverers of ENG courses) is therefore present. Should the major grow to the point wherein additional upper-division creative writing courses (WR) are required, that growth can be accommodated by shifting certain ENG courses to the literary studies faculty. Creative writing faculty, however, will continue to teach some literary history, a core pedagogical principle within the school.

Budget needs for the creative writing major are therefore projected to involve marketing only, not curriculum development or offerings.

	Fiscal Year 1	Fiscal Year 2	Fiscal Year 3	Fiscal Year 4
Library	536	570	610	610
Services & Supplies	3,750	1,500	2,500	1,500
TOTAL	\$4,286	\$2,070	\$3,110	\$2,110

RECOMMENDATION

All appropriate university committees and the OSU Faculty Senate have positively reviewed the proposed program. The Provost recommends that the Academic Strategies Committee approve the establishment of a BA in Creative Writing, effective fall 2020, pending support of the Statewide Provosts Council and the approval of the Higher Education Coordinating Commission.