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THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
Department of Theatre, Film & Creative Writing
www.creativewriting.ubc.ca

Optional-Residency M.F.A. in Creative Writing Information & Application Guidelines

Contact

Andrew Gray, Program Coordinator
(604) 822-2469 / fax: (604) 648-8848 / optres.mfa@ubc.ca

Program Description

The Creative Writing Program's Optional-Residency MFA is a studio course of study by distance education in which apprentice writers are offered instruction by faculty who work in a variety of literary and dramatic forms. The program leads to a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing.

The aim of the Creative Writing Program as a whole is to provide an intensive, varied and demanding apprenticeship for a select number of students who have shown, upon application, an already high level of ability and the promise of becoming professional writers of merit. The aim of our distance education program is to provide high-quality, flexible access to the Creative Writing MFA Program to students who are unable to attend residential classes.

Program Requirements

During the course of the degree, students must complete 36 credits of study (most workshops are 6 credits). Students are required to take a minimum of six credits each in three of seven genres of writing: fiction, poetry, non-fiction, writing for children, translation, stage play, or screenwriting.

While they may focus on their thesis genre, students will discover a fuller understanding of their capacities as writers in the "cross-training" component of the program. The program is primarily workshop-based and relies on peer critique to provide the basis for discussion of works in progress. Deadlines and quotas are set to encourage and develop professional discipline and to provide workshops with a steady stream of material to discuss. Active

participation in online workshops is required and students are encouraged to consult regularly with instructors.

Full-time / part-time study

Students may study full-time or part-time. Tuition fees are assessed on a per-credit basis. Most students study part-time. Full-time students generally complete the program by April of their second year, although some students considered full-time may take three years to finish (UBC considers 12 credits in the fall/winter term to be full-time study and 6 credits in the summer term are considered full-time for the summer). All students must complete their degree requirements within five years. It is not necessary to choose full-time or part-time study; your status is determined by how many classes you enrol in each year.

Summer Residency

We hold one 10-day intensive residency starting on the first Sunday in July each summer on the UBC campus. The residency consists of writing workshops, panels and lectures on aspects of writing and social events. Residencies are designed to foster creative and social links between students as well as to educate. Residencies are currently considered 3 credit courses, and students are charged fees at the standard 3 credit course rate (half the fee of a 6 credit course). There are no additional costs, other than the student's own responsibility for transportation, meals and accommodation. It is possible to attend as a non-credit student for a lesser fee. Non-credit students may not attend workshops, but can participate in the rest of the residency.

The residencies are an important part of the optional-residency MFA. A student's first residency, in particular, provides a grounding in the methods of writing workshops and distance learning as well as a physical introduction to the students and faculty he or she will be working with in the future. We understand, however, that for some students, work, location or family issues make it very difficult or impossible to attend residencies. Therefore, although strongly recommended, residencies are not mandatory.

Fees

(projected for 2012-13 Academic year)

Canadian Students: \$536.03 per credit.

US & International Students: \$884.24 (Canadian dollars) per credit.

The MFA degree is awarded on the completion of 36 credits. Most courses are 6 credits.

Please note: UBC generally raises fees by 2% each year; the above projections are extrapolated from current fees based on this. These fees do not include UBC student fees. We have negotiated a fee waiver and optional-residency student fees are significantly lower than current on-campus fees of approximately \$600 per year.

Courses

Other than the summer residency, courses are usually conducted during UBC's standard academic year, taking place from September through April (students continue to work on their writing individually from May to September).

Workshops in three or more of the following areas are chosen in consultation with program faculty & staff. Short fiction and Novel/Novella are both considered to be part of one genre: fiction. Each course is six credits unless otherwise noted. Complete course descriptions are available online for courses currently offered:

http://www.creativewriting.ubc.ca/programs_mfa_op_residency_courses.shtml

Workshop List

CrWr 503	Advanced Writing for Children
CrWr 505	Advanced Writing of Creative Non-Fiction
CrWr 506	Advanced Drama for Screen & Television
CrWr 507	Advanced Stage Playwriting
CrWr 508	Advanced Novel/Novella (cross listed with CrWr 509)
CrWr 509	Advanced Short Fiction (cross listed with CrWr 508)
CrWr 510	Advanced Poetry
CrWr 515	Advanced Translation
CrWr 516	Advanced Applied Non-Fiction
CrWr 522	Teaching Creative Writing (3 and/or 6 credits). Not a genre.
CrWr 539	Special Projects in Creative Writing
CrWr 539	Special Projects in Creative Writing: Summer Residency (3 credits)
CrWr 547	Directed Reading (available only upon consent of instructor)
CrWr 549	Thesis

Faculty

Fiction: Brian Brett, Gail Anderson-Dargatz, Zsuzsi Gartner, Annabel Lyon, Lisa Moore

Poetry: Gary Geddes, Susan Musgrave, Karen Solie

Non-Fiction: Terry Glavin, Wayne Grady, Luanne Armstrong

Writing for Children: Maggie deVries, Susan Juby

Screen & Television: Sara Graefe, Sioux Browning

Stageplay: Stephen Hunt

Translation: Peter Levitt

Faculty members are professional, working writers. Their biographies can be found on the Creative Writing website at http://www.creativewriting.ubc.ca/faculty_staff.shtml. Additional faculty may be added for this and future academic years as required. Some faculty members may not teach classes but rather work individually on special projects or thesis.

Thesis

The thesis (CrWr 549) normally consists of the student's best work composed in the course of the program. It is book-length and of publishable quality or, in the case of drama for screen or television, ninety minutes of producible material; and for stage a full-length work. Students are advised to choose their thesis supervisor through consultation with the Optional-Residency Program Faculty before the completion of 30 credits, and to begin working on the thesis the summer before the thesis class actually begins.

Theses may be presented to the Faculty of Graduate Studies at any time during the year. There are deadlines consistent with the two periods when graduation ceremonies are held in May and November.

Full policies on theses are available in the Optional Residency MFA student manual, which is available to all students enrolled in the program.

Faculty of Graduate Studies policies govern the amount of time students have to complete their theses, as well as leaves of absence or extensions. Currently, students have five years from the start of their degree to complete and submit their theses. Once embarked on the thesis course, students must finish during the regular academic period allotted, or pay a continuing course fee.

There is no thesis defence or special examination.

How To Apply For The Optional-Residency M.F.A. Program In Creative Writing

Process

1. Students apply directly by **email** to the Creative Writing Program with a portfolio of writing which is evaluated by our faculty
2. Students **simultaneously** send original copies of their undergraduate transcripts (see our transcripts section for details) and apply to UBC by using the Graduate Studies **online application form**.
3. Our faculty will select the successful applicants through a competitive reading process. We usually accept less than 25% of applicants. Successful applicants will be submitted to UBC for formal admission.
4. UBC will then accept the student, presuming academic qualifications are met.

We hope to inform all applicants of the outcome of the reading process by early to mid-December, 2011.

Admission Deadline

All portfolios must be received by email by **9am PST on Monday, September 11th, 2011**. Mailed transcripts must be sent directly from the issuing institution, and should be ordered on or before September 11th, 2011. Please allow time for your undergraduate institution(s) to process your transcript requests. Please contact us if you have any difficulties obtaining paper documents.

On-Line Application & Application Forms – Graduate Studies

Apply via the on-line application service: <http://www.grad.ubc.ca/apply/online/index.asp>
Please read the instructions on the website. The system will generate an 8 digit reference number which will become your student number if you are accepted by the Creative Writing Program. The current fee is CDN \$90 for Canadian applicants. International applicants pay CDN \$150. This fee is set by UBC Graduate Studies. **Please note:** the online application form will not available for applications until **July 2011**.

Please pay the on-line application fee by credit card. If you do not have a credit card, another cardholder may pay on your behalf. If you cannot pay on-line, contact us to request a paper application form. The completed application form and accompanying cheque, bank draft or money order (made payable to UBC Faculty of Graduate Studies) must be sent directly to the Creative Writing Program and will then be forwarded to the Faculty of Graduate Studies. Do not send cash, wire, transfers, Eurocheques, or UNESCO cheques. Please also make this request as early as possible, as applying by mail is slower than applying online.

Academic Requirements

Students must have an existing **four year** undergraduate degree (or the equivalent for international students) with a B+ average in order to pursue graduate studies at UBC. Please see the Prospective Students section of the Faculty of Graduate Studies website at www.grad.ubc.ca/prospective-students for more information. We strongly recommend reviewing all UBC Graduate requirements in advance of your application to determine

eligibility and to help you prepare for the process. If you are not considered eligible by Graduate Studies you will **not** be able to enter the program, even if we have accepted your portfolio. Under some circumstances, students with a below B+ average may be accepted by Graduate Studies; there is no guarantee, and the closer your senior level course average (3rd and 4th year courses) is to the B+ range, the better.

GRE/GMAT & Other Academic Scores

GRE, GMAT and other academic scores are not required.

Transcripts & Letters Of Reference

Applicants must send **two** official transcript from each post-secondary institution attended. Please note that the official transcripts must be mailed to Andrew Gray **directly** from the issuing institution. **Transcripts issued to the student are not acceptable.** Detailed information about transcript requirements can be found at

<http://www.grad.ubc.ca/prospective-students/application-admission/application-components-required-documents>

Letters of reference are required with the initial application. UBC requires three letters of reference with each application. We accept reference letters on paper and are also accepting them using UBC's E-reference system.

Paper references: Reference letters must come directly from the referee or if issued to the student, they must be in a sealed envelope with the referee's signature across the seal. Faxed or emailed reference letters are unacceptable. Referees may use the official Graduate Studies form, letterhead or plain white paper.

Electronic references: In the online application system, applicants are asked to provide an e-mail address for each referee (Please note, that we are unable to accept e-mails from Hotmail, Yahoo, GMail, MSN or other free e-mail accounts for referees.) A unique link will be emailed to each referee, allowing them to log in to a secure site and submit an online reference or upload a reference document as an attachment.

Full information including the official referee form can be found on the Graduate Studies website at <http://www.grad.ubc.ca/prospective-students/application-admission/letters-reference>. The form which may be used for application to Creative Writing is the standard Graduate Student Reference Form.

NOTE: If you are applying to **both** the onsite and the optional-residency MFA programs, you only need to send **one** set of transcripts and letters of reference and apply to Graduate Studies online **once**. However, you will need to send an email application portfolio to **both** email addresses for each individual application date and also mention clearly in your application that you are applying to both programs. You are not required to send the same portfolio to each program. Each application will be read separately by faculty in the program to which you are applying.

Publications, Readings & Productions

Please enclose a list of your publications, readings and productions if you have them. However, you do not need to be published, produced or have performed a reading to apply for the Program.

TOEFL Testing

Applicants from a university outside Canada in which English is not the primary language of instruction must present evidence of competency to pursue studies in the English language prior to being extended an offer of admission. Acceptable English language proficiency tests for applicants to graduate studies are: TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language): minimum score of 550 (paper version); 213 (computer version). Test scores must have been taken within the last 24 months at the time of submission, and photocopies of test scores are not acceptable. See the Graduate Studies website for more information - <http://www.grad.ubc.ca/prospective-students/application-admission/english-proficiency-requirements>.

Class Selection

Do not select or request classes with your application. Students only select workshops once enrolled in the program.

Portfolio Guidelines

All work must be in English. All work must be sent as email **attachments** to the Optional-Residency Program (optres.mfa@ubc.ca), **NOT** as text in the body of an email. If you submit a piece that is longer than our guidelines we will return it to you for revision.

We cannot provide critiques of manuscript submissions or detailed explanations to students who are not accepted into the program, nor can we provide pre-evaluation of portfolios. To find out if you will be accepted, you must apply.

File Specifications

All files must be in Microsoft Word format or Rich Text Format. All modern word processors are capable of producing files in one of these formats. Screenwriting submissions may also be sent as PDF (Adobe Acrobat) files. Electronic submissions in other formats will **not** be accepted. Please send your submission as several separate files: one containing the cover letter, CV (if applicable) and table of contents, then **one** file for each **genre** of written material which you are submitting. **Please add page numbers to your documents.**

File Naming: Please name your file attachments with your last name. For example, Jules Verne's application in three genres might be structured and named as follows: verne_letter.doc, verne_poetry.doc, verne_fiction.doc, verne_screen.doc.

Cover Letter

All submissions should include a brief one-page cover letter with a request to apply for the Optional-Residency MFA Program. Please include your full contact information including address, phone and email. The letter should also include a brief description of your

educational background and/or life experiences relevant to your writing and the program. It's also helpful to state the main genre in which you prefer to write.

Be assured, acceptance into the program does not depend on the lyricism of your cover letter. We only consider the originality and vitality of your writing portfolio. However, a letter may help provide a useful context for the material which you submit as well as assist with any letters we may have to write to Graduate Studies on your behalf (common if undergraduate marks are below B+).

Literary CV

Include a record of publications, productions and awards, if applicable. This is not required if you are unpublished.

Table of Contents

Include a Table of Contents for the writing portfolio with the genre of each piece indicated beside its title. Your main genre should be at the top of the list.

Portfolio

- All pages must be numbered. It is also helpful to place your last name on every page as part of the page footer.
- Please adhere to the page requirements (see below).

Page Requirements

Your portfolio **must** include a minimum of 2 different genres. Three genres is preferable but not absolutely essential. We would rather you send work in 2 strong genres rather than including a weak genre to make 3. The page requirement for each genre submitted should be followed as closely as is reasonable **without exceeding it** – manuscripts which are longer than requested will be returned for resubmission. For example: in short fiction, if you have one short story which runs 15 pages, you could submit it alone, but if you submit only one story of 5 pages, this is not sufficient. You may send more than one piece in a particular genre, as long as the cumulative page count in that genre does not exceed our requirements. Short & long fiction are not considered separate genres, therefore you **must** send in another genre in addition to fiction.

You cannot submit work in genres which we do not teach (such as Lyric & Libretto).

Do not use non-standard fonts, font sizes or page margins in order to squeeze in more material; our faculty will be able to evaluate your writing based on the page requirements stated.

Poetry: up to 20 pages. Poetry is generally single-spaced but no particular format is required.

Fiction: Double-spaced. Up to 20 pages (novel outline optional if you are submitting a novel excerpt). If you chose to submit both long and short fiction for one genre, submit no more

than a max of 20 pages altogether. (**NOTE: If you submit short fiction & novel or novella it will only be considered as one genre, not two.**)

Screenplay: The first 20 pages of a screenplay as well as a two page outline for the same screenplay. Sample scripts (also called show scripts) from pre-existing television series as well as **adaptations or collaborations of any kind** are **not** acceptable -- the writing, development of characters, etc., must be original to you.

Stage Play: 30 pages - excerpt from a full-length play, or one or more one-act plays.

Non-Fiction: Creative Nonfiction: double-spaced. Up to 20 pages of creative nonfiction -- which includes, but is not limited to, autobiography, literary journalism, commentary (op-ed), personal essays, travel writing, popular history, and any other form of nonfiction written in a clearly identifiable, personal voice. The following forms do NOT qualify: academic essays or criticism, standard newspaper reporting, press releases, corporate reports, scientific papers or copywriting. Journal/diary entries or online postings such as blogs are acceptable, but will be judged by the same standards of literary excellence as all other forms of creative nonfiction. If you do not have a sufficient number of pages of acceptable creative nonfiction available, up to 10 pages of fiction may be submitted as a substitute. (If you are also submitting a fiction manuscript in the fiction category, do not submit the same material as your creative nonfiction substitute.)

Children's Literature: Double-spaced. 20 pages of text (no illustrations).

Translation: Double-spaced where applicable. 20 pages of translated work in any genre **into English**. Do not send original work in the foreign language from which the translation was taken.

Note: collaborative works of any type are not acceptable in any genre. All work must be original to you alone.

Optional-Residency MFA Application Checklist

- Cover letter and literary CV (if applicable). Note the main genre you work in and include a note about your educational history if relevant.
- Writing samples consisting of a minimum of two different genres and a maximum of three. Pages numbered, and table of contents included. Note: long & short fiction are considered only one genre--Fiction.
- Complete portfolio sent as email attachments in Microsoft Word or Rich Text Format to optres.mfa@ubc.ca in the following format: one file containing the cover letter, literary CV (if applicable) and the table of contents, then one file for each genre of the writing samples.
- Application to Graduate Studies: <http://www.grad.ubc.ca/apply/online/index.asp>
- 3 letters of reference, either electronic through the Graduate Studies application, or sent by postal mail to Andrew Gray.
- TOEFL (if applicable), sent directly from the institution to the Creative Writing Office, attention Andrew Gray. One original test score is required.
- Arrange to have 2 official transcripts sent from each post-secondary institution attended. Transcripts should be ordered by September 11th, 2011.

Portfolio Deadline: September 11th, 2011 (before 9AM PST)
Transcript Deadline: Ordered on or before September 11th, 2011.

Send Manuscripts To: optres.mfa@ubc.ca

Send TOEFL Scores, Letters of Reference & Transcripts To:

Andrew Gray, Coordinator
 Optional-Residency MFA
 UBC Creative Writing Program
 Buchanan Room E462
 1866 Main Mall *
 Vancouver, BC
 V6T 1Z1
 CANADA
 FAX: 604-648-8848

*Couriers should be told to deliver to the East Mall side of the building.

The address must be written exactly as stated above. Failure to do so may result in problems with your application. Your material will not be automatically sent to the Creative Writing office if received in another UBC office.

Questions? Contact Optional-Residency Coordinator Andrew Gray.

Telephone: (604) 822-2469 **Email:** optres.mfa@ubc.ca

Website: www.creativewriting.ubc.ca

Email is the primary means of communication for this program. All applicants will be informed by email when their application has been received. Applicants will be notified by email of the results of the competition. No letters will be sent by postal mail.

Please let us know if your email address changes after your application. Applicants accepted by the Creative Writing Program must also be accepted by the Faculty of Graduate Studies. Acceptance by Creative Writing does not guarantee Graduate Studies acceptance.

Students are accepted for the academic year beginning in May 2012, with the first class being the optional July 2012 summer residency; online workshops begin in September 2012.