

Creative Writing

Lara Naughton, Chair: LNaughton@nocca.com, 504-940-2821

Anne Gisleson: AGisleson@nocca.com, 504-940-2822

Michael Lee: MLee@nocca.com, 504-940-2913

Andy Young: AYoung@nocca.com, 504-940-2819

The Creative Writing program offers a four-year course of study as well as year-long writing workshops for talented and disciplined students who aspire to be writers. With the addition of Academic Studio, there is also now a four-year course of study for students who join NOCCA as freshmen. The faculty selects students on the basis of demonstrable writing promise, overall academic performance and enthusiasm for literature. They must show open-mindedness, discipline, maturity, imagination and strong self-motivation in respect to their creative work and to their education as a whole.

In classes concentrating on aesthetic quality and technique, students study novels, short and long stories, poems, drama, book reviews and other nonfiction and films. They discuss and analyze literature, then apply that knowledge to their own writing. Students write almost every day and are given exercises that encourage both imaginative and technically skilled work. While a wide variety of authors are used as models, NOCCA writers are encouraged to develop their own voice and style. During class and the more structured workshop sessions, they receive feedback from peers, instructors and visiting artists toward revision of their work.

The curriculum reinforces the demands of a career in writing by encouraging self-discipline, the meeting of deadlines and professionalism regarding peers, instructors and one's own work. Having established a solid foundation with their own craft, students also participate in collaborative projects with other NOCCA arts disciplines to enhance the understanding of their writing and its relationship to other forms and to expose them to the possibilities of art in general.

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 of the classes so that students have the benefit of receiving a variety of approaches, while instructors remain involved with all of the 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 may 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 with a lasting appreciation for the written word and as valuable supporters of the literary arts.

Course Descriptions

Level I (CW1)

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 non-fiction material is also used to develop their critical sensibility.

At the completion of the year, Level I writers should:

- show college-level proficiency in reading comprehension, syntax and diction.
- demonstrate a command of various figurative language devices, such as metaphor and simile.
- have an understanding of the structure and development of a poem, imagery, line, rhythm and sound devices.
- have an understanding of the basic elements of fiction such as character, scene, exposition, point of view and plot.
- have a familiarity with the prose poem, experimental fiction, dramatic literature and non-fiction.
- be able to recognize the unifying artistic elements of a film.
- have produced drafts of short stories, creative non-fiction and poems and presented this work for critique.
- understand the importance of revision in their writing.
- have turned in quarterly portfolios of revised work.

Level II (CW2):

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 and master advanced writing skills. They study the characteristics of major art movements such as Romanticism, Realism, Impressionism, Expressionism, Surrealism and Post-modernism. Upper level students also edit *Umbra*, NOCCA's literary journal, lead class discussions and are required to teach one novel.

Level II writers:

- produce drafts of poems, short stories and non-fiction.
- present new work for critique through workshop, conferences or peer editing.
- focus on revision as essential to the writing process.
- turn in quarterly portfolios of revised work.

Their study of poetry includes:

- at least one historical survey.
- prosody and scansion.
- writing in traditional forms.
- poetry in translation from other languages.

Their study of short fiction includes:

- at least one survey of narratives.
- novels and stories by international writers.
- writing both traditional and experimental stories.

In addition, they study and write:

- prose poems.
- dramatic literature.
- creative nonfiction.
- film criticism.

Level III (CW3):

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, non-fiction 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.

In addition to their regular coursework, Level III students must also complete the requirements for the Certificate of Artistry. These include:

- a year-long independent study of one author's work of the student's choosing.
- passing an oral and a written examination based on an extensive reading list.
- presenting and defending a thesis-length work of publishable quality.
- maintaining a "B" average or better.

Level IV (CW4):

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

CW4 is primarily an independent course of study designed by each individual student. Students will continue a close study of one or more genres, produce publishable work in the genre of their choice, and may design a community service project incorporating creative writing and collaborate with students from other arts disciplines.

Please note: Level IV students will complete their independent author study as Level III students but wait until Level IV to submit a creative thesis and take the oral and written exams.

Other Course Offerings:

Introduction to Creative Writing

This non-credit semester-long course offers students an introduction to creative writing, with primary focus on writing poetry and prose. The class meets twice a week for lectures on craft, stories and poems; discussion; critique of student work; studio writing time; visiting artists, and other activities. Students must show self-discipline and a commitment to working independently.

Non-Credit Workshops

The Creative Writing Department may also offer a series of non-credit workshops throughout the year, which meet once a week for 4-5 weeks. Each workshop focuses on a specific topic and offers students an opportunity to engage in the writing process and explore writing as an art form.

Visiting Artists

The Creative Writing Department seeks to give students an accurate understanding of the professional realities of the literary world, while focusing primarily on the aesthetic value of the literature. The visiting writers program supports this aim by offering students the benefit of working with dozens of writers who treat them as peers, sharing their experience in the writing world and leading workshops that give students critical feedback on their work.

Certificates

The Creative Writing Department offers three levels of certification:

- **Certificate of Artistry:** Students must have met all the performance expectations of Level IV and/or III (see above).
- **Certificate of Achievement:** Seniors who have completed the required coursework in any given level with significant accomplishment.
- **Certificate of Attendance:** First-year seniors who have completed required coursework in any given course.

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