



# MFA HANDBOOK

CREATIVE WRITING

**USF** UNIVERSITY OF  
SOUTH FLORIDA

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## THE MASTER OF FINE ARTS PROGRAM

Welcome to USF's Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing program. Our program offers small classes, friendly fellow students, dedicated faculty, a lively reading series, and a supportive atmosphere. Each year we accept between six and nine students into the program; we like to keep the program small to help foster a sense of community. The MFA faculty are invested in the students and in their development as writers.

Here are some highlights of our program:

- We strive to help all our students achieve their maximum potential as writers. All writing workshops, studio courses, and craft courses are conducted in a positive atmosphere.
- Students may concentrate solely on their chosen genre, or they may take workshops outside of their genre. For instance, fiction writers may take creative nonfiction courses, and poetry students may enroll in fiction writing. We encourage our students to push boundaries.
- Students are welcome to write hybrid theses that combine multiple genres into a unified purpose.
- Our teacher training is superb. First-Year Composition training prepares our graduate students to enter the classroom with confidence. We also are one of the few programs in the country to offer training in creative writing pedagogy. Graduates of our program are well-prepared for the difficult academic job market.
- The Department of English offers job placement sessions that guide students through every step of the job interview process. Students receive assistance crafting effective CVs and cover letters and writing teaching philosophy statements. The placement committee also runs mock interview sessions.
- Our students are publishing in top journals—*the Sun*, *Quarterly West*, and *Epoch*, to name just a few—and have won prestigious national prizes such as the O. Henry Award and the AWP Intro Award. Our alums include Karen Brown, author of *Pins and Needles* (winner of the AWP Grace Paley Award in Fiction) and *Little Sinners and Other Stories* (Prairie Schooner Book Prize in Fiction); Ric Jahna, author of *True Kin* (Ohio State University Prize in Short Fiction); poet and translator Daniele Pantano, author of *The Oldest Hands in the World* and translator of *The Possible Is Monstrous: Selected Poems by Friedrich Dürrenmatt and The Collected Works of Georg Trakl* (all published by Black Lawrence Press); Alicia Thompson, author of *The Psych Major Syndrome* (Hyperion); poet John Nieves (Indiana Review Prize in Poetry, work published widely in prestigious journals such as *Minnesota Review* and *Harpur Palate*); and memoirist Adriana Paramo, author of *My Mother's Funeral* (CavanKerry Press) and *Looking for Esperanza* (Benu Press).
- Our literary journal, [Saw Palm](#), gives graduate students a chance to gain valuable editorial experience.
- Students may gain administrative experience—and sharpen their own presentation skills—through participation in Blank Pages: Creative Writing Symposium, National Poetry Month Festival, Writers Harvest fundraiser, and the 6 X 6 Student Reading Series. The Department of English offers modest assistance to students who are selected to present at national conferences such as AWP.
- The Department of English, the USF Lecture Series, and the USF Humanities Institute bring in many guest speakers for readings, master classes, and day-long workshops. Guest speakers have included Salman Rushdie, Robert Pinsky, Galway Kinnell, A. Manette Ansay, Kim Addonizio, David Leavitt, and many others.
- The English Graduate Student Association hosts student-run symposia during the academic year.

## THE USF ENGLISH GRADUATE PROGRAM

In the Carnegie Foundation categories for higher education, the University of South Florida is classified as Very High Research and Community Engaged. The department of English shares these commitments with a productive graduate faculty engaged in creative and critical publishing, and a dynamic and growing program that features Literature and Critical Theory, Cultural Studies, Digital Humanities, Rhetoric and Composition, and Creative Writing.

Graduate studies in English at the University of South Florida includes five degree programs: [Literature](#) (PhD and MA), [Rhetoric and Composition](#) (PhD and MA) and [Creative Writing](#) (MFA). The department also administers graduate certificates in [Comparative Literature](#), [Creative Writing](#), and [Professional and Technical Communication](#). Additionally, graduate students in English can earn [certificates](#) in related fields such as Women's Studies and area studies including Film, Africana, Cuban, Latin American and Caribbean Studies, or Library Science.

We have approximately 130 students in our program who work closely with a dynamic and growing [faculty](#) of internationally recognized scholars and award-winning teachers. The program features small seminar-style graduate classes and offers opportunities for directed research and professional development. The department is home to journals for undergraduate and graduate students including the [Norman Mailer Review](#) and the newly established [Aphra Behn Online](#) interactive journal. In addition, we also publish [Saw Palm](#), a literary annual focused on Florida authors and themes produced by members of the Creative Writing program.

Graduate degrees in English are professional degrees in that they prepare students for professional activities in scholarly or creative publications and pedagogy. The Master of Arts degree is a generalist degree that builds upon the literary or writing experiences from the student's Bachelor's program. It involves students in increasingly complex critical inquiry and analysis and introduces them to the implementation of methods, standards, and conventions of scholarship in the field. It has broad-based distribution requirements but also the flexibility for students to study cutting-edge theories and newly emerging fields of interest, including cultural and comparative studies, genre studies such as film, rhetoric and technology, and theories of composition. The Literature program concludes with a portfolio. The Rhetoric and Composition program has an option for either a thesis with defense or a portfolio.

The Master of Fine Arts degree in Creative Writing is a graduate-level program offering concentrations in fiction, poetry, and creative nonfiction. The program emphasizes the craft of writing and concentrates on the student's original work. The MFA requires 45 hours of coursework and typically will take three years for the full-time student to complete. Our goal is to help MFA students produce publishable theses and secure teaching or writing-related positions upon graduation.

The PhD is the highest level of training for studies in English, and it prepares students to be scholars and teachers in recognized fields, including emergent fields with high marketability. This degree allows students to develop depth in primary and secondary fields and to become expert scholar-teachers in the sub-discipline of choice. Students work closely with a faculty advisor whose scholarly training and publication record provides a model for the student's development. After coursework, students must produce a portfolio that highlights their scholarly expertise and pedagogical interests. Upon completion of the portfolio, this degree concludes with the writing of a dissertation, a substantial work of scholarship that solidifies the student's professional identity.

We have placed many MA and PhD graduates in teaching positions throughout the state and country. Our doctorates have recently earned tenure-track positions at institutions such as the University of Kentucky, Appalachian State University, Middle Tennessee State University, Old Dominion University, University of Central Florida, Florida Atlantic University, College of the Bahamas, Albany State University, University of Wisconsin-Stout, Nova Southeastern University, St. Cloud University, and Edge Hill University, England. Because many of our graduates go on to tenure-track jobs at teaching institutions, we emphasize theories of pedagogy and training in instruction through practica in Composition, Literature, and Professional and Technical Writing. Many of our students are offered teaching assistantships for [First-year Writing](#) courses, and there are opportunities for advanced graduate students to teach general education courses in literature and writing.

One of our underlining core principles is community and we believe in creating supportive, challenging, and

collaborative relationships among graduate students and faculty. The department benefits from the collegial interaction of our three tracks with colloquia and speaker series that bring them together. Our active [English Graduate Student Association](#) (EGSA) sponsors a monthly colloquium in which students from Literature, Rhetoric and Composition, and Creative Writing each read from their work. Additionally, the EGSA annually hosts a national interdisciplinary graduate conference centering on current disciplinary topics. Faculty members share their works-in-progress in a monthly brown-bag lunch series.

With help from courses on professional topics such as Scholarly Writing and Research and Publishing Your Journal Article and numerous workshops on preparing for the job market by our placement committee, our graduate students publish their work in a variety of scholarly and literary venues. Our creative writing students have won national awards including the O. Henry Prize for short fiction. The department provides some support for students to present their work at conferences, and additional funds are available from the [Graduate and Professional Student Council](#). Our teaching assistants consistently garner the university's highest distinction, the [Provost's Award for Outstanding Teaching](#), and the department annually honors our top students for their accomplishments in scholarship, writing, and instruction with twelve or more named monetary [awards](#). We also have a vibrant and active graduate internship program to help students prepare for alternative academic careers by matching them with companies such as Refinery29. We have over 120 companies that we can match our students with.

For more information on the program and opportunities for graduate students, please visit the department website: <http://english.usf.edu/>

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## GRADUATE CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS

The English Department is home to several excellent Graduate Certificate programs. Many MFA students have chosen to complete a certificate program in order pursue an additional academic interest and to make themselves more qualified on the job market. Students can usually complete both the MFA coursework and the certificate program coursework within three years.

Here is a partial list of the certificate programs offered:

- Africana Studies
- American Culture and Society
- Comparative Literary Studies (see Dr. Susan Mooney)
- Digital Humanities
- Film and New Media Studies
- Latin American and Caribbean Studies
- Library Information Technology
- Multimedia Journalism
- Professional and Technical Communication (see Dr. Meredith Johnson)
- Teaching Composition (see Dr. Debra Jacobs)
- Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) or Foreign Language
- Women's and Gender Studies

For a complete list, see the Graduate Certificate webpage: <http://www.usf.edu/innovative-education/graduate-certificates/programs/index.aspx>

## HELPFUL HINTS

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The purpose of this handbook is to help you plan your graduate studies in English and to prepare you for entrance into an academic career. In addition to examining these materials, you may also want to consider the following resources:

### **BECOME ACTIVE IN THE ENGLISH GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION**

The EGSA sponsors academic and social events that will help you become an active member of the department.

### **SUBSCRIBE TO ONE OR MORE LITERARY JOURNALS**

By subscribing and reading current literary journals, you support the larger literary community and learn more about what type of work gets published. We also encourage you to read other literary journals available in the USF Library and to consult the on-line editions of these magazines. A collection of current literary magazines also will be maintained in the Michael Kuperman Library (a.k.a "The Fishbowl," located outside the English Department offices and next to the elevator).

### **CONSIDER SUBMITTING YOUR CREATIVE AND SCHOLARLY WORK FOR PUBLICATION**

Write for publication. Work hard on each creative piece and submit your most polished pieces to reputable literary journals. Also consider conducting interviews with authors and writing book reviews for literary magazines. Each paper that you write for your literature courses also should be seen as a possible article for publication. Consider submitting shorter papers for conferences.

### **READ THE E-MAILS SENT TO THE CREATIVE WRITING DISTRIBUTION LIST**

All MFA students will receive special announcements about writing contests, publication venues, and conference opportunities. You also will receive special updates from the Associated Writing Programs. You should check the AWP website regularly ([www.awpwriter.org](http://www.awpwriter.org)) for other opportunities.

### **CONSIDER WORKING ON SAW PALM, OUR DEPARTMENTAL LITERARY MAGAZINE**

Students who wish to gain valuable editorial experience should register for CRW 6940 Practicum in Literary Editing and Publishing. Students in CRW 6940 are responsible for producing the annual issue of *Saw Palm: Florida Literature and Art*. The course also provides an overview of the publishing industry, from literary journals to small and large presses, and covers topics such as literary agents, book reviewing, interviewing, and copyediting. CRW 6940 is offered each fall semester.

### **MONITOR THE CANVAS ORGANIZATION FOR ENGLISH GRADUATE STUDENTS**

As a graduate student, you will automatically be placed in the Canvas organization "English Graduate Students Information." The organization is accessed through Canvas (<https://usflearn.instructure.com>) under the Courses tab. This site is regularly updated by the Graduate Program Specialist. It includes department forms, exam information, handbooks, degree information, discussion boards, and more.

### **MONITOR YOUR USF EMAIL ACCOUNT, AND DON'T LET IT BECOME FULL**

While we may have personal email addresses on file for students, the default means of communicating with students is through USF email. Student email addresses are used by department staff and administrators, and they are posted on the current graduate student listing of the department website. Students are responsible for actively monitoring their USF email accounts and ensuring that they do not become full.

### **FOLLOW THE MFA PROGRAM AND THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA**

Facebook: USF Creative Writers Network, USF English Department. Twitter: @USF\_MFA, USF\_English.

### **GET TO KNOW FACULTY AND CONSULT WITH THEM ON A REGULAR BASIS**

Our faculty members are interested in helping you. Feel free to seek advice from them on publication, job opportunities, and topics for articles, conference papers, dissertations, or theses. The list of faculty (<http://english.usf.edu/faculty>) and their specialties will help you to identify those who might be familiar with scholarship in a given area.

### **ATTEND REGIONAL AND NATIONAL CONFERENCES**

Attending conferences is an excellent way to gain access to the latest trends in creative writing, an opportunity to meet students and faculty from other institutions, and the opportunity to acquaint yourself with particular areas of specialization. For upcoming conferences, see the AWP website ([www.awpwriter.org](http://www.awpwriter.org)) and the MLA Announcements website (member access only), as well as the monthly newsletter. Note: Graduate students taking a full course load and teaching should not try to present at more than one conference per semester; it takes away from your ability to succeed in coursework, which should be your first priority.

### **READ THE IMPORTANT JOURNALS IN YOUR AREA OF INTEREST**

Read what is being published in current journals so you gain a feel for what is publishable and what is not. Most literary journals have extensive websites; you should visit the website of each journal prior to submitting your work to determine if your manuscript is a good match.

### **RESPOND TO CALLS FOR NEWS**

We will announce news of your accomplishments on social media when you publish a creative work or scholarly article, present a paper, or receive an honor or award.

### **BEGIN THINKING ABOUT YOUR MFA THESIS EARLY**

By the end of your third semester in the program, you should decide on the format of your thesis (a collection of poems, a novel, a collection of stories, a collection of personal essays, a memoir, a graphic novel, hybrid work) and begin working toward reaching your required page count. Your thesis may contain some or all of the work you have prepared in individual workshops.

### **BEGIN NOW TO PREPARE FOR YOUR CAREER**

If your goal is to obtain a teaching position in higher education, begin thinking of the dossier you will be preparing even as you attain your degree. Collect materials as you go, and don't assume you can always do it later. Work on building an impressive vita that will distinguish you from other qualified applicants. Join professional organizations, read papers at conferences, submit work for publication, and apply for scholarships and honors. Because so much depends on the professionalism of the documents in your dossier, spend ample time perfecting them. Students who wish to cultivate career prospects outside academia are strongly encouraged to take the internship ENG 6946 Internship.

### **REMEMBER THAT THE MFA IS A TERMINAL DEGREE**

The MFA is considered a terminal degree in creative writing. You should not suddenly decide in the third year of your program that you want to pursue a PhD in literature or rhetoric/composition. You will not be considered a viable candidate for such degree programs. You may be a viable candidate for a PhD in creative writing, but you should remember that such programs are still relatively rare and are highly competitive. The MFA gives you a full three years to work on becoming a professional writer and teacher. Seize your opportunities now.

### **EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

We would like to encourage all our MFA students to begin thinking about their ultimate career paths early in the degree program. We encourage you to supplement your teaching experience with any tutoring, editing, book reviewing, or writing positions you may find available. We especially encourage you all to begin sending out your best work for publication. Please remember that the MFA alone does not qualify you for permanent university-level teaching positions. Only candidates who hold "significant publications" will qualify as job candidates for tenure-track positions at four-year universities or colleges. "Significant publications" usually are defined as follows: "acceptance of a full-length work by a commercial or university press and/or acceptance of several stories, poems, or essays by leading literary magazines." For assistance in seeking a job, students are encouraged to attend workshops sponsored by the Graduate Placement Committee.

### **INTERNSHIP**

As part of our effort to expand professional opportunities for and enhance the job placement of our graduate students, we offer a graduate internship, ENG 6946 Internship, for MA, MFA, and PhD students in all tracks. Based on the undergraduate internship in Professional and Technical Writing coordinated by Dr. Michael Shuman (<http://mshuman.com/internships/>), this is a semester-long, elective course. The department has created relationships with an impressive list of sponsors in the Tampa Bay area from industry and technology to the arts, law, and education. Internships create valuable opportunities to enhance your job skills to prepare you for non-

academic careers.

ENG 6946 Internship consists of supervised work-and-learning experience in professional and technical communication or other related fields under the direction of a USF faculty member and an employee of a participating firm. Ten to 12 hours per week of student time is expected during a standard 16-week semester; 13 to 16 hours per week is expected during a 10-week Summer C semester; 30 to 36 hours per week is expected for Summer A or Summer B semesters, although internships during these shorter terms normally are not available.

**Students must arrange an internship placement prior to the start of the course and are encouraged to meet with the Director of Graduate Studies at least one semester prior to enrolling in the course. PhD students must have the approval of their major professor.** Enrollment is contingent upon the availability of suitable internship sponsors based on the student's academic and career goals. Students are placed according to specific academic and experiential qualifications, including GPA, courses taken, previous employment history, and interviews with the Director of Graduate Studies, the Coordinator of Professional and Technical Writing Internship Program, and a representative of the prospective internship sponsor. This internship course may not be repeated. Enrollment is by permit only. This class is Pass/Fail (S/U).

Prerequisites: Graduate students enrolled in the MA or MFA program must have completed with a grade of B or higher 18 credits of coursework toward the degree. Students enrolled in the PhD program must have completed 27 credits of coursework and be scheduled to take their qualifying exams. PhD students also require the consent and recommendation of their major professor.

The principal goal of ENG 6946 Internship is to transfer graduate-level skills in research, analysis, text production, course management, as well as oral and written communication into job preparedness and practice by providing students on-the-job experience in non-academic work environments.

## WHOM TO CONTACT FOR HELP

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Please read through this handbook to familiarize yourself with the program and its requirements. You also should consult the [department website](#) for questions on the program and the [Graduate Studies website](#) for questions on degree requirements and policies. We encourage you to thoroughly read the requirements prior to e-mailing or telephoning the graduate staff with questions that may already be answered online. The Graduate Director (Dr. John Lennon), Master's Advisor (Dr. Jessica Cook), MFA Director (Dr. John Fleming), and Graduate Program Specialist (Ms. Marisa Iglesias) should be your next stop for advice and regular status checks.

### **DR. JOHN LENNON, GRADUATE DIRECTOR,**

is in charge of all the graduate tracks in the English Department and should be consulted about broader departmental and Graduate Studies regulations, and questions concerning transfer credit and approval of directed studies. Dr. Lennon also is in charge of overall tracking of student progress. Contact him with information about your publications and presentations.

### **DR. JOHN FLEMING, MFA ADVISOR AND DIRECTOR OF THE CREATIVE WRITING PROGRAM,**

is in charge of consulting with Dr. Lennon and Dr. Joyce Karpay to plan the graduate and undergraduate creative writing schedule. He should be consulted with questions about the following: admission to the MFA program, course selection, long-term schedule planning, formation of thesis committees, setting up a professional dossier, and employment opportunities.

### **DR. JESSICA COOK, MASTER'S ADVISOR,**

is responsible for conducting status and graduation checks. All students approaching the last year of their program should meet with Dr. Cook to make sure they are on track for graduation.

### **MS. EMILY NORTON, GRADUATE PROGRAM SPECIALIST,**

assists students with processing all paperwork related to course registration, thesis hours, and graduation. She also processes employment contracts for graduate assistant and tuition payment paperwork. She schedules appointments for the Graduate Director and Master's Advisor.

All members of the graduate creative writing faculty are happy to discuss with you publishing and employment opportunities. We encourage you to take advantage of our office hours.

## MFA PROGRAM OVERVIEW AND ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

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The Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing is a graduate-level program offering concentrations in creative nonfiction, fiction, and poetry (with the opportunity to study other genres of writing such as comics). The program emphasizes the craft of writing and concentrates on the student's original work. The MFA requires 45 hours of coursework and typically will take three years for the student to complete. Our goal is to help MFA students to produce publishable theses and secure teaching or editing positions upon graduation.

To be considered for admission to the Master of Fine Arts degree program in Creative Writing, the following requirements must be met:

- An undergraduate degree, preferably in English, from an accredited college, with a 3.2 GPA average, or its equivalent.
- A score in the 73rd percentile or better on the verbal reasoning section of the [Graduate Record Examination](#) general test and a target analytical writing score of 4.0 [International applicants must also take the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and must score at least 600].
- Three letters of recommendation, preferably from former English instructors, assessing the student's potential to do graduate level work.
- A writing sample consisting of 12-20 pages:
  - Prose should be double spaced. Indicate genre (fiction, memoir).
  - Poetry should be single spaced.
  - A sample that includes both prose and poetry is permitted if the student plans to specialize in more than one genre.
  - Hybrid, graphic, text/image works and comics are invited (format is left up to the author).
- A two-to-three page statement, describing the student's background, purpose for attending graduate school, and career goals.
- A completed application form submitted to the [Graduate Admissions Office](#).

All application materials should be submitted electronically through the online application.

If you would like to be considered for a Graduate Assistantship, please briefly indicate your interest in your personal statement.

All materials, including GRE scores and transcripts, must be received by the application deadline in order for students to be considered for admission. Graduates of USF do not need to order official transcripts. Applications are reviewed by an admissions committee after the application deadline. Students will be notified of the application decision within eight weeks after the deadline.

### CANDIDATES WITH A BA IN A FIELD OTHER THAN ENGLISH

A candidate with a BA degree in a field other than English may be required to take undergraduate surveys in English and American literature, although these can be taken while the student is participating in graduate work. The undergraduate courses that must be taken will be determined by the Graduate Director in consultation with the student.

### FILING DEADLINES

The application deadline is January 1 of each year. Students accepted into the program will begin course work the following fall. No applications will be considered for spring or summer admission.

## ACADEMIC POLICIES

### TRANSFER CREDITS

Up to twelve (12) hours of graduate work taken by the student at USF as a non-degree-seeking student may be applied towards the degree when the student becomes a degree-seeking student or candidate. More than twelve hours will not be applied.

A student may transfer as many as nine (9) hours of graduate credit in English from another university at the time of first enrollment. These courses must be approved in advance by the Graduate Director.

### Minimum Enrollment, Leave of Absence, and Inactive Status

- All students must enroll in a minimum of six (6) graduate hours in any twelve-month/three-semester time frame to maintain continuous enrollment, including summers.

#### Examples:

Fall	Spring	Summer
6	no enrollment	no enrollment
2	2	2
2	4	no enrollment
3	3	no enrollment
no enrollment	5	1

- Students requiring time off from the program should request an official Leave of Absence, the form for which is located on the Forms page of the Graduate Studies Web site (<http://www.grad.usf.edu/>). The completed form is then submitted to the Graduate Program Specialist. Time that is taken away from the program when not on an approved Leave of Absence counts toward the student's time limitation.
- Students who neglect to enroll in three consecutive semesters will become inactive and must reapply for admission to the program, subject to the current admission criteria and degree requirements in place.

### TIME LIMITS

The Graduate College strictly limits the completion time of master's degrees to no more than five years. Under extenuating circumstances, a student may request in writing an extension to complete the program. This request should be made to the Graduate Liaison who will submit it to the Graduate Committee for approval. The recommendation of the committee will be forwarded to the Graduate College Dean for final approval. Any approval to extend the deadline will not change the expiration of overage coursework. Please see the Graduate College Bulletin for details.

### GRADE FORGIVENESS POLICY

Students do not have the opportunity to retake a course for a higher grade. All grades stand as submitted.

### ENGLISH DEPARTMENT INCOMPLETE ("I") GRADE POLICIES

While the Office of Graduate Studies sets a minimum for the university, they also authorize departments to set standards fitting their program. The Graduate Studies policies can be found at <http://www.grad.usf.edu/catalog.asp>.

- An Incomplete grade indicates incomplete coursework and may be awarded to graduate students at the discretion of the instructor, only when a small portion of the student's work is incomplete and only when the student is otherwise earning a passing grade.
- To receive a grade of Incomplete, the student and the professor for the course must complete an **Incomplete Grade Contract** (available on the Forms page of the Graduate Studies website: <http://www.grad.usf.edu/student-forms.php>) a copy of which must be placed in the student's file. The contract describes the work to be completed, the date it is due, and the grade earned including a zero for the incomplete portion. The instructor must file a copy of the contract in the department before the date grades are due.
- Graduate students cannot take more than one grade of Incomplete at a time.

- Graduate students cannot carry an “I” for more than one term, including summer. For example,
  - An Incomplete incurred in the fall term must be completed no later than the following spring.
  - An Incomplete incurred in the spring term must be completed no later than the following summer.
  - An Incomplete incurred in the summer term must be completed no later than the following fall.
- Failure to conform to this policy will constitute a failure to maintain satisfactory progress toward degree and thus a failure to maintain **good standing**.
- Students who have Incomplete grades (I [Incomplete], IF [Incomplete Failing], IU [Incomplete Unsatisfactory], or MU [Missing Unsatisfactory]) will not be eligible to take the MA comprehensive examination and cannot be certified for graduation.
- Students who fail to complete the assigned work within one term will be placed on Academic Probation for the semester following the term in which the grades were earned. Standard policies for completing the incomplete courses will apply. Students will be taken off probation when the Incompletes are satisfied; this status changes at the start of the semester following the completion of the Incompletes. Graduate Assistants who have failed to satisfy the Incomplete grades after one semester will lose their USF funding (assistantship and/or fellowship).

*Note: Graduation will not be certified until all courses have been satisfactorily completed. No grade changes will be processed after the student has graduated except in the case of university error. Procedures requiring petitions are processed through the Office of Graduate Studies.*

#### **“GOOD STANDING” – GRADUATE STUDIES POLICY**

- To be considered a student in good standing, graduate students must
  - maintain an overall minimum grade point average (GPA) of 3.00 (on a 4.00 scale) in all courses taken as a graduate student, and
  - maintain an overall minimum grade point average (GPA) of 3.00 (on a 4.00 scale) in all courses taken in each of the student’s degree-seeking programs.
- No grade of **C-** or below will be accepted toward a graduate degree [see additional department policy below]. Students must meet the requirements to be in good standing to graduate. A student will not be certified to graduate if an “IF” or “MF” is on the transcript, unless the student requests to “accept” the “IF” or “MF” grade and the request is signed and approved by the student, program, college and Graduate Studies. “IF” or “MF” grades that are “accepted” will never be changed.
- Any student who is not in good standing at the end of a semester shall be considered on probation as of the following semester. The college or program may also place students on probation for other reasons as designated by the college or program. Notification of probation shall be made to the student in writing by the department, with a copy to the College Dean.

For further information on Academic Probation, consult the [Graduate Catalog](#)

#### **“GOOD STANDING” – ENGLISH DEPARTMENT POLICY**

- English graduate students who are not in good standing may be refused graduate assistantships the following semester.
- Students who are not in “good standing,” according to either the Graduate Studies definition or that of the English department, may be recommended for dismissal from the program.
- While students will usually be notified on a periodic basis (around the first third of each semester) if they are in any of these categories, it is entirely the students’ responsibility to keep track of their own GPA and “incompletes” by checking their grades on OASIS.
- All students must meet with the Master’s Advisor for a graduation check before they can be certified for graduation.
- All work applicable to the Master of Fine Arts degree requirements must be completed within five years from the date of admission.

- Any course in which a student earns a grade below a B- will be disqualified from counting toward the degree requirements, though it will be calculated in the GPA. There is no grade forgiveness at the graduate level. Students should be aware that in the event that they earn a grade lower than a B-, they will need to take additional coursework to complete their degree requirements.

## MFA Degree Requirements

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To complete the Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing, students must satisfy the following requirements:

Earn 45 credit hours with an overall grade point average of 3.0 or better in the required courses. The distribution of the requirements will be 18 hours in writing workshops and craft seminars, 3 hours in introductory graduate studies, 15 hours in literature and optional pedagogy courses, and 9 hours in thesis studies (taken in the final year of the program).

Complete a book-length manuscript in creative nonfiction, fiction, or poetry that will meet departmental and university requirements for the thesis. The thesis shall consist of 48-64 pages of poems (single- or double-spaced), at least 100 pages of fiction (double-spaced), or at least 100 pages of creative nonfiction (double-spaced). All students must write a three- to ten-page introduction to their thesis that explains their goals for the work.

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MFA

#### 6 courses (18 hours) chosen from:

- CRW 6130 Fiction Writing (3)—may be taken up to three times for a maximum of 9 credits.
- CRW 6331 Poetry Writing (3)—may be taken up to three times for a maximum of 9 credits.
- CRW 6236 Nonfiction Writing (3)—may be taken up to three times for a maximum of 9 credits.
- CRW 6164 The Craft of Fiction (3)—required for students admitted on the fiction track, optional for students admitted on the poetry or creative nonfiction track.
- CRW 6352 The Craft of Poetry (3)—required for students admitted on the poetry track; optional for students admitted on the fiction or creative nonfiction track.
- CRW 6025 Special Topics: The Craft of Creative Nonfiction (3)—required for students admitted on the creative nonfiction track; optional for students on the poetry or fiction track.
- CRW 6025 Special Topics in Creative Writing (3)—may be taken up to four times for a maximum of 12 credits. This new course might concentrate on screenwriting, translation, editing, creative writing pedagogy (with a community service component), comics and graphic narrative, or study of a particular genre or technique.

#### 1 course (3 hours) in graduate studies:

- ENG 6009 Introduction to Graduate Studies (3). This course must be taken in the student's first semester of graduate studies.

#### 5 courses (15 hours) in any combination of the courses listed below:

- ENC 6745 Practice in Teaching Composition (3) Required of all first-year teaching assistants in composition.
- ENG 6946 Internship (3) Required of students participating in graduate internship program.
- CRW 6025 Practice in Teaching Creative Writing (3) Required of all teaching assistants in creative-writing courses. This course may be taken more than once, but will only count for a total of three credits toward degree requirements.
- CRW 6940 Literary Editing and Publishing (3). This course may be taken more than once, but will only count for a total of three credits toward degree requirements.
- Any of the following graduate-level (6000 and above) literature courses offered by the English Department. These courses are coded AML 6—, ENL 6—, and LIT 6—. Sample courses include:
  - AML 6017 Studies in American Literature to 1860 (3)
  - AML 6018 Studies in American Literature 1860-1920 (3)
  - AML 6027 Studies in Modern American Literature (3)
  - AML 6608 Studies in African-American Literature (3)
  - ENL 6206 Studies in Old English (3)
  - ENL 6216 Studies in Middle English (3)
  - ENL 6226 Studies in Sixteenth-Century British Literature (3)
  - ENL 6228 Studies in Seventeenth-Century British Literature (3)
  - ENL 6236 Studies in Restoration and Eighteenth-Century British Literature (3)
  - ENL 6246 Studies of the English Romantic Period (3)
  - ENL 6256 Studies in Victorian Literature (3)

- ENL 6276 Studies in Modern British Literature (3)
- LIT 6096 Studies in Contemporary Literature (3)
- LIT 6105 Studies in Continental Literature (3)
- LIT 6934 Selected Topics in English Studies (3)

**3 courses (9 hours) in thesis work:**

- ENG 6971 Thesis: Master's (3-6 hours per semester). Typically taken in the student's final year of study, though students may also take three hours in the second semester of their second year or in the summer between their second and third year. The student must be registered in at least 3 hours of ENG 6971 during the semester prior to graduation.

## Checklist of Requirements for the MFA in Creative Writing

	Fulfilled (√)	Fulfilled by/ Waiver	Term Completed	Credits	Grade
<b>ENG 6009</b> – Introduction to Graduate Studies *					
<b>Six courses (18 hours) chosen from the following:</b>					
<b>CRW 6130</b> – Fiction Writing (May be taken up to three times for credit.)					
<b>CRW 6331</b> – Poetry Writing (May be taken up to three times for credit.)					
<b>CRW 6236</b> – Nonfiction Writing (May be taken up to three times for credit.)					
<b>CRW 6164</b> – Craft of Fiction ( <u>Required</u> for fiction students; optional for others.)					
<b>CRW 6352</b> – Craft of Poetry ( <u>Required</u> for poetry students; optional for others.)					
<b>CRW 6025</b> – Craft of Creative Nonfiction ( <u>Required</u> for nonfiction students; optional for others.)					
<b>CRW 6025</b> – Special Topics in Creative Writing (May be taken up to four times for credit.)					
<b>5 courses (15 hours) chosen from the following:</b>					
<b>ENC 6745</b> – Practice in Teaching Composition					
<b>ENG 6946</b> – Internship					
<b>CRW 6025</b> – Practice in Teaching Creative Writing					
<b>CRW 6940</b> –Literary Editing & Publishing					
<b>Any graduate-level (6000 and above) literature courses offered by the English Department.</b>					
<b>ENG 6971</b> – Thesis (9 credits minimum required)					

\* This course must be taken in the first semester of coursework.

- Students must earn a minimum total of 45 credit hours in order to meet graduation requirements.
- A maximum of three credit hours of an approved directed study may count as elective credit toward the 45 credit-hour requirement.

ADVISOR NOTES: \_\_\_\_\_  
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## SUGGESTED TIMELINE FOR MFA DEGREE

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### **Semester I**

Three required courses (one writing/craft, ENC 6745, and ENG 6009)

### **Semester II**

Three required courses (two writing/craft, one literature)

### **Semester III**

Three required courses (two writing/craft, one literature). By the end of semester III, students should commit to a thesis topic and begin to form their thesis committees.

### **Semester IV**

Three required courses (one writing/craft, two literature).

### **Semester V**

Two elective courses and three thesis hours.

### **Semester VI**

One elective course and six thesis hours. Students who cannot finish their thesis in this semester must continue to take at least three thesis hours until graduation.

Please note the following regarding course sequence: All MFA students who are teaching assistants should take ENC 6745 Practice in Teaching Composition during the first semester of study. All MFA students must take ENG 6009 Introduction to Graduate Studies in the first semester of graduate studies. All MFA students who are interested in teaching creative writing should take CRW 6025 Practice in Teaching Creative Writing during their second year of study. All MFA students should take their required craft course (Craft of Poetry, Craft of Creative Nonfiction, or Craft of Fiction) in the first year of study if possible; students may have to wait until their second year to accomplish this due to course rotation constraints.

### **Please note the following regarding summer policies:**

Graduation is permitted only in the fall or spring semesters. There will be no writing/craft courses or directed studies in writing for the MFA program offered over the summer, but some literature courses may be offered.

Thesis hours may be sponsored over the summer at the discretion of your thesis advisor. Students must agree to work independently and submit their work for evaluation at the end of the summer.

## MFA THESIS GUIDELINES

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- In the student's third semester of study, the MFA Director (John Fleming) will distribute the thesis committee preference form [see page 15] and thesis prospectus guidelines [see page 22] asking the student to 1) describe his or her plan for the thesis and 2) rank-order the faculty members available to serve as thesis director and first and second readers. The MFA Director, in consultation with the entire creative writing faculty, shall then select the thesis director and two other graduate faculty members to serve on the thesis committee. English faculty in tracks other than creative writing may also serve on MFA thesis committees. The final part of this process of forming the committee is the completion of the Graduate Supervisory Committee Form with the Graduate Program Specialist (Emily Norton). The student and the three faculty members must sign and submit the form to the Graduate Program Specialist by the appropriate date.
- Continuing Instructors with appropriate publication record may serve as second or third reader on up to four MFA committees with the approval of the director of the program and the Graduate Director.
- An outside reader may be included on the MFA thesis committee under the following conditions:
  - The committee must have a majority of USF English faculty (meaning that only one outside reader may serve on a three-person thesis committee).
  - The outside reader must hold a terminal degree (MFA or Ph.D.).
  - The outside reader's terminal degree must be from an institution other than USF.
  - The outside reader must have sufficient publications to warrant their participation on an MFA thesis committee.
  - An outside reader serves on a voluntary basis and will not be financially compensated for his or her work.
  - No outside reader may serve on more than two committees concurrently.
- Once the Graduate Supervisory Committee Form has been submitted, students may begin enrolling in thesis hours. A minimum of nine thesis hours must be completed for the MFA degree. Once all coursework has been completed, students must enroll in a minimum of two credit hours during each 12-month period (fall, summer, spring) until the completion of the MFA degree or until the time limit for the degree (five years) is reached. [Please note that assistantships are only available for a maximum of three years.] **It is critical that the student submit the application for graduation to the Graduate Program Specialist before the deadline during the semester in which the student intends to graduate.**
- Length requirements: Prose theses must be a minimum of 100 pages. Poetry theses must be a minimum of 40 pages. The length of hybrid theses is determined in consultation with your thesis director. A hybrid thesis is a unified work that combines poetry, prose, or comics.
- The student should submit the first draft of the thesis to the director only, but all subsequent drafts should be circulated to the full committee by the director. Should this process not be followed, other members may reject the work even after it has been thoroughly developed. The director of the thesis is responsible for giving the student both line-by-line editorial correction and suggestions for substantive content revision. The second and third readers are responsible for giving the student two types of editorial advice: corrections that **MUST** be made prior to final thesis approval and suggestions for further revision. It is understood that all students will continue working on their theses after graduation, in hopes of producing a publishable manuscript.
- The student is responsible for proofreading all drafts submitted to the thesis director and making all the required copyediting changes from draft to draft. It is not the responsibility of the thesis director or the second or third readers to correct excessive punctuation, spelling, and formatting errors. Such work will be returned to the student for immediate revision.
- The final draft of the thesis should be submitted to the thesis director six weeks before the printed Graduate Studies deadline in order to allow the committee ample time to read and evaluate the thesis. If a student fails to do so, he or she will not be eligible to graduate that term. The student can, and indeed is expected, to continue to work on the thesis until the final draft has been approved by all members. Students should expect to receive critical feedback from the members of the committee in time to complete requested revisions and, if necessary, resubmit the pages for final approval. Consequently, students need to work diligently with their directors prior to the semester during which they expect to graduate in order to understand clearly what expectations need to be met by the early semester deadline.

- All drafts of the thesis should be submitted to the director who will then distribute them to the committee. It is the sole responsibility of the student (i.e., not of the Graduate Program Specialist) to observe all regulations concerning manuscript preparation and formatting, as well as deadlines for submission of the final draft. Consult the [Graduate Studies website](#) for instructions.

## MFA Thesis Committee Preference Form

Name of student:

Genre of thesis: creative nonfiction/fiction/poetry/comics/hybrid

Anticipated date of graduation: please state either December 2018 or May 2019

Describe your thesis project (for instance, is it a novel, a collection of stories, a full-length memoir, a collection of mainly narrative poems, a graphic memoir, a graphic novel?). Remember that everything you have written so far in your workshops and craft classes may be included in your thesis provided it is of high quality. Students who wish to work in comics or graphic narrative should consult with Dr. Roselló and also should provide information on their background and facility in this area.

Rank order your preference for your thesis committee. Number one should go to the faculty member you ideally would like to have serve as your director. Number 2 and 3 should go to the faculty members you most would like to serve as your second and third readers. There is no difference between the work level of the second and third reader; each provides one close reading of your thesis, usually in December or January for May graduates. Please keep ranking the faculty after that; this will help us to share the workload equally across the ranks of the creative writing faculty. Faculty on leave are not available for thesis reading during this coming year.

\_\_\_ Karen Brown (may serve as second or third reader only on up to four theses)

\_\_\_ Rita Cirese

\_\_\_ John Fleming

\_\_\_ Jay Hopler

\_\_\_ Mark Leib (may serve as second or third reader only on up to four theses)

\_\_\_ Jarod Roselló

\_\_\_ Heather Sellers

\_\_\_ Ira Sukrungruang

\_\_\_ Literature faculty also can serve on MFA theses. In the past we have been fortunate to have the help of Dr. Hunt Hawkins (poetry), Dr. Pablo Brescia (World Languages—science fiction/ fantastic lit/Latin American lit), Dr. Ylce Irizarry (Latin American lit/immigrant lit), and Dr. Nhu Le (Asian American lit/Native American lit/immigrant lit). If you wish to work with someone on the literature faculty, please feel free to list that faculty member here and provide a rank order number: \_\_\_\_\_.

## MFA Thesis Prospectus Guidelines

Please take some time to reflect on the following questions and write a prospectus.

1. What is the proposed title, genre, audience, and expected page count for your project?
2. In a paragraph or two, summarize the project. Describe the subject matter, scope, and arc of the proposed thesis.
3. Why have you chosen this project?
4. Ultimately, where could this project, in its finished form, be published?
5. What background reading and research will you be undertaking for this project?
6. Offer a timeline for your writing and research. When will you complete the first draft, the second draft, the final draft? The ten page introductory essay?
7. Describe your writing process. Do you tend to meet or miss deadlines?
8. What issues might arise that could make completing the project difficult for you? How will you address any potential obstacles?
9. Attach a current C.V.
10. Attach a five to ten page writing sample, preferably from, or related to, the proposed project.

## GRADUATION PROCEDURES

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**Beginning with the term prior to graduation, the student should observe the following deadlines:**

- In the semester prior to graduation, you must attend an ETD Workshop in person or complete the ETD Online Tutorial through the Master's Thesis Blackboard Organization.
- Within the first month of the your graduating term, you must complete and submit an application for graduation. This form is available online at the Registrar's website at <http://www.registrar.usf.edu> (click on Registrar's Office Forms on the right). This form should be submitted to the Graduate Program Specialist for a graduation check and submission to the college for processing.
- Contact the ETD administrators ([ETD@usf.edu](mailto:ETD@usf.edu)), and inform them when you will be graduating. Please identify yourself clearly as a student in the Master of Fine Arts program in English. The ETD administrators then will issue a waiver allowing you to submit the thesis directly to the ETD office rather than through ProQuest. The ETD office will still require an electronic submission conforming to ETD standards, but your thesis then will be archived in the Office of Graduate Studies and will not be available on the Internet.
- Prepare the final copy of the thesis following the guidelines established by the Office of Graduate Studies. Information on the Electronic Thesis and Dissertation (ETD) guidelines and submission is available on the Graduate Studies website, <http://www.grad.usf.edu/ETD.gsd>
- By the final thesis submission deadline, email the thesis to the ETD administrators, and then submit hardcopies of the Certificate of Approval form and the last page of the Exit Survey to the Graduate Studies reception, ALN 226.
- Students who plan to attend commencement must register for commencement online at <http://usfweb2.usf.edu/commencement/>. Students who do not submit a graduation application within the first four weeks of the semester are not eligible to participate in commencement ceremonies. Likewise, students who do submit the graduation application but do not successfully submit the thesis by the published deadline are not eligible to participate in commencement ceremonies.

## FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

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Financial Assistance in the form of scholarships, fellowships, and grants is available through the Office of Graduate Studies (<http://www.grad.usf.edu/>), the College of Arts and Sciences (<http://www.cas.usf.edu>), the Office of Financial Aid (<http://usfweb2.usf.edu/finaid/>), and external sources. It is wise to check all sources to be fully aware of the funding for which you may qualify.

### Graduate Assistantships

The Department of English annually awards a number of First-Year Composition Graduate Assistantships. GAs usually teach between two and four sections per year. GAs must maintain a minimum 3.0 GPA in all courses throughout their tenure. Students with fewer than 18 credit-hours in English may hold teaching assignments but cannot be the instructors of record. Such students will further be classified as Graduate Teaching Assistants (class code 9550) and be assigned a mentor. All Graduate Assistants may receive a partial tuition payment plus a stipend. To be eligible to teach and receive a partial tuition payment, which covers approximately 80% of tuition costs, a student must hold a .25 FTE (10 hours per week/one course per semester) appointment or higher, which is equivalent to teaching one course, and must register for nine credit-hours of coursework in the fall and spring terms, and six hours during the summer (summer assignments are not guaranteed and should not be counted on). Students in their final semester of enrollment may register for only two credit-hours and still keep eligibility for the assistantship. Students in good standing may teach and receive the partial tuition payment for a maximum of two years while working toward the MA degree, three years while working toward the MFA, and four years while working toward the PhD, with a possible fifth year. To be eligible for health insurance benefits, a student must hold a .25 FTE (10 hours per week) appointment. More information on graduate student health insurance is available at <http://www.grad.usf.edu/health-insurance.php>.

### Graduate Assistant Requirements

Graduate Assistants will also be required to attend an orientation, conducted by the Director of Composition and the Assistant Director of Composition, prior to the start of the fall semester.

All Graduate Assistants will be required to take **ENC 6745**, Practice in Teaching Composition, during their first semester of employment. This course counts as elective credit toward the 33 required credits for the MA degree.

Applicants should express interest in an assistantship in their personal statement. A detailed description of the First Year Composition program is available at <http://hosted.usf.edu/FYC/>.

## **AWARD OPPORTUNITIES**

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### **GRADUATE AWARDS**

Each academic year the department offers a number of awards to graduate students for outstanding teaching and scholarly work. Awards usually include a modest monetary sum and are presented to the award winners at the annual department awards ceremony near the end of the spring term. [Click here to learn more.](#)

### **CREATIVE WRITING AWARDS**

Each academic year the Department of English holds creative writing contests in the areas of fiction, poetry, science fiction, and screenwriting. The contests are open to all enrolled USF students. Awards usually include a modest monetary sum and are presented to the award winners at the annual department awards ceremony near the end of the spring term. [Click here to learn more.](#)

## USF's WRITING COMMUNITY

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### **VISITING WRITERS**

Each year the Department of English, The USF Humanities Institute, and the University Lecture Series bring in visiting writers. We encourage you to attend their readings, lectures, and question-and-answer sessions.

### **6x6 SERIES**

The 6x6 Series is run by USF MFA students and features readings by USF grad and undergrad students at a local coffee shop.

### **BLANK PAGES**

Blank Pages is a creative writing symposium sponsored by the USF MFA program. Events include readings and panel discussions. If you would like to work on this event, please contact Prof. Ira Sukrungruang.

### **SAW PALM LITERARY JOURNAL**

*Saw Palm* is an annual journal published by the graduate creative writing program at the University of South Florida. *Saw Palm* publishes work by Florida writers and artists, and by those outside the state whose work concerns itself with Florida. USF MFA students produce the journal as part of the Literary Editing and Publishing course. Students may also conduct interviews, write reviews, and submit creative work for the "Places to Stand in Florida" feature. [Click here to learn more.](#)

## PREPARING FOR LIFE AFTER THE MFA

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The purpose of the MFA is not to train for a job. However, there are things you can do while you're in the MFA program that can improve your job prospects after you graduate. One caveat: don't forget that your writing should take priority; avoid an overloaded schedule that leaves you little time to write.

If you're interested in teaching:

- Take advantage of the English Department's pedagogy courses in composition, creative writing, and literature.
- Prepare a teaching portfolio of syllabi, exercises, a teaching statement, and student evaluations.
- Consider joining a pedagogy panel at a conference such as the Other Words Conference and the Gulf Coast Association of Creative Writing Teachers Conference.
- Consider a Graduate Certificate in Professional and Technical Writing or another area that will help give you valuable experience and round out your CV. Entry-level teaching positions often go to generalists who can teach in multiple areas.
- If your ultimate goal is to teach creative writing at the college level, you'll need to have a book published or under contract to be considered for such a position. That's one more reason why your writing should take priority.

Other careers:

- The Literary Editing and Publishing course requires a final project that allows you to make strides toward a career path in the publishing industry.
- Consider a summer session at the Denver Publishing Institute or the New York Publishing Institute.
- Take advantage of the graduate Internship program.
- Work in the USF Writing Studio.
- Stay involved. Volunteer to help with events and projects within the MFA program and the English Department. Attend conferences. Give readings.
- Think big. Start a literary magazine or a publishing company. Edit an anthology. Work toward establishing yourself as a freelance writer, editor, or book packager. Discover something you think is missing in the literary or academic world and bring it into existence. Create a platform for yourself in the literary world.

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The Creative Writing Committee wishes to thank graduate student Jim Miller for his help preparing and designing this handbook.