CREATIVE WRITING - MASTER OF FINE ARTS (MFA)

The MFA in creative writing is a three-year degree program that values literary study, innovation and writing that tests the limits of conventional forms.

The program challenges students to write in a variety of genres and to study literature from the point of view of a working writer. Recent graduates have become not only published authors of fiction, nonfiction, poetry, plays and screenplays, but also journalists, editors, publishers and college-level and secondary-level teachers.

The degree program culminates in the submission and oral defense of a creative thesis in poetry or fiction. Students may develop custom programs in nonfiction and scriptwriting with available faculty with secondary interests in those genres.

Requirements

The degree requirements listed here are subject to change. Students wishing to pursue graduate work in English should visit the department’s Graduate Studies webpage for the most up-to-date degree requirements.

Admission

Applicants interested in creative writing must complete the verbal, analytic and quantitative sections of the GRE General Test. A BA degree with an English major or at least 18 credits hours in English is normally required. Each applicant must submit a manuscript of at least 10 pages of poetry, or 25 pages of fiction or nonfiction prose (other than literary criticism).

Course Requirements

Students must take 45 hours of course work (15 courses) in the following areas:

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<th>Required Courses</th>
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<td>Four writing workshop courses (fiction, nonfiction, poetry, publishing)</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>Four literature courses</td>
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<td>Two courses in two of the following: Studies in Poetry; Studies in Fiction; Studies in Literary Movements</td>
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<td>9 thesis credits (may not be taken the first year)</td>
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<th>Electives</th>
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<td>Two elective courses</td>
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Total Credit Hours: 45

Language Requirement

Students earning the creative writing MFA must complete a foreign language requirement, either before or after enrolling at CU Boulder, in one of the following ways:

- Complete a fourth-semester (second-semester sophomore) college language course with a grade of C or better. Completion of only freshman-level language courses does not qualify as evidence of competence.
- Take the foreign language proficiency exam administered each semester by the English department. In some cases, students may be asked to make independent arrangements for such an exam.
- Present other evidence of competency in a foreign language to the associate chair for graduate studies. In most cases, this evidence consists of native or near-native command of a language; a written exam may be administered to confirm such fluency.

Thesis

General Requirements

All students must complete a thesis as part of the degree requirements. The thesis should be a book of poetry, short stories, literary/creative nonfiction or a substantial portion of a novel, play or screenplay. It may also be a combination of these genres. The thesis should be at least 70 pages in length, though most students write between 70 and 100 pages. The bulk of work used in a thesis should have been written while the student was enrolled in the creative writing MFA program, and it should be in a form acceptable to the committee. The thesis must include an abstract (1 to 1 ½ pages) that states the writer’s aims and explains how the thesis reflects those aims.

Students take a total of 9 thesis hours in one or more semesters. The student should select a committee of three faculty (the advisor, who is a faculty member in the Creative Writing Department; one other creative writing faculty member; and a faculty member in literary studies) during the semester prior to that in which they will defend the thesis. A rough draft of the thesis should be made available to the advisor prior to the thesis defense so that problems may be discussed at an early enough date to enable the student to work on them. The advisor will work with the student to advise them on manuscript length, suggestions for improvement and general compilation. The advisor and the student will also agree on a reading list about which the student may be questioned at the defense.

See the index in the Graduate Student Handbook (http://www.colorado.edu/english/sites/default/files/attached-files/graduate_student_handbook_2017-18_0.pdf) for the MFA-CRWR Thesis Action Item Checklist, which includes deadlines and a suggested schedule.

A thesis defense must take place before the semester’s deadline for completing defenses (see the graduate program assistant for details). A student must give their completed thesis to their entire committee and file a Master’s Examination Report at least two weeks in advance of the defense. The defense is an oral examination of the thesis that lasts about an hour. All committee members must be present in person or via teleconference. A positive vote from at least two of the committee members is required to pass. A student who fails the defense may not reattempt it for at least three months, and not until any work prescribed by the committee has been completed. The student may retake the examination only once; the second exam covers the same material and includes the same committee members as the first.

Thesis Submission and Format

The final draft of the MFA thesis must be submitted to the Graduate School by the applicable deadline and must comply with the Graduate School’s specifications for theses and dissertations as described on the Graduate School’s Master Graduation Information - Thesis Plan (http://www.colorado.edu/graduateschool/academic-resources/graduation-requirements/master-graduation-information-thesis-plan) webpage. Students must include all stipulated parts of the thesis (e.g., title page, signature page, abstract, table of contents, bibliography) and are encouraged to ask the Graduate School to check the format of the thesis before they submit the final copy (gradinfo@colorado.edu).
Candidacy and Diploma Applications for MFA

Students must submit their Candidacy Application for an Advanced Degree (http://www.colorado.edu/english/graduate-studies/graduate-forms-and-information) by the stipulated deadline, which is generally the third or fourth week of classes in the semester in which the student plans to graduate. The candidacy application confirms that all degree requirements will have been completed by the end of the semester. Return all forms to the graduate program assistant for signatures and submission to the Graduate School.

All students planning to graduate must apply online to graduate. This step must be completed regardless of whether the student plans to attend the commencement ceremony. See the Degrees & Graduation (catalog.colorado.edu/about-cu-boulder/degrees-graduation) section for more information.

Time Limit

MFA students have four years from the semester in which they are admitted and begin course work to complete all degree requirements. To continue past four years, students must file a petition for an extension of the time limit with the dean of the Graduate School. Such petitions must first be submitted for endorsement to the English Department’s associate chair for creative writing. Extensions may be granted for up to one year.