

# The Writing Seminars

The Writing Seminars exists for those students who want to combine imaginative writing with scholarship in the general context of the humanities.

## The Faculty

**John Barth**, Professor Emeritus: fiction.

**Tristan Davies**, Senior Lecturer: fiction.

**John T. Irwin**, Decker Professor in the Humanities: criticism and poetry.

**Brad Leithauser**, Professor: fiction.

**Alice McDermott**, Richard A. Macksey Professorship for Distinguished Teaching in the Humanities: fiction.

**Jean McGarry**, Professor: fiction.

**Mary Jo Salter**, Professor: poetry.

**Dave Smith**, Elliott Coleman Professor of Poetry (Chair): poetry.

**Greg Williamson**, Senior Lecturer: poetry.

## Visiting Appointments

**Wayne Biddle**, Visiting Associate Professor: nonfiction.

**Ann Finkbeiner**, Visiting Associate Professor: science writing.

**Marc Lapadula**, Visiting Assistant Professor: playwriting/screenwriting.

## Joint Appointments

**Richard A. Macksey**, Professor (The Humanities Center, History of Science and Technology): film studies.

## Undergraduate Programs

Writing Seminars 220.105-106 Introduction to Fiction and Poetry Writing is a prerequisite for all majors and others who want to take advanced courses in writing.

### Requirements for a B.A. Degree

(See also General Requirements for Departmental Majors, page 47.)

Students choose a genre concentration: fiction, poetry, generalist.

- Two Introductory courses (200-level); both may be taken in the selected genre.
- One Intermediate course (300-level) in the selected genre.
- One Advanced Workshop (400-level) in the genre.
- One Readings course (400-level) in the genre.
- One Writing Seminars course beyond IFP outside the selected genre.

In addition, students must take:

- Two semesters of Introduction to Fiction and Poetry (220.105 and 106).
- Four semesters of literature.
- Two semesters of philosophy (The Writing Seminars strongly recommends that its majors select at least one course from the following: Philosophic Classics, Philosophic Problems, Introduction to Greek Philosophy, or Introduction to History of Modern Philosophy).
- Two semesters of history (may include one course in History of Art or History of Science and Technology. Majors are encouraged to take at least one semester of History of Occidental Civilization).
- Demonstrated competence in a foreign language through the intermediate level.
- Eight advanced semesters beyond IFP in The Writing Seminars.

### Requirements for an Undergraduate Writing Seminars Minor

A minor in The Writing Seminars is available to selected undergraduate students who apply to the department's director of undergraduate studies. The requirements for a minor are:

- Two semesters of Introduction to Fiction and Poetry (220.105 and 106).
- One semester of English literature.
- One semester of history.
- One semester of philosophy.
- Demonstrated competence in a foreign language through the intermediate level.
- Five semesters beyond IFP in The Writing Seminars.

## Graduate Programs

The Writing Seminars offers a master of fine arts (M.F.A.) in fiction and poetry. Students admitted to the M.F.A. program enroll in two years of course work and produce a substantial manuscript in the form of a novel or collection of fiction or poetry. M.F.A. candidates are chosen on the basis of a manuscript, college transcripts, GRE scores, and appropriate letters of recommendation that testify to the student's ability and willingness to undertake serious study in the literary arts. Since all students receive financial aid in the form of full tuition and a teaching assistantship, applicants must be able to demonstrate aptitude for college teaching.

The program requires two full years of residency in Baltimore. Students enroll each semester in two courses: a writing workshop in poetry or fiction and a second course in craft or literature taught within the department. Poets study with Dave Smith, John T. Irwin, and Mary Jo Salter. Fiction writers take courses with Alice McDermott, Jean McGarry, and Brad Leithauser. At the end of the first year, students present half of their theses for faculty review. Successful completion of this work is a requirement for continuation in the second year.

The M.F.A. degree in The Writing Seminars is designed for students committed to the study and practice of literary writing at the highest level of accomplishment. Approximately five poets and six fiction writers will be admitted annually. Our pedagogy emphasizes genre-informed discussions, faculty conferences, independent readings, and interactions with visiting writers. Culminating in a book-length thesis, this immersion in literary study is designed to inculcate the habits and skills necessary for a productive writer's life.

Students applying to the M.F.A. program should have a bachelor's degree. All must demonstrate competence in a foreign language at the second-year college level.

### **M.A. in Writing about Science**

Writing about Science is a two-semester program leading to a master of arts degree. The program requires workshops in which student writing is criticized for form and substance, and the production of a thesis in the form of a long essay or series of articles. All students take Science Stories, a weekly series of conferences with scientists engaged in research. Students interview, analyze and write accounts of these reports.

Science-writing students focus on developing stories and on presenting the science clearly, accurately, and seamlessly. Students enroll in three courses per semester. Elective courses can be chosen from, among others, the sciences, public health and the history and philosophy of science. Internships can be arranged. Some tuition remission and teaching assistantships are available.

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## Undergraduate Seminars

*Permission is required for all courses unless otherwise indicated.*

### **220.105 (H,W) Introduction to Fiction and Poetry: Telling It Straight**

A course in realist fiction and traditional verse, with readings in Eudora Welty, Vladimir Nabokov, Henry James, Robert Frost, Paul Fussell, John Gardner, Seamus Heane, and Gwendolyn Brooks. This first course for writers is a study of forms of short fiction and metered verse. Students compose short stories and poems; includes practice of critical attention to literary models and workshop of student writing. IFP 105 must be taken before 220.106, IFP II, Telling It Slant. Permission not required. Section limit: 17. McGarry and Teaching Fellows 3 credits

### **220.106 (H,W) Introduction to Fiction and Poetry: Telling It Slant**

The second half of IFP, a course in counter-traditional anti-realist fiction and free verse (Emily Dickinson, Virginia Woolf, Elizabeth Bishop, Franz Kafka, Italo Calvino, and William Carlos Williams). This course will follow the format of 220.105, IFP I, described above, and should be taken after the completion of 220.105. Limit 17. McGarry and Teaching Fellows 3 credits

### **220.146 (H,W) Introduction to Science Writing**

Science writing translates science to nonscientists. Students read, interview scientists, organize, write initial drafts, then revise, with practice under journalistic pressures of deadlines and verification. Background in sci-

ence is useful but not essential. Limit: 15. Permission not required.

Finkbeiner 3 credits

### **220.200 (H) Introduction to Fiction**

A study in the reading and writing of short narrative with focus on basic techniques of subject, scene, beginnings and endings. Students do weekly sketches, present story analyses, and write a complete story for workshop critique. Parallel readings from such masters of the form as Henry James, James Joyce, Ivan Turgenev, and others. IFP 105 and 106 required for admission. Limit: 15.

Blake, Davies 3 credits

### **220.201 (H) Introduction to Poetry**

A study of the fundamentals and strategies of poetry writing. This course combines analysis and discussion of traditional models of poetry with workshop critiques of student poems and student conferences with the instructor. Admission requires successful completion of both IFP 105 and 106. Limit: 15.

Irwin, Smith, Salter, Williamson 3 credits

### **220.202 (H,W) Introduction to Nonfiction: Matters of Fact**

A first course in nonfiction writing, emphasizing how facts can be woven into narrative forms to portray verifiable, rather than imagined, people and events. Students read and discuss model works, then write frequent papers to refine their own style. Limit: 15.

Biddle 3 credits

**220.205 (H) Introduction to Dramatic Writing: Plays**

Students study conventions and strategies of writing for the stage through examination of the basic principles of dramatic action, character, and language. Analysis of works by dramatic masters (e.g., Shakespeare, Moliere, Ibsen), as well as contemporaries such as Vogel, Churchill, and Guare, with writing assignments and critiques of student writing. Limit: 15.

Lapadula 3 credits

**220.206 (H) Intermediate Dramatic Writing: Plays**

Intensive workshop development of one play by each student. Repeatable for credit with permission of instructor. Limit: 15.

Lapadula 3 credits

**220.316 (H,W) Seminar: Opinion Writing**

The study of exposition and argument in literary prose, with exposure to journalistic practices. Instructor will assign topics on which students write essays subsequently discussed in class and critiqued for style, grammar, coherence, and effectiveness. Limit: 17.

Staff 3 credits

**220.319 (H,W) Intermediate Non-Fiction: Non-Fiction and Non-Fact**

A study of differences between accuracy and truth in nonfiction writing. Students discuss mutually correct but incongruent biographies, incompatible news reports, hoaxes, fictitious memoir, and class writing assignments chosen to elicit disparate statements of fact. Limit: 15.

Biddle 3 credits

**220.322 (H) Intermediate Fiction: Modernist Stories**

A study of stories with a realist (Joyce), poetic (Virginia Woolf), or fantasist (Kafka) formal structure, with consideration of how the standard elements of fiction (story, point-of-view, tone, character, endings) function in each. Students will also write their own stories. Limit: 15.

McGarry 3 credits

**220.323 (H) Intermediate Fiction: Describing in Fiction: Colette, Kawabata, Woolf, and Nabokov**

Close study of the role in narration of descriptive writing. Readings in Colette, Kawabata, Woolf, Proust. Limit: 15.

McGarry 3 credits

**220.325 (H) Intermediate Fiction: Story and Plot**

The study of plot, with questions, both practical and theoretical, inevitably raised by the short story form. Readings in Chekhov, James, O'Connor, Cheever, Joyce, and Hemingway. Limit: 14.

Davies, McGarry, 3 credits

**220.327 (H) Intermediate Fiction: Characters**

A study of fictional persons in works by Fitzgerald, Joyce, W.C. Williams, and Rilke. Students write sketches and compose at least one complete story. Limit: 15.

Davies, McGarry 3 credits

**220.329 (H) Intermediate Fiction: Forming the Short Story**

Readings in the first hundred years of the short story in the Western tradition. Authors may include Hoffmann, Kleist, Pushkin, Gogol, Turgenev, Maupassant, James, Chekhov, and Wharton. Numerous pastiches will be assigned. Limit: 15.

Davies 3 credits

**220.331 (H) Intermediate Fiction: Forms of Fiction**

A course in such forms of fiction as romance, confession, anatomy, novel, and short story. Students write sketches and three stories. Limit: 15.

Davies 3 credits

**220.338 Intermediate Fiction: Image and Text**

A study of book composition and design. Emphasis on combinations of writing and digital photography, with attention to aesthetic principles and production. Requirements include, but are not limited to, creation of a prose-and-image semester project. Darkroom access is limited to students who have completed 371.146, Basic Black and White Photography. Limit: 15. Cross-listed with Art.

Davies

**220.339 (H,W) Seminar: Science Stories**

The course's model is the scientific press conference. Scientists from different fields talk about their research. Students interview scientists and write short articles. Emphasis is on identifying and structuring a story. Limit: 15.

Finkbeiner 3 credits

**220.342 (H) Introduction to Dramatic Writing: Film**

An examination of the screenplay as a literary text and blueprint for production. Professional screenplays will be critically analyzed, with focus on character, dialogue, plot development, conflict, pacing, dramatic foreshadowing, the element of surprise, text and subtext, and visual storytelling. Students write one complete script. Limit: 15.

Lapadula 3 credits

**220.347 (H) Intermediate Dramatic Writing: Film**

An intensive workshop focusing on enhancing original characterization, plot development, conflict, story, pacing, dramatic foreshadowing, surprise, text and subtext, act structure, and visual storytelling. Students present sections of his/her "screenplay-in-progress" for class discussion. Limit: 15.

Lapadula 3 credits

**220.377 (H) Intermediate Poetry: Forms I**

A consideration of a variety of poetic forms and conventions, analysis and discussion of characteristic approaches, with a balance of workshop of student poems. Admission requires completion of Introduction to Poetry. Limit: 15.

Salter, Williamson 3 credits

**220.378 (H) Intermediate Poetry: Forms II**

An extension of Forms I and a careful reading of eight to 10 contemporary poets and writing imitations of their work. Prerequisite: 220.377. Limit: 15.

Williamson 3 credits

**220.380 (H) Intermediate Poetry: Dramatic and Narrative Forms**

The study and writing of blank verse for plays and longer narratives, based upon such models as Elizabethan plays, modern dramas by T.S. Eliot, Maxwell Anderson, etc., and long narrative poems such as Wordsworth's *The Prelude*. Limit: 15.

Irwin 3 credits

**220.384 (H,W) Intermediate Non-Fiction: I, Me, Mine: American Autobiography**

A study of the evolution of non-fiction prose composing an individual's life-story, with readings from Benjamin Franklin to Malcolm X and beyond. Not a workshop course. Limit: 15.

Biddle 3 credits

**220.388 (H,W) Intermediate Non-Fiction: Science and Society**

A study of the political and economic context of science and technology. Topics include moral responsibility, conflict of interest, government oversight, secrecy, and press coverage. Not a workshop course. Limit: 15.

Biddle 3 credits

**220.397 Intermediate Poetry: The Lyric Form**

A study of the lyric form from image to contemporary song with emphasis on the form's brevity, personal speaker, and rhythmic character. May be taught as a readings course in the history of the lyric, as a workshop in writing lyric forms, or as a combination of both. Readings will vary from instructor to instructor, as will required writing. Limit: 15.

Irwin, Salter, Smith, Williamson 3 credits

**220.400 (H) Advanced Poetry**

The capstone course in poetry writing. Consideration of various poetic models in discussion, some assigned writing, primarily workshop of student poems. Students will usually complete a "collection" of up to 15 poems. Completion of Introduction to Poetry required for admission. Limit: 15.

Irwin, Salter, Smith, Williamson 3 credits

**220.401 (H) Advanced Fiction**

The capstone course in writing fiction, primarily devoted to workshop of student stories. Some assignments, some discussion of literary models, two or three completed student stories with revisions. Completion of Intermediate Fiction is required for admission. Limit: 15.

McDermott, McGarry 3 credits

**220.404 (H) Readings in Fiction: Narrative Design**

A readings course in the novel studying works by Jane Austen, Honore de Balzac, Ivan Turgenev, Henry James, Thomas Mann, Joseph Conrad, and Elsa Morante. Students keep a notebook of critical responses to the novels and write a final paper. Limit: 25.

McGarry 3 credits

**220.405 (H) Readings in Poetry: 14th-Century Alliterative Poetry**

A course in the poetry of the 14th-century alliterative revival in which students will read and study Middle English works such as *Patience*, *Cleanmess*, *Pearl*, *Gawain and the Green Knight*, and *Piers Plowman*. Limit: 15.

Irwin 3 credits

**220.406 (H,W) Hard-Boiled Fiction and Film Noir**

Students read six novels by Hammett, Chandler, Cain, Burnett, and Woolrich and view seven films made from these novels by Huston, Hawks, Wilder, Dmytryk, Richards, Walsh, and Farrow. Cross-listed with Film and Media Studies. Limit: 15. Lab fee \$40.

Irwin 3 credits

**220.407 (H) Readings in Fiction: The 20th Century**

A survey study of novels, novellas, and short stories written by world writers in translation. Readings and course make-up vary from instructor to instructor, as do requirements for student writing. Limit: 20.

Blake, Leithauser, Davies 3 credits

**220.408 (H) Readings in Poetry: Introductory Anglo-Saxon**

Introduction to the Anglo-Saxon language and Anglo-Saxon poetry in works such as *The Battle of Maldon*, *The Seafarer*, *The Wanderer*, *Widsith*, and *The Dream of the Road*. Limit: 15.

Irwin 3 credits

**220.409 (H) Readings in Fiction: Faulkner, Fitzgerald, and Hemingway**

An examination of the fiction of three American modernist masters in the context of the early 20th-century movement in the verbal and visual arts. Not a workshop course. Limit: 15.

Irwin, Smith 3 credits

**220.410 (H) Readings in Poetry: Four Women Poets**

A study of technique and strategy in the poetry of Emily Dickinson, Marianne Moore, Elizabeth Bishop, and Amy Clampitt. Not a workshop course. Limit: 20.

Salter 3 credits

**220.412 Readings in Poetry: Eliot, Crane, and Stevens**

An examination of the poetry of Eliot, Crane, and Stevens in the context of the modernist movement in the verbal and visual arts. Not a workshop course. Limit: 15.

Irwin 3 credits

**220.413 Readings in Fiction: Contemporary American Fiction**

A survey study of novels, novellas, and short stories by American writers from 1945 to the present. Readings and course make-up vary from instructor to instructor, as do requirements for student writing. Limit: 20.

Blake, Davies, Leithauser 3 credits

**220.414 Readings in Poetry: Contemporary Poetry**

A study of poetry written since 1945 in the English language, ordinarily by poets from Canada, the Caribbean

Islands, England, Ireland, Scotland, and the United States. This is not a workshop course but may require some poems written in imitation of the poems read in class. Limit 25.

McGarry 3 credits

#### **220.501-502 Independent Study**

Prerequisite: permission of individual faculty member. Ordinarily no more than one independent study course may be counted among the eight Writing Seminars courses presented for graduation.

#### **220.507-508 (H) Honors Thesis**

For selected undergraduate majors. By invitation only.

### **Senior Faculty**

#### **220.509-510 Practicing Journalism**

This internship is given in conjunction with local media and must be taken on a satisfactory/unsatisfactory basis. It covers many aspects of the operation of a metropolitan newspaper or magazine or TV station. Admission is competitive.

1 credit

#### **220.513-514 Internship: Teaching of Writing**

Teaching writing to students in public or private elementary, middle, junior high or high schools. Interns, under supervision of a professional teacher, teach and assist in teaching a course in the writing of fiction or poetry or a combination of both. Interns make up writing assignments, critique student writings, lead workshops, conduct free writing exercises in class, and comment on students' works.

#### **220.570 Intersession Independent Study**

#### **220.572 Intersession Practicing Journalism**

#### **220.574 Intersession Internship: Teaching of Writing**

#### **220.594 Summer Practicing Journalism**

#### **220.596 Summer Internship: Teaching of Writing**

#### **220.598 Summer Independent Study**

## **Graduate Seminars**

#### **220.603 Readings in Fiction: 20th-Century World**

##### **Literature: First Person**

A study of technical and thematic questions such as how "personal" voices are constructed; how reliable they are; what kinds of stories they can tell, and how well they can tell them. Students write an analytic paper and a first person narrative. Readings include Gertrude Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*; James Joyce, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*; Ford Madox Ford, *The Good Soldier*; Marcel Proust, *Swann's Way*.

McGarry

#### **220.611 Readings in Fiction: Faulkner, Fitzgerald, and Hemingway**

A study of the major writings of Faulkner, Fitzgerald, and Hemingway with the corpus of each writer's work being treated as oblique psychobiography.

Irwin

#### **220.613-614 Workshop in Writing about Science**

A seminar in the writing of factual prose about scientific matters, whether for the general reader or for professional scientists as audience. Weekly writing, editing, and reading assignments. Prerequisites: approved writing samples.

Finkbeiner

#### **220.620 Techniques of Poetry: Forms**

A study of the kinds of poetry written in English, with attention to historical context and strategies of application. Requirements include, but are not limited to, assignments, class presentations, and a semester project.

Irwin, Salter, Smith

#### **220.621 Techniques in Fiction: A Writer's Journal**

A study of published writers' journals as examples of work in progress, record keeping and memoir, and as deliberately crafted works of art. Students will write specimen pages in each mode. (James, Chekhov, Kafka, Woolf, Rilke, et al.) Open to undergraduates with permission. Limit: 15.

McGarry

#### **220.623-624 Fiction Workshop**

Discussion and critique of fiction manuscripts by students enrolled in the M.F.A. program. Some assignments possible. Limit: 10.

Leithauser, McDermott, McGarry

#### **220.625-626 Poetry Workshop**

Discussion and critique of poetry manuscripts by students enrolled in the M.F.A. program. Some assignments possible. Limit: 10.

Irwin, Salter, Smith

#### **220.627 Techniques of Fiction: Characters**

Close study of fictional characters as constituted by physical features: face, clothing, gestures and attributes; internal features: personality, ideals, habits; and by social forces: class, religion, education, ethnic group, historical period. We will also consider where authors find their characters, and what stylistic techniques are used to bring these "people" forward with a minimum of strain. We will further consider the constraints fictional form imposes on the creation of characters, limiting what an author may say, wants to say, and is able to say. Readings in Fitzgerald, Joyce, Williams and Rilke, Lukacs, Forster and Aristotle. Limit: 10.

McGarry

#### **220.628 Techniques of Fiction: Landscape and Setting**

We will study physical setting in fiction (landscape, weather, houses, furniture, and other objects) in terms of its role in narration and its special techniques. We will read writers who aimed—in the course of telling their

stories—to evoke a particular region, class, and era. Readings in Cheever, Taylor, Munro, Merwin, Waldie; Ruskin, Valery, and Wolfflin.

McGarry

**220.629 Readings in Poetry: Contemporary American Poetry**

A study of American poetry written after 1945 with discussion of aesthetic movements, events, historical and contextual, and the character of evolution and practices in poetic structures. Readings vary. Limit: 10.

Smith

**220.630 Readings in Poetry: Poetic Modernism: Eliot, Crane, and Stevens**

Readings in the poetry and prose of Eliot, Crane, and Stevens with attention paid to origins and effects of the Modernist movement in the arts. Limit: 10.

Irwin

**220.637 Techniques of Fiction: Workshop in Formative Genres**

An examination of the formative genres in prose fiction and their hybridized descendants in Defoe, Flaubert, Stevenson, Camus, Barnes, Dixon, and others. Written work will focus on conscious borrowing from alternative genres.

**220.639 Techniques of Fiction: The Short Novel**

A study of the novella form of fiction that is longer than short story but shorter than a novel in the attempt to isolate characteristics and define the form. Readings include 10 novellas. Students write one novella in the course of the semester. Limit: 10.

McDermott

**220.640 Readings in Poetry: The Longer Poem**

A study of poems motivated primarily by narrative strategy and structure that requires book-length shape. Readings vary but may include Anglo-Saxon and later epics, romances, Milton, Wordsworth, Baudelaire, Whitman, Eliot, Williams, Frost, Warren, Walcott, Irwin, Muldoon, Ondaatje, (Ann) Carson, Voigt, Dove, and others. Short papers accompany class presentation and a seminar project is required. Limit 10.

Smith

**220.641 Readings in Poetry: The Lesser and Greater Lyric**

A study of short poems, primarily in the English tradition, with emphasis on what lyric form is and has been, what work a lyric may and may not do, and considerations of varieties within the unequivocally dominant shape of the contemporary poem. Readings vary but may focus upon poems defined as image, elegy, ode, verse, monologue, dialogue, prose, and rap. Short papers accompany class presentation and a seminar project is required. Limit: 10.

Smith