

Undergraduate Handbook

The Writing Seminars

The Writing Seminars offers a general liberal arts education with a concentration in creative writing. Writing Seminars majors take courses in the writing of fiction, poetry, and non-fiction; seminars on the history and technique of poetry and prose; and literature courses with a focus, from a creative writer's perspective, on close reading.

Majors also study literature, philosophy, and history in other departments of the university. Finally, Writing Seminars majors are expected to demonstrate competency in a foreign language.

The Learning Goals of The Writing Seminars Undergraduate Major

Writing Seminars majors should be able to:

Analyze works of literature with an eye to form, voice, development, closure, conflict, structure, or ornament, as well as historical context.

Demonstrate competence in the formatting and presentation (verse line, stanza, rhythm, meter, narrative exposition, dialogue, argument) of their own original writing.

Possess critical capabilities in the evaluation of creative work-in-progress, and experience in the protocol of the workshop method.

Acquire the substance of a liberal arts education through the distribution requirements in the major, including history, philosophy, and foreign language study.

Compose a portfolio of original writing (poems, stories, or essays) that would meet the standards for application to M.F.A. programs, but also serve as a foundation for careers in communication, law, teaching, or other fields where success is a function of skills in close analysis conveyed through lucid and intelligent writing.

To Declare a Major in The Writing Seminars

- 1) Go to SIS/Online Forms to complete and submit the appropriate form.
- 2) On the on-line form, please let us know if you are particularly interested in poetry or in fiction. (It's fine if you don't know yet; just choose one for now.) Knowing your initial preferences will help the department in choosing the faculty advisor who best suits your academic needs.
- 3) The department will complete the form and students will be emailed the name of their advisor.

Meeting Your Advisor

Once you have declared a major and your information has been entered on SIS, you are encouraged to visit your advisor. Regular office hours are best, and are posted outside of Gilman 81. If you're unable to go during office hours, please email your advisor to schedule an appointment. Your first visit needn't be a lengthy one. However, getting to know your advisor is very much to your advantage in your progress as a major. While the Writing Seminars major requirements are not complicated, they are nuanced, and your advisor is always the first person to approach if you need help navigating.

The Director of Undergraduate Studies for the calendar year 2019 is Prof. Mary Jo Salter (mjsalter@jhu.edu). She can also answer any questions, and (when necessary) she can update and correct the record of your fulfilled Writing Seminars requirements on SIS. She is the person who can authorize official exceptions on your degree audit, such as counting a philosophy-based course in the Classics department as a fulfillment of our philosophy requirement.

Major Requirements

Within the department:

- Introduction to Fiction and Poetry I (220.105) and Introduction to Fiction and Poetry II (220.106). These courses are commonly called "IFP I and II."
- One course of 220.200, The Craft of Fiction (previously known as Introduction to Fiction)
- One course of 220.201, The Craft of Poetry (previously known as Introduction to Poetry)
- One additional course of fiction at the 200-400 level, often named "Readings" or "Survey"
- One additional course of poetry at the 200-400 level, often named "Readings" or "Survey"
- One semester of either Advanced Fiction Workshop (220.401) or Advanced Poetry Workshop (220.400). Unless a faculty member's course description specifies otherwise, students should generally have completed an intermediate course in fiction to qualify for Advanced Fiction Workshop, or an intermediate course in poetry to qualify for Advanced Poetry Workshop.
- Any three additional, elective courses beyond IFP I and II within the department. Any Writing Seminars course numbered above "The Craft of Fiction" (220.200) or "The Craft of Poetry" (220.201) may be used to fulfill this requirement, as well as any course cross-listed with The Writing Seminars.

Outside the department:

- Four courses of literature, either in the Department of English or in other literature departments. The English Department's Expository Writing courses will not fulfill this requirement, but its Introduction to Literary Studies course is accepted.
- Two courses in the Department of Philosophy. An introductory-level course is recommended.

- Two courses in the Department of History. May include courses from History of Art or from History of Science and Technology.
- Foreign language proficiency through the second semester of the intermediate level. This proficiency can be demonstrated by taking the appropriate courses, or by obtaining a language waiver. For a waiver, please contact the language department to set up an assessment. They should then send the registrar the placement results and their recommendation for your record, cc-ing your advisor.

Courses cross-listed with The Writing Seminars may count toward history, philosophy, or literature requirements in the major as appropriate. Creative writing workshops taken abroad will not fulfill department requirements unless approved by the department's Director of Undergraduate Studies.

Internships

Many Writing Seminars majors choose to seek internships in journalism, publishing, and the arts during summers, during the semester, or both. The Professional Internship (formerly titled Practicing Journalism) is a one-credit independent course created to document the internship; often a provision for credit is required before an internship can be taken. The department is happy to provide a letter, if required by the sponsor, indicating that credit will be received.

Recent internships have been taken at *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The New Yorker*, CBS News, Simon and Schuster, HarperCollins, Ecco Press, International Creative Management, HBO, *Baltimore Magazine*, and *The Baltimore Sun*.

The department requires a minimum of 120 work hours for internships. For help in identifying possible internships, you can get in touch with the Life Design Lab. The contact person there for Writing Seminars majors is April Patty (apatty1@jhu.edu).

To register for a Professional Internship:

The independent academic work form is now online. On the Registrar website, locate the registration drop down menu and click on "online forms." Internships are graded S/U only. The course numbers are:

220.509 (Fall)
 220.510 (Spring)
 220.572 (Intersession)
 220.594 (Summer)

After you fill out the form, a request will be sent to the department's internship advisor, Prof. Katharine Noel (knoel4@jhu.edu). She will contact you to set up an in-person meeting to discuss the internship and the academic paper you will write to document the experience. She will also be the person to grade your work and file that grade with the Registrar.

Study Abroad

The department encourages its majors to study abroad when practical. While traditionally, students have spent one semester at a foreign university, increasingly majors are taking advantage of summer opportunities or stays over Intersession. Interested students should begin by making an appointment with the Study Abroad office.

Literature, history, and philosophy credits taken abroad are typically recognized as Writing Seminars credits. If a major has already taken certain courses on the Hopkins campus—for instance, the required four literature courses—a fifth literature course taken abroad does not usually count as a Writing Seminars elective. Creative writing courses taken abroad may or may not be approved for Writing Seminars credit. As always, ask your advisor for guidance.

The department's Study Abroad Advisor is Prof. Dora Malech: doramalech@jhu.edu. She or the Director of Undergraduate Studies, Mary Jo Salter (mjsalter@jhu.edu), can answer many such questions, as well as sign the required forms.

Research Funding Opportunities

Writing Seminars majors often compete favorably for Provost's Undergraduate Research Fellowships, Dean's Undergraduate Research Fellowships, Azrael Fellowships, and Woodrow Wilson Fellowships.

Please consult the Krieger School website under "Research" for a comprehensive guide to funding available to Arts and Sciences students.

Independent Study

Independent study projects are usually offered to advanced students who have either exhausted the coursework offered in the major or are engaged in a significant research project, such as a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship or a DURA or PURA grant.

Only full-time members of the faculty may supervise independent study projects.

If you are interested in exploring an independent study, contact a faculty member, preferably one with whom you have worked previously, with an outline of your proposed project.

Community-Based Learning

Each semester, the department offers a Community-Based Learning course in partnership with the organization Writers in Baltimore Schools. In the fall, "Teaching Writing in the Community" involves leading writing groups in local public middle schools. In the spring, students from public high schools around the city come to campus to study writing alongside JHU students; the course rotates among genres (e.g. "Poetry and Community Engagement," "Fiction and Social Engagement"). These courses can be counted towards the Writing Seminars' elective requirement.

Departmental Honors in The Writing Seminars

If you believe that you are eligible for Writing Seminars departmental general honors (G.P.A. of 3.5 or higher in all major requirements exclusive of language courses), then please do the following:

Fill out an honors application sheet, available on the Academic Advising website.

Fill out an honors calculation sheet and calculate your departmental G.P.A.

Deliver the documents to Yvonne Gobble in the department office. She will sign and deliver the forms to the Registrar's office.

Extracurricular Activities

We encourage students to involve themselves in such non-credit activities as the Lit Barn undergraduate reading series, the literary magazines *Zeniada* and *Jmag*, and student-run events coordinated by Writing Seminars majors on the Student Advisory Board. About five times per semester, the department-wide reading series offers public readings and lectures, notably "The President's Reading Series: Literature of Social Import," and the Turnbull Poetry Lecture, among others.

Beyond Hopkins

The Writing Seminars hosts panels and other events to help students think ahead to careers in the many fields that our major supports. Many of our majors go on to become published authors. A Writing Seminars major prepares students for academic careers (begun either at the M.F.A. or Ph.D. level), as well as careers in journalism, publishing, advertising, film, theater, the law, medicine, and beyond.