

Undergraduate Handbook

The Writing Seminars

The Writing Seminars provides a liberal arts education with a concentration in creative writing. Offerings include classes in the writing of fiction, poetry, and nonfiction; seminars on the history and technique of poetry and prose; literature courses with a focus on close reading; and community-based learning classes that create space for diverse voices.

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.

Specific course requirements for Writing Seminars Majors and Minors can be found in the [Academic Catalog](#). Students majoring in Medicine, Science and the Humanities (MSH) can opt to fulfill their humanities requirement with a sequence of Writing Seminars classes in fiction, poetry, or creative nonfiction. Specific course requirements for the MSH Writing Seminars focus are outlined [here](#).

Declaring a Major or Minor; Meeting Your Advisor

Go to SIS/Online Forms to complete and submit the appropriate form. The department will complete the form and students will be emailed the name of their advisor. As a new major/ minor, you are encouraged to make an appointment to visit your advisor. While the Writing Seminars' major and minor 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 is Prof. Katharine Noel (knoel4@jhu.edu). She can (when necessary) update and correct the record of your fulfilled Writing Seminars requirements on SIS. She is also 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.

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 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 Eric Mason (emason16@jh.edu).

To register for a Professional Internship:

Once logged into your SIS account locate the registration drop down menu and click on "online forms." Internships are graded S/U only. The course number is 220.509. For "faculty sponsor," choose the department's internship advisor, Prof. Katharine Noel (knoel4@jhu.edu). If you have not already talked to her about the internship, she will contact you at this point to discuss the work you will be doing 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 if they can. While traditionally students have spent one semester at a foreign university—for example, the [Hopkins program at St. Andrews in Scotland](#)—increasingly majors are taking advantage of summer opportunities like the [Hopkins Summer in Rome](#). Interested students should begin by making an appointment with the [Global Education](#) 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.

The department's Study Abroad Advisor is Prof. Katharine Noel: knoel4@jhu.edu. She can answer 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.

Community-Based Learning

The department offers several courses in partnership with local nonprofit organizations. These courses can be counted towards the elective requirement for Writing Seminars majors or minors or for MSH majors with a focus in the Writing Seminars. For more information, please see our [Community-Based Learning page](#).

Capstone Classes and Independent Study

Each spring, the Writing Seminars offers two capstone classes, one in fiction ("The Long Work") and one in poetry ("Creating the Poetry Chapbook"). In these small seminars, students work on a book project. Application details will be sent out to majors and minors each fall.

Independent study projects are sometimes possible for 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. Ideally, arrangements should be finalized before the semester in which you hope to pursue independent study.

Departmental Honors in The Writing Seminars

Writing Seminars departmental general honors bestowed at graduation require a GPA of 3.5 or higher in all major requirements, exclusive of language courses.

Students do not need to apply to receive honors; the department handles all aspects of the process. Questions can be directed to Ms. Yvonne Gobble (ygobble1@jhu.edu).

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 *Marque*, and student-run events coordinated by the Student Advisory Board. Two student-led writing groups-- Writers' Warehouse and Bluejays and Poets -- meet regularly. You can learn more about any of these groups [here](#), or by clicking on the "Student Involvement" tab in the Undergraduate section of the Writing Seminars website. 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. A schedule of department-sponsored readings and events can be found [here](#), or by clicking on the "Events" tab in the Writing Seminars website.

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.