

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 bring together Hopkins students and Baltimore residents.

This handbook covers topics related to study in the Writing Seminars:

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Overview of MSH Focus Area, Writing Seminars Minor, and Writing Seminars Major

MSH Focus Area: Four Writing Seminars classes, including one 300 or 400 level class.

Minor: Seven Writing Seminars classes, including three electives. With permission of the Director of Undergraduate Studies, up to one elective can be from outside the Writing Seminars Department; approval is given for courses with a strong creative writing component (e.g., 061.205, Introduction to Screenwriting).

Major: Twelve Writing Seminars classes, including three electives. With permission of the Director of Undergraduate Studies, electives can come from outside of the Writing Seminars department; approval is given for courses with a strong creative writing component (e.g., 061.205, Introduction to Screenwriting).

In addition, Writing Seminars majors take literature, history, and philosophy classes, and are expected to show either proficiency in a second language *or* basic knowledge of a second language plus coursework in translation (see page three for more detail).

For specifics of course requirements, please see our [Requirements](#) page and the [Academic Catalogue](#).

Language and Translation (For Majors)

Majors must have either proficiency in a second language — the equivalent of taking or testing out of two years of college study— or a basic knowledge of a second language plus classes on translation or on literature in translation. Information on language waivers may be found at the [Placement Exams](#) page.

Test out of 4 semesters of lang study	Test out of 3 semesters lang study	Test out of 2 semesters lang study	Test out of 1 semester lang study	Does not test out of any lang study
x	x	x	x	Language class: intro level 1st semester
x	x	x	Language class: Intro level 2nd semester	Language class: Intro level 2nd semester
x	x	Language class: Intermediate level 1st semester OR a translation option	Language class: Intermediate level 1st semester OR a translation option	Language class: Intermediate level 1st semester OR a translation option
x	Language class: Intermediate level 2nd semester OR a translation option	Language class: Intermediate level 2nd semester OR a translation option	Language class: Intermediate level 2nd semester OR a translation option	Language class: Intermediate level 2nd semester OR a translation option

If you want to take a class on translation, you should check which courses are available in a given term. The Writing Seminars offers a spring class called "Introduction to Literary Translation: Theory and Practice." A class meets the "literature in translation" requirement if it exclusively (or almost exclusively) studies work originally composed in a language other than English. Courses cannot double-count within the major.

To request a translation or literature in translation course be counted towards your second-language requirement, either you or your mentor can write to Professor Katharine Noel: knoel4@jhu.edu.

Community-Based Learning

The Writing Seminars department offers classes each year to bring Hopkins students together with local students, teachers and activists.

Writing and Social Engagement

We offer this course each spring, rotating among genres (poetry, fiction, theater, nonfiction). Baltimore City high school students meet with JHU undergraduates weekly on the Hopkins campus to engage in academic discussion and creative collaboration, culminating in a public reading.

Incarcaration, Reentry and Personal Storytelling

This class looks at mass incarceration and its current impact on the Baltimore community. In addition to reading and reflecting on personal narratives from the American Prison Writing Archive (housed at the JHU Sheridan Libraries), students interact with organizers, activists, educators, and writers, and assist formerly incarcerated women with memoir projects.

The Teaching Fellows Project

This full-year course is open by application to undergraduate students from across KSAS. Students accepted into the program receive extensive training and support to lead writing groups in underresourced Baltimore City elementary and middle schools. Each semester, students take a three-credit class so that the learning gained from meaningful engagement in the community is supported and deepened by guest lecturers, academic readings, and discussion.

You can find more information about these courses, along with instructions for applying to the Teaching Fellows Project, [here](#). **Community-based learning classes count as electives towards the major, minor, or MSH focus area.**

Study Abroad

Living abroad can be an invaluable experience in students' development as individuals, writers, and citizens of the world. In addition to the [Hopkins Semester/Year in Scotland](#) and the [Hopkins Summer Program in Rome](#), Writing Seminars students have studied across Europe and around the globe.

Students interested in studying abroad should begin by making an appointment with the [Global Education](#) office to talk about options and get a sense of how credits transfer to Hopkins. Once you have created a rough draft of the courses you hope to take at a specific university, you should reach out to our Director of Undergraduate Studies, Professor Katharine Noel (knoel4@jhu.edu), who can talk with you further about how your classes will come back towards the Writing Seminars major/ minor and sign preapproval forms. **Creative writing, literature, history, philosophy, and foreign language credits taken abroad typically count towards the Writing Seminars major's outside requirements.**

Research Funding Opportunities

Writing Seminars majors often compete favorably for opportunities like Provost's Undergraduate Research Fellowships. Please consult the [Hopkins Office for Undergraduate Research](#) for a comprehensive guide to funding available to Arts and Sciences students.

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 requires a minimum of 120 work hours for internships. **For help in identifying possible internships, you should get in touch with the Life Design Lab. The contact person there for Writing Seminars majors is Dr. Eric Mason (emason16@jh.edu).**

For more information, as well as information about internships with *The Hopkins Review*, please see “[Student Involvement and Internships](#)”

Capstone Classes and Independent Study

Each spring, the Writing Seminars department offers two capstone classes, one in fiction ("The Long Work") and one in poetry ("Creating the Poetry Chapbook"). In these small seminars, students work towards a book-length 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 through a 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 studied 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).

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. For more information, please see our [Events](#) page and [Instagram](#) account.

Many of our majors go on to become [renowned 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.