

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
M.F.A. IN CREATIVE WRITING PROGRAM
MARSTON HALL 250
206.281.2727
MFA@SPU.EDU
WWW.SPU.EDU/MFA

Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing (M.F.A.)

PHILOSOPHY

The low-residency M.F.A. at Seattle Pacific University is a creative writing program for apprentice writers — both Christians and those of other traditions — who not only want to pursue excellence in the craft of writing but also place their work within the larger context of the Judeo-Christian tradition of faith. The spiritual dimension of this program is not intended to produce didactic, sectarian, or sentimental literature. Nor is this M.F.A. intended to produce writers of “Christian fiction.” Far from it. Seattle Pacific’s program seeks to extend the tradition of Christian writing in which the highest standards of art, an open-eyed exploration of human experience, and a respect for transcendent mystery come together.

At the heart of any low-residency program is the ancient relationship between master and apprentice. Writing is ultimately a solitary experience, so the rhythm of students sending packets of completed material and receiving feedback from mentors is both appropriate and effective. The beauty of this type of program is that it allows students to maintain their current jobs and locations, while offering two stimulating and intensive residency periods at stunning locations in the American West — the high desert of New Mexico and an island off the coast of the Pacific Northwest.

RESIDENCIES

The residencies are intensive: they pack in a great deal, including workshops, classes on craft, lectures, and readings, as well as extended consultations with faculty mentors. Faculty at the residencies will consist of a group of current mentors along with a number of invited guest speakers, including some of America’s most celebrated writers. Students are required to attend a total of five residencies over the course of two academic years. The 10-day residencies will take place during the months of August and March. The residency dates for the 2005-06 academic year are July 27–August 7, 2005, and March 16–26, 2006.

The summer residencies will be held alongside the Glen Workshop, a program run by Image journal, the leading quarterly of arts and religion based here at Seattle Pacific. The Glen, held on the campus of St. John’s College in Santa Fe, New Mexico, features daily lectures, readings, concerts, and worship services with some of the leading artists and writers at work today. M.F.A. students will pursue their own activities, but will have the benefit of all the presentations at the Glen Workshop.

The spring residencies will be located amidst the beautiful waterfront surroundings of Whidbey Island at SPU’s Camp Casey Conference Center. M.F.A. students will have the opportunity to sample the many cultural and recreational possibilities in the area, including visits to nearby historic Coupeville as well as Port Townsend, just a short ferry ride away.

CORRESPONDENCE QUARTERS

The heart of the low-residency M.F.A. program involves the relationship between the student and his or her faculty mentors. Each student will have two responsibilities: the creative writing project in a chosen genre and the reading list.

THE CREATIVE PROJECT

During the academic quarter, the student will be responsible for generating three packets (at approximately three-week intervals). Each packet will consist of a cover letter, in which the student might share thoughts

about the creative challenges he or she is facing, and a segment of new or revised creative writing. Some packets will include critical papers that are due. Mentors will respond with detailed comments, pointing out strengths and weaknesses and suggesting fruitful avenues for further development. While the lion's share of this communication will be handled through email or paper mail, the program will also utilize the Blackboard online course technology to allow for online workshops, manuscript exchanges, and discussion threads. The norm for low-residency M.F.A. courses is for students to spend 25 hours per week on their work.

READING LIST/CRITICAL ESSAYS

In close consultation with their faculty mentors, each student will formulate a course of reading. Readings will be chosen from two categories: classic works from the Judeo-Christian literary tradition and contemporary works that may serve as models and inspiration for students' immediate creative needs and gifts. Special emphasis will be placed on gaining a deeper understanding of the classic works in the student's chosen genre. By the end of the two-year program, students will have read between 50–60 books.

Students will write one short critical paper (approximately seven pages in length) per quarter in preparation for their long critical essay (20 pages), due at the end of the final quarter.

Among the classics that students will select for study are: the poetry of Chaucer, John Donne, John of the Cross, W.H. Auden, and Denise Levertov; the fiction of Cervantes, Sigrid Undset, and Walker Percy; and the creative nonfiction of Desiderius Erasmus, John Henry Newman, and Kathleen Norris.

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

1. Each student will choose a specialization in one of three genres — poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction — and complete a thesis under the direction of a faculty mentor. Students may choose to study two genres during the course of the program, but this will require a third full year of study.
2. Students will work toward completion of a full-length manuscript in one of the following categories: collection of poems; collection of short stories; novel; book-length work of creative nonfiction.
3. In close consultation with his or her faculty mentor, the student will formulate a course of reading. By the end of the two-year program, students will have read between 50–60 books.
4. For the first four quarters, the student will complete a short critical paper on a subject relevant to the chosen course of study. In the fifth quarter of the program, the student will complete a long critical paper.
5. Recommendation for the degree can be made only after the successful completion of at least six quarters of work and five residencies (64 graduate credit hours) as well as the approval of the faculty.
6. During the final residency, the students will present a graduation lecture and give a public reading of their work.

ADMISSION INFORMATION

To qualify for admission consideration, turn in an application packet to The Graduate Center. Please bear in mind the following things:

1. Students may choose to begin the program during either of the 10-day residencies in March and August. The first residency will take place in August 2005.
2. The application deadline to begin the program during the August residency is March 1. The application deadline to begin the program during the March residency is October 1.
3. The creative manuscript will be given special emphasis. The applicant must submit 10 pages of poetry or 25 to 30 pages of prose, whether of fiction, creative nonfiction, in the student's chosen genre. (In the case of prose, the applicant must decide whether to send an excerpt of a longer manuscript or stories or essays that fall within the page limit.) If an applicant wishes to study two genres, he or she must submit creative manuscripts in both genres (see above for page requirements). The application should include three manuscript copies; two-genre students should submit three manuscript copies in each genre. The manuscripts cannot be returned.
4. Applicants must also submit a three-to-four-page personal essay on their development as writers and as people of faith.
5. Three letters of recommendation must be submitted from three people familiar with the student's writing and capacity to undertake a graduate program requiring independence and initiative.

6. A \$50 nonrefundable application fee. This fee cannot be waived.
7. Though GRE scores are not required, the applicant must have a bachelor's degree and must submit official transcripts from previous schools attended.

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

ENG 6100 Art and Faith (3)

A theological and cultural overview of the relationship between the arts and religion, grounded in the tradition of Christian humanism. Class open to masters in fine arts majors.

ENG 6210 Workshop I (3)

The residency workshops will consist of intimate classes in which students engage in peer critique, guided by one or more faculty members. Class open to masters in fine arts majors.

ENG 6220 Workshop II (3)

The residency workshops will consist of intimate classes in which students engage in peer critique, guided by one or more faculty members. Class open to masters in fine arts majors.

ENG 6230 Workshop III (3)

The residency workshops will consist of intimate classes in which students engage in peer critique, guided by one or more faculty members. Class open to masters in fine arts majors.

ENG 6240 Workshop IV (3)

The residency workshops will consist of intimate classes in which students engage in peer critique, guided by one or more faculty members. Class open to masters in fine arts majors.

ENG 6250 Workshop V (3)

The residency workshops will consist of intimate classes in which students engage in peer critique, guided by one or more faculty members. Class open to masters in fine arts majors.

ENG 6310 Craft I (3)

At the residencies, students will be offered a class that focuses on craft issues in their chosen genre. Class open to masters in fine arts majors.

ENG 6320 Craft II (3)

At the residencies, students will be offered a class that focuses on craft issues in their chosen genre. Class open to masters in fine arts majors.

ENG 6330 Craft III (3)

At the residencies, students will be offered a class that focuses on craft issues in their chosen genre. Class open to masters in fine arts majors.

ENG 6410 Tutorial I (6)

Each quarter students will produce three packets of material: new or revised parts of their creative project, plus short critical responses to the literary readings they have selected. Class open to masters in fine arts majors.

ENG 6420 Tutorial II (6)

Three more packets of material are generated. Class open to masters in fine arts majors.

ENG 6430 Tutorial III (6)

Three more packets of material are generated. Class open to masters in fine arts majors.

ENG 6440 Tutorial IV (6)

Three more packets of material are generated. Class open to masters in fine arts majors.

ENG 6450 Tutorial V (6)

Three more packets of material are generated. Class open to masters in fine arts majors.

ENG 6460 Final Manuscript Tutorial (6)

Three more packets of material are generated. Class open to masters in fine arts majors.

ENG 6500 Manuscript and Reading (3)

The final manuscript is presented, publicly read, and discussed. Class open to masters in fine arts majors.

ENG 6900 Independent Study (1–5)

Registration approval: Independent Study Agreement. Student works with a faculty member on a mutually agreed upon topic. May be repeated for credit up to 15 credits.

FACULTY

Gregory Wolfe, the M.F.A. director, and writer-in-residence at SPU, will teach the introductory Art and Faith course that M.F.A. students attend during their first residency. Wolfe is publisher and editor of *Image* journal and author of *Intruding Upon the Timeless: Meditations on Art, Faith, and Mystery* and numerous other books.

Robert Clark is the author of three books of nonfiction and four novels, most recently the novel *Lives of the Artists*, forthcoming in 2005. His other novels include *Love Among the Ruins*, *Mr. White's Confession* (which won the Edgar Award), and *In the Deep Midwinter*. A memoir, *My Grandfather's House: A Genealogy of Doubt and Faith*, was published in 1999. He is currently a Guggenheim Fellow working on a collection of essays on art and belief.

Leslie Leyland Fields is the author of the nonfiction books *Surviving the Island of Grace*, *Out on the Deep Blue*, and *The Entangling Net: Alaska's Commercial Fishing Women Tell Their Lives*, among others. She teaches at Kodiak College and fishes commercially with her family. Her essays have appeared in *The Atlantic*, *Orion*, *Image*, and *The Christian Science Monitor*.

Paul Mariani is one of America's leading literary biographers and poets. His books include the poetry collections *Salvage Operations* and *The Great Wheel*, as well as biographies of William Carlos Williams (nominated for a National Book Award), John Berryman, Robert Lowell, and most recently Hart Crane. Three of his biographies were *New York Times* notable books. His most recent books are *Thirty Days: On Retreat with the Exercises of St. Ignatius*, winner of the Catholic Book Award, and *God and the Imagination: On Poets, Poetry, and the Ineffable*.