

MASTER OF FINE ARTS IN CREATIVE NONFICTION WRITING

Academic Programs

The Bay Path University MFA in Creative Nonfiction Writing is a unique, no-residency program designed to help talented writers find their creative voice through the means of expressive nonfiction. Offered fully online, the 39-credit program allows busy adults at any stage of life to practice the craft of writing, read and discuss great works of creative nonfiction, study with acclaimed faculty authors, and participate in a dynamic community of writers.

Along with intensive foundational work, writers are offered a wide range of electives with topics including women's stories, the spiritual journey, nature and environmental writing, storytelling in medicine, and writing about culture, race, and identity. The program concludes with a two-semester capstone thesis project, in which students complete a 100-page work of creative nonfiction - a collection of essays, a memoir, a biography or work of narrative fiction - with an eye toward publication. Professional tracks in publishing, teaching creative writing, and narrative medicine provide practical tools and additional preparation for a range of literary careers after graduation.

All students receive intensive one-on-one mentoring throughout the program by faculty authors, editors, and publishers with national reputations. Frequent interaction between and among students is built into the curriculum and supported by a flexible, easy-to-use online learning system. Live chats, online discussions, streaming video, and other tools ensure that students become part of a dedicated writing community and receive substantial peer input and support.

Students in this program benefit from a curriculum built with their goals in mind: to focus on their own writing while gaining extraordinary insight into the theory and history of the genre; to work closely alongside published and esteemed writers, and to gain valuable teaching, publishing, and narrative medicine experience that will serve as a foundation for working as a writer in a variety of educational, literary, cultural, media, and healthcare settings.

Highlights of the program include:

Mentoring

An essential element of the MFA curriculum is the three-semester mentorship lab through which students are paired with published mentors and small groups of peers for writing practice and critique. During the seminars and labs students will:

- develop and hone skills in writing, editing, and revision in creative nonfiction;
- recognize and write on the subject of the student's choosing, or along the program tracks of women's stories, travel and food, and spiritual nourishment;
- demonstrate knowledge of the history of nonfiction and how the student's own work fits within that literary tradition;
- analyze and write with care about literary texts of considerable difficulty;

- recognize critical positions and literary arguments, including the student's own critical and aesthetic position;
- demonstrate the ability to read and respond thoughtfully and critically to work.

Content Courses

The program offers an exceptional variety of electives, including "Generational Histories: Writing about Family," "Spiritual Writing through the Ages," "Travel and Food Writing," "Contemporary Women's Stories," "Writing about Culture, Race, and Identity," "Reading as a Writer," "Introduction to Narrative Medicine and Trauma Writing," and "Nature and Environmental Writing," among others. Each course is taught by a nationally recognized faculty writer who has published widely on the topic and is an expert in the field. The MFA also offers an international study experience each summer, "Creative Writing Field Seminar," an optional eight-day retreat held in Dingle, Ireland, and featuring a variety of guest writers and instructors.

Publishing

The MFA offers a two-semester professional track designed to introduce writers to the world of publishing. In the first semester course, Introduction to Publishing, students meet series of guest speakers and conduct one-on-one interviews with working professionals, to gain a greater and more personal understanding of the roles played by agents, editors, book designers, publicists, booksellers, and other key figures in the publishing process. During the second semester course, Immersion in Publishing, students gain first-hand experience working as interns (remotely or on-site) within literary magazines, book publishers, bookstores, and other literary settings. Both courses are designed to integrate an expanding understanding of the publishing world with each student's unique writing and publishing goals.

Teaching Creative Writing

A second two-course track is teaching creative writing. "Learning to Teach" is a course focusing on the pedagogy and practice of teaching creative writing. "Teaching to Learn" involves an actual teaching practicum. Students living near the college campus will have the option of teaching a creative writing course under the guidance of an experienced writing instructor. Students living outside of the area will have a teacher training experience arranged at a location nearer the home of the student, which can include facilitating a non-credit community-based class to an underserved population, such as new citizens or residents of shelters, housing projects, nursing homes, and hospitals.

Narrative Medicine

The newest addition to our professional tracks, Narrative Medicine is a four-course sequence that offers interdisciplinary classes in medical and trauma narratives (poetry, fiction, essays, and memoir); creative writing; the psychology of the sick; and social justice narratives. The final course in the sequence is an internship under the supervision of a clinical practitioner and writer. The internship will place writers in health care and other settings to lead creative writing groups fostering the use of writing as a tool in the medical journey and/or the trauma experience. MFA students who choose this track earn a Certificate in Narrative Medicine along with their MFA.

Program Requirements

Students must complete 39 credit hours of graduate coursework to earn a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Nonfiction Writing.

- Creative Nonfiction Writing, MFA (<https://catalog.baypath.edu/graduate/academic-programs/master-fine-arts-creative-nonfiction-writing/creative-nonfiction-writing-mfa/>)

Student Learning Outcomes

The MFA in Creative Nonfiction focuses on skills in writing, editing, literary analysis, and group feedback and critique; and on the knowledge of current trends in publishing and teaching. Students will:

- Develop and hone skills in writing, editing, and revision in creative nonfiction
- Recognize and write within literary genres of creative nonfiction including specific emphases on women's stories, travel and food, and spiritual nourishment
- Demonstrate a good reading knowledge of classic and contemporary nonfiction literature and how the student's own work fits within that literary tradition.
- Analyze and write with care about literary texts of considerable difficulty
- Recognize critical positions and literary arguments, including the student's own critical and aesthetic position
- Demonstrate the ability to read and respond thoughtfully and critically to work by other MFA students
- Demonstrate knowledge of how to perform effectively in the online classroom setting
- Demonstrate understanding of the theory and practice of literary publishing, including the practice of submitting work to literary journals and/or publishing houses