

# Creative Writing M.F.A. at Arcadia University

*Global Perspectives...Personal Attention...Real-World Integrative Learning Experiences*

## Faculty

Coordinator

Joshua Isard, M.Sc., M.A., Adjunct  
Professor of English

Faculty

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## Master's Degree

Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing

## About the M.F.A. in Creative Writing

- Personal attention in small workshops
- Low-residency, using technology to build a dynamic online writing community
- Study abroad residency in Edinburgh, Scotland, and other locations such as Umbria, Italy
- Manuscript requirement and publication plan

Arcadia University's low-residency M.F.A. program in Creative Writing, the only one of its kind in the Philadelphia area, is distinctive in that it incorporates both a dynamic online environment and a study abroad experience. The course emphasizes online workshops; personal attention from faculty; studying abroad, with a residency in Edinburgh, Scotland; and the preparation of both a book-length manuscript and a plan to publish it.

Arcadia's experienced and award-winning faculty help to prepare each student for a career in writing and in teaching the craft at the college level.

Because this is a low-residency program and students take between six and nine credits each term, each participant is able to develop much of his or her own schedule and maintain a full-time professional life outside school.

- **Online Community**—In Arcadia's program, students participate in weekly workshops conducted online

and led by the faculty, as opposed to many low-residency creative writing programs in which students have infrequent contact with their peers and instructors. Arcadia utilizes Blackboard software for these discussions, which requires only that the students have a consistent Internet connection. There are no extra programs to buy or download.

- **Personal Attention**—In addition to the online community, Arcadia's program utilizes technology to allow consistent one-on-one contact between the students and the faculty. Through the use of e-mail, instant messaging, and voice chat programs such as Skype, students are never out of touch with their faculty advisers.
- **Study Abroad**—A global perspective is an important facet of writing. Therefore, each student spends a residency abroad at the start of the second year of the program. That residency is in Edinburgh, Scotland, and additional locations—including Umbria, Italy—may be available.
- **Manuscript and Publishing**—At the end of the program, each student submits a book-length manuscript in his or her genre and works with his or her faculty adviser to develop a plan for publication.

## Fiction or Poetry: Program Structure

**Genres and Cohorts**—Upon application, the student chooses the genre he or she wishes to pursue, either fiction or poetry.

The program is a cohort model, and students move through the program with their cohort, concentrating on their specific genre, either poetry or fiction. This allows for a cohesion in students' work and the creation of a community among the students as they progress through the program.

**Fiction**—Students in the fiction group develop a full-length manuscript, either a novel or a collection of stories, over the course of the

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program. Each student is able to submit portions of his or her writing to the workshops and to discuss the progress of his or her manuscript with the faculty. By the end of the course, students can expect to have a book-length manuscript that they are ready to submit to agents and publishers—and also to have a plan for that process that the faculty will help to develop.

**Poetry**—Students in the poetry group produce a full length manuscript over their two years in the program. Through online workshops and discussions with the faculty, a student can expect to have a manuscript which he or she is ready to submit for publication upon graduation. The faculty help each student to develop a plan to submit his or her manuscript to publishers, contests, and literary journals.

**Residencies**—Students participate in three residencies, each lasting for one week. The first is held in August of year one, when the program begins; the second is held the following summer, before year two begins; and third will be held in January of year two.

The first residency is conducted at Arcadia University and includes face-to-face workshops, lectures and discussion with visiting writers, and individual conferences with the faculty members. Additionally, the cohort attends events in the Philadelphia area—such as museums like the Rosenbach, or plays—in order to build community among the cohort.

The second residency is in Edinburgh, Scotland, and other sites (including Umbria, Italy) may be developed. The time overseas includes face-to-face workshops, visits from foreign writers so as to get a global perspective on the craft, and opportunities to travel around the area. Edinburgh is one of the richest literary cities in the world, and it presents ample opportunity for exploration and inspiration.

**Note**—Students who attend the Fiction Writer's Residency in Umbria, Italy, during Summer 2011 and then enroll in the M.F.A. in Fall 2011 will be considered to have completed the residency abroad and will not have to attend a residency in Summer 2012.

However, those students will still be able to go abroad again if they so choose.

The third residency is back at Arcadia, and it begins turning the focus of the program to completing the manuscript and developing a plan for publishing it upon graduation.

While the two cohorts attend residencies together, there are some genre-specific lectures, discussions and activities. Students are required to attend all the programs within their genre, and they are welcome to attend any program in the other genre if possible.

**Workshops**—The program utilizes technology to conduct weekly workshops in an online discussion board. Students are able to share their work, critique their peers' work, and complete exercises assigned by the instructor. Consistent feedback is an important part of the writing process, and with the available online resources, students feel connected to the writing community at Arcadia.

The workshops are asynchronous discussions, meaning that while there are due dates and deadlines, students do not have to be online at any particular time, freeing them to complete the work around their own schedules. Additionally, all the technology is web-based, meaning that students will not have to download or buy special software to participate in the program.

M.F.A. students complete four workshops, two each year of the program. They are held in the Fall and Spring semesters during each year of the program.

**Practicums**—In order to receive personal attention from Arcadia's faculty members, students have four practicum courses. In these courses, students work one-on-one with a faculty adviser on their writing, and they also construct a reading list of literature and writing theory.

The first three practicums focus on the writing craft and building a manuscript. The fourth practicum focuses on completing a manuscript for the thesis and on preparing a plan for trying to publish it after graduation.

While some of the practicum work is asynchronous, such as e-mail communication, any meetings students have with faculty

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members are scheduled at mutually convenient times.

**Literature Courses**—Each student takes two literature courses. One can be chosen from any graduate-level literature course that Arcadia University offers, and students are encouraged to pick something which interests them. The second course is a craft course in the student's genre. The craft courses focus on trends and techniques in contemporary literature, and they are meant to give students an idea of what's happening in the writing world right now.

**Thesis**—After completing all of the above requirements, students submit their writing to the M.F.A. faculty as their theses. The thesis will be a completed manuscript in the student's chosen genre, and it should be one that students reasonably can expect to publish after graduation.

### M.F.A. in Creative Writing Admission Requirements

In addition to the general admission requirements, the following requirements must be met:

1. A graduate application, including personal statements, to be completed online at [www.arcadia.edu/gradapp](http://www.arcadia.edu/gradapp).
2. A bachelor's degree from an accredited institution with a recommended GPA of 3.0 or better. The undergraduate major should be in one of the traditional liberal arts or in a professional or pre-professional field but accompanied by strong undergraduate training in creative writing.
3. One official transcript from each college, university or professional school attended. Transfer credits included on a transcript must include grades earned; if not, an official transcript from the original school must be submitted. Transcripts must be sent from the issuing school in a sealed envelope and contain the appropriate signatures and seals to be considered official.
4. Two letters of recommendation. The letters must be of a professional not personal nature. If the student has been out of school five years or less,

at least one letter must come from a professor.

5. An interview with the program Coordinator, either in-person or over the phone, if deemed necessary.
6. A writing sample. For poetry students, this should be 10 to 15 pages of verse. For fiction students, it should be 15 to 20 pages of prose. Please do not exceed the page limit.
7. International applicants should visit [www.arcadia.edu/international](http://www.arcadia.edu/international) for detailed information on admission requirements and application procedures. Official results from the TOEFL or IELTS are required for all students for whom English is a second language or who have not earned degrees or diplomas from post-secondary institutions in English-speaking countries (e.g. the United States, Canada, England, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand). A course-by-course evaluation of all transcripts by an independent evaluation service based in the United States also is required.

All application materials must be sent to the Office of Enrollment Management.

**Admission deadlines:** In order to encourage community and continuity among the cohorts, each student must start in the Fall semester with the first practicum. Applications will be accepted through July 30 for Fall 2011; after that, applications will be accepted for the following year.

#### Expenses

Tuition for 2011-12: \$670 per credit

#### Fees:

Audit: \$670 per course

Parking: \$30 per semester (Fall and Spring) before 4 p.m. No charge after 4 p.m.

**Financial Aid:** Graduate students who have been accepted into a degree program and are enrolled for at least 6 credits per semester are eligible to apply for financial aid. Please visit [www.arcadia.edu/finaid](http://www.arcadia.edu/finaid) for information regarding required forms and documents, most of which can be submitted online.

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Graduate assistantships are available to all students registered for at least 9 credits per semester. Students may apply for assistantships upon acceptance and registration. Questions regarding graduate assistantships should be directed to the College of Graduate Studies at 215-572-2925.

**Federal Loans:** Graduate students are eligible to borrow through the federal Stafford Loan and federal PLUS Loan programs. Arcadia University, in partnership with AES/PHEAA, offers the no-fee Arcadia University Preferred Stafford Loan Program, which provides students with benefits that include:

- Origination and guarantee fee waivers
- Interest rate reduction during repayment
- Superior administration and servicing

All financial aid paperwork not submitted online should be sent to the Office of Enrollment Management/Financial Aid. Please e-mail [finaid@arcadia.edu](mailto:finaid@arcadia.edu) or call 1-877-ARCADIA (1-877-272-2342) with additional questions.

## Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing Degree Requirements

(A minimum of 40 credits)

### Sample Course Sequence Scenario for a Student in the Low-Residency M.F.A. in Creative Writing

*Residency One, August 2011—at Arcadia University*

Fall Semester 2011:  
Workshop 1  
Practicum 1

Spring Semester 2012:  
Workshop 2  
Practicum 2

Summer Semester 2012:  
Traditional Literature Course

*Residency Two, Summer 2012—Edinburgh, Scotland*

Fall Semester 2012:  
Workshop 3

Practicum 3  
Craft Course

*Residency Three, January 2013—Arcadia University King of Prussia Campus*

Spring Semester 2013:  
Workshop 4  
Practicum 4: Thesis Preparation

Thesis turned in at the close of the Spring Semester, 2013

### Residencies (9 credits)

EN 550*	Residency 1
EN 551*	Residency 2: Abroad in Edinburgh
EN 552*	Residency 3

### Workshops (12 credits)

EN 555A*	Workshop 1 (fiction) or EN 555B (poetry)
EN 556A*	Workshop 2 (fiction) or EN 556B (poetry)
EN 557A*	Workshop 3 (fiction) or EN 557B (poetry)
EN 558A*	Workshop 4 (fiction) or EN 558B (poetry)

### Practicums (12 Credits)

EN 560*	Practicum 1
EN 561*	Practicum 2
EN 562*	Practicum 3
EN 563*	Practicum 4: Thesis Preparation

### Literature Courses (6 Credits)

EN 553*	Craft of Contemporary Fiction
or EN 554*	Craft of Contemporary Poetry

Plus any other graduate literature offering from Arcadia

\*Courses pending approval

- Students must complete all of the above requirements before being awarded a degree.
- It is important that students make all possible efforts to complete the classes in order, so as to maintain a community within the program.
- If a student must take a leave of absence; however, it is best that he or she take a full year of absence so that

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it is easiest to rejoin the program at a natural point.

- Extenuating circumstances will be evaluated at the faculty's discretion.

## M.F.A. in Creative Writing English Courses (EN)

### Residencies

EN 550, 551, 552 (pending approval)

During the on-campus residencies (the first and third residencies), students take part in intensive workshops, meet one-on-one with their faculty advisers, participate in seminars and exercises with visiting writers, and generally build the cohesive community of the program. These last for one week, and they are conducted in August of the program's first year, and January of the program's second year.

Students spend the second residency, also for one week, abroad in Edinburgh, Scotland. During that time students take part in workshops and meetings with faculty, but they also will explore the area, meet with local writers, and produce work based on those experiences.

### Workshops

EN 555A, 556A, 557A, 558A for fiction. EN 555B, 556B, 557B, 558B for poetry (pending approval)

In each workshop, students are able to submit their work for critiques and discussion by the faculty and their peers. These discussions are conducted online, through Blackboard's forums. There are online discussions every week of the term, and a faculty member leads and participates in each one.

Additionally, students complete writing exercises assigned by their instructor throughout the term. These short assignments help students to develop new techniques to use in their writing.

### Practicums

EN 560A, 561A, 562A, 563A for fiction. EN 560B, 561B, 562B, 563B for poetry.

Each of these courses involves one-on-one instruction with a faculty member as students develop their manuscripts over the two years of the program. The professor not only helps the students with their writing, but also assigns readings and other assignments that help the students with their projects.

Students meet with faculty about every other week, either over the phone, through a program such as Skype, or by another agreed upon means. Of course, students always have the option of contacting their practicum instructor more often—this is a way for the faculty to be consistently available to the students.

### Craft of Contemporary Fiction

EN 553 (pending approval)

This course focuses on the themes, techniques, and movements of contemporary fiction and is reading- and discussion-intensive, utilizing Blackboard's forums in order to conduct weekly conversations led by the instructor. This course is reading-intensive, and students are expected to write two essays in addition to the weekly online discussions.

### Craft of Contemporary Poetry

EN 554 (pending approval)

This course focuses on the themes, techniques, and movements of contemporary poetry and is reading- and discussion-intensive, utilizing Blackboard's forums in order to conduct weekly conversations led by the instructor. This course is reading-intensive, and students are expected to write two essays in addition to the weekly online discussions.