

Undergraduate Handbook

The Writing Seminars

The Writing Seminars offers a general liberal arts education with a concentration in creative writing. Writing Seminars majors take courses in the writing of fiction, poetry, and non-fiction; seminars on the history and technique of poetry and prose; and literature courses with a focus, from a creative writer's perspective, on close reading.

Majors also study literature, philosophy, and history in other departments of the university. Finally, Writing Seminars majors are expected to demonstrate competency in a foreign language.

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.

To Declare a Major in The Writing Seminars

- 1) Go to SIS/Online Forms to complete and submit the appropriate form.
- 2) On the on-line form, please let us know if you are particularly interested in poetry or in fiction. (It's fine if you don't know yet; just choose one for now.) Knowing your initial preferences will help the department in choosing the faculty advisor who best suits your academic needs.
- 3) The department will complete the form and students will be emailed the name of their advisor.

Meeting Your Advisor

Once you have declared a major and your information has been entered on SIS, you are encouraged to visit your advisor. While the Writing Seminars major 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 also answer any questions, and (when necessary) she can update and correct the record of your fulfilled Writing Seminars requirements on SIS. She is 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.

Major Requirements

Within the department:

- Introduction to Fiction and Poetry I (220.105) and Introduction to Fiction and Poetry II (220.106). These courses are commonly called “IFP I and II.” Introduction to Fiction and Nonfiction (220.108) can be taken in place of IFP I.
- One course of 220.200, The Craft of Fiction
- One course of 220.201, The Craft of Poetry
- One additional course of fiction (numbered above Craft of Fiction, 220.200) at the 200-400 level, often named “Readings,” “Survey” or “Intermediate.”
- One additional course of poetry (numbered above Craft of Poetry, 220.201) at the 200-400 level, often named “Readings,” “Survey” or “Intermediate.”
- One semester of either Advanced Fiction Workshop (220.401) or Advanced Poetry Workshop (220.400). Unless a faculty member’s course description specifies otherwise, students should generally have completed an intermediate course in fiction to qualify for Advanced Fiction Workshop, or an intermediate course in poetry to qualify for Advanced Poetry Workshop.
- Any three additional, elective courses beyond IFP I and II within the department. Any Writing Seminars course numbered above “The Craft of Fiction” (220.200) or “The Craft of Poetry” (220.201) may be used to fulfill this requirement. Courses cross-listed with The Writing Seminars may count here with approval from the DUS; approval is given for courses with a strong creative writing component (e.g., 061.205, Introduction to Screenwriting).

Outside the department:

- Four courses of literature.
 - *For students matriculating before 2023*, at least two of these courses must be in the Department of English (courses numbered 060.xxx) or other literature departments, and up to two of these courses can be “Readings” courses in the Writing Seminars Department.
 - *For students matriculating in or after 2023*, two of these courses must be in the Department of English (courses numbered 060.xxx) or other literature departments and two must be “Readings” courses in the Writing Seminars.
- Two courses in the Department of Philosophy. An introductory-level course is recommended.
- Two courses in the Department of History. May include courses from History of Art or from History of Science and Technology.
- Foreign language proficiency through the second semester of the intermediate level. This proficiency can be demonstrated by taking the appropriate courses, or by obtaining a language waiver. For a waiver, please contact the language department to set up an

assessment. They should then send the registrar the placement results and their recommendation for your record, cc-ing your advisor.

Courses cross-listed with The Writing Seminars may count toward history, philosophy, or literature requirements in the major as appropriate. Creative writing workshops taken abroad will not fulfill department requirements unless approved by the department's Study Abroad Coordinator, Katharine Noel.

To Declare a Minor in The Writing Seminars

- 1) Go to SIS/Online Forms to complete and submit the appropriate form.
- 2) On the online form, please let us know if you are particularly interested in poetry or in fiction. (It's fine if you don't know yet; just choose one for now.) Knowing your initial preferences will help the department in choosing the faculty advisor who best suits your academic needs.
- 3) The department will complete the form and students will be emailed the name of their advisor.

Meeting Your Advisor

Once you have declared the minor and your information has been entered on SIS, you are encouraged to reach out to your advisor. While the Writing Seminars major 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 also answer any questions, and (when necessary) she can update and correct the record of your fulfilled Writing Seminars requirements on SIS.

Minor Requirements:

- Introduction to Fiction and Poetry I (220.105) and Introduction to Fiction and Poetry II (220.106). These courses are commonly called "IFP I and II." Introduction to Fiction and Nonfiction (220.108) can be taken in place of IFP I.
- One course of 220.200, The Craft of Fiction
- One course of 220.201, The Craft of Poetry
- Any three additional, elective courses within the department. Any Writing Seminars course numbered above "The Craft of Fiction" (220.200) or "The Craft of Poetry" (220.201) may be used to fulfill this requirement. A maximum of one course outside The Writing Seminars may count here with approval from the DUS; approval is given for courses with a strong creative writing component (e.g., 061.205, Introduction to Screenwriting).

Creative writing workshops taken abroad will not fulfill department requirements unless approved by the department's Study Abroad Coordinator, Professor Katharine Noel.

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 (formerly titled

Practicing Journalism) 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:

The independent academic work form is now online. 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@jh.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 when practical. While traditionally, students have spent one semester at a foreign university, increasingly majors are taking advantage of summer opportunities or stays over Intersession. Interested students should begin by making an appointment with the Study Abroad 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. As always, ask your advisor for guidance.

The department’s Study Abroad Advisor is Prof. Katharine Noel: knoel4@jh.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.

Capstone Classes and Independent Study:

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 alongside equally serious peers. 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.

Community-Based Learning

The department offers Community-Based Learning courses in partnership with the nonprofit organization Writers in Baltimore Schools. These courses can be counted towards the elective requirement for Writing Seminars majors or minors or for MSH majors with a concentration in the Writing Seminars.

Writing and Social Engagement: Each spring, students from public high schools around the city come to campus to study writing alongside JHU students. The course offered rotates among genres (Poetry and Social Engagement, Fiction and Social Engagement, Nonfiction and Social Engagement).

The Teaching Fellows Project (TFP) is a two-course sequence, open by application. In the fall, students accepted into the TFP cohort take "Teaching Creative Writing in Baltimore Schools;" in the spring, they take the "Undergraduate Teaching Fellowship" class. Students lead writing groups in local public elementary and middle schools, learning both in the Hopkins classroom and from on-the-ground experiences with young writers.

Departmental Honors in The Writing Seminars

If you believe that you are eligible for Writing Seminars departmental general honors (G.P.A. of 3.5 or higher in all major requirements exclusive of language courses), then please do the following:

- 1) Fill out an honors application sheet, available on the Academic Advising website.
- 2) Fill out an honors calculation sheet and calculate your departmental G.P.A.
- 3) Deliver the documents to Yvonne Gobble in the department office. She will sign and deliver the forms to the Registrar's office.

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 can be found [here](#), or by clicking on the "Events" tab in the Writing Seminars website.

Concentration in Writing for MSH majors

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. Katharine Noel (knoel4@jhu.edu) has more information for MSH majors about these options.

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.