



GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY CREATIVE WRITING

STUDENT HANDBOOK

2019-20



Matt Davis (left), director of the Cheuse Center for International Writers, speaks with MFA students about their research abroad, funded in part by support from the center.

Academic Year 2019-20 Calendar

AUGUST

- 19 • New GTAs Report to Writing Center Training
- 22 • New Student Happy Hour (Oh George! 5:50pm - 7:30pm)
- 23 • MFA Orientation, Robinson B442 (12pm brown bag lunch)
- 26 • First Day of Fall Classes
- 31 • "Pankey Party" Welcome and Welcome Back Party
Hosted by Jen Atkinson and Eric Pankey

SEPTEMBER

- 2 • Labor Day, University Closed
- 3 • Last Day to Add Classes
- 9 • Last Day to Drop Classes (w/ 100% Tuition Refund)

OCTOBER

- 14 • Columbus Day, University Closed
- 15 • Note: Monday classes/labs meet Tuesday.
Tuesday classes do not meet this week.
- 10-12 • Fall For the Book
- 15 • Requests for Poetry Thesis Directors Due (2nd-Year Students Only)
- 22 • Poetry Thesis Directors Announced (2nd-Year Students Only)

NOVEMBER

- 11/27 - 12/1 • Thanksgiving Break

DECEMBER

- 6 • Completed Thesis Projects Due to the Library (Fall Graduates Only)
- 7 • Last Day of Classes

JANUARY

- 20 • Martin Luther King Jr. Day, University Closed
- 21 • Classes Resume

FEBRUARY

- 3 • Third-Year Fellowship Apps Deadline
- TBD • Last Day to Drop Classes (w/ 100% Tuition Refund)
- 21 • Third-Year Fellowship Announcements

MARCH

- 4-7 • AWP Conference, San Antonio
- 9-15 • Spring Break
- 16 • Spring Writing Contests Deadline
- 25 • Requests for Prose Thesis Directors Due (2nd-Year Students Only)

APRIL

- 7 • Prose Thesis Directors Announced (2nd-Year Students Only)
- 13-17 • New Leaves
- 17 • Spring Writing Contests Winners Announcements

MAY

- 6 • English Honors Reception
- 14 • Graduating Student Reading
- 15 • College of Humanities and Social Sciences Convocation
- 15 • Schedule MFA Exam (Rising 3rd-Year Poets Only)

JUNE

- 1 • Thesis Proposal Approval Sheets Due (All Rising 3rd-Year Students)

THESIS CALENDAR (3rd-Year Students Only)

Friday before Thanksgiving:
First draft due to thesis advisors
(November 22, 2019)

Friday before Spring Break:
Final draft due to thesis advisors
(March 6, 2020)

First Friday in April:
Final thesis manuscript with any
revisions due to readers
(April 3, 2020)

First Friday in May:
Completed, formatted thesis
projects due to the library
(May 1, 2020)

STAY UP TO DATE!

Stay up-to-date by subscribing to the CW Students Calendar and the CW Events Calendar by importing the iCal .ics files emailed to you.

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Policy Notes

In all cases, degree requirements are determined by the catalog in effect when the student enters the program. Students may choose to fulfill the requirements of a subsequent catalog by requesting a change of catalog term; however, a student must satisfy all of the requirements of one catalog.

CHSS policy mandates a six-year time limit for completing the MFA program. The clock starts the first semester a student enrolls. If a student take a semester off, the clock keeps running.

Only courses that meet requirements in the university catalog or the MFA Advising sheet may be used toward the completion of the degree. All exceptions must be approved prior to registering for the course in question.

Full-time status is 9 credit hours, or 6 credit hours with a full-time graduate assistantship (GTA or GPA). Students who only have thesis hours left to complete may file a form with the Verification Services department of the office of the Registrar to be considered full time while completing their thesis.

Financial aid mandates a minimum of 4.5 credit hours. Students at Mason can take two courses (6 credit hours) to meet this minimum and receive financial aid, or they may take a workshop for less than 3 credits if they qualify to do so.

Adding a certificate can enhance a degree but it must be added as a secondary program and that must happen prior to earning half of the credits needed to complete the certificate.

For more policies and tips, please consult the university catalog at: catalog.gmu.edu

MFA Program History

Welcome to the MFA program and Mason's creative writing community.

You selected this program from among the several to which you applied and we selected you from more than 100 applicants. MFA programs are not for every writer, but for those who choose this path, their influence is profound. Let's take a moment, before we dive into the various requirements and processes, to introduce some of the rich opportunities that are here for you, and do so in the context of the history of the program.

Ours is one of the older MFAs in the country, started in 1980 near the beginning of a wave of graduate writing programs that appeared across the country. Originally, this one started as a two-genre program—fiction and poetry—and added nonfiction in the mid-1990s. The MFA was the first terminal-degree program in the English Department at Mason. As such, it has always received the attention and solid support from the English Department and the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHSS) within which it is housed.

Novelist Susan Richards Shreve and poet Peter Klappert were its original architects and key faculty. It was patterned on a studio-workshop model that also blended in a significant requirement for major literary study, and so the curriculum has always required and still requires workshops, craft courses, and "reading" courses. Due to this approach, and its location near the nation's capital, the program found early success, which led to the core faculty being enlarged to include fiction writers Richard Bausch, Stephen Goodwin, and Alan Cheuse, as well as poets C.K. Williams, Carolyn Forché, and Susan Tichy. When in the mid-1990s, the faculty and administration added nonfiction as its third genre, writer Beverly Lowry was hired to anchor that concentration.

Over the intervening years, as some of the faculty moved to other opportunities, those who remained and the program administration have been able to carefully select from the best contemporary writers to serve as new faculty members who expanded the program's offerings and continue to enrich its aesthetic diversity. As a result, the Mason program doesn't teach what might be thought of as the Mason "way to write"; instead, it offers experiences and opportunities in a nourishing environment that encourages students to grow into the writers they want to become. (By the way, you will find biographies of each of the faculty later in this handbook.) Throughout its history, the Mason program has encouraged students to work with numerous faculty during their time here, including crossing genres to gain from that experience. Students are also required to take at least one course out of the genre in which they are enrolled.

Today, you will learn from a core faculty of eleven highly acclaimed, extremely experienced literary artists who bring to each course and workshop our program's most precious commodity—their love of teaching.

Another trademark of the Mason program is the development and expansion of "non-classroom" opportunities, which have been established to encourage the enrichment of individual writers according to their interests and abilities (as well as to add experiences and credentials to their resumes). The rich array of ways to engage publishing practice and literary citizenship that distinguish Mason's MFA program from all other programs starts, at least chronologically, with the Fall for the Book festival (<https://fallforthebook.org/>), begun in 1999 as a venture in partnership with numerous community and arts organizations throughout the region. For more than 20 years now, it has presented multi-day literary experiences that students can—and we think should—take advantage of during their years at Mason. In addition, working behind the scenes with Fall for the Book can help you gain valuable experience in events production and arts management. Working with Fall for the Book could be undertaken for academic credit or, in some cases, for financial stipends. But, of course, just attending events offers students the chance to meet and talk with more than 100 writers, which is singular in itself.

In 2014, some MFA faculty, administration, and alumni joined together to found Stillhouse Press (<https://stillhousepress.org>), designed as a teaching press that both offers publication opportunities for writers from around the world and affords Mason students first-hand exposure to all facets of book publishing. Soon after its founding, Stillhouse produced its first title, a volume of short stories, *Helen on 86th Street and Other Stories*, by Mason alum Wendi Kaufman. Today, Stillhouse offers students experience in everything from manuscript selection to book design and production to effective marketing and business strategies required in the changing world of publishing. Engagement with the press is undertaken through course work, internships, and newly developed Graduate Professional Assistantships (which we are testing in 2019), as well as on a volunteer basis.

Writer Alan Cheuse, during almost 30 years of teaching at Mason, encouraged young writers to both find their own strengths and also look beyond themselves to the larger world for ideas and inspiration. For example, through his involvement with the annual Pegasus Prize, he brought to the Mason campus each year an international writer whose work had been selected for translation into English and publication in a special Pegasus edition. The event featured the international writer reading from their work in the original language and then Alan reading from the translation. When in 2014 talk within the program's administration and faculty turned to exploring international links, Alan advocated for a center that would bring writers from around the world to Mason on a consistent basis. Alan died in the late summer of 2015 after a car accident in California. It seemed only appropriate to name for him the center for international writing that grew out of those early conversations.

Today, the Cheuse Center for International Writers (<https://cheusecenter.gmu.edu/>) regularly brings literary artists to campus and the Washington, D.C., area as part of its work to facilitate "the exchange of international creative writers and writing in order to help foster the tolerance and understanding a more connected world requires." Events on campus and in the community built around those visits offer truly unique experiences for Mason's students, but the Center also offers MFA students a chance to propose their own research-abroad agendas and receive financial support to make them possible. Travel grants generally are \$5000 each, depending on funding availability, and are considered on a competitive basis.

In 2019, the MFA program announced a collaboration with nonprofit Daily Poetry Association, and Mason University Libraries to relocate the curation, publication, and administration of *Poetry Daily* from Charlottesville to Mason's campus. Launched in 1997, *Poetry Daily* is a highly esteemed online journal that features poets, their poetry, and publishers of poetry. The new collaboration transforms it into a significant learning opportunity for Mason students. Working with Poetry Faculty, students help select works to be featured each day on the *Poetry Daily* website (reimagined and redesigned at <https://poems.com>) and emailed every morning to a burgeoning list of subscribers. Students also work with *Poetry Daily's* editorial board of poets, and gain experience in design and use of online publications, social media and multi-media platforms, and nonprofit arts administration.

Finally, many MFA programs sustain traditional literary journals, and while Mason is no different in that respect, it boasts not one but two highly-acclaimed and innovative publications. In the early 1970s, Richard and Robert Bausch started *phoebe* during their pre-MFA-program days, then immediately folded it into the new degree program. *phoebe* prides itself on supporting up-and-coming writers whose style, form, voice, and subject matter demonstrate a vigorous appeal to the senses, intellect, and emotions of its readers. It publishes one print and one online issue per year (<https://phoebejournal.com>). *So to Speak* was founded in 1993 by an editorial collective of women—all MFA candidates—and has served as a space for feminist writing and art for more than 25 years. As the journal has evolved over the years, so have its editors' outlooks on feminism; they believe in an intersectional feminist outlook that includes, advocates for, and amplifies the perspectives and experiences of marginalized women and nonbinary people (<https://sotospeakjournal.org>).

During your tenure, as the program grows as a center of literary art and publishing practice activity, you

will grow with it into a core campus building (the new Robinson Hall) that reflects the centrality of the humanities at Mason. Such change and growth requires fresh ideas and new energy from thinkers and creatives like you.

So, we're really glad you're here.

Thanks to Bill Miller, who served the George Mason University community for 33 years and was Director of Creative Writing from 1992 to 2018, for drafting this program history. Bill is one of the many reasons you are benefiting from the rigorous scholarship, stellar faculty, and exceptional opportunities that the program offers today.

Students complete 48 graduate credits, distributed as follows:

ENGH 564: Forms of Poetry
ENGH 565: Forms of Nonfiction
ENGH 566: Forms of Fiction

This should be taken in the first semester. Workshops should not be taken with the forms course but students are encouraged to take ENGH 608 with forms courses.

_____ & _____

Students may begin taking these courses in their first semester. More than the minimum may be taken and counted as electives. ENGH 608s of another genre may be used to meet the "other genre" requirement. ENGH 608s vary in topic and genre from semester to semester. ENGH 608s taken to fulfill this requirement should be specific to a student's genre of study. Contact the Graduate Academic Coordinator if you have questions about whether a specific ENGH 608 falls within your genre of study.

Courses should include at least one section of ENGH 616 (nonfiction), ENGH 617 (poetry), or ENGH 618 (fiction), as appropriate to a student's genre of study, and at least three credit hours of ENGH 750 (poetry), 751 (fiction), or ENGH 752 (nonfiction), as appropriate to a student's genre of study. In each concentration, either a 600-level or 700-level workshop may be repeated as a third class to complete this requirement. ENGH 619, a special topics course may also be taken as a third class to complete this requirement.

_____ & _____ & _____
These courses are taken starting in the 2nd semester and repeated along with literature courses, special topics courses, and craft seminars.

For students in poetry it could be a forms course, ENGH 608, or ENGH 619 in fiction or nonfiction; for fiction students it could be a forms course, ENGH 608, or ENGH 619 in poetry or nonfiction; for nonfiction students it could be a forms course, ENGH 608, or ENGH 619 in poetry or fiction.

Any graduate-level literature courses meet this requirement. Contact the Graduate Academic Coordinator if you have questions about whether a specific course is a literature course. ENGH 608s and ENGH 619s are NOT literature courses.

Includes additional literature courses (more than the minimum are recommended) and writing courses beyond requirements. May include ENGH 798 (independent studies up to a max of 12 credit hours; 9 hours max if 3 credit hours are counted for literature credit).

Electives will include:

- At least one credit hour of ENGH 699, Visiting Writers - Repeats of ENGH 699 or a two-credit-hour workshop/independent study can be used to balance the one credit hour of ENGH 699.
- ENGH 506, Research for Narrative Writing - Required for all nonfiction students.
- Two pedagogical courses—ENGH 615 and ENGH 610 - Required for all TAs.
- Any extra course, including literature courses, workshops, special-topics-in-writing courses, independent studies, craft seminars, or other graduate level courses at Mason (courses taken outside of the English department must be pre-approved by the Program Director for elective credit).

Students take their thesis credit hours over two or more semesters. Students must take 3 credit hours of ENGH 799 (thesis) to start and then may divide up the remaining credit hours as they choose. Once enrolled in ENGH 799, students must continue in thesis until the final thesis is turned in, even if this results in extra thesis credits. Extra thesis credits cannot be applied toward the degree.

MFA EXAM _____ *This exam is a requirement for all poetry students.*
date passed

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MFA Degree Requirements

Students must successfully complete **48 credit hours** of graduate coursework. Students who have earned master's degrees may reduce the requirements for the MFA by up to 23 credit hours with the recommendation of the Program Director and approval of the College. Graduate credit may be transferred from other institutions if those credits have not been used to earn a degree, and to the extent that they fit MFA requirements. Credits previously earned in other Mason graduate programs or non-degree studies may also be used as they fit MFA requirements. To be eligible for transfer, credits must have been earned within six years prior to first enrollment as an admitted student in the MFA program.

Course Sequence

The degree is usually earned over six semesters (three years). This requires several semesters of taking a minimum of three courses (9 credit hours) and/or taking summer courses. The degree can be completed in a longer period, but must be completed within six years of enrolling.

Some writing courses must be taken in sequence. Craft seminars (ENGH 608) should be taken early in the program and may be repeated as a student wishes and as topics vary. Anything more than two would count as elective credit.

A student may take a 600-level workshop (ENGH 616, 617, or 618) concurrently with the appropriate Forms course (ENGH 564, 565 or 566) or they may wait until after completing Forms to take the 600-level workshop. Although depending on course availability, students may take an advanced 700-level workshop first (ENGH 750, 751, or 752). Because students are required to take multiple workshops, they are encouraged to take them with different faculty in their genre. Students are required to take three workshops: a 600-level, an advanced 700-level, and the third can be either level.

Some workshops may be taken for variable credit (one to six credit hours). ENGH 616 and 618 and 751 and 752 may be taken for variable credit at any time. ENGH 617 can be taken for variable credit only when it is taken for the second time. ENGH 750 is available for variable credit but only with instructor permission. All students interested in variable credit should talk to the instructor before registration and be sure to change the number of credit hours on Patriotweb when registering. Note: indicating variable credit can be tricky in PatriotWeb; you have to register, submit, then go back into the course to check/change (manually) the number of credits needed and resubmit before the semester's add/drop period concludes.

Non-workshop courses, literature courses, research courses, etc., may be taken as department offerings and student interests dictate, except where prerequisites have been set by the English Department. All students are required to take at least one credit of the Visiting Writers master class (ENGH 699) in their genre. Visiting writers are announced before each semester. Three visiting writer master classes taken over three semesters equals one 3-credit elective course, although the 1-credit 699 can be paired other ways, such as with a 2-credit independent study or workshop.

With the approval of the Program Director, the English Department Chair, and the faculty member of record, students may take independent studies (ENGH 798) with MFA or English faculty. Students must first complete at least 15 credits of course work. Given the program's architecture and requirements, independent studies are rare, but can go toward fulfilling elective requirements. (Forms to set up independent studies are available at the Creative Writing office or by emailing a request to the Graduate Academic Coordinator.)

Courses and Registration

The English Department offers courses in literature, creative writing, film, folklore, linguistics, Native American studies, and professional writing and editing. Graduate classes are taught as seminars with about 10-18 students. This format facilitates lively and engaged discussion as well as the concentrated attention typical of advanced study. Workshops are capped at 12 students. Graduate courses are scheduled with the needs of working students in mind. In Fall and Spring semesters, classes meet once a week at 4:30 or 7:20. Students may take courses in other academic disciplines and with other colleges/departments as long as the courses are graduate level, they inform your work as a writer in general or your thesis in particular, and approval is received from the Program Director. Such courses will count as electives.

Students must register for courses prior to the start of each semester or pay a \$125.00 late-registration fee. Students registering for the first time also pay a new-student fee and sometimes pay an educational resource fee. Please see <http://studentaccounts.gmu.edu> for a list of tuition and fees for any approaching semester. If you are a graduate assistant and are receiving a tuition waiver from the college, please be aware that the tuition waiver cannot cover these charges. Registration is accomplished online at <http://patriotweb.gmu.edu>.

Students are strongly urged to take a balance of workshop, literature, and craft courses every year. On occasion, students have taken all of their workshop courses, then their literature courses. Not only does this run counter to the beliefs and goals underlying the structure of the MFA program, but it also can mean that students lose touch with their own creative work in the semesters preceding their thesis work.

ENGH 799 Thesis: Registration and Rules

Students in the MFA program should take their 6 credit hours of thesis work over two or more semesters. Students receive a grade of IP (in progress) each semester until the finished thesis has been submitted.

Once enrolled in ENGH 799, students must be continuously enrolled in ENGH 799 until the final manuscript is submitted. Students who expect to extend their thesis work should divide thesis hours into smaller blocks, such as 1 or 2 credits per semester, to avoid having to take (and pay for) extra thesis credits. That said, students must take 3 credits of ENGH 799 to start and then may divide the remaining credit hours as they choose. Additional thesis credits beyond the required six cannot be counted toward the degree.

To register for thesis hours, students must first submit a thesis proposal and have it approved by all Committee Members, the Program Director, and the Department Chair. Once these approvals are in place, the Graduate Academic Coordinator will send registration information via email. Students should use this information (CRN and section number) to register. **It is important to change the variable credit option to the number of credit hours needed at the time of registration on Patriotweb. Note: indicating variable credit can be tricky in PatriotWeb; you have to register, submit, then go back into the course to check/change (manually) the number of credits needed and resubmit before the add/drop date (so best practice is to do so then and there).** If a mistake is made or you forget to check/change it before the semester's add/drop period concludes, a Late Schedule Adjustment form must be used to drop the current hours and add new hours. There is a fee associated with this change and additional tuition may be owed. Mistakes in registration can be easily fixed if caught early; later adjustments to registration involve paperwork, fees, and additional tuition charges.

Special Courses

Visiting Writers Master Classes

Visiting writers are an essential part of any good creative writing program. At George Mason, well over 400 nationally and internationally known writers have spoken on campus since the program began in 1980. Sometimes, the Visiting Writer series includes not only readings but lectures, panels, film and video screenings, seminars, workshops, symposia, and conferences. Events are usually free and open to the public, and most include informal opportunities to meet and talk with the writers. Students are strongly encouraged to become as involved as their schedules allow.

ENGH 699 Visiting Writers is the master class portion of a writer's visit and is only open to a maximum of 10 registered MFA students. The format of ENGH 699 varies from section to section. Faculty believe it is valuable for students to encounter the teaching methods and styles of many different creative temperaments, and in most cases, faculty ask the guest writer to design their own sessions. Visiting writers may make reading assignments in advance and devote class time to the discussion of assigned works and aesthetic issues, or they may make student manuscripts a core of the discussion, or they may do both. In all sections, however, students are expected to: 1) read the work of visiting writers before those writers arrive on campus, 2) submit a manuscript prior to class, 3) attend all public events such as readings, lectures, and panels, 4) attend all seminars and workshops, and 5) submit creative writing revised in light of seminar and workshop discussions and/or critical writing relevant to the writers' work. Specific syllabi are distributed by the faculty of record. Students must follow the syllabus and complete assignments accordingly. Students are required to take one ENGH 699 Visiting Writers course in their genre.

ENGH 699 courses are graded like any other course. Note that manuscripts submitted by students are sent to the visiting writer in advance, so complying with deadlines is essential. Individual manuscripts may not be commented on directly, but they are used by the visiting writer to prepare their in-class presentation.

Special Topics Courses

Students are advised that special topics courses—such as ENGH 513 Advanced Special Topics (LIT) and ENGH 685 Selected Topics (LIT)—are not offered according to a predictable schedule or rotation. If a course listed above in an area of interest becomes available, students are encouraged to take these courses when they are offered. For example, ENGH 670: Visual Culture: Theories and Histories, is a class that many MFA students have found enriching, but it is not offered on a regular basis.

Internships

The Department of English offers opportunities for qualified students to work with local companies and agencies in part-time positions for credit. Work may involve technical writing and editing, general editing, journalism, public relations, magazine work, creative writing, arts administration, and other career areas. These internships are taken as ENGH 504. Contact Scott Berg, Internship Coordinator, at sberg1@gmu.edu or 703-993-1635.

Rules and Tips for Registration

Departmental Approval Required: A departmental approval error received while registering on Patriotweb means that the student registering must email the instructor of record asking for an override. The email should include the student's name and G# (and reason for taking the course if the instructor and student are not acquainted or the student is not taking a regular MFA course). In some cases, faculty may ask for a manuscript prior to approving an override.

Overrides: Overrides on Patriotweb are the means by which faculty allow students to take courses that are controlled or closed. Once overrides are issued, students can register. Only the instructor can issue an override. Patriotweb will not notify students by email when they receive an override, so it is imperative that students check at least every day after they email their request to the instructor. For controlled and closed courses that indicate the need for departmental approval, students must contact the instructor via email to ask for an override.

Waitlist Overrides: These grant waitlisted students a seat in a previously full class at the discretion of the instructor (please understand that keeping class sizes small is to everyone's benefit). For students on a waitlist, when a seat becomes available it is offered in the form of an override to the student in the #1 position on the waitlist. Students on waitlists should routinely check their registration status page in Patriotweb for any override. Waitlist overrides only last 72 hours so students must register within those 72 hours. A new override will be issued to the next student on the waitlist should the override to the first student go unused.

Full-Time Status: The University Catalog stipulates that a full-time student is one taking 9 or more credit hours or 6 credit hours with a full-time graduate assistantship (TA or PA). Also, students receiving financial aid, scholarships, or fellowships may be required to take a certain number of credit hours per semester, usually 4.5 credits.

Inactive Student Status: With the exception of students in the thesis phase of the program, graduate students may take a semester away from study after they have been enrolled for at least one semester. No forms are required and there are no penalties/fees associated with taking a semester away, but students who are not enrolled in classes will lose privileges in the library and the gym. Those privileges will be restored once the student enrolls again. Students who go unregistered for more than two consecutive semesters will become inactive. Inactive students must apply for re-enrollment using a Graduate Application for Re-enrollment form (<https://chss.gmu.edu/graduate/policies/gradreenrollment>). Re-enrollments allow a student to complete a program after having to step away from the program for unforeseen circumstances. Most re-enrollment requests are granted; however, poor academic performance can be a factor in a denied request for re-enrollment. Once the form has been completed, it should be submitted to the Graduate Academic Coordinator for processing. After a re-enrollment has been approved and processed, it will take a few days before the student is allowed to register and their status is returned to "active." Students should carefully review the university policies pertaining to re-enrollment as well as information outlined on the re-enrollment form regarding time limits and unsatisfactory grades.

Please Note: Let the Program Director or the Graduate Academic Coordinator know if you need to take a semester away from study. If unforeseen circumstances make progress toward your degree difficult, talk to the Program Director to discuss your options.

After registering for classes each semester, check your student schedule to ensure you are registered for the correct sections and number of credit hours. Registration errors are easily corrected ahead of the add/drop date for each semester. If missed, however, registration errors can cause serious problems that can lead to extra expenses and possibly extra semesters of coursework.

MFA Exam (Poets)

Overview

The MFA exam is an important benchmark in the poetry program. Students are expected to sit for the exam in the summer between their second and third year of study. For poetry students, sitting for the exam is the chance to develop ideas and demonstrate knowledge of the genre after much preparation and consideration, and before taking on thesis studies.

Preparation begins with a drafted and submitted reading list and rationale. All students are encouraged to take Poetry Planet (ENGH 684) to read for the exam. Students are also encouraged to form informal study groups.

Reading List

An MFA reading list is a compilation of 20 poets' names created in preparation for the MFA exam and presented for approval, along with a rationale, prior to sitting for the MFA exam. Students are encouraged to begin compiling their reading lists early. In this way lists help shape students' reading and coursework even in the first year of study. Faculty are happy to advise students as they draft lists, even before committees are assigned.

How Should List Be Formatted?

- Lists should be attached to a completed cover sheet (see "Preparing for the MFA Exam" PDF)
- Poets on the list should be grouped in two columns: major and minor
- Within each column (major and minor), poets would be listed by full name and in chronological order, with birth and death dates after each name.
- A rationale should be attached to the list.

What Is a Rationale?

A rationale is a 250-500-word paper discussing the reasons for the selected names on the list and the various lines of influence and affiliation among the poets on the list. Every poet on the list need not fit into a seamless scheme. Several lines of interest, as well as affiliation and influence, will form a typical reading list. In many cases, a couple of names will not fit into a scheme at all. Rationales are required and must be submitted with reading lists for approval.

When Should Reading List and Rationale Be Submitted?

Lists and rationales should be submitted for approval any time after the completion of 12 credit hours of coursework in the MFA program. More typically, lists are submitted shortly after thesis director assignments are made, usually in the spring of the second year of study. Lists must be submitted for approval before completion of 36 credit hours and prior to registering for any thesis credit hours (ENGH 799).

Reading Lists and Rationales should be submitted to the student's thesis committee and the program's Graduate Academic Coordinator.

A separate, more detailed document "Preparing for the MFA Exam" will be circulated to all poetry students and is available upon request from the Graduate Academic Coordinator.

MFA Thesis

THESIS TIMELINE OVERVIEW

2nd-Year Students

Mid-October:
Poetry Thesis Director Requests Due

Late March:
Prose Thesis Director Requests Due

April:
Confirm Second and Third Readers

June:
Submit Thesis Proposal Approval
Sheet to Grad Academic Coord

THESIS TIMELINE OVERVIEW

3rd-Year Students

Friday before Thanksgiving:
First draft due to thesis advisors

Friday before Spring Break:
Final draft due to thesis advisors

First Friday in April:
Final ms due to thesis readers

First Friday in May:
Completed, formatted thesis
projects due to the library

General Information

Your MFA thesis must be a manuscript long enough to suggest the overall plan and design you envision for the complete manuscript, and to demonstrate your command of the ideas, techniques, and strategies of your genre. In prose, the manuscript should be at least 30,000 words. In poetry, the length should be at least 45 pages. All finished manuscripts must be approved by the members of the individual thesis committee. All theses also must be accepted by the Department of English and the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, and all must meet the requirements of the Mason Library for terminal degree theses ([see https://library.gmu.edu/udts](https://library.gmu.edu/udts)). Thesis proposals must be approved by the Program Director prior to initial thesis registration.

First and foremost, regardless of genre, students should review their manuscripts to ensure they are mechanically correct. Each thesis should uphold the highest possible standards in manuscript preparation. That those standards will be met should be visible in the final draft of a thesis as it goes to the Committee Members who are being asked to approve it.

The thesis manuscript, regardless of genre, should show each student's ability to meet the intellectual and imaginative challenges of a longer work—such as identifying and defining a subject and theme that merit treatment at length; conducting necessary research; demonstrating a range of technique and craft; revising in a way that shows an ability to identify weaknesses and solve problems; and demonstrating an awareness of work written by other writers that is relevant to your own work. Students approaching the thesis process without a lot of foregrounding workshops of the proposed project, discussion with faculty, craft seminars and literature courses that embrace the thesis genre, should not expect the thesis process itself to make up for all that might be lacking in preparedness. This does not mean that a successful thesis cannot be completed. It does mean that the thesis process and comments from Committee Members cannot be expected to bear the full weight of all preparation. In such a case, a final thesis may be a more thorough-going-if-partial manuscript of what will become a publishable work. The Committee Members have the first say in what constitutes an acceptable thesis, with their judgement to be confirmed by the English department and the College of Humanities and Social Sciences.

MFA Thesis (Cont.)

Thesis Committee Selection

A thesis committee consists of three members: a director and two readers. Students submit Thesis Director requests to the Graduate Academic Coordinator and a faculty member is assigned by the Program Director after consulting with appropriate faculty. Two readers are then selected by the student in consultation with their Thesis Director. In poetry, the third reader should not be a Poetry Faculty member but rather a literature or Prose Faculty member. In prose (fiction and non-fiction), students have the option of choosing the third reader from the Prose Faculty or from outside of it. The third Committee Member also may be from outside of Mason, but that person must be formally vetted before joining the committee. Accepting the outside member is up to the Program Director, English Department, and College of Humanities and Social Sciences.

Thesis Director Requests

Poetry

The Creative Writing Director assigns Thesis Directors to students, working with the faculty members to do so in a fair and thoughtful manner. This assignment procedure is also necessary in order to ensure an equal distribution of thesis work among faculty members.

Poetry students submit their thesis requests to the Graduate Academic Coordinator in the middle of the fall semester of their second year. On the Thesis Director Request Form, students rank the faculty in order of preference. Notes may be included if students have already been in touch with faculty regarding their thesis. Prior discussion with faculty, however, is discouraged; students should base their rankings on their knowledge of faculty. For this reason, it is important that students work with as many MFA faculty members as possible in their early semesters of study.

Faculty members approach the work of directing a thesis and serving as a reader in different ways, just as students approach the work of writing a thesis in different ways. In their role as directors, some will encourage frequent meetings while others will allow great flexibility.

Prose

Prose students will request a Thesis Director assignment toward the end of March of their second year. The Prose Faculty regrets that it will not always be able to give students their first, second or even third choices—in part, the size of any given class and the unevenness of assignment requests spread across faculty will make this impossible. Faculty will, however, put a good deal of thought and no small amount of discussion into how to make these assignments. It is in everyone's interest that no one faculty member is overloaded.

Prose students should expect to receive written comments from their Thesis Director and should meet with their director as they work through drafts. Students and their Thesis Director will determine the timing and frequency of meetings.

Prose Faculty deeply prefer that thesis students concentrate on quality over quantity. To this end, they ask students to focus on the first 100 to 150 pages of their projects for the purpose of the final draft. They

MFA Thesis (Cont.)

encourage students to look at the thesis project as only one step on the road to publication. Their hope is that with 100-150 strong pages, students will more easily pick up the thread of their work after graduation. They should conceptualize the entire project as much and as fully as possible. And they should discuss it with their Thesis Director. Students also should be mindful that “more” is not always “better.”

Once the Thesis Director is matched to the student, the student and Thesis Director should begin thinking about the rest of the committee. Bear in mind that all Prose Faculty may also serve as Second and Third readers in fiction. Poetry Faculty members—Eric Pankey, Jennifer Atkinson, Sally Keith and Peter Streckfus—have also stated their willingness to read prose theses. And, of course, the English Department literature faculty may also serve as readers of prose theses, if students have taken a course with them.

Forming Your Thesis Committee (Poetry + Prose)

After receiving a Thesis Director assignment, students should think about who could serve as their other two committee members, inform their Thesis Director, then move accordingly and quickly to ask those readers to serve on their committee. Generally, students will ask two other MFA faculty to serve as Committee Members, but cases can be made to have other English faculty, other Mason faculty, or readers from outside the Mason community to serve (vetted and approved by the Program Director). Once a committee is in place, a schedule should be planned out to include meeting dates, progress reports, and pre-established dates for first drafts, final drafts, and revised manuscripts to readers (the deadline for final, formatted thesis projects to the library is established by the university, and is always the first Friday of May). Poetry students should keep in mind when planning their schedule that they will not be allowed to register for their final three hours of ENGH 799 until they have passed the required comprehensive exam.

MFA Thesis (Cont.)

The Thesis Proposal

Once your committee is in place, it's time to draft a proposal. Proposals usually range from 3-5 pages in length. (There is no template for a proposal, but there is a Thesis Proposal Approval cover sheet). The proposal is submitted to the Graduate Academic Coordinator prior to the end of your second academic year, or soon thereafter (typically by June 1).

Writing Sample

A writing sample can be a chapter of a novel, a representative short story, a group of poems, etc. The number of pages is not specified, but the sample must be long enough to let the reader make a fair appraisal of the quality of the writing. While it is impossible to predict in advance the direction creative work will take, approval of a creative writing thesis proposal indicates that the quality of the work is suitable, and if the remainder of the thesis is the same quality and is consistent with the general goals of the proposal, the finished work will satisfy the thesis requirement.

Preparation for Thesis Submission

In preparing the final version of the thesis, students must adhere to the format specifications found at <https://library.gmu.edu/udts>. Formatting is an important step and must be approved by the University Dissertation and Thesis Coordinator (UDTS). Each student is responsible for ensuring that their thesis meets all such requirements. *You should only use the CHSS signature sheet template.* Once you have your information in the template, a quick formatting check can be done by sending your signature sheet as an email attachment to Sally Evans, the Thesis and Dissertation Coordinator. It is highly encouraged that you have Sally Evans check and approve your formatting prior to submitting your thesis for Chair and Dean approval. Print official copies of the signature page for collection of signatures. Email the coordinator at udts@gmu.edu to make these arrangements.

Thesis Submission Process

- Students may attend a thesis formatting workshop early in their process. Contact the coordinator at udts@gmu.edu for scheduling information.
- On occasion, students work with their three Committee Members, writing and submitting drafts and making changes in a timely manner, but typically second and third readers do not expect to see the thesis until the Thesis Director has approved it. Note that students no longer have to provide final printed copies of their theses, but some Committee Members may want to see paper copies during the writing process.
- As the draft is completed, email the document to udts@gmu.edu for format review and also to arrange a Submission Consultation.
- Print a Thesis Signature Cover Sheet from the thesis.gmu.edu web site: library.gmu.edu/udts/signaturesheets (click on the College of Humanities and Social Sciences link).
- Collect Committee Members' signatures. The signature page must be approved and signed by the committee before the English Department Chair and the Dean of the College will sign. *Original signatures are required.*

MFA Thesis (Cont.)

- Make appointments with the English Department Chair and Dean to obtain signatures. Note that signatures usually cannot be obtained on a walk-in basis unless the Chair or Dean is holding open hours for such purposes.
- Follow the instructions provided by the UDTS to electronically submit the thesis and signature pages. Students can have copies of their thesis bound for personal use, but students will no longer turn in paper copies to be bound and placed in the library.
- Important: The electronic version of your thesis will be available for online viewing unless you embargo it as you submit it. A form is required to request the embargo, and it requires the Dean's approval, by signature. Obtain the form as you make final preparations of your manuscript and get the signature when you obtain the Dean's signature on the final thesis signature page.

Thesis Embargo Policy

No one at the university disputes your ownership of your work. The university leadership does take the position that graduate work should be shared with the scholarly community. This is primarily based on "research" in the more classic sense of the term. But it embraces all work, including creative theses by MFA students. The university system, then, is built to lean toward sharing information that is included in graduate theses and dissertations. For these purposes, they use an Internet system or set of systems that makes this information available to the larger world.

Any graduate student can request an embargo to keep their work off the Internet for a specific period. Almost all of our students make that request. And our graduate students are about the only ones at Mason who make that request. The faculty and administration of the MFA program support students in these requests and will continue to do so, keeping students informed of any changes or alterations of policies or procedures. Though the burden of maintaining the embargo falls to the student ultimately, we pledge to help remind students of renewals and the necessity to file for renewals as the time comes around each year.

As of Fall 2017,

- Embargoes will be granted for an initial period of 10 years.
- Embargoes can be renewed every ten years and are repeatable forever.
- Theses, though kept off the Internet by the embargo, will be available for viewing on campus only and only through the libraries' Special Collections office. (This is the situation as it pertained prior to the invention of the Internet.) Here, though, a graduating student can request to have the manuscript held out of the viewable files for a period of time starting right after submission in order to have time to work with an agent or editor or faculty mentor to see if they can immediately sell the book, and can do so without it being compromised even by a slip-up in the embargo system. This period of time could be a year or several years, depending on the situation.
- When graduating students submit their theses they will be told how and when to renew the embargo, how to alter the provisions of the embargo they requested should they desire to do so, and how to stay updated on any changes in the embargo policy. This information is to come from the library staff.

MFA Thesis (Cont.)

THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND ABOUT THESIS:

- Request your director (Poets: fall semester of second year / Prose Writers: spring semester of second year)
- Think about second and third readers, inform your Thesis Director, and then ask and confirm two other Committee Members (See "Forming Your Thesis Committee")
- Draft a proposal outlining your plans for your thesis project
- Prepare a writing sample similar to the writing that your committee can expect to see in your final thesis
- Print and complete a Thesis Proposal Approval cover sheet
- Submit your Thesis Proposal Approval cover sheet, proposal, and writing sample Graduate Academic Coordinator by the end of your second academic year
- Register for ENGH 799 Thesis using the codes provided by the Graduate Academic Coordinator
- ENGH 799 is a variable course credit course; when you register, check to make sure you are registered for the correct amount of credits (typically 3 for each semester for a maximum of 6 thesis credits)
- If you don't maintain continuous enrollment in ENGH 799 until your thesis is turned in, you will owe those thesis hours retroactively in order to graduate

Tuition, Assistanships, Fellowships, Awards

Tuition and Fees

Tuition rates are set by the Board of Visitors as part of its budget-setting function. As of Summer 2019, the in-state rate per graduate credit hour is \$652.00 and the out-of-state rate per graduate credit hour is \$1,540.00. Likely, the rate will increase by 8-10% in ensuing years.

In addition to tuition, students are required to certain pay fees:

- Educational Resource Fee: This fee is charged each semester upon registration. This fee ranges from \$60-\$100 depending on student registration.
- New-Student Registration Fee: This fee is charged one time only upon each student's first registration.
- Late Fee: This fee is charged when a student registers for credit hours after the first day of classes.

Teaching Assistants (TAs) and Professional Assistants (PAs), please note: Your tuition waiver allocation includes the ERF (Educational Resource Fee), but does not include any other fees, such as the new student fee or any late fees.

Assistantships

MFA students are eligible for appointment as teaching assistants (TAs) working for the English Department. Typically, these appointments are part of the initial application process to the program, but can at times be offered any time during the course of a student's tenure in the program, as long as they meet eligibility requirements (18 credits earned and ENGH 615 successfully completed). Decisions are based on numerous factors, including interview results, teaching or tutoring needs of the English Department, applicant's background and preparation, etc. TAs take courses in the teaching of composition (ENGH 615) and literature (ENGH 610), and work for the department as writing tutors and instructors of composition and literature courses. Depending on demand, TAs may also have the opportunity to teach ENGH 396 Intro to Creative Writing to undergraduates.

Each TA appointment includes a tuition waiver for graduate courses that meet degree requirements. TAs are also eligible for paid health insurance and all full-time TAs are considered as in-state students for tuition payment purposes. This allows a TA to take a course not covered by waiver and pay for it at in-state rates regardless of domicile status.

In the 2019-20 academic year, new Graduate Professional Assistantships (PAs) were established to support the work of the literary citizenship and publishing practice initiatives associated with the program (such as Fall for the Book, Stillhouse Press, *Poetry Daily*, and the Cheuse Center for International Writers). The terms, benefits, and conditions are identical to those for TAs (a contracted assignment for 20 hours / week that includes a stipend, tuition waiver, and optional health care coverage). PA positions include Outreach Coordinator, *Poetry Daily*; Production Coordinator, *Poetry Daily*; Operations Assistant, Stillhouse Press; Poetry Editor, Stillhouse Press; Submissions Manager, Stillhouse Press; Administrative Assistant, Cheuse Center; Marketing and Social Media Coordinator, CW Program (with assignments involving FFTB, SH, and CC as necessary). The 2019-20 AY is a trial year for these PAs; as such, funding for the number of PAs and the specific positions available may vary.

The selection of both TAs and PAs involves a competitive application process and possible interviews.

Tuition, Assistantships, Fellowships, Awards

TA Selection

Selection of teaching assistants TAs occurs prior to the fall semester with assignments made on both a three-year and shorter basis. Students receiving what are expected to be three-year assignments tutor in Mason's Writing Center their first year and then enter the classroom teaching for their second and third years. Students receiving two-year appointments may enter the classroom during their third semester in the MFA program. As classroom instructors, both three-year and two-year TAs must take a pedagogical course, ENGH 615, prior to entering the classroom. Their initial teaching assignment is two sections of English 101, normally in the fall of their first year of teaching eligibility. After that, they take a second pedagogical course, ENGH 610, and may move into teaching literature courses (or split prep comp / lit courses). TAs may also have an opportunity to teach undergraduate creative writing courses. TAs may also receive an assignment to assist another English faculty member teaching a large-enrollment literature course. TAs appointed for less than three years will work on a specific schedule worked out at the time of appointment.

Tuition Waiver and Course Loads

All full-time TAs and PAs held by MFA students come with a tuition waiver. However, the waiver is subject to the allocation of waiver funds by the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, and is only good for up to 48 total credit hours of coursework that meet the requirements of the MFA. Waiver is managed by the Creative Writing Program to provide for completion of the program in three academic years. Because of the close management of waiver, TAs and PAs are highly encouraged to inform the Graduate Academic Coordinator of their enrollment plans ahead of each semester. Annual waiver is based on funded students taking up to, but not exceeding, 18 credits in a budget year (that includes courses taken in the summer *prior* to the academic year, the fall semester, and the spring semester). Reporting intended registration is necessary in managing waiver and ensuring the fairest distribution of available waiver funds. Students who intentionally or inadvertently register for and complete more than 18 credits in a budget year or 48 credits cumulative over the course of the program should expect to be responsible for paying for those credits according to their domicile status at in-state or out-of-state rates.

All full-time TAs and PAs must enroll in at least six credit hours of graduate coursework each semester except in their final semester when, if they have fewer than six credits left, they may register for a smaller number of credit hours. Students may register for coursework during the summer session following the academic year in which they received a tuition waiver and have the hours covered by waiver, but those waiver dollars are part of the student's total for that year.

Fellowships

The MFA program has established four fellowships to support students as they focus on thesis work in the third year of study. Awards are announced toward the end of February each year. Awards include the *Heritage Fellowship*—set up by Richard Bausch and continued by the second Heritage Chair, poet Eric Pankey—that affords recipients additional time to write—and *Thesis Fellowships*, which also offer students a level of support to focus on their work. All fellowship recipients receive a stipend and a tuition waiver equal to that of graduate assistantships.

To Apply for a Fellowship: A fellowship application is analogous to a thesis proposal, including a statement of the project the student intends to undertake and a writing sample. The sample should serve to update faculty with whom the student has not worked recently on the status of their writing. Applications are only accepted electronically and should be submitted to the Graduate Academic Coordinator. More details about available fellowships, deadlines, and application specifics can be found on the creative writing site.

Tuition, Assistanships, Fellowships, Awards

Travel Research Grants

Grants from the Cheuse Center for International Writers (cheusecenter.gmu.edu) are designed to help George Mason's MFA students pursue international research for creative projects they are either currently working on or hope to begin. Students submit proposals of 1500 words for the opportunity to travel to a country or region that fits their research needs. Proposals are then evaluated by a three-person review team. Usually between 2-4 students are selected as Cheuse Center travel grant recipients, and each awardee receives approximately \$5,000 toward their international travel. In return, students must deliver a piece of creative writing from their travels and a secondary project designed to engage with the local population. Learn about past Cheuse Center Fellows here: <https://cheusecenter.gmu.edu/our-fellows/mfa-2019>.

Spring Writing Contests and Awards

Mark Craver Poetry Award was created in honor of Mark Craver, an MA and MFA alum as well as a popular Mason adjunct professor and an area high school teacher until his death in January 2004.

Mary Robert Rinehart Awards were inaugurated by the the family of the late Mary Roberts Rinehart, who has been likened to Agatha Christie, although her first novel appeared years before Christie's first. She is also the source of the phrase "The butler did it!" although that exact phrase never appears in any of her writing.

Joseph A. Lohman III Poetry Award was established by Judith Lelchook through the Academy of American Poets in New York to honor her husband, a lover of poetry. Applicants need to be 23 years old or younger, because the winner is automatically considered for AAP's "Promising Young Poet Award."

Virginia Downs Poetry Award was established by the family and friends of Virginia Downs (1916-1984), poet and George Mason University graduate.

Shelley A. Marshall Fiction Award was established by Donn Marshall, the husband of Shelley Marshall (1963-2001), a GMU alumna killed in the September 11, 2001, attack on the Pentagon.

Dan Rudy Fiction Award was established by the family and friends of Dan Rudy (1947-1983), fiction writer and George Mason University MFA candidate.

Alan Cheuse Awards in Fiction and Nonfiction honor former Mason faculty member, author, editor, and NPR commentator Alan Cheuse, who died in 2015 from injuries suffered in an automobile accident.

To Apply: Spring Writing Contests are open to all currently enrolled Mason students although most applications come from currently enrolled MFA students. Unique submissions are required for each contest entered. Students must submit an electronic copy of each submission to masoncw@gmu.edu by the stipulated deadline (typically in mid-March). Check the creative writing website for guidelines and details.

Outstanding Graduate Student Award: Each spring the Department of English chooses Outstanding Graduate Students from each concentration, including Outstanding Graduate Students from each MFA genre. Nominees are selected by department faculty and recipients are selected by a faculty committee. Recipients are recognized at the annual English Honors Reception where they also receive their award.

MFA Faculty



Jennifer Atkinson

Poetry

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Jennifer Atkinson is the author of five collections of poetry—*The Dogwood Tree*, *The Drowned City*, *Drift Ice*, *Canticle of the Night Path*, and most recently, *The Thinking Eye*. Her poetry can be seen in *Field*, *The Cincinnati Review*, *The Missouri Review*, *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Bennington Review*, *Image*, and elsewhere. Both her poetry and her nonfiction have been honored with Pushcart Prizes. She taught in Nepal and Japan and at the University of Iowa and Washington University before joining the faculty of George Mason University, where she usually teaches Creative Writing, Poetry Writing (at the graduate and undergraduate levels), and recent and contemporary American poetry. jenniferatkinsonpoet.com



Courtney Brkic

Fiction

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Courtney Brkic (MFA, New York University) is the author of *The First Rule of Swimming*, a 2013 *New York Times* Editors' Choice. *Stillness*, her short fiction collection about the wars in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, was a 2003 *Chicago Tribune* "Best Book" and a 2003 *New York Times* "Notable Book." Her memoir, *The Stone Fields*, records her work on mass grave sites around Srebrenica, as well as her family's history during the Second World War in Sarajevo, and was shortlisted for a "Freedom of Expression Award" by the Index on Censorship. She is the recipient of an NEA fellowship, a Fulbright Scholarship, a *New York Times* Fellowship and a Whiting Writers Award, and her work has appeared in *Zoetrope*, *Harpers & Queen*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post Magazine*, *National Geographic*, *Dissent* and *The Alaska Quarterly Review*, among others. courtneyangelabrkc.com



Tim Denevi

Nonfiction

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Timothy Denevi (MFA, University of Iowa) is the author of *Freak Kingdom: Hunter S. Thompson's Manic Ten-Year Crusade Against American Fascism* (PublicAffairs, 2018) and *Hyper: A Personal History of ADHD* (Simon & Schuster, 2014). His essays on politics, sport, and religion have recently appeared in *The Paris Review*, *New York Magazine*, *Salon*, *The Normal School*, and *Literary Hub*. He's been awarded fellowships by the MacDowell Colony and the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts. timdenevi.com



Stephen Goodwin

Fiction

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Stephen Goodwin (MA, University of Virginia) is the author of three novels, including *The Blood of Paradise* and *Breaking Her Fall*, and two books of nonfiction. His short fiction has appeared in *Shenandoah*, *Sewanee Review*, *Georgia Review*, and *Gentleman's Quarterly*; his essays and nonfiction has appeared in the *Washington Post*, *USA Today*, *Preservation*, *Poets & Writers Magazine*, and several sports magazines. He has received fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation and the Ingram Merrill Foundation. He is a former director of the literature program at the National Endowment for the Arts, and has twice served as president of the PEN/Faulkner Foundation.

MFA Faculty



Helon Habila

Fiction

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Helon Habila won a Windham-Campbell prize from Yale University in 2015. He is the author of the novels *Waiting for an Angel* (2002), *Measuring Time* (2007), *Oil on Water* (2010), and most recently, *Travelers* (2019), which deals with the migrant crisis in Europe. He edited *The Granta Book of The African Short Story* (2013), and the British Council's *New Writing 14* (with Lavinia Greenlaw). His book of nonfiction, *The Chibok Girls* (2016), focuses on the kidnapping of 276 school girls by Boko Haram Islamists in northeastern Nigeria. Habila is a contributing editor to the *Virginia Quarterly Review* and a regular contributor to the *UK Guardian*. Habila's short stories, essays and reviews have appeared in the *Wall Street Journal*, *VQR*, *Granta*, the *UK Guardian*, *Guernica*, *AGNI*, and other journals. Habila has held many fellowships including the Chinua Achebe Fellowship at Bard College in 2005 and the Berlin DAAD Fellowship in 2013-2014. helonhabila.com



Tania James

Fiction

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Tania James (MFA, Columbia) is the author of three works of fiction, most recently the novel *The Tusk That Did the Damage* (Knopf). *Tusk* was named a Best Book of 2015 by *The San Francisco Chronicle*, *The Guardian*, and NPR, and shortlisted for the International Dylan Thomas Prize. Her stories have been published in *Granta*, *One Story*, *Oxford American*, *Tin House*, and other venues. Her story, "The Liberator," was published in *Freeman's: The Future of New Writing*, and was longlisted for the 2018 Sunday Times Short Story Prize. She received her BA in filmmaking from Harvard University. taniajames.com



Sally Keith

Poetry

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Sally Keith (MFA, University of Iowa) is the author of four collections of poetry, most recently *River House* (Milkweed Editions) and before that *The Fact of the Matter* (Milkweed). She has published individual poems in journals and anthologies, including *Colorado Review*, *Conjunctions*, *New American Writing*, and *A Public Space*. Sally has been awarded fellowships to the Breadloaf Writers' Conference, a Pushcart Prize, and the *Denver Quarterly's* Lynda Hall Award. Prior to joining Mason's MFA faculty, she was awarded the year-long Emerging Writer Lectureship at Gettysburg College, after which she taught at the University of Rochester.



Kyoko Mori

Nonfiction

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Kyoko Mori (MA and PhD, University of Wisconsin) is the author of three nonfiction books, *Yarn: Remembering The Way Home, A Memoir*; *The Dream of Water: A Memoir*; and *Polite Lies: On Being a Woman Caught Between Two Cultures*, and her essays have appeared in numerous publications including *The Best American Essays*. She has also published three novels, the most recent being *Stone Field, True Arrow*. She was born in Kobe, Japan, and moved to the United States in 1977. Prior to joining the faculty at Mason, she was a Briggs-Copeland lecturer in Creative Writing at Harvard University. kyokomori.com

MFA Faculty



Eric Pankey

Poetry

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Eric Pankey (MFA, University of Iowa) is the author of twelve collections of poems, most recently *Augury* (Milkweed Editions 2017). Three new books—*The Owl of Minerva*, a collection of poems; *Alias*, a collection of prose poems; and *Vestiges: Notes, Responses, & Essays 1988-2018*, a collection of essays—are forthcoming in 2019. His poetry, essays, and reviews have appeared widely in such journals as *The Iowa Review*, *The Harvard Review*, *The Kenyon Review*, *The New Yorker*, *The New Republic*, and *The Yale Review*. His work has been honored by awards such as the Walt Whitman Award and the New Measure Poetry Prize, and supported by fellowships from John Simon Guggenheim Foundation, The National Endowment for the Arts, the Ingram Merrill Foundation, and the Brown Foundation. He is the Heritage Chair in Writing at George Mason University. ericpankey.com



Susan Shreve

Fiction

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Susan Shreve (MA, University of Virginia) is the author of seventeen novels, most recently *More News Tomorrow*, as well as a memoir, *Warm Springs: Traces of a Childhood at FDR's Polio Haven*, twenty-nine books for children, and she has edited or co-edited five anthologies, including *Skin Deep* with Marita Golden, and *Tales Out of School* with Porter Shreve. She has been the Jenny Moore Writer in residence at George Washington University, a Guggenheim Fellow in Fiction, and a recipient of a grant in Fiction from the National Endowment for the Arts. Susan has served as president of the PEN/Faulkner Foundation. Susan started teaching at Mason in 1976 and co-founded the MFA program in 1980. Please note that Susan will retire after the Fall 2019 semester. susanshreve.com



Peter Streckfus

Poetry

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Peter Streckfus (MFA, George Mason University) won the Yale Series of Younger Poets Award in 2004 with his first book, *The Cuckoo*. His second book, *Errings*, came out in February 2014 from Fordham University. His individual poems have won numerous prizes and awards, including grants from the Peter S. Reed Foundation and the Breadloaf Writers Conference. At the University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, where he taught as an assistant professor prior to joining the faculty at Mason, Peter won the Barnwell-Sellers Award for Creative Writing plus two research grants. In the 2013-14 academic year, he was selected as a Rome Prize Fellow by the American Academy in Rome and spent the year in Rome studying and writing. He is the editorial director of *Poetry Daily*, a daily online poetry journal that launched in 1997 and relocated to Mason in 2019 in partnership between the Creative Writing Program, University Libraries, and its founding nonprofit organization. peterstreckfus.com

MFA Administration



Holly Mason
Graduate Admissions Coordinator
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Holly Mason (MFA, George Mason University) became Graduate Admissions Coordinator in July 2019. While pursuing her MFA, she served as a tutor in the Writing Center and as the Coordinator of the Weekly Graduate Write-Ins. She has years of experience teaching college Composition, Humanities, Literature, and Creative Writing classes. She is originally from North Carolina, where she received her BA in English (with a Minor in Dance) from UNC-Greensboro.



Jay Patel
Graduate Academic Coordinator
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Jay Patel (BA and MFA, George Mason University) has been the Graduate Academic Coordinator since 2012. He is also an adjunct faculty member for the English Department, teaching English 101, 201, and 302.



Art Taylor
Assistant Director
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Art Taylor (MFA, George Mason University) teaches creative writing, literature, and composition. He won the 2019 Edgar Award for Best Short Story for "English 398: Fiction Workshop," originally published in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*. He is the author of *On the Road with Del & Louise: A Novel in Stories*, winner of the Agatha Award for Best First Novel, and he has won three additional Agatha Awards, an Anthony Award, two Macavity Awards, and three consecutive Derringer Awards for his short fiction. arttaylorwriter.com



Gregg Wilhelm
Creative Writing Director
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Gregg Wilhelm (MFA, University of Tampa) became Creative Writing Director in Spring 2018. His expertise covers book publishing, arts administration, and higher education. He started his career at Johns Hopkins University Press, launched three imprints including one with a major independent bookseller, founded nonprofit literary arts organization CityLit Project, and held adjunct and leadership positions at several institutions. He is a recipient of a Maryland State Arts Council Individual Artist Award, a RUBYS Artist Grant from the Greater Baltimore Cultural Alliance, and the Dambach Award for Service to the Literary Arts. greggwilhelm.com

Other People to Know



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Carnegie Mellon University
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University of Wisconsin-Madison

Literary Arts and Publishing Practice

Mason Creative Writing is a community that fosters serious engagement with literary art and the practical application of publishing knowledge. The following programs, organizations, and events affiliated with the Creative Writing Program support the careers of writers and cultivate literary community. They offer students opportunities to develop a variety of publishing skills and to deepen their commitment to literary citizenship.

Fall For the Book and New Leaves Writers' Conference

Celebrating its 20th anniversary in 2018, [Fall for the Book](#) has mushroomed into a multi-day literary extravaganza on campus and in Fairfax. It features nearly 150 of writers representing multiple genres, including Mason alumni. The festival attracts 15,000 people and turns the entire area into a literary mecca for readers and writers from around the region. A separate spring-time event, the [New Leaves Writers' Conference](#) features some of that semester's Visiting Writers to Mason and focuses on all aspects of writing: the craft, the business, and the life of the writer.

Stillhouse Press

Founded in 2014 by creative writing program alumni, [Stillhouse Press](#) is one of the country's few "teaching presses," an operational imprint publishing books by writers from across the country and managed by students with the guidance of industry experts. Its first title was *Helen on 86th Street and Other Stories*, by Mason MFA alumnae Wendi Kaufman, who passed away in August 2014.

Cheuse Center for International Writers

After the untimely death of long-time faculty member, author, and critic Alan Cheuse, the [Cheuse Center for International Writers](#) was established specifically to host diverse writers from around the world while developing opportunities for Mason students to conduct research abroad. Among its many activities, the center also coordinates an annual "Day of Translation" event on campus.

Literary Journals

The graduate literary journals *phoebe* and *So To Speak*, in partnership with the Office of Student Media, publish work by writers from across the country in both print and digital editions. [phoebe](#) has been publishing original poetry, prose, and visual art since 1971. Founded in 1993 by an editorial collective of women—all MFA candidates—[So To Speak](#) has been a dynamic showcase of feminist writing and art. *So To Speak* seeks to publish work that addresses issues of significance to women's lives and movements for women's equality and that live up to a high standard of language, form, and meaning.

Poetry Daily

Since 1997, *Poetry Daily* ([poems.com](#)) has been an online reading space that brings news and information about poetry, poets, and the world of poetry publications to thousands of readers. In early 2019, the Creative Writing Program and University Libraries announced a partnership with founding nonprofit Daily Poetry Association to relocate the journal's curation, publication, and administration to Mason. A significant pedagogical component was developed for students and a new website was launched in April 2019, unveiling a more robust, more user-friendly experience.



MFA Program Contact Information

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Note:
MFA Faculty offices are located at the
University Townhouse Complex
4260 Chain Bridge Road
Unit A6, second floor

Job Search Resources

General searches: indeed.com, linkedin.com

Academic Searches: higherjobs.com, higher360.com, careers.insidehighered.com, chroniclevitae.com

Another good place to lurk are the creative writing wikis organized by year (Google “creative writing wiki”).

Literary and Academic: awpwriter.org/careers/job_list/, aaronline.org (database of literary agents, but an easy way to leap to agency sites to check out their job postings)

Publishing searches: publishersmarketplace.com/jobs/, jobzone.publishersweekly.com, aupresses.org (university press website, click on resources), plus the “big five” publishers in NYC have robust HR sites

General arts-related searches: jobbank.artsusa.org, artistcommunities.org/jobs, sign-up for the free ArtsJournal weekly newsletter and get classified in your inbox artsjournal.com/category/words

Humanities searches: loc.gov/careers/, statehumanities.org/job/ (not the best clearinghouse site, so you might want to drill down into the humanities councils’ sites of states that interest you; state centers for the book tend to be housed at either humanities councils or major public libraries)

Tip: individual state arts councils and nonprofit associations often maintain job banks; for example, Minnesota Council of Nonprofits (jobs.minnesotanonprofits.org), Springboard for the Arts (springboardforthearts.org), and New York Foundation for the Arts (nyfa.org/jobs). So your search can really be refined by job sector, location, and position desired.