

# Advanced Certificate in Innovative Writing GRADUATE HANDBOOK



# Advanced Certificate in Innovative Writing Graduate Handbook

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## **INTRODUCTION TO THE ADVANCED CERTIFICATE IN INNOVATIVE WRITING**

This handbook introduces students to the practices and requirements of the UB English Department's Advanced Certificate in Innovative Writing. You will find information and advice here about a wide range of subjects relating to all stages of your progress through the Certificate, including coursework, thesis writing, and general thoughts on publication. Do not hesitate to contact the appropriate departmental officers—especially the Director of the Creative Writing—if you have any questions or if you need further information.

### **Director of Creative Writing**

Dimitri Anastasopoulos  
435 Clemens Hall  
[danastas@buffalo.edu](mailto:danastas@buffalo.edu)

### **OUR MISSION, OR WHY GET THIS WRITING DEGREE?**

The Certificate in Innovative Writing presents a unique form of graduate study in creative writing, unlike any other MA in Creative Writing or MFA program, by closely intertwining the practice of writing with literary and aesthetic inquiries.

Our program creates a collaborative space in which we reflect on the ethical and political implications of creative writing within the matrix of global citizenship; tease out evident and obscured connections between contemporary and historical texts; consider how aesthetic concerns are inflected by various systems of power; and create rigorous, sensuous, contentious—above all, evocative—forms of writing that embody imaginative and forward-thinking strategies.

Our hope is to create an environment in which new forms of writing will flourish. Poetry. Fiction. Hybrid forms. Digital and electronic media. We are here to help you explore and advance your own writing approach to our ever-changing literary environment.

Informed by UB's long history of innovation in the arts, the writing workshops and literature seminars in the Certificate in Innovative Writing program arise from our faculty's shared belief that writing engages with—and intervenes in—the worlds we inhabit as much as the identities we pose and perform; that writing is a situation layered by critical examination, inventive thought, wild speculation, complex, often paradoxical feelings, multiple, entangled media platforms and social circuits, differing perceptions of time, and an ongoing translation of languages, as much as people and cultures.

Our Certificate invites you to view writing as an investigative, exploratory process in its own right: a mode of inquiry that, at its best, can articulate and *re*articulate diverse experiences of 21 century culture, and unearth, perhaps even overturn, our most foundational thoughts—freeing them for profound imaginative work.

Students in the Certificate program who are enrolled in the English Department receive a MA or PhD in English with an Advanced Certificate in Innovative Writing. Students in other departments receive a MA or PhD in (their field of study) with an Advanced Certificate in Innovative Writing.

The Certificate in Innovative Writing is particularly useful for students who are interested in enhancing their writing portfolios and/or their critical and literary backgrounds before applying to MFA and PhD programs. For PhD students, the Certificate is valued as a credential for writing related careers, including teaching creative writing, for future university appointments or alternative academic careers.

### **OUR COMMUNITY**

Students in the Innovative Writing Certificate program immerse themselves in a mentorship community of faculty and students that begins with each student and their work. Our aim is to create a culture of writing activated by conversations with a cohort of fellow thinkers and makers, to offer our writers conditions where they can begin to write what they might not have been able to write alone. Above all, to give students skills to keep on writing long after they leave the formal space of the workshop.

Workshops and seminars in the Innovative Writing program are enhanced by the MA and PhD communities at the University at Buffalo and the English Department's distinctive Poetics Plus and Exhibit X Fiction Series. Our award-winning guests include: Caroline Bergvall, Mei-mei Berssenbrugge, Mary Caponegro, Miles Champion, Robert Coover, Kathryn Davis, Lydia Davis, Samuel R. Delany, Brian Evenson, Percival Everett, Renee Gladman, Lyn Hejinian, Yunte Huang, Laird Hunt, Susan Howe, Shelley Jackson, Tan Lin, Nathaniel Mackey, Ben Marcus, Carole Maso, Bernadette Mayer, Tom McCarthy, Fred Moten, Lisa Robertson, Juliana Spahr, Lynne Tillman, Steve Tomasula, Cecilia Vicuna, Rosmarie Waldrop, and Diane Williams.

### **YOUR FIRST WEEK AT UB**

At the end of August, incoming MA English students must attend a week-long orientation in which they will be given pointers about the library system at UB, computer technology, immigration (for international students), and insurance issues. In addition, they will have an opportunity to meet English faculty members, the Chair of the Department, and the Directors of Graduate and Master's Studies

Students who have enrolled in the Advanced Certificate in Innovative Writing program will meet again for a separate session with the Director of Creative Writing and the Creative Writing faculty in order to discuss issues specific to students taking the certificate curriculum. The Director will contact all new students to schedule the meeting, which will take place after the MA English orientation.

## **WORKING WITH THE DIRECTOR OF CREATIVE WRITING**

The Director of the Creative Writing Program is available to answer all questions about the Certificate in Innovative Writing Curriculum. Address all other questions to the Director of the Masters Program. Please do not hesitate to contact faculty members when you have question, or to set up an appointment should you have concerns about any aspect of your graduate study. If you are not certain whom to contact, please feel free to email the Creative Writing Director for advice.

## **CREDIT TRANSFERS:**

If you have completed graduate coursework at another institution, it may be possible to transfer credits, but bear in mind that a) transfer credit (up to 6 credits) is decided on a case-by-case basis and b) the transfer of credits can only occur after the completion of 24 graduate-level credits at UB while enrolled in the UB English Department's MA Program.

Please note: credits for writing courses cannot be transferred to replace Certificate in Innovative Writing workshops (the Fall Writing Colloquium and Spring Workshop) which must be taken to complete the Certificate Requirements.

## **ELIGIBILITY & COURSE ENROLLMENT**

Current MA and PhD students at UB, in English as well as other departments, are welcome to apply to enroll in the Certificate Program. These students earn the Certificate by taking the 4 required courses while satisfying their other degree requirements.

Students who are enrolled in the Certificate have primary access to workshop courses in the curriculum.

Should there be open workshop seats, graduate students who are not enrolled in the Certificate program may request a seat *with the approval of the workshop professor*. Please contact the professor teaching the workshop directly for permission to enroll in the course. Permission may be offered at the discretion of the professor: permission is not guaranteed even if there are open seats.

## **REQUIREMENTS**

In order to satisfy the Certificate in Innovative Writing requirements, students must complete the following courses for a total of 18 credits:

- ENG 547: Fall Workshop Colloquium in Fiction (6 credits) **OR** English 549: Fall Workshop Colloquium in Poetry (6 credits.)
- English 548: Spring Fiction Workshop (3 credits) **OR** English 550: Spring Poetry Workshop (3 credits)
- ENG 502: Introduction to Critical and Cultural Theory (3 credits)
- English 598: Creative Project Guidance (6 credits)

**PLEASE NOTE:**

Students enrolling in the Certificate in Innovative Writing Program **AND** the MA in English take *4 elective seminars* in addition to the above courses. You may retake the Fall Colloquia (counts as 3 credits the second time) or the Fiction and Poetry Workshops as electives. In addition, one of your elective literature courses may be taken extensively rather than intensively. This allows you to fulfill the requirements of a course (reading, response papers, short projects) without having to complete the final project or term paper. See the MA in English Handbook for explanation.

Students enrolled in graduate degree programs elsewhere at UB who are admitted to the Certificate in Innovative Writing are required to take **ONLY** the above 4 courses.

**DESCRIPTIONS OF REQUIRED COURSES:**

***Fall Colloquium***

ENG 547: Fall Workshop Colloquium in Fiction (6 credits) **OR**

ENG 549: Fall Workshop Colloquium in Poetry (6 credits)

—The Fall Colloquium is a unique workshop that is split into two sections in Poetry & Fiction. The sections meet at the same time with different professors in different seminar rooms. Over the course of the semester, the Poetry and Fiction classes meet together several times to discuss work by the same visiting guest writer with whom they then meet for an amplified conversation. The object of the Colloquium is to create an enhanced conversation between and among genres: to find points of interaction and engagement between them, and to then possibly use new concepts or perspectives in one's own creative work or future literary study. This course *is repeatable for 3 credits* should you wish to take it again the following Fall.

***ENG 547: Workshop Colloquium in Fiction***

This course weaves together the practice of crafting fictional language with the study of contemporary poetry, poetics, and the practice of poetry writing. As an integral part of this inquiry, students will be engaged in a colloquium designed to invite them into the English Department's vibrant intellectual and writing communities with a particular focus on a series of events where students have the opportunity to meet an exceptional roster of contemporary writers: novelist, poets, short story writers, and writers of experimental cross-genre forms. A workshop represents a community of writers willing to take time and care with each other's works-in-progress. Our goal therefore is to offer acute critical insights about the manuscripts we examine, keeping in mind both the advancement of individual *techné* and future publication.

***ENG 549: Workshop Colloquium in Poetry***

This course weaves together the study of contemporary poetry, poetics, and the practice of poetry writing with an enhanced understanding of fictional language. As an integral part of this inquiry, students will be engaged in a colloquium designed to invite them into the English Department's vibrant intellectual and writing communities with a particular focus on a series of events where students have the opportunity to meet an exceptional roster of contemporary writers:

novelist, poets, short story writers, and writers of experimental cross-genre forms. A workshop represents a community of writers willing to take time and care with each other's works-in-progress. Our goal therefore is to offer acute critical insights about the manuscripts we examine, keeping in mind both the advancement of individual *techne* and future publication.

## ***2.Spring Workshop***

ENG 548: Spring Fiction Workshop (3 credits) **OR**

ENG 550: Spring Poetry Workshop (3 credits)

This course *is repeatable for 3 credits* should you wish to take it again the following spring.

### ***ENG 548: Spring Fiction Workshop***

Students write and exchange fiction and prose manuscripts in a supportive community environment. Professors will assign literary and critical readings at their discretion, which are designed to enhance student understanding of current critical and craft issues.

### ***ENG 550: Spring Poetry Workshop***

Students write and exchange poetry manuscripts in a supportive community environment. Professors will assign literary and critical readings at their discretion, which are designed to enhance student understanding of current critical and craft issues.

## ***3.ENG 502: Introduction to Critical and Cultural Theory***

This course is intended to enhance students' familiarity and facility with the kinds of questions that literary scholars ask today and their strategies for answering them. Students will tour some of the foundational texts and landmarks of contemporary theory, study various critical approaches, and gain practice doing research.

## ***4.ENG 598: Creative Project Guidance (6 credits)***

All Certificate in Innovative Writing students are required to write a creative thesis in completion of their course of study. The thesis may be a collection of poems, a collection of short stories, a novel, novella, or some other form of cross genre work approved by the supervising professor.

Students must ask a member of the creative writing faculty to mentor their work. The student and their supervising professor will then design a schedule that works for both the student and their professor. Ideally, students will meet with their professor every 3-4 weeks for exchange.

## **SOME THOUGHT ON CHOOSING A CREATIVE PROJECT MENTOR**

Once you have decided what genre and what kind of creative project you intend to write, you should approach a professor who works in your genre (the Director of Creative Writing can help you if you are unsure of whom you should ask). Ideally, you should ask

a professor with whom you have already taken a workshop and who is therefore familiar with your writing. If you have not taken a workshop with the professor before, however, write the professor an email introducing yourself and your project and ask if they would meet with you. As supervision workloads are not distributed evenly among faculty and some professors may be oversubscribed, it may not always be possible to work with your first choice, especially if you have not taken a workshop with that person. What is most important, however, is that you get regular opportunities to meet with someone who will discuss ideas, read your work and give you feedback on early drafts. There is no set number of meetings required while you write your project. Talk to your thesis advisor about her or his requirements. Especially during the summer months, you may want to plan in advance for a professor's travel out of town, or agree to discuss work by email.

### **WRITING THE CREATIVE PROJECT**

Although you can start writing whenever you like, the vast majority of creative projects are written over the summer months. The writing experience is different for everyone, but you should aim to set yourself clear and realistic deadlines and stick to them. Try to write a little every day. The more you write the less daunting writing becomes and consistent daily efforts soon add up. This phase of the project is generally done alone as your supervisor will not be able to give you meaningful feedback until there is a fair amount drafted for him or her to comment on. For instance, you might meet to discuss a group of poems, a completed story, or a chapter. You can also ask for feedback if your having a hard time moving forward, or find yourself at a crossroads and would like some advice about how to move forward.

Don't forget to look to your own bookshelf for guidance. Which books and forms engage you? Which are suitable for your project? Form and content go hand in hand, and you may find that your form or your content changes as you move forward in your project. You may also find that what you believed to be the beginning of your project is now the middle (or the end). The more intently you engage the work, the clearer it will become to you. Be prepared for change: change in the work often means that you have begun to understand more clearly what you hope to accomplish. Do research. Read other writers who are interested in similar ideas. Put pressure on your own ideas and expectations. Always think about how each line or sentence drives the next one forward. Write every day. Above all, trust yourself.

Soon, you will have more pages than you thought you could write.

### **GRADING AND MATRICULATION**

With the exception of ENG 501 and ENG 502, MA students regularly take their courses with PhD students. While PhD students are graded either "Satisfactory" or "Unsatisfactory," students in the MA Program are given traditional letter-grades for their coursework.

When you have completed all your coursework except for your final creative project, you will need to fill out an official "Application to Candidacy" form. When you have completed your final project, you will fill out an official "M" (matriculation) form for the

award of your degree. These forms are on file in the graduate office. Note that once your “Application to Candidacy” has been approved, you are eligible for full-time status by paying for as little as one academic credit while you work on your final component. (See Joyce Troy for the Certification of Full-Time Status Form. Eligibility is limited to two semesters.)

### **INCOMPLETES:**

Although it is possible to take incompletes in graduate workshops and seminars at UB, faculty in English strongly discourage you from doing so. The grade replacing an I/U needs to be turned in within a year of your taking the incomplete, so it is important to remain in communication with faculty and give them enough time to read the submitted work before your grade is due. Two Incompletes unfinished after two semesters will lead to loss of good standing in the program.

### **COMPLETING THE PROGRAM: HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE?**

Our program has been designed so that it is possible to be paid for as two semesters of full-time study and completed in one calendar year (two semesters and a summer). That said, most students take three or four semesters to finish. The amount of time you take to finish is entirely up to you. Once you start, you are neither locked into a timetable, nor under any pressure to finish as long as you finish within four years.

Note: If you choose to complete the program in three or more semesters, you should talk with Joyce Troy about being “certified” for full-time status during the semesters when you are taking fewer courses. Obtaining this certification means that you may be registered for fewer than 12 credits but still technically be counted full time. The university will permit this for up to two semesters. For many students, full-time enrollment is important for maintaining insurance and deferring loan repayment.

### **EXAMPLES OF TWO-SEMESTER PLANS:**

For students enrolled in the MA in English with the Certificate in Innovative Writing, full-time status is defined as 12 credit-hours. When paying for full-time status you can enroll for up to 18 credits at the same rate. Registration for full-time status extends, for degree conferral purposes, up to the late-August deadline for September degree conferral. Therefore you can schedule (and pay for) all of your required 30 credit hours toward the degree by registering for either 12 hours in the fall semester and 18 in the spring, or for 15 in each semester, even though the work on your final component will most likely be finished during the summer.

Following are two models for full-time study, with their credit-hour calculations:

#### **Model A: 1 Year Plan**

*Fall semester—Spring semester—Summer*

**Fall Semester Year 1**

ENG 547: Colloquium/Fiction OR ENG 549: Colloquium/Poetry [6 credits]  
ENG 502: Introduction to Critical Theory [3 credits]  
Elective Seminar [3 credits]

**Spring Semester Year 1**

ENG 548: Fiction Workshop or ENG: 550 Poetry Workshop [3 credits]  
Elective Seminar [3 credits]  
Elective Seminar [3 credits]  
Elective Seminar [3 credits]

**Summer**

ENG 598: Creative Project [6 credits]\*

The advantage of Model A is that it gives you time to adjust to graduate school and, for most of you, a new home. However, Model A does make for a very loaded spring semester.

**Model B: Two Year Plan****Fall Semester Year 1**

ENG 547: Colloquium/Fiction OR ENG 549: Colloquium/Poetry [6 credits]  
ENG 502 Introduction to Critical Theory [3 credits]

**Spring Semester Year 1**

ENG 548: Fiction Workshop or ENG: 550 Poetry Workshop [3 credits]  
Elective Seminar [3 credits]

**Fall Semester Year 2**

ENG 547: Colloquium/Fiction OR ENG 549: Colloquium/Poetry [3 credits]  
Elective Seminar [3 credits]

**Spring Semester Year 2**

ENG 598 Creative MA Thesis [6 credits]  
Elective Seminar [3 credits]

**OTHER ASPECTS OF GRADUATE STUDY*****Course Attendance***

Your responsibility to a graduate seminar is much greater than what you are likely to have experienced with undergraduate courses. Very simply, you should not miss class unless there is an emergency. In such a case, you should contact the professor leading the seminar.

Writing workshops at the graduate level are often very demanding because you are responsible for reading and responding to your peers' work every week while writing your own to share several times during the semester. Compartmentalizing time every day

for writing your own work, and another stretch of time to read for your workshops and seminars, is a crucial discipline that will help you keep you abreast of your assignments, while giving you a strong routine to rely on when it's time to start writing your final creative project.

### ***Professors as Resources***

Professors leading graduate workshops and seminars may not ever require that you set up office meetings with them or that you attend office hours. This does not mean that you should not do so! As a graduate student, your work is more independent than it was as an undergraduate. Part of this independence means asking for help when you need it, as well as using faculty as a resource. Whether you are having difficulty with a particular assignment or are interested in further engagement on a question that emerged during discussion, contact the professor and arrange to talk about it. She or he will appreciate your initiative and interest.

### ***Beyond the Classroom***

Graduate school should be about more than what happens in your workshops and seminars: it should be more broadly about participating in the creative and intellectual life of the university and community. This can take many different forms at UB. Among them are:

#### ***Exhibit X Fiction Series***

The Exhibit X Series invites 4-5 prose writers to give readings and participate in a salon style meeting with students. Showcasing experimental and innovative fictions—from new novels to anti-novels, criti-fictions to cross-genre writing, hypermedia to the avant-pop—Exhibit X presents new fictions in any shape they compose themselves, lends their authors the stage a few nights a year, and challenges our campus and community audiences to reconsider how stories can be told. Hosted by Hallwalls with the support of Talking Leaves Books.

#### **SERIES CURATORS:**

Christina Milletti ([milletti@buffalo.edu](mailto:milletti@buffalo.edu))

Dimitri Anastasopoulos ([danastas@buffalo.edu](mailto:danastas@buffalo.edu))

Nnedi Okorafor ([nnedioko@buffalo.edu](mailto:nnedioko@buffalo.edu))

#### ***Poetics Plus Reading Series***

A reading series sponsored by the Poetics Program, Poetics Plus brings contemporary experimental poets to UB to read from their work. The many visitors who come to UB to read as part of the “Poetics Plus” program are integrated into the seminar work of graduate students. Hosted by WNYBAC.

#### **SERIES CURATORS**

Judith Goldman ([judithgo@buffalo.edu](mailto:judithgo@buffalo.edu))

Myung Mi Kim ([mmkim@buffalo.edu](mailto:mmkim@buffalo.edu))

Steve McCaffery ([stevemcc@buffalo.edu](mailto:stevemcc@buffalo.edu))

### ***The UB Humanities Institute***

Since its founding in 2005, the University at Buffalo's Humanities Institute (HI) has quickly established itself as one of the most important entities supporting the humanities at UB and in Western New York more generally. With dynamic lectures, conferences and research workshops, the Humanities Institute fuels intellectual inquiry, vitality and interdisciplinary collaboration. Consider joining one of the dozen research workshops on topics from early modern culture and ecocritical studies to disability studies and queer studies. To receive the weekly electronic HI newsletter, send an email inquiry to [huminst@buffalo.edu](mailto:huminst@buffalo.edu) To join a research workshop, go to the website and click on the workshop that interests you and write the faculty coordinator directly about joining their listserv about future events and meetings.

<http://humanitiesinstitute.buffalo.edu/research-workshops/>

### ***Graduate Groups***

Graduate study at UB offers multiple opportunities for non-credit learning and intellectual stimulation. The Department strongly encourages you to become involved with the Graduate Groups in the fields closest to your interests. Current Graduate Field Groups include the Americanist Group, the British and Irish Studies Group, the Early Modern Studies Group, the Graduate Poetics Group, and the Transnational Studies Group. Typically, these groups hold colloquia, organize work-in-progress sessions, and invite outside speakers. Many of these groups are interdepartmental and interdisciplinary. Participating in these groups will enable you to become acquainted with graduate students and faculty from UB and elsewhere who have similar intellectual interests. Many students also participate in the English Graduate Students Association (EGSA)

### ***Readings & Lectures: Campus & Community***

The intellectual life at UB is enriched by the many lectures, conferences and symposia that the English Department, the UB Humanities Institute, other UB departments, and the wider Buffalo community offer. For instance, Medaille College hosts the Write Thing Reading Series. Canisius College hosts the Contemporary Writers Series. And Just Buffalo Poetry Center sponsors both the Babel Series and Studio Series which bring several international and national writers every year to Buffalo respectively. (The Babel series often send tickets to the English Department that you can claim, but if none are available, they are \$10 for students).

All Certificate in Innovative Writing students should make an effort to attend these events. They can be a wonderful way to immerse yourself in the national and local writing scenes, to introduce yourself to new ideas, and the faculty and graduate students working in them.

### ***Applying for Jobs & Advanced Graduate Degrees***

#### ***During your degree***

Often, students find they need to work while completing their degree. If you do, please keep in mind your need for personal and emotional resources, as much as financial resources, to complete your curriculum in good standing. The balance can

be tricky. Consider working part time or in an Alt-Ac (“alternative academic”) field related to your course of study. Students have found work with UB’s University Communications department, with Just Buffalo, tutoring for the Writing Center on campus, and writing for the Daily Public. You may also wish to check with Career Services at UB to view temporary and permanent positions that are available.

### **Post-Degree**

After earning your degree, you may wish to apply to adjunct positions or writing related careers. Your professors will support you with recommendations. Please give them an ample time frame to write them (ideally a month), as your professors are often writing multiple recommendations at the same time.

These days, graduates generally need multiple publications and an MFA and/or PhD in order to be competitive for academic jobs. Should you wish to apply for advanced graduate study, start thinking early about one piece of writing you can significantly develop to accompany your application. MFA programs will read your creative work most intently. PhD programs will read one of your seminar papers most intently. Generally, applications to MFA and PhD programs are due in late December. Think ahead and, over the summer, begin making decision about what work you hope to develop for submission. Always consult with your professors before choosing a range of programs to apply to as we often have information that will amplify your efforts.

### ***Publishing***

Getting that first publication will always be a milestone. Research publications that engage emerging writers. Check out the Poets and Writers website ([pw.org](http://pw.org)) which lists calls for work and prizes. Read the AWP’s *Chronicle* (which the department gets for free) and view their calls for work as well. Join Facebook groups, listservs, and writing groups that may share information about editors and journals. Above all? Submit your work. Over and over. Network at conferences and readings. Take any feedback you get seriously. Then revise and submit again. Don’t give up. Every writer has to do the same thing, is doing the same thing. Soon you’ll have that first publication in hand.

## **The Director of Creative Writing**

The Director of the Creative Writing is a resource meant to help you make the best of your experience at UB. Use him/her!!

**APPENDICES**

**SAMPLE ORIENTATION SCHEDULE**

The English Department orientation for incoming graduate students takes place during the two weeks before classes begin.

**FOR IN-COMING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS ONLY:**

M, Aug. 22 16:00-18:00 Immigration & Public Safety Sessions\*

\*You must first register with the Office of International Education

**FOR ALL IN-COMING PHD AND MA STUDENTS (HELD IN 306 AND 436 CLEMENS):**

F, Aug. 26 9:00-11:50 Intro. to the PhD Program..... Dir. of Grad Studies  
Intro to the MA Program..... Dir. of MA Studies

**FOR EVERYBODY—GRAD STUDENTS, SPOUSES, SIGNIFICANT OTHERS, CHILDREN**

Early in the semester 18:00-21:00 Garden Party (Bring a dish) .....Place TBA

**For Innovative Writing Certificate Students**

Sun, Aug 28 15:00-17:00 (Held at a Faculty Member’s House)