

TEMPLE UNIVERSITY

**MFA PROGRAM IN
CREATIVE WRITING**

Two-year MFA program in
fiction or poetry in
Philadelphia

Reduced tuition for
Pennsylvania residents

Faculty
Don Lee, Liz Moore, Jena Osman,
Marie-Helene Bertino, Pattie McCarthy

temple.edu/creativewriting

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Program Overview

The Temple MFA Program in Creative Writing awards a two-year Master of Fine Arts degree in Creative Writing, with a focus in either fiction or poetry. Our innovative curriculum immerses students in the study of creative writing and literature, with course offerings that range from special topics and craft classes in creative writing to graduate classes in literature, the arts, and humanities. Through small workshops each semester and one-on-one manuscript tutorials with our resident faculty in the second year, the curriculum supports students as they study craft and prepare to hand in their MFA theses in their final semester. The supportive environment also helps our students move successfully from the MFA into the highly competitive world of submissions to journals, book publishers, and agents.

Workshops are supplemented by individual consultations with visiting writers and a series of readings by prominent authors and poets. For more information, please look online at our [Poets & Writers events page](#).

Students also have the opportunity to work on our online literary journal, [TINGE Magazine](#), which is graduate student–edited.

[Current faculty members](#) include Don Lee, Liz Moore, Jena Osman, Marie-Helene Bertino, and Pattie McCarthy. Faculty who have taught in the program in the past include such noted writers and scholars as Samuel R. Delany, Rachel Blau DuPlessis, Alan Singer, David Bradley, Sonia Sanchez, and Susan Stewart. Visiting writers have included Peter Carey, Alexander Chee, Robert Creeley, Robert Coover, Anita Desai, Brian Evenson, C. S. Giscombe, Jaimy Gordon, Mat Johnson, Bhanu Kapil, Jonathan Lethem, Carole Maso, Alice Notley, Anne Waldman, C. D. Wright, and many others.

Please go to the Temple University Creative Writing MFA [Facebook page](#) or our [Twitter account](#) for current updates.

Note: Most of our classes are currently in-person. Masks and vaccinations are required.

Curriculum

This is a two-year, 33-credit program. The curricular requirements are as follows:

- Four fiction workshops or four poetry workshops, one each semester. 12 credits
- Three courses focused on craft in fiction or poetry; special topics in creative writing; or manuscript tutorial in the second year, ideally one of each. 9 credits
- Two graduate literature, writing, arts, humanities, or social sciences courses*. 6 credits
- One elective course or, if a teaching assistant, the required composition practicum*. 3 credits
- Master's project (thesis). 3 credits
- Comprehensive examination in either poetry or fiction, consisting of a 10–15-page paper

* These courses should align with writers' or poets' interests, augment their practices, and relate to their projects. As the program values the potential for interdisciplinary collaboration, courses offered within the School of Communications and Theater (including Film and Media Arts), Boyer School of Music and Dance, and the Tyler School of the Arts may be used to fulfill these requirements. Courses that students have taken in the past include:

- Writing for Media I (Film and Media Arts 5361)
- Playwriting I (Theater 5871)
- Artists Teaching in Communities (Art Education 5202)
- Gender & Body (Sociology 8411)
- Urban Studies: Philadelphia Neighborhoods (Master of Liberal Arts 5220)
- American Sign Language (Communication Sciences and Disorders 5534)
- Bodies, Texts, History (Dance 9862)

Students admitted to the MFA program with funding must attend full-time. Students admitted to the MFA program without funding may attend part-time.

At the discretion of the vice dean and the MFA director, up to 6 graduate credits may be transferred if they were taken at a competitive university within the last five years with a grade of B+ or higher.

A Letter to Poets

Dear Poets:

Temple's MFA program is located in the poetically lively city of Philadelphia and features faculty members with a particular interest in the tradition of innovation. Our two-year course of study combines creative and critical practices: students take a mix of writing workshops, arts and humanities classes, and literature seminars whose emphases on literary-historical traditions as well as innovative practices fuel students' thesis projects. Augmented by one-on-one mentoring and thesis advising in the second year, the coursework provides a rich and challenging curriculum for any serious student of poetry.

Designed to dovetail with classroom studies, the program's [Poets and Writers reading series](#) brings four poets to campus a year, including one who is in residence for several days in order to work with the students individually. Additionally, the annual DuPlessis Lecture in Poetry and Poetics brings a poet-critic to campus to speak about the intersection of critical and creative practices. Our program also draws on the resources of neighboring institutions, particularly the University of Pennsylvania and the [Kelly Writers House](#), in addition to the vibrancy of Philadelphia's many [independent poetry communities](#).

Temple has several financial aid packages available to eligible candidates, including teaching assistantships, which cover full tuition, health benefits, and a stipend. Students on TAships teach in Temple's first-year writing program, and may also choose to teach creative writing workshops in their final semester.

We encourage potential applicants to contact us if they are interested in what Temple's poetry program has to offer. Feel free to email Jena at josman@temple.edu.

Many thanks,
Jena Osman and Pattie McCarthy

A Letter to Fiction Writers

Dear Fiction Writers:

Our curriculum includes a workshop every semester, a craft class in fiction in the first term, special topics courses that range from journal editing to nonfiction writing, and a tutorial in the second year, in which students work one-on-one with a resident faculty member.

A visiting fiction writer comes to campus every year, meeting in individual conferences with second-year students about their manuscripts, sitting in on workshops, and giving a reading. In addition, we usually have three other fiction writers reading each year in the program's [Poets and Writers series](#).

We're often asked by applicants if we allow genre work in workshops. In general, our program leans toward literary fiction. We do not encourage the writing of pure genre fiction. However, students may write stories or books that play with and try to subvert or reinvent genre conventions. But we want them to do so with the ambition of meeting or exceeding the standards that we would expect in any piece of good writing, meaning that it pays attention to language and is well crafted and imbued with depth and nuance and texture.

Temple has several financial aid packages available to eligible candidates, including Teaching Assistantships and Future Faculty Assistantships, which provide a stipend, health benefits, and full tuition remission. Students on TAships teach in Temple's first-year writing program, and may also choose to teach introductory creative writing workshops in their third or fourth semester. We are able to fund, on average, 40% of our students.

The priority deadline for applications is December 15.

Cheers,
Don Lee and Liz Moore

Admissions Information

ADMISSIONS OVERVIEW

Although not required, we prefer applicants to the MFA Program in Creative Writing to hold a bachelor's degree in English or creative writing, or to have taken a significant number of workshops or literature classes as an undergraduate. However, in the past, students without this background have performed well in the program. Therefore, we consider the entire application package in our admission decisions.

The minimum admission standard for all graduate students is an undergraduate grade point average of B, or 3.0 (see below for exceptions), or the functional equivalent for students who have attended universities outside of the United States.

Submit the following application materials to be considered for admission (details on the next page):

1. College of Liberal Arts Application
2. Optional GRE scores
3. TOEFL or other test scores (for international students only)
4. Transcripts (from all colleges attended)
5. Résumé or CV
6. Personal Statement
7. Writing Sample
8. Three Letters of Recommendation

Materials should be submitted through the College of Liberal Arts' online application system:

<https://apply.temple.edu/CLA/Pages/Welcome.aspx>

APPLICATION DEADLINE

All materials should be submitted by **February 15**. If you would like to be considered for a teaching assistantship or future faculty assistantship, please turn in your materials by **December 15**. Applications submitted after December 15 will still be considered for a teaching assistantship or a future faculty assistantship, but those meeting the initial deadline will be prioritized. Basically, if you are seeking funding through a teaching assistantship or a future faculty assistantship, the earlier you submit your application, the better.

After the February 15 deadline, applications may still be considered on a rolling, case-by-case basis (though not for funding), depending on the availability of space and the applicant's credentials. Inquire by emailing mfaapplications@temple.edu.

Applications are accepted only for fall admission.

APPLICATION MATERIALS

1. **College of Liberal Arts Application:** Complete the College of Liberal Arts application on Temple's [online application system](#). The application fee is \$60. (Note: After you enter your contact information, previous degree(s), and three recommenders, and pay your fee, there will be a processing lag of up to five minutes. You will first receive an email acknowledging payment of your fee, then you will receive a second email saying you may now upload your supplemental documents.)

2. **Optional Graduate Record Examination (GRE):** The GRE is not required to apply to the MFA Program in Creative Writing. However, if you are taking or have taken the GRE and wish your scores for the general test to be considered, please have them forwarded electronically by ETS to Temple University. You should do so by December 15 if you are seeking a teaching assistantship or a future faculty assistantship. See eligibility requirements for teaching assistantships on the Financial Aid Information page. Scores must be from the last five years. The institutional code for Temple is 2906. The department code is 2501.

3. **International applicants:** TOEFL, IELTS, or PTE scores should be sent to Temple University electronically by ETS or the appropriate agency. The following minimum scores are required: TOEFL score of 79/550, or IELTS score of 6.5, or PTE Academic score of 53. Please refer to the Graduate School's [International Application](#) page.

4. **Transcripts:** Request that official transcripts from *all* institutions of higher education you previously attended (no matter how briefly, e.g., for study-abroad or as a non-matriculated student) be sent to us, preferably as eTranscripts to mfaapplications@temple.edu. Alternatively, they may be mailed to: Creative Writing Program, Dept. of English, Temple University, Anderson Hall, Room 1020, 1114 Polett Walk, Philadelphia, PA 19122-6090. Additionally, we ask that unofficial copies or scans of your transcripts be submitted to us with the other application materials online.

5. **Résumé or CV:** A personal résumé or curriculum vitae is required. Work experience—academic or non-academic—is as important as any publishing credits (the latter is not required or expected at this stage of applicants' careers). There's no need to try to impress us. In fact, listing a series of service jobs will earn our respect.

6. **Personal Statement** (750–1,000 words): Discuss literary influences and models that feed your creative work; we're interested in which writers and texts have been important to you in recent years, as well as what critical approaches, if applicable, you have found useful. We're not particularly interested in how you were inspired to start writing as a six-year-old. Describe your work or teaching experience. Discuss your aims in attending an MFA program. Mention what attracts you to Temple's program and whether you're familiar with Philadelphia. Give us a sense of who you are—a more detailed, personal picture than what can be gleaned from transcripts or résumés, especially if you have a non-traditional background or atypical undergraduate record. Double-space the lines, paginate the pages, use a standard font such as Times New Roman sized to 12 points, and have margins of at least one inch on all sides.

7. **Writing Sample:** Your writing sample is the most crucial element of your application. Send a

packet of writing in one genre only (poetry or fiction). **For poetry**, submit ten pages. These pages may include shorter poems, longer poems, and/or an excerpt from a longer project. Individual poems should be separated by page breaks, not run together. Poems may be single-spaced or formatted in whatever way you see fit. **For fiction**, send a total of 15–25 pages. The pages may include a single story, a series of stories, and/or an excerpt from a longer work (please identify if it is from a long story, novella, novel, or hybrid work). Double-space the lines, paginate the pages, use a standard font such as Times New Roman sized to 12 points, and have margins of at least one inch on all sides. For applicants in either genre, if you would like to include a personal or critical essay in addition to the creative sample, please feel free to do so; it should be double-spaced and formatted like the fiction sample.

8. Three Letters of Recommendation: Request three confidential letters of recommendation to be sent to us. Your recommendations should address your performance in previous academic, creative, and/or professional roles.

In addition, we may request a phone or video interview with you at a later time.

NON-MATRICULATED STUDENTS

Writers (or graduate students from other departments at Temple) who wish to take a class in the MFA program as non-matriculated students may inquire about the possibility by emailing mfaapplications@temple.edu at least two weeks before the start of the semester about specific classes. Check Temple's [course schedule](#). If there is space and the director and instructor are amenable, you will most likely be asked for a writing sample and other information for further consideration.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- [Temple Student Financial Services](#)
- [Tuition and Fees](#)
- [Creative Writing Graduate Bulletin](#)
- [Temple English Department](#)
- [General Graduate School Information](#)
- [General Graduate Application Site](#)
- [General Temple Information](#)

If you have questions or need further assistance, please contact Tara Lemma, the Program Coordinator, at mfaapplications@temple.edu or 215.204.1796.

EXCEPTIONS FOR GPAs LESS THAN 3.0

The Dean's Office considers exceptions to the admissions requirement if the student meets one of these criteria:

- Achieved a 3.25 cumulative grade point average in at least 9 credits of graduate work at an accredited university in the United States or equivalent academic performance in a university outside the United States.
- Scored above the 65th percentile on the verbal or quantitative portions of the Graduate Record Exam (or other standardized test, such as the Graduate Management Admission Test).
- Earned a 3.5 grade point average during her/his final two years of undergraduate work.

In special circumstances, particularly with an exceptional writing sample, other exceptions may be granted.

Financial Aid Information

On average, the MFA Program in Creative Writing is able to fund 40% of its students with Teaching Assistantships and Future Faculty Assistantships. These funding packages are awarded on a competitive basis. If you are admitted to the Creative Writing Program, you will automatically be considered for a teaching assistantship or a future faculty assistantship:

Teaching Assistantships require some form of instructional activity—usually teaching a composition course. A maximum of 20 hours of service per week is required. The teaching assistantship awards for 2021–22 include a tuition waiver, health benefits, and a stipend of \$20,064. TAs teach composition classes in Temple’s [First Year Writing Program](#), and may have the opportunity to teach introductory creative writing workshops in their second year for one semester. Conditions of the award are determined by the graduate student union contract with Temple University. For further details, consult the Temple University Graduate Student Association’s [TUGSA](#) website. In general, a minimum GPA of 3.25 as an undergraduate is required for teaching assistantships.

Future Faculty Assistantships are intended to attract outstanding domestic students who would diversify the professoriate. Candidates are newly admitted domestic graduate students from underrepresented groups in the applicant’s discipline who show exceptional leadership and/or have overcome significant obstacles in pursuing an academic career. The applicant’s department determines nomination for the future faculty assistantship. Nominations are then decided by the College of Liberal Arts, which usually looks at traditional markers of academic excellence, i.e., GPA. Future faculty assistantships require the same instructional activities as teaching assistantships and provide the same tuition remission and health benefits. However, future faculty assistantships offer a larger stipend: \$26,752 in 2021–22. In general, a minimum GPA of 3.5 as an undergraduate is required for future faculty assistantships.

Students who do not receive funding often work off-campus jobs and/or take out federal loans (see below) to attend the MFA program. Classes are once a week; thus, it is possible to come to campus just twice a week as a full-time student (9 credits, or 3 classes, per semester), although the class meetings are generally held during the day.

Temple University is relatively affordable in comparison to other programs (see tuition information below). We have had students in the past choose Temple with no funding as opposed to other programs that offered some funding because ultimately it was a better deal for them. Also, note that Pennsylvania residents receive reduced tuition at Temple (see the registrar’s [residency](#) page for eligibility).

There is also the option of going part-time over three years (6 credits, or 2 classes, per semester), or taking some classes as a non-matriculated student. Non-matriculated students may transfer up to 9 credits for courses with a grade of B or higher upon admission to the program.

Federal Loan and Work-Study Programs: Graduate students are eligible to receive education loans through the [Federal Direct Stafford Loan](#) and [Federal Direct Graduate PLUS Loan](#) programs. At Temple University, unsubsidized Stafford Loans are available to full-time graduate

students up to a maximum amount of \$20,500 annually. There are also opportunities for [Federal Work-Study](#) jobs.

The first step to determine eligibility is to complete the [Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(or FAFSA\)](#). Temple University's Federal School Code is 003371. The FAFSA **deadline is March 1** for fall admission.

Refer to Temple's [Student Financial Services](#) office and to the Graduate School's [Financial Information](#) page for additional information.

Tuition: The MFA program requires 33 total credits. Check the [Bursar's Office](#) for current tuition rates and fees. For 2021–22, annual tuition—including fees—for full-time graduate students from Pennsylvania is \$18,278 (18 total credits); for full-time, out-of-state graduate students, it is \$24,812. (Note that in the second year of the program, only 15 credits are required.) For part-time in-state graduate students, it is \$12,230 (12 total credits); for part-time out-of-state graduate students, it is \$16,586.

See the Sample Curriculum and Tuition sheet on the next page.

MFA PROGRAM IN CREATIVE WRITING – TEMPLE UNIVERSITY – SAMPLE CURRICULUM AND TUITION

2022-23

2-Year Full-Time Plan

	Credits	In-state	Out-of-state
Fall — Year 1			
Workshop	3		
Craft Class	3		
Elective or, if TA, practicum	3		
<i>Semester Tuition and Fees</i>		\$9,498	\$12,891
Spring — Year 1			
Workshop	3		
Special topics	3		
Literature, arts, or humanities	3		
<i>Semester Tuition and Fees</i>		\$9,498	\$12,891
Year 1 Tuition Total		\$18,996	\$25,782
Fall — Year 2			
Workshop	3		
Tutorial	3		
Literature, arts, or humanities	3		
<i>Semester Tuition and Fees</i>		\$9,498	\$12,891
Spring — Year 2			
Workshop	3		
Master's project	3		
<i>Semester Tuition and Fees</i>		\$6,355	\$8,617
Year 2 Tuition Total		\$15,853	\$21,508
Total Tuition	33	\$34,849	\$47,290

3-Year Part-Time Plan

	Credits	In-state	Out-of-state
Fall — Year 1			
Workshop	3		
Craft Class	3		
<i>Semester Tuition and Fees</i>		\$6,355	\$8,617
Spring — Year 1			
Workshop	3		
Special topics	3		
<i>Semester Tuition and Fees</i>		\$6,355	\$8,617
Year 1 Tuition Total		\$12,710	\$17,234
Fall — Year 2			
Workshop	3		
Elective	3		
<i>Semester Tuition and Fees</i>		\$6,355	\$8,617
Spring — Year 2			
Workshop	3		
Literature, arts, or humanities	3		
<i>Semester Tuition and Fees</i>		\$6,355	\$8,617
Year 2 Tuition Total		\$12,710	\$17,234
Fall — Year 3			
Tutorial	3		
Literature, arts, or humanities	3		
<i>Semester Tuition and Fees</i>		\$6,355	\$8,617
Spring — Year 3			
Master's project	3		
<i>Semester Tuition and Fees</i>		\$3,181	\$4,312
Year 3 Tuition Total		\$9,536	\$12,929
Total Tuition	33	\$34,956	\$47,397

Tuition Rate per Credit

In-state	\$1,004 per credit
Out-of-state	\$1,381 per credit

Semester Fees

Semester fee for 9+ credits	\$462
Semester fee for 5–8.9 credits	\$331
Semester fee for 1–4.9 credits	\$169

Fees are included in the rates above.

More details are at

<https://bursar.temple.edu/>

Contact Information

Creative Writing Program
Dept. of English
Temple University
1114 Polett Walk
Philadelphia, PA 19122-6090

For questions about the MFA Creative Writing Program, please contact:

Tara Lemma, Program Coordinator
(215) 204-1796
mfaapplications@temple.edu