



Future Explorations

In

Creative Writing

Bowling Green State University

Why choose BGSU's Creative Writing Program?

The Creative Writing Program at Bowling Green State University (BGSU) is one of the oldest programs of its kind in the country. Its faculty of published and publishing writers of national stature, in combination with the presence of twenty Master of Fine Arts student writers, provides undergraduate students with the knowledge and the skills necessary to find their own niches in the diverse fields associated with contemporary literature. For students who love writing and literature and desire to join the human conversation that spans the ages, this program offers a place where their passions can be indulged and their goals fulfilled.

Who is right for BGSU's Creative Writing Program?

There are some courses that a potential Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) student should have in high school. It is beneficial for students to complete four years of a foreign language in high school, which will exempt them from having to take a foreign language for their degree. Three years of a language lets them drop one of four required language courses. Students should also take whatever writing or composition classes their schools offer. More important than any classes they might take, however, is their passion for writing and the commitment to this difficult and often underappreciated vocation. If students love literature, and if they love to shape language, then BGSU is exactly the place they should be.

What do students learn and how do they learn it?

Students often decide that they wish to spend their lives writing long before they are ever aware of the realities of such a choice. As students in the

Bachelor of Fine Arts Program in Creative Writing at Bowling Green State University, they are exposed to the publishing world and to the skills necessary to not just survive in it, but to prosper.

Students in the BFA program at BGSU are required to take several different types of classes to earn their degrees. In their sophomore year, for instance, students take literature survey courses designed to provide an historical overview of their art. They also take craft classes, which are designed to familiarize them with the techniques of contemporary writing, in order to apply them to their own work. The classes incorporate a shared vocabulary with which to talk about literary fiction and poetry.

Students also take a course that studies the nature of language itself. Writers, like other artists, need to understand how the materials of their art function. The combination of the craft classes and the language study class is designed to provide students with a functional knowledge of the tools of their art.

In their sophomore year, students enter their first workshop, a class in which one of the primary texts is their own writing. Instructors select readings designed to continue the students' exposure to the rich possibilities of expression available to them as contemporary writers. Students bring in their own work to be critiqued by their peers and the workshop leader, who is a published and publishing writer of either literary fiction or poetry. Students both give and receive immediate feedback in a supportive environment. This studio approach is the reason BGSU students earn a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in writing, as opposed to a Bachelor of Arts degree.

In the final two years of the program, creative writing students take courses that give them an intimate knowledge of the scope and practices of modern and contemporary writers.

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Students also have the opportunity to work on the editorial staff of *Prairie Margins*, the literary magazine run by undergraduate students with the help of a faculty advisor. This experience prepares students for what will happen when they send their writing out to magazines. There is also a creative writing club, Undergrowth, which brings student writers together for a variety of writing-centered experiences, including travelling to poetry competitions and participating in exercises designed to inspire poems and stories.

The workshops and the literature classes are taught by the faculty of the Creative Writing Program at BGSU. Faculty members are nationally recognized for their fiction and poetry, publishing their work in many of the most prestigious literary journals in the country, and winning such awards as Fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, Yaddo and MacDowell Fellowships, The Hoddard Fellowship at Princeton, Fellowships from the Ohio Arts Council and other state arts organizations.

Some classes are taught by the MFA students in Creative Writing, and often a mentoring relationship develops between the MFA and undergraduate students. According to the Associated Writing Programs, this feature is only available at two other schools in North America.

What are the career opportunities for creative writers?

The field of literary fiction and poetry is more varied and diverse than ever. If young writers wish to break into this business, they will need to acquire certain skills and knowledge. There is a rich and multifaceted, small press-publishing world where the predominance of literary fiction, and virtually all poetry, is published. This business world includes many university presses, and a variety of other respected small presses, such as

Gray Wolf, Copper Canyon, Coffee House, and White Pine. Young writers, without a familiarity with this publishing world, are faced with the corporate indifference of larger publishing houses and their attached agents. These writers may be discouraged for years and give up writing.

The small-press publishing industry is healthy, and though its audience might not match the numbers of larger publishing houses, it is passionate and committed. Having readers is important and necessary, despite what some writers might say. Part of finding that audience is being aware of what presses exist and what sort of work they publish.

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Another reality for writers of literary fiction and poetry in this country is that very few of them earn a living from their writing. Most writers, even those of national prominence, hold jobs in addition to working in their vocation. Many teach in colleges and universities across the country in programs where they mentor young writers. Others work as editors and/or writers in the publishing industry, with both large publishing houses and small presses. Writers of literary fiction and poetry also hold many other jobs, such as working for public relations firms and insurance companies, as writers in large corporations, and many work in law. But without an understanding of the nature of the publishing industry and what is happening currently in their art, young writers can feel alone and lost.

Also, young writers need to learn that there are some avenues for money that are particular to their field, like grants from Federal and state governments, and from various foundations across the country who support the arts in America by supporting the work of worthy individual writers.

The Creative Writing Program at Bowling Green State University is designed to provide a student with an intimate and functioning knowledge of the publishing world.