

Creative Writing at Brandeis

2011-2012

Overview

Participation in the Program

The Major and Minor

Faculty

Brandeis is one of a select number of American universities to offer a B.A. in Creative Writing (as distinct from the B.A. in English). Our program, unlike those of many comparable schools, is taught and administered entirely by established authors. The major combines writing workshops, literature courses, and studio art, promoting creative work of high caliber, as well as a grasp of canonical, multicultural, and contemporary literature. It also offers—to highly qualified students—two different honors options.

The Department's tradition of hospitality to creative writers is unmatched in universities of our size. J.V. Cunningham, a well-known poet and Renaissance scholar, was a founding member of the department in 1949, and Creative Writing workshops have been offered since 1951. Allen Grossman, poet, scholar, Brandeis Ph.D., and MacArthur Fellowship recipient, was a shaping force of Creative Writing from 1960 to 1991. Among our graduates are Ha Jin, winner of the National Book Award; the poets Linda Pastan, Alicia Ostriker, and Mary Leader; playwright and screenwriter Teresa Rebeck; Ross Martin, poet and Senior VP for programming at mtvU; poet, fiction-writer and memoirist Shirley Geok-Lin Lim; and fiction writer Elisa Albert.

All Brandeis students, whether majors or not, may apply to one of the ten to thirteen workshops offered annually. Many choose to pursue a minor. Workshop size is limited to fourteen, and admission is based on work samples submitted to professors. The Registrar's *schedule of classes* webpage provides important application guidelines for each course.

Fannie Hurst and Jacob Ziskind Writers in Residence: Every year, two

distinguished authors join the Creative Writing faculty as the Fannie Hurst Fiction Writer and the Jacob Ziskind Poet. Over the years we have welcomed an impressive roster of visiting faculty, among them Alice Walker, Nobel Laureate Saul Bellow, Poet Laureate Louise Glück, John Irving, Adrienne Rich, Galway Kinnell, Gloria Naylor, Sharon Olds, Carolyn Forché, Mark Doty, Rafael Campo, Marilyn Hacker, Jay Wright, Henri Cole, and Thylas Moss.

The School of Night reading series brings several outstanding writers to campus annually to read their work and meet with students: J.M. Coetzee, Lorrie Moore, Li Young Lee, Denis Johnson, Amy Bloom, A. J. Verdelle, Russell Banks, Ha Jin, Eleni Sikelianos, Gish Jen, Louise Glück, Grace Paley, Jessica Hagedorn, Anne Waldman, Li Young Lee, Robert Creeley, Junot Diaz, and Elizabeth McCracken, to name a few.

Majors have received graduate fellowships at Harvard, Cornell, Syracuse, Michigan, Arizona, Oregon, and Washington Universities. Mytili Jagannathan was awarded a \$50,000 Pew Fellowship in the Arts for her poetry. Some have taught at Tufts, Rhode Island School of Design, Columbia, Emerson, The New School, and Bentley College. Yael Shinar, 2003, and Cynthia Shur, 2004, won a St. Botolph Club Literary award upon graduation. Maria Pinto, 2008, was twice awarded a fellowship by The Writer's Room of Boston.

Participation in the Program

Our structure allows flexible participation by a diverse body of students. We are excited to have had students from fields as varied as Neuroscience, Judaic Studies, Economics, Psychology, AAAS, Fine Arts, Law, Biology, Chemistry, Women's Studies, Sociology, and Classics as workshop participants, minors, or double majors.

Students also participate informally by attending readings and other public events, by submitting work to our literary publications, reading at the open mic series, or by seeking out the writers on our faculty for consultation.

All Directed Writing courses require a *manuscript submission*, generally of five to six pages in the genre of the course being applied for. These are emailed to the relevant instructor immediately prior to or early in each registration period *as a single .doc/docx attachment*. **Majors and minors are not guaranteed entry to such courses outside the selection process of each.** Directed Writing courses are offered exclusively on a Credit/No Credit basis (with the exception of THA 71a).

The Minor

Any student may minor in Creative Writing by fulfilling the following requirements:

- a) Three semester courses in Directed Writing
- b) Two literature electives in the Department of English.

c) *Transfer credits, cross-listed courses, and Advanced Placement exam credits do not count toward the minor. No course with a final grade below C- counts toward the minor.*

The Major

The major may be declared at the completion of a minimum of three courses in directed writing and of ENG 11a (Literary Method) or ENG 1a (Introduction to Literary Studies).

Ten semester courses are required, including the following:

a) ENG 1a (Introduction to Literary Studies) or ENG 11a (Literary Method), which should be taken as early as possible.

b) A minimum of four semester courses in directed writing, poetry, prose, or both; courses in screenwriting and playwriting are also offered. At least one of these courses must be from the 109/119 categories, and three should be concluded before the beginning of the senior year. Only one course in directed writing may be taken each semester in the same genre. Two such courses may be taken in different genres, but only after careful consideration of the intense reading, writing, and editing required in what can be divergent directions.

c) One course in foundational texts: ENG 10a, ENG 10b, or HUM 10a.

d) One course in multicultural or world Anglophone literature. World Anglophone literature is defined as works written in English outside the United States and England (e.g., Caribbean, Asian, Indian, African literature). Consult the Registrar's schedule of classes webpage, which lists the categories of offered courses.

e) Two elective courses in English Literature.

f) An elective course in a studio or performing art.

g) Advanced placement credits do not count toward the major.

h) *A maximum of three courses taught by persons other than members of the faculty of the English department may be counted towards the major. This restriction includes courses taken while studying abroad, cross-listed courses, and transfer credits.*

i) No course with a final grade below C- counts toward the major.

A major in Creative Writing may double-major or minor in English. Please consult the Bulletin for specifics on double-major requirements, or for major-minor combinations.

Poetry or Fiction Honors Options

1. Senior Creative Writing Honors Project

The Creative Writing Honors Project is a one-semester project, similar in scale to the Honors Essay in the English Department. It is available to qualified Creative Writing majors. The project culminates in the completion of a 25-page chapbook of poetry, or 50

pages of fiction.

Eleven semester courses are required. All four workshop requirements (*including two from the 19/39a/79b/109/119 categories*) should be completed prior to the project. One literature and the studio art requirements may be taken concurrently with the honors project, ENG 96a or 96b.

Students interested in this option should consult with the UAH in their respective genres (poetry or fiction) within the first month of the semester prior to the proposed study to discuss application, guidelines, and an advisor for the project, normally a senior faculty member the student has worked with before.

2. Literary Poetry or Fiction Thesis Option

Admission to the Thesis Option is by application only, at the end of the sophomore year. It is a highly selective process, and often a small percentage of applicants are admitted. A Creative Writing Committee reads each application carefully in order to evaluate a student's level of accomplishment, potential, maturity, and seriousness of purpose. Writing a thesis requires a great deal of introspection and independent work with the thesis advisor. The focus is on the development and rigorous refinement of a single book-length manuscript. Some students of exceptional talent are better served by pursuing a simple major and continuing to experiment and develop in the more expansive atmosphere of workshops, or by the Senior Creative Writing Honors Project. The Committee strives to determine which course of study best suits each applicant.

Eleven semester courses are required. The directed writing requirement is reduced to a *minimum* of three semester courses, of which ***two should be at the 109/119 level***, plus the satisfactory completion of two semesters of Senior Creative Writing Thesis (ENG 96D).

For the Senior Creative Writing Thesis, the student produces, under the direction of his or her advisor, a body of literary work of appropriate scope: a book of poems (50-70 pages), or a collection of stories or a novel (125-200 pages). The writing is expected to be of high imaginative caliber, intelligently conceived and crafted. In fiction, the emphasis is on work driven by emotionally and psychologically complex characters. Primarily commercial genres, such as science fiction and fantasy, are normally not considered appropriate for a thesis. The Thesis Option also requires an essay on a tutorial bibliography: a list of 10-12 books, chosen by the candidate in collaboration with the thesis advisor. The essay is due at the end of the senior year, along with the thesis.

Application occurs in April of the sophomore year (November for midyears). Exact dates may be found at our honors site:

<http://www.brandeis.edu/departments/english/undergraduate/majors/cwhonorstrack.html>. A student may apply after completing a minimum of one course in directed writing, from

the 19/39a/79b/109/119 categories, and either ENG 1a or 11a. A manuscript sample (20 pages of poetry or 35-50 pages of fiction, plus an informal transcript) should be emailed as a *single .doc/.docx attachment* to Olga Broumas: broumas@brandeis.edu, *and* to the department at chaucer@brandeis.edu by each year's deadline. Students are notified of the results by the end of the semester's examination period.

Recommendations for honors in Creative Writing are based on the excellence of the student's work in the major, especially as exemplified by the senior honors project or thesis.

The Faculty

Olga Broumas

Professor of the Practice, Director of Creative Writing

M.F.A. University of Oregon

Rave: Poems 1975-1999

Eros, Eros, Eros, Poems, Selected and Last, translations of Greek Nobel Laureate, Odysseas Elytis (1998)

Olga Broumas: a CD, featuring readings from the above works (2000)

Open Papers, essays of Odysseas Elytis, *trans. with T Begley* (1995)

Sappho's Gymnasium, collaborative poetry *with T Begley* (1994)

Perpetua (1989)

What I Love and The Little Mariner (Elytis translations, 1986, 1988)

Black Holes, Black Stockings (prose poems, *with Jane Miller*, 1985)

Pastoral Jazz (1983)

Soie Sauvage (1980)

Beginning with O (1977)

Restlessness, 1967 (in Greek)

Stephen McCauley

Associate Professor of the Practice, Associate Director of Creative Writing

M.F.A. Columbia University

Novels:

Insignificant Others (2010)

Alternatives to Sex (2006)

True Enough (2001) Film adaptation, 2009, Films A4, Paris.

The Man of the House (1997)

The Easy Way Out (1992)

The Object of My Affection (1988) Film adaptation, 1998, 20th Century Fox.

Professor John Burt

Ph.D. Yale

Lincoln's Tragic Pragmatism (2009)

Victory (poems, 2007)

Work Without Hope (poems, 1996)

The Way Down (poems, 1988)

The Collected Poetry of Robert Penn Warren (A Critical Edition) (1999)

After the Southern Renaissance (1999)

Robert Penn Warren and American Idealism (1988)

Professor Mary Baine Campbell

Ph.D. Boston University

Trouble (poetry, 2002)

Wonder and Science: Imagining Worlds in Early Modern Europe (1999)

Are Sin, Disease and Death Real? (chapbook featured in Black Warrior Review, spring 1993)

The World the Flesh and Angels (poetry, 1989)

The Witness and the Other World: Exotic European Travel Writing, 400-1600 (1988)

Co-editor of Begetting Images: Studies in the Art and Science of Symbol Production with Mark Rollins (1989)

Colin Channer

Fannie Hurst Writer in residence

Novels:

The Girl With The Golden Shoes (2007)

Passing Through (2004)

Satisfy My Soul (2002)

Waiting In Vain (1998)

Co-Editor: So Much Things To Say: 100 poems From the First Ten Years of the Calabash International Literary Festival, with Kwame Dawe, (2010)

Melanie Braverman

Jacob Ziskind Poet in residence

Novels:

East Justice (1996)

Poems:

Red (2002)

Massachusetts Cultural Council Awards in poetry and fiction

Publishers Triangle Audre Lorde Poetry Award

More than a dozen one-woman shows of visual artwork

Marc Weinberg

Screenwriter

Projects for:

Discovery Channel

A&E Network

USA Network

Dick Clark Productions

Script Analyst for 20th Century Fox Studios

Student Publications and Venues

Laurel Moon — poetry and fiction.

Pseudonym — poetry, fiction, drawings, photographs.

Where The Children Play — poetry, stories, art, photography.

The Justice — weekly newspaper.

The Hoot — independent weekly newspaper.

Blowfish — satirical publication.

BOMS — Brandeis Open Mic Series.

For more information please visit our websites:

<http://www.brandeis.edu/departments/english/events.html>

<http://www.brandeis.edu/departments/english/about/index.html>

<http://www.brandeis.edu/departments/english/courses/index.html>

<http://www.brandeis.edu/departments/english/undergraduate/majors/cwmajor.html>

<http://www.brandeis.edu/departments/english/undergraduate/majors/cwhonorstrack.html>

<http://www.brandeis.edu/registrar/schedule/classes/2011/Fall/1800/UGRD>

<http://www.brandeis.edu/registrar/schedule/classes/2012/Spring/1800/UGRD>

You may contact the English Department at 781.736.2130, or at chaucer@brandeis.edu.