

Sewanee School of Letters MFA Requirements and Expectations

Course Requirements

All students will take 8 courses earning 30 semester hours, normally enrolling in two courses per summer. Students seeking the MFA after completing 8 courses (4 workshops and 4 literature classes), will submit a final thesis. No course with a grade lower than B- may be applied toward the degree. Students are encouraged to strike a balance between courses covering material from before and after 1800.

Policy on Transfer Credit

Up to two graduate course credits (or six semester hours) may be transferred from other accredited institutions to count toward a degree from the Sewanee School of Letters. Each course must be approved for transfer by the Director, preferably before the work is done. Transfer course credits cannot have been counted towards any other degree, whether taken at Sewanee or another institution, and must be of a grade of B or better. Graduate credits, whether they are earned at Sewanee or transferred from another institution, cannot count toward a degree after ten years have elapsed.

Thesis

All M.F.A. students must complete a thesis. This is a substantial creative manuscript: a novel or sustained nonfiction narrative, a collection of short stories or essays, or a collection of poems. Length for the M.F.A. thesis may be anywhere from 80 to 200 pages of prose or 40 to 50 pages of poetry.

Work on the thesis may begin at any time after required course work has been completed. The thesis is written under the supervision of an advisor, chosen by the candidate and appointed by the Director of the School of Letters, who may be any willing member of the School of Letters faculty. As the project nears completion, a second reader will be appointed by the Director. When the thesis has been completed and conditionally approved, the candidate for the degree will submit to a one-hour oral examination conducted by the advisor and second reader.

Students engaged in thesis work should register for English 599. Thesis work carries six hours of graduate credit.

Expectations

Course work and thesis work in the School of Letters require independent thinking and writing. Students in the M.A. program are expected not only to understand what others have said about literary works under study, but to contribute original understandings of their own. Students in the M.F.A. program, besides being grounded in the history of creative writing in English, are expected to contribute to that by writing publishable, original work themselves.

Sewanee places major emphasis upon honor. Its students are expected to conduct themselves with integrity, discipline, a sense of individual responsibility, and regard for other people. In exchange for this conduct the University grants its students freedom and privacy. The Honor Code is a time-honored tradition at Sewanee, and your matriculation at

the University acknowledges your willingness to live within the bounds of academic, personal, and community relationships the Honor Code upholds.

Learning Expectations for MFA Program

The School of Letters expects graduates of its MFA program to have developed the following skills and areas of expertise:

1. They should develop a rich and articulate understanding of the formal elements of the genre in which they write.
2. They should acquire sufficient knowledge of the history and traditions of that genre to be able to place their own work in relation to these.
3. They should develop and employ techniques of intensive revision.
4. They should be able to produce polished literary work of publishable quality.
5. They should be able to articulate verbally the purposes of their work, accounting for their artistic choices and explaining the work's place both within its genre and within their own developing craft.