

Hello, everyone.

Welcome and thanks so much for being here.

I'm joining you from Vancouver on the traditional ancestral and unceded lands of the Musqueam people.

And I'm Bronwyn Tate.

I'm the undergraduate chair of the Creative Writing Program.

And I'm joined by Alexandra Tsardidis, who is the undergraduate advisor.

You may have emailed with her in the past.

And I'm also joined by some of our faculty and some of our students, who I will introduce to you in a moment.

And they'll share some of their experiences, some insights into the program.

We're going to talk about both the Creative Writing major and the Creative Writing minor.

And we'll present a little bit about each program, an overview of how you might join or participate in these programs.

And then we'll have plenty of time at the end for questions.

So I'll jump right in.

So in the School of Creative Writing, we teach a whole lot of genres of creative writing.

Where I studied creative writing for my undergraduate, I think we only did poetry, creative nonfiction, and fiction.

But here we also have writing for new media, podcasting and video games, writing for children and young adults, dramatic writing for the screen, writing for TV, stage, graphic forms, which also means comics, writing for comedy, lyric form, songwriting.

And we're also starting to develop some courses that have more of a key question or key theme at the center.

So climate writing, writing with an indigenous focus, literary translation, hybrid forms.

It's an exciting department with lots of genres, lots of different approaches, lots of space for whatever kind of writing people want to do.

We have two undergraduate options, a creative writing major, which is sometimes called the BFA because our students who do the creative writing major most frequently get a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree, although some of our double majors get a Bachelor of Arts.

So sometimes a BFA, sometimes a BA.

And we also have a creative writing minor.

So there's some key differences between these two programs.

The creative writing major is a portfolio application.

So students who want to participate in that program need to give a portfolio of their work, which is assessed by faculty.

Whereas for the creative writing minor, people can just self-declare.

And this often happens in year two or year three.

For the major, there are 36 credits of 400 level courses.

For the minor, it's also pretty robust.

It's 30 credits of 200, 300, and three five level courses.

In the major, all courses are capped at 12.

So sometimes there'll be an eight or a 10, but 12 is the most frequent.

For the minor, the classes start pretty big.

So if you've already taken, say, a creative writing 201, the Intro to Poetry that Sharita and I teach, that might be 200 students.

But then each level becomes smaller and more intimate.

So the 301 is maybe three TA-led sections of 30.

And then the 351 could be, what, 15, 20, 25 students.

So they start big.

But then if you continue with them, they get small pretty quickly.

A lot of people who are doing the creative writing major take classes at the 200 and the 300 level before applying to the major.

And some people continue to take them even while doing the major.

So especially maybe if there's a genre that we're not offering that term, like video game writing that we only offer every so often, one might take that 300 level class.

So there are also students who transfer in for the creative writing major and haven't done any of our 200 or 300 level courses.

But we're seeing that more and more of these two programs are pretty in conversation with one another.

Faculty are teaching across both programs.

And students often are doing work at the 200 and 300 level before doing the 400 level courses.

All right.

So just brief overview we'll get into in a moment.

But for now, I'm just going to invite some of our faculty and our students to talk about their experiences.

Hello.

So I teach the creative writing 203 lecture class in children's and YA writing.

And I see some names here from that class.

But I also teach the 303 seminar class in the minor program and then 403 workshops in the creative writing major.

And it's a bit like 203 is a bit like if you're on a bus tour of writing for children in YA and you get to see really cool things.

But there's a tour leader, me, who tells you where to get off the bus and what to look at.

And then as you get into 303 and 403, it's much more like you're backpacking with a group of fellow travelers.

And you get a lot more choice and agency over direction, which is fun.

Terrific.

Anosh, how about you?

Can you tell us a little bit about what classes you teach and what they're like?

Hi, everyone.

So I teach both at the grad and undergrad level.

Previously, I've taught a graduate fiction course, which was a small workshop course.

It had about seven students.

This semester, I'm teaching both playwriting and fiction.

They're both undergrad classes.

My fiction class is, again, a small group.

It's workshop based.

So you get a lot of one-on-one conversations.

It's a short fiction class.

The playwriting class that I'm teaching is at 307.

And that has about 45 students.

So the style is different.

It's interactive.

It's lecture based with lots of writing exercises.

But I do like having conversations.

So that's always something that I encourage in all my classes.

And personally, I enjoy the range.

The fact that the different genres is fun for me, but also the fact that one class is only about seven

and the other is 45.

Because the way you teach and the way you learn are kind of different in both these classes.

So you're using different skills at different moments, right?

Yeah, I feel that too.

Absolutely.

Sheryda, should we try your sound again?

So sorry, my total desktop froze and I couldn't do anything.

I'm so sorry about that.

I'm really happy to see so many people here.

I teach poetry 201, 301, 351, and 401.

And in that range, I get to see students develop a progress across all of those classes.

One of the pleasures that I think is definitely the small sizes as you get further along in the program, and really seeing the students form communities of friendship and really supporting each other's growth.

It's such an intimate practice.

Creative writing classroom is quite intimate and vulnerable, especially in a poetry space.

So we do a lot of work to develop community and care for one another in these spaces.

And so it's really lovely to see a group of 351 students having gone through 201 and 301 together, come together and support one another.

For those who are really interested in the minor program, there's something really lovely about having creative writing classes as part of a really, maybe busy schedule with because creative writing supports a certain kind of learning, you're developing different capacities like resilience, you're sort of wrestling with uncertainty and not knowing, and you're practicing some soft skills that you might not be practicing in other kinds of classes.

So I think creative writing, I find a lot of students say how nice it is to have creative writing classes as part of their larger undergraduate schedule.

So that's another pleasure.

Absolutely.

Well, maybe we could pass to Evelyn then.

So how, what else are you studying and how did you decide to do a creative writing minor alongside your other studies?

Hi, I am a psychology major.

I'm in my last year of my degree.

And I, I don't really, I did a little bit of creative writing in high school.

And I found I really enjoyed it.

I've always enjoyed writing my whole life.

And so I took, I think I took 200.

And I really was drawn to the, I was drawn to poetry, and I was drawn to creative nonfiction.

And then I was like, when do I take those?

And then I was taking a lot of creative writing courses.

And I was like, I might as well get a minor in this because it's so interesting to me.

And I really enjoy writing.

And creative writing is so different from, because I do a lot of academic writing.

So it's a very nice, it's a very nice break from that.

And I don't know, all the professors I've had have been so lovely and sweet.

Yeah, so it's been, it's been like a nice creative outlet to have away from all the academics, and also help build like my writing skills.

And I think it depends on your, you're really able to incorporate your major into some of your writing.

Like I'm in psychology, and I tend to write a lot about like mental illness, things like that.

And I'm informed from work I've done in my major.

So yeah.

Amazing.

And what are some classes you're doing this term?

This term, I'm only taking two creative writing courses.

I'm taking the 300 level of fiction.

And I'm also taking genre fiction.

Cool.

Yeah.

Amazing.

What about, let's hear from some of the creative writing majors as well.

So maybe Katika, how did you come to do a creative writing major?

And what are some things that you're enjoying?

Yeah, so I have kind of an unusual entry into creative writing, which is that I actually have a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science.

But I've always loved writing and sort of just felt like it wasn't an option for me.

So I felt like I had to get my science degree first.

But then once I was finishing that up, I think in my last year or two, I took, I actually took a 201 poetry class with Sharita, and I took the prerequisite 200 level with Tarek.

And I was just like, what if I just did this?

So I applied to the program and the way that that works is you can do like a second degree, and they jump you essentially into third year.

So I'm finishing my last year of my degree, and it'll only be two years total.

But yeah, the, it's just like a completely different world from what I'm used to in academia.

And it's just like the, the community and the energy of like, just being in class day to day is just like, it's like, night and day, like it's a whole different world, because I'm very used to like, you know, kind of head down, get your studies done, learn what you got to learn, cram for the test, move on.

But creative writing, my experiences with the major program, so with the small workshop classes, but it's so just like focused on like being present with other folks who, who are all lovely, and, and just like writing together and talking about writing, and reading each other's stuff and hyping each other up.

And it's like, yeah, it's just completely, that's, I think, probably my favorite part of it is just like, it's, it's giving you room to write and connect with people.

And it's pretty cool.

Amazing.

What are some of the genres that you've studied over your time here?

I applied with poetry and fiction, and I'd say those are still my main genres.

But a really cool thing about this program is that you have to take at least four different genres.

You can't just specialize.

And I know that's scary, because I was freaked out, because I was like, I don't know how to write anything else.

But like, I, some of my favorite classes have been ones that were outside of those, those focuses.

Like, I really love, I took graphic forms with Sarah Levitt last year, and I really loved it.

It's like comics.

And I'm doing the advanced class with her next semester.

And I really love that.

And I think that like the different types of writing that we do inform each other and they, like the more that you do write in different genres, the more you realize that the boundaries between them are very gray, and you can kind of blur them as you'd like.

And that's super fun.



Amazing.

So how about you?

How did you come to major in creative writing?

And what have you been up to?

Okay, so I'm a English creative writing double major.

So I'm doing the BA.

And I was planning on doing the minor.

But I realized that like, I really wanted to take my writing, like really seriously and have it be a major part of my day to day life.

And I've been writing since I was a kid, but I wanted to be able to collaborate with other people in the major.

And I had a friend who was applying, and she was encouraging me to apply.

And so I applied with fiction and nonfiction.

And I think I had a similar experience to Katika, I was really worried because I'm truly like fiction only.

Ever since I was little, I hadn't really thought about other genres.

But I would completely agree.

And I also think that other university creative writing programs tend to ask you to like, specialize and then like, write, usually like, lit thick, and stuff like that.

And I really appreciated this program's ability to kind of teach a wide variety of things.

So in any given class, people are coming in with a wide variety of experiences, even if everyone's in the major.

So some people are starting out like from the beginning, and other people have much more experience with it.

And it just makes it so that like my scope of how I understand writing really widens.

And even if I'm going back to a genre that I am really comfortable with, I'm able to utilize a lot of the skills that I've learned from other genres, and also maybe like try and mix them up a little bit or do a combination and really, like explore creatively, which I don't think other like academic creative writing programs really provide all that much.

So I'm really grateful for that.

Awesome.

And so had you done some 200 or 300 level classes before you applied for the major?

Yeah, so I took the 200 level, just like beginning class.

And I've taken poetry with Charita.

I've taken fiction, and all this stuff.

And then this term, I'm also taking 300 level course on interactive storytelling.

Yeah, so I really like the diversity of programs and classes.

And I like to dip my toes into all of them.

Amazing.

So what about you, Karis?

Anything you want to share about how you became creative writing major and what you've been doing?

Yeah, so I actually applied twice, and I didn't get in the first time.

And I think it's because I was paranoid about applying with something that I wasn't wanting to do when I was in the program.

So I did a lot of poetry, and I did a lot of fiction in high school.

And so those were the things that I had the strongest portfolios in.

And so I did, but I didn't want to do any poetry in the program.

So I was like, I'm not going to use a poetry portfolio.

So I didn't use that, and to my detriment, so I didn't end up getting accepted the first time.

But I ended up using it the second time, and I got in with poetry and fiction.

And then I ended up getting in the program.

And I have taken every single type of writing that is offered at UBC.

I kind of was like, well, I'm here, I'm paying for it.

And there's so many professionals that are here that are teaching so many different things.

So I might as well get as many different experiences as humanly possible.

So I've done a little bit of writing for children.

And I've done writing for TV, writing for stage, writing for video games, writing podcasts.

If we offer it, I've done a little bit of it.

I even did hybrid forms with Sharita, which isn't poetry, but it's kind of poetry.

And then that broke my brain over the summer.

And now all I can do is write poetry.

And it's been a real issue because I'm in my last class before graduating, and it's a fiction class.

And all I want to do is write poetry.

And it's been a real issue this entire semester.

But it's probably been the best kind of like three years, technically.

Because this last term, I've just had a creative writing class for my just to tie a little bow around my degree before I graduate in the spring.

And I've just loved the community and the friendships that I've built because it is such like a small group of people that you're just moving through these classes, and you don't always expect to see the same people.

But you'll walk into a room and you're like, "You!

I saw you in podcasts two years ago.

What are you doing here?

" And then you'll like rekindle this friendship that you weren't expecting to survive, but you know each other so personally because you're seeing each other through a lens of like a very personal like writing experience.

And the joke that kind of gets passed around with people, especially if they're in poetry classes, is that you're learning each other backwards.

You put so much of your emotions in there.

So it's been great.

And I just, I feel like coming out of this, especially since I dipped my toes into every single genre that I'd set my eyes on, I've kind of strengthened a lot of random craft that exists out there to kind of shove it into other things.

So I've kind of multitasked.

And my cat, who you might see her tail because she does not believe in me being on the computer without supervision, she is also a creative writing major because she has been my assistant writer throughout this entire degree as well.

But yeah, so that's kind of where I'm at with it.

Thank you so much.

And I see there's a few questions in the chat.

And we'll get to those later or they might be answered over the course of things.

But just don't worry if you have any questions.

I will make sure that we take the time at the end to get into everything in detail.

Just wanted to ask if any of the faculty want to kind of talk back to or respond to anything that came up from some of the students.

Yeah, Anush.

I think what was mentioned about practicing in different genres, I think that's really, really helpful.

And I would highly encourage students to do that.

Because that's what the BFA is for.

It's for discovery.

And don't be afraid to try something new because until you try it, you don't know what you're really good at.

And even if you end up not being good at a particular genre, it will always inform your own writing in some way.

So I would definitely encourage students to kind of spread out a little.

And if you've never written a play, try writing a play.

If you're not comfortable with poetry, take two courses that you're really comfortable with and then take that one course that stretches you a bit.

Because I was a student at UBC many, many years ago.

And it was the fact that I was working in multiple genres that really helped me a lot.

Right.

And it was through an internship that you did that you started writing a play, right?

Yes.

And I initially, you know, at UBC, I was in poetry and fiction.

I did not take any playwriting classes while I was in the program.

But then through the UBC co-op program, I got a job as a summer intern at the Arts Club Theatre Company.

And my job was to read plays and, you know, be in rehearsals and stuff like that.

And I wrote a play which they eventually produced on their main stage.

So you never know what happens.

Absolutely.

Thank you.

Sharida or Tanya, anything you want to add?

I did love what So said about wanting to take the writing seriously.

And I think often in undergrad experience, there's not a lot of support if you want to do creative work.

Sometimes you're maybe people don't understand why creative work is important to you as a person.

And so this is a space where you can believe in yourself and see that it's important and it affects all aspects of your life.

And so I love that idea.

Like we take your work very seriously as writers and work here to support and cultivate that and help you feel really confident and encourage you in that choice to make it a priority.

So that was lovely.

Thank you.

Tanya, any final notes?

I'll just add that a few people mentioned community.

And I think that's one of the most amazing parts of the program.

I had a 403 class last year that would meet an hour before class every week in the lounge and eat cake and then come to class, bring me cake and just continue the conversations that they'd started.

And having 11 or 12 smart people try to help you make your writing as good as possible and helping them in return is just an amazing process.

Beautiful.

Thank you.

All right.

I'm going to share my screen again and we'll get into sort of some more detailed things and then I'll pass it to Alexandra to talk about some of the admissions questions.

And I see there's some questions coming up in the chat there.

So resuming the screen share.

All right.

So here's the structure of the minor program.

There's 30 credits of 200 and 300 level courses.

And there are three course path already developed in four genres.

So in poetry, in fiction, in screenwriting, and in writing for children, students are able to start with the 200 level, focus at the 300 level, and then get into the workshop at this three, five level.

And we're developing that full path in other genres as well moving forward.

And then there's also lots of courses like writing lyric forms or writing for new media or interactive storytelling that might just have a single course on the books currently but that gives students a real chance to explore.

So through these, especially the four genres that we have the full path in, there's this development of the solid basis of technique and craft and then moving into these more student driven sort of maybe sustained project based courses.

And for most 300 level courses, there is some kind of 200 level prerequisite in the same genre, especially for the ones that build in this way.

And so this is the way the-- especially the three, five level classes can often be really deep courses, very rigorous, because people have this sort of shared vocabulary, shared basis of understanding.

If they haven't taken them all in the same sequence together, they often know at least some other people.

So there's a real sense of connection, especially at those three, five level courses.

When will it move?

There?

Yes.

All right.

So here is a map, which we also have on our website, that just shows you a little bit what this

program looks like.

So 200 is a kind of base.

Many people start there.

It introduces students to multiple genres.

Then so say in poetry, 201, 301, 351.

So these kind of building up through those different genres with some other courses being just kind of on their own depending on what that structure is.

So lots of information available on our website for people who want to look more closely at what this might be like.

Now the structure of the Creative Writing major program.

It's a fine arts program within the Faculty of Arts.

It's a closed studio program.

So the students do need to apply with portfolios.

And I would say the focus is on experiential learning, so learning through doing their writing, engaging in the writing of others with a solid support of craft and critical reading, and sometimes analytic writing, sometimes presentations, sometimes shared experiments.

These might vary from course to course, but definitely intensive courses.

As several people have mentioned, it's a multi-genre program with an emphasis on cross-genre training.

So nobody comes in with just one thing they want to do and like discipline to only ever do that thing.

Everybody comes in with at least an openness to stretch and grow and try some new things and discover what they might have an aptitude for, but they have not yet tried.

Students are really encouraged to try genres that are new or challenging and even genres like songwriting or like writing for comics that you might think you need to be able to play an instrument or know how to sing or know how to draw.

These classes are really designed to bring people in without any previous experience or any previous skills and show you that even as a beginner who maybe hasn't drawn since



kindergarten, you can make comics and they might even be really great.

There are small workshops that are capped at 12 people per course, and the requirements of the major are 36 credits of 400 level workshops in at least four genres.

And the program is designed to be completed over two years with three courses per term.

Now I'm going to turn things over to Alexandra who will say a little bit about eligibility and the application process.

And just tell me if you need me to advance a slide, Alexandra.

Okay, sounds good.

Thank you.

Yeah, so I'll just quickly go over the eligibility requirements for the major.

So you must be an active UBC student.

So that means for transfer students, you have to apply to the university first before applying to our major.

The deadline for the university is January 15.

So it comes before application.

So you'd have to get that in first.

And then students that are applying as a second degree student must also apply to UBC enrollment services.

And for current UBC students, they usually apply during your second year of studies.

So this means that by September 1, which is the program start date, you'll have third year status or 54 completed credits.

There are students that need to take some summer classes to get to the 54 credits, which is totally fine.

You can take a couple classes over the summer, if you were to get an admission into our program, it would be conditional pending these completed credits.

So by September 1, you need to have 54.

There is no GPA requirement to be eligible for the program, you need to have creative writing 200 or equivalent.

This means any creative writing 200 level class and if you're a transfer student, then also something equivalent to our 200 level.

And then the next slide Great.

So the application process.

So the window coming up is January 8 to February 28 for September 1.

And there was one question in the chat, there is no advantage to applying early, you can apply right before the deadline and all applications will be reviewed at the same time.

They're circulated to faculty readers who will assess the writing samples anonymously.

So for that reason, we ask that you don't include your name on the portfolio or the personal statement.

We only have one application intake per year.

So if you apply and you're not admitted, you have the option to apply again next year.

And part of our application guidelines, which is on our website, and posted in this slide here.

There's nine genres that you can apply in.

And yeah, just go through our guidelines, it's everything's in there.

For the application components, there's four pieces.

So a form that you'd need to fill out the link is on our web page, a personal statement, a manuscript with a primary genre and a second secondary genre.

So there's, you'll submit this all as one document, one PDF on the application form.

And we usually have offers by April or May.

And the acceptance rate is approximately 25%.

So we receive about 100 applications and admit roughly 25 students.

And then a few things about the portfolio.

So you're submitting two separate genres, they have to be a minimum of 10 pages.

And then we have maximum page numbers listed in the guidelines.

It's different for each genre.

So pay attention to that.

And then the pieces that you submit can be from previous assignments, they don't have to be published work or anything.

We do not accept collaborative work of any form.

There are no intake quotas.

So we don't admit based on any particular genre.

And yeah, we just ask that you submit your strongest work.

And that's all.

Terrific.

So I'll just say a few words about those materials specifically.

So the personal statement asks you to just share a little bit about who you are, what your goals are as a writer, who you want to become.

So you could talk about sort of how you started writing.

If there are some writers or some movies or songs or comics that have been really influential or inspiring for you, you can tell us a little bit about that.

Maybe a bit about genres you're interested in and why, what you've enjoyed from previous creative writing courses.

And then because this program is one in which you work really closely with other people, we ask you to maybe share a little bit as well about why you're interested in doing a program with other people.

So you could do a sort of one-on-one mentorship with somebody where it's just you, or you could read creative writing books and follow things.

But if you do a program, you're sort of saying, I want to work on my writing in a community with other people.

So we invite you to talk to us a little bit about that.

What experiences have prepared you to engage in the work of others, support their growth?

What appeals to you about a small kind of workshop-based program?

And then again, we are reviewing these anonymously, so we ask you not to include your name.

When it comes to the manuscript, people often ask us, how do I pick or how do I make my manuscript great?

Or is there something people are looking for that you haven't told us?

And I will say, all of us as faculty, we're open to a wide range of stylistic and aesthetic approaches.

So I think so mentioned that, right?

Some people are writing very literary fiction, and some people are writing much more genre-based fiction or are doing kind of new, fabulous, or speculative things.

We have people writing maybe a romantic comedy TV script.

We have somebody else writing some poems.

And so I think we're really a program that is eclectic and that isn't snobby.

And we take seriously the craft of all of these things from picture books to personal essays to stage plays.

And we are open to seeing what excellent work might look like according to a wide range of sensibilities and aesthetics.

So things I would say we're looking for are kind of fresh, original voices and perspectives, an awareness of genre and craft specific to whatever genre you're submitting in, a certain degree of care and attention to detail.

So that might mean making sure that the titles are on the pages of the poems, not on the page before, or that you've checked over the grammar and spelling and make sure it is how you want it to be.

But really, we're looking for people who have the potential to learn and thrive in our program and to contribute to the growth of those around them.

So we would ask you to pay attention to the manuscript guidelines and the page requirements.

And if you're in the 200 level classes now, or if you are already working with some of us, we have to tell you that we're not able to help with this part.

We're not able to consult or give advice about which writing to include or review revisions with an eye towards the portfolio because we need to stay outside of that.

And we will be assessing anonymously.

And it does occasionally happen that someone's assessing and then they say, oh, I recognize this poem from my class.

And in that case, we would recuse ourselves and it would bounce to someone else who is sure that they're able to assess it without any kind of personal bias or connection.

So I think I'll stop the share now and just see if anyone wants to-- faculty or students say a few words about their experiences reading portfolios.

What have they been struck by before from faculty?

Or for students, how did you decide how to prepare your portfolio, what to include?

We already heard a little bit from Karis about maybe the first time not including the poetry and the second time, yes.

And I'll also just say, I love that we have such a range of people, Katika deciding to do a second degree.

That is something that happens.

Karis applying once and it not working out, applying again.

And it did.

These are all experiences that are totally common within the program.

So I love that we have people who are able to share their experiences with that full range.

So maybe Tanya or Sharida or Anosh, can you talk a little bit about your experiences reading portfolios and when things have stood out to you?

Sharida, you've been a thumbs up from the call on you.

Sure.

I think across all genres, it doesn't matter on poetry, fiction, nonfiction, whatever you decide to put into your portfolio, the kind of writing that strikes me as something that's exploring subject matter that is meaningful to you and that you're making intentional and considered choices.

So you're paying really close attention to whatever you're paying attention to, say in a poem.

You're thinking about unexpected word combinations, concrete and particular and sensory language, really unexpected and surprising images.

And just showing this notion that you've spent some time with this work and it's not rushed.

It hasn't been just kind of thrown together, but that you've paid some attention to it.

You've sat with it.

It's accompanied you through the world a little bit.

Maybe you carry it around with you and look at it while you're in another class.

Oh, no, don't do that.

No, I'm just kidding.

Time and attention, I think, is really evident in a portfolio package.

Thank you.

How about you, Anosh?

What has stood out to you when you've read portfolios?

So I'll start by saying something very simple.

I think, Bronwyn, you touched upon it and it's important.

First, make sure that your manuscript is really clean in the sense that it's formatted correctly.

There are no fancy fonts.

And it's really important because that's your first point of contact with the reader.

It just means that you've taken care to read the instructions and it's the first introduction to the reader.

So even though it's a very simple thing, it makes the reading experience much, much better.

It actually makes your work better in some way.

What I'm really interested in is, again, what Sharida mentioned, at a craft level, I'm looking for care that this person is paying attention to craft.

It's not just about the imagination and how.

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Sometimes writers get carried away with plot and I'm not really interested in plot or event.

The writing doesn't even have to be particularly clever, it just has to be human.

And I'm looking for something that's character driven.

And at a sentence level, can you write a good sentence?

I think that's something that's really important because if you focus too much on event, you might think you've accomplished a lot, but at a sentence level, there's grammatical errors, the sentences are clumsy, the imagery isn't clear.

So just simplify things.

And finally, I'm a huge believer in economy.

Do in one sentence what it's taking you five right now.

So those are things I look at.

No pressure.

Thank you, Anosh.

I'm seeing that there are lots of questions in the chat and we'll definitely get to those.

Tanya, anything you wanna share as a portfolio reader?

I've been asked before, should I put in a short story so it's complete or is it okay to put in an excerpt?

And I think it's definitely okay to put in excerpts because if something I'm reading is making me wonder about things and making me ask questions, and if I'm disappointed when I get to the end because I don't know everything yet, that's always a really good sign to me if I would wanna keep reading.

Terrific.

All right.

Let's hear maybe from a few students.

So, Karis, you told us a little bit about your two portfolio experiences.

What about you?

So how did you decide what to include and how did you prepare that?

Yeah, I think when it comes to excerpts and completed work, I'm not super good at completing excerpts.

That's one of the things I'm working on with the program.

But I remember while I was preparing for the portfolio, something I came across really inspired me.

And I was like, well, I can't write that right now because I'm working on polishing the stuff that I have for the portfolio.

But I just kept coming back to the idea over and over again.

And so I just decided to include it in the portfolio because I really liked what I had so far.

And I ended up deciding that it was the beginning of a novella.

So I categorized it as such in my portfolio.

And I got in and I was really worried about it not being a completed piece.

But yeah, so I think that that's something that might be a weight off of some people's shoulders when it comes to deciding what to include.



I do think that I really focused on the pieces that I felt had the most to say.

And then also if they were cohesive, kind of across the board.

I don't know why I ended up gravitating towards that, but I felt that a lot of the writing that I felt most confident about had very similar themes throughout.

And so I kind of arranged it so that that might become clear to whoever was reading.

And I'm not very confident in nonfiction.

So the nonfiction that I ended up submitting was stuff that I thought were the most personal to me.

And I hoped that that kind of personal aspect of it would come through to the reader.

Perfect.

And you said you were applying around the same time as a friend.

Did you read each other's portfolios at all?

I was applying with two different friends and we were constantly sending each other copies back and forth.

And that was my first foray into being comfortable sharing my writing with other people because at this point I was really uncomfortable with it.

And I was like, but I have to and I will have to if I get into the program.

So we all had different genres and we kept sharing back and forth and giving notes and stuff like that.

And that was really helpful.

Perfect.

How about you, Katika?

Anything to add?

Yeah, I think a lot of similar stuff to so.

I also actually applied with a friend who also got into the program.

And I think, again, it was like I was very shy about sharing stuff at that point still.

And just like even having that part, it kind of helps you gather up the courage to send in the portfolio, but also to look at it critically.

And I think I had like a handful of poems that I was like, I'm not sure what the strongest ones of these are.

I feel like I'm too close to them or I'm too judgmental of myself.

And she was really helpful in being like, these are great.

I think that these ones maybe are the strongest or the most unique.

I think that maybe some of my biggest advice would be don't worry too much about writing what you feel like you should be writing, if that makes sense.

I definitely, I knew that I was going to apply to the program about a year before I did.

And so I was like, great, I have a year to prepare this portfolio.

I can write the entire year.

I was paralyzed from writing for this portfolio for like 10 months.

Like it was really in the last two months that I pulled it together.

I mean, I had some material already, but because I felt like I had to kind of like be this version of myself that was like already like an incredible writer that like somehow satisfied these requirements that I wasn't even sure what people are looking for.

But like what people are actually looking for is just you.

They're looking for like what you write, what's true to you, what's interesting to you and like grounded in who you are and your experience.

Like that's the good stuff.

So really don't worry too much about like how you're sounding or, you know, like just I mean, you know, pay attention to your craft, but like in a way that's like being honest to yourself, not to how you feel like it should be said.

Another thing that I would say is like if you are panicked about like having not having enough

content, don't necessarily discount old stuff because like sometimes it's really helpful to just have something to start off of.

I had a story that I was like, oh, I don't really, there's something here but I don't really like it and I essentially just like rewrote it and put that in my portfolio because like it gave me somewhere to start and I think that that's really helpful.

But yeah, the other thing I'm going to underline is the thing that Kara said about being scared about like not wanting to submit in a genre that you don't want to write in in a program.

The genres that you apply with, I think, I mean, faculty correct me if I'm wrong, but I think that you want, you just want your portfolio to be the strongest and like, yeah, the strongest that you can do that's like true to where you were at applying as a writer at this moment, but it doesn't say anything about what you're going to be as a writer after that.

You're not bound to the fact that you're not going to stick to the genres.

You don't even have to take them at all if you don't want to.

Like you can do whatever you want.

Just like really focus on getting the strength of your portfolio in and yeah, just being like bringing your unique perspective and voice to it.

Perfect.

Thanks so much, everybody.

I'm just going to share screen briefly one more time to give our contact information.

So here's Alexandra's email address crwr.

undergrad@ubc.

ca.

I'm Bronwyn Tate, Bronwyn.

Tate@ubc.

ca and our website is creativewriting.

ubc.

ca.

And now we'll open up for questions and people have already put these in the chat.

I'll stop the screen share and I'll start reading questions from the chat and I'll kind of bounce them to whoever is most prepared to answer them.

So I'll stop the screen share now and open up the chat and I'm going to scroll all the way back to the beginning just to make sure we don't miss anything, but we'll get through everything.

So we had a question about the acceptance rate to the major, which I think came up.

So it is 25% roughly from year to year.

Someone asks, what are the chances for someone who doesn't have a first degree but has a strong portfolio?

And I think I could just say there's no advantage to having a previous degree.

You know, we absolutely welcome people and we have people who are in their 40s, we have people who are in their 70s at the moment.

So people can pick up creative writing and decide to go deep with it at any age.

But we don't look at transcripts with an idol like, oh, this person already has a degree, they must be really serious.

It's really about that portfolio.

So there's no particular advantage or disadvantage to having a previous degree.

There was a question, does the creative writing make the UBC campus feel smaller?

Are there opportunities to connect outside of class through clubs, readings, etc?

So I would say yes.

But I'd love to ask some of our students to speak to that.

Is that a hand, Karis, or is that a cat related hand?

It's a me related hand.

She's just blaring because I'm about to talk.

Yes, and also no.

So it's smaller because there's like smaller classes.

So you see like a smaller amount of people, you're not in a class of 50 people.

So you don't see like the same 50 people you see the same like 12 people in three classes.

So you see the same 36 people, give or take each semester.

But those 12 people will invite you to like different readings each month, or faculty will be like, hey, if you're in comedy, Deena will probably mention, hey, real Vancouver has a reading today or whenever and kind of try and get you to go to that or there's different like things that happen.

So that kind of connects you to community outside of class.

And there's different things like I know that the film society on campus, they will like put together money to film a short film each year.

And there's like different things like that, that you can get involved with, which kind of makes the campus feel a little bigger.

But normally, you get kind of a smaller, more tight knit group is kind of the experience that I got, because like, I've made some really tight friendships, I feel like in my time, instead of like a really broad friend group, it's a smaller friend group that I can see lasting a long time is kind of where my perspective comes from here.

Thank you.

So do you want to continue?

So I'm in my first years first semester of the program.

And I was also really nervous about whether I would kind of feel like I'm on the outskirts a little bit.

But I've already been, like invited to a lot of readings, a lot of clubs, there's a lot of opportunities for people to get involved.

There's the Brave New Playwrights Festival, which is where like students can submit pieces and like work on them with a with a director and actors and everything.

There is just a lot of stuff that like a variety of people are doing and everyone is really eager to, like invite everyone else and you get to meet a lot of cool people.

And it is like close knit in the sense that there's not a ton of people in the major program.

But there is a lot of like reach, I think.

Can you say a few words about young adulting or any of the other things going on in writing for children and young adults?

Yeah, I mean, young adulting, some people are involved in it right at the 200 level too.

It is, we receive advanced reader copies from publishers, and then we distribute them to student reviewers.

And then we post the reviews on the young adulting website.

It's like an online children's lit review.

Evelyn, have you done some?

Yeah, a bunch of them, I think.

Amazing, cool.

And then often there's opportunities to interview authors as well and to meet some publishing people.

And so yeah, it's a great group of people involved in that.

Perfect.

Evelyn, do you want to say anything about other stuff you've been involved in through creative writing as a minor student?

Yeah, well, I was gonna just say a little bit about young adulting as someone who's done it.

I was like, when I first signed up for it, because I heard about it in my class with Tanya, somebody came in, talked about it, and I was like, maybe I can try this.

I was worried it was gonna be like extra homework.

But it was not.

It was like, you get to experience the joy of children's books.

And you have a whole month to write a review.

And the reviews are not very long at all.

And it's been lovely to see what's going on in the children's world of fiction.

So it's been nonfiction.

It's been really lovely.

But in terms of making, because I'm in the minor program, a lot of my intro classes weren't, they were kind of big and then they got smaller.

But I haven't taken, I'm gonna take my first work.

I haven't taken a 351 yet.

I'm taking one of those next term.

So I don't know how small that is, but I will say I took a poetry class.

And in the poetry class, it was about 15 students per class.

And I got really close with everyone.

We were divided in within the class, we were divided into groups of like five people.

And I still talk to a few of them, like I still hang out with some of them to this day.

And it's really lovely.

The thing about creative writing is a lot of people write about, especially in poetry, I feel like people are very vulnerable, and you write about things that are really close to you.

And so that kind of forms this instant connection with other people.

Because they've heard about some of like, maybe your struggles, they've heard about like, your most deep, innermost feelings.

And that's really lovely.

And I also would like to say that it's, they just, everyone is so kind.

Everyone is so kind, like, I've never had a negative, like sharing my work, I've never had a negative experience.

Everyone has been so lovely.

And yeah, it's just it's you form these really lovely bonds.

Thank you so much.

So maybe we can come back if there's anything else that people think of, but I'll keep moving down the questions.

So there was a question, is there an option to defer attendance for a year?

If Alexandra answered, no, there's a need to apply for the year that you want to join.

So if someone who has admitted if they decided to not take that slot, they would need to apply again.

Question, is it possible to do a creative writing major in the BFA program without doing it as a double major?

Yes, absolutely.

So many people are only majoring in creative writing.

And some people are doing the double major.

And that would be a question of figuring out if it works with the other major and what the requirements are, but totally fine to just do a major in creative writing.

Yes, which Charis is doing.

Thank you.

Let's see.

We had a question about applying to the program early doesn't make any difference because the materials go out to the faculty who are reading them all at once after the deadline.

So there's no kind of rolling admissions.

Here's does the program have to be completed in two years?

Or you can you take longer if necessary?



Alexandra, do you want to speak to that?

Yeah, you can definitely take longer.

So the two years is if you were to study full time, which is three courses per term, but there are students that study more of a part time basis or just take less creative writing courses.

So as long as you're okay with your overall degree, and graduating a little bit later, then it's totally up to you.

Yeah.

Perfect.

We have a question.

What if you want to major in just one genre?

And I would say if you're only interested in doing one genre, this program might not be the best fit for you.

Because we really do have a structure of cross training and working across genres.

So I think if you want to go really deep in one genre, there's that possibility.

But if you really don't want to do any other genres, I think you might find it a frustrating experience.

Question, are there normally creative writing courses offered in the summer that count towards the major?

Alexandra, do you want to take that one?

Yeah, so we usually offer one course in term two, which is part of a 10 day summer residency.

So you have the opportunity to obtain three credits in 10 days.

But these 10 days are jam packed.

It's full day classes where there's lectures, talks, events, and you are expected to participate every day.

And then sometimes we will offer a 400 level in term one.

We haven't in the last couple years, but this upcoming year, we are hopefully planning to offer at least one 400 level in term one.

And we do sometimes offer creative writing 200 or creative writing 13 over the summer.

So especially if someone needs to get that final credit to push them into the 54 credits before beginning, there are opportunities for that.

All right, how strict is the maximum page limit?

For example, if you were to submit 23 pages of fiction, Alexandra?

You certainly can.

We do ask that you stick to the guidelines.

The faculty are reading a lot.

So there's a chance that they might just stop reading at the max.

So if you want to risk it, those last couple pages might not get read.

So please just try to stick to that limit as best as you can.

It can feel like a courtesy question.

So often faculty were reading these files on top of our teaching on top of our thesis advising on top of whatever else we're doing.

And so sometimes if somebody puts something that exceeds the page limit that you really notice, it can feel a little bit like a lack of respect for our time.

And it's sort of like, this is so important.

You need to have the whole thing.

And it's sort of like, hey, we set up a structure.

Please respect that structure and the time we're devoting to this.

So a little bit is one thing, but something that's really noticeable might feel a little bit like a lack of awareness or a lack of courtesy.

We have a question.

Does it mean we don't have to take any 200 level classes if we want to apply for the creative writing major?

That's correct.

You only need to have creative writing 200 or an equivalent, which could be any 200 level class.

If you're a transfer student, this could mean any 200 level at your home university that would transfer to a 200 level at our institution.

So yeah.

I would just say, though, if somebody's like, I don't want to take any creative writing courses until I start the major, I would be a little bit curious as to why, because I feel like if you're interested in doing it, why would you want to wait to start doing it?

And also, it's the same faculty teaching these classes, and they're pretty excellent.

So I would say, sure, you don't have to, but why deprive yourself of the opportunity to start your learning earlier and have a chance to develop your portfolio through those courses?

Question is, any combination of genre acceptable?

Would fiction/children YA be too similar to submit as primary and secondary?

Or is that okay?

That is totally okay.

Yep, any genre.

We do consider screen and TV one genre.

So just for that purpose, it would be considered one, but any other genre, yeah, there's any combination works.

Terrific.

The only things might be, yeah, if it's fiction, it's like novel and short story or something like that.

But if it's showing up as a genre in our materials, it can be treated as a separate genre and can be a portfolio.

All right, someone, I'm currently in my first year, does that mean I should apply in my second year?

Or can I apply this year?

Yeah, so if you're in your first year, that means you're going to apply next year.

So January 2025 for a September 25 start date.

And well done planning ahead.

You're going to be so ready for this.

A question, will we be sending out the recording and the slides?

We'll be sharing them on our website, right, Alexandra?

They'll be posted to our website.

Yes.

Question, when does the application window open again?

January 8 to February 28.

And we are not accepting late applications because we start reading right away.

It's a pretty short window to evaluate.

So we, yeah, it's a hard deadline.

Great.

Question, this is interesting.

How different is the major program from the master's or the MFA program?

Maybe I could ask Sharida to speak to that first.

That's an interesting question, actually.

I think there are a lot of similarities.

They're all workshop-based courses, although there's lots of different modes of pedagogy that we use in our classes, experimentation, experiential learning, active learning, field trips, those kinds of things.

But I don't know if as faculty we think of them too differently.

It's just a matter of workload.

Probably in the grad, at the grad level, we're a bit more rigorous, ask a bit more, but not too much.

I mean, we heard Keris talk about how their brain broke and everything this summer.

But yeah, so I think that's a tricky question.

I don't know if Kenya or Anosh want to help me out here.

I can't think of too much difference, except for the thesis.

There is a thesis related component to the MFA.

There are certainly lots of people working in the BFA at a very high level and approaching publication level.

So you're working with great people in both programs.

In terms of admission, it is a little bit more competitive to get into the MFA.

They receive a little bit more in terms of applications.

So the admission rate is lower.

I'd say the experience also, many of the master's students are TA-ing or doing other kinds of work like that while in their classes.

And so that can make for a somewhat different learning experience.

I would also just say maybe-- I mean, I'd say maybe there's more variation from class to class to some extent across both programs than maybe there is from program to program.

But I would say in general, in the MFA program, there's more and more kind of asking students to claim agency over their own learning and maybe giving a structure, but expecting the student to have their own agenda, to have their own kind of goals and intentions.

And I think in the BFA, it's still kind of maybe in transition there between giving structures,

introducing possible goals and intentions, and kind of teaching those skills of claiming agency, if that makes sense.

Anush, anything you want to add?

I think one of the things that I kind of experienced was in the BFA, there's still a lot of doubt.

Not a lot, but sometimes there's a doubt whether this is what I want to pursue after I complete my BFA.

But once they're in the MFA, they're kind of locked in and they're very, very clear that yes, I am a writer and there's no looking back.

And it sort of changes the way you write and live your life as well.

The one thing I will say that is really helpful, at least going back to when I was a student, I came here as an international student and I did both my undergrad and my MFA at UBC.

And I remember at one point, looking at one of my poems when I was an undergrad and thinking this is going to take a long time for me to get published.

And this was in the year 2000, I was maybe a year and a half into my BFA.

And I suddenly just changed my focus.

I said the focus is not to get published.

It's to just make sure that I'm improving every single day at a craft level.

And the minute I did that, my whole outlook on my writing changed.

I got a lot of strength because I was improving every single day, even if it was one just one good sentence.

And it's very important to make sure your focus is on learning and getting better at your craft.

You can do all the networking you want, all of that will continue.

But don't make getting published your main focus because that's actually not the main focus.

It's about making sure you're really, really good at a craft level.

And if you do that every single day, if you develop a reading and writing practice that is devoted to you becoming a better craftsperson, you will automatically get published at some point.

Thank you.

There's a question about the MFA in film production.

And I would say that might be a better question for our graduate chairs or for the MFA information events than for this session.

So maybe we'll pass over that one for now.

But I'm happy at the end of the session to put email addresses for graduate chairs or a graduate advisor or anybody involved with that.

If it's the MFA, if it's the Joint Creative Writing and Film Production Program, those applications are actually housed within the film production department.

So those applications don't go through us, you apply through them.

So they have their own application process requirements and course structure.

So just have a look at their website.

Thank you, Alexandra.

There's a question about joining Young Adulting and it looks like Evelyn has answered that you just email and the website's right there.

So thanks so much for taking that, Evelyn.

Can you double major if one of your majors is in arts and the other would be this one, fine arts?

So fine arts, at least here is within arts, right?

We're not a separate school outside of art.

So that would still be the same core requirements and breadth requirements and things.

So no complication there.

We've got a question about how juggling, so I'm thinking of doing a double major, how do you juggle taking courses for this would be like two per term in both classes.

So maybe so do you want to speak to that?

How are you kind of moving back and forth between the expectations for both of your majors as you pace your degree?

Yeah, I would say I'm still figuring it out, but it's truly not like so overwhelming that I can't handle it.

This term I'm taking mostly creative writing courses and next term I'll be taking mostly English courses.

I do have to graduate in four years as per my scholarship, so I'll have to be taking like a summer class here or there.

But otherwise it hasn't been too much of a problem.

I just do what I normally do, which is just like trying to organize all the classes and like workload wise, I'm still doing five courses a semester, so it's pretty much the same.

And I would say that like people who are just doing the major as well that I have friends doing just the BFA is also taking like classes outside of the program and doing five courses a term and stuff like that.

So everyone has around a similar workload, I would say.

Thank you.

Someone's asking if you're in one genre you're able to work with professionals in that genre, so connecting with people in industry more broadly.

And we've had a few answers there from Tanya and from Keris.

Any of our other faculty or students want to add anything about connecting with industry professionals or people within those genres?

I can just say that also most of the faculty are working professionally in their genres.

And there's also the preparation for a career in writing course that is open to BFA students and MFA students that will help connect you to industry.

And through the Visiting Writers Series, we also have Writers in Residence and those Writers in Residence will come in and they'll do one-on-one sessions with any student who wants to talk about a manuscript that they're working on or even just some like small package of writing.

So there are opportunities for you to gain mentorship outside of faculty in the program.

I think that's really lovely.



We've got a question.

Do the same faculty members read MFA and BFA undergrad applications?

If someone applied for both, what is the chance the same faculty member would read the portfolio twice?

I would say it depends on the genre.

And so, yes, we do read for both programs.

We do MFA first and then just when we think we're done, we get BFA.

And in a genre like comics where we maybe only have like one or two faculty members teaching in that genre, there's a pretty high chance that someone might see the same portfolio in both.

In a genre like fiction where we have a really deep bench, it's much less likely because it's just sort of the odds everyone lists for Alexandra or for Julia.

These are the genres that I feel capable of assessing in.

And then we get sent portfolios that have work in the genres that we're prepared to assess.

And so, I think there's a chance for any genre, but I think it would be a higher chance for these genres where we have fewer faculty.

Anything to add, Alexandra?

No, that's, yeah, that's great.

Okay.

Are there any options if a student doesn't get into the creative writing program but still wants to pursue creative writing?

I mean, I would say the minor program is a really wonderful option, right?

And people who do the minor program can still do these small workshop-based courses at the 3.

5 level that are often working at a really similar level to the creative writing major.

And Tanya says she just had someone as a guest speaker in a class who did the minor because she didn't get into the major and just published her third book.

So, that's also part of it, right?

Like, don't let any step along your journey tell you who you are as a writer or what you're capable of.

It's always contingent.

There's always some degree of chance involved.

And it's always just sort of a snapshot of a particular moment, not a referendum on your life.

Is there any different advice faculty would give to MFA applicants versus major applicants when it comes to portfolios?

I don't think so.

Yeah, not for me.

I would give the same advice.

Anybody else?

Yeah.

Okay.

Well, I think we've hit the end of our chat questions unless anyone else has something they'd like to add.

Just give it one more moment.

And I'll just thank all of our wonderful faculty and students for making time to be with us and share your experiences and share your insights.

I really appreciate it.

And thanks so much to Alexandra for inviting everybody.

And we'll hope to see you in the future in some context or another.

And email us if you have questions about anything that weren't covered here or that occurred to you down the road.

All right.

I will end the recording.

Bye.

Thanks, everybody.