



BFA

STUDENT HANDBOOK

2025-26

UBC Creative Writing (Vancouver Campus) is located on the traditional, ancestral, unceded territory of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) people.



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

School of Creative Writing

Faculty of Arts



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Welcome to the BFA in Creative Writing at UBC! We're so pleased to have you here.

Our writing community is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the Musqueam people. Musqueam storytellers have lived and worked in this place for thousands of years. We're privileged to share this space with them.

The Creative Writing program is unique and wide-ranging; we offer classes in many genres, including fiction, poetry, creative non-fiction, graphic forms, screenwriting and TV writing, and lyric song writing. As a Creative Writing Major student, you will be required to take workshops in at least four genres. We believe that this literary cross-training offers a rich and vital range of ways for you to build your skills and expand your sense of what is possible in writing.

At the core of the BFA degree program is the workshop. You'll be enrolled in small classes where you read the work of other student writers and share your own, as well as learning aspects of craft from your instructors and through the reading and viewing of professional work. You'll be taught to provide feedback to your peers that is prompt, respectful, and meets the same professional standards you can expect to encounter in the writing, editing, and media industries. It's an intensive and collaborative experience that builds a strong sense of community and mutual support, and we hope you will thrive in it.

In addition to the classes you take, you will also have the opportunity to participate in a variety of reading series, publications, and performances, including: our annual theatre festival, Brave New Play Rites; the literary journal PRISM International; and the Creative Writing majors reading series Outwrite.

All of us in the School of Creative Writing, faculty and staff, are committed to supporting you during the year to come. We are so looking forward to the work you will create with us.

If you have questions or need advice, please don't hesitate to contact our Undergraduate Advisor, Giulia Sperman, or myself—we are here to help.

All best wishes,

Alix Ohlin
Professor and Interim Director
UBC School of Creative Writing

CRWR Major Program

Creative Writing offers a BFA degree.

Students who double major may choose to graduate with either a BA or a BFA degree if the other department offers a BA degree. If the other department does not offer a BA (BMus, BSc, e.g.), students should consult with the Undergraduate Advisor and/or relevant faculty advisors to set their degree status. Students who wish to double major should contact the other department for information on how to apply, degree requirements, and deadlines.

Students who are not double majoring with another department will graduate with a BFA degree.

Program Structure and Requirements

Creative Writing Majors must take 36 credits of CRWR 400-level workshop courses. Students can take a maximum of 3 workshop courses per term. Students are not permitted to take more than 36 workshop credits without requesting permission from the Undergraduate Advisor.

Please note that CRWR 430 is not a workshop course and will not count towards the 36-credit workshop requirement; rather, CRWR 430 will count as upper level/elective credit.

Genres

CRWR majors must take a minimum of 3 credits in at least 4 genres. A maximum of 18 credits are allowed per genre (e.g. Dramatic Writing for Screen, which could include CRWR 406 or CRWR 416).

Most 400-level CRWR course numbers can be repeated for credit up to four times and show up in the course calendar as (3-12), with the following exceptions: CRWR 415 (3-6 credits), CRWR 420 (3-6 credits), CRWR 423 (3-6 credits), CRWR 425 (3-6 credits), CRWR 440 (3-6 credits), CRWR 410 (3-6 credits), CRWR 431 (3-6 credits).

Genres:

- Poetry (CRWR 401, CRWR 423, CRWR 451)
- New Media (CRWR 402, CRWR 410)
- Children and Young Adults (CRWR 403, CRWR 453)
- Nonfiction (CRWR 405, CRWR 455)
- Dramatic Writing for the Screen/TV (CRWR 406, CRWR 416, CRWR 456)
- Dramatic Writing for the Stage (CRWR 407, CRWR 457)
- Graphic Forms (CRWR 408, CRWR 458)
- Fiction (CRWR 409, CRWR 419, CRWR 459)
- Lyric Forms (CRWR 411)
- Literary Translation (CRWR 415)
- Indigenous Writing (CRWR 420)
- Multi-Genre: Climate Writing (CRWR 425), Comedic Forms (CRWR 431), Interdisciplinary Projects (CRWR 440)

Course Naming

The workshop classes offered by CRWR are interactive, experiential classes where students actively develop their writing in a particular genre and participate in peer review. This structure means that no two classes are the same. In order for the system to give a student credit for taking the same course code more than once, CRWR courses are assigned letters. For the 2025-2026 academic year, X courses run in Term 1 and Y courses run in Term 2. Please note that students cannot take more than one course with the same course code (e.g. 2 sections of CRWR 401) in a single term.

Courses beginning with 45X are advanced courses for experienced students wishing to extend their skills in a given genre. Each 45X course requires a 40X course as a pre-req (i.e. CRWR 409 (Writing Fiction I) is the pre-req for CRWR 459 (Writing Fiction II)).

BFA/BA Degree Requirements

Students are encouraged to meet regularly with Arts Advising for guidance on their overall program requirements.

Dropping a Course

Majors can drop a course through their Workday student account. Remember to check the add/drop deadline in advance. A student who drops a course after the deadline passes receives a “W” on their academic record.

If a student has any doubts whether to stay in a course or drop it, they should consult with the instructor or with the Undergraduate Advisor.

Attendance and Participation

Campus-wide regulations state that regular attendance is expected of students in all course components, including lectures, laboratories, tutorials, workshops, discussions, studios, rehearsals and seminars. Students who neglect academic work and assignments in a course, or who fail to attend a sufficient number of classes, put themselves in danger of failure.

Learning in the BFA is grounded in the writing workshop, and participation is a foundational aspect of our workshops. Because of this, attendance and participation are reflected in our grading. We expect students to attend every session of the workshop on time and to notify the instructor in advance if an absence is expected. Absences from class may seriously affect your grade.

Students who are unavoidably absent from scheduled classes because of illness or disability should immediately alert the course instructor and contact Arts Academic Advising. Students whose attendance or academic performance is severely affected by medical or other extenuating circumstances should apply for academic concession through Arts Academic Advising. See [Arts Academic Concession](#) and [UBC Academic Concession](#).

Concerns and questions related to this policy and its application can be directed to the Undergraduate Advisor; we advise students to be proactive in managing attendance issues, and to address any potential problems early.

Grade Average Requirements

Students must maintain an average of 80% in Creative Writing Courses to maintain their standing as BFA majors. Any BFA student whose term average in Creative Writing workshops is at or below 80% will need to meet with the Undergraduate Advisor and make a formal plan to address performance before registering in any further workshops.

Leaves of Absence

Students who are in good academic standing and take more than a year away from the program must apply for readmission to UBC (through the SSC) and submit an application to the Creative Writing Major during the annual application intake. Students applying for readmission to the Creative Writing Major should contact the Undergraduate Advisor to let the advisor know that the submission is a re-application.

Awards

Each year, Majors in the Creative Writing program benefit from scholarships specifically endowed for them. Students don't need to apply for these awards; all current and incoming BFA students are automatically considered on the basis on their academic performance.

We would like to thank the generous individuals who have endowed the following awards for Majors in the Creative Writing program:

- The Teresa Tenisci Memorial Prize
- The George McWhirter Prize in Poetry
- The Douglas and Beverly Bankson Scholarship in Creative Writing
- The Ethel Lillian Mulligan Memorial Scholarship in Creative Writing
- The Peliplat Prize in Creative Writing

As well, our Majors are considered in turn with other Fine Arts Majors for the following award:

- The Faculty Women's Club Ida Green Scholarship

UBC Funding

UBC offers other more general awards, and provides advice and support for you to explore funding opportunities for your undergraduate studies. Explore the financial resources available to you as a UBC student.

[View scholarship and award opportunities for Arts undergraduate students to learn more.](#)

[View all finance opportunities at UBC Student Services to learn more.](#)

Guide to Workshop Citizenship

Workshop classes are at the heart of the BFA experience, and the School of Creative Writing seeks to create a workshop climate in which the best possible learning about writing can occur. Workshop puts us all in a vulnerable position. If the work is going to be emotionally affecting (and we hope it is!), then we run the risk of being emotionally affected by both writing it and reading it. The workshop should be a safe place for everyone. Try to distance your personal feelings, and focus on the workshop's task: discussing the execution of craft in this specific work. Additionally, it is never appropriate to share a peer's work, even in admiration, with anyone outside the class. Again, the safety of the classroom space is paramount; writers need to be confident that they know who's reading their work, and that it won't get shared with anyone they don't know or haven't chosen.

Each instructor will offer guidelines on how the workshop will proceed. Here are some general protocols to keep in mind:

For the Writer

- **The workshop should be helpful to the submitting writer.** To this end, it's often useful if the writer can come with some questions. Be prepared to tell the group a bit about your piece when you submit it: how long you've been working on it, what you're trying to do, what you've struggled with, and what aspects you most would like feedback on.
- **Openness to feedback and a willingness to listen are important components of the creative process.**
- **A rushed and muddled first draft may garner equally muddled feedback.** Try to give yourself time to do a rewrite before you submit. A more polished draft can enable the workshop discussion to be more sophisticated and more productive.

For the Workshop Participants

The workshop's goal is to empower the writer to continue forward with their piece. If the writer leaves discouraged or dissuaded from working on their piece again, the workshop has failed. Our best efforts will give the writer probing questions to consider as they plan their next draft.

- **Respect each other's pronouns.** Students are invited share their personal pronouns at the beginning of term and to include them in their screen names. Please make note of other students' personal pronouns whenever communicating with them.
- **Be kind.** Students sometimes bristle at this, because it sounds a bit like "be nice" and they fear it means they won't be able to be honest. Of course, you can be honest. We're asking you to work harder: be honest *and* kind. (For online courses: our online voices tend to sound a bit terser than our in-person voices, so kindness is very important here.)
- **Please do not use profane language.** Choose language that articulates your ideas, not your emotions.
- **Begin with something positive. End with something positive.**
- **As much as you can, refer to concrete examples in the text.** General, abstract comments like, "I love your writing!" "I was so confused." "You write beautiful sentences." "I couldn't understand the mother." are too vague to be of use to the writer. Whenever possible, cite an example from the text. If you're confused, hone in on where in the text you first became confused – what was the sentence? That will be useful to the writer. A great feedback approach is to support a criticism with an example of where the writer did get it right. For instance: if character B seems underdeveloped, you might use the writer's artful rendering of character A as an example of what you'd like to see more of in character B.
- **Give as much time and attention to the work as you'd like to receive on your own,** and remember you're being graded in part on your participation.

- **Workshop is not a venue for matters of taste or personal relatability.** If the submitted piece is about basketball and you hate basketball, keep that to yourself. If the content challenges your morals and beliefs, try to step back and view the piece from a craft perspective. The question before us is always: how can we help this writer move closer to their intent within this piece of writing. Content is not arbitrary, so please don't dismiss it as if it is. The writer has worked hard and made choices, choices that are not easily undone or re-imagined. The key here is to respect what the writer has done so far.
- **Handle political topics with care and consideration.** Discussions surrounding race, identity, and appropriation of voice can be challenging. The BFA program is a place where diverse voices and modes of storytelling are welcome and encouraged. Discussions of politics should remain grounded in the specific work at hand, and should be handled in a way that is helpful and constructive to the writer. Some resources for thinking about what's helpful and constructive can be found here:
<http://www.pleiadesmag.com/pure-craft-is-a-lie-part-1/>
<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/26/books/review/viet-thanh-nguyen-writers-workshops.html>.
- **Try to avoid declarative statements.** Instead, consider asking questions that will help the writer think more deeply about their work. For example, if a piece contains scenes of violence that you find disturbing, instead of saying, "This story is too violent!" you might ask: what role do you see violence playing in this piece? How do you want the reader to feel about the level of violence in this piece? (Avoid passive-aggressive questions like, "Don't you think this piece is way too violent?") Remember: workshop is an exploration that does not require you to pass judgment.
- **Some disagreements will not get resolved.** Your job, as participant in a workshop, is not to convert everyone else to your way of thinking, or rhetorically destroy people who disagree with you. Express yourself; refine your own ideas and others' through thoughtful disagreement; and know when to call it a day. "We're going to have to agree to disagree about that" is a simple and elegant way to withdraw from a conversation that has begun to spin its wheels.
- **Conflicts are best resolved through open communication.** If you have an issue with the conduct of a fellow workshop member or with a workshop process, please get in touch with your instructor immediately, the Undergraduate Advisor, or the Director. Open pro-active communication leads to prompt and equitable solutions, preventing the negative impact of isolation or harassment in any form.

Student Responsibilities

Upon registering, all UBC students are bound by the following [declaration](#):

"I hereby accept and submit myself to the statutes, rules and regulations, and ordinances (including bylaws, codes, and policies) of The University of British Columbia, and of the faculty or faculties in which I am registered, and to any amendments thereto which may be made while I am a student of the University, and I promise to observe the same."

Academic Honesty

Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the UBC standards for [academic honesty](#). Failure to meet these standards may result in disciplinary action. If you have any questions about the university policies regarding academic honesty, please consult your course instructor.

Respectful Environment

UBC has clear guidelines on Respectful Environment:

The University of British Columbia envisions a climate in which students, faculty and staff are provided with the best possible conditions for learning, researching and working, including an environment that is dedicated to excellence, equity and mutual respect. The University of British Columbia strives to realize this vision by establishing employment and educational practices that respect the dignity of individuals and make it possible for everyone to live, work, and study in a positive and supportive environment, free from harmful behaviours such as bullying and harassment.

Statement of Principle

The best possible environment for working, learning and living is one in which respect, civility, diversity, opportunity and inclusion are valued. Everyone at the University of British Columbia is expected to conduct themselves in a manner that upholds these principles in all communications and interactions with fellow UBC community members and the public in all University-related settings.

The full statement on Respectful Environment may be accessed at the following link:

<http://www.hr.ubc.ca/respectful-environment/files/UBC-Statement-on-Respectful-Environment-2014.pdf>

The School of Creative Writing seeks to foster a welcome space for all members of our community. We ask everyone to be respectful of other people's ideas, creativity, spaces, and learning. Together, we can create an environment where many voices can be heard and many stories can be told.

As an additional resource, we recommend that all community members consult the UBC Indigenous Peoples: Language Guide:

http://assets.brand.ubc.ca/downloads/ubc_indigenous_peoples_language_guide.pdf

Student Involvement & Activities

Students can become involved with a variety of organizations, reading series, publications, and performances, including:

Creative Writing Student Association (CWSA)

Established in 2010, the Creative Writing Student Association (CWSA) serves to represent the needs and concerns of Creative Writing BFA and MFA students to the Creative Writing faculty and to the University. The CWSA Chair (an MFA student) and the BFA Representative work together to represent students by liaising with faculty and university staff, attending faculty meetings and organizing student events.

CWSA Chair: crwr.cwsa@ubc.ca

BFA Rep: crwr.bfacwsa@ubc.ca

Outwrite

Outwrite is a monthly BFA reading series organized by BFA volunteers. This provides students an opportunity to read their work to an audience and strengthen connections to their community of literary peers.

Bryan Wade Brave New Play Rites

Brave New Play Rites is an annual theatre festival that showcases short scripts written by BFA and MFA playwriting students. <https://www.bravenewplayrites.com/>

PRISM international

Established in 1959, *PRISM* is a quarterly magazine that publishes the best in modern and contemporary literature from Canada and around the world and is produced and edited by our graduate students. *PRISM* welcomes volunteers from the BFA program, and will on occasion recruit for specific positions. More information can be found at:

<http://prismmagazine.ca/>

Nineteen Questions

Nineteen Questions is a collection of interviews with established writers conducted by CRWR students. These conversations explore the writer's career, advice, writing process, etc.

<https://nineteenquestions.com/>

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee

The **UBC School of Creative Writing** aims to foster a welcoming and inclusive space for all members of our community. We are engaged in an ongoing process of building and reinforcing anti-racist and decolonial pedagogies and structures in our School, and centering equity, diversity, and inclusion in our teaching, learning and hiring. We are committed to ensuring that our classrooms and community spaces are safe and respectful for individuals from historically marginalised and oppressed communities – these include BIPOC, queer, trans, two-spirit, disabled and neurodivergent individuals, as well as women.

Our strategies include:

- Centering equity, diversity, and inclusion in our recruitment and retention of students, faculty, and staff.
- Diversifying our reading lists, source materials, lecture content and range of visiting writers.
- Supporting and collaborating with our students in interrogating the cultural, historical, and literary contexts that inform craft and technique choices.
- Maintaining strong stances against violence and harassment.
- Being willing and open to engaging in difficult conversations around issues of identity and oppression.
- Reading outside of our own personal preferences and comfort zones.

- Familiarising ourselves with ongoing discourse pertaining to issues of race, class, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, disability, neurodiversity and cultural diversity.

The EDI Committee is an advisory group supporting the School of Creative Writing. It does not have a formal decision-making function or an Ombuds role. Learn about their work and how to get involved at:

<https://creativewriting.ubc.ca/about/equity-diversity-inclusion/>

Student Resources

Academic Appeals

It is the School of Creative Writing's hope that each instructor and each student in a course will work together harmoniously. However, if a student has a concern, we have a set of procedures aimed at resolving any difficulty while protecting and being fair to both students and instructors alike. We encourage students to first discuss the situation with their instructor; however, if they feel uncomfortable doing so, then they can reach out to the Undergraduate Advisor, who in turn consults regularly with the Undergraduate Chair. Campus-wide policies and regulations can be found here:

<http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=12,204,342,1610>

Sexual Harassment and Discrimination

UBC has a responsibility to maintain a respectful environment where its members can study, work, and live free from sexual misconduct. UBC's Sexual Assault and Other Sexual Misconduct policy articulates UBC's duty and commitment to support members of the UBC community who are impacted by sexual misconduct, to provide a central site for information regarding the resources and options available to those affected by sexual misconduct, to create and make available programs and resources to educate its community on the prevention of sexual misconduct, and to provide a process to respond to and to investigate allegations of sexual misconduct.

<https://universitycounsel.ubc.ca/policies/sexual-misconduct-policy/>

Students who have concerns about Equity, Respectful Environment, or Harassment and Discrimination are encouraged to contact the Director of the School of Creative Writing, the Equity and Inclusion Office (<https://equity.ubc.ca/>), the Office of the Vice-President, Students (<https://vpstudents.ubc.ca/>), or the Office of the Ombudsperson for Students (<https://ombudsoffice.ubc.ca/>).

The UBC Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Office (<https://svpro.ubc.ca/>) is a safe and confidential space for all members of the UBC community.

Centre for Accessibility

Students with disabilities or medical conditions are encouraged to reach out to the Centre for Accessibility (CFA). CFA will make recommendations to programs on how to remove barriers for students requiring accommodations or additional support during their programs.

<https://students.ubc.ca/about-student-services/centre-for-accessibility>

Counselling Services

UBC takes Health & Wellness seriously, and there are wellness advisors available to assist with concerns such as sadness, stress, anxiety, loss/grief, trauma, or other mental health concerns. If a same-day appointment is not available, please see the counselling services website for additional resources.

<https://students.ubc.ca/health/counselling-services>

UBC Student Recovery Community

Students with addictions seeking community on campus (including meetings and one-on-one peer support in a safe and private setting) are encouraged to reach out to the UBC Student Recovery Community.

<https://students.ubc.ca/health/ubc-student-recovery-community>

Resources for Indigenous Students

Arts Indigenous Student Advising (AISA) offers academic and cultural support for incoming and continuing First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students in the Faculty of Arts. Please see their website for details.

<https://www.arts.ubc.ca/student-support/arts-indigenous-student-advising/>

The First Nations Longhouse provides tutoring, academic advising, counselling, health, and financial advising services.

<https://indigenous.ubc.ca/longhouse/>

The School of Creative Writing has a page on Indigenous Engagement with a FAQ section that may be of interest to students.

<https://creativewriting.ubc.ca/about/indigenous-engagement/>

AMS Student Resources

The AMS offers many student services, such as Speakeasy (one-on-one peer support), Safewalk, Food Bank, and Advocacy services.

<https://www.ams.ubc.ca/student-services/> <https://www.ams.ubc.ca/student-services/food-bank/>

International Student Advising

International Student Advising is available for international students who are seeking guidance on immigration/study permit issues or general questions about life as an international student.

<https://students.ubc.ca/about-student-services/international-student-advising>

School of Creative Writing Contacts

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