

CREATIVE WRITING, B.F.A.

Begin Campus: Any Penn State Campus

End Campus: Erie

Program Description

The major allows students to develop their writing skills through craft classes, literature classes, and writing workshops, in preparation for a variety of post-graduation options, from continuing on to M.F.A. degree programs to working in the professional fields of publishing, editing and education. The program recognizes students must understand the relationship between tradition and individual talent, and provides a required sequence of literature courses designed to give students an overview of the historical literary traditions, especially modern and contemporary prose and poetry. It also provides options for sequences of writing workshops, requires a course in creative writing theory, and requires a course that fosters professional development and features live reading by visiting authors. The program culminates in a capstone experience, the senior thesis, a collection of poetry or prose of publishable quality that includes a critical preface demonstrating the students' ability to analyze and contextually their own writing.

What is Creative Writing?

Creative writing is a liberal arts discipline concerned with the practice of literary art, the life of the imagination, and the capacities of language. Creative writing students analyze masterworks of fiction, poetry, and literary nonfiction from different periods and cultures; compose their own original works; develop editing and communication skills; and explore the world of contemporary publishing.

You Might Like This Program If...

- Your nose is always in a book.
- When you're not reading, you're writing.
- You enjoy the editing and revision process.
- You can see yourself working on the editorial staff of Lake Effect, Penn State Behrend's international literary journal.

Entrance to Major

In order to be eligible for entrance to this major, a student must:

1. attain at least a C (2.00) cumulative grade-point average for all courses taken at the University; and
2. have at least third-semester classification (<https://www.registrar.psu.edu/enrollment/semester-classification.cfm>).

READ SENATE POLICY 37-30: ENTRANCE TO AND CHANGES IN MAJOR PROGRAMS OF STUDY (<https://senate.psu.edu/students/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/37-00-entrance-to-a-college-or-major/>)

Degree Requirements

For the Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Creative Writing, a minimum of 121 credits is required:

Requirement	Credits
General Education	45
Requirements for the Major	76

Per Senate Policy 83.80.5, the college dean or campus chancellor and program faculty may require up to 24 credits of coursework in the major to be taken at the location or in the college or program where the degree is earned.

Requirements for the Major

A student enrolled in this major must earn at least a grade of C in each 300- and 400-level course.

To graduate, a student enrolled in the major must earn a grade of C or better in each course designated by the major as a C-required course, as specified by Senate Policy 82-44 (<https://senate.psu.edu/students/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/82-00-and-83-00-degree-requirements/>).

Code	Title	Credits
Prescribed Courses		
ENGL 6	Creative Writing Common Time ¹	4-8
<i>Prescribed Courses: Require a grade of C or better</i>		
CMLIT 10	World Literatures	3
ENGL 100	English Language Analysis	3
ENGL 200	Introduction to Critical Reading	3
ENGL 212	Introduction to Fiction Writing	3
ENGL 213	Introduction to Poetry Writing	3
ENGL 312	Globality and Literature	3
ENGL 401W	Creative Writing Theory	3
ENGL 420	Writing for the Web	3
ENGL 433	The American Novel: 1900-1945	3
ENGL 436	American Fiction Since 1945	3
ENGL 437	The Poet in America	3
ENGL 458	Twentieth-Century Poetry	3
ENGL 494	Senior Thesis in English	6
Additional Courses		
Select 12 credits of a World Language (0-12 credits are included in ELECTIVES if world language proficiency is demonstrated by examination)		12
<i>Additional Courses: Require a grade of C or better</i>		
ENGL 443	The English Renaissance	3
or ENGL 444	Shakespeare	
Select three of the following:		9
ENGL 412	Advanced Fiction Writing	
ENGL 413	Advanced Poetry Writing	
ENGL 422	Fiction Workshop	
ENGL 423		
Supporting Courses and Related Areas		
<i>Supporting Courses and Related Areas: Require a grade of C or better</i>		
Select 6 credits from courses at the 200-level or above in CMLIT or ENGL		6

¹ Students planning to major in creative writing should enroll in this course every semester (typically 8 semesters). A student is required to take this course a minimum of four times.

In addition to the requirements above, for enrichment, students in the B.F.A. degree program have the opportunity of taking ENGL 209, Literary Magazine Practicum, and serving as genre editors or assistant editors

on the staff of *Lake Effect*, the national literary journal published by the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at Penn State Erie, The Behrend College. This is a 1-credit course in which students may enroll for up to 8 credits over their time in the degree program.

General Education

Connecting career and curiosity, the General Education curriculum provides the opportunity for students to acquire transferable skills necessary to be successful in the future and to thrive while living in interconnected contexts. General Education aids students in developing intellectual curiosity, a strengthened ability to think, and a deeper sense of aesthetic appreciation. These are requirements for all baccalaureate students and are often partially incorporated into the requirements of a program. For additional information, see the General Education Requirements (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/general-education/baccalaureate-degree-general-education-program/>) section of the Bulletin and consult your academic adviser.

The keystone symbol appears next to the title of any course that is designated as a General Education course. Program requirements may also satisfy General Education requirements and vary for each program.

Foundations (grade of C or better is required and Inter-Domain courses do not meet this requirement.)

- **Quantification (GQ):** 6 credits
- **Writing and Speaking (GWS):** 9 credits

Breadth in the Knowledge Domains (Inter-Domain courses do not meet this requirement.)

- **Arts (GA):** 3 credits
- **Health and Wellness (GHW):** 3 credits
- **Humanities (GH):** 3 credits
- **Social and Behavioral Sciences (GS):** 3 credits
- **Natural Sciences (GN):** 3 credits

Integrative Studies

- **Inter-Domain Courses (Inter-Domain):** 6 credits

Exploration

- **GN**, may be completed with Inter-Domain courses: 3 credits
- **GA, GH, GN, GS, Inter-Domain courses.** This may include 3 credits of World Language course work beyond the 12th credit level or the requirements for the student's degree program, whichever is higher: 6 credits

University Degree Requirements

First Year Engagement

All students enrolled in a college or the Division of Undergraduate Studies at University Park, and the World Campus are required to take 1 to 3 credits of the First-Year Seminar, as specified by their college First-Year Engagement Plan.

Other Penn State colleges and campuses may require the First-Year Seminar; colleges and campuses that do not require a First-Year Seminar provide students with a first-year engagement experience.

First-year baccalaureate students entering Penn State should consult their academic adviser for these requirements.

Cultures Requirement

6 credits are required and may satisfy other requirements

- United States Cultures: 3 credits
- International Cultures: 3 credits

Writing Across the Curriculum

3 credits required from the college of graduation and likely prescribed as part of major requirements.

Total Minimum Credits

A minimum of 120 degree credits must be earned for a baccalaureate degree. The requirements for some programs may exceed 120 credits. Students should consult with their college or department adviser for information on specific credit requirements.

Quality of Work

Candidates must complete the degree requirements for their major and earn at least a 2.00 grade-point average for all courses completed within their degree program.

Limitations on Source and Time for Credit Acquisition

The college dean or campus chancellor and program faculty may require up to 24 credits of course work in the major to be taken at the location or in the college or program where the degree is earned. Credit used toward degree programs may need to be earned from a particular source or within time constraints (see Senate Policy 83-80 (<https://senate.psu.edu/students/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/82-00-and-83-00-degree-requirements/>)). For more information, check the Suggested Academic Plan for your intended program.

Program Learning Objectives

- **Application of Knowledge:** Apply knowledge of critical, theoretical, and technical traditions to the production of original literary works.
- **Articulation of Knowledge:** Articulate the relationship between their own original literary works and the traditions of literature.
- **Foundational Reading:** Demonstrate familiarity with representative literary texts from a significant number of historical, geographical, and cultural contexts, with particular focus on Modern and contemporary literature.
- **Presentation:** Effectively present their own literary work in public forums
- **Professional Knowledge:** Demonstrate familiarity with the contemporary literary publishing milieu.

Academic Advising

The objectives of the university's academic advising program are to help advisees identify and achieve their academic goals, to promote their intellectual discovery, and to encourage students to take advantage of both in-and out-of class educational opportunities in order that they become self-directed learners and decision makers.

Both advisers and advisees share responsibility for making the advising relationship succeed. By encouraging their advisees to become engaged in their education, to meet their educational goals, and to develop the habit of learning, advisers assume a significant educational role. The advisee's unit of enrollment will provide each advisee with a primary academic adviser, the information needed to plan the chosen program of study, and referrals to other specialized resources.

READ SENATE POLICY 32-00: ADVISING POLICY (<https://senate.psu.edu/students/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/32-00-advising-policy/>)

Erie

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Suggested Academic Plan

The suggested academic plan(s) listed on this page are the plan(s) that are in effect during the 2025-26 academic year. To access previous years' suggested academic plans, please visit the archive (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/archive/>) to view the appropriate Undergraduate Bulletin edition.

Creative Writing, B.F.A. at Erie Campus

The course series listed below provides **only one** of the many possible ways to move through this curriculum. The University may make changes in policies, procedures, educational offerings, and requirements at any time. This plan should be used in conjunction with your degree audit (accessible in LionPATH as either an **Academic Requirements** or **What If** report). Please consult with a Penn State academic adviser on a regular basis to develop and refine an academic plan that is appropriate for you.

First Year

Fall	Credits Spring	Credits
First Year Seminar	1 ENGL 6	1
ENGL 15, 30H, or ESL 15 [‡]	3 General Education	1.5
ENGL 6	1 CAS 100, CAS 100A, CAS 100B, or CAS 100C [‡]	3
General Education	3 ENGL 212 or 213	3
General Education	3 General Education	3
World Language Level 1	4 World Language (Level 2)	4
	15	15.5

Second Year

Fall	Credits Spring	Credits
ENGL 6	1 ENGL 6	1
ENGL 200	3 ENGL 100	3
200-400 level course in ENGL or CMLIT	3 200-400 Level Course in ENGL or CMLIT	3
ENGL 212 or 213	3 CMLIT 10	3
General Education	3 ENGL 202A or 202B ^{†‡}	3
World Language Level 3	4 ENGL 412 or 413	3
	17	16

Third Year

Fall	Credits Spring	Credits
ENGL 6	1 ENGL 6	1
ENGL 312 [*]	3 ENGL 422 or 423 [*]	3
ENGL 412 or 413 [*]	3 ENGL 433 [*]	3
General Education	3 General Education	3
ENGL 444 or 443 [*]	3 General Education	3
ENGL 458 [*]	3 General Education	3
	16	16

Fourth Year

Fall	Credits Spring	Credits
ENGL 6	1 ENGL 6	1
ENGL 401W [*]	3 ENGL 437 [*]	3
ENGL 436 [*]	3 General Education	3
ENGL 494 [*]	3 ENGL 494 [*]	3
General Education	3 General Education	3
General Education	1.5 ENGL 420 [*]	3
	14.5	16

Total Credits 126

* Course requires a grade of C or better for the major

‡ Course requires a grade of C or better for General Education

Course is an Entrance to Major requirement

† Course satisfies General Education and degree requirement

University Requirements and General Education Notes:

US and IL are abbreviations used to designate courses that satisfy Cultural Diversity Requirements (United States and International Cultures).

W, M, X, and Y are the suffixes at the end of a course number used to designate courses that satisfy University Writing Across the Curriculum requirement.

General Education includes Foundations (GWS and GQ), Knowledge Domains (GHW, GN, GA, GH, GS) and Integrative Studies (Inter-domain) requirements. N or Q (Honors) is the suffix at the end of a course number used to help identify an Inter-domain course, but the inter-domain attribute is used to fill audit requirements. Foundations courses (GWS and GQ) require a grade of 'C' or better.

Additional Notes

Academic Advising Notes: The course series listed about is only one of many possible ways to move through this curriculum. Please be sure to consult with an adviser about your intended plan.

Career Paths

As a Creative Writing major, you'll enhance your knowledge and sharpen your skills through a variety of literature courses and writing workshops. Additionally, you'll interact with established writers who visit campus as part of the Smith Creative Writers Reading Series, and you'll have the opportunity to help edit *Lake Effect*, an international literary journal. Penn State Behrend has a comprehensive support system to help you identify and achieve your goals for college and beyond. Meet with your academic adviser often and take advantage of the services offered by the Academic and Career Planning Center beginning in your first semester.

Careers

A B.F.A. in Creative Writing can lead to a variety of careers. Graduates of Penn State Behrend's program publish their writing widely. They also work as technical writers, communications coordinators, copy editors, editors of presses, marketing directors, project managers, media associates, university professors, teachers, lawyers, librarians, and freelance writers and editors.

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT POTENTIAL CAREER OPTIONS FOR GRADUATES OF THE CREATIVE WRITING PROGRAM (<https://>

behrend.psu.edu/school-of-humanities-social-sciences/academic-programs/creative-writing/)

Opportunities for Graduate Studies

Recent Behrend B.F.A. graduates have earned advanced degrees at the University of Utah, Bowling Green State University, Ohio State University, Indiana University, the University of Minnesota, Wichita State University, George Mason University, the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, the University of Southern California, Northeastern University, the University of North Dakota, the University of Alaska-Fairbanks, Northern Michigan University, Duquesne University, and Syracuse University.

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT OPPORTUNITIES FOR GRADUATE STUDIES
(<https://behrend.psu.edu/school-of-humanities-social-sciences/academic-programs/creative-writing/>)

Professional Resources

- Association of Writers and Writing Programs (<https://www.awpwriter.org/>)

Contact

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