THE BOOK
Everything You Need to Know to Survive Colorado State University's Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing Program

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THE A-Z'S OF MFAs
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ADVISING GUIDELINES

Your advisor will aid you in negotiating the rigors and pleasures of the program and is the person responsible for directing your MFA thesis. Upon being accepted to the Masters of Fine Arts Degree Program in Creative Writing you will be assigned a temporary advisor from among the faculty in your genre. Faculty do their best to create a compatible, beneficial match between students and temporary advisors. After your first semester begins, you should set up an appointment to meet with your advisor to discuss your proposed course of study. Do not delay!

Your advisor remains temporary until the end of the Fall semester of your second year, at which point you may either: A) change your advisor, or B) request that your temporary advisor become your permanent advisor. In either case you will need to consult with and receive permission from your chosen advisor. Please note that to ensure that the advising load is spread fairly among the faculty, advisors are limited in the number of advisees they are able to accept each year. You will need to fill out a GS-6 form and submit it to the graduate school to avoid a hold on your registration. (See p. 14 for more on Forms.)

Advising checklists giving degree requirements and forms are available from the main office. You and your advisor should update these each semester together.

Advisor's role & duties:

Giving students feedback on class selection
Giving students feedback on their writing
Providing students with career-related guidance
Providing intensive feedback on a student's thesis during the last year of study

Student's responsibilities:

Contacting advisor to set up meetings to talk about classes and writing
Contacting advisor if you have a problem, question, or concern
Submitting work to advisor
Being aware of and meeting graduate school requirements and deadlines

APPLYING FOR FELLOWSHIPS & FINANCIAL AID

If you aren't familiar with the FAFSA then visit http://www.sfs.colostate.edu/. This is Colorado State's Student Financial Services webpage; they have information about scholarships, the FAFSA, loans, and CSU aid. You can also search their website for CSU and other scholarships. Some CSU scholarships are available to graduate students, so make sure to check here.

Information on a national fellowship available to CSU students, the Javits Fellowship, is listed below. This is a national fellowship, with very limited funds and number of winners, so keep that in mind when applying. Visit the websites given below for specific information about deadlines and applications for scholarships and post-MFA fellowships.

Javits Fellowship

National fellowship open to students in their first year in an MFA program (it's also open to students in other fields besides the arts).

http://www.ed.gov/programs/iegpsjavits/index.html

The fellowship is worth up to $15,000 each year during the MFA program.

First year students will be notified in September about this opportunity (Note: the deadline has moved to an earlier date for the last two years so check the website for information on this as soon as possible.).

The deadline to turn in manuscript, forms, and recommendation letter(s) is usually around the first of October.

CSU does not judge this contest in any way. We only make it known to our first year MFAs.

Post-MFA Fellowships (Fall-Spring)

These fellowships are open to recent graduates of MFA programs:

1) Stegner Fellowship – http://www.stanford.edu/dept/english/cw/fellowship.html
2) Olive B. O'Conner Fellowship in Creative Writing at Colgate – email this address for more information and application: englishdept@mail.colgate.edu
3) Stadler Fellowship at Bucknell – http://www.bucknell.edu/x3735.xml
4) University of Wisconsin-Madison Fellowships – http://creativewriting.wisc.edu/institute.php
5) University of Minnesota Edelstein-Keller Discovery Fellowship – http://english.cla.umn.edu/creativewriting/e-k_fellowship/Edelstein-Keller_Discover.htm
6) Emory University Creative Writing Fellowship – http://www.emory.edu/COLLEGE/CREATIVEWRITING/faculty/Fellowshipinfo.html
7) Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown – http://www.fawc.org/winter/index.shtm
8) George Bennett Writer in Residence at Phillips Exeter Academy – http://www.exeter.edu/about_us/about_us_537.aspx

Deadlines for the different fellowship competitions may change, so check the sites immediately prior to applying.

We do not judge these contests in any way. We only make them known to third year MFAs and recent alumni.

Master of Fine Arts Creative Writing Fellowship Fund

Tremblay-Crow Fellowships

Intended to honor the talent, inspiration, and tireless efforts of emeriti poetry professors Bill Tremblay and Mary Crow, who taught in CSU's English Department for 39 years and 30 years respectively.

Each year, two $2,000 merit-based fellowships will be awarded to incoming MFA students whose writing shows exceptional promise, or to continuing students who are contributing members of the MFA program and whose writing has shown exceptional growth.

Fellowship recipients shall not have graduate teaching assistantships in the English Department. Fellowship monies will be deposited directly into students' accounts.

Fellowship winners will be announced in the spring of each year.

Faculty choose the winners at their discretion. There is no application.

CALENDAR FOR YOUR FIRST YEAR

Fall Semester (first year)

Check with Student Financial Services regarding applying for residency for your second year. Do not delay on this! Go to: http://sfs.colostate.edu/I20000.cfm.

Meet with your advisor.

November: deadline for AWP Intro Journals Project competition. The Associated Writing Programs (AWP) holds this contest each year for MFA programs throughout the country. You will be asked to submit a sample of your work for the contest. For details, turn to “Department Writing Contests” on p. 10.

Late fall semester: If you did not receive a GTA for the current academic year, you should definitely still apply for the next academic year. Contact your advisor and talk to others in the department about applying for an assistantship. (See also “GTAs and Other Jobs” on p. 15.)

Register for Spring classes. (Meet with your advisor if necessary to help decide what classes to take.)

Spring Semester (first year)

January: Complete GTA applications. Application forms are available from the English Department office and online, and are due by January 15.

March/April: Meet with your advisor to discuss your anticipated course of study.

March/April: deadline for the national *Best New American Voices* fiction anthology entries (open to CSU graduate fiction students only). For details, turn to the “Department Writing Contests” on p. 9.

March/April: deadline for Ruth Lilly Poetry Competition Fellowship nomination (open to CSU graduate poetry students only). For details, turn to the “Department Writing Contests” on p. 10.

March/April: deadline for Academy of American Poets (AAP) University Prize (open to CSU graduate poetry students only). For details, turn to the “Department Writing Contests” on p. 10.

Register for Fall classes in early April.

Summer Term (first year)

June: If you are an out-of-state student trying to get residency for the next academic year, pick up a Petition for In-State Tuition Classification from the Tuition Classification Office, 103 Administration Annex. Complete your petition and submit it to the Tuition Classification Office at least 6 weeks before the first day of classes in the fall semester. Remember: The English Department will not pay out-of-state tuition for second-year GTA’s, so it’s necessary to receive residency prior to the first day of classes during the fall. Make sure to check the Tuition Office’s deadlines on this one.

Fall Term (second year)

Watch for an English Department meeting about completing the GS-6 form. (Note: you’ll want to start working on your GS-6 Form and your committee members are required to complete it. Don’t wait until a hold is placed on your registration (which will prevent you from registering for classes in the spring of your second year) to start on this form.

Tuition Classification Procedures

Initial classification

Initial residency determination for tuition purposes of any student enrolling at Colorado State University is determined by the Office of Admissions. To be initially considered for in-state classification you must answer all residency questions completely and accurately on the application; failure to do so will result in classification as out-of-state for tuition purposes.

How to change your tuition classification

Individuals who have been classified as non-resident and want to change their classification from out-of-state to in-state classification must complete a “Petition for In-State Tuition Classification.” Petitions are available at Student Financial Services. Petitions and all supporting documentation must be received by Student Financial Services by the published deadline date specified for the semester for which a change is being requested. The burden of proof rests upon the petitioner who has the responsibility to submit a timely petition along with the required documentation by the published deadline date. A change in tuition classification will be made when the Tuition Classification Officer is convinced that physical presence and ties with the state have occurred at least 12 months prior to the first day of classes for which the applicant is petitioning.

A student's current tuition classification will remain until they have received notification from the Student Financial Services Tuition Classification Officer indicating a residency change has been approved. Students who are petitioning for in-state classification remain responsible for paying their tuition based upon current tuition classification. Students are strongly urged to petition during the "Priority decision deadline" in order to receive a response of their tuition classification prior to the beginning of the semester and tuition and fee deadlines.

Petition completion can be very challenging and will require considerable time and effort on your part to accurately respond to all questions and to gather and submit the required documentation. Allow ample time to gather all the necessary information and documentation; failure to do so may delay processing and may result in rejection of your petition.

Petition Deadline

Student Financial Services must receive completed petitions no later than the published deadline date for the semester for which you are petitioning (see Petition Deadlines). Petitions will not be accepted after the published deadline date and incomplete petitions will not be accepted and/or reviewed for that semester, and your tuition classification and tuition assessment will remain nonresident for that term. By statute, the Tuition Classification Officer is not permitted to make exceptions.

Petitioners will be notified of the results of their petition by mail. Please allow up to six weeks for notification. If additional information is required, the additional information must be submitted within 15 days from the original petition unless special arrangements are made with the Tuition Classification Officer.

Decisions made by the Tuition Classification Officer may be appealed by the University's Residency Appeals Committee. A student wanting to appeal the decision to the Residency Appeals Committee must contact Student Financial Services no later than two weeks (10 business days) after the date of the letter in which the decision was conveyed to the petitioner. The decision of the Residency Appeals Committee is the final University determination for that specific semester. In addition, there are no provisions in the Tuition Classification Statutes for retroactive compliance.

The fact that you do not qualify for in-state status in any other state does not guarantee in-state status in Colorado; in-state classification is governed solely by Colorado statute. The tuition classification statute places the burden of proof on the petitioner to provide clear and convincing evidence of eligibility.

Any student who provides false information to avoid paying out-of-state tuition may be subject to legal and/or disciplinary actions.

FACULTY AND STAFF CONTACTS FOR MFA CREATIVE WRITING STUDENTS

Poetry Faculty
Matthew Cooperman, 327 Eddy, 491-6843
Sasha Steensen, Eddy 320, 491-5079

Fiction Faculty
Leslee Becker, 335 Eddy, 491-7374
Judy Doenges, CW Program Director, 340 Eddy, 491-2644
David Milofsky, 350 Eddy, 491-5756
Steven Schwartz, 329 Eddy, 491-6892

Nonfiction Faculty
John Calderazzo, 315 Eddy, 491-6896

Graduate Coordinator
Carol Cantrell (interim), 349 Eddy, 491-5202

English Dept. Internship Coordinator
Deanna Ludwin, 334 Eddy, 491-3438

Creative Writing Teaching Program Coordinator
Todd Mitchell, 323B Eddy, 491-3341

Administrative Assistant – CW Program
Shiela Bushanam, 336 Eddy, 491-6218

English Department Contact
Marnie Leonard, 359 Eddy, 491-2403

Organization of Graduate Student Writers
Michael McLane, President, Michael.McLane@colostate.edu
Dana Masden, VP, Dana.Masden@colostate.edu

Colorado Review
Stephanie G’Schwind, Editor
C107 Aylesworth Hall, 491-5449

Office hours of faculty will be posted on office doors near the start of each semester. You can also check with the English Dept. Office, 359 Eddy, 491- 2403.

DEPARTMENT WRITING CONTESTS

We run several contests within the MFA program. The Assistant to the Director of Creative Writing will notify all eligible MFA students of contest requirements several weeks prior to the deadline. For most of these contests, faculty judge the entries, and entries are judged blindly.

Undergraduate Creative & Performing Arts Scholarships (Fall)

Call for submissions in early fall
Graduate students may be asked to screen entries

AWP Intro. Journal Awards, MFA only (Fall)

Poetry, Fiction, and Creative Nonfiction
MFAs can submit in more than one genre, but may only submit one entry per genre. One poetry entry can consist of one to three poems
Blind read
CW Faculty serve as judges
Submission deadline usually around late October
Three poems (which may or may not be by the same author), one fiction, and one nonfiction entry are chosen by the faculty to be sent on to the national contest, where they are judged by an AWP panel of judges
National selections are published in a national journal

Academy of American Poets Award, MFA only (Spring)

MFA poets submit one poem
Blind read
CW Faculty choose outside judge
Submission deadline usually in March or April
Outside judge may choose 1 or 2 winners and 1 or 2 honorable mentions. Winners split the $100 award according to judge’s weighting
Names of winners and honorable mentions are sent to the Academy of American Poets along with winning poem(s) by early May

Best New American Voices, MFA only (Spring)

MFA fiction students submit 1 story
Blind read
CW Faculty serve as judges and nominate two stories to be sent to national contest
Submission Deadline usually in March or April
National winners get published in an annual edition, judged by a nationally recognized author

Ruth Lilly Poetry Fellowship, MFA only (Spring)

MFA poets submit up to 10 pages of poetry
Blind read
CW Faculty nominate one manuscript to be sent on to national competition
Submission Deadline usually in February or March
Two national winners receive $15,000 scholarships

FACULTY TEACHING STATEMENTS

Leslee Becker

From me? A teaching philosophy? Nope. I'll finesse myself out of such a task by describing how I operate. I steal. I take stuff from the best and worst of my teachers, and I always try to put myself in the shoes of students. I go back to my student days to recall how exciting and important this whole enterprise is—workshopping fiction—and this is why I want to wriggle out of the role of teacher. We're writers, and we read as writers, and so I invite classmates to gush about what writers and works of fiction they love—another hard task. Isn't it easier to say why you don't like something? So we practice the art of struggling to say: "I love this because…" I discourage police tactics because I distrust anyone who says, "You can't do this." And this brings us back to why I cannot arrive at a categorical definition of my teaching philosophy. The best of my teachers acted like gentle border collies, nudging me in certain directions, and other teachers, more like German shepherds, barked at me, but managed to herd me toward a destination I might've wanted to avoid, but, oh, the payoffs were big. I can't separate myself, thank God, by canine breed, or into the single role of being a teacher or a student, but I can swipe stuff from Chekhov, who disappointed Tolstoy on questions of philosophy. Chekhov distrusted anything that couldn't be apprehended by our five senses. He claimed he lacked a "political, religious, and philosophical world view. I change it every month, so I'll have to limit myself to the description of how my heroes love, marry, give birth, die, and how they speak."

John Calderazzo

The world is full of stories, stories that float inside of you and around you all the time. And it's your job as a writer to find the most compelling of these tales and present them to yourself and to a wider audience. As a writer and teacher of nonfiction, from literary journalism to personal essays, it's my job in particular to help you recognize, research, and shape the verifiably true stories that float among all these others. In my workshops I will try to do this by pushing you in various directions—say, into the field to discover the stories of others. Or deep along the shady and sun-dappled trails of the past to explore memoir. Or, quite literally, along a sidewalk or mountain trail to explore what a personal essay may be all about. In fact, an essay and the drift of your mind in conversation with itself can be much the same thing. The techniques available to you as a nonfiction writer can also be much the same as those available to the short story writer or the novelist. And so I offer plenty of models and writing assignments to show how personal voice, characterization, the use of dialogue and scene and metaphor all lend themselves to nonfiction writing. I show how nonfiction writers are just as hardwired to The Muse as any other writers, and how what Eden Philpotts once said can be more true than you might ever have imagined: "The universe is full of magical things patiently waiting for our wits to grow sharper."

Matthew Cooperman

My approach to teaching assumes the classroom as an exploratory setting. Whether it be a creative writing, literature or composition class, the point is to stretch, and to stretch by doing. Process, therefore, is the key term. We learn by doing, and in our case, doing writing. It is much of what Charles Olson meant in his conception of writing as 'istorin: a way to find things out for oneself. Such a classroom requires flexibility and open-endedness, and I ask my students to therefore recognize learning as a provisional act. It requires risk and participation, in the process of doing and in the consideration of various aesthetics, texts, cultural assumptions. In our words and our imaginations we are always going somewhere, and the going many places is the hope. Variety--of materials, activities, processes, physical spaces, and authorities--enables this multiple excursion. I am very interested in procedures--the ones we do now, the ones we assume, and the ones we might discover in a reformulated approach to learning. "Now do it slant." All of this amounts to an engagement with texts. To consider the whole text in context is key, as is the atomization of texts into parts. Global patterns obtain in local instances. We see patterns, echoes, strategies most clearly when we have experienced them first hand. Knowing how to read, to read closely, is still the best way to get started. I start there. I want, as much as possible, to foster invention, and to make that invention leap across boundaries—of periods, disciplines, applications. The best class is always that which is a surprise; it is a class where conversation is open and quickening, and people feel free to risk their deepest selves. Simple pragmatism. If, as recent theory tells us, we are a collocation of texts, then the most useful class makes the most of our texts available. We find these by reading deeply and writing variously. Allowing wander into wonder enlarges the very real possibility of learning some THING. If we are successful, the class continues long after the grades are in.

Judy Doenges
Good fiction engages the senses and the psyche as well as the intellect. Good fiction is also the result of hard work, careful crafting, and some serendipity. One of my goals is to help students foster their own kind of literary luck and, in the process, to realize how consciously one creates it. In the classroom, I'm interested in the whole writing process: Generation of material, drafting, revision, and more revision, followed by the questions that try to get to the heart of the fiction. How close is the writer to achieving the central feeling or event, the crucial connection between story and reader? What is the vibrant light of fiction? And what practical work does the writer have to do in order to connect what's on the page to the reader's hopes and expectations?

David Milofsky
We all use different methods at different times depending on the students and the situation, but often enough we make it up as we go along. One thing I would say is that I don't think of graduate workshops as being support groups but rather classes in which those who wish to become professional writers learn to read, write and criticize fiction as professionals do.

Steven Schwartz
One can't say exactly how a teacher fits into a student's development, only that the teacher is there to abbreviate a process that might take much longer on the writer's own, to direct the writer to relevant readings and most important, to help the writer know how to revise the work. In this relationship the writer learns to trust the teacher, as well as to trust himself or herself, when to know a suggestion is right—true to the intent of the work—and when to respectfully pass on such advice. I'm particularly interested in helping students find the nexus of character, voice, and conflict in their work. My approach involves two directions: examining the work as an organic whole, analyzing structure on a large scale—a willingness to ask whether, for instance, the first seven pages, despite the wonderful writing, really belong. The other approach depends on more local attention: line-by-line editing; word choice; transitions; all the details of craft. If there's magic in making stories work, it seems to me it happens as much in the revision process as in any initial inspiration. So much transformation can take place from one draft to another that it

leaves one a little in awe (and hopeful) about the curative powers and small revolutions inherent in rewriting.

Sasha Steensen

In *On Beauty and Being Just,* Elaine Scarry writes: “This willingness continually to revise one’s own location in order to place oneself in the path of beauty is the basic impulse underlying education. One submits oneself to other minds in order to increase the chance that one will be looking in the right direction when a comet makes its sweep through a certain patch of sky.” In the classroom, my primary goal is to encourage students to revise their locations, to consider new methods, models, and techniques so that they might stumble on beauty’s path again and again. After all, the etymological root of invention is “to find,” so looking with the utmost attention is crucial for the writer. Of course in the workshop, this involves careful and critical reading of texts produced not only by fellow students, but also by predecessors and contemporaries. I encourage students to view outside readings as models for their own writing and to use these texts to develop a vocabulary to constructively and considerately critique each other’s work. But submitting oneself to other minds is only part of the struggle, and I ask students to document and articulate their own gathering, thinking, and writing processes. Although the most inspired moments of writing are often spontaneous and serendipitous, an understanding of one’s own process is inherent in any sustainable writing practice. Poets are always re-newing—that is, the poem is both a response to the raw material that prompted it and a transformation of that raw material into something new. Watching oneself find and transform this material is what makes writing an activity. When we watch together, as a class, the chances that we might be looking in the right direction multiply.

Dan Beachy-Quick

I believe Emerson when he claims that the Delphic imperative “Know Thyself,” and the Stoic imperative “Study Nature,” are but a single command: to attempt one is also to do the other. Reading and Writing—those seemingly opposing but actually co-creative activities in which we spend our time while in school—present us not only with the difficult fact of manifold voices speaking the inquiries for themselves, but implicates us in the very same process. As with most things, I think an actual education looks very different than what we had expected to gain: no repository of facts, no knowledge that remains in our minds as does a book remain closed on a shelf, no set of skills by which we can learn to annotate a text or compose a poem. A genuine education gives us to our actual confusion, and within that confusion, gives us resource—not answers necessarily, but necessarily light . . . a light that clarifies complexity without reducing it. My hopes for a class are simple to say: to begin the discussion that leads to actual learning. That discussion involves that particular poetic courage of drawing connections where none seem to exist, stitching poems to philosophy to theology to diaries to fiction. That discussion also involves putting books down and picking the blank page up, and adding our voice into the cacophony of voices (past and present) in hopes that some day, impossibly enough, the din reconciles into harmony. It seems easy to forget in the weeks a syllabus charts out, that we ourselves are also part of the discussion we’re trying to have. But by the end of class, in the midst of an education, I hope we leave humbled by the audacity of the undertaking: to learn, to think, to ask a question, to write a poem.

FORMS, FORMS, FORMS

Graduate school forms are available online at
http://graduateschool.colostate.edu/index.asp?url=forms

First and Second Years

File the GS-6 form before the end of your third semester at CSU, or when you've accrued 12 credits. The GS-6 is a forecast of the credits you'll take to complete your degree. List the courses required by the program on this sheet. If you end up taking different courses than what you list here, you'll be able to update this listing on the GS-25 form your third year.

To change advisors, to set up a thesis committee, and to change committee members, you'll need the GS-9 form. Signatures are not required for members added to the committee, but from those being deleted. Signatures of both your new advisor and old advisor are required to switch advisors. Look under "Advising" in this packet for more instructions.

Third year

The GS-24 form is submitted with your thesis to the graduate school. The GS-24 is the Report of Final Exam Results, or in this case, the oral defense of your thesis. Each of your committee members needs to sign this form, so bring this to your oral defense. Be sure to bring three cotton-paper copies of your title page to be signed as well.

File the GS-25 form (Application for Graduation) by the sixth week before the end of your last semester. You'll need your transcript and a copy of the GS-6 to complete this form.

GTAs and Other Jobs

There are a variety of paid gigs through the CSU English Department. Those that provide the most financially are Graduate Teaching Assistantships (GTAs). Most GTAs teach CO150 (College Composition). CO150 has a training program and extensive support system to help new teachers be successful. GTAs provide tuition waivers and a stipend (a little more than $1000 per month). These jobs are defined as twenty-hour per week jobs; most people find that the work load can fluctuate above and below this number. To be a successful GTA and writer, it's important to manage your time and plan writing time into your schedule. Applications for GTA positions are due on January 15.

Unfortunately, CSU does not have the funding to offer a GTA to everyone. Other English Department positions that provide a stipend but not a tuition waiver include serving as advisor to *A* (the undergraduate literary magazine), and the manager for Eddy computer labs. E-mail announcements for applications for these positions go out to current MFA students in the spring semester. Students can also apply to work in the Writing Center. Tutoring in the Writing Center pays between $10 and $12 per hour, and tutors can work anywhere from 2-20 hours per week. Calls for applications for the Writing Center are usually sent out to incoming students in August, or during the first week of classes. It's a great on-campus job, and many students who apply are able to work in the Writing Center. Those students who don't get GTAs can also search for professors who'd like an unpaid TA for an undergraduate class they are teaching, gaining experience that may help on a future GTA application. Another English Department related job includes the *Freestone* Editor (the department newsletter). Faculty also hire students to do freelance writing and editing work. Most of these jobs are advertised via e-mail, so make sure your current email address is on file with the university and department, and that you check it often.

Off campus jobs include paid internships, which you can research through the CSU Career Center's website (http://career.stuser.colostate.edu/). Deanna Ludwin, CSU's internship coordinator, is also a big help in arranging paid and un-paid internships. See the list of internships, under the Internships/Service Opportunities on p. 22, for an idea of where people have worked in the past. Some of these internships, such as paid technical writing positions with Advanced Energy, have turned into full-time paid positions for MFAs after they've graduated. You can also find on-campus and off-campus Fort Collins jobs through Student Employment Services (http://ses.colostate.edu/), through the local newspaper's website (http://coloradoan.com) and through the university's newspaper, *The Collegian* (http://www.collegian.com). Other Northern Colorado job sites include www.northerncoloradohelpwanted.com, and www.fortcollinsjobnetwork.com.

Also, you can visit Student Financial Services for information about scholarships (http://www.sfs.colostate.edu/j21000.cfm) and grants (http://www.sfs.colostate.edu/f20000.cfm), both on-campus and off-campus. We have had students in the past who've received small scholarships, as well as large scholarships that include tuition and stipends. Research those that graduate students are eligible for through SFS's website.

MFAs also have the opportunity to teach Introduction to Creative Writing (E210) after taking Teaching Creative Writing (E684C). Those who do not have a GTA and teach E210 will be paid a modest stipend for their work teaching E210. For more information about E684C, talk to Todd Mitchell.

TIPS FOR WRITING A GTA APPLICATION

The GTA application consists of three sections: Background and Experience; Statement of Interest; and Recent Writing Sample. Understanding what the selection committee is looking for in those three sections and writing for their expectations will strengthen your GTA application.

Background and Experience. Here you should describe any teaching, tutoring, undergraduate teaching assistantship work, any course grading for a professor, and any elementary and/or secondary school teaching. If you don't have direct classroom experience, describe any and all supervisory, training, coaching, or outdoor recreation experience. In short, describe your duties and experiences, and explain what you learned from any job or position in which you were a supervisor, instructor, or guide. Important: Remind your recommenders to speak to your potential for college teaching.

Statement of Interest. In this section, the committee wants to know about your future plans. Do you see teaching and writing as part of your life? Do you see teaching as a way to better understand writing--yours and others? Is teaching something you hoped you would do as a graduate student, and are you enthusiastic about the opportunity? Make it clear that you are aware that GTAs teach their own freshmen composition classes (they do not assist professors); these are the courses you will be trained to teach. Also make it clear that you think having a GTA is an integral part of the graduate teaching experience, especially for a budding writer.

Recent Writing Sample. Include an edited and proofread copy of a recent piece of expository writing: a term paper for class, a research paper, a nonfiction essay, or, if you have none of these, a brief intellectual autobiography. Include a solid, strong sample of your writing, one in which you demonstrate your knowledge of and skill at expository writing, which you will be teaching.

GTA Selection Process (by Steven Schwartz)

When students apply to the MFA Program, they also have the option to apply for a Graduate Teaching Assistantship. What follows is a description of the process we go through in selecting applicants for teaching assistantships (GTAs).

Marnie Leonard, our administrative assistant in charge of graduate applications, starts a file upon receipt of an application. The file is placed in the appropriate section of a cabinet—fiction or poetry—and then materials such as letters of recommendation, graduate school application forms, and writing samples are collected in the file. If students want to be considered for teaching assistantships they fill out a supplementary application declaring their interests. Remember to include a separate “teaching statement” (see above) with your application. This is in addition to your personal statement submitted with your application. Applications are due by January 15.

From here, the creative writing faculty take over. Each file is read by at least two faculty members and sometimes as many as four. When ranking students for teaching assistantships—as for admission—we most strongly consider the writing sample. We also look at GPA, letters of recommendation, job experience, and personal statements, but mainly it is the writing sample and the promise it shows that determine our selection. The fiction faculty meets as a group, as does the poetry faculty. Each group creates a ranked list of applicants recommended for GTAs. It's important to note that students currently in the program form a part of this pool and that our policy has been to give these students preference in our selection. However, we have to balance recognition of current students with recruitment of new ones in order to have the strongest program possible. We do strongly encourage GTA applicants already in the program to update their files with new letters of recommendation from CSU faculty, with current writing samples, and with any other materials that would contribute to their qualifications as potential teachers.

After the poetry and fiction faculties create their respective lists, the lists are put together, alternating applicants from each genre. One year a poet is put at the top of the list, the next year a fiction writer.

Our ranked list is then submitted to a GTA Selection Committee made up of members from the different programs within the English department. This committee reads all the files of applicants recommended for GTAs by the six different programs.

The GTA Selection Committee chooses GTAs with three factors in mind: the strengths of the individual applicants; balance across the six graduate programs in the department; and the needs of the composition program. Teaching and related experiences can play an important role in the selection process, particularly when evaluating applicants with similar strengths. The committee respects the rankings of the individual programs and takes care to preserve these rankings but they are free to—and do—rearrange the rankings based on such factors as teaching experience, academic record, and on the committee's own response to the application materials.

A final list from the GTA Selection Committee will most likely include applicants from all the programs. At this point, GTA offers are made in a first round to applicants. How many GTAs are offered depends foremost on the financial resources available for the upcoming year. It has to be noted that an incoming MFA student with a GTA receives three years of financial support from the department, a greater commitment than a student in the other English department programs, which have two-year durations.

Students extended these offers in the first round have a deadline by which to accept. Once they accept or decline, a second round of GTA offers goes out to other applicants. Depending on monies that become available for the department and how many people accept the first round of offers, students may hear late into spring or even summer about whether they will receive a GTA.

Our commitment is to support as many MFA students with GTAs as possible. But also, we are constantly searching for alternative ways—internships, work-study, writing center employment, department opportunities—to provide resources and to bridge the gap for those who do not receive offers. In the meantime we invite all students to apply for support and promise to evaluate their applications in a fair and timely manner.

A Balancing Act: Writers and GTAs (by MFA Alumna Lesa Hastings)

The best advice I can offer about being a GTA while in the Creative Writing program would be the same advice I have received from professors, “Remember why you are here. To write.” It is also a lot of responsibility to teach composition, which requires much prep time and patience. It is easy to get bogged down in grading comp essays rather than writing your own stories, poems or non-fiction pieces. So, I suggest two key things: (1) remember you are here to write and make it a discipline. Schedule your writing times and keep to that schedule at all costs, and (2) Also schedule time to do your teaching preparation so that you remain organized. Write! Teach! Write!

HOUSING IN FORT COLLINS

Check the phone book and online to find other rental properties. These change often and without notice so keeping track of the most recent places is difficult. Use an online search engine to locate other sites that assist with rental property searches.

Some property management companies in Fort Collins include:
All Property Services, Inc. (http://www.allpropertyservices.com)
Antares Property Management (http://www.antaresproperty.com), and
Poudre Property Services (http://www.poudreproperty.com).
Also, check out the local newspaper, *The Coloradoan* (http://www.coloradoan.com) or CSU's newspaper *The Collegian* (www.collegian.com).

You might also check out Off-Campus Student Services (http://www.sc.colostate.edu/ocss_ral/) for information about renting. This office is especially helpful for finding possible roommates to share rentals with as well.

The best way to secure housing is to come to Fort Collins in the late spring or early summer, preferably during the week. Oftentimes, you can sign a lease that will start in August if you find a place in May. It's a college town, so some places are trashed and some landlords expect any person under thirty to be a bad tenant. There are lots of nice, relatively affordable places within walking distance of campus, though. Some students find that the further they live from campus, the quieter their neighborhood is. We strongly recommend visiting Fort Collins, and the property you will be renting, rather than finding and leasing a place that you haven't seen.

Housing Advice (by MFA Alumna Lesa Hastings)

Finding housing can be a daunting experience. There is a wide range of housing options in Fort Collins from new apartments to old, practically antique houses—and everything in between. If you are searching from out of the area, you can search *The Coloradoan* online (see link above). Here are some housing hints.

The most affordable "student" housing is found surrounding campus. Much of this housing is comprised of old houses that are shared between three to four roommates (sometimes more depending on the size of the house). Many of these houses will be cheaper in rent, but since many of them were built in the early 1900s, keep in mind the electric and heating bills will be higher than average in the winter.

The Old Town area (north Fort Collins) is the hippest part of the city. The housing in this area usually provides a nice walk to Old Town where the bars and music venues are located. There are also many fun, independently owned shops in this area, and tons of restaurants. If you want an apartment or house with "character," look in the area between the north edge of campus (Laurel Street) and Old Town. Rent prices go up the closer to Old Town you get, especially with studio apartments. When shopping online for studio apartments in Old Town, be sure to ask the landlord if the apartment has private or shared bathrooms (if you don't mind sharing bathrooms, youth hostel style, you may find some studios for lower prices).

The east end of campus has more houses for rent. There are more apartments past Lemay (near the hospital), but living there makes for a long walk to campus. This is probably one of the least interesting areas to live in, as there is heavier traffic and few to no parks.

The west side of campus is full of mostly undergrad housing. There are many town homes and campus apartments on this edge of CSU. If you are seeking a quiet area to live, this is probably not the place. Rams Village is "party central" for undergrad students, as are many of the surrounding town home complexes. However, the further west you go toward Overland and Horsetooth Reservoir, things quiet down quite a bit. If you crave seclusion, there are some houses for rent up by the reservoir. What you save in rent you may spend in gas money commuting to and from campus, but there are plenty of options for beautiful hikes and picnics.

The south end of town has more conservative, newer buildings, and is more expensive. This is the "cookie cutter" housing area of Fort Collins (South of Drake). The south side of Fort Collins is more suburban with corporate chain stores readily available (i.e., Best Buy, Bed Bath and Beyond, etc). This area is more tame and less unique than the north end of Fort Collins, but if you prefer the newest housing Fort Collins has to offer, and you don't mind driving to campus, this is the area for you.

Walking around campus you can always find posters advertising rooms for rent. The yellow pages also offer pages of Property Management companies that will assist you in finding housing.

Buying a House in Fort Collins (by MFA Alumna Stephanie Stickney)

If you are planning on living in Fort Collins for at least three years, then you may want to consider buying a house. If you have money for a down payment (usually 10% to 15% of the cost of the house), then you may be able to get a mortgage with payments equal to or cheaper than renting. A house is an investment, so at least you know you won't be throwing money away on rent for the next three years.

The biggest real estate company in Fort Collins is called The Group (http://www.fortcollinsrealestate.com/). If you are interested in buying a house, you can contact them, or any other realtor in Fort Collins, and they will start helping you locate a house. You will not need to pay them anything; they make their money if you buy a house through them. You can also look into houses that are For Sale By Owner—these houses are usually a bit cheaper because the owners are not paying realtor fees. Buying a house this way is more work, but there are websites and magazines that can help.

When you need a loan, you can go through your current bank or look into others. Compare interest rates and take into account whether they are offering fixed or variable interest rates. Fixed means your rate will never go up which, if you can get a good rate, is a good idea. Rates over the last few years have been at an all time low, so getting a low rate secured means you never have to worry about rates going up. Variable rate means that your rate can increase, for example, up to one point per year. The advantage of this is that you may be able to get a very low starting rate. For example, if your starting rate is 3.5 and it increases one point in a year, you will pay less for several years than if you got a 7.0 fixed rate. If you plan to sell in 3 or 4 years, this can save you money. If you are not planning on selling, remember that a variable rate may continue to rise. Ask your lender how far it can rise and at what point you can refinance.

You can apply for a loan through multiple financial institutions and see who offers you the best deal. There is no charge to apply for a loan. Some banks will finance you with no down payment.

Tips Before Closing:

Have your house inspected by an ASHI certified house inspector.

If you have a basement, you may want to perform a radon test. You can get the test done cheaply through University of Colorado at Colorado Springs. They will mail the test to you, and you can do the test yourself. It will save you the cost of having the house inspector do it.

If you want to buy a house, but you have no money for potential problems, consider asking the seller to throw in a home warranty. Blue Ribbon is one such group that you can get a warranty through. That way, if there are any unforeseen problems in the first year, the warranty company will fix them.

Helpful websites:

www.servicemaster.com
www.homegain.com
www.blueribbonhomewarranty.com

INTERNSHIPS AND SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

Internship Opportunities

Following is a list of internship opportunities that graduate and undergraduate students in the English at CSU have taken advantage of in the past. For more information, please contact Deanna Ludwin, 334 Eddy, 491-3438.

Non-Profit Organizations:
Bas Bleu Theatre
Larimer County Partners Program
Larimer Humane Society
Littlest Angels
Poets in the Park (Loveland)
Poetry in Motion (a Colorado Poet Laureate Project)
Trees, Water, People
United Way

Publishing:
Bloomsbury Review (Denver)
Colorado Review
Freestone
Interweave Press (Loveland)
Scene Magazine
University Press of Colorado (Boulder)

Businesses and Corporations:
Advanced Energy
All About Events
Experience Plus! Specialty Tours
Hewlett Packard

Education:
Kids at Work
Poetry in Motion
Poudre School District's International Baccalaureate Program
Discovery Science Museum
Teaching College English (Graduate students assist a CSU teacher of record in an undergraduate class)

In the past, students (both graduate students and undergraduates) have also done internships with Allnut Funeral Services, CSU’s Center for Applied Studies in American Ethnicity, Creative Career Connections, Denver Zoo, Fort Collins Public Library Adult Literacy Program, CSU’s English Dept. Reading Series, Fort Collins Women's Clinic, Loveland Downtown Development Authority, *Many Mountains Moving*, *Parent Magazine*, Poudre Canyon Press, Poudre High School's literary magazine (*Kaleidoscope*), PSD's Research and Development Office, and many other organizations.

OGSW (ORGANIZATION OF GRADUATE STUDENT WRITERS)

(by MFA/former OGSW President Cathy Ackerson Rogers)

OGSW serves all graduate student writers through membership in the Associated Students of CSU (ASCSU). OGSW organizes, supports, and/or participates in the following activities:

Literacy Through Poetry (graduate students meet with elementary students weekly to work on reading skills)
CSU Reading Series (contributes to cost of visiting author honorariums)
Portfolio option (for graduate MFA students.)
3 Voices Reading Series (this series is designed for 1st or 2nd year MFA students and those in MA programs to give them an opportunity to share their work with the community)
Author workshops (supports workshops with visiting authors)
Reading Series Committee (OGSW President participates in this committee, which selects authors and coordinates dates for the CSU Reading Series)
Creative Writing Committee representative is elected by OGSW to allow a student voice in faculty meetings.

As a recognized student organization, OGSW applies for funding through ASCSU to support the CSU Reading Series. OGSW fills the offices of President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Creative Writing Committee Representative with graduate students from the English Department. OGSW strives to represent all graduate student writers by assisting with the above activities along with involvement in class offering and scheduling issues, advisor/advisee relationship issues, and other pertinent concerns of English graduate students. OGSW serves all needs of the English graduate students and exists for the sole purpose of contributing to the experience all English graduate students at CSU.

Literacy Through Poetry

This program is organized by the Poudre School District and OGSW. Years ago, CSU poetry professor Mary Crow and an elementary school teacher at Dunn Elementary School discussed ways to encourage below-grade-level students to read more. The Literacy Through Poetry program is a result of their efforts. Through this program, graduate student volunteers meet with small groups of third through fifth graders. The elementary-aged students are encouraged to read and are rewarded for reading with a small amount of money, in the hopes that this external motivation will eventually become internal as students come to enjoy reading. Mentors write poetry with the students. At the end of the year, students’ poems are collected in a small book, and students read their poetry at a celebration, reception, and awards ceremony. This program provides graduate students an opportunity to be involved in the Fort Collins community and to use writing to benefit kids. OGSW helps to run the program and recruit volunteers. If you want to be involved, contact OGSW.

Center for Literary Publishing *(Colorado Review)* (by MFA Nicole Jackson)

One of the greatest benefits Colorado State University offers its graduate students is the opportunity to work as an intern at the Center for Literary Publishing, which publishes the tri-annual journal *Colorado Review*. Any graduate student in the English Department may register for 1-3 credits at the Center each semester.

While fulfilling an internship, students learn about the publishing business and participate in one or more of the following tasks: logging in and reading submissions (fiction, poetry, and non-fiction), proofreading, copyediting, and typesetting. Ultimately, students learn valuable skills that have, in the past, helped alumni acquire jobs at publishing houses.

In addition to working on *Colorado Review*, students are exposed to many of the Center's other activities, such as the Colorado Prize for Poetry, an annual contest that awards winning a $1500 honorarium and publication for a book of poems, and the Nelligan Prize for short stories.

Anyone considering a career in publishing (or anyone interested in learning more about publishing in a friendly professional atmosphere) is strongly encouraged to register for an internship with the Center. Please contact Stephanie G'Schwind at Stephanie.Gschwind@colostate.edu for registration details. For more information on *Colorado Review* and other Center activities, please visit http://www.coloradoreview.com.

PUBLICATIONS

Colorado Review
A nationally recognized literary magazine: See “Internships/Service Opportunities” on p. 22 for more information

A
This undergraduate literary magazine is run by students, with a graduate student who works as an advisor. The graduate student advisor is paid for this work. Working as the advisor to *A* gives a graduate student teaching experience and experience with literary magazines.

Freestone
The department newsletter magazine for current students, faculty, and alumni. A graduate student serves as the editor and is paid for this work. It provides students the opportunity to write feature articles and to build a writing portfolio.

Program Requirements

Workshops (E640)

You must take 12 credits (usually taken as four three-credit courses) of E640, in fiction or poetry. You also have the option of taking the nonfiction workshop as an elective. Keep in mind the specific requirements and focus of each workshop depend on the instructor. It is assumed that students accepted into the workshop already command a critical vocabulary.

A. Fiction

Group discussion of original student fiction, emphasizing plot, characterization, style, structure, and theory. Students will normally submit one substantial story or chapter per credit hour and will be responsible for revising their own work as well as providing detailed evaluations of all work submitted to the workshop.

B . Poetry

This graduate workshop provides the student poet with an audience made up of instructor and fellow students who read the student's work in advance and offer analysis and suggestions in weekly class meetings. Since one of the main aims of the course is to help students develop a body of work, students who enroll are expected to produce poems every week and to be open to criticism offered in class discussion. At the end of the term, poems written during that semester may be re-submitted as a portfolio in revised versions.

C. Creative Nonfiction

This is a writing workshop which challenges students to learn, through reading and a lot of writing practice, ways in which to conceive, research, write, and critique literary nonfiction--from personal essays to reportage-based literary journalism.

Form & Technique (E513)

You must take one three-credit course of E513, fiction or poetry. You may also take E513 nonfiction as an elective course. Keep in mind the specific requirements and focus of this class vary with instructors.

A. Fiction

This is a reading and discussion class about the way a wide variety of modern and contemporary fiction writers use form and technique. Focus will be on the writer's point of view and on the relationship between theory and practice. Typical discussion might cover the ways in which theme is developed through voice, plot, characterization, tone, and so forth. The course, though not a history of contemporary fiction, may cover trends in fiction from the modernists to the present day—realism, metafiction, minimalism, etc.

B. Poetry

This course will examine individual poems and critical writings by major modern poets in an effort to establish relationships between theory and practice, between poetics and poetry. It usually will trace some sources of modern and contemporary trends as they take their beginnings in the 19th Century. Major precursors such as Whitman, Dickinson, and Hopkins may be included as well as the French Symbolists for the backgrounds they provide in understanding 20th Century modernist poetry. Technical and formal issues such as the use of persona, imagery, rhythm, rhyme, stanzaic form, poetic line, diction, and figurative language will provide continuity as the course moves through literary history and such movements as Imagism and Surrealism toward the contemporary period.

C. Creative Nonfiction

This reading and discussion class explores a wide variety of contemporary literary nonfiction books and shorter forms and focuses on the writer's point of view--specifically on questions such as “How did the writer accomplish the structure of this work?" and "How might you do this, too?" and “How do voice, plotting, characterization, and other techniques typical of the fiction writer help develop themes in nonfiction?” and “What kinds of research are needed to help create a credible story?" This class might look at personal essays and any number of creative nonfiction books in the following genres or areas of interest: memoir, nature or environmental writing, science, travel, anthropology, immersion reporting, history.

Out of Department Class

One 3 credit course (300-level or above) outside the English Department (unless your bachelor's degree was not in English) is required. In the past, students have used classes such as playwriting (offered through the Theater and Music Department) or science writing (listed as CM640) to satisfy this requirement.

Pre-20th Century Class

You must take a course concentrating on pre-20th century literature at the E500 level or above (3 credits). At least one course meeting this requirement is offered per semester.

International Requirement

This requirement is filled through the annotated bibliography in the portfolio. At least 20% of the works cited should be translated works. You should meet with your advisor in your first year to discuss this requirement and what authors and works would fit best with your desired course of study.

Portfolio

The portfolio is designed to allow for an accurate and thorough assessment of a student’s progress in the program, while granting a student maximum time for writing and study. Here are its elements:

1. A sample critical paper from a literature course.
2. A sample paper from a craft course (Form and Technique, Narrative Voice, The Short Story, etc.).
3. A sample of your creative work: one story or a group of poems culled from the thesis.
4. A self-assessment of your teaching, internship, or service while in the program. The self-evaluation should discuss how any (or all) of the positions above helped you to become a better writer and critical thinker. You may also include a supervisor’s evaluation of your teaching or internship.
5. An annotated bibliography. The annotated bibliography must include a minimum of 50 works, 20 of which must be full-length books. The rest of the works can be made up of short stories, poems, creative non-fiction, critical articles, and other primary and secondary sources. Fifteen to twenty annotations are to be submitted to the advisor over the course of each year in the MFA Program. Portfolio entries should be no less than one page

and should focus on matters of form and technique, and/or should place the work in a critical/historical context. Twenty-percent of portfolio must be annotations of international works. No plot summaries. You may not annotate works read for courses while in the program; the works must be in addition to your required course readings and should represent a selection that has contributed to your intellectual growth as a writer, editor, and critic. Entries should be dated. You may choose to use the Writing Studio located on CSU's Writing@CSU website (http://writing.colostate.edu) to help record and organize your entries. Here you can create your own projects and manage your working bibliography. Once you create your logon, you can access the bibliography section under "Tools."
** Revised portfolio guidelines, effective for Fall 2006 entering students.**

In addition to the lists below, suggested reading lists will be provided, although these are recommendations and not meant to be prescriptive. Ideally, the readings should arise out of suggestions from faculty members and peers, in the course of workshops or classes, from the reading lists, from informal discussions, or from the student's own digging around for useful and important texts. Students should consider a balance between classics and more contemporary work, a portfolio that represents an informed and yet personal perspective on their genre.

The portfolio will be evaluated in a student's final semester—a prerequisite to the oral defense—by the two creative writing members of a student's thesis committee. It must be submitted to these committee members three weeks before the oral defense.

Suggested Reading

FICTION

Novels:
Bastard Out of Carolina, Dorothy Allison
Northanger Abbey, Austen
Pride and Prejudice, Austen
Emma, Austen
The Hiding Place, Trezza Azzopardi
Continental Drift, Russell Banks
Nightwood, Djuna Barnes
The Adventures of Augie March, Saul Bellow
Herzog, Saul Bellow
Humboldt's Gift, Bellow
Jane Eyre, C. Bronte
Villette, C. Bronte
Wuthering Heights, E. Bronte
The Way of All Flesh, Butler
The Awakening, Chopin
Disgrace, J. M. Coetzee
Waiting for the Barbarians, J. M. Coetzee
Mrs. Bridge, Evan Connell
The Leatherstocking Tales, Cooper
Hopscotch, Julio Cortazar
The Hours, Michael Cunningham

The Red Badge of Courage, Crane
Moll Flanders, Defoe
Libra, Don DeLillo
White Noise, Don DeLillo
Great Expectations, Dickens
Bleak House, Dickens
Our Mutual Friend, Dickens
Play It As It Lays, Joan Didion
Crime and Punishment, Doestoevsky
The Brothers Karamazov, Doestoevsky
Castle Rackrent, Edgeworth
Look at Me, Jennifer Egan
Middlemarch, George Eliot
Daniel Deronda, George Elliot
The Sound and the Fury, Faulkner
Tom Jones, Fielding
The Great Gatsby, Fitzgerald
Madame Bovary, Flaubert
A Sentimental Education, Flaubert
Desperate Characters, Paula Fox
The Death of Artemio Cruz, Carlos Fuentes
Fat City, Leonard Gardner
Caleb Williams, Godwin
Dead Souls, Gogol
The End of the Affair, Graham Greene
The Power and the Glory, Graham Greene
The Quiet American, Graham Greene
Hunger, Knut Hamsun
Tess of the D'Ubervilles, Hardy
Jude the Obscure, Hardy
The House of the Seven Gables, Hawthorne
A Moveable Feast, Hemingway
The Sun Also Rises, Hemingway
A Hazard of New Fortunes, Howells
Portrait of a Lady, James
The American, James
Who's Irish? Gish Jen
Ulysses, James Joyce
Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man, James Joyce
Thumbsucker, Walter Kirn
The Unbearable Lightness of Being, Milan Kundera
The Book of Laughter and Forgetting, Milan Kundera
Under the Volcano, Malcolm Lowry
Death in Venice, Thomas Mann
The Magic Mountain, Thomas Mann
One Hundred Years of Solitude, Gabriel Garcia Marquez

Property, Valerie Martin
Everything in This Country Must, Colum McCann
Lots of novels to choose from, Cormac McCarthy
That Night, Alice McDermott
Atonement, Ian McEwan
Moby Dick, Melville
Billy Budd, Melville
The Good Mother, Sue Miller
Like Life, Lorrie Moore
Beloved, Toni Morrison
The Book and the Brotherhood, Iris Murdoch
The Philosopher's Pupil, Murdoch
A River Runs Through It, Norman Maclean
Pnin, Vladimir Nabokov
McTeague, Norris
Eugene Onegin, Pushkin
Clarissa, Richardson
Housekeeping, Marilynne Robinson
The Radetzky March, Joseph Roth
The Human Stain, Philip Roth
Sabbath's Theater, Philip Roth
Mating, Norman Rush
Why Did I Ever, Mary Robison
Everything is Illuminated, Jonathan Safran Foer
Civil Warland in Bad Decline and Other Stories, George Saunders
Austerlitz, W. G. Sebald
Caucasia, Danzy Senna
Frankenstein, Shelley
Red and Black, Stendahl
Tristram Shandy, Sterne
Vanity Fair, Thackeray
War and Peace, Tolstoy
Anna Karenina, Tolstoy (new translation)
A Sportsman's Notes, Turgenev
Fathers and Sons, Turgenev
The Master, Colm Toibin
Huckleberry Finn, Twain
The Age of Innocence, Wharton
The House of Mirth, Edith Wharton
Birdy, William Wharton
Mrs. Dalloway, Virginia Woolf
The Waves, Virginia Woolf
To the Lighthouse, Virginia Woolf
Revolutionary Road, Richard Yates

Short Novels/Novellas:
Heart of Darkness, Joseph Conrad
Notes from the Underground, Fyodor Dostoyevsky
So Long, See You Tomorrow, William Maxwell
Bartleby the Scrivener, Melville
Pale Horse, Pale Rider, Katherine Anne Porter
*The Age of Gr*ief, Jane Smiley
The Death of Ivan Ilyich, Leo Tolstoy
Miss Lonelyhearts and *The Day of the Locusts*, Nathaniel West

Story Collections:
The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven, Sherman Alexie
The Collected Stories, Isaac Babel
Ship Fever and Other Stories, Andrea Barrett
Come Back, Dr. Calagari, Donald Barthelme
Come to Me, Amy Bloom
The Sheltering Sky & Collected Stories, Paul Bowles
Emperor of the Air, Ethan Canin
Where I'm Calling From, Raymond Carver
Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories, Sandra Cisneros
Adultery and Other Choices, Andre Dubus
Drown, Junot Diaz
All Around Atlantis, Deborah Eisenberg
Rock Springs: Stories, Richard Ford
Because They Wanted To, Mary Gaitskill
The Collected Stories, Mavis Gallant
The Collected Stories, Hemingway
Collected Stories, Henry James
Jesus' Son, Denis Johnson
The Pugilist at Rest, Thom Jones
Dubliners, James Joyce
The Metamorphosis and Other Stories, Kafka
Lovers for a Day, Ivan Klima
The Magic Barrel, Bernard Malamud
Birds of America, Lorrie Moore
The Things They Carried, Tim O'Brien
The Complete Stories, Flannery O'Connor
The Collected Stories, Katherine Anne Porter
The Collected Stories, William Trevor
A Curtain of Green and Other Stories, Eudora Welty
In the Garden of the North American Martyrs, Tobias Wolff
The Collected Stories, Richard Yates

Books/Essays on Craft and Criticism:
"The Literature of Exhaustion" and "The Literature of Replenishment," John Barth in *The Friday Book: Essays and Other Nonfiction*, Putnam, NY, 1984
Burning Down the House, Charles Baxter
Bringing the Devil to His Knees, Baxter and Turchi, Eds.
The Story Behind the Story, Baxter and Turchi, Eds.
The Uses of Literature, Italo Calvino
The While Album, Joan Didion
Political Fictions, Didion
Living by Fiction, Annie Dillard
Unacknowledged Legislation, Christopher Hitchens
On Moral Fiction, John Gardner
The Art of Fiction, John Gardner
The Art of the Novel, Milan Kundera
Mystery & Manners, Flannery O'Connor
The Habit of Being, Flannery O'Connor
The Lonely Voice, Frank O'Connor
Art and Ardor, Cynthia Ozick
Curious Attractions: *Essays on Writing*, Debra Spark
Against Interpretation, Susan Sontag
AIDS as Metaphor, Susan Sontag
A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again, David Foster Wallace
On Becoming a Writer, Eudora Welty

Recommended Authors for General Work:
James Baldwin
John Cheever
Chekhov
Alice Munro
Gabriel Garcia Marquez
Tolstoy
Eudora Welty
Flannery O'Connor
Henry James
Joan Didion
Ernest Hemingway
William Faulkner
The Brontës

POETRY

Recommended Authors for General Work:

A.R. Ammons
John Ashbery
W.H. Auden
Amiri Baraka
Charles Bernstein
John Berryman
Elizabeth Bishop
Louise Bogan
Evan Boland
Gwendolyn Brooks
Ann Carson
Lucile Clifton
Hart Crane
Robert Creeley
e.e. cummings
Diane DiPrima
Hilda Doolittle [HD]
Mark Doty
Rita Dove
Robert Duncan
T.S. Eliot
Robert Frost
Allen Ginsberg
Louise Gluck
Jorie Graham
Barbara Guest
Joy Harjo
Robert Hayden
Lyn Hejinian
Seamus Heaney
Geoffrey Hill
Susan Howe
Langston Hughes
Randall Jarrell
Robinson Jeffers
Yusef Komounyakaa
Maxine Kumin
Philip Larkin
Ann Lauterbach
Denise Levertov
Audre Lorde
Robert Lowell
Gerard Manley Hopkins
W.S. Merwin
Marianne Moore
Lorrine Niedecker
Josephine Miles
Frank O'Hara
George Oppen
Charles Olson
Sylvia Plath
Ezra Pound
Kenneth Rexroth
Adrienne Rich
Theodore Roethke
Muriel Rukeyser
Sonia Sanchez
Leslie Scalapino
Anne Sexton
Ron Silliman
Gary Snyder
Gary Soto
Jack Spicer
William Stafford
Gertrude Stein
Wallace Stevens
Dylan Thomas
Anne Waldman
Rosmarie Waldrop
Richard Wilbur
William Carlos Williams
James Wright
Charles Wright
W. B. Yeats
Louis Zukofsky

Answers to commonly asked questions about the portfolio.

Will the contents of my portfolio be evaluated on their merit to determine whether I pass or fail the portfolio?

We intend the evaluation to be a quantitative more than qualitative measurement. We won’t be second-guessing the professor who has already graded your literature or craft paper. The bibliography will be evaluated as to whether the format has been followed and the minimum number of entries included.

Do I have to teach in order to fulfill the portfolio requirements?

No. You may fulfill the requirement by teaching, by service to the program (e.g. president of OGSW, creative writing committee representative, etc.), by an internship, or by other options such as working in the Writing Center. However, we hope students will take advantage of a number of opportunities in the program—teaching, internship, service—as their time allows.

Do I have to sign up for an internship?

Again, no; however, most students find an internship helpful as hands-on experience for gaining them future job opportunities and for their development as writers.

What internships will count for credit in the portfolio?

An extensive list of internships is included in the handbook (p.22). Students should see Deanna Ludwin (334 Eddy; 491-3438) for more information.

Can I include more than one work by the same author in the bibliography?

Yes. We no longer require students to study a major author and read all of that author's works. But you are encouraged to find an author of interest and influence for you and read a selection of the author's works.

When should I start on the bibliography and where do I get suggestions for what to read?

The annotated bibliography should be started during your first semester in the program and should represent your reading—and varying interests—over your time here. Suggestions for what to read will come from your instructors, the reading lists, your fellow students, and from your own digging and discoveries. The principal responsibility, however, for generating a list of works comes from you, not your advisor.

What should my annotation focus on?

Your annotation, at least a page in length, should focus on some element(s) of craft in the work that you found useful to your development as a writer and critical thinker. A sample list of annotations, compiled by faculty, follows.

Is there a required format for compiling my annotations?

No. How you decide to arrange your annotations is up to you. You should put them together in a way that makes sense and will be understandable by your committee members. Some students have arranged their annotations by type (nonfiction, fiction, short stories, craft, etc.) and some have arranged them alphabetically. If you are concerned about the format, discuss this with your advisor.

Sample Annotated Bibliography

These sample annotations have been taken directly from past students' submitted portfolios. Each entry will be a little different in that the student's style and format was maintained as much as possible to display the different ways to arrange the bibliography. Remember to be consistent when you put your own bibliography together. Students can find additional examples of annotations in the Creative Writing office.

Novels:

DeLillo, Don. The Names. New York, N.Y.: VintageBooks, 1982.

This was my second DeLillo experience no less strange and inspiring. What this book made me realize most was DeLillo's ability to build a book around a philosophical idea and still drive the text with his characters. DeLillo explores the purpose of language, its ability to humanize and dehumanize and what it means to understand a people through their language on both a cultural and personal level. Set in Greece, both the staging ground for financial Western world meeting with the oil interests of the Middle East and "an invention of people from lost places, people forcibly resettled, fleeing war and massacre and each other, hungry, needing jobs" (104), we follow James, a writer first, and later hired by an international company to assess risk in the Middle East, through his estranged marriage, his relationship with his young and ambitious child, and his quest to understand a cult whose killings are centered around linguistic puzzles. Because James is an author and his friend Owen, a linguist, DeLillo is able to overtly talk about fiction, film, and language through the sensibilities of his characters without seeming overt or heavy handed. The narrative is first person and James is wry and self-deprecating. The evil he tries to understand is so simple it shocks, horrifies and intrigues. We discover that the point of the murders is only to match the initials of the victim, a vagrant on the verge of death, with the name of the city where the murder occurs. Similar to White Noise, the pattern dehumanizes the act of killing. However, as readers, we are forced to look at the intimacy of these acts, making them shockingly real and terrifying. One of the cult members describes, "we have not talked about the way she crumpled, how soft it was. We have not talked about the way she crumpled or how we kept hitting…Or how long it took, we have not talked about this. Or how we hit harder because we could not stand the sound, the damp sound of hammers on her face and head…" (211). Like White Noise, DeLillo explores the ways in which we humans order our lives around the inevitability of our own deaths both through the eyes of his main character James and others. Again, from a craft point of view, we are acclimated into the "alternative" reality of the novel so that the murders seem to arise in a seamless way. They don't jar the reader because DeLillo has already sucked his reader into his particular world. (November 2003)

Marquez, Gabriel Garcia. One Hundred Years of Solitude. Trans. Gregory Rabassa. New York, N.Y.: Perennial Classics, 1998.

Magical realism is the most talked about technique in this novel and when I first read the novel I felt like that was an accurate description of Marquez's work. How else can one explain the presence of blood that travels for blocks and climbs tables, children born with pigs tails, etc? It seemed reasonable to me that Marquez's book was operating by the rules of good contrivances—he created an alternate reality to tell emotional truth. Then I read in an interview that he resented the term. I think that the main source of discontent for the term "magical realism" is the assumption that the physical world is the greater of the truths and can be bent to accommodate emotional truth, but who is to say that emotional truth is not the greater reality? A work of fiction is in essence "contrived," so what is this need on the part of the reader to define/ explain "fantastic" events? The whole thing didn't actually happen in the world, but the whole thing did actually happen in the novel's world. Regardless of the term, I still believe that a good contrivance in any piece of fiction should be justified with an emotionally real result. I appreciate

Marquez's contention with the term, but I can't escape the designs of my fiction to emulate the "real" world. As a writer, I am more interested in the emotional significance to Senorita when the blood of her son comes to her front door more so than the actual event. I like the suggestion that the detail makes. I don't necessarily contest the "realness" of it. In terms of craft, Marquez sparked in me a fascination with the emotionally real and the physically "other." This allowed me to make departures in a few of my stories keeping in mind the heart/ emotional truth for the characters was paramount to the course of events. (February 2004)

Dillard, Annie. Living By Fiction. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1982.
This is a critical book I would recommend to any writer. Dillard covers many bases, but the ones that were most important to my development were on psychic distance, POV, and prose. In her discussion of psychic distance, Dillard examines holding characters close and far. A far reaching distance, as if holding your characters "with tongs" flattens characters by showing characters' speeches and actions without motivation. This makes characters random, unwilled, and absurdist. Her discussion on POV begins to trace the changes in fiction over the centuries. "The intimate voice of a narrator moves fiction toward its own surface" (41). Paradoxically, such an intimate voice actually distances us from voice. With varying distance in mind, Dillard encourages a return to narration. She raises the question of who (character) is unaware and how to use the unawareness of character to develop the other elements of fiction. One point in particular that she examines is, "if fiction has changed gradually, we still get to ask why it has not changed wholly" (75). Prose has been a great strength of Western fiction throughout the century: plain and fancy—both derived from mainstream traditional writing (103). I want to find a balance between the two in my writing—the fiction (not boring) being the more straight-forward language, and poetry being the "fancy." I think the two can be combined into a new form of writing and language. (January 2004)

Stories/Story Collections:
Best American Short Stories 2000. ed. E.L. Doctorow. Series ed. Katrina Kenison. Boston, M.A.: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000.

In his introduction, E.L. Doctorow begins with Frank O' Connor's assertion that "what makes the short story a distinct literary form is 'its intense awareness of human loneliness'" and the tendency for the short story to isolate or be about the isolated in someway (xiii-xv). Doctorow goes on to punch holes though O'Connor's thesis, but he marks it as an interesting insight. I suppose that Doctorow's point was to try and discern the uniting quality common to all short stories, even if it proves somewhat impossible to do. I like this notion of "intense awareness of human isolation," and in each of the stories within this collection there is a character who begins alone and seeks connection with other characters and in most cases finds it through some means, even if for a brief instant. If not presenting a distinct "aboutness," this theory of isolation became a way for me to track plot as a series of connections and disconnections between characters. Take for instance Raymond Carver's "Call if You Need Me" originally published in *Granta*. It is the story of a husband and a wife who rent a vacation house for the summer to try and save their marriage. It's evident from the first scene that their quest is futile. The doomed couple hands rents out their own house in the city to a younger, more optimistic couple and then heads off to the coast to try and rekindle what they had lost. What makes this story so painful are the moments of connection that this couple experiences. They are so intimate and so close at moments that the reader begins to hope for them and yet just as easily the couple becomes severed from each other once again and through their disconnections it becomes increasingly apparent that this marriage will fail. This was an extremely helpful way to view what happens in a story; events become traceable based on the characters' closeness with one another as opposed to the pyramid model where one character is always trying to conquer or overcome. For me, this model seemed to work more closely with the kind of stories I like to read and I am trying to tell.

Englander, Nathan. For the Relief of Unbearable Urges. New York, N.Y.: Vintage Books International, 1999.

Based primarily on Jewish characters, it's been one of the most helpful collections for me when writing about characters with a Jewish heritage. It's always difficult to write a story aimed at the general readership about a minority group, the "other," whose customs and traditions are not necessarily familiar to the larger world, especially when I don't conceive of myself as "other." Judaism is a certain kind of world view and whenever I'm writing about distinctly Jewish characters, I'm always asking myself how much should I explain? When I offer up a detail of thematic significance should I make it explicit for the general audience or just leave it apparent for only those who are aware of Jewish traditions? Englander does both. In "The Wig," a Hasidic wig maker, who is desperate for her former beauty and youth, buys the hair of a tree salesman and makes herself a wig. As a Hasidic woman she is bound by customs of modesty. Englander makes this apparent through tiny details of dress and action. The fact that Rachuama pays a vendor to *look* at fashion magazines for her wig clients because they are considered pornography in her community clearly illustrates the confines of community standards for someone not versed in the Hasidic world. It's not immediately apparent to someone who doesn't know Hasidic traditions why Ruchama is behaving the way she behaves, nor why her clients need wigs. Through dialogue with the magazine vendor, Englander reveals something of the Hasidic traditions and we are also given a flashback of when Rachuama cuts her own natural hair on the eve of her wedding. Her hair is a symbol of her femininity and her freedom, and her actions demonstrate an act of desperation, a kind of feminist revolt, the more universal theme of the story. I guess the best way to describe what Englander does is build a world based on memorable and particular details with a universal message that the story bears weight to all audiences regardless if a nuance is missed along the way.

Proulx, Annie. *Close Range: Wyoming Stories.* New York: Scribner, 1999.

Bleakness is almost an affectation for Proulx: I don't think a single one of these stories lacks a gruesome death ("We are in a new millennium and such desperate things no longer happen…If you believe that you'll believe anything."), and roughly, taking them all in, they seem to be about violence and sex and hate, with the occasional spot of love (but more lust). It pissed me off occasionally, and these read in conjunction with *The Meadow*, where the lives were just as bleak but the inner resources were deeper and gentler, made me think that Proulx adopted Wyoming as her literary home because of its at least surface agreement with her trademark vision.

What I liked most about this collection was the variety: the shortest story is two pages, two long paragraphs, a variation of the Bluebeard theme; there are two stories of about 40 pages, and the rest are the typical 20-30. Some of the longer stories get rambly, with multiple ranch failures and deaths, but I liked this, the shifting themes, unity coming from the overall theme of bleakness and grayness and hard living. Especially since these are balanced with traditional tight arrowshot stories like "The Half-Skinned Steer" (takes place in one day) and "Brokeback Mountain" (covers the lifetime of two men but is framed within a day). (January 2002)

Udall, Brady. "Buckeye the Elder." Letting Loose the Hounds. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1997.

Udall's ability to create unpredictable characters makes reading any story of his a treat. I find that in first drafts I tend to write predictable characters. Reading Udall has helped me discover how to make characters have revelations that change them and their situations. In "Buckeye the Elder," Buckeye is the boyfriend of the narrator's older sister. Newly reformed to Mormonism, Buckeye is an upstanding young man to whom the narrator and his entire family respect and look up to. The narrator, younger than Buckeye by five years or so, begins to idolize Buckeye while Buckeye begins to get nostalgic for his wild days. While Buckeye tries to give the narrator just enough of a bad influence, his character cracks back into his patterns of self-destruction and binge drinking. This character change was unexpected, yet deserved and fully believable. Udall is also a good model for me to turn to in terms of knowing how to take an idea that has novel scope but write it in a short amount of time. Usually my initial ideas for stories are too huge to be written in a focused short story. "Buckeye the Elder" reveals enough information about Buckeye that there's the feel of a novel, yet the plot is accomplished in a short amount of time, revealing large amounts of info about the character in first person, present tense. (October 2002)

Essays/Books on Fiction Craft:

Baxter, Charles. "Rhyming Action,"Burning Down the House: Essays on Fiction. Saint Paul, MN: GrayWolf Press, 1997.

In this essay, Baxter talks about the effect of mirrored action in stories. He doesn't advocate for detectible symmetry, but he points to several stories that use subtly repeated images, which depend on the reader's *unconscious* memory, to heighten metaphoric significance. What he describes happening in Joyce's "The Dead" and Monroe's "Five Points" is the feeling of dejavu or what he terms "slant rhyme" or "assonance" in the action. In "Five Points," Brenda finds herself reenacting the role of a girl from her boyfriend's childhood. In "The Dead," Michael Furry is instantly transported into the room of the married couple by the sound of the falling snow as it mirrors the sound of the rocks that Michael used to throw against the window. Baxter argues that these subtle mimicries are what make the action feel "right" or natural, something of Flannery O'Connor's inevitable. He points out that such "rhyming" should not be forced; rather his point is that this repetition exists and evokes a feeling of wholeness in the narrative. I agree with Baxter that a feeling of too much symmetry will make the story flat and the reader feel dumb. Blatant repetition is too obvious and often invokes a feeling that a neon sign is jumping off the page and blinking "metaphor", instead of that quiet sense of experience and understanding that washes over the reader as he/she reads. The idea of slant-rhyme action provokes in me a new understanding of plot structure. Characters are moving in something of a circle—they are who they are, and scenes work to unfold and explain each character. Yet with each scene of the story, some dramatic action happens to push the character forward or backward or sideways—point being, their pushed from their circle, their comfort zone. Then they get comfortable and circle back around again driven by their essence; this is followed up by another scene which rocks them off their axis again, which is why stories resonate with familiarity. Characters, if they are like people, don't change their constitutions. Instead, events happen to stretch them, challenge their shape, but not all together violate who they are. (October 2004)

Boswell, Robert. "Narrative Spandrels," Bringing the Devil to His Knees: The Craft of Fiction and the Writing Life. Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2001.

In his essay, Boswell creates a metaphor between spandrels, an architectural byproduct of placing domes on rounded archways, and the accidental details in narrative fiction. Spandrels, defined as the triangular space between archways, offer beauty and significance to the design of cathedrals, but were not necessarily part of the intentional design. Instead, they are arguably accidents of beauty that have come to the foreground of aesthetic attention. Boswell offers that the same sorts of "accidents" happen in fiction when a seemingly insignificant detail placed in a scene to develop character becomes the detail on which the significance (beauty) of the entire narrative rests. He sights the example of the cat, Pitty Sing, from Flannery O'Connor's "A Good Man is Hard to Find." The cat originally appears as a detail to flesh out the grandmother and yet, later on in the story, the cat precipitates the accident and the fatal events. Boswell goes on to say that the hidden elements, the spandrels in our stories, often end up as the essential parts which unlock meaning and allow the story to come together as a whole. He offers that writers should mine what is already in their scenes and see what elements might "naturally" push the narrative forward when they find themselves stuck. This was hands down one of the most important revision techniques that I have applied to my writing. I was incredibly stuck on a draft of a story and I could not make the tension between the characters come to life, especially in the explosive way that I wanted them to face one another in the end and the story kept feeling forced and flat (at least that final scene did). After reading Boswell, I went back and "mined" for the material already there, some detail I had missed. There was a scene that I had written where one of the characters goes to her lover's place of business for the first time to deliver bad news about her lover's health. The scene was originally meant to highlight the separation between the two characters' lives and how that kind of complete separateness was devastating to their intimacy. Low and behold, lurking at the edges of the scene was a brand new character, a black-haired girl with a pixie cut who was just dying to bust into the story. Once that character lit up my stage, the power dynamics of the story suddenly shifted so that I could force my main character to face her problems and move toward the more difficult life choices that I had wanted her to make all along. Boswell's essay seemed more concerned with props, not whole new characters, but the same principles seem to apply in that my new character was organically hidden in that scene (the scene didn't function to introduce her) and her presence is what allowed the rest of the story to take on the more significant, more beautiful shape.

Brown, Nickole. "Writing In The Mother Tongue: Approaches to Dialect and Colloquial Speech." The Writer's Chronicle. February 2003: 48-57.

This article explores the ways to portray dialect in a character's dialogue. Brown begins with her own familiarity with dialect that she calls her "mother tongue" and her ultimate desire to "lose the accent." She goes on to admit that rhythmic speech is alluring, but it can often create a difficult dialogue for the reader to follow. Brown quotes Janet Burroway's warning that writing in dialect (with misspellings) can cause the reader to "mistrust" the author. While Brown agrees to a point, she purports that "misspellings are sometimes necessary to the presentation of certain voices." Brown utilizes examples from a vast array of writers to present her case. In the end, she contends that "faith, and not the tricks of the craft, is the savior of writing in dialect." It is "the heart of the story" that must win out over the "diction and syntax" to make the story work. I found this article to be extremely useful in deciding what type of dialect to use in my stories and to what extent that dialect serves to move the story along or hold it back. (February 2003)

Poetry Collections:

Bang, Mary Jo. Apology for Want. Connecticut: Middlebury College, 1997.

Notes: This strong book of poems pushes against the traditional autobiographical narrative poem, swerving away rather than directly addressing a subject, violating decorum by exploding assumptions of what belongs in poetry or life, rejecting prettiness, narrative, slogans, epiphany endings. I like the way Bang mixed a lyrical language with allusions to popular culture: "The sea dazes itself at our feet while we break/open rocks, hoping for fossil…" followed by "Tomorrow we'll return to what is ours, the graffiti/we know: Nut House, Weasel, Chucky Love." This poem ends simply: "The sea will be, as we left it."

Clearly these poems are first steps toward something more radical. They take up the postmodern displacement of the central event, positing an emptiness that holds meaning in readiness and accepting the idea that the world is progressively less real: "You travel on, headed somewhere yourself:/where house, where dog." Or: "After all you learned echoes from emptiness/tapping from canes." These poems refuse story telling and few things happen in them. Instead, Bang employs odd juxtapositions and bits of description. The effect is often oneiric or just spacey: "Summer's fretwork of mosquito and fireflies mocking/ the false alchemy of ever and elsewhere—the wish to be/where we weren't—a wall rose/clinging to a trellis."

Cisneros, Sandra. Loose Woman. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. 1994. 8 June 2003.

In this collection of voice-driven poetry, Sandra Cisneros explores much of what women are told to hide in the closet, or under the bed, and she does it with flare. These are passionate, wicked, desperate, fearless poems that make you want to slip into your best tango dress, pull on your muddiest broken-down cowboy boots, and drink tequila with ex-lovers until the sun comes up. I was struck by the gritty truth of these poems and their fierce imagery. Although they are rooted in a culture and a language not my own, they were still very accessible, and as I read this collection, I never felt as if I were missing out, which is an impressive feat. Since reading this book, I have tried more consciously to help my readers experience the richness and texture of the world I am writing about without excluding them. The unapologetic reliance on voice in this work also made me reconsider what I was doing in trying to get away from overt use of voice in my own poems.

Dick, Jennifer K. *Fluorescence.* Athens & London: University of Georgia Press, 2004.

Though not on a linear narrative of complete sentences, Jennifer Dick's collection undoubtedly is built on a narrative communicated through fragmented sentences (called "sentences" simply because they contain periods), prose poems, and poems whose spatial as well as structural arrangements disseminate a mood of controlled chaos. Several of Dick's poems seem to be products of dreams (for instance, in "She feels very small," an unidentified "it" "sinks its fangs into her forearm" and "she raises the arm to stare in its eyes." [44]), while other poems describe a scene and setting so intricately that they paint a picture of a reality many of us have— or can imagine— experiencing. The collection as a whole calls into question that alleged separation of dreamworld and "real" world.

Much of Dick's work looks squarely at language— its playfulness, seriousness, ambiguity— and its ability to communicate what we *want* it to communicate in our disjointed realities. In "Identification," for example, the speaker struggles to identify an image (does she see a shoulder or a thigh?), a threshold ("there is something crossed as now when he steps over"), and the sufficient language with which to describe (thus, identify) the relationship between the female speaker and the male passenger with whom she is riding on the train. (Is the train a metaphor, or is it the scene of a crime, as when the two see "rim of / torso, then, what lies open between the rails, a / ..." [13-14].) In this poem, as in others, thoughts, sentences and fragments are cut-off at their middles. Perhaps Dick is working with that notion of one's experience of consciousness as described by Lyn Hejinian in "Two Stein Talks": "I myself don't always experience consciousness as a 'stream.' Instead it often does appear broken up, discontinuous— sometimes radically, abruptly, and disconcertingly so" (from *The Language of Inquiry* [2000] 103). The fragments, amputated phrases and conclusions, and thought-interjections that populate Dick's poems enact this disjointed experience of consciousness while living in this real world of dreams, bombings, fear, joy and confusion.

Moure, Erin. O Cidadan, poems . Toronto: Anansi Press, 2002.

Notes: In her twelfth book, Canadian poet Erin Moure sets a wise and politically well-informed playfulness to the very serious task of opening spaces to speak from, to be human in, and from which to recognize the humanity of others. Moure "does not construct her reader as a receptacle of authorial direct speech but engages readers in the word's enactment / folding" (121). Starting with its title (which begins the work of finding out the complicated site of a feminine "citizen"), O Cidadan is a polyphonic echo chamber in which desire(s) for truth make crucial an intertextual and necessarily on-going effort extended over time. Starting where love 'bursts' a failure to hear, the book proceeds by that careful and wild--that conscious and ecstatic--emphasis on sensation, understanding, and memory so characteristic of Moure's writing. Inside and outside are, as always, at issue—but the poet has never pressed so hard at the limits of language and world for the fullest communication. Images, diagrams and disappearing fonts, screen or screamplays, strike-outs and re(re)iterations are all put to the arduous / ardorous task of arriving at a knowledge which is subject to an ethical accountability and open to revision. "A kind of movement, then, lisp-ecto-real. // Which beckons the whole notion of the 'outside' into the field of inquiry and unseats it." (21) As she goes "beyond measure" (19), slipping past or shattering the borders of forms, names, languages, national boundaries, and genres, Moure makes of poetry a place wide as the world.

---. Trans. Cole Swensen. *OXO.* Providence: Burning Deck, 2004.

Alferi's book-box is seven-cubed: The book contains 7 sections of 7 poems each, with each poem composed of 7 lines of 7 syllabes per line. There is no table of contents, nor are there page numbers. There are at least three other prominent markers to the book's organization: Empty boxes are literally drawn on the page to divide and introduce each section; each poem-box is grounded by an italicized phrase at the box's bottom (inverted titles); and the fifth section is composed of 7 boxed photographs instead of 7 poems. The proliferation of references to televisions, film reels, and photographs gives the book a sense of a moving picture, with the poem-boxes as the frames.

One can only speculate as to the effect that Alferi's demandingly formal, seven-cube structure had on him as an author or on Cole Swensen, who maintained the seven-cube structure translating from French to English. One prominent effect it has on the poems is an intensely concise presentation, despite the many poems in this book whose lines break between article and noun, or adverb and verb. The cube structure required Alferi to enjamb his lines even more so than in *Natural Gaits.* The italicized, inverted titles at each poem's end offer important grounding for the poem itself. Many titles are nouns— "garbage can," "cinema," "fountain," and "song." As with Gertrude Stein's Portraits, the poems become the moving depictions or descriptions of their titles.

In "tai-chi," Alferi writes, "yet one more symptom of an / awkward relation to space / alas the endless session / of unnatural even / verbal postures that lacking / an asian precision have / but the charm of discomfort." Readers who have witnessed or practicied tai-chi quickly grasp the poem as a description of the exercise's movements. This poem also illustrates distinctive Alferi gestures, such as his linking of supposedly contradictory ideas ("charm" and "discomfort"), and his skillful use of the line break — "of unnatural even" breaks on a word that may imply measurement / equality (an "even" amount) or introduce an exception ("even" though). This book proves, among other things, the usefulness of formal constraints as a means to liberate the poetic imagination from poetic habits.

Essays/Books on Poetry Craft:

Armantrout, Rae. "Feminist Poetics and the Meaning of Clarity." ***Artifice and Indeterminancy: An Anthology of New Poetics.*** **Ed. Christopher Beach. Tuscaloosa and London: University of Alabama Press, 1998: 287-296.**

In this essay, Armantrout takes on the role of clarity in women's poetry, and, like Leslie Scalapino, takes issue with Ron Silliman's notion (quoted in the Scalapino entry) that women are more likely to write "conventional" poetry. Armantrout counters this: "I wonder, however, whether the nature of women's oppression *can* be best expressed in the poem that, as Silliman put it, 'looks conventional.' The conventional or mainstream poem today is univocal, more or less plain-spoken, short narrative often culminating in a sort of epiphany" (288). She notes that such a form implies "closure" and "wholeness," which is not true to most women's experience, citing Lacanian theory of the Symbolic: "It is, however, I believe, the core of women's condition that she is internally divided, divided against herself" (288).

The aspect of this essay, however, that is of most interest to me is Armantrout's discussion of a typical narrative poem of Sharon Olds, where the speaker's daughter, a young girl, is presented in a metaphoric, phallic light: "Thus Olds makes her entrance into Lacan's proscribed symbolic order, using her daughter as a phallus. Is that what Olds meant to do?... What the poem seems to imply is that people and things are serviceable, interchangeable, ready to be pressed into the service of a metaphor..." (290). I am told sometimes that my poems lack an easily identifiable clarity and point out, using Armantrout's words, "Whether such a poem is clear depends upon what one means by clarity" (290). Armantrout proceeds to redefine clarity: "Clarity need not be equivalent to readability. How readable is the world? There is another kind of clarity that doesn't have to do with control but with attention, one in which the sensorium of the world can enter as it presents itself. Am I valorizing a long-enforced feminine passivity here? I think not. Writing is never passive" (290). Armantrout, who in another essay says her poetry employs as much metaphor as anti-metaphor, continues in this essay by championing techniques, such as metonymy, used by Lyn Hejinian and Lorine Niedecker. She closes the essay "in the spirit of subversion," asking "What is the relation of readability to convention? How might conventions of legibility enforce social codes?... whose life is a single narrative or an extended metaphor?" (296)

Makoff, Karl. . Escape from the Self: A Study in Contemporary American Poetry and

Poetics. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1977.

Notes: My reading of this book focuses on the discussion of Ezra Pound and his experimental techniques with an eye to applying some of the ideas to my own writing. Malkoff suggests that the effect of grammatical fragmentation in poetry can be to invite the reader to experience images as simultaneous. Another consequence that he points out, "is the reader's increased participation in the creative process" (p. 46), an increased participation which "may well be related to the diminished power of the ego to provide a fixed point from which reality can be rationally shaped" since TV has created "instant sensory awareness of the whole" instead of "rationally organize(d) experience" (47).

The problem was how to communicate experience rather than talk about it. Pound's solution, according to Malkoff , was to "by-pass the assumptions about reality inherent in the structure of our language…" Pound, therefore, replaces logical structure with "bare juxtaposition" (47).

Malkoff believes that the Cantos differ from more traditional poetry most significantly in Pound's treatment of time and in the poems' lack of a fixed point of view. "These two characteristics are linked together by necessity rather than accident; both are functions of the traditional ego, of literate man" (48). Along with other writers, Pound continues the "assault on the notion of time as something objective and absolute, something that exists independent of the consciousness that perceives it or the circumstances of that perception" (50). In regard to point of view, Pound in the Cantos focuses on "the screen" (rather than in front of it) which "frustrates the reader in his attempts to perceive the work as a whole; he must experience it piece by piece…and is therefore plunged directly into the experience, the pieces set flatly side by side rather than arranged symmetrically in relation to a fixed point of view" (50).

THESIS

Thesis manuals are available from the Graduate School, or online at http://graduateschool.colostate.edu/index.asp?url=publications

You should choose thesis committee members by the end of your third semester. Your committee should consist of your advisor, another Creative Writing graduate faculty member, and a professor from outside the English Department. Use the GS-9 form to change advisor or committee members, and the GS-24 upon completion for approval of your thesis.

You may defend your thesis only after you successfully complete the portfolio, all course work, and program requirements (see pp. 26-44). Your oral defense must also take place approximately six weeks before the end of the semester. As well, your committee should have your thesis at least 3 weeks before your defense date. Plan your schedule accordingly.

Format

Preliminaries—fly page, title page, signature page, abstract, table of contents, acknowledgements, etc.
Body—the work itself.

The thesis will be prefaced by an introduction which is a brief discussion of the aesthetics behind the writer's work. The introduction should be tailored to each writers’ specific concerns. Topics covered in the introduction can include influences, issues of craft, background, development as a writer, and evaluation of the works in the thesis. Before writing the introduction, it is very helpful to visit the library and read former MFA candidates’ theses. The introduction can also be included as an afterward, if the student and his/her advisor so choose. Once the full committee approves the thesis and introduction, the student will take an hour-long oral defense of his/her thesis.

For detailed guidelines about thesis preparation, pick up a **Thesis Manual** from the Graduate School office, 208 Administration Annex. *A thesis must follow these formatting guidelines before it will be accepted by the Graduate School*.

Poetry Thesis: A poetry thesis is defined as a book-length collection of poetry. Therefore, a thesis will have the number of pages and the quality of work that make publication a possibility, at least 48 double-spaced pages and no more than 84 pages in length. These pages do not include the preliminaries.

Fiction Thesis: A fiction thesis is defined as a book-length collection of stories or a novel. Therefore, a thesis will have the number of pages and the quality of work that make publication a possibility, at least 8 short stories or no less than 100 pages, double-spaced. These pages do not include the preliminaries.

Criteria

A thesis may be evaluated as inadequate by a student’s thesis committee and permission will not be given for the oral examination until a thesis revision is accepted by all members of the candidate’s committee in writing.

Double-genre thesis

While you are enrolled in either the poetry or fiction track as a M.F.A. candidate at CSU, you may wish to complete a double-genre thesis.

If you wish to have a thesis that includes poetry and fiction, then you must take E513 for both genres. You must compile twelve total workshop credits in the genre in which you were admitted to the program. You must also take at least one workshop (3 credits) in the genre you wish to add to your thesis. For example, a poetry student writing a poetry/fiction thesis who takes both E513 A and B must take twelve credits in poetry workshops, and at least three in fiction workshops.

Your committee must consist of two co-advisors and one faculty member outside the department. You must have one co-advisor for each genre represented in your thesis. The co-advisors will work with you as you write your thesis; their response to your work will most likely focus on their respective genre. Ideally, the double-genre thesis will be a unified work of both genres.

To include nonfiction in your thesis, you must have the approval of your advisor. You will still be required to compile twelve workshop credits along with E513 in your admitted genre, as well as E513 (Form and Technique) for nonfiction and at least one workshop (3 credits) in nonfiction.

How to Make a Thesis Committee (by MFA Alumna Lesa Hastings)

Your Thesis Committee (TC) is comprised of two departmental faculty members and one extra-departmental faculty member. The biggest challenge people usually encounter in recruiting their committee members is finding someone outside of the department. Contrary to rumors, there is no list available of out of department people who are willing to be on your TC. Most people recruit someone they have taken a class from (i.e. while fulfilling the out-of-the-department course) or someone who has previously served on a committee and was recommended. As a general rule of thumb, you may use whomever you can recruit. Ask your advisor &/or fellow students for recommendations.

READINGS AND THE WRITING COMMUNITY

Student Readings

As a student, you will have many opportunities to read your work. OGSW (the Organization of Graduate Student Writers) hosts The Three Voices Reading Series which is open to all English graduate students. These readings are casual, with one poet, one fiction writer, and one nonfiction writer.

One of the more formal opportunities will be a public reading the third year of your course work at CSU. The reading is considered a capstone to your career as a graduate student writer and a chance to invite family members and others to hear what you've been doing the past three years. Typically, your advisor will introduce you since s/he is most familiar with your work. As our faculty have reading engagements and responsibilities of their own, it helps to contact your advisor about this some time before your reading.

The Assistant to the Director of Creative Writing will coordinate the date and time of your reading. Usually s/he will send out an announcement at the end of your second year asking your preference of available dates. S/he will also handle the publicity, room set-up, etc. All you have to do is show up and read.

There are also many other opportunities to read around town. Many coffee houses and book stores sponsor open mics, as does OGSW and *A*, the undergraduate literary magazine.

CSU Creative Writing Program's Reading Series

This series, sponsored in part by the English Department and OGSW, brings local, national, and international readers to CSU. Students have the opportunity to serve on the Reading Series Committee and suggest visiting readers. Most readers host a workshop/discussion about craft, often just for MFA students. Students also have the opportunity to go to potlucks, lunch, and receptions with visiting readers. MFAs make the reading series possible through participation in OGSW, and through setting up and organizing readings. These events are always free. Check out the Unofficial Handbook for more information about the reading series.

Other Local Readings

Other Front Range universities, like the University of Denver and University of Colorado, host readings themselves. Since these schools are about an hour's drive from CSU, MFAs can easily take advantage of what these schools' readings series have to offer. Closer to home, Bas Bleu Theater and the Harmony Library host readings. This information usually gets distributed through the English Department's e-mail list.

Writing Community

One of the things that CSU’s Creative Writing Program prides itself on is having a strong community of writers. Creating this community requires student and faculty involvement. Our Reading Series, and the potlucks before readings and receptions afterwards, give students an opportunity to mingle with each other, faculty, and visiting readers. OGSW events, including meetings, readings, open mics, and writing retreats, give graduate students time to hang out together. There are also, of course, informal parties, beer grabbings, and dinners. The most important part of maintaining this writing community is your involvement. You show up, and the community continues to grow and thrive. You will find that you will get back whatever you put in. Some of the friendships made here will last a lifetime.

TRANSFERRING CREDITS

You may transfer up to 9 credits from other graduate institutions towards completion of your degree here at Colorado State University. You will need a transcript from each graduate institution you attended as well as a course description for each course you want transferred. Foreign language credits are subject to the approval of the Foreign Languages and Literature Department at CSU.

Advice from MFA Alumna in Fiction Shelle Barton:
When I arrived as a first year student in the MFA program at CSU, I was already an old hand at the whole graduate school experience, having received my MA in English Literature the year before. So I didn't have too much to worry about when it came to figuring out expectations of my professors, or knowing how to do "real" research. The main concern I had when I arrived was, "Will CSU give me credit for all this hard work I've already done?" While I worked on my master's degree, I took a lot of literature classes, even though my primary focus was fiction writing. I wasn't too keen on repeating the pre-20th century Literature requirement because I'd already taken two classes that fit the requirement. So I asked my advisor about transfer credits.

Thankfully, the department was kind enough to credit 21 of my 33 master's credits toward the MFA, which meant that I got most of my Literature and Language requirements taken care of in one sweep of my advisor's pen.

For me it worked like this: I presented the classes I thought should transfer and asked how each class might fulfill some portion of the MFA requirements. Previous workshops and form & technique classes, of course, never transfer. That was OK with me considering I came here for the chance to spend more time workshopping and learning about the structure of fiction.

After looking at what courses I took as a Master's student, my advisor picked classes he felt were most useful in fulfilling my requirements. My Old English class counted as my International Credit. The class I took on the Romance fulfilled that nasty old Pre-20th century requirement. And my "Intro to Graduate Studies Class" (a research methods course) fulfilled any theory courses I needed to take. The rest of the credits I transferred counted as elective courses.

If I wanted to, I could have graduated in two years, after taking my transfer credits into account. But I didn't want to and besides, there's the credit-hour requirement for the Graduate Teaching Assistantship. All GTA's must take nine credit hours per semester in order to maintain their funding. That meant that even with all my transfer credit, I still had to take three classes a semester. I made it easier on myself the first year and a half by taking two full classes a semester and registering for E684 (the teaching practicum) credits to make up the rest. During the last semester of my second year, I signed up for nine full hours of classes in order to get in some electives I wanted to take.

Everyone's experience is different and not all students who enter the MFA with a Master's degree will want or need to transfer credits. I took the opportunity so that I could spend more time focusing on what I wanted to do. If you're interested in transferring credits from a Master's program, the first step is to talk to your advisor. Make sure to take a copy of your transcript with you when you make the inquiry, as well as any course descriptions or syllabi you might have to describe the courses. If your advisor doesn’t have all the answers about what classes may fulfill certain requirements, make an appointment with the Creative Writing Program Director to discuss your options. The final step is to list all those transfer credits on the GS-6 form, and wait for the Graduate School to approve your choices. While that is another entry entirely, it’s usually a formality for the Graduate School, which leaves the transfer decision making up to the individual department and advisor.

What Classes to Take (by MFA fiction graduate Nicole Jackson)

As an incoming student, it's important to remember what's required to get your M.F.A., and it's important to meet these requirements while still taking elective courses that you believe are stimulating, interesting, and fun. Since it's probable that you won't be taking thesis hours until your third year, most students concentrate on fulfilling all (or most) other requirements during their first and second years. Typically, in his/her first year an M.F.A. in Fiction student will take:

Two semesters of E640A: Fiction Workshop (taught each semester)
One semester of E513A: Fiction Form and Technique (usually taught every third semester)

An M.F.A. in Poetry student will typically take:

Two semesters of E640B: Poetry Workshop (taught each semester)
One semester of E513B: Poetry Form and Technique (usually taught every third semester)

Beyond that, student preferences vary. If you have a GTA you'll be taking three credits of E684 in the fall and in the spring. Many students, whether they have GTAs or not, choose to spend at least one credit hour taking E687 as an intern at the Center for Literary Publishing, which publishes *Colorado Review*. Others prefer to dive right in and fulfill their pre-twentieth century or out-of-the-department requirement. It's up to you how you'd like to proceed; however, if you see a class that looks particularly interesting, sign up for it! One huge advantage of a three-year program is that you have a lot of freedom in how you spend your twelve elective credits.

In general, your third year is spent on your thesis, so many students try to get requirements taken care of during their first and second years. It's important to plan ahead. You can visit the English Department and view a tentative schedule of future course offerings.

Many students choose to take Nonfiction Workshop and Nonfiction Form and Technique as electives; any graduate student is free to enroll in Nonfiction Workshop. If you want to take a workshop outside of your concentration (you're in the poetry track and you want to take fiction workshop, for example), you must get the professor's approval. This extra workshop would then count as an elective; see information about double-genre theses for details. Other popular courses include Creative Science Writing (listed as CM640), Playwriting, the Short Story, and Narrative Voice.

(Note: CM640 and Playwriting count as your out-of-department class.)

THE CSU MFA EXPERIENCE

FIRST YEAR

It’s best to arrive in Fort Collins several weeks, if not a month, before classes start, so that you can find an apartment, get settled, register your car, and do other necessary things before classes start. Plan to be a bit overwhelmed at first, especially if you are a GTA. It is grad school, after all. Remember why you are here: to write, write, write. Remember that you would not have been accepted if our faculty did not see talent in your writing. Now is the time to make connections with other students and faculty, figure out CSU, and get acquainted with Fort Collins. There will be a picnic before the first day of classes to meet and greet fellow first years, second- and third-year students, and faculty. Contact your advisor, and start your annotated bibliography.

Get involved with OGSW and internships, go to readings, and get to know your fellow writers. The best way to meet other students and former students is to attend these events. If you don’t have a GTA, it can be a little bit easier to get lost in the shuffle, so attending OGSW meetings and readings will help you to get to know other MFAs. If you didn’t have a GTA your first year, you may get one for your second year—be sure to re-apply in January of your first year.

SECOND YEAR

Remember to take time to write over the summer—it’s a good time to focus on your work without the distraction of required classes, and many MFAs find that they can get a great deal of work done during the summertime.

Being in your second year is kind of like being the middle child, you’re neither here nor there. You’re wise about the ways of CSU now, but you’re not a third-year about to leave the nest. Many students find that they’re the most productive during their second year—they are used to the program, but they don’t yet have the stress of writing a thesis. You can start thinking about what you might focus on in your thesis. Many students try to get all their requirements out of the way during their first and second years, so make sure to look closely at your requirement checklist so that you can focus on your thesis during your third year. Keep reading for your annotated bibliography.

THIRD YEAR

Your job your third year is to write your thesis. Start early, revise often, might be your motto. Also, look to the future: apply for fellowships, jobs, and keep on submitting to magazines and contests. Get your work and yourself out there. Get your portfolio together, and make sure to submit it to your committee before your thesis defense. If you have been working on your annotated bibliography all along, this will be no sweat. Keep an eye out for the graduate school’s many deadlines, and make sure to meet them.

Another major event during your third year is your MFA reading. Expect your mom to cry after your introduction. This often happens. Invite your friends, family, enemies you want to make bitterly jealous, whomever you’d like. It’s all about you (and the other person or two who are reading with you), so have a party.

Words of Wisdom

Submitting Your Work – Advice from MFA Alum Steven Church

Believe in your Work: When I started the MFA program at CSU, I erroneously believed that "publishable" was an objective standard that all workshops were aiming to achieve. I thought there would be some magical workshop moment when nobody had any criticism of my work. Then and only then would I be ready to submit my work to literary magazines. Of course this is ridiculous. "Publishable" is as subjective a standard as I've ever witnessed. This makes sense. One person's aesthetic sensibility is never the same as another's. We'd be worried if this wasn't the case. But it took some work for me to realize this. It took time reading numerous literary magazines and working as an editorial intern at the *Colorado Review* for me to come to this seemingly obvious conclusion. The truth is all it takes sometimes is one reader, one person who just happens to work at a literary magazine, to deem your work "publishable." The key, of course, is that you believe in your work. And that's the challenge—to believe so strongly in your own work, strongly enough that you don't need the approval of others, and then to offer up this work for the very same approval or disapproval you pretend to eschew.

Set Goals: When Sherman Alexie was a twenty-four year old undergraduate writing student, he set goals for himself—publish two books by thirty, make a movie by thirty-five, and win a major literary prize by forty. I know it seems audacious, even egotistical, to not only set such goals but to publicize them. But by the time he was thirty, he had something like seven books, one movie, and several "mid-major" literary prizes. I remember wondering if it was that easy. Perhaps all you have to do is set goals and then work to achieve them. Maybe writing is like anything else. Maybe, as Steven Schwartz once put it to me, there is an artistic side to writing and a business side; and the successful writers are those who can balance their commitment to both. Just for the hell of it, try posting some goals on your wall or somewhere visible. Start with smaller goals, like publishing a story in a mid-major magazine.

Persistence counts: It took some time for me to develop the discipline of submitting my work. Stacks of rejection letters, many of them form letters, filled up a manila envelope. But I didn't quit. In fact I took every rejection as a challenge, an invitation to try again. And it's amazing what you cling to. The smallest handwritten comment can make all the difference. It's an indication that you are close to a standard of "publishability." So you keep sending your work. I had no fewer than four separate pieces rejected by *Fourth Genre* before they finally took one of my essays. I think it helps to be a little competitive. When I've had pieces accepted, I've had the urge to write to magazines that rejected me just to let them know what they missed. I know it seems silly, but I even sort of enjoy getting rejection letters. It lets me know I'm still in the game.

Diversify: I try to keep at least five submissions out at any given time. Some of them are fiction, some nonfiction, and some even prose poetry and "cross-genre" work. Most writers have diverse reading interests, but often only write in one form or genre. If you can, try sending out submissions in other genres or in other forms. I've made a concerted effort to develop several shorter prose pieces that I can alternately sell as either prose poems, short short fiction, short nonfiction, or vignettes. If you look at the average literary magazine, there may be five or six short stories, but there are often twenty or thirty poems or pieces of short prose. It's sometimes easier to find "room" in their magazine for shorter pieces. Also, I've never seen anyone list publications and include the number of pages they published in each magazine. I hear too many writers say that they don't have anything "ready" to submit, too many prose writers who only have one story they feel comfortable submitting. You have to be willing to risk success with a piece that you don't consider perfect.

Who not What: For better or for worse, publishing often abides by the same rules as everything else. It's often as much a matter of *who* you know, as it is *what* you know. Like most contexts, it pays to make friends in the publishing world. Take the time to read their magazine and compliment them on specific pieces. Read what the editors write and publish elsewhere, then mention it in your cover letter. Be nice to editors who respond to your work. Thank them for their efforts. And always always send something else when they ask for it. Develop relationships. Make it hard for your piece to sit at the bottom of a pile. Drop names when appropriate. In short, play the game.

Know the Magazine: Send your work to magazines you know and respect. Online versions make it easier to read sample work and get a feel for the magazine's aesthetic. Find out what their circulation numbers look like if that matters to you. Understand where their funding comes from and get a feeling for their priorities in promotion and sales. Send your work to magazines that have published writers you respect and then tell them that's why you're submitting to their magazine. You also have to be realistic about your submissions. While *The New Yorker* publishes some outstanding work, your chances of breaking in as an unsolicited freelance writer are probably slim to none. Take a look at past issues of the magazine. It's usually fairly easy to tell if they're committed to publishing new and emerging writers or if most of their content is solicited from established writers. To find new journals, I often use anthologies like *The Best American* series or the *Pushcart* and *O'Henry* collections, and look at where those writers are publishing. If I find a piece in a journal that I like, I'll look to the author bio to see what other magazines have published the writer's work, and then send my stuff to those places.

Keep Records: It doesn't really matter how you do it, but keep good records of your submissions and any correspondence. Personally I keep track of submissions on scraps of paper that I then tack to a bulletin board. When I get a rejection, I put an "X" through the submission. I keep all my rejection letters and make a note on the letter as to what has been rejected before cramming it in an overstuffed manila envelope. Other friends keep everything in an organized notebook and have form cover letters saved in a separate file on their computer. Do whatever works for you.

Just because your submission was rejected once by a magazine, doesn't mean it will be rejected a second time. There's a lot of turnover at literary magazines, especially those staffed by graduate students. So it's unlikely that your submission would be read by the same person. To be safe, you might wait a year or so before sending them the same piece.

Cover Letters: I'd like to say that cover letters don't matter, but my experience working at the *Colorado Review* has taught me differently. This is your first impression on your readers. You don't get another chance. If you have publications and awards, list those first and list them quickly. Listing few publications with recognizable names has a way of getting your work read, moving it to the top of the pile. Otherwise keep a cover letter short and simple. Mine are rarely more than three sentences. For the most part, they don’t care where you earned your degree or whether you own a cat or not. Most important, don’t spend time explaining or interpreting your work. The work should speak for itself.

If you have some connection to the editor, then mention this; and always try to mention the editor(s) by name. Also if you’ve liked something you’ve read in the journal, mention this as a reason for your submission. Flattery can go a long way.

Simultaneous Submissions: More and more magazines are accepting simultaneous submissions. Do this. Do not be afraid. Even if they say they don’t accept them, you should send your work out to numerous magazines. It just doesn’t make sense not to submit simultaneously, especially considering that many magazines have a four-month (or more) response time. You’d be lucky to have your piece read by two magazines in a year. That’s just not good business. What’s the worst that can happen? You might get your piece accepted at two magazines and have to make up an excuse for one of them.

What I Got From CSU’s MFA in Creative Writing Program by MFA Alum Meghan Clay

Most people consider the writing life a pipe dream, some unattainable dimension that exists only in fiction. However, three years in CSU's M.F.A. Program made me realize that this lofty aspiration might actually be a distinct possibility.

When I first arrived in Fort Collins, I was banking on the promise of unlimited writing time. But what proved to be even more valuable—and more realistic—was the supportive writing community that I found at CSU. Thanks to the encouragement and generous feedback that I received again and again from faculty and peers, I developed a confidence that my writing and the stories that I had to tell were somehow worthwhile. And this confidence allowed me to take risks—in terms of style, content, and publishing—that I had never attempted before.

In rereading that last paragraph though, I realize that it fails to capture the environment and unique personality of CSU's Writing Program. And I'm afraid that this failure will be true of any brochure or program synopsis. As beneficial as the workshops and classes were for me and my writing, it was the generous, non-competitive, supportive nature of the people and community that still resonates with me and keeps me writing years later and half a continent away.

But it's difficult to communicate all of the components of that community--the post-workshop discussions over beers at Avo's, extensive thesis meetings with advisors over the perfect closing line, an office secretary's compliment on your outfit, coffee-shop writing marathons with other students, Elvis-worthy cheering mayhem for a friend's performance at a poetry slam, or the pages and pages of encouraging critique comments that you keep and look to a year later when you're searching for the motivation to write.

So when I'm asked what I got out of CSU's Writing Program ... Sure, I think of the technical stuff—the technique of crafting stories, the development of my own style and voice. But it's the people and community that stay with me, reminding me that the struggle and doubting moments are worth making this pipe dream real.

What Every MFA with a GTA Should Know Before Coming to Ft. Collins- by Rosa Salazar, poetry MFA graduate

I am an MFA with a GTA (Graduate Teaching Assistantship). This means I spend a good deal of my time at CSU writing lesson plans, teaching, and grading papers. If you are awarded a GTA, you should know this and try to start coming to terms with it before you arrive. I would not advise doing it my way, which was to breeze into town on Sunday evening, when GTA orientation was to begin the next morning, with the thought that sure, teaching might be hard, but I was here to write and nothing was going to stand in the way of that. *Teaching might be hard* was a good start, but the problem was, I had no concrete idea of what *hard* meant.

My first mistake was to move in the night before orientation. Sure, I had rented the apartment on August 1, but in the flurry of goodbyes at home, all the last oh-so-important meetings and visits and things to do before embarking on my new life as a graduate student, I pushed my move up to the last possible minute, and paid for it for most of the first semester. They aren’t kidding you when they say you won’t have time for much during orientation week. It’s a grind. A good one, in the sense that you go into your first day of teaching feeling as prepared as you could ever be, but a bad one if your apartment is littered with boxes and you can’t find a knife to spread peanut butter with, much less fathom the idea of ever living a peaceful, productive life in this pit of disorganization that is your new home. I think by Halloween I finally had everything out of boxes, and I was on my way to feeling at home in my place.

In the second semester, things settle down, a little. Teaching still took way more time than I wished it would, but it didn’t feel quite as invasive as it did that first semester. The students were great, and it was a good feeling to know I was contributing to their improvement as writers. With more time, I could have written more, but I guess that was the tradeoff for having some steady income. If you didn’t mind living frugally and you were willing to have a roommate or two, you probably could’ve even gotten by without needing to take out loans. The vast majority of writers have had to do something other than writing to make a living, so grad school with a GTA could be seen as practice for the inevitable. If you were at all attached to the idea of having a somewhat smooth and only mildly insane transition into grad school, you should have moved in at least a week or so before school started, and didn’t put off any major tasks with the excuse that you would have time when the semester began.