Nonfiction Writing Program

Graduate Student Handbook

2015-2016

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ETHICS AND WORKSHOP ETIQUETTE

The faculty of the NWP is committed to making the program one in which each student feels supported in his or her endeavors. We also expect that students will treat one another with courtesy as they approach one another’s essays. While nonfiction is a very big genre with many different aesthetic and formal possibilities, and while we all might not share the same views about the genre, it is important for our own development as individual writers and for the intellectual integrity of the program as a whole that we remain open to as many different approaches to the genre as possible.

Likewise, the Nonfiction Writing Program is a small community in a bit of a hothouse environment. In New York or L.A., there’s a certain amount of anonymity afforded by the large populations of those cities, but this is not the case in Iowa City and certainly not in the Nonfiction Writing Program. Writing by its nature is a private act, but in a workshop environment it is necessarily public. Consequently, we urge that you refrain from invading the privacy of any of your fellow students. We especially ask that you don’t write about others in such a way as to embarrass or demean them. And if you write of them at all, please do so with permission. As nonfiction writers, ostensibly writing about “real” events, it’s especially important that we respect the lives and boundaries of our fellow writers in the program.
COURSE WORK AND REQUIREMENTS

What are the basic requirements to receive a degree from the University of Iowa’s Nonfiction Writing Program?

The degree requires a total of 48 semester hours. Three of these hours must go toward the completion of your thesis in your third year in the program.

How do people generally meet the 48 credit requirement?

1. Each student must take a total of five 4-hour workshops within the program. One of your required workshops must be what is designated as a Special Topics workshop, such as “Literary Journalism,” “The Ethnographic Essay,” “The Radio Essay,” or “Experimental Essays.” And all students are required to take the "Thesis Workshop" in the fall semester of their third year. (Students who have completed all other requirements and who choose to spend their third year off campus may make special arrangements with the Director to forego the "Thesis Workshop"). (These five required workshops will total 20 hours toward your degree.)

2. Each student must also take seven 3-hour seminars within the program. Among these six seminars, you are required to take “The History of the Essay” during the fall semester of your first year in the program and “The Professional Writer” during the spring semester of your second year in the program. (These seven required seminars will total 21 hours toward your degree.)

3. Each student must take 4 thesis hours with their thesis advisor during their third year in the program. (These required 4 thesis hours should be divided evenly between the fall and spring semesters. They will total 4 hours toward your degree.)

4. This now leaves you with 3 additional hours to play with in order to meet the requirements for the degree. These additional hours may be filled by taking another workshop or another seminar from within the Nonfiction Writing Program’s curriculum.

Of course, the above 48 credit hours are not the only courses you can take at the University. These 48 hours can quite easily be filled as long as you are regularly taking one Workshop per semester and at least one seminar. There is plenty of room in your schedule therefore to sample courses from around the University, which we certainly encourage you to do. Keep in mind however that only courses offered through the Nonfiction Writing Program can be counted toward your degree from the Nonfiction Writing Program.
There are two exceptions for the above rule, however:

(1) Students who are serving as TAs in the Rhetoric Department may also take “Teaching in a Writing Center,” which is offered through the Department of Rhetoric. Taking this course during your first or second year as a TA in Rhetoric will qualify you to be hired as a writing tutor in the Writing Center. Students who take “Teaching in a Writing Center” are therefore allowed to count that course toward their degree in the Nonfiction Writing Program. Unless you are given special permission otherwise, only students who serve as TAs in Rhetoric are allowed to take “Teaching in a Writing Center.”

(2) Similarly, students who are scheduled to teach a nonfiction workshop as a TA may count the “Teaching Nonfiction” course toward their degree. “Teaching Nonfiction is offered in the Fall Term only.

NOTE: While we don’t put limits on the time it takes for a student to graduate, the Graduate College does: ten years. Keep in mind, however, that after three years the possibility of aid from the NWP runs out and after ten years, your course credits begin to evaporate, semester by semester. Ten years seems more than a reasonable amount of time within which to finish your degree. After this time passes, your degree is forfeited.

What is the History of the Essay course?

The History of the Essay is designed to give everyone in the nonfiction Writing Program a common understanding of the history of this genre in which you’ve chosen to seek a higher degree. The course is rotated among the Nonfiction Writing Program’s faculty. While all incoming students must take the course, it’s also open to any other interested graduate students in the University, and may also be taken a second time at some point during your tenure in the program (just as long as you are taking the course with a different faculty member).

What's an average semester load?

The average is 9-12 hours. Ideally, you want to have little besides thesis hours and one or two extra courses remaining in your third year (so between 3-8 hours). If you take only 9 hours each semester, that will leave you with 12 hours to fill during your third year, so most likely you’ll want to take at least a couple of 12-hour semesters prior to your third year.
NOTE: Normally, the maximum number of credit hours you may take is 15 per semester. However, a little fudging is sometimes possible, but only if you’re taking a mix of undergrad and grad courses. The Graduate College Manual explains:

“Students registered in the Graduate College may register for no more than 15 semester hours in all courses eligible for graduate credit (100-level or above). In a schedule of mixed graduate and undergraduate courses, 2 hours of undergraduate credit may be substituted for 1 hour of graduate credit, with registration limited to a total of 18 semester hours. This equivalency applies to the calculation of academic load only. Graduate credit is not given for courses numbered under 100. The maximum for the eight-week summer session is 8 semester hours. Corresponding maximums for the three-week summer and winter sessions and the six-week summer session are 3 or 6 semester hours, respectively.”

What's the difference between 3000, 4000, and 5000 level classes, and do I get graduate credit for all of them?

3000- and 4000-level courses admit undergrads. 5000-level courses do not (at least not without special permission). All receive grad credit. Anything below the 3000-level does not.

What about grades?

Most classes in the Nonfiction Writing Program are offered on a pass/fail basis. As a graduate student, you must maintain at least a B average to maintain good standing. You should, in fact, try your best to maintain an "A" average in courses offered outside of the program. NOTE: We recommend that you take your outside courses as S/U (also known as pass/fail), since the grades you get for them will be the only contributors to you GPA. In order to do this, you will need to have the instructor sign a Grade Change Option form, which you can obtain via the Registrar’s webpage, or from Program Assistant Cherie Hansen-Rieskamp (room 308D EPB ~ cherie-rieskamp@uiowa.edu).

When can I sign up for classes?

The dates for registration are announced each semester. Enrollment becomes available towards the end of the semester. The exact dates vary from year to year, but early registration usually begins in November for spring courses and April for summer and fall classes.

Students sometimes wait to register until the last minute. Remember, a course you might really want could be cancelled by the College if not enough students register ahead of time. Likewise, a course you might really want could be full by the time you register. And failure to register on time may mean you don’t receive your financial aid funds when you’re expecting them. It’s best to stay on top of this. Ask Cherie if you’re not certain when to register.
**How do I sign up for classes using ISIS?**

Log on to [ISIS](#) using your Hawk ID. Click on Registration at the top of the page and follow instructions. If you have further questions, stop by and see Cherie.

**How do I create an Independent Study?**

You speak to the professor you're interested in working with first. Keep in mind however that there’s no guarantee the professor will be available to advise your independent study, and as a rule we discourage Independent Studies if they will be taking the place of an already-scheduled class.

Prior to starting the independent study, you must complete a Record of Graduate Independent Study form (which can be found outside Cherie’s office). This must include a written prospectus stating the objective of the project, the work to be done, and the evidence of completed work (for example, written or oral exams, critical essays, etc.). The form must be signed by the independent study instructor before you can enroll. Independent studies may be taken for a maximum of 3 semester hours. You may only count one Independent Study toward your degree in the Nonfiction Writing Program. When you register for an independent study you must also include your instructor code number, this information is found in a drop down list on ISIS.

**Can graduate students receive credit for a summer internship—especially an internship which is directly connected to their work in the NWP?**

Most likely, especially if it relates to your professional development. You need to present it as an independent study and have both the independent study faculty advisor and the Program Director sign off on it. An internship might entail work at a radio station, newspaper, magazine, nonprofit organization, PR firm, etc. You’ll have to set this up beforehand with the Program Director—not retroactively—if you’d like such a request permission to have the internship count as credit toward your degree.

**What is the Overseas Writers’ Workshop?**

The [Overseas Writers’ Workshop](#) is an occasional program that enables Nonfiction Writing Program students take writing courses in foreign settings. In May of 2005, approximately
15 students from the program traveled to the Philippines to participate in the annual National Writers Workshop of the Philippines for three weeks. In subsequent years, groups have traveled to Cathar country in the South of France (2006), Hong Kong/Macao (2007), Slovenia/Croatia/Northern Italy (2008), Australia (2009), Corfu (2010), Philippines (2011), Cuba (2012), and Australia (2013)
THESIS AND ADVISING

Do people take classes for credit during their third years?

Some take classes in their third year, but it’s not necessary unless you have requirements left to fulfill. However, you must enroll for thesis credit during the semester in which you plan to graduate, and if you’re working as a TA or RA you need to be enrolled for two hours.

NOTE: One to four credits cost the same for residents and non-residents alike. When a person takes five or more credits the fee skyrockets quite a bit for non-residents. In the third year, this formula becomes most important—particularly for those students who choose to leave Iowa for their third year. For current tuition fees, see https://www.maui.uiowa.edu/maui/pub/tuition/rates.page.

Can I do thesis credits during my first and second years?

Definitely not during your first year and generally not during your second. A thesis is considered the capstone of your career as a grad student, and for this reason it’s sort of putting the cart before the horse to take thesis credits before you’ve finished a substantial portion of your coursework.

It should be understood that the Nonfiction Writing Program is an educational program and not a writers’ colony or a writing studio. And while our goal is to be immensely supportive of your writing projects, we also believe that there is a lot that we all can and ought to learn about the genre to which we have committed ourselves. That is why we put a strong emphasis on the course work in the program. For that reason, we limit the number of thesis hours you can take. If you need more time for your project, you’ll need to do it outside of your plan of study.
**How does registration work during the third year?**

Same as for first and second, but you sign up for thesis hours on ISIS if you're ready. You take thesis hours WITH someone (your thesis adviser), so you need that professor's section number (see drop down list located on ISIS).

**Do I need to spend my third year on campus?**

Not necessarily, as long as you're in touch with your thesis adviser and have filled all of your other course requirements.

**What is full-time status?**

A minimum of 9 semester hours is considered full-time enrollment.

**How do I create a thesis committee? Who serves on it?**

In your second year, start asking people to be on your committee. You should form your committee by the end of the Spring Semester of your second year. The committee consists of three members. Generally, your thesis chair should be one of the primary faculty members of the Nonfiction Writing Program. These presently consist of John D'Agata, Patricia Foster, Jeff Porter, and Bonnie Sunstein. But other faculty members within the English Department have close ties to the Nonfiction Writing Program and can also serve on your committee.

Two members of your committee must have primary appointments (tenure-track) in the English Department (though not necessarily in the Nonfiction Writing Program). If you are unsure whether someone’s primary appointment is in English (many faculty teach in more than one department), check with Cherie.

A third member of your committee MUST be either the program's annual spring Visiting Professor or a University of Iowa professor from outside of the Nonfiction Writing Program. If you'd like to have someone serve on your committee from outside the University of Iowa, you need to be approved beforehand by the Director of the program and also by the Dean. If you would like to propose someone as the third member for your committee who is not a member of the University of Iowa's faculty or a Visiting Professor, contact that person and ask them for a copy of their CV. Then draft a letter to John D'Agata explaining how that person’s expertise will serve your thesis. E-mail both the CV and your letter to Cherie before the prospectus meeting for your thesis.
After you’ve found a thesis director, you should try to choose the rest of your committee as soon as possible. Also, you should have an initial prospectus meeting with your committee before the end of your second year.

What’s a Prospectus?

When you identify a possible thesis topic and/or thesis director, you must draft a "prospectus"—typically 5-7 pages, explaining the topic, scope, mode, audience, etc., and maybe giving a tentative breakdown of chapters or section, as well as a bibliography. Your thesis director will help you refine this document as a way of initiating the thesis-advising relationship. Please contact Cherie, if you are interested in reviewing previous submissions.

Prospectus Eligibility

Before you can submit your prospectus, you must complete the “Prospectus Eligibility Form,” which Cherie will distribute to all second-year students. You should complete and return it early in the spring semester of your second year. This form simply asks you to note all the courses you have taken and the requirements you have met, as well as those you plan to take/meet before graduating. It’s a way for the Program Director to ensure that you are on track before you begin working on your thesis in the near future. Once your Prospectus Eligibility Form is reviewed and approved, you are eligible to submit a prospectus.

Prospectus Meeting

Usually within a few months, after the secondary thesis committee members have been identified, the student will give the prospectus to each committee member and all four people will meet to discuss it. The job of your committee is to trouble-shoot your prospectus, identifying potential strengths and weaknesses of the project. Your committee will also make suggestions for useful reading. Afterwards, the student revises the prospectus to everyone’s satisfaction, and the thesis director signs the document and files it with Cherie. The Director of the Program will also need to sign the document.

Prospectus meetings should be held late in your second year.

What is the role of advisers in the Nonfiction Writing Program. Must we have one? Are they assigned?

For your first year, the Program Director serves as your adviser. The Program Director can sign forms, give advice, support, etc. After the first year, anyone within the Program can
serve as your adviser, but once you’ve identified a thesis adviser, he/she fills the role of all-
around adviser. Please inform Cherie once this has been confirmed.

What is the role of my thesis adviser?

Your thesis adviser guides you, but this depends on your relationship with your adviser. Cases will differ, but you should expect mentoring and guidance to the extent you feel necessary. Meet early with your adviser and try to hammer out clear expectations between the two of you. Keep in mind however that the thesis is not an Independent Study. You are expected to demonstrate in your thesis that you can work on your own to complete an extended and accomplished piece of writing. You should not expect to be hand-held during your thesis, because that defeats the purpose of the thesis.

Does my thesis have to be nonfiction?

This is actually a tougher question than it seems. Several years ago, the Nonfiction Writing Program agreed with the Graduate College that a thesis written by a student in the Nonfiction Writing Program should be “nonfiction.” That said, the boundaries between fiction, poetry, and nonfiction are of course blurry, and exceptions can be made in certain circumstances. But, this IS a nonfiction program and that fact should be honored in spirit if not always to the letter. If you have any doubts, please discuss this with your adviser and/or the Program Director. If necessary, you can petition the Nonfiction Writing Program Advisory Committee to work on something slightly different from the norm.

How long does my thesis need to be?

Your thesis should (except in special circumstances, such as different media) be a minimum of 75 pages, double-spaced. See Graduate College Guidelines for specific details on format. Website link: [http://www.grad.uiowa.edu/theses-and-dissertations](http://www.grad.uiowa.edu/theses-and-dissertations)

I’m worried about the amount of white space in my thesis. Will the Grad College make a fuss if there’s a lot of white space?

Don’t worry too much about this. Caren Cox (former Director of Academic Affairs) in the Grad College wrote in an e-mail:

“In the process of reviewing theses and dissertations from 100+ programs, the reviewers and I try to allow for a certain amount of flexibility when it comes to a format evaluation of creative, as opposed to academic, deposits. I have shared your comments with my team, reminding them that, especially in the case of nonfiction, fiction and poetry theses, we have a slightly different standard than that imposed for
someone, say, in chemistry. We will allow for the use of some unconventional spacing techniques by these folks, however we also will look for consistency in the use of spacing devices, particularly within each story or poem. One thing that will not be permitted is the insertion of a page devoid of text within the thesis. (This is probably the only hard and fast rule when we talk about spacing.)

I don't believe that it is necessary to provide each student with a memo of dispensation. Hopefully the students will be able to format within the required parameters, knowing that there truly is the ability to push the envelope a bit."

**When and how do I turn in my thesis?**

A preliminary draft of the thesis (First Deposit) must be submitted to the Graduate College by a deadline in the term of your graduation (usually three weeks before the due-date for reporting the results of the defense). This early draft is reviewed solely—but strictly—for compliance with the formatting requirements of the Graduate College. Students are informed of any mechanical problems they need to correct. The final draft, which has to meet all requirements for formatting and paper quality, and has to be signed by the thesis committee members after the defense, must then be submitted to the Graduate College by the deadline for the "Final Deposit" (usually a week after the due date for defense results).

Deadlines change from semester to semester. It’s EXTREMELY important for you to be on top of this and know what the deadlines are. Cherie will inform you of all these deadlines early in your graduating semester, and you can always ask her if you are in doubt. You can also check the Graduate College website.

**What happens at the thesis defense?**

The format of the defense can vary somewhat depending upon the thesis committee, but fundamentally it is an editorial session in which you, the writer, discuss your work with three attentive readers. It starts by asking you to leave the room while the committee discusses the merits and problems of your thesis. This discussion can go on for twenty minutes or more. After you’re invited back in, committee members ask you questions about your thesis and offer you the chance to answer these questions to the committee’s satisfaction. If the committee believes your thesis still has substantial weaknesses, they might decide not to pass it, or they might decide to pass it with revisions. In any case, it should be understood that your defense is truly a defense and not simply an automatic pass. Most often, defenses turn into lively discussions, a final rigorous workshop of sorts, a last test before we’re confident in your ability to represent our program well in the larger world.
FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND TEACHING

How is financial aid decided?

At the end of January, you should turn in a financial aid application form to Cherie along with a recent essay(s) or chapter selections (minimum of 5 pages, maximum of 30), written since the previous aid deadline. We also ask you to submit a personal statement of purpose (1-2 double-spaced pages) putting your writing sample in context and discussing your progress and goals in the program. The applications will be read by the Advisory Committee and will be a factor in aid decisions for the upcoming year in the event that there is not enough aid for all returning students. Students teaching Rhetoric or Gen Ed Lit can reasonably expect their appointments to continue for a second year if they are productive in the Nonfiction Writing Program and in good standing as teachers.

NOTE: The Nonfiction Writing Program has a limited aid pool and is somewhat at the tender mercies of the Rhetoric and Gen Ed Lit Programs. We do NOT control the number of teaching slots these programs give us from year to year and these slots do vary. Likewise, we’re not usually given a slot until one is vacated.

In order to attract students from elsewhere and to be competitive with other programs, we have to reserve a certain number of these slots for incoming students. This naturally puts the squeeze on students in the program who currently are without aid. While we make every effort to find aid for these students, it’s increasingly difficult to do so. Some of these students find Research Assistantships and teaching assistantships within other programs, and this somewhat alleviates the strain, though it’s by no means a perfect solution. Unfortunately, we do not imagine the situation will improve soon as the university is cutting rather than adding TA positions.

Is all funding renewed from year to year?

Not necessarily, though if you remain in good standing you can reasonably expect it to be renewed for a second and third year. Please pay careful attention to your funding offer, as some scholarships and fellowships only last two years. In other words, if you’re from out of state, you’ll pay out of state tuition for your third year (unless you’re funded as a TA or an RA for that year and have at least a quarter time (25%) appointment). This is another good reason to get most of your credits out of the way in your first two years.

That said, all graduate students with TA or RA appointments receive a tuition scholarship as negotiated by COGS from the Graduate College. This scholarship is pro-rated according to the number of hours you take per semester.

What is and who teaches CNW:1000, and CNW:2000?
CNW:1000 to CNW:2000 level classes are undergraduate creative nonfiction courses. They are taught by NWP students.

**Do you teach fewer Rhetoric classes if you teach in the Writing Center?**

If you teach Rhetoric, and you want to teach in the writing center, you need to negotiate directly with the Rhetoric Department. But yes, you would normally be substituting teaching in the writing center for teaching rhetoric, provided you’ve taken 8N:375: “Teaching in a Writing Center.” However, the Nonfiction Writing Program has nothing to do with this and it’s up to you to negotiate the balance between your rhetoric classes and the writing center.

**Can the Rhetoric’s PDP class be taken for credit?**

Yes, you can take it for three credits if you wish.

**Are we eligible for travel funds?**

As a general rule you are awarded funding for three conference/workshop/research trips during your time in the program (limited to one per year; see detailed information below) and two trips to the AWP or MLA job interviews. If you have any questions regarding travel, please stop in to see Cherie and she will be happy to assist you.

Website link: [Funding for MFA Students](#).

**Travel to conferences and research**

The Department will fund travel to conferences or research sites (such as research trips to investigate new writing subjects, interview people, etc.) in the amount of $200 per trip, limited to one trip per fiscal year (July 1 to June 30) and limited to three trips total for MFA students. (For students working simultaneously on MFA and PhD degrees, the maximum number of trips shall be three.) You may only use one allotment of funding per trip, even if you take a trip that spans the fiscal year.

**Eligibility and application procedures:**

Nonfiction Writing Program students are eligible for travel support to conduct research, participate in the Overseas Writing Workshop (or another approved workshop), attend the AWP, and/or present a paper at a conference. In order to apply for travel support Nonfiction Writing Program students should first email a one-paragraph request for travel funds outlining the nature of the proposed trip to Cherie. Your request should include the dates and other details of your proposed trip, and an explanation of its importance to your
professional development. Cherie will then forward the request to the Director of Graduate Studies for final approval.

If you intend to travel outside the United States and your trip is partially funded by the English Department, you are required to register your trip online 45 days prior to departure. For additional information, please visit this website: http://international.uiowa.edu/study-abroad/forms-and-procedures to guarantee your health insurance and emergency services. Once you receive your international insurance card, please forward a copy of the card to Justin and Cherie.

When you receive a letter of approval from the DGS approving the reimbursement, you will need to save receipts during the trip and confer with Joelle Petersen, English Admin Services Coordinator, joelle-petersen@uiowa.edu upon your return. Joelle handles the actual reimbursement.

Since travel support funds may, in any given year, be limited, students are encouraged to also seek travel support from other sources within the University. See Funding For MFA Students for a list of other funding sources.

**Travel for job interviews**

For MFA students who have job interviews at events approved by the director of the Nonfiction Writing Program, the English Department will offer up to two awards of $300 to help cover travel expenses. This is in addition to the three supported trips to conferences, archives, or workshops described above. Funding is not available for interviews where the interviewing institution is paying for lodging and travel expenses. This funding is not available after graduation. Interviews must be completed prior to graduation.
COMMUNITY

Where can I find information on grants for special projects?

The Division of Sponsored Programs is an excellent resource for all graduate students seeking a variety of funding. You can set up a meeting with one of their graduate assistants to discuss how to find and apply for grants. The Graduate College website and the International Studies Website may also have some resources.

What’s the relationship of the Director of Graduate Studies to the Nonfiction Writing Program?

Alvin Snider (fall 2015) and Bluford Adams (spring 2016) is currently the Director of Graduate Studies in the English Department. Because the Nonfiction Writing Program has its own director, Alvin/Bluford works more directly with MA and PhD students. However, besides the Nonfiction Writing Program’s own guidelines, there are sometimes Graduate School guidelines that must be followed. Certain types of assistance—such as when you apply for funds to attend a conference and give a paper—must go through the Director of Graduate Studies.

What’s the AWP Conference?

AWP stands for the Associated Writing Programs, an organization of mostly graduate writing programs as well as individual members numbering in the thousands. It’s the most important professional organization for teacher/writers and was founded in the 1960’s. Every spring (or late winter), the AWP holds a conference in a different region of the country, or in rare instances outside of the country. Shortly after the conference is held, proposals for panels for the following year are solicited. Some believe it’s a good idea for you to try to go to at least one AWP conference during your time here. As a student, you receive a discount. The movers and shakers of contemporary poetry, nonfiction, and fiction attend the AWP each year. There’s also a phenomenal book fair at which editors from various literary magazines and presses are represented. This is the place to hobnob with writers, editors, and fellow grad students. It can seem a bit overwhelming at first, but it’s almost always a good time.

If you are presenting a paper or serving on a panel (at AWP or another conference), you can apply for assistance from the Graduate College and student government (GSS) in addition to the English Department.

The AWP also sponsors three prestigious book competitions each year: one each for poetry, nonfiction, and fiction.
What are the “4C’s” and the “3C’s?”

“CCCC” stands for “Conference on College Composition and Communication,” and “CCC” is its related journal, “College Composition and Communication.” The organization is tied to NCTE (the National Council of Teachers of English), and we’re proud to mention that it traces its ancestry directly to our very own English Department. CCC dedicates itself to the histories, theories, stories, research, and related disciplines of the teaching of writing at the college level. CCC scholars and teachers draw on a broad range of humanistic disciplines (English and literacy studies, linguistics, rhetoric, technology, gender, and diversity studies, philosophy of language, anthropology, and sociology). You can check both out at www.ncte.org.

Like AWP, the organization holds an annual conference each spring (occasionally and unfortunately at the same time as AWP and often during spring break). Like AWP, the conference site changes each year. Like AWP, there’s a discount for students, proposal-writing time is just after the previous year’s conference, and the movers and shakers of writing teaching, writing research, and writing-related fields (not to mention good writers) appear, schmooze, network, and interview at each conference. And like AWP, the book exhibit is worth the trip, especially if you are developing a syllabus for teaching a writing course or thinking about writing-related texts.

We encourage you to propose presentations for CCCC, or think about participating in some of its alternative kinds of sessions: there are many special-interest research forums and special interest groups dedicated to such topics as technology and the new media in writing, writing centers, writing across the curriculum, and the histories of composition studies. CCC sponsors many awards for the writing and teaching about writing and teaching. As we mention above, we’ll be happy to assist you with proposal drafts, prospective funding, or even a dry run of a presentation.

What is the Jakobsen Conference?

The Jakobsen Conference is a local conference exclusively for University of Iowa graduate students. It is entirely run by fellow graduate students in GSS. The conference is held every spring semester and provides a forum for oral, poster, and performance presentations—a local venue in which to present your research and graduate work, with cash prizes for top presentations.

Does the Nonfiction Writing Program hold readings?

Yes, we have a couple of successful student-run series as well as a series of well-known writers, editors, and agents brought in from year to year. Likewise, Prairie Lights has an excellent reading series. Many of the authors coming through are nonfiction writers, and there are many other readings throughout Iowa City.
Why is the NWP in the English Department?

The short answer is: history. When the Writers’ Workshop began in the 1930’s, creative writing—as it was understood by the culture at the time—consisted of Fiction and Poetry. Since then of course, nonfiction as a discipline has come into its own. Were the founders of the Writers’ Workshop designing that program today, they would undoubtedly include nonfiction in the mix.

What’s the IWP?

The IWP is the International Writing Program, whose Director is Chris Merrill, a poet and nonfiction writer who also holds an appointment within the English Department. Each fall, the IWP invites a varied group of writers from around the world to be in residency here, for several months in most cases. These writers are well-known in their own countries and in many cases internationally. Throughout the fall, the IWP hosts readings and lectures by these eminent writers, and their presence is one of the great pleasures of living in Iowa City. You’re encouraged to attend their readings and lectures. In most cases, they’re quite available to meet informally.

How can we connect with the International Writing Program and with the Writers’ Workshop?

You can go to readings sponsored by the IWP and Writers’ Workshop for starters. You can go to lectures and other events sponsored by the IWP and Workshop. You can take seminars offered by the Writers’ Workshop. You can host a party and invite members of the IWP and Workshop communities.

What kind of professional development or publishing advice is provided by the NWP?

First, there are plenty of websites that deal with such things. Two of the best resources are the AWP website and Poets and Writers magazine. As members of AWP, all Nonfiction Writing Program students receive copies of the The Writers Chronicle, which has great articles on writing, teaching, and publishing. You should also consider subscribing to Poets and Writers.

As for the program, we occasionally bring in editors and agents to meet students and also organize panels of faculty to answer questions on these matters. (The Writers’ Workshop also brings agents every year, and you are invited to participate in their visits, which usually consist of a presentation and appointments with individual students.)
Still, it should be noted that professional development is as much a matter of initiative as it is a matter of guidance. One of the first things one learns as a writer is that you have to create your own opportunities. Opportunities abound if you seek them out. You might volunteer to screen submissions for *The Iowa Review* or intern at the radio station. You can help run one of the many student-led reading series on campus. You can volunteer for the Iowa Youth Writing Project. If you’re an RA, you’ll receive experience that you’ll most likely be able to use later in publishing, business, or whatever direction your career takes.

And, if you do hold a teaching assistantship, remember that we’re hiring you to be part of our program. You’re playing two roles: first as a student and secondly as a colleague assisting us in the development of our undergraduate program.

*How do I get a letter of recommendation from someone in the program?*

You ask. It’s not guaranteed. Recommendations should be sincere and therefore aren’t simply doled just out for the asking. Usually, a recommender will be someone with whom you’ve taken classes and who you know supports and respects your work.

*What is the Nonfiction Writing Program Advisory Committee?*

The Advisory Committee, as its name suggests, advises the Program Director in decisions that affect the program. Most important decisions are made in consultation with the committee, which consists of John D’Agata, Patricia Foster, Jeff Porter, Bonnie Sunstein, and one student representative. The Advisory Committee meets regularly, as often as once a week, so if there’s anything you’d like brought up for discussion, speak with the representative and he/she will try to get it on the agenda.

*What is the Nonfiction Writing Program listserv?*

The listserv ([NWPLOCAL@LIST.UIOWA.EDU](mailto:NWPLOCAL@LIST.UIOWA.EDU)) is a way to reach others associated with the program via email. Please contact John D’Agata or Cherie Hansen-Rieskamp to post an announcement. **This message goes to all students and faculty in the program.**

The program also has a moderated listserv for announcements that **may affect those outside the program’s faculty and students**, such as calls for submissions, readings, and other newsworthy announcements. You can reach this list by sending e-mail to [NWP@LIST.UIOWA.EDU](mailto:NWP@LIST.UIOWA.EDU). All e-mails to this list go through Cherie for approval; if she deems it more appropriate for the local list; she may forward it there instead. It’s important to remember that the program list goes out to friends and alumni of the program around the country and beyond. So your request to use it ought to be of appropriate importance (ie, not a ride to the airport or a sitter for your dog).
For personal requests, please use NWP-GRAD@LIST.UIOWA.EDU. This list is appropriate to use to ask for a ride to the airport or a sitter for your dog, etc.

All students are added to the three lists upon joining the program.

*Is there a network of Nonfiction Writing Program alums? How can we keep in touch with them and each other after leaving?*

Yes, we also have a NWP alumni listserv: NWPALUMNI@LIST.IOWA.EDU. You can ask Cherie to add you to this listserv upon your graduation.

**OTHER OPPORTUNITIES**

*Is there a program library?*

Yes, it’s tiny now, but it exists in the lounge, 425B EPB. The most prominent aspect of the library, besides sparsely-populated bookshelves, is a wonderful collection of video interviews done with well-known writers, generously donated to us by the Lannan Foundation. Please feel free to borrow videos and books from the library, but please return them afterwards. We have also established a small collection of autographed books in our library. We ask that you do not check them out, but peruse them in the lounge. In previous years, the library has been maintained by students.

*Who are the Provost’s Postgraduate Visiting Writers?*

The Provost's Postgraduate Visiting Writers are postgraduate residents who have just earned MFAs in fiction, poetry, nonfiction, playwriting, or translation from the University of Iowa. The residents teach courses in the English Department's Undergraduate Creative Writing Track. They earn a modest annual stipend of between 10 and 15k. Guidelines and applications will be available in late spring each year. Only current students who are graduating in the spring will be eligible to apply.