

Nonfiction Writing Program Graduate Handbook

Updated for Fall 2009 – Spring 2010

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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 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 worldview, it is important for our own development and for the intellectual integrity of the program 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 sheer number of people, but not in Iowa City and certainly not in the NWP. Writing by its nature is a private act, but it's not so private here. 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 NWP.

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, at least 30 of which must be in program-designated courses. Two to eight hours must go to the thesis.

How do people generally meet the 48 credit requirement?

Starting in Fall 2009, each student must take a total of five 4-hour workshops, with at least three different workshop instructors. *

During your first semester, you need to take our "History of the Essay" course. You also need to take an additional 6 hours of Readings Courses. These courses may be taken in the NWP or in the Writers' Workshop.

You're also required to take at least one graduate level course in the English Department, outside of NWP courses.

Some students take summer classes. Some take a few more than 9 hours for a couple of semesters and then have little more than their thesis to do in their 3rd year. We don't put limits on how long a student takes to graduate. Sometimes students take longer than three years, sometimes less.

NOTE: While we don't put limits on the time it takes for a student to graduate, the Graduate College does. Ten years. Furthermore after three years, 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.

*Grandfather clause: Students who enrolled in the NWP prior to Summer 2009 may follow the requirements that were in place at the time of their first enrollment. For those students, the requirement is to take four workshops at 6 hours each.

What is the History of the Essay course?

The History of the Essay course will give everyone in the NWP some common ground by teaching a history of the form in which you've chosen to seek a higher degree. The course will be rotated among the NWP and English faculty. While all incoming students must take the course, it's open as well to any other interested NWP students further along in the program.

What is the Minor?

The NWP briefly required a minor from students, but this is no longer the case.

What's an average semester load?

The average is 9-12 hours. Ideally, you want to have little besides thesis hours remaining in your third year (2-8 hours). If you take only 9 hours a semester, that will leave you with 12 hours for 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 100, 200, and 300 level classes, and do I get graduate credit for all of them?

100 -level courses admit undergrads. 200 and 300 level courses do not (at least not without special permission). All receive grad credit. Anything below the 100 level does not.

What about grades?

Most classes in the NWP 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 NWP. NOTE: We recommend that you take your outside courses as pass/fail (also known as S/U), since the grades you get for them will be the only contributors to your GPA.

When can I sign up for classes?

The dates are announced each semester. Enrollment becomes available towards the end of the semester. The exact dates vary from year to year, but usually 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. It's best to stay on top of this. Ask Maggie McKnight, the Program Assistant (room 321 EPB) 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 Maggie. Her e-mail address is maggie-mcknight@uiowa.edu.

How do I get permission codes for classes that require them?

You need to get a registration code for some classes, usually just workshops. Maggie can provide you with the permission codes before registration starts.

How do I create an Independent Study?

You speak to the professor you're interested in working with first. It's never guaranteed and generally builds on some prior experience with the professor. We discourage Independent Studies if they take 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 Maggie'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, essays). The form must be signed by the independent study instructor.

Do students take classes in the Summer and Winter?

Hardly in the Winter. Some do in the Summer. As we continue to build the international component of the NWP, these options will become more central to students' experiences.

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 pose it as an independent study and find a faculty member and the Program Director to sign off on it. An internship might entail work at a radio station, newspaper, magazine, Nonprofit organization, PR

Office, web developer, etc. You'll have to set this up beforehand with the Program Director—and not retroactively—if you'd like such a request to be considered.

What is the Overseas Writers' Workshop (8N:365)?

The [Overseas Writers' Workshop](#) is a special program that we hope will be offered annually. In May of 2005, approximately 15 students from the NWP 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) and Australia (2009).

The course is worth 6 credits. Students pay NO tuition fees for these credits – only a nominal fee to handle emergencies, etc. Some grants are available for interested students, both need-based grants and merit-based. See Robin Hemley for more details.

THESIS AND ADVISING

Do people take classes for credit their third years?

Generally, people take about 40 to 44 hours before they take thesis credits. Some take classes in their third year, but it's not necessary. 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 at least one or two hours.

You need to take a minimum of two thesis hours and a maximum of eight thesis credits. In most cases, no more than eight thesis credits are needed. If you feel a need for more time to work on your project outside of a formal course, you can sign up for an Independent Study, and this can serve the same function as taking thesis credits, practically speaking.

NOTE: Zero, one, or two credits cost the same registration fee, and that fee is the same for residents and non-residents alike. There is a jump for those taking three to four credits, but it is still the same for both residents and non-residents. When a person takes five or more credits the fee skyrockets quite a bit for non-residents. In the third year, when most students are only taking thesis hours, this formula becomes most important. Additionally, some of our graduates have found that their salaries (in teaching jobs and otherwise) are determined in part by how many graduate credits they have taken. (Thus, it makes little sense to sign up for a single credit hour in any given semester, when for the same fee you could sign up for two hours.) For current tuition fees, see <http://www.registrar.uiowa.edu/tuition>.

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

Definitely not your first year and generally, not the 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 NWP is a program and not a writers' colony as such, and while we want to be supportive of your work, we believe that a certain amount of course work should be required for you to receive a degree from us. For that reason in part, we limit the number of thesis hours you can take to 8 credits. 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 if you're ready. You take thesis hours WITH someone (your thesis adviser), so you need that professor's section number. You can get it from the professor or from Maggie.

Do I need to spend my third year on campus?

Not necessarily, as long as you're in touch with your thesis adviser.

What is full-time status?

6 hours, if you're teaching. Nine hours, if not.

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 members of the Nonfiction Writing Program. These presently consist of John D'Agata, Patricia Foster, David Hamilton, Robin Hemley, Stephen Kuusisto, Susan Lohafer, Jeff Porter and Bonnie Sunstein. Others who have close ties to the NWP include Tom Simmons, Mary Trachsel, Brooks Landon and Chris Merrill. Of course, you're in no way limited to this list.

Two members of your committee must have primary appointments (tenure-track) in the English Department (though not necessarily in the NWP). If you are unsure whether someone's primary appointment is in English (many faculty teach in more than department), check with Maggie. Members of the NWP faculty with primary appointments in English include John, Patricia, David, Robin, Stephen, Susan, and Jeff.

A third member of your committee **MUST** be from outside of the NWP. Committee Members should not come from outside the University of Iowa, except by special arrangement. An exception to this might be if you would like one of our semester-long visiting writers to be on your committee. However, this should be someone who is already quite familiar with your work, and you'll need to work out logistics with the person and with the Program Director.

To include a faculty member from another university on the thesis committee, you **ALSO** need to petition for Graduate College approval--which includes submitting a CV for the proposed outside member. Maggie handles the paperwork.

After you've found a thesis director, you should try to constitute the rest of your committee as soon as possible. Also, you should have an initial prospectus meeting with your thesis director as soon as possible, preferably before the end of your second year.

What's a Prospectus Meeting?

When a student identifies a possible thesis topic and/or thesis director, the first step is to draft a "prospectus"--typically 5-15 pages, explaining the topic, scope, mode, audience, etc., and maybe giving a tentative breakdown of chapters or parts, and possibly a bibliography. Your thesis director will help you refine this document as a way of initiating the thesis-advising relationship.

Usually within a few months, after the secondary readers have been identified, the student will give the prospectus to each committee member and all four people will meet to discuss it. Faculty will "trouble-shoot," identifying potential strengths and weaknesses of the project. They will also make suggestions for useful reading, and the student, of course, will ask questions. Afterwards, the student revises the prospectus to everyone's satisfaction, and the thesis director signs the document and files it with Maggie. The Director of the Program will also sign the document.

Prospectus meetings are should be held late in the second year, or, if necessary August or early September of the third year.

I've wondered for quite some time about the role of advisers in the NWP. 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 director, he/she fills the role of all-around adviser.

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.

Does my thesis have to be Nonfiction?

This is actually a tougher question than it seems. Several years ago, the NWP clarified with the Graduate College that the thesis should be nonfiction. That said, sometimes the boundaries between fiction, poetry, and nonfiction blur 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 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.

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 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 Grad. College by a deadline in the term of 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 Grad. 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 Grad. 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. The best thing is for you to talk to Maggie early in your graduating semester so that she can guide you. 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?

Every year, you should turn in a financial aid form to Maggie McKnight along with a recent essay(s) or chapter selections (minimum of 5 pages, maximum of 20), written since the previous aid deadline. This year, financial aid forms will be **due in January, 2010 (exact date TBA)**. The essays will be read and ranked by the Advisory Committee and will be a significant factor in aid decisions for the upcoming year. 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. Students teaching Rhetoric or Gen Ed Lit can reasonably expect their appointments to continue for a second year if they are productive in the NWP and in good standing as teachers. The essays and personal statement will determine in large part who teaches the Intro to Nonfiction Courses, as well as who is chosen as one of four Writers-in-residence at the UI Art Museum (for more on that, see OTHER OPPORTUNITIES).

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. Realistically, we imagine the situation will not 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 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, in which case you pay in-state tuition if you have at least a quarter time 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 8N:20, 8N:80, and 8N:90?

8N:20, 8N:80, and 8N:90 are a variety of 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 NWP 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 two 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 job interview trips. If you have any questions regarding travel, please stop in to see Maggie and she will be happy to assist you.

Website link: <http://english.uiowa.edu/graduate/funding.html>

Travel to conferences and to archives

The Department will fund travel to conferences or archives in the amount of \$150 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.)

Eligibility and application procedures:

* NWP students are eligible for travel support to conduct research, participate in the Overseas Writing Workshop (or another approved workshop), attend AWP, and/or present a paper at a conference. In order to apply for travel support NWP students should first submit a one-page travel funds request outlining the nature of the proposed trip to the Program Assistant for approval. The Program Assistant will then forward the request to the Director of Graduate Studies for final approval.

When the student receives a letter of approval from the DGS approving the reimbursement along with the funding number (MFK), s/he should go on [ISIS, Employee Self Service](#) >> FO Application >> ProTrav >> Travel >> Create New Trip. The trip will then be approved by the department. After the trip has been taken, the student should return to Pro Trav to Create

Voucher, in which s/he lists the expenses and presents original receipts to accompany the voucher to the graduate Program Assistant. The Program Assistant will forward the voucher to the travel department.

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 <http://english.uiowa.edu/graduate/funding.html> for a list of other funding sources.

Travel for job interviews

For PhD students who have job interviews at the MLA conference and for MFA students who have interviews at events approved by the director of the NWP, the 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.

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, including the [Graduate Incentive Fellowship](#), a 5% supplement to any national fellowship awarded. You may also talk to the NWP Director or the Director of Graduate Studies.

What's the relationship of the Director of Graduate Studies to the NWP?

Claire Fox is currently the Director of Graduate Studies in the English Department. Because the NWP has its own director, Claire works more directly with MA and PhD students. However, besides the NWP guidelines, there are sometimes Graduate School guidelines that must be followed. Certain types of assistance, for instance 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. It's a VERY 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.

You should seriously consider proposing a panel for the following year's conference. It's competitive, but do-able. If you want someone to look over your proposal, ask any of the faculty members in the Program. We'll be happy to give you what help we can. Barring that, you should at the least propose a brief paper for the Pedagogy Forum. These are somewhat easier to get accepted.

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 ([ECGPS](#) and [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 draws its ancestry directly to our very 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. 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's the NWP Conference?

The first NWP Conference, called NonfictioNow, was held in November 2005 and gathered together some of the most important writers of nonfiction in the country for a kind of Summit. Four hundred attendees helped make it a spectacular event, one that was repeated in 2007. Both conferences were recorded in their entirety and are available on our website. The third conference, now called the [Bedell NonfictioNow Conference](#), is planned for November 4-6, 2010.

What is the Jacobsen Conference?

The [Jakobsen Conference](#) is a local conference, only for University of Iowa graduate students, and 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 NWP hold readings?

Yes, but so far they have been primarily student readings, organized differently from year to year. [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 consisted of Fiction and Poetry. In recent years, nonfiction as a discipline within creative writing has come into its own. Were Paul Engle founding the Writers' Workshop today, he would undoubtedly include Nonfiction in the mix. The person who founded the NWP as such was Carl Klaus, a member of the English Department. At the time he founded the MFA in Nonfiction (it actually started as an MA and Paul Diehl accomplished the switch from an MA to an MFA), the Writers' Workshop was already its own satellite of the English Department, and was pretty much autonomous. Several years ago, the Writers' Workshop formally split from the English Department, but the NWP naturally stayed behind. In many ways, this makes the NWP unique. It is one of the only nonfiction writing programs in the country NOT attached to a creative writing program.

Is the NWP connected with the Writers' Workshop?

No, as explained above. We have plenty of informal ties and Writers' Workshop teachers have previously taught in our program and some students have graduated from both the Writers' Workshop and the NWP.

Can we take classes in the Writers' Workshop?

Not workshops but seminars. This restriction should not be taken as a slap against the NWP; even students within the Writers' Workshop may not switch genres unless they are formally accepted into that specific wing of the program. The Writers' Workshop has summer workshops that are open to all students.

What's the IWP?

The IWP is the [International Writers 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 Writers' 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. You can take seminars offered by the Writers' Workshop, too. You can host a party and invite Workshop students over.

How do I get published? Does NWP have any literature or place where I can get advice on how to publish, or at least on how to submit things? Also, what kind of professional development is provided by the NWP, particularly for those of us who do not have a teaching assistantship?

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 NWP 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 NWP, we occasionally bring in editors and agents to meet students and also organize panels of NWP faculty to answer students' questions on these matters. (The Writers' Workshop also brings agents every year, and NWP students 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 and develop to a certain degree on your own. Opportunities abound if you seek them out. You might volunteer to read for [The Iowa Review](#) or intern at the radio station. If you're an RA, you'll receive experience that you'll most likely be able to use later in publishing or 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 NWP?

You ask. It's not guaranteed. Recommendations should be sincere and aren't simply doled 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. Recommendations are pretty crucial for those of you hoping to teach in the future.

What is the Advisory and Search Committee?

The Advisory Committee, as its name suggests, advises the Director in decisions that affect the NWP. Most important decisions are made in consultation with the committee, which consists of John D'Agata, Patricia Foster, David Hamilton, Robin Hemley, Steve Kuusisto, Susan Lohafer, Jeff Porter, Bonnie Sunstein, and one student representative. The 2009-10 student representative is Kendra Greene. 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 Kendra and she'll try to get it on the agenda.

How do I get things done in the NWP? Do I contact people by e-mail or put things on a bulletin board or what?

It depends what you want to do. If you want to ask a question, announce a party, or something of that sort, feel free to post your announcement/question on the NWPLOCAL listserv at NWPLOCAL@LIST.UIOWA.EDU. This goes to all NWP students and faculty, and a few lingering alumni.

The NWP also has a moderated listserv for announcements that may affect those outside the NWP faculty and student community, such as calls for submissions, readings, and other newsworthy announcements. You can reach this list by sending e-mail to NWP@LIST.UIOWA.EDU. All e-mails to this list go through Maggie 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 NWP list goes out to friends and alumni of the program around the country and beyond.

All NWP students are added to both lists upon joining the program.

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

Yes, we now have an Alumni Association chaired by Hope Edelman. If you'd like to join the association, please contact Hope at hopedel@hotmail.com.

What do I do if I have concerns, complaints or substantive suggestions? Or even not-so-substantive suggestions?

Your best two options are to contact your student representative on the Advisory Committee or speak/e-mail directly with the Program Director.

I feel like I'm not writing enough. Who in NWP should I talk to about jitters/general artistic angst?

It's normal to feel jittery about your writing. Almost everyone feels he/she isn't writing enough, and that includes the NWP faculty. One of the chief difficulties of grad school, and life after grad school, is balancing your writing goals with the necessities of everyday life. If you're teaching, that first semester can be quite difficult as you try to learn to teach—for the first time in many cases—as well as get your writing done. Even if you aren't teaching you might find the adjustment difficult. The best thing to do is to try to create a writing schedule for yourself that is realistic and that you can follow and to make your writing your priority. Self-discipline is the key here. If you're having difficulty beyond this, talk to your peers and your teachers and we'll do our best to get you through the angst.

How much free time do NWP professors have to give us additional counseling? Suppose we have something we want read and commented on—is it kosher to ask a professor to look over it? How busy are you all?

Not much free time, unfortunately. We all give a lot of time to the program, often to the detriment of our own work, so reading work that comes from outside of class should not be taken for granted, though it may on occasion be invited. After all, we too need to continue as writers.

OTHER OPPORTUNITIES

Is there an NWP Library?

Yes, it's tiny now, but it exists in the NWP lounge, 425A 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 425A. In previous years, the library has been maintained by NWP students. Civic-minded NWP-ers are encouraged to continue the tradition.

What is the Museum Writer-in-Residence Program?

Starting in the Fall of 2006, four students from the NWP were selected yearly to serve for three month terms as Writers-in-Residence at the Art Museum. Each writer-in-residence will be given an office for three months and a stipend of \$3000. In return he/she will write an essay on some aspect of the museum for its non-exclusive use. Only current NWP students are eligible.

The current Museum Writers-in-Residence, as of 2009-10 are:

Janet Hendrickson
Kerry Howley
Cheyenne Nimes
Jennifer Percy

What is the Church Street Fellowship?

The Church Street Fellowship is a post-graduate residency open to graduating students in the various MFA Writing Programs on campus. The fellowships have both an administrative track (in which Fellows work for the IWP) and a Teaching Track (in which Fellows teach a course of their own devising to talented undergraduates). While there's no guarantee that the NWP will always get a Fellow, it's likely this will be the case from year to year. Each fellowship will be renewable for up to three years, and Fellows will be offered the opportunity to live rent-free at 111 Church Street for the duration of their fellowship. A modest stipend will be part of the fellowship, between \$10k and 15k, depending on one's track and duties. Guidelines and applications will be available in late spring each year. As envisioned, only current students who are graduating in the spring will be eligible for the fellowship.

What are the Pitch Meetings?

Pitch Meetings were informal gatherings that met several times a semester organized jointly by students and faculty to share ideas on outlets for one's work as well as informal workshops to

pitch ideas to one another. A number of successful essays and articles were pitched at these meetings. In past years, Katherine Jamieson and Robin Hemley have held the pitch meetings at the Sanctuary and elsewhere. Writers such as David Hamilton and Michael Judge (of *The Wall Street Journal*) have joined us, and we have not only focused on literary journalism, but have held sessions on such subjects as literary magazines as well. The pitch sessions are open to writers from other MFA programs as well as the NWP and topics may be proposed. Anyone interested in carrying on this relatively new tradition (as Katherine Jamieson has graduated) should contact the Director.

What are the Graduating Readings?

Students graduating in the Spring traditionally give a celebratory reading in March or April. These events are completely organized by students, though the NWP tries to pitch in with a modest donation. Students in the second year of the NWP traditionally organize the readings. For more information, please contact your student representative.