

Portfolio Components

The Written Component

All students include the documents listed under Professional Development, as well as *either* the documents under The Teaching of Creative Writing *or* the documents under The Art and Craft of Creative Writing, depending on the option they chose.

1. Professional Development
 1. Curriculum Vita
 2. Statement of Purpose
 3. Statement of Aesthetic Philosophy
 4. Sample Cover Letter
 5. Writing Sample
2. The Teaching of Creative Writing
 1. Sample Syllabi
 2. Sample Assignments, Exercises, and Lesson Plans
 3. Statement of Teaching & Workshop Philosophy
3. The Art & Craft of Creative Writing
 1. Craft Essay
 2. Single-Author Study *or* Compendium Review
 3. Statement of Editorial Philosophy

The Oral Defense

Students conduct two portfolio defenses. One defense is always the Mock Interview. The other is *either* a Teaching Demonstration *or* a Public Presentation, depending on the portfolio option the student chose.

1. Professional Development
 - a. Mock Interview
2. The Teaching of Creative Writing
 - a. Classroom Teaching Demonstration
3. The Art & Craft of Creative Writing
 - a. Public Presentation

The Elements of the Written Portfolio

- *Curriculum Vita*: All MFA students should submit a current CV. The CV should follow the formatting and style conventions of an academic CV.
- *Statement of Purpose*: All MFA students should submit a statement of purpose, which outlines their career goals and aspirations. It should be between 500 and 1,000 words in length.
- *Statement of Aesthetic Philosophy*: What is beautiful? What is true? What is the nature of your project as a writer? A statement of aesthetic philosophy is a brief introduction to your work and serves to provide context to potential readers of

your work. It asks you to articulate, in a few words, your goals and intentions as a writer. It should be between 500 and 1000 words.

- *Sample cover letter:* All MFA students should submit a cover letter for a particular (hypothetical or real) position, to be determined in conjunction with their advisor. The cover letter should be an application for the job used in the mock interview portfolio defense.
- *Syllabi:* The student will prepare three distinct syllabi to be selected from among the following options: multi-genre introductory course for high school juniors and seniors (15-week semester); multi-genre introductory course for sophomore-level college students (15-week semester); single-genre introductory course for junior-level college students (15-week semester); single-genre course for advanced undergraduate or graduate students (15-week semester); multi-genre introductory course for community-based organization (10-week, one-day-a-week meetings); single-genre online course for distance learners (10-week course); single-genre course for incarcerated students pursuing a GED (15-week course).
- *Assignments, Exercises, and Lesson Plans:* Each syllabus should include sample assignments and exercises, as well as detailed lesson plans for four 50-minute class periods (excluding workshops). The lesson plans may include assigned readings and discussion questions, lectures, prompts, in- or out-of-class writing exercises, individual or collaborative work, PowerPoints, audio/visual materials, community engagement projects, etc.
- *Statement of Teaching and Workshop Philosophy:* A statement of teaching philosophy is often required as part of the application for a teaching position. The statement is brief (between 750 and 100 words) and articulates the applicant's core beliefs regarding the profession of teaching, as well as the applicant's perspective on creative writing workshops. A well-written statement should be distinctive and memorable as well as consistent with the practices articulated in the syllabi and lesson plans.
- *Craft Essay:* Broadly speaking, a craft essay puts forth an argument about some element of literature, written from the perspective of a creative writer and to the practitioners of creative writing. Well-written craft essays are focused in scope, clear in their analyses, and offer specific examples to support their claims. The best essays are provocative and original, even formally inventive, and lead the readers to think more deeply about their own craft and the practice of it. Craft essays in the portfolio should be between 2,000 and 3,000 words.
- *Single-Author Study:* In conjunction with a member of the MFA faculty, the student selects a single author whose work they will read, analyze, and review. Both the author and the scope of the author's work to be included in the study, as well as appropriate secondary sources, will be agreed upon by the faculty member and the student. The study should not merely be a surface-level overview of the author's work but should identify some element(s) that may be studied with significant depth and be appropriate for graduate-level work. The completed essay should be a minimum of 3,500 words.
- *Compendium Review:* In conjunction with a member of the MFA faculty, the student selects 3 to 5 related works by multiple authors and writes a single review

(an essay of literary criticism) that encompasses the works as related bodies. The completed review should be a minimum of 3,500 words.

- *Statement of Editorial Philosophy*: If a statement of aesthetic philosophy applies to your own work, the statement of editorial philosophy asks you to articulate your perspective on the curation of works created by others. It is the kind of statement you might be asked to give if you were brought on board the editorial staff of a press or literary journal. How would you decide what and whom to publish? What ideas and principles would guide your selections? It should be between 500 and 1000 words.

Oral Defense Guidelines

The oral defenses are conducted by the portfolio advisor and the second evaluator.

- *Mock Interview*: All MFA students must participate in a mock interview, the parameters of which (including the nature of the position to be applied for) are to be determined in conjunction with the student's portfolio advisor. The position need not be one the student actually intends to apply to, but it should be a position to which the student's work in the MFA program is relevant.
 - Following the mock interview, the student will receive feedback on their performance from their advisor and second evaluator.
- *Classroom Teaching Demonstration*: Students who select this option will be asked to teach one full class session for one of the following courses: ENGL 3380, 3381, 3382, 4380, 4381, 4382. The specific content of the lesson should be negotiated between the student, the portfolio advisor, and the faculty whose class the student is conducting the demonstration in. Ideally, the demonstration would include some lecture and some workshop of student writing.
 - Following the teaching demonstration, the student will receive feedback on their performance from their advisor and second evaluator.
- *Public Presentation*: Students who select this option will present their craft paper or their single-author study to faculty and students in a public forum. The presentation of the paper itself will be followed by a question-and-answer period to be led and moderated by the portfolio advisor and second evaluator. The presentation itself should be at least 20 minutes long (Q&A not included).
 - Following the public presentation, the student will receive feedback on their performance from their advisor and second evaluator.