

# The Writing Seminars

The Writing Seminars exists for those students who want to combine imaginative writing with scholarship in the general context of the humanities.

## The Faculty

**John Barth**, Professor Emeritus: fiction.

**Tristan Davies**, Senior Lecturer: fiction.

**Stephen Dixon**, Professor: fiction.

**John T. Irwin**, Decker Professor in the Humanities: criticism and poetry.

**Alice McDermott**, Professor: fiction.

**Jean McGarry**, Professor: fiction.

**David J. Smith**, Elliott Coleman Professor (Chair): poetry.

**Greg Williamson**, Senior Lecturer: poetry.

## Visiting Appointments

**Wayne Biddle**, Visiting Associate Professor: nonfiction.

**Ann Finkbeiner**, Visiting Associate Professor: science writing.

**Anne Frydman**, Visiting Associate Professor: fiction.

**Marc Lapadula**, Visiting Assistant Professor: playwriting/screenwriting.

## Joint Appointments

**Richard A. Macksey**, Professor (The Humanities Center, History of Science and Technology): film studies.

## Undergraduate Programs

The preliminary course in reading and writing is 220.105-106 Introduction to Fiction and Poetry Writing. This is a prerequisite for all majors and others who want to take advanced courses in writing.

### Requirements for a B.A. Degree

(See also General Requirements for Departmental Majors, page 46.)

- Two semesters of introduction to Fiction and Poetry (220.105 and 106).
- Four semesters of English literature (or other literatures with adviser's approval).
- Two semesters of philosophy (The Writing Seminars strongly recommends that its majors select at least one course from the following: Philosophic Classics, Philosophic Problems, Introduction to Greek Philosophy, or Introduction to History of Modern Philosophy).
- Two semesters of history. (May include one course in History of Art or History of Science, Medicine, and Technology. Majors are encour-

aged to take at least one semester of History of Occidental Civilization).

- Demonstrated competence in a foreign language through the intermediate level.
- Eight advanced semesters beyond IFP in The Writing Seminars.

### Requirements for an Undergraduate Writing Seminars Minor

A minor in The Writing Seminars is available to selected undergraduate students who apply to the department's director of undergraduate studies. The requirements for a minor are:

- Two semesters of Introduction to Fiction and Poetry (220.105 & 106).
- One semester of English literature.
- One semester of history.
- One semester of philosophy.
- Demonstrated competence in a foreign language through the intermediate level.
- Five semesters beyond IFP in The Writing Seminars.

## Graduate Programs

The Writing Seminars offers a Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A.) in fiction and poetry. Students admitted to the M.F.A. program enroll in two years of course work and produce a substantial manuscript in the form of a novel or collection of fiction or poetry. M.F.A. candidates are chosen on the basis of a manuscript evaluation, college transcripts, GRE scores and appropriate letters of recommendation that testify to the student's ability and willingness to undertake serious study in the literary arts. Since all students receive financial aid in the form of full tuition and a teaching assistantship, applicants should be able to demonstrate aptitude for college teaching.

The program requires two full years of residency in Baltimore. Students enroll each semester in two courses: a writing workshop in poetry or fiction and a second course in craft or literature taught within the department. Poets study with Dave Smith, John T. Irwin and Greg Williamson, among others. Fiction writers take courses with Alice McDermott, Stephen Dixon, Jean McGarry and Tristan Davies. At the end of the first year, students present half of their theses for faculty review. Successful completion of this work is a requirement for continuation in the second year.

The M.F.A. degree in The Writing Seminars is designed for students committed to the study and practice of literary writing at the highest level of accomplishment. Approximately five poets and six fiction writers will be admitted annually. Our procedure emphasizes genre-informed discussions, faculty conferences, independent readings of various texts, and interactions with visiting writers. Culminating in a book-length thesis, this immersion in literary study is designed to inculcate the habits and skills necessary for a productive writer's life.

Students applying to the M.F.A. program should have a bachelor's degree and sufficient study in a foreign language to demonstrate competence at the second-year college level. Having a second language allows a writer the syntactic flexibility to experiment with the first language, and to develop and refine a literary voice with a comparative understanding of language.

### **M.A. in Writing about Science**

Writing about Science offers a one-year program leading to a Master of Arts degree. The program is centered on a two-semester workshop in which

student writing is criticized for form and substance. The second semester focuses on the production of a thesis in the form of a long essay or series of articles.

The other required course, Science Stories, entails a weekly series of conferences with scientists engaged in cutting edge research. Students learn to interview, analyze and to write accounts of these reports.

In each course, science writing students focus on developing stories and on presenting the science clearly, accurately and seamlessly. The best stories clarify for the general reader the context of a discovery, its technical and social implications, and the degree of confidence scientists have in its accuracy. Although we offer no courses in journalistic practice, students learn the principles as they go and will often publish articles before the year is out.

Science Writing students enroll in three courses per semester. Elective courses can be chosen from, among others, the sciences, public health and the history and philosophy of science. Internships can be arranged. Tuition remission and teaching assistantships are available.

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## **Undergraduate Seminars**

*Permission is required for all courses unless otherwise indicated.*

### **220.105 (H,W) Introduction to Fiction and Poetry: Telling It Straight**

A course in the arts of realist fiction and traditional verse, with readings in American literature, most recently: Eudora Welty, Vladimir Nabokov, Henry James; Donald Justice, Robert Frost, and Gwendolyn Brooks. Students will learn to read as writers; they will study forms in short fiction and metered verse; they will compose short stories and poems of their own. Classes meet two or three times a week with a day set aside for a writing workshop. This course is part one of the yearlong Introduction to Fiction and Poetry, and must be taken before 220.106, IFP II, Telling It Slant. Permission not required. Section limit: 17. McGarry and Teaching Fellows 3 credits

### **220.106 (H,W) Introduction to Fiction and Poetry: Telling It Slant**

A course in the counter-traditional arts of anti-realist fiction, free verse, and the prose poem, with readings in 20th-century world literature (Virginia Woolf, Franz Kafka, Italo Calvino, Francis Ponge, William Carlos Williams, Russell Edson). This course will follow the format of 220.105, IFP I, described above, and should be taken after the completion of 220.105. McGarry and Teaching Fellows 3 credits

### **220.139 (H) Introduction to Playwriting Workshop**

Students tackle the rough magic of writing-and rewriting-for the stage through a practical examination of the basic principles of dramatic action, character, and language. Analysis of works by past masters (e.g., Shakespeare, Molière, Ibsen), as well as contemporary practitioners like Vogel, Churchill, and Guare, supplement writing exercises and assignments. Limit: 12. Lapadula 3 credits

### **220.141-142 (H) Introductory Workshop in Poetry**

Limit: 12. Irwin, Smith, Williamson 3 credits

### **220.145 (H,W) Introduction to Nonfiction: Matters of Fact**

A first course in nonfiction writing, emphasizing how facts are woven into narrative forms to portray real, rather than imagined, people and events. Students will read and discuss classic works, then write frequent papers to refine their own style. Limit: 15. Permission not required. Biddle 3 credits

### **220.146 (H,W) Undergraduate Workshop in Science Writing**

Science writing translates science to nonscientists. Students read, interview scientists, organize, write simply and clearly, rewrite. Students write frequently and to deadlines. Background in science is useful but not essential. Limit: 12. Permission not required. Finkbeiner 3 credits

**220.174 (H) Intersession Creative Writing Workshop**

Satisfactory/unsatisfactory. Limit 12. Permission not required.

Staff 1 credit

**220.191-192 (H) Rudiments of Fiction**

An introductory workshop in the fundamentals of prose fiction. Frequent written exercises in the elements of description, characterization, dialogue, reflection, narrative viewpoint, etc., with supplementary readings in conventional and unconventional short fiction. Limit: 12.

Davies, Dixon, McGarry 3 credits

**220.303-304 (H) Advanced Playwriting**

Intensive workshop development of one play. Repeatable for credit with permission of instructor. Year course, though first semester may be elected separately. Limit: 10.

Lapadula 3 credits

**220.307 (H) 20th-Century Fiction**

A look at major novels, novellas, and short stories written in this century by authors in England, Ireland, Europe, Japan, Africa, and North and South America. Two papers. Seminar setting. Limit: 15.

Frydman 3 credits

**220.308 (H) The Russian Short Story**

A discussion seminar designed as a study of the short story form so well used by many Russian writers. Readings will include works of Pushkin, Gogol, Turgenev, Tolstoy, with heaviest emphasis on works of Chekhov, and Babel. We will look at possible influences on American writers. Limit: 15.

Frydman 3 credits

**220.310 (H) Workshop in Dramatic and Narrative Poetry**

Intensive practical training in writing blank verse for plays and longer narratives, with models taken from Elizabethan plays and from modern dramas by T.S. Eliot, Maxwell Anderson, etc., and from long narrative poems such as Wordsworth's *The Prelude*. Limit: 10.

Irwin 3 credits

**220.316 (H,W) Opinion Writing**

Instructor will assign students topics on which they will write essays. Essays will be discussed in class and critiqued for style, grammar, coherence, and effectiveness. Limit: 17.

Staff 3 credits

**220.319 (H,W) Nonfiction and Nonfact**

An examination of the difference between accuracy and truth in nonfiction writing. We will discuss mutually correct but incongruent biographies, incompatible news reports, hoaxes, and the class's own assignments chosen to elicit disparate statements of fact. Limit: 12. Permission not required.

Biddle 3 credits

**220.321 (H) Narrative Design**

A reading course in the novel: Works by Jane Austen, Honore de Balzac, Ivan Turgenev, Henry James, Thomas

Mann, Joseph Conrad and Elsa Morante. Students will keep a notebook of critical responses to the novels and write a final paper. Limit: 25.

McGarry 3 credits

**220.322 (H) Modernist Stories**

We will read stories with a realist (Joyce), poetic (Virginia Woolf), and fantasist (Kafka) base, and study how the standard elements of fiction: story, point-of-view, tone, character, endings are stated (or transmuted) in each. Students will also write their own stories. Limit: 12.

McGarry 3 credits

**220.323 (H) Describing in Fiction: Colette, Kawabata, Woolf, and Nabokov**

Limit: 12.

McGarry 3 credits

**220.325 (H) Story and Plot**

A course on questions, both practical and theoretical, of plot in the short story. Readings: Chekhov, James, O'Connor, Cheever, Joyce, and Hemingway. Limit: 14.

Davies, McGarry 3 credits

**220.327 (H) Characters**

A study of fictional persons in works by Joyce, W.C. Williams, and Rilke. Students will also write sketches and a story. Limit: 12.

Davies, McGarry 3 credits

**220.329 (H) Forming the Short Story**

Readings in the first hundred years of the short story in the Western tradition. Authors include Hoffmann, Kleist, Pushkin, Gogol, Turgenev, Maupassant, James, Chekhov, and Wharton. Numerous pastiches will be assigned. Limit: 14.

Davies 3 credits

**220.331 (H) Forms of Fiction**

A workshop in several forms of fiction including romance, confession, anatomy, novel and short story. Frequent sketches and three stories. Limit: 14.

Davies 3 credits

**220.332 (H) The 20th-Century Short Story**

Readings of short stories from the beginnings of the 20th-century to the beginnings of the 21st century. Works by Chekhov, Babel, Joyce, Kafka, D. H. Lawrence, Mansfield, Camus, Faulkner, Hemingway, Flannery O'Connor, Cheever, Paley, D. Bartheleme, Solzhenitsyn, and others. Limit: 15.

Frydman 3 credits

**220.336 (H) The Art of the Screenplay**

This course will look at the screenplay as both a literary text and blue-print for production. Several classic screenplay texts will be critically analyzed. Students will then embark on their own scripts. We will intensively focus on character enhancements, creating "believable" dialogue, plot development, conflict, pacing, dramatic foreshadowing, the element of surprise, text and subtext, and visual story-telling. Limit: 12.

Lapadula 3 credits

**220.337 (H) Advanced Screenwriting**

Intensive workshop focuses on methodology: enhancing original characterization, plot development, conflict, story, pacing, dramatic foreshadowing, the element of surprise, text and subtext, act structure, and visual storytelling. Each student is expected to present sections of his/her "screenplay-in-progress" to the class for discussion. Limit: 12.

Lapadula 3 credits

**220.339 (H,W) Science Stories**

The course's model is the scientific press conference. Scientists from different fields talk about their research. Students interview scientists, write short articles. Emphasis is on identifying and structuring a story. Limit 12. Prerequisite: 220.146.

Finkbeiner 3 credits

**220.355-356 (H) The Writing of Fiction**

One-semester workshop in the writing of fiction. Most of the class time will be devoted to discussion of student work. Students will write several short pieces at the beginning of the semester, based on exercises given by the teacher, and then write two to three short stories. Students will also have to revise one of these short stories. Limit: 15.

McDermott 3 credits

**220.359 (H) Genre Fiction and the Short, Short**

Undergraduate fiction workshop. Limit: 12.

Dixon 3 credits

**220.377 (H) Poetic Forms I**

A consideration of a variety of poetic forms and conventions, on a workshop basis. Limit: 12.

Williamson 3 credits

**220.378 (H) Poetic Forms II**

Prerequisite: 220.377. Limit: 12.

Williamson 3 credits

**379.379 Eliot, Crane and Stevens**

An examination of the poetry of Eliot, Crane and Stevens in the context of the modernist movement in the verbal and visual arts. Limit: 15.

Irwin 3 credits

**220.384 (H,W) I, Me, Mine American Autobiography**

A study of the genre's evolution from Benjamin Franklin to Malcolm X. Limit: 12.

Biddle 3 credits

**220.388 (H,W) Science and Society**

A study of the political and economic context of science and technology. Topics include conflict of interest, government oversight, secrecy, and press coverage. Limit: 12.

Biddle 3 credits

**220.394 Faulkner, Hemingway and Fitzgerald** Limit: 15.

Irwin 3 credits

**220.396 (H) Advanced Poetry Workshop**

An advanced poetry workshop. Prerequisite: permission of instructor. Limit: 12.

Irwin, Smith 3 credits

**220.399 (H,W) Hard-Boiled Fiction and Film Noir**

Class will read six novels by Hammett, Chandler, Cain, Burnett, and Woolrich and view seven films made from these novels by Huston, Hawks, Wilder, Dmytryk, Richards, Walsh, and Farrow. Cross-listed with Film and Media Studies. No prerequisites.

Irwin 3 credits lab fee \$40

**220.405 (H) 14th-Century Alliterative Poetry**

A course in the poetry of the 14th-century alliterative revival in which students will read and study Middle English works such as *Patience*, *Cleanness*, *Pearl*, *Gawain* and *the Green Knight*, and *Piers Plowman*. No prerequisites.

Irwin 3 credits

**220.408 (H) Introductory Anglo-Saxon**

Introduction to the Anglo-Saxon language and Anglo-Saxon poetry in works such as *The Battle of Maldon*, *The Seafarer*, *The Wanderer*, *Widsith*, and *The Dream of the Road*. Limit: 15.

Irwin 3 credits

**220.501-502 Independent Study**

Prerequisite: permission of individual faculty member.

**220.507-508 (H) Honors Thesis**

For selected undergraduate majors. By invitation only. Senior Faculty

**220.509-510 Practicing Journalism**

This internship is given in conjunction with local media and must be taken on a satisfactory/unsatisfactory basis. It covers many aspects of the operation of a metropolitan newspaper or magazine or TV station. Admission will be competitive.

Dixon 3 credits

**220.513-514 Internship: Teaching of Writing**

Teaching of writing to students in public or private elementary, middle, junior high or high schools. Interns, under the supervision of a professional teacher, will teach and assist in teaching a course in the writing of fiction or poetry or a combination of both. Interns will make up writing assignments, critique student writings, lead workshops, conduct free writing exercises in class, and comment on students' works.

Dixon

**220.570 Intersession Independent Study****220.572 Intersession Practicing Journalism****220.574 Intersession Internship: Teaching of Writing**

Dixon

**220.594 Summer Practicing Journalism****220.596 Summer Internship: Teaching of Writing**

Dixon

**220.598 Summer Independent Study**

## Graduate Seminars

### 220.603 20th-Century World Literature: First Person

Gertrude Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*; James Joyce, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*; Ford Madox Ford, *The Good Soldier*; Marcel Proust, *Swann's Way*. We will examine technical and thematic questions: how are these "personal" voices constructed; how reliable are they; what kinds of stories can they tell, and how well can they tell them. Students will write an analytic paper and a first-person narrative. Permission required. Limit: 15.  
McGarry

### 220.606 Genre Fiction

Graduate fiction workshop.  
Dixon

### 220.608 20th-Century World Fiction

Stories and novels. Authors to include Kafka, Beckett, Waugh, Flannery O'Connor, Marquez, Malamud, Coetzee, Tanizaki. One oral presentation based on the works being read, in addition to several short sketches. Limit: 12.  
Dixon

### 220.611 Faulkner, Fitzgerald, and Hemingway

This course will study the major writings of Faulkner, Fitzgerald, and Hemingway with the corpus of each writer's work being treated as oblique psychobiography.  
Irwin

### 220.613-614 Workshop in Writing about Science

Intensive seminar, at a professional level, in the writing of factual prose about scientific matters, whether for the general reader or for professional scientists as audience. Weekly writing, editing, and reading assignments. Prerequisites: approved writing samples.  
Finkbeiner

### 220.619 Graduate Poetic Forms I

A study of classifications of poetry and their practical applications.  
Williamson

### 220.621 A Writer's Journal

We will study published writers' diaries as examples of work in progress, record keeping and memoir, and as deliberately crafted works of art. Students will write specimen pages in each mode. (James, Chekhov, Kafka, Woolf,

Rilke, et al.) Open to undergraduates with permission. Limit: 12.  
McGarry

### 220.622 Graduate Poetic Forms II

Prerequisite: 220.619.  
Williamson

### 220.623-624 Fiction Workshop

Prerequisites: approved manuscript. Limit: 12.  
McDermott, Dixon, McGarry

### 220.625-626 Poetry Workshop

Prerequisites: approved manuscript.  
Irwin, Smith

### 220.629 Contemporary American Poetry: A Vision

According to surveys by *Poets & Writers*, 5,000 poets, more or less, have published enough in America since 1945 to be recognized as part of "Contemporary American Poetry." Thus, any selection of poets constitutes an idiosyncratic, and perhaps non-representative, vision of what matters. We will read the work of the following poets with an awareness of events, historical and environmental, which have configured what they think and how they write. Robert Penn Warren, Elizabeth Bishop, James Dickey, Sylvia Plath, Stephen Dunn, Louis Gluck, Ellen Bryant Voigt, Larry Levis, Bruce Weigl, and selected younger poets. Limit: 15.  
Smith

### 220.630 Poetic Modernism: Eliot, Crane, and Stevens

Readings in the poetry and prose of Eliot, Crane, and Stevens with attention paid to origins and effects of modernism in the arts.  
Irwin

### 220.637 Workshop in Formative Genres

An examination of the formative genres in prose fiction and their hybridized descendants in Defoe, Flaubert, Stevenson, Camus, Barnes, Dixon, and others. Written work will focus on conscious borrowing from the less known genres.  
Davies