

Degrees

Requirements

Master of Arts students are required to complete 30 semester hours (typically 10 course credits), which may be done in two ways. All students will take eight courses, normally enrolling in two courses per summer. After earning these credits, students seeking to earn the Master of Arts degree may earn their final course credits either by writing a thesis or by enrolling in two additional courses. Students seeking the Master of Fine Arts degree submit a final thesis after completing four creative writing workshops and four literature courses. No course with a grade lower than B- may be applied toward a degree. The “core” for all Master of Arts students will consist of two courses in English literature, of which one must be Shakespeare; two courses in American literature, of which one must cover literature written before 1900; and at least one course in non-English literature in translation. Beyond that, students are encouraged to strike a balance between courses covering material from before and after 1800. As many as two creative writing workshops may be counted toward the Master of Arts degree.

Additionally, a student must satisfy all financial obligations to the University. The University will neither confer a degree nor provide transcripts to any student or former student who has unsatisfied financial obligations to the University.

Thesis

All Master of Fine Arts students must complete a thesis. This is a substantial creative manuscript: a novel or sustained nonfiction narrative, a collection of short stories or essays, or a collection of poems. The length of the Master of Fine Arts thesis may be anywhere from 80 to 200 pages of prose or 40 to 50 pages of poetry. Master of Arts students may choose to complete a thesis in lieu of a final two courses. The Master of Arts thesis is an original scholarly monograph, 40 to 60 pages in length.

Work on the thesis for either program may begin at any time after required course work has been completed. The thesis is written under the supervision of an advisor, chosen by the candidate and appointed by the Director of the School of Letters, who may be any willing member of the School of Letters Faculty. As the project nears completion, a second reader will be appointed by the Director. When the thesis has been completed and conditionally approved, the candidate for the degree will submit to a one-hour oral examination conducted by the advisor and second reader.

Students engaged in thesis work should register for ENGL 599. Thesis work carries six hours of graduate credit.

Learning Expectations for Master of Fine Arts Program

The School of Letters expects graduates of its Master of Fine Arts program to have developed the following skills and areas of expertise:

1. A rich and articulate understanding of the formal elements of the genre in which they write.
2. Sufficient knowledge of the history and traditions of that genre to be able to place their own work in relation to these.
3. Skilled employment of techniques of intensive revision.
4. Production of polished literary work of publishable quality.
5. Verbal articulation of the purposes of their work, accounting for their artistic choices and explaining the work’s place both within its genre and within their own developing craft.

Learning Expectations for Master of Arts Program

The School of Letters expects graduates of its Master of Arts program to have developed the following skills and areas of expertise:

1. The ability to write clear, professional English prose.
2. Familiarity with the conventions of literary criticism, including its characteristic terminology.
3. Sufficient familiarity with the history of literature in English to be able to place individual works in historical context.
4. Close reading of individual literary texts, with due attention to both content and technique.
5. Identification and location of published scholarship and criticism with which to supplement their reading of a text, and to incorporate the insights gained from these sources into that reading.
6. The ability to combine all these skills in a convincing, well-developed argument about the meaning of a literary work.