

# PROFESSIONAL WRITING (PWRI)

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## **PWRI 4000 Masterworks: Fiction (4 Credits)**

A "masterwork" of fiction is a literary text that has achieved both broad recognition for artistic excellence and an extraordinary level of influence within and beyond its culture of origin. In this course, students will engage such works from an aspiring writer's point of view, drawing on them to develop a deeper understanding of the way structure, style, character, theme, and cultural values work together in the most powerful fiction works of modern times. Discussions and writing assignments will focus on how exposure to the fiction of different countries can help us see our own literary and cultural assumptions with fresh eyes.

## **PWRI 4001 Portfolio Foundations (0 Credits)**

Master's and certificate-seeking students in Professional Creative Writing must register for and take Portfolio Foundations in their first quarter in the program. Students must complete the course and assessment-related tasks, including writing their learning goals, in order to pass the course. Non-completion of this required course will result in a no-pass grade on student transcripts.

## **PWRI 4020 Writing the Short Story (4 Credits)**

The dramatic elements of the short story are distinct from any other form of fiction. This workshop is for writers who plan to seriously study the form of the contemporary short story, and to apply their learning to their own projects. Students focus equally on reading published works and writing/ revising an original short story, as well as discussing aspects of publishing. Weekly writing exercises, readings, and workshops of student stories will be combined to provide the most direct, effective training in this dynamic form. (It is strongly encouraged that students take PWRI 4010 Writing Fiction: Foundational Concepts, Skills, and Practice prior to this course.)

## **PWRI 4030 Writing the Novella (4 Credits)**

This course concentrates on the craft of writing a form of fiction that combines the intense thematic focus of short stories and the complex character development typical of the novel. The novella offers writers the opportunity to create an extended story without juggling the complexities of multiple points of view, intricate plot lines, and difficult-to-manage back stories. Typically concerned with a character's emotional and personal development rather than the interaction of many characters in a complicated social context, the novella usually takes place in one location or in a larger but well-defined setting. Novellas are common in genres such as mystery and science fiction, and because of their strong focus and relative brevity, they are widely considered the perfect form for adaptation to the stage, film, and television.

## **PWRI 4100 Masterworks: Creative Nonfiction (4 Credits)**

A "masterwork" of creative nonfiction is a literary text that has achieved both broad recognition for artistic excellence and an extraordinary level of influence within and beyond its culture of origin. In this course, students will engage such works from an aspiring writer's point of view, drawing on them to develop a deeper understanding of the way structure, style, character, theme, and cultural values work together in the most powerful works of modern creative nonfiction. Includes popular sub-genres such as narrative nonfiction, memoir, the personal essay, travel writing, humor, criticism, nature and science writing, literary journalism, and experimental forms. The primary focus will be fundamentals and techniques of creative nonfiction to be used in virtually every sub-genre. Discussions and writing assignments will focus on how exposure to the creative nonfiction of different countries can help us see our own literary and cultural assumptions with fresh eyes.

## **PWRI 4110 Writing Creative Nonfiction (4 Credits)**

This course concentrates on the craft of writing nonfiction, the art of writing the literature of real life, "true stories, well told." It includes popular subgenres such as narrative nonfiction, memoir, the personal essay, travel writing, humor, criticism, nature and science writing, and literary journalism. The primary focus will be dynamic storytelling techniques to be used in virtually every sub-genre of creative non-fiction. Students will later apply these skills in courses devoted to various nonfiction sub-genres, such as personal essay and memoir. Class discussions will emphasize essential writing skills and professional approaches to research, taking advantage of a supportive workshop format. Students will express their ideas about both craft and content, and workshop their writing with a view toward professional publication.

## **PWRI 4120 Writing the Personal Essay (4 Credits)**

The author Dinty Moore describes the personal essay as being for writers who want to capture a bit of life, producing a written record of their better thoughts. Like the short story in fiction, the personal essay is one of the original forms of creative nonfiction. It is a lively form that has tracked through the ages—from ancient archetypes to the school of Enlightenment essayists, 19th-century realists and romantics to robust 20th-century conventionalists, and on to Digital Age innovators where it deeply informs blogs, social media posts, and other contemporary writings. Conventions of the craft are covered in this course, but students will not be expected to embrace creativity-stifling rules. The work will be hands-on, with workshoping that pushed students to pursue new pathways and fresh approaches in their personal essay writing.

## **PWRI 4130 Writing the Memoir (4 Credits)**

The memoir is as popular as ever – tales of persistence and overcoming odds grip us like no other. Students in this course will concentrate on the craft of writing the memoir, a work of creative nonfiction rooted in and focused on the writer's memories. Unlike personal essays, memoirs foreground the writer's past to illuminate the complex development of understanding that past. This aim results in works that are typically book-length, in which the writer applies the techniques of creative nonfiction to describe and make observations and draw conclusions from personal experience. Class discussions emphasize essential writing skills, techniques for exploring and recording memories, and professional approaches to the research required to make the past come to life for the reader. Taking advantage of a supportive workshop format, students will share their ideas about craft and content with a view toward book publication.

**PWRI 4200 Masterworks: Poetry (4 Credits)**

Poetry is the most ancient of the written arts, so there are thousands of poetry masterworks—far too many to be usefully studied in a single course. That's why this course focuses on the one resource that every poet must develop in order to write well: a personal "poetic lineage." Students will learn how to explore the work of other poets and identify significant parts of their poetic lineages. They will also learn how to use that exploration to develop, expand, and refine their own poetic lineage, which will shape and nourish their poetry over a lifetime.

**PWRI 4210 Writing Poetry (4 Credits)**

This course is a combination of readings in poetry and poetics, brief lectures, and open discussions focused on the interplay of image, metaphor, rhythm, emotions and ideas in the expressive form of writing called poetry. Students will learn to tap the imaginative sources that all creative writing springs from and flow those energies into poetic form. The instructor will provide examples to illustrate successful uses of key poetic concepts and help students explore, through a range of open-ended exercises, various approaches to expressing themselves fully and clearly. Students will also develop practical critiquing skills with the aim of helping themselves and their classmates write with greater subtlety and power.

**PWRI 4220 Writing Traditional Verse and Contemporary Song Lyrics (4 Credits)**

This course focuses on the shared building blocks of traditional formal poetry and contemporary song lyrics: meter and rhyme, repetition, and verse/stanza structure. Beginning with simple constructions like limericks and nursery rhymes, and moving swiftly into more sophisticated verse organizations like the sonnet, the villanelle, the ballad, and the popular song, students will explore a variety of existing examples, then produce their own pieces that follow (or break) the established rules of each form. The course will take a workshop format, in which students will generate, share, and receive feedback on their formal experiments; the focus will be on developing a more finely tuned ear for form, and on deploying "traditional" poetic techniques in relevant, radical, and inventive ways. (NOTE: The ability to sing or play an instrument is NOT required for this course; when discussing and writing songs, students will focus on the texts only, not the harmonic/melodic elements of songwriting craft.)

**PWRI 4230 Writing Improvisational Verse and Prose Poetry (4 Credits)**

This course focuses on the writing of improvisational verse and prose poems, certainly the most popular forms of poetry today both in America and around the world. The course will explore a wide variety of approaches to non-metrical verse and examine how poetry sounds when it appears in prose form. Using a workshop format, students will generate, share, and receive feedback on their poetic experiments, with an emphasis on developing a more finely tuned ear for cadence and phrasing. Robert Frost famously wrote that writing what he called "free verse" was like "playing tennis with the net down." This course aims to demonstrate why Frost was wrong.

**PWRI 4300 Masterworks of Stage and Screen (4 Credits)**

A "masterwork" of drama is a play or screenplay that has achieved both broad recognition for artistic excellence and an extraordinary level of influence within and beyond its culture of origin. In this course, students will engage such works from an aspiring writer's point of view, drawing on them to develop a deeper understanding of the way structure, style, character, imagery, theme, and cultural values work together in some of the most powerful dramatic works of modern times. The course will also explore the impact of stagecraft, the needs of actors, and vision of directors on the way a play or film is developed. Discussions and writing assignments will focus on how exposure to the drama of different countries can help us see our own literary and cultural assumptions with fresh eyes.

**PWRI 4310 Playwriting (4 Credits)**

In this course, students analyze short and full-length plays, compose experimental exercises, write drafts of short plays, evaluate each other's writing, and revise a short play to develop the skills required to write for the stage. Students learn key theatrical skills and terms as they analyze varied plot structures, create vivid characters, and write realistic and stylized dialogue. Students examine theatre's collaborative process, and model possible relationships between environment, stagecraft, and the ways playwrights shape their texts. Scripts read for class discussions illustrate uses of key dramatic techniques while suggesting various approaches to theme, genre, character, and structure. Students develop practical critiquing skills while incorporating colleagues' feedback into script revision, with the aim of crafting compelling plays that appeal to both theater professionals and theatrical audiences.

**PWRI 4320 Writing the Original Screenplay (4 Credits)**

This course provides a comprehensive overview of the industry standard elements of screenwriting. Through readings, film viewings, written analyses, online discussions, and creative exercises, students will learn how to write original stories for a visual medium, use prescriptive filmic story structure ("screenplay formatting"), and identify key elements that make a script successful. With these tools in hand, students will create the first act of an original feature-length screenplay, develop an outline ("script treatment") for the entire film, and finish the course prepared to complete the project and present it to the film-making industry.

**PWRI 4330 Writing for Personal Performance (4 Credits)**

This course focuses on writing texts that the authors aim to perform themselves, including spoken word poetry, storytelling, one-person plays, presentations in TED Talk and other formats, and even standup comedy. Using a variety of readings and recorded performances, brief lectures, and writing assignments, the course helps writers develop the skills required to shape their work for public performance. Students learn to distinguish between their "page voice" and their "performance voice" so that they can produce more effective texts for performance. Using a supportive workshop format and class discussions, students will apply practical critiquing skills with the aim of helping themselves and their classmates create compelling performance pieces that appeal to audiences of all kinds.

**PWRI 4340 Writing the Adapted Screenplay (4 Credits)**

Much of Hollywood's source material in recent decades was not written originally for the big screen – it was first created and popularized in another medium, like a book, memoir, an article, a video game, or even an album. Clearly, the marketplace has a proven demand for adaptations. In this course, we examine the adaptation of literary and nonfiction works and the film interpretations of each work. This class will explore the principal development questions involved in a successful adaptation, look at the legalities of securing the rights to a property, and dive into the specifics behind pitching an adaptation. Students will study the main developmental issues of adaptation and write a range of short adaptations across multiple mediums, plus create a pitch and a first act for a feature project. The course also aims to enhance the critical skill of students as well as their craft abilities.

**PWRI 4410 Writing and Healing (4 Credits)**

In this course, students evaluate theoretical and practical aspects of written expression as it relates to healing. Students analyze foundational concepts of healing through the lens of contemporary creative literature. Students apply these concepts to their writing practice through journaling processes, written therapeutic strategies, and poetic techniques aimed at cultivating self-awareness and personal growth. Through a course-long inquiry into the concept of "healing," students will learn to articulate how their writing processes enhance their writerly identities and develop a practical set of therapeutic, expressive techniques for everyday use.

**PWRI 4430 Writing for Television (4 Credits)**

This course provides an overview of two important television writing skills: the creation of a pilot for an original series and the writing of a "spec," which is writing an original idea for a television show that currently exists (a requirement in the pursuit of employment as a TV writer). Students will intensively study the structure, character build, template, theme, and franchise involved in the development of TV shows (both half hour and hour long), as well as learn about the current business of TV. Since this is an intensive writing and workshoping course, students will be required to submit their work to and to give constructive criticism to their fellow writers. Prerequisite: PWRI 4320 Writing the Screenplay.

**PWRI 4500 The Writing Life: Concepts, Practices, and Professionalism (4 Credits)**

This course aims to provide aspiring writers a basic knowledge of the creative and professional tools they will need to succeed, whatever their individual goals or life situation. This course tackles questions and challenges common to all writers at one time or another. Primary considerations include: What exactly does it mean to be a writer? What are my motivations for wanting to write? How can I identify and prioritize writing projects? How do I move my writing projects forward from concept to completion? These primary challenges require writers to narrow their creative focus and to cultivate habits of thought and behavior that sustain creative efforts in a world full of distractions, obligations, and competing claims on their time.

**PWRI 4510 Literary Genres for Writers (4 Credits)**

This course deals with the four core literary genres: Drama, Fiction, Creative Nonfiction, and Poetry. These genres are distinguished from one another in two ways: first, by the relative weight each genre gives to the key cross-genre elements, and second, by each genre's distinctive approach to structure and form. Within each genre, subgenres have evolved over time, each recognizable by particular patterns, each playing by a distinct set of rules. Whether writing within or across or even against those rules, writers need to understand how literary genres work in order to write effectively. This course aims to foster that understanding and prepare students to shape their writing in ways that align with their creative vision. Recommended prerequisite: PWRI 4500.

**PWRI 4520 The Writers Workshop (4 Credits)**

"A writer writes" is the universal mantra of the writing life, but one of the critical steps in developing a work in progress is getting constructive feedback. Unfortunately, all too often, a writer ends up disappointed because the feedback received is superficial, too polite, or little more than proofreading. This course teaches students to workshop in a meaningful way, responding to content, focus, coherence, and organizational issues. Students learn to elicit more feedback from their workshop colleagues, demonstrating the relationship between reader and writer. The class will explore a variety of genres, and each student produces short exercises and longer projects that demonstrate a grasp of various aspects of the writing craft.

**PWRI 4600 Breaking the Chains of Genre: An Exploration of Hybrid Literatures (4 Credits)**

Hybrid genre, cross-genre, multi-genre, or mixed genre literature is literature that combines writing from different genres to create one text. The text created might be fragmentary or unified; it might be coherent or disjointed. Cross-genre literature is not new, but contemporary authors are more frequently pushing on the boundaries between genres in their creative and scholarly writing to produce rich, open, polyphonic texts as a result. How has cross-genre literature been deployed in different literary and cultural traditions? What advantages does cross-genre literature provide for the writer and for the reader? This course will explore the ways in which authors have experimented with mixing genres in different cultural traditions and writing disciplines as well as how this genre-bending has enabled them to accomplish various creative, narrative, and rhetorical purposes. Recommended Prerequisites: PWRI 4500 and PWRI 4510.

**PWRI 4701 Topics in Literature (4 Credits)**

This course is designed to provide a deep dive into advanced topics of special interest to creative writers. Topics may range from close studies of established masterworks to examining the latest trends in developing genres or wrestling with several works by living masters.

**PWRI 4702 Topics in Writing (4 Credits)**

This course is designed to provide a deep dive into advanced topics of special interest to creative writers. Topics may range from close studies of compositional techniques used in established masterworks to examining the development of new genre forms or wrestling with texts whose approaches are drawn from multiple genres.

**PWRI 4901 Professional Creative Writing Capstone Project (4 Credits)**

The Creative Capstone Project provides students the opportunity to apply the knowledge and skills gained through the degree program to create a culminating project consisting of three major parts: a creative core (fiction, creative nonfiction, poetry, or some other kind of creative writing); a researched analysis essay exploring an idea, issue, or problem that is closely related to the creative core (however, the essay is not about the creative core); and a reflection essay placing the creative core and the analysis essay in the context of the student's coursework at University College and his or her writing goals for the future. The student will select an appropriate Capstone advisor who is knowledgeable in the field of study to work closely with and whom can guide the project. Please see the Creative Capstone Project Guidelines for additional details. Note: For the creative core, students should not attempt a genre they have not written in at least one of their University College courses. Prerequisites: a Capstone Proposal that has been approved by both the Capstone Advisor and the Academic Director, acceptance as a degree candidate, and completion of at least 40 quarter-hours (including all core courses) with a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or better.

**PWRI 4917 Pathways to Publication (4 Credits)**

All writers of every medium considering a professional career path must not only learn their craft but learn to navigate the publishing and production worlds. This course discusses the relationships between agents, editors of books, journals and magazines, literary managers, artistic directors, publishing houses (both big and boutique), and booksellers, as well as production companies. Additionally, students determine ways to cultivate relationships with those industry professionals and find opportunities (such as contests and fellowships) with the goal of submission and acquisition. This course also covers the research required for target-rich submission campaigns, the process of manuscript submission and acquisition, as well as learning copyright and contractual basics. Students will learn how to generate marketing materials that aid in the submission process, across all mediums, and how to develop an author platform, using branding and social media opportunities, that cultivates a professional, public persona critical to connecting with their audience. Ultimately, students consider how to build a writing community that will provide the foundation for support, education, and networking, which is vital for success. Recommended Prerequisite: PWRI 4500. Note that this course should be completed before enrolling in either the PWRI Portfolio Capstone or Creative Capstone Project.

**PWRI 4920 Portfolio Capstone (4 Credits)**

The Portfolio Capstone course provides students the opportunity to reflect upon the work they have done throughout their graduate studies at University College and synthesize their learning. Students in the Portfolio Capstone produce deliverables that include: (1) a thorough annotation of their portfolio, a process requiring critical and creative thinking about their educational experience, and (2) a pinnacle project that identifies, analyzes, and elaborates significant themes in their program experience, evaluates their accomplishments, connects their coursework to their professional goals, and assesses those goals in the context of their chosen field.

**PWRI 4980 Internship (0-4 Credits)**

The PWRI internship is designed to offer students a practical educational experience in an industry-related setting. The internship is an individualized learning experience that is directly related to the knowledge and skills covered in the PWRI master's degree program. Students are responsible for finding their own internship site and proposing their internship ideas. University College sends notification to all PWRI students if they hear of internship possibilities. Students may also work through the DU career center to explore opportunities for internship experiences. The objectives, activities, responsibilities, and deliverables for the internship are defined in a training plan that is developed by the student jointly with the internship supervisor at the sponsoring organization. The training plan is approved by the academic director. Prerequisites: The student must be unconditionally accepted in the PWRI degree program, have completed a minimum of 28 hours of graduate coursework, including at least two core courses, and have earned a GPA of 3.0 or better. Enrollment must be approved by the academic director.

**PWRI 4991 Independent Study (1-4 Credits)**

This is an advanced course for students wishing to pursue an independent course of study. The student must be accepted in a degree program, have earned a grade point average of 3.0 or better, have obtained the approval of the department director, and have completed the Independent Study form and filed the form with all appropriate offices before registering for the independent study. Independent Study is offered only on a credit basis and only for degree candidates.