

PROFESSIONAL WRITING (PWRI)

Courses

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 4010 Writing Fiction: Foundational Concepts, Skills, and Practice (4 Credits)

This course concentrates on the craft of writing fiction, which includes popular subgenres such as literary fiction, science fiction, fantasy, suspense, mystery, historical fiction, satire, romance, and more. The primary focus will be fundamental concepts and techniques common to all subgenres of fiction. Class discussions will emphasize essential writing skills and professional approaches to research (almost all fiction writing requires some level of 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 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: Foundational Concepts, Skills, and Practice (4 Credits)

This course concentrates on the craft of writing nonfiction, which includes popular subgenres 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. Students will later apply these classic skills in courses devoted to various nonfiction sub-genres, such as 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 workshopping that pushed students to pursue new pathways and fresh approaches in their personal essay writing.

PWRI 4130 Writing the Memoir (4 Credits)

This course concentrates on the craft of writing the memoir, which includes popular subgenres such as coming of age, spiritual development, addiction/recovery, food writing, travel adventures, accounts of career failure and success, and stories of surviving various kinds of trauma. The primary focus will be on applying fundamentals and techniques of creative nonfiction to the writer's personal experience. Class discussions will emphasize essential writing skills, techniques for exploring and recording memories, and professional approaches to research. Taking advantage of a supportive workshop format, students will express their ideas about both craft and content and to workshop their writing with a view toward professional publication.

PWRI 4140 Natural Science and Literature (4 Credits)

This class will explore the practice – and art – of nonfiction writing about science and nature. Students will begin with an examination of influential historical works and move into contemporary writing on science and nature. The class will be a sort of journey, from ruminative essays on the individual in nature to impassioned (and science-heavy) explorations of ecosystem destruction to exuberant studies of love and sex in the animal kingdom. Students will seek to understand the narrative and linguistic machinery that make these pieces of writing “tick” through discussions, short writing exercises, brief reviews, and workshop participation. This course will also address the development of students' own writing. Specifically, students will seek understanding of the writing techniques that can be used to make the complex fields of science and nature accessible subjects of writing intended for mainstream or literary publications. The key challenge will be to find a topic, a format (memoir, essay, narrative journalism), a structure, and a voice suitable for creating a single, sustained piece of writing that each student will devise, draft, workshop, and polish throughout the course.

PWRI 4200 Masterworks: Poetry (4 Credits)

A “masterwork” of poetry 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 form, structure, style, figurative language, theme, and cultural values work together in some of the most powerful poetic works of modern times. Discussions and writing assignments will focus on how exposure to the poetry of different countries can help us see our own literary and cultural assumptions with fresh eyes.

PWRI 4210 Writing Poetry: Foundational Concepts, Skills, and Practice (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: Drama (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 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 Writing Drama: Foundational Concepts, Skills, and Practice (4 Credits)

This course uses readings of dramatic texts, brief lectures, writing assignments, and the performance of those writings to develop the skills required to write for the stage. Students learn the essentials of drama, including the design of effective plots, the creation of vivid characters, and the writing of performable dialogue. Students also explore the effects of drama's necessarily collaborative process and varieties of stagecraft on the way playwrights shape their texts. Examples illustrate successful uses of key dramatic techniques and help students explore various approaches to expressing themselves fully and clearly through a range of open-ended exercises. Students also develop practical critiquing skills with the aim of helping themselves and their classmates create compelling plays that appeal to both theater professionals and theatrical audiences.

PWRI 4320 Writing the Screenplay (4 Credits)

Screenwriting is the art of telling a story in images. This class focuses on elements of form and structure, with particular emphasis on format, character development, plot and dialogue. Movies are studied to illustrate genre, fixed and fluid characters, tragic flaw, the dynamic of relationships, development of protagonist and antagonist, and other screen elements. Numerous in-class exercises, discussions, workshops and screenings enable students to find the dramatic essence of stories, and write a detailed film synopsis, treatment, and the first act of a feature-length screenplay.

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 Literature to Film (4 Credits)

In this course, students will examine the adaptation of literary works into films. Through close study of modern literary works and the film interpretations of each, the course will focus on the challenging process of transitioning from one narrative form to another. The course aims at enhancing the critical skill of students as readers and viewers of film as well as their creative abilities as writers. This is accomplished through a combination of close reading, study of the visual vocabulary of film, and scripting workshops designed to highlight the considerations that go into the crafting of film scripts based on previously published works.

PWRI 4410 Writing and Healing (4 Credits)

Many writers attest to the emotional, spiritual, and even physical benefits of writing. In this course, students will explore a variety of ways in which written expression can help them navigate the human journey. Students learn leading theoretical models of journal and poetry therapy (interactive bibliotherapy), assess poems based on their usefulness in personal growth contexts, and participate in experiential discussions and writing exercises. Students focus on the writing and healing process rather than their own self-explorations of healing through writing. Students submit a portfolio of reflection writings, as well as complete a final paper on a writing topic that intersects with a personal growth experience or interest. Cross-listed with MALS 4410 Writing and Healing.

PWRI 4420 Literary Translation: Crossing Borders to Enrich Your Own Writing (4 Credits)

Note: No previous formal language study or fluency in a second language is required. Translation is essential for a genuine exchange of ideas between people of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Besides being an essential service for cultural understanding, literary translation is also a form of creative writing. This course includes readings in the history, theory, and practice of literary translation, along with analysis of sample translations by leading translators. Students will also practice translation of literary texts, including poetry and short works of fiction and nonfiction. While increasing the student's awareness of the art of literary translation as an end in itself, the course also demonstrates translation's value in enriching a writer's development in his or her own work. Students should have basic skills in the source language of their choice, but fluency is not required. Cross-listed with MALS 4420 Literary Translation.

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.

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. Periodically, guest authors with different writing specialties join the class to discuss the writing experience and shed light on the workshop process.

PWRI 4540 Children's Literature: From Picture Books to Books for Young Adults (4 Credits)

This course is an introductory study of all levels of children's literature for the student who is interested in literature, the student who is planning to teach, and for those who are or will be parents. It introduces students to types, genres, and varieties of literature for reading to children as well as reading by children. The main focus of this course will be to rediscover the joys and wonders of reading as a child and young adult and to approach the literature selected not as “just a kid's book,” but as literature with definable quality standards and offer a firm foundation for critical and analytical discussions.

PWRI 4550 From Romance to Realism (4 Credits)

This course explores novels produced during the period when widespread social, political, and cultural upheaval in Britain generated the continuum, from Romance to Realism, which even today provides the lens through which readers view most genres of fiction. The French Revolution, war with France, the expansion of empire, naval dominance, massive political reforms, and ongoing debates about women created a range of tensions, gaps, and overlaps between these two categories that creative writers still live with today. The course emphasizes both the literature itself and the cultural forces from which the literature developed, with an eye toward helping student writers understand the audience expectations that remain in force today.

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: earned a C or better in MALS 4915 Research in the Humanities or PWRI 4917 Professional Research for Creative Writers, 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. A final grade of B- or better is required to pass.

PWRI 4903 Creative Capstone Seminar (4 Credits)

The Creative Capstone Seminar is a graduate seminar in which students 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. Note: For the creative core, students should not attempt a genre they have not written in at least one of their University College courses. The seminar is dependent upon students thoughtfully commenting on one another's work under the facilitation of the seminar instructor. Consistent, high-quality engagement in this process is essential. The course is structured to guide students through both the creative and analytical writing processes, with the instructor providing intensive feedback on the capstone process and papers. Students are responsible for generating the course content through ongoing discussion of and peer feedback on the capstone process and individual work, as well as the analysis and contextualization of focused student creative work and papers within the wider degree field of study. Students will professionally and academically communicate their creations and findings through written work and oral presentation. Students must have: acceptance as a degree candidate; completed at least 40 quarter-hours (including all foundations courses) with a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or better, and, earned a B- or better in MALS 4020 Graduate Research & Writing, MALS 4915 Research in the Humanities, or PWRI 4917 Professional Research for Creative Writers. A final grade of B- or better must be earned in this course to meet degree requirements. Students must complete the Capstone Seminar in one quarter; no incomplete grades are assigned.

PWRI 4917 Professional Research for Creative Writers (4 Credits)

This course examines two types of literary fieldwork that all writers who hope to publish must become proficient in. One, navigating the business landscape of the publishing world: agents, editors, publishing houses, submissions, booksellers, author platforms, copyright issues, contract basics, and more). Two, developing skills in content-oriented research to expand the boundaries of a narrative by refining character development, broadening the landscape of setting, and anchoring historical situations in the realities of the period.

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. Students must complete the Portfolio Capstone with a grade of B- or better.

PWRI 4980 Internship (1-4 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.

PWRI 4992 Directed Study (1-4 Credits)

This is an advanced course for students wishing to pursue a directed 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. Directed Study is offered only on a for-credit basis.