

# MFA Program Information

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## SECTION ONE

### Handbooks

The Graduate College Catalog contains basic information pertinent to all graduate students. The Catalog can be found online at the Graduate College website, or on the MFA website under **Student Resources** ([www.english.txstate.edu/mfa/Resources.html](http://www.english.txstate.edu/mfa/Resources.html)).

The Graduate College's **Guide to Preparing and Submitting a Thesis or Dissertation** contains a comprehensive guide to thesis requirements. (Please see [www.gradcollege.txstate.edu/Thesis-Diss\\_Info.html](http://www.gradcollege.txstate.edu/Thesis-Diss_Info.html).)

All the information that you need is either downloadable or linked on the **Student Resources** page of the MFA website.

### Coursework

Each graduate course counts for three hours of course credit in a semester. *Note: Students cannot take undergraduate courses and use them for credit in their graduate degree.*

To graduate in three years, if you DO have an assistantship, plan to take five nine-hour semesters and one six-hour semester in the spring of your final year to complete a total of 51 hours. You must take nine hours each semester during your first year, since you need 18 graduate English hours to be considered for a TA position.

If you do NOT have an Assistantship, plan to take four nine-hour semesters, and two six-hour semesters to complete 48 hours in three years.

If you enroll in summer courses, you must pay out-of-state tuition, unless you have Texas resident status or work for the English department as an IA/TA.

If you apply for financial aid, please follow the 2011 guidelines, which require you to take nine hours per semester in order to qualify for full financial aid for tuition and fees. If you do not register for nine hours, your financial aid for tuition and fees will be prorated.

For financial aid information, please go to this link: <http://www.finaid.txstate.edu/graduate.html>.

### Required Courses

- **12 degree hours** (four sections) of workshop (ENG 5315). After two workshops, you may take a break to apply what you've learned to your work. Then take one workshop during your second year and one workshop during your third year. (*Note: No student may repeat a workshop with any permanent MFA fiction or poetry faculty member. No fiction student may take a workshop with more than one Endowed Chair holder. **No exceptions.***)
- **3 degree hours** of Form & Theory of Fiction (ENG 5320) or Poetry (ENG 5322) taken in your first year.
- **3 degree hours** of Literary Techniques (ENG 5395), also known as Problems in Language and Literature courses. (*Note: Literary Techniques may be repeated twice for six Cognate credits.*)
- **15 degree hours** in Literature courses, which may include six hours of ENG 5312, **Front Porch**

**Journal**, and three to six hours of ENG 5323, Studies in Autobiography and Memoir. (*Note: Students may take ENG 5323 twice, provided they take it with two separate instructors.*)

- **6 degree hours** of thesis work (ENG 5399A and ENG 5399B)
- **9 degree hours** in an Open Cognate. Six hours may be 5395 seminars.

### **Cognate**

An "Open Cognate" is composed of nine graduate hours.

If you want to take a course for your cognate outside of the English department, you need to first get permission from the MFA Director. Then you must get permission from the instructor of the graduate class you hope to take in another department. If you do not request and receive permission, the hours will not count toward your MFA degree.

## **SECTION TWO**

### **Thesis**

Read and follow all instructions provided by the Graduate College for preparing your thesis. It is your responsibility to do so. Please do it before you consult with your thesis director or the MFA office.

All information is at the following link: [http://www.gradcollege.txstate.edu/Thes-Diss\\_Info.html](http://www.gradcollege.txstate.edu/Thes-Diss_Info.html)

The MFA thesis is a book-length work of literary merit. While individual theses will vary in length, the program has established guidelines of 50 or more pages for poetry, 100-125 pages for short fiction, and 150 pages and up for a novel. 200 pages will be sent to your adjunct reader; of course, your thesis novel may be longer. If your complete novel is 250 pages or fewer, we will send the entire novel. Students must complete at least three semesters of coursework before requesting a thesis director on March 1 of their fourth semester. Do not request to work with a faculty member as your thesis director prior to March 1 of your fourth semester in the program, and do not make a commitment with a faculty member to serve as your thesis director until that time.

You must register for thesis credit (ENG 5399A or 5399B) in every semester that you work with your thesis director, and you must be registered for Thesis B during your final semester. Otherwise, you will not graduate.

In order to enroll for Thesis 5399A, first ask an MFA faculty member to serve as your thesis director. Again, do not do this until March 1 of your fourth semester in the program. MFA faculty members may direct a maximum of four thesis students per year. If a faculty member is unable to serve as your thesis director for any reason, you will have to ask another faculty member to serve as your thesis director. Once the faculty member has accepted the offer to direct your thesis, tell the MFA Coordinator who your thesis director will be, then email **Taylor Cortesi** at [tc1224@txstate.edu](mailto:tc1224@txstate.edu) to ask for the course code (CRN) you will need to enroll in ENG 5399A. Taylor will approve your enrollment in Thesis A and give you the CRN to register.

In your fifth semester in the program – i.e., your first semester of thesis work – you may select your second and third thesis committee readers from the English faculty, which *may*, but does not have to, include one other MFA faculty member. (*Note: One of your committee members must be from the greater English department faculty, i.e., non-MFA.*)

Everyone on your thesis committee must be a graduate faculty member. **An Endowed Chair holder cannot direct a thesis nor serve on a thesis committee.**

At this time, you must complete the Proposed Research form, which you will find on the **Student Resources** page of the MFA website. *Your MFA student thesis proposal form must include only your thesis title and a description of it -- novel, story collection, or poetry collection.* Once your three committee members have signed the form, please submit it to Karen Bryson. She will have the English Department's Chair sign it, and then she will send it to the Graduate College.

At the beginning of your final semester, remind Taylor Cortesi that you need to take Thesis B, and include the name of your thesis director in your email. Taylor will issue you a course code (CRN) to enroll for ENG 5399B.

Enroll for six thesis hours in your final two semesters. If possible, begin your first thesis semester with a virtually complete draft of your thesis manuscript. Then revise your manuscript in consultation with your thesis director.

Make sure to use the Graduate College's new templates for preparing your thesis manuscript! You may find a link to their templates page under the **Student Resources** page of the MFA program website, or at [http://www.gradcollege.txstate.edu/t\\_d\\_tmplt.html](http://www.gradcollege.txstate.edu/t_d_tmplt.html).

### **MFA Thesis Faculty**

**Fiction:** Doug Dorst, Jennifer duBois, Tom Grimes, Debra Monroe

**Poetry:** Cyrus Cassells, Roger Jones, Cecily Parks, Kathleen Peirce, Steve Wilson

### **Adjunct Thesis Faculty**

The adjunct thesis faculty is a collection of established, published writers who have agreed to read student thesis manuscripts. An adjunct reader of your choosing will critique your entire thesis, once, via mail. Ask the MFA Coordinator to contact your first choice by September 20th for spring graduation, or by April 15th for winter graduation.

Most adjunct faculty are available for thesis reading; however, on occasion, someone may not be able to read theses that year, in which case you must select a "backup" adjunct reader. All contact with adjunct faculty members is conducted through the MFA office, not directly by the student. Do not request a writer who is not on our adjunct faculty list, nor contact any writer who is not on our list and ask him/her to serve as your thesis reader. If you do not wish to have an adjunct faculty member critique your thesis, inform the MFA office in writing.

### **Adjunct Faculty**

**Fiction faculty:** Lee K. Abbott, Gina Apostol, Rick Bass, Kevin Brockmeier, Ron Carlson, Charles D'Ambrosio, John Dufresne, Amelia Gray, Amy Hempel, Bret Anthony Johnson, T. Geronimo Johnson, Karan Mahajan, Nina McConigley, Elizabeth McCracken, Kirstin Valdez Quade, Elissa Schappell, Natalia Sylvester, and Justin Torres.

**Poetry faculty:** Catherine Barnett, Victoria Chang, Maxine Chernoff, Natalie Diaz, Carolyn Forché, James Galvin, Saskia Hamilton, Li-Young Lee, Jane Mead, Mihaela Moscaliuc, David Mura, Naomi Shihab Nye, Spencer Reece, Alberto Ríos, Richard Siken, Gerald Stern, Brian Turner, and Eleanor Wilner.

### **Thesis Submission to Adjunct Reader**

In order to have an adjunct faculty member critique your thesis, you must submit your polished manuscript to the MFA office no later than the third Friday in February for spring graduation, or the third Friday in September for winter graduation. If you miss this deadline, you forfeit your right to an adjunct thesis reader's commentary. No exceptions. Manuscript turnaround time is generally six to eight weeks. Having an adjunct thesis reader is optional, not required.

The maximum page limit that we will send to an adjunct reader is 60 pages for poetry and 250 pages for fiction. Please notify the MFA Coordinator if your submission exceeds the page limit.

### **Thesis Distribution to Second and Third Readers**

The submission date of your thesis to your committee is agreed upon by you and your committee members. However, you should submit your thesis to your committee *no later* than the first Monday following spring break.

The only date that you absolutely **cannot** miss is the date by which you must submit your thesis to the Graduate College. This date is posted on the Graduate College website every semester.

### **Comprehensive Exam**

Once you have sent your manuscript to your adjunct thesis reader, schedule your comprehensive exam with your thesis director. The exam may be taken no later than the eighth week of the semester you plan to graduate, in order to insure that your committee will have ample time to read your exam. The comprehensive exam requires you to write 1-2 essays, not to exceed 4000 words (or approximately 15-17 pages). Your comprehensive exam questions are composed by your thesis director.

Deliver your completed comprehensive exam to the members of your committee at the time you submit your thesis to them. Your committee members are not required to offer commentary on your exam unless they decline to assign a grade of "Passing" to said exam.

Please bring a copy of your **Comprehensive Examination** form to your Oral Defense for your committee members' signatures. At the conclusion of your oral defense, your committee members will sign a Comprehensive Examination Report for Master's Degree form, indicating a pass or fail grade. The result of the comprehensive examination *must* reach the Graduate College ten days before commencement.

### **Oral Defense**

Defenses are held between the week following spring break, in late March, and the second week of April. At the beginning of your final semester in the program, contact your thesis committee to offer several days and times you will be available, and work out a date and time when all can be present at your defense. Once you have done so, please book the Brasher Library or Room 376 for your thesis defense with Shaula Rocha in the English office.

### **Graduate College Submission of Thesis and Comprehensive Exam Report**

Again, refer to the Graduate College's thesis guidelines for exact information:  
[http://www.gradcollege.txstate.edu/Thes-Diss\\_Info.html](http://www.gradcollege.txstate.edu/Thes-Diss_Info.html)

You are responsible for submitting a typed copy of your thesis that meets the guidelines outlined in the Graduate College's Guide to Preparing Theses and Dissertations. You must use archival-quality paper specified by the Graduate College. You may find templates for thesis manuscripts at the Graduate College website ([http://www.gradcollege.txstate.edu/t\\_d\\_tmplt.html](http://www.gradcollege.txstate.edu/t_d_tmplt.html)) or through **Student Resources** on the MFA website.

The Graduate College offers workshops on thesis submission guidelines each semester; please contact them for information regarding when and where workshops are offered. We also try to arrange an MFA-only thesis workshop every fall semester.

The Graduate College allows students the option of electronic thesis submission. See the "Guide to the Preparation of Theses" under the **Student Resources** page of the MFA website for all information regarding the submission of your thesis to the Graduate College and to the Alkek Library. Again, here's the link: [http://www.gradcollege.txstate.edu/Thes-Diss\\_Info.html](http://www.gradcollege.txstate.edu/Thes-Diss_Info.html).

### **Checklist for Graduates**

On the **Student Resources** page of the MFA website, there is a **Final Year Checklist**. Please use it. If you have questions, please consult the MFA Coordinator.

### **Graduation**

The Graduate School Dean **will not approve** any request to extend the deadline to apply for graduation if a student does not file for graduation by the posted Apply for Graduation deadline. The deadline is posted on the Graduate College's website, and there is a link to the deadline page on the MFA in Creative Writing Program's website. If you miss the deadline, you will not graduate or receive your diploma until the end of Summer II. **NO EXCEPTIONS.**

Go to this link for instructions: [http://www.gradcollege.txstate.edu/Thes-Diss\\_Info/Thes\\_Info.html](http://www.gradcollege.txstate.edu/Thes-Diss_Info/Thes_Info.html)

The application deadline is always early in the semester you plan to graduate. Apply for graduation online according to the information found at the above link.

## **SECTION THREE**

### **Scholarships**

Several Graduate College and English Department scholarships are available. Check with the English Office, FH 365, for its list.

For all Graduate College scholarships, visit the Graduate College scholarship web page: [www.gradcollege.txstate.edu/Prospect\\_Students/Fin\\_Grad\\_Ed/Scholarships.html](http://www.gradcollege.txstate.edu/Prospect_Students/Fin_Grad_Ed/Scholarships.html).