

Idaho

MFA in CREATIVE WRITING

Fiction Poetry Nonfiction

3 Years Fully Funded

Work with Award-Winning Faculty

Jess Arndt, Brian Blanchfield, Leah Hampton,
Michael McGriff, Scott Slovic, Alexandra Teague

Study with Distinguished Visiting Writers

Recent Visitors: Maggie Nelson, Mary Szybist,
Roger Reeves, Luis Alberto Urrea, Dorianne Laux

Join the Editorial Staff of *Fugue*



Apply by January 15, 2022 [LEARN MORE](#)

A Note of Welcome from Brian Blanchfield DIRECTOR OF CREATIVE WRITING

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*Associate Professor
Director of Creative Writing*

Thank you for your interest in the Creative Writing MFA Program at University of Idaho: the premier fully funding, three-year MFA program in the Northwest. Situated in the panhandle of Northern Idaho, at the Washington state line ninety minutes south of Spokane, we offer the time and support to train in the traditions, techniques, and practice of nonfiction, poetry, and fiction. Each student graduates as the author of a manuscript of publishable quality after undertaking a rigorous process of thesis preparation and public defense. Spring in Moscow has come to mean cherry blossoms, snowmelt in the creek, and the head-turning accomplishments of our thesis-year students. Ours is a faculty that, collectively, has authored more than twenty books and has received NEA, Lannan Literary, and Stegner Fellowships; the Whiting and James Laughlin Awards; and Fulbright Scholarships and residencies around the world. More important, we are a cadre of active, working writers who relish teaching and mentorship. We invite you in the following pages to learn about us, our curriculum, our community, and the town of Moscow. If, then, the prospect of giving yourself three years with us to develop as a writer and teacher or editor is appealing, we very much hope to learn about you.

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What You Study

WORKSHOP TECHNIQUES TRADITIONS LITERATURE

WORKSHOP

Our workshop classes are small by design (typically twelve students or fewer) and taught by core and visiting MFA faculty. No two workshop experiences look alike, but what they share are faculty members committed to the artistic and intellectual passions of their workshop participants.

TECHNIQUES

Techniques studios are developed and taught by core and visiting MFA faculty. These popular courses are dedicated to the granular aspects of writing, from deep study of the poetic image to the cultivation of independent inquiry in nonfiction to the raptures of research in fiction. Such courses are heavy on generative writing and experimentation, offering students a dedicated space to hone their craft in a way that is complementary to their primary work.

TRADITIONS

Traditions seminars are also developed and taught by core and visiting MFA faculty. These generative writing courses bring student writing into conversation with a specific trajectory or “tradition” of literature, from life writing to outlaw literature to the history of the short story, from prosody to postwar surrealism to genre-fluidity and beyond. These seminars offer students a dynamic space to position their work within the vast and varied trajectories of literature.

LITERATURE

Literature courses are taught by core Literature and MFA faculty. Our department boasts field-leading scholars, interdisciplinary writers and thinkers, and theory-driven practitioners who value the intersection of scholarly study, research, humanism, and creative writing.

Degree Requirements

15 Credits	Graduate-level Workshop courses, the majority in your genre (ENGL 591, 592, 593)
3 Credits	Techniques Studio in your primary genre (ENGL 581, 582, 583)
15 Credits*	<p>Graduate-level Literature courses (ENGL 500 and above)</p> <p>--->One Traditions Seminar in your genre (ENGL 571, 572, 573) <i>must be</i> applied.</p> <p>--->The following <i>may not</i> be applied (ENGL 402, 523, 598)</p>
2 Credits	<p>Distinguished Visiting Writer (DVW) courses</p> <p>--->Each week-long DVW course is 1 credit. Typically, two DVW courses are offered per year, rotating between all three genres</p> <p>--->You may (and are encouraged) to take a DVW course outside your primary genre</p>
1 Credit	Internship course with <i>Fugue</i> (ENGL 598)
9 Credits	<p>Elective courses</p> <p>--->Most graduate-level university courses are accepted (500-level and above)</p> <p>--->ENGL 523 may be applied</p> <p>--->Additional Workshop, Techniques, and Traditions courses may be applied</p> <p>--->Thesis credits may not be applied</p>
9 Credits	<p>Thesis (ENGL 500)</p> <p>--->You may take as many thesis credits as you like, but only 9 count toward your degree</p>

*Of the 24 total credits of required Literature and elective courses, up to 6 credits of coursework in 400-level courses may be applied

Symposium

The Symposium Reading Series is a longstanding student-run initiative that offers every second-year MFA candidate an opportunity to read their works-in-progress in front of peers, colleagues, and community members. This reading and Q & A event prepares students for the third-year public thesis defense. These off-campus events are fun and casual, exemplifying our community centered culture and what matters most: the work we're all here to do.



The symposium was one of my favorite parts of Idaho's MFA program—I shared my symposium with a close friend I made in the program, a Nonfiction candidate named Laura Zak. Our symposium was at Professor McGriff's house, and his living room was filled with poets, essayists, fiction writers, and friends of the program. During my first year, I attended my peers' symposia and was blown away by the second-year students' work; listening in the audience, I truly felt like I was part of a writing community. In turn, reading at my own symposium was one of the first times I felt like a "real" writer. Five years after my symposium, I still remember specific questions members of my cohort asked about the story I read—it was one of the first times I experienced an audience deeply engaging with work I'd written. The symposium is a distillation of what is exceptional about the MFA program: not only are you experiencing the great pleasure of becoming a writer, you're also experiencing the greater pleasure of becoming part of a writing community.



Sam Burns, Class of 2019

Thesis Defense

The MFA experience culminates with each student writing and defending a creative thesis. For prose writers, theses are 100 pages of creative work; for poets, 48 pages. Though theses often take the form of an excerpt from a book-in-progress, students have flexibility when it comes to determining the shape, form, and content of their creative projects. In their final year, each student works on envisioning and revising their thesis with three committee members, a Major Professor (core MFA faculty) and two additional Readers (core UI faculty).

All students offer a public thesis defense. These events are attended by MFA students, faculty, community members, and other invitees. During a thesis defense, a candidate reads from their work for thirty minutes, answers artistic and critical questions from their Major Professor and two Readers for forty-five minutes, and then answer audience questions for thirty minutes. Though formally structured and rigorous, the thesis defense is ultimately a celebration of each student's individual talent.



To have three years set aside to craft a quality manuscript under the mentorship of successful, supportive writers changed me and my writing in a profound way. It was then so meaningful to stand before my peers, friends, family, and thesis committee to present and defend my book manuscript. In the weeks leading up to my thesis defense, I reflected on all the aspects of the MFA program that made my thesis what it was: books, classes and workshops, friendships, edits and rewrites, etc. My thesis defense stands out as one of the more special events of my life. It can be a daunting experience to think of dedicating three years of your life to improving your writing and putting together a book. Without the mentorship and structure within the MFA program, I wouldn't have taken on the task. Within that structure, I wrote and revised a quality manuscript, formed lasting personal and professional relationships within the writing community, and learned the skills to continue writing, editing, and submitting work that I'm truly proud of.



Stacy Boe Miller, Class of 2019



Jess Arndt

fiction

Visiting Assistant Professor

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I teach fiction by feeling into its most genre non-conforming appendages and my classes prioritize lateral engagement with and between students who I am lucky enough to join. In them, we ask each other to write from a place of the shared corporeal, privileging risk over outcome to create work that is porous to the body and deeply intuitive in its process. Instead of directing our conversations to more traditional questions about character and voice, we might wonder: “What’s lurking?” “Whose shape is this and why am I making it?” or “How is this story an exploration in losing one’s form?”

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JESS ARNDT is a fiction and transgenre writer living off the grid in Washington State. Their debut story collection, *Large Animals* (Catapult Press, 2017, reprint Cipher Press, UK, 2020), was shortlisted for the California Book Prize and longlisted for The Story Prize, and their writing has recently appeared in *Granta*, *The LA Review of Books*, *THEM*, *Lithub*, *Fence*, *BOMB*, *Night Papers*, and in collaborations with Swedish band, The Knife. Arndt received an MFA at Bard College and is the recipient of a Graywolf SLS Fellowship, a Fiction Fellowship at the New York Foundation of the Arts, and an Arctic Circle Residency (Fiction). They are a co-founder of the prose experiment, New Herring Press, and teach in the Low-Residency Creative Writing MFA program at Pacific Northwest College of the Arts.



Leah Hampton

fiction and nonfiction

*Environmental Humanities Fellow
in Residence*

LEAH HAMPTON currently serves as the Environmental Humanities Fellow in Residence at the University of Idaho. As a visiting scholar and writer, Leah works in both the MFA program and the Confluence Lab. Her collection *F*ckface and Other Stories* was released by Henry Holt and named one of the best books of 2020 by *The Paris Review*, the New York Public Library, *Slate*, and others. A graduate of the Michener Center for Writers, she has been awarded multiple prizes and fellowships including UT-Austin's Keene Prize for Literature and the Phillip Roth residency at Bucknell University's Stadler Center for Poetry. Her work has appeared in *Ecotone*, *Guernica*, *McSweeney's*, *Electric Literature*, and elsewhere. She divides her time between Moscow, Idaho, and the Blue Ridge Mountains.

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I teach fiction and nonfiction, and I love working with graduate students one on one. My teaching is conference based and centers your writing goals, with workshops designed to be as inclusive and flexible as possible. As a first-generation high school graduate and former community college instructor, I'm especially interested in mentoring writers who come to the MFA via circuitous or nontraditional paths. Topics of particular interest include rurality and social/climate justice.

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Scott Slovic

nonfiction

University Distinguished Professor

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My goal as a teacher is to be a coach and guide: to help students develop their skills as creative and scholarly writers by providing practical exercises, to deepen students' appreciation of literary traditions and theoretical tools by suggesting relevant readings, and to create a sense of community in the classroom. When I work with graduate students, I am particularly focused on providing writing opportunities that have the potential to result in publishable work.

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SCOTT SLOVIC is University Distinguished Professor of Environmental Humanities. Educated at Stanford and Brown universities, he served as the founding president of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE) in the early 1990s, and from 1995 to 2020 he edited *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, the central journal in the field of ecocriticism. He currently co-edits two book series: Routledge Studies in World Literatures and the Environment and Routledge Environmental Humanities. After teaching for years at Texas State University and the University of Nevada, Reno, he came to the University of Idaho in 2012. Scott works on many different aspects of the environmental humanities, including the comparative study of international environmental literature, historical and theoretical ecocritical studies, and the application of psychological concepts to the communication and apprehension of information in the context of humanitarian and ecological crises. He has written, edited, and co-edited thirty books, including the forthcoming volumes *Nature and Literary Studies* (Cambridge University Press, 2022) and *The Bloomsbury Handbook to Medical-Environmental Humanities* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2022). His nonfiction emphasizes such themes as place, autobiography, ecology, social activism, and the value of research for the good of society. In addition to his position at Idaho, he serves as Associate Director of the HIBAR Research Alliance, a consortium of universities devoted to supporting “highly integrative basic and responsive” research: <https://hibar-research.org/>.

The Palouse (/pəˈlus/ pə-LOOSS)

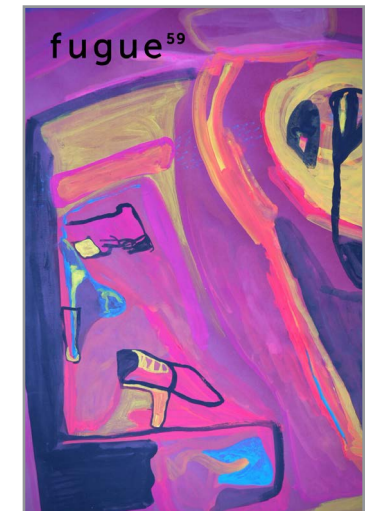
Situated just west of Moscow Mountain amid the rolling hills of the Palouse (the ancient silt beds unique to the region), our location in the vibrant community of Moscow, Idaho, boasts a lively and artistic local culture. Complete with independent bookstores, coffee shops, art galleries, restaurants and breweries, (not to mention a historic art house cinema, organic foods co-op, and renowned seasonal farmer's market), Moscow is a friendly and affordable place to live. Outside of town, we're lucky to have many opportunities for hiking, skiing, rafting, biking, camping, and general exploring—from nearby Idler's Rest and Kamiak Butte to renowned destinations like Glacier National Park, the Snake River, the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness Area, and Nelson, BC. As for more urban getaways, Spokane, Washington, is only a ninety-minute drive, and our regional airline, Alaska, makes daily flights to and from Seattle that run just under an hour.



JOIN THE EDITORIAL STAFF OF FUGUE

About the Journal

Established in 1990 at the University of Idaho, *Fugue* biannually publishes poetry, fiction, essays, hybrid work, and visual art from established and emerging writers and artists. *Fugue* is managed and edited entirely by University of Idaho graduate students, with help from graduate and undergraduate readers. We take pride in the work we print, writers we publish, and the presentation of each issue. We publish one print and one online issue per year and hold an annual contest in both prose and poetry, judged by two nationally recognized writers. Past judges include Pam Houston, Dorianne Laux, Rodney Jones, Mark Doty, Rick Moody, Ellen Bryant Voigt, Jo Ann Beard, Rebecca McClanahan, Patricia Hampl, Traci Brimhall, Edan Lepucki, Tony Hoagland, Chen Chen, Aisha Sabatini Sloan, sam sax, and Leni Zumas. The journal boasts a remarkable list of past contributors, including Steve Almond, Charles Baxter, Stephen Dobyns, Denise Duhamel, Stephen Dunn, B.H. Fairchild, Nick Flynn, Terrance Hayes, Campbell McGrath, W.S. Merwin, Sharon Olds, Jim Shepard, RT Smith, Virgil Suarez, Melanie Rae Thon, Natasha Trethewey, Anthony Varallo, Robert Wrigley, and Dean Young, among many, many others.





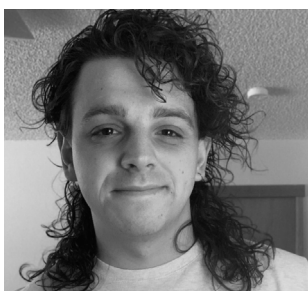
Emma Neal (First Year, Fiction) was born and raised in Boise, Idaho. She attended Sarah Lawrence College, where she studied creative writing and religion. Currently, she is working on a collection of short stories about young women trying to understand themselves and searching for their communities. Emma enjoys coffee shops, live music, and painting. She taught yoga for two years at Sarah Lawrence College.

Steff Sirois (First Year, Fiction) is from Cheshire, Connecticut. She earned her B.A. in English from Southern Connecticut State University, where she finally got the chance to indulge in her passion for writing prose. The last big project she worked on was a collection of short stories for her undergraduate honors thesis called *Where They Want You*, which was inspired by her experiences as a woman working in the service industry.



Daniel Lurie (First Year, Poetry) was born and raised in Talala, Oklahoma. He attended Montana State University, where he studied Organizational Communications. His work has appeared in *The Palouse Review*, *FeverDream*, and *The Rook*, and he has a forthcoming poem titled "One Night Only," which will be stamped into a concrete street in Billings, Montana, through Sidewalk Poetry. Daniel wants to become a published environmental activist.

Isabel Marlens (First Year, Nonfiction) grew up in California and Colorado, and studied literature and ecology & evolution at Bennington College. She went on to work in the nonprofit world, writing about local economies and initiatives for community and ecological renewal. She is working on essays that layer the personal with thoughts on literature, psychology, evolutionary theory, history, and politics. She spends most of her free time rock climbing and traversing the rural West.



Christian Perry (First Year, Nonfiction) is a white, Queer, Midwesterner born and raised in Michigan. They attended Michigan State University, where they studied a myriad of subjects and obtained a BA in English/Creative Writing in 2019. In 2020, Christian self-published their undergraduate thesis, *thanks*. Their free time is often spent playing Nintendo games and going on long walks.



Brink Hall, home of the Department of English & Creative Writing Program

Students are the lifeblood of the MFA program. We're proud of our their commitment to the art, their dedication to teaching, and their accomplishments, which include publishing in our nation's top literary venues and securing book contracts from trade, university, and independent presses. Though we emphasize process over publishing during the course of a degree, what follows are some recent achievements by our storied alums.



“

Joe Wilkins is a writer of great power and heart, and *Fall Back Down When I Die* is a riveting and timely novel. — Jess Walter

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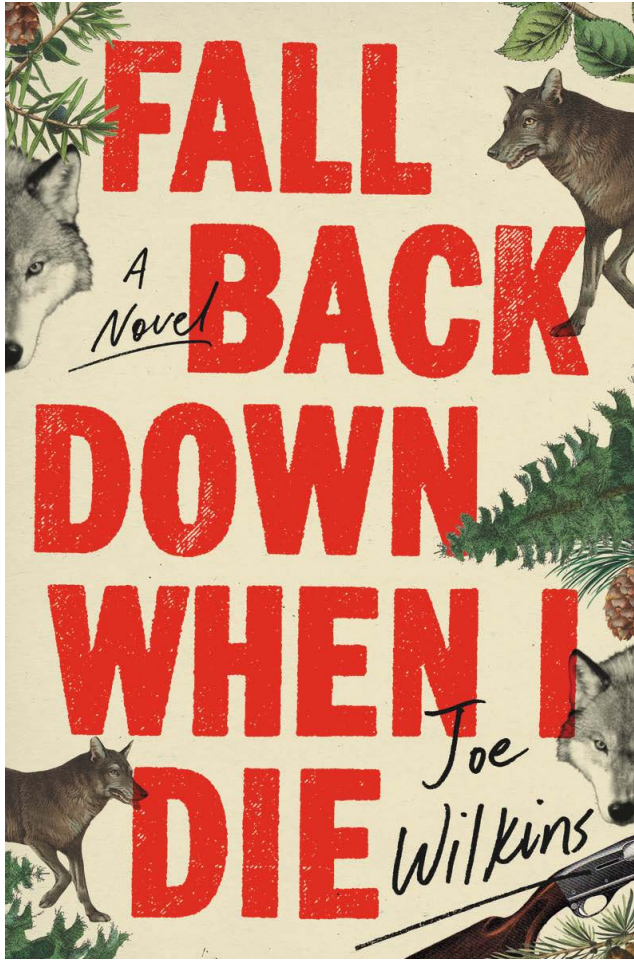
Joe Wilkins

Class of 2007

novel

Fall Back Down When I Die
Little, Brown, and Company, 2019

JOE WILKINS is the author of a novel, *Fall Back Down When I Die* (Little Brown), a memoir, *The Mountain and the Fathers* (Counterpoint), and four poetry collections, most recently *Thieve* (Blue Lynx Press), which was a finalist for the Oregon Book Award. Wilkins serves on the faculty of Eastern Oregon University’s Low Residency MFA Program and directs the Creative Writing Program at Linfield University.





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All fire and surprise, sadness and forgiveness...I could never say enough about the beauty of this work. — Jericho Brown

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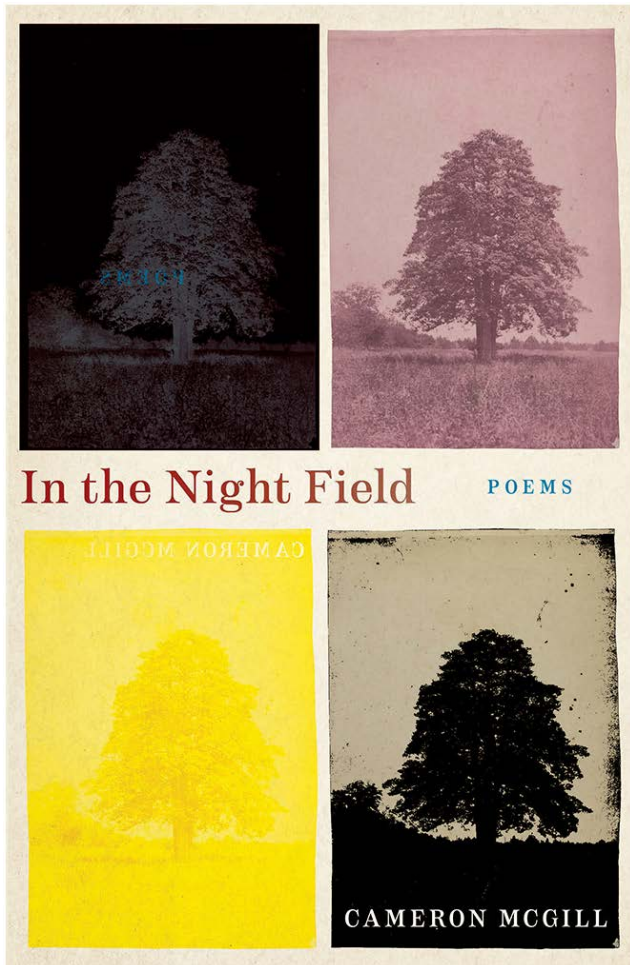
Cameron McGill

Class of 2018

poetry

In the Night Field
Augury / Brooklyn Arts Press, 2021

CAMERON MCGILL is an educator and musician, as well as the author of two collections of poetry, *In the Night Field* (Augury) and *Meridians* (Willow Springs Books). His poems have appeared in *American Poetry Review*, *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Northwest Review*, *RHINO*, *Western Humanities Review*, and elsewhere. He works as a Career Track Assistant Professor of English at Washington State University.



MFA Student Opportunities

Writing in the Wild

This annual fellowship gives two MFA students the opportunity to work in Idaho's iconic wilderness areas. The fellowship fully supports one week at either the McCall Outdoor Science School (MOSS), which borders Payette Lake and Ponderosa State Park, or the Taylor Wilderness Research Station, which lies in the heart of the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness Area. Both campuses offer year-round housing. These writing retreats allow students to concentrate solely on their writing. Because both locations often house researchers, writers will also have the opportunity to interface with foresters, geologists, biologists, and interdisciplinary scholars.

The Hemingway Fellowship

This fellowship offers an MFA Fiction student full course releases in their final year. The selection of the Hemingway Fellow is based solely on the quality of an applicant's writing. Each year, applicants have their work judged blind by a noted author who remains anonymous until the selection process has been completed. Through the process of blind selection, the Hemingway Fellowship Fund fulfills its mission of giving the Fellow the time they need to complete a substantial draft of a manuscript.

Centrum Fellowships

Those selected as Centrum Fellows attend the summer Port Townsend Writers' Conference free of charge. Housed in Fort Worden (which is also home to Copper Canyon Press), Centrum is a nonprofit dedicated to fostering several artistic programs throughout the year. With a focus on rigorous attention to craft, the Writers' Conference offers five full days of morning intensives, afternoon workshops, and craft lectures to eighty participants from across the nation. The cost of the conference, which includes tuition, lodging, and meals, is covered by the scholarship. These annual scholarship are open to all MFA candidates in all genres.

MFA Student Opportunities

The Academy of American Poets Prize

The Creative Writing Program is proud to partner with the Academy of American Poets to offer an annual Academy of American Poets Prize to a student at the University of Idaho. The Prize was established in 2009 with a generous grant from Karen Trujillo and Don Burnett.

Many of our nation's most esteemed and celebrated poets won their first recognition through an Academy of American Poets Prize, including Diane Ackerman, Toi Derricotte, Mark Doty, Tess Gallagher, Louise Glück, Jorie Graham, Kimiko Hahn, Joy Harjo, Robert Hass, Li-Young Lee, Gregory Orr, Sylvia Plath, Mark Strand, and Charles Wright.

Recent recipients include

2021

Steven Pfau

Selected by Meg Freitag

2020

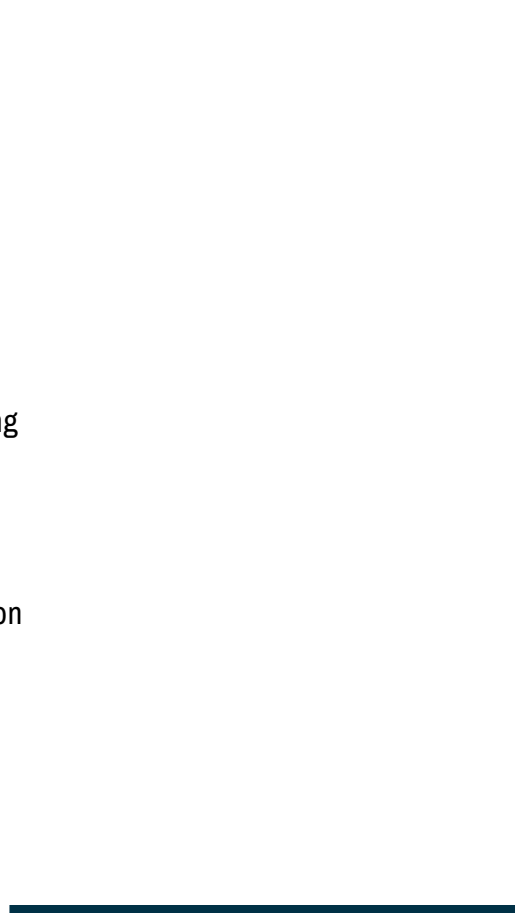
Ryan Downum

Selected by Malena Mörling

2019

Caitlyn Curran

Selected by Marcus Jackson



HOW TO APPLY

<https://www.uidaho.edu/class/english/academics/graduate/mfa-creative-writing>

Please visit the Department of English website (link above) for full application details. All materials must be received by the deadline, so we recommend starting the application process early. We cannot access your materials or consider your application until **ALL** of your materials, including letters of recommendation and official academic transcripts, are received by the University of Idaho College of Graduate Studies. The bullet points below offer a quick rundown of what you'll need to apply; please refer to our website for full details, instructions, and link to the online application.

- * The application deadline is January 15.
 - * The application fee is \$60.
 - * Candidates should apply in one genre only (Fiction, Poetry, or Nonfiction).
 - * GRE scores are **NOT** required to gain admission to the program. *You do not need to take the GRE.*
 - * You must hold a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution by the time you start your first semester at Idaho.
 - * You should hold a 3.0 undergraduate GPA (see website for further detail).
 - * You will need 3 Confidential Letters of Recommendation from those familiar with your work.
 - * You will need to order Official Transcripts from the institution that granted your bachelor's degree.
 - * You will need to write a Statement of Purpose discussing your artistic and academic plans and goals.
 - * You will need to include a CV or resume citing relevant writing and academic experiences.
 - * You will need to include a Critical Writing Sample (a critical essay), 20 pages maximum.
 - * You will need to include a Creative Writing Sample (please select only one genre):
 - 20 pages (maximum) of fiction
 - 20 pages (maximum) of nonfiction
 - 10 pages (maximum) of poetry
- International students: You will need a TOEFL score (or equivalent English test) of at least 560 (paper test) or 83 (Internet test) for non-English speaking students who have not graduated from an English-speaking institution.

