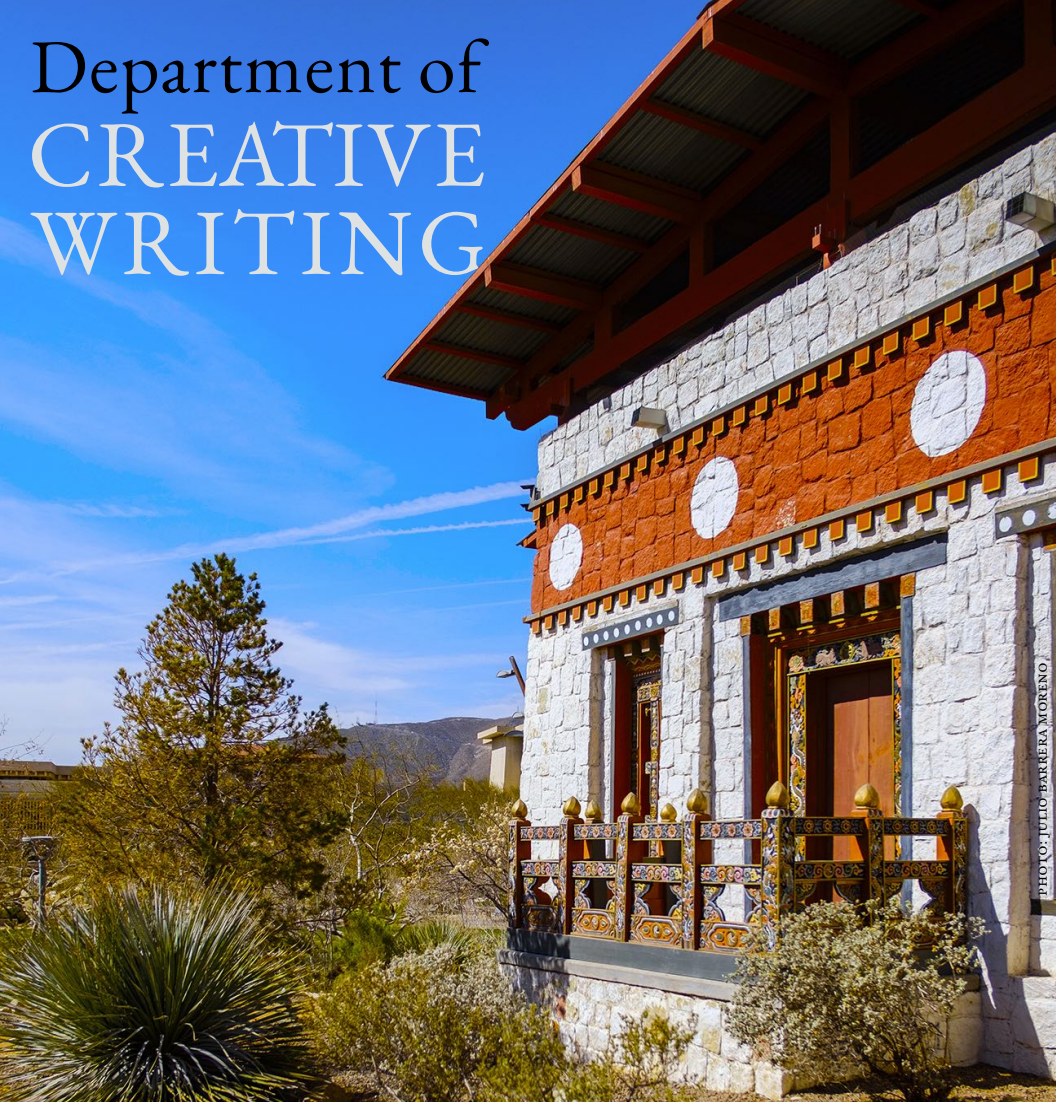


Department of CREATIVE WRITING



Residential Bilingual MFA Program MFA Student Handbook



UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS, EL PASO
Texas Western Hall Ste. 200 — 500 W. University Ave.
El Paso, TX 79968

MFA Student Handbook

MFA in Creative Writing

Department of Creative Writing

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS, EL PASO

Texas Western Hall, Suite 200 — 500 W. University Ave.

El Paso, TX 79968

utep.edu/cw

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Introduction

Welcome to our residential Bilingual MFA in Creative Writing! This handbook is designed to help you throughout your two years at UTEP. The “Table of Contents” (page [iii](#)) will give you a quick overview of the handbook. Some sections include hyperlinks (in blue) you can click on if you are reading this document on a screen. If the information you are looking for doesn’t appear in the “Table of Contents,” check “Frequently Asked Questions” (page [42](#)). Should you still have questions, please contact:

- [Director of Graduate Studies at jdepierola@utep.edu](mailto:jdepierola@utep.edu).
- [Chair at danchacon@utep.edu](mailto:danchacon@utep.edu).

The Creative Writing Department

The Creative Writing Department was established at UTEP to offer aspiring writers a path to learn the craft and earn a degree. We offer an undergraduate major and minor in Creative Writing, and a Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in Creative Writing, available as a residential and an online program.

Our residential Bilingual MFA in Creative Writing is one of the few bilingual programs in the world. Situated where two states and two countries meet, it attracts students from the Americas and beyond, offering a rich multicultural experience. However, we understand bilingualism not as a requirement for students to be bilingual, but rather as the coexistence of Spanish and English in the classroom.

OFFICE INFORMATION

The Creative Writing office is located at Texas Western Hall, Suite 200. In our offices, you will find our Chair, Daniel Chacón, and our Administrative Services Coordinator, Ser Godoy; as well as the offices of our faculty. Additionally, the building offers several spaces suitable for study and writing.

OFFICE HOURS

Hours are as follows when the university is in full session (hours are reduced during intersession and during the summer).

- Main Office: Monday – Friday 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM
- Should you need to talk with our chair, please, make an appointment at danchacon@utep.edu.

PHONES

- Main Office Phone: 1-915-747-5713
- Main Office Fax: 1-915-747-5523

MAILING ADDRESS

Correspondence for faculty and chair should be addressed to:

Department of Creative Writing
University of Texas, El Paso
Texas Western Hall, Suite 200
500 W. University Ave.
El Paso, TX 79968

MFA Curriculum

During your two years of studies, you will need to complete the coursework described in this chapter. The order in which you take the courses will depend on your overall plans for your MFA, which you should discuss with your advisor (see page 10).

Though you will choose your coursework, if you are a full time student, you should complete your MFA in two years. Please, consider the following:

- You need to complete 36 hours of coursework in 4 semesters. If you are an online student, you may take longer than 4 semester; however, it is advisable that you enroll in at least one course per semester.
- To be considered a full time student, you need to register for 9 hours (3 courses) each semester. If you hold a teaching assistantship, you must be registered full time (see page 25).
- You may take courses in our summer sessions. These courses may count towards your 36 hour requirement, but they do not count towards your 9 hours requirement to be a full time student in Fall and Spring.
- Exceptionally, you may take one undergraduate class for credit (see guidelines below).
- You will enroll in CRW 5397 Capstone in your fourth semester, concurrently with two other courses to complete your full time requirement. The successful completion of CRW 5397 Capstone, evaluated by your Capstone Supervisor, is a requirement for your graduation in our program.

CURRICULUM

This section includes the types of courses that make the curriculum of our program.

CRW 5321 NARRATIVE THEORY AND POETICS

This required course has three main goals. First, to serve as an introduction to the craft of prose and poetry writing, as well as how to give and receive meaningful feedback in the context of a creative writing workshop. Second, to give you enough theoretical background so you may write your own *poetics*—a personal statement of your artistic vision. And third, to help you write your “Work in Progress Plan,” which will guide your work throughout your MFA.

WORKSHOPS (9 HOURS)

These courses, held in the format of a creative writing workshop, are meant to help you develop your writing skills. They are also an opportunity to learn how to receive and offer meaningful feedback. The final project for the class will be creative, in some cases with a short preface framing the project.

- CRW 5366 Advanced Fiction Writing
- CRW 5367 Advanced Poetry Writing
- CRW 5369 Advanced Playwriting
- CRW 5371 Writing the Novel
- CRW 5372 Advanced Screenwriting
- CRW 5373 Advanced Creative Nonfiction
- CRW 5374 Ten Problems for the Fiction Writer
- CRW 5363 Writing Children’s Literature
- CRW 5368 Variable Topics
- CRW 5370 Literary Translation

The course CRW 5368 Variable Topics is a workshop course with a different content each semester. Check the Course Catalog before you enroll in this course.

CRAFT COURSES (9 HOURS)

These courses are focused on the craft of writing. They may include theoretical, technical, and creative readings across several genres. Most courses will offer you a chance to apply what you learn in your own work. And, depending on the objectives of the course, the final project may be a creative piece, an analytical essay, or a combination of both.

- CRW 5375 Writing Comics and Visual Culture
- CRW 5376 Writing About Popular Music
- CRW 5377 Rewriting America Since 1960s
- CRW 5378 The Politics of Narration
- CRW 5379 Kafka and the Art of Fiction
- CRW 5380 The Physics of Creative Writing
- CRW 5382 Studies in form
- CRW 5383 History of the Short Story Form
- CRW 5384 Forms in the Prose Poem and the Short Story
- CRW 5385 Forms in the Contemporary Short Story
- CRW 5386 Minding Fiction
- CRW 5387 Contemporary Latin American Novel
- CRW 5388 Storytelling in Film and Literature
- CRW 5389 High Modernism in Latin America

The course CRW 5382 Studies in Form is a craft class with a different content each semester. Check the Course Catalog before you enroll in this course.

STUDIO COURSES (9 HOURS)

These courses are designed to give you dedicated time to focus on your work in progress under the close supervision of an experienced faculty member. You should take these courses from your second to your fourth semester.

These courses require an approved “Work in Progress Plan.” This plan is developed in CRW 5321 Narrative Theory and Poetics, available during your first semester.

- CRW 5394 Prose Studio
- CRW 5395 Poetry Studio

ELECTIVE (3 HOURS)

This is a graduate-level course you may take from any department with your advisor's approval.¹

Independent Study (3 hours)

This is not a course *per se*, but a way of taking a course, and it is designed to give some flexibility to your coursework. You can take an independent study from any department with your advisor's approval. It may replace a workshop or a craft course. See the Independent Study chapter (page 8) for more details.

Undergraduate Course (3 hours)

Exceptionally, you may take one undergraduate course for credit, as long as you keep the following in mind:

- You may only take 3000 and 4000 series classes from the list approved by the Graduate Council. See the most current list of undergraduate courses under “[Advising and Enrollment](#)” on the Graduate School website.
- Your advisor must approve the class you are taking.
- You must contact the instructor and have their agreement in writing that they will adjust the assignments and readings for the class to count as a graduate level course.
- This class will count as one of your electives.
- You may only take **one** undergraduate class for credit.

CAPSTONE (3 HOURS)

This course is meant to help you complete your work in progress. You will take this course with a Capstone Supervisor you have requested at the end of your first year. The Capstone Project will include a Critical Introduction and the completed manuscript of your Work in Progress. For more details see “Capstone Project” (page 21)

- CRW 5397 Capstone

¹If you hold a teaching assistantship in the Department of English, the pedagogy class required (ENG 5346) counts as your elective (see the section below).

Independent Study

The Independent Study format is intended to provide you with the opportunity to explore specific areas of interest that are not covered in regular courses during your two years in the program. This allows for personalized learning of topics relevant to your goals.

GUIDELINES

- You are not required to take an Independent Study, nor are you guaranteed one.
- Make sure you ask for an Independent Study within the area of interest, research, or creative work of the instructor with whom you will take the class.
- To ensure timely approval, you should submit your proposal for your Independent Study at least one semester in advance. For example, if you wish to take an Independent Study in the Fall semester, your proposal should be submitted by the end of the previous Spring semester.
- Keep in mind the requirements below.

REQUIREMENTS

Before registering for your Independent Study, you must submit a proposal that includes the following components, which must be approved by your instructor and the Director of Graduate Studies:

- A brief letter stating how the proposed independent study will contribute to your development as a writer or to your work in progress.
- A detailed syllabus for the course. While the syllabus can be formatted to better suit each class, it must include the following components:

INDEPENDENT STUDY

- Cover page with signatures for your instructor and the Director of Graduate Studies
- An introduction
- A list of readings
- A means of evaluation
- A list of assignments
- A weekly break down of readings, evaluations and assignments
- Final project

STEPS

To successfully enroll in an Independent Study, please follow these steps carefully:

- Meet with the instructor you plan to take the independent studies with and discuss your plans.
- If the instructor accepts working with you, write an Independent Studies Proposal (see above).
- Submit your proposal to the instructor.
- Once your proposal is accepted and signed by your instructor, submit your proposal to the Director of Graduate Studies.
- Once the Director of Graduate Studies has approved and signed your proposal, you may register for your independent study (NOTE: CRW 5390 Independent Studies has a different CRN depending on the instructor who teaches it).

Advising Policies

You will be assigned an advisor to guide you during the two years of your MFA; however, you may request a change of advisor (see details under Advising Guidelines on page 13). Your advisor is responsible for helping you design a comprehensive plan for your MFA, which includes selecting coursework, fulfilling program requirements, and assisting with registration. Your advisor is your main contact with our department, and you should meet with them whenever you have concerns or questions regarding your academic responsibilities.

Keep in mind the following policies regarding your study in our program:

TYPES OF COURSES

FIRST-YEAR It is strongly recommended that you take CRW 5321 Narrative Theory and Poetics in your first year, and, if possible, in your first semester. This class will help you understand basic theory, and, most importantly, will allow you to write your “Work in Progress Plan,” a requirement for all studio classes and the blueprint to finish your work in progress and fulfill your Capstone Project requirement.

WORKSHOPS These courses focus on the writing practice. They follow a workshop format and assign a creative final project. You may take up to three workshop courses. It is recommended that you take at least one workshop in a genre different from the one you practice.

CRAFT These courses focus on various aspects of writing. They follow a seminar format, and the final project may consist of either an analytical paper or a creative work. These courses require reading at least six book-length texts, and writing an analytical or a creative final project of at least 15 pages.

STUDIO These courses will give you time for focused writing so you can advance your work in progress. The format, readings, and meetings will vary depending on the needs of the students enrolled in the class. You are required to have a “Work in Progress Plan” (developed ideally in CRW 5321) to enroll in these courses.

ELECTIVE You may take any graduate level course offered at UTEP as an elective with approval from your advisor. **NOTE:** If you hold a teaching assistantship in the English Department, the required pedagogy class will count as your elective.

INDEPENDENT STUDIES You are allowed one Independent Study (CRW 5390) during your MFA. The proposed Independent Study should not duplicate a course that we regularly offer. For more information, see Independent Studies on page 8.

UNDERGRADUATE COURSE You may choose your elective from the undergraduate catalog. This undergraduate class must be selected from the list approved by the Graduate Council (for more information, see Undergraduate Courses on page 7). If the class is not in the list, the class will not count towards your degree.

COURSEWORK

1. Except for those approved by the Graduate Council, other undergraduate courses **are not accepted for graduate credit**.
2. If you are funded by UTEP, whether through the Department of English or the Department of Creative Writing, you must enroll in nine hours (three courses) each semester to maintain your eligibility for your teaching assistantship.
3. We strongly recommend that you not enroll in more than nine hours per semester.
4. The Department Chair, in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies, assigns teaching assistantships. They are not done by petition of students. Assignments are calibrated to serve the needs of the Department of Creative Writing and are subject to change from semester to semester.

5. The renewal of teaching assistantships from year to year is not automatic; it is contingent on satisfactory progress in both coursework and teaching assistantship assignments.

CAPSTONE

The capstone course gives you the opportunity to complete the manuscript of a work in progress that you have developed over the previous three semesters (for more details see Capstone Project on page 21).

Advising Guidelines

These guidelines outline the role of **advisor** in our MFA program. They are based on our MFA Handbook, which includes detailed information about program requirements, coursework, and your duties as student.

THE ADVISOR-ADVISEE RELATIONSHIP

The advisor-advisee relationship is central to our MFA. Each faculty member will be assigned 2 to 3 students as advisees. The advisor's main role is to guide you through your MFA toward successful completion of the program.

IMPORTANT: You will work with the same advisor from your first semester throughout your MFA. This continuity provides you consistent mentorship. However, at the end of your second semester, and no later than the beginning of your third semester, you will request a faculty member to supervise your Capstone Project (see “Capstone Project” on page 21).

ADVISOR ASSIGNMENT

Upon being accepted to our program, you will be assigned an advisor. The assignment process considers:

- Your primary genre (poetry, prose, nonfiction, screenwriting, translation)
- Faculty availability and current advising load
- Your personal statement

You will be notified of your advisor assignment around week four of your first semester. Barring extreme circumstances, the advisee will remain with the same advisor throughout your MFA.

ADVISOR'S DUTIES

The advisor serves as your primary academic contact throughout your MFA. Specific advisor duties include:

FIRST SEMESTER

- Meet with you at the end of your first semester to review your Work In Progress Plan (developed and approved in CRW 5321 Narrative Theory and Poetics)
- Give you feedback on the Work In Progress Plan

EACH SEMESTER

- Meet with you before each registration period to:
 - Review your updated Work In Progress Plan
 - Guide your selection of classes for the upcoming semester
 - Make sure coursework follows your overall development as a writer
 - Complete the Advising Sheet with you
- Monitor academic progress
- Alert the Director of Graduate Studies if you are struggling academically or not fulfilling your TA responsibilities
- Advocate for you when seeking competitive opportunities
- Assist you with professional development
- Be available for additional meetings as needed

MEETING FORMAT AND SCHEDULE

REQUIRED MEETINGS

- End-of-first-semester meeting to review Work In Progress Plan
- At least one in-person meeting per semester, scheduled before registration
- Additional meetings as needed based on your requests

MEETING FORMAT

- Meetings may be conducted in person or virtually depending on advisor availability
- You should come to meetings prepared with:
 - Questions about coursework or program requirements
 - Updates on your work in progress
 - Completed or updated Work In Progress Plan

REGISTRATION PROCESS

Each semester, you and your advisor must complete the following steps to enable registration:

1. Discuss course selection
2. Complete your Registration Request
3. Advisor forwards the completed Registration Request to the Director of Graduate Studies
4. The Director of Graduate Studies lifts holds
5. You proceed with registration

IMPORTANT: You cannot register until your holds have been lifted. Plan advising meetings accordingly.

ADVISOR CHANGE

You may request a change of advisor once. Additional changes may be granted in extreme circumstances at the discretion of the Director of Graduate Studies.

PROCESS FOR REQUESTING AN ADVISOR CHANGE

- Change of advisor requests should be addressed to the Director of Graduate Studies.
- Requests should be made during the first year and no later than the end of the second semester, to ensure continuity in the writing of the work in progress. Advisor changes during the second year (third and fourth semesters) are strongly discouraged.

ADVISING GUIDELINES

- You should schedule a meeting with the Director of Graduate Studies to discuss your request.
- The Director of Graduate Studies will work to assign a new advisor as quickly as possible.

TIMING

- Early requests (first year) allow for smoother transitions
- You should consider the impact on your Work In Progress Plan and studio class enrollment
- **IMPORTANT:** Requests after the end of the second semester will seriously complicate your planning.

QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS

For questions about these guidelines or concerns about the advising relationship, you should contact:

- **Director of Graduate Studies:** José de Piérola (jdepierola@utep.edu)
- **Department Chair:** Daniel Chacón (danchacon@utep.edu)

Grading

GRADES

- To keep a good standing as a graduate student, your GPA must remain at 3.0 or higher.
- Graduate School gives credit to grades A, B, and C.
- If you earn an F in a course you will not receive credit towards your degree.
- In some classes, such as CRW 5397 Capstone, the grading system is I (incomplete), P (in progress), S (satisfactory), and U (unsatisfactory).
- Make sure you understand the grading policy in each class you take.

DROPPING COURSES

- Except for a family emergency, we strongly discourage you from dropping courses. Nevertheless, should you need to withdraw from a course, consult the [Academic Calendar](#). Usually the deadline to drop a class is around Week 8.
- If you hold a teaching assistantship position, you must remain a full-time student (9 hours); otherwise, your appointment will be canceled.
- For leaves of absence, check the corresponding section in Frequently Asked Questions on page 42.

INCOMPLETE

- If you cannot complete the assignments of a course, you will earn either an F (fail) or an I (incomplete), depending on the policies of that particular course. However, if you have not completed a significant number of assignments, you cannot request an I (incomplete) grade.
- If you earned an Incomplete, you need to make arrangements with the instructor to fulfill the missing assignments. NOTE: It is your responsibility to make these arrangements.
- If you don't complete the necessary assignments within a year of the course's completion, you will receive an F for that course.

Working on Your Capstone Project

WRITE YOUR BOOK WITH US

One of the primary goals of the MFA program is to help you complete a book-length project. Our program is designed to support you through the process of completing your work in progress, honoring our motto: *Write Your Book With Us*. This section outlines how the program will help you achieve this goal.

WORK IN PROGRESS PLAN

The “Work in Progress Plan” is a concise document (three to five pages) that outlines the work in progress you intend to complete during your MFA. It includes a timeline spanning from your second semester to your final semester, when you will enroll in CRW 5397 Capstone. This plan is drafted during the CRW 5321 Narrative Theory and Poetics course in your first semester.

STRUCTURE OF A WORK IN PROGRESS PLAN

The “Work in Progress Plan” includes the following components:

PROJECT A description of your book-length project, including its form and genre. Reference examples from existing works, if applicable.

OUTLINE One to three paragraphs outlining the structure of your project. Specify whether it will be divided into chapters, sections, or pieces, and describe the narrative or thematic arc.

SOURCES A list of creative or theoretical sources relevant to your project. These may include literature, film, music, visual art, performances, or other cultural works.

WORKING ON YOUR CAPSTONE PROJECT

TIMELINE A semester-by-semester timeline detailing your project's progression. Break each semester into three five-week sections to better track your progress effectively.

UPDATING YOUR “WORK IN PROGRESS PLAN”

FIRST VERSION Draft your “Work in Progress Plan” during CRW 5321 Narrative Theory and Poetics in your first semester.

APPROVAL The plan must be approved by the instructor of CRW 5321 Narrative Theory and Poetics.

SUBMISSION Submit your most current plan to the instructor at the beginning of each studio class (CRW 5394 or CRW 5395).

UPDATE Revise your plan at the end of each studio class to reflect progress and insights gained while working on your book.

STUDIO COURSES

Studio courses provide dedicated time for focused writing, allowing you to advance your work in progress. The format, readings, and meetings are tailored to the needs of the students enrolled. To enroll in a studio course, you must have an approved “Work in Progress Plan.”

After completing each studio course, you are encouraged to revise your “Work in Progress Plan” to reflect the current state of your project, as well as any changes that may have arisen during the course.

There are two studio courses available:

- CRW 5394 Prose Studio
- CRW 5395 Poetry Studio

CAPSTONE

The CRW 5397 Capstone course is your opportunity to complete the manuscript you have developed during the studio classes (see details in Capstone Project on page 21).

Capstone Project

CAPSTONE COURSE

The goal of our MFA program is to help you complete a book-length manuscript of publishable quality. To this end, during your first semester, you will draft a “Work-In-Progress Plan” in CRW 5321 Narrative Theory & Poetics (see “Working on Your Capstone Project” on page 19).

You will complete your book-length project throughout your MFA in the studio courses. The Capstone course, taken during your final semester, is designed to help you complete your manuscript. During this process, you will receive guidance from your Capstone Supervisor.¹

If you are a full-time student, you will take the Capstone course concurrently with two other courses. Therefore, careful planning is essential to successfully completing your MFA.

Keep the following in mind:

- You are required to enroll in the Capstone Course during your fourth semester, if you are a full-time student, or during your last semester if you are a part-time student. In exceptional circumstances, you may enroll in the Capstone Course up to three times; however, if you hold a teaching assistantship position in our department, you will only be funded through your fourth semester.
- You may take the Capstone course in absentia, provided you have completed all required coursework and have received approval from your Capstone Supervisor. Please note that if you choose to take the class in absentia, you will forfeit your teaching assistantship appointment.

¹Your **Advisor** and **Capstone Supervisor** are different roles. For more information on advising, see “Advising Guidelines” on page 13

CHOOSING YOUR CAPSTONE SUPERVISOR

Towards the end of your second semester, and no later than the beginning of your third semester, you will request a faculty member to be your Capstone Supervisor. Keep the following in mind:

- Approach a faculty member as early as possible, as the number of projects a faculty can supervise is limited.
- Take classes or read the work of the faculty member you would like as supervisor.
- Meet your prospective supervisor in person to explain your work in progress, as well as how far along you are, and to discuss your “Work In Progress Plan.”
- Once a faculty member has accepted to supervise your work, you **must** inform the Director of Graduate Studies.

WRITING YOUR CAPSTONE PROJECT

YOUR CAPSTONE SUPERVISOR

Your Capstone Supervisor will work closely with you to guide you in the process of finishing your work in progress and completing your capstone project. Each Capstone Supervisor has a unique approach to guiding students. Early in the process, you should discuss your expectations and communicate your own needs.

Your Capstone Supervisor must approve your capstone project, and they will only do so if they are satisfied with the quality of your work based on their standards. It is essential to establish clear mutual expectations at the outset. Discuss and agree upon the following:

- How early in the program you will begin working with them,
- The frequency of meetings,
- The number of pages or drafts to be submitted for each meeting,
- The type of feedback you expect,
- Any other relevant guidelines for collaboration.

WORKING WITH YOUR CAPSTONE SUPERVISOR

As you work on your capstone project, keep the following in mind:

- Be respectful of your Capstone Supervisor's time.
- Follow your Capstone Supervisor's preferred method for submitting work.
- Establish clear deadlines with your Capstone Supervisor. If you have any difficulties or delays, notify your supervisor as soon as possible.
- Keep all scheduled appointments and arrive on time.
- During the revision process, your Capstone Supervisor will provide feedback, which may fall into one of two categories:
 - **BINDING:** These are required changes. Your Capstone Supervisor will not approve your project unless these changes are implemented.
 - **NON-BINDING:** These are suggestions intended to improve your work. However, the final decision to incorporate them depends on you.

CAPSTONE PROJECT REQUIREMENTS

Your Capstone Project consists of two components: a critical introduction, and the finished version of your work in progress. The requirements for these two sections are as follows:

CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

This is a critical discussion of your project. In it, you should include the following sections:²

- Description
- Literary tradition
- Poetics
- Critical assessment
- Bibliography
- Total length: 10 - 12 pages (not including the Bibliography)

²Each year, the Director of Graduate Studies will give an orientation to discuss each part. Make sure you attend this orientation.

CREATIVE SECTION

This is the book-length, creative project; ideally a manuscript ready for submission. The minimum page length requirements by genre are as follows:

- Fiction: 120 pages,
- Poetry: 60 pages,
- Screenplay: 90 pages,
- Translation: Follow the requirements for the corresponding genre (fiction, poetry, or screenplay),
- Other genres: Consult your Capstone Supervisor for specific requirements.

Completing Your Capstone Project

The completion of your Capstone Project is the last step to complete your MFA in Creative Writing. Keep the following in mind:

- Once you have completed your Capstone Project, you will submit it to your Capstone Supervisor by the deadline you have agreed upon, and no later than Week 15.
- Your Capstone Supervisor will evaluate your work.
- If your Capstone Project meets the standards of your Capstone Supervisor and the mutually agreed goals, your project will be approved.
- The successful completion of your Capstone Project will mark the completion of your MFA. Congratulations!

Teaching Assistantships

TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIPS

Depending on the strength of your application, you may be awarded a Teaching Assistant position. This part-time position (20 hours per week) provides financial support to help cover tuition, living expenses, and books. The renewal of this appointment depends on academic and job performance.

If you are awarded a Teaching Assistantships funded by other departments—such as English—you are required to fulfill your duties exclusively within those departments; therefore, you will not be available for assignments within the Department of Creative Writing.

TYPES OF TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIPS

Teaching Assistants in the Department of Creative Writing are assigned to one of the following four categories:

1. Teaching
2. Research
3. Digital and Publishing Work
4. Graduate Program Support

Once offered a Teaching Assistant position, you will have the opportunity to indicate your preferences by ranking the categories above in order of interest. The specific duties for each category are as follows:

1. TEACHING

If you are assigned to this category, you will teach for the department under one of the following roles:

- **Instructor of Record:**

- Teach an introductory-level course. Responsibilities include attending the annual teaching colloquium organized by the Director of Undergraduate Studies, creating a syllabus, developing lesson plans, grading assignments, and delivering instruction.
- First-year students are not eligible to serve as Instructor of Record unless they hold a master's degree or equivalent.
- Continuation in this role is contingent on demonstrated success in the classroom.

- **Teaching Assistant:** Assist a faculty member in teaching a course. Responsibilities may include:

- Grading assignments and providing feedback,
- Taking attendance and supporting classroom instruction,
- Facilitating discussions and offering general classroom assistance.

2. RESEARCH

If you are assigned to this category, you will assist a faculty member with an academic or creative project. Duties may include:

- Conducting research in creative writing, literature, pedagogy, or related fields,
- Assisting with compiling bibliographies, gathering sources, conducting interviews, and analyzing texts,
- Performing other research-related tasks as required by the project.

3. DIGITAL AND PUBLISHING WORK

If you are assigned to this category, you will contribute to the department's digital media and publishing initiatives. Assignments may include:

- **Podcasting and Social Media:**

- Assist in producing podcasts for the department,

- Create and manage social media content to promote departmental activities.

• **Publishing and Editorial Work:**

- Edit and produce the *Río Grande Review*,
- Serve on the editorial team of *Hizache*,
- Assist with the administration of the Montoya Poetry Prize.

4. GRADUATE PROGRAM SUPPORT

If you are assigned to this category, you will assist the Graduate Director in managing and promoting the graduate program. This role is ideal for students interested in gaining experience in literary administration, event planning, and program management. Responsibilities include:

- Creating promotional materials for the graduate program, such as flyers and videos,
- Organizing and promoting student-centered literary events,
- Managing outreach efforts to increase the visibility of the graduate program through digital and print media,
- Assisting with departmental branding and visibility initiatives.

Tuition and Scholarships

PAYING FOR TUITION

All graduate students at UTEP, including those with a teaching assistantship appointment, are expected to pay for tuition. The information below should help you fulfill this obligation. Follow the links to obtain more up to date information under each category.

COMPLETE AND SUBMIT FAFSA

The financial aid process begins after you submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The information you submit is used to determine your eligibility for grants, loans and work study. Our school code is 003661.

IMPORTANT: For best results, submit your application by February 14 (mark your calendar).

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

If you are admitted to the program without a teaching assistantship it is still possible to work on campus. Contact Job Mine at 1-915-747-5640 or careers@utep.edu.

FINANCIAL AID RESOURCES FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

College students have a number of options available for financing their education. The most common types of assistance include grants, loans, work study and scholarships. Additional resources including private loans, internships and fellowships are also available.

Information for aid resources can be found at the Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid. All loan forms can be found on the Financial

TUITION AND SCHOLARSHIPS

Aid page under “Forms” as well as information about topics below under “Funding”.

- Federal Grants
- State Grants and Programs
- Student Loans
- Workstudy
- Tax Credits and other Programs
- Waivers
- Scholarships
- Additional Financial Aid Resources
- PLUS Loans for Graduate and Professional Degree Students

ESTIMATED LIVING EXPENSES

The following tables show an estimate of expenses for graduate students at UTEP. Keep in mind that some of the line items might not apply to you. For instance, if you plan to live near UTEP, and walk to the university, your transportation expenses will be much lower than those estimated. In the same fashion, if books assigned for your courses are available in the Main Library, this will lower that line item too. For the most up-to-date estimates, visit [Financial Aid](#).

2026-27 ACADEMIC YEAR

	TX RESIDENT	TX NON-RESIDENT
Tuition and Fees	\$ 7,696.00	\$ 17,530.00
Room and Board	\$ 5,134.00	\$ 5,134.00
Books and Supplies	\$ 1,266.00	\$ 1,266.00
Transportation	\$ 2,600.00	\$ 2,600.00
Personal Expenses	\$ 2,036.00	\$ 2,036.00
TOTAL	\$ 18,732.00	\$ 28,566.00

Información para estudiantes internacionales

SEGURO DE SALUD

La universidad ofrece a todos los estudiantes la posibilidad de enrolarse en el plan BlueCross/BlueShield. Tenga en cuenta, sin embargo, que este plan requiere el pago parcial por los servicios, por lo que algunos estudiantes optan por usar los servicios médicos que ofrece Ciudad Juárez, afiliados con BlueCross/BlueShield.

Para obtener información más reciente, consulte la siguiente presentación en formato PDF: [Beneficios BlueCross](#).

IMPORTANTE: Cada año hay una sesión de orientación para Estudiantes Internacionales a la que es obligatorio asistir, ya que aclara muchas dudas para quienes empiezan su maestría en UTEP. Para más información, visite la página siguiente: [Resources for Students](#).

IMPORTANTE: Cada semestre, durante la primera semana de clases, debe ir a la Oficina de Recursos Humanos de UTEP para firmar la inscripción al seguro de salud para que el costo del mismo sea aplicado como un crédito en la matrícula del estudiante, de otro modo usted tendrá que asumir el pago. Este proceso también se puede efectuar vía internet. Las notificaciones de inscripción se envían por correo electrónico.

SEGURO SOCIAL

Antes de poder trabajar legalmente como Graduate Assistant en los Estados Unidos, usted debe tener un número de seguro social. Para obtener una tarjeta de seguro social, necesita la carta de oferta de nuestro programa. Debe llevar esta carta a Office of International Programs and Study Abroad para solicitar una carta para la oficina

del Seguro Social. El OIP creará dicha carta verificando que usted está inscrito o inscrita a tiempo completo —requisito para ser Graduate Assistant— y que mantiene su estado migratorio. El Asesor de Estudiantes Internacionales firmará luego la carta de oferta. Deberá llevar ambas cartas a la oficina de la Administración del Seguro Social para solicitar su tarjeta.

La expedición de la tarjeta de seguro social puede tomar algunas semanas. Sin embargo, la carta de la oficina de Administración del Seguro Social es suficiente para oficializar su puesto como Graduate Assistant en nuestro departamento.

Para más información, contacte con *Office of International Programs and Study Abroad*.

VIVIENDA

La universidad está ubicada en una zona de El Paso donde es factible encontrar alojamiento que permite caminar a la universidad y a la mayoría de servicios cercanos. La mejor forma de obtener la información más actualizada es contactando con otros estudiantes que ya hayan vivido en el área por medio del correo de nuestro Departamento. Recomendamos algunas opciones, como una idea general de lo que está disponible en el área. Debe tomarse en cuenta que los costos mínimos de alojamiento rondan entre los \$450 y \$600 dólares al mes, aproximadamente, y por lo general incluyen servicios de agua, luz y gas. La mayoría de los departamentos o habitaciones en alquiler solicitan un anticipo o depósito en garantía, así como la firma de contrato.

CERCA DE UTEP

Highlander apartments

1700 Hawthorne St

\$595 por mes, para una sola persona. Incluye todos los servicios.

1127 Los Angeles St. Apartments
Downtown 301 East River Ave.

Victor Valdez—Rooms for Rent
528 Prospect Avenue.

\$500 por mes. Incluye todos los servicios.

Contact: email

DORMITORIOS UTEP

Miner Village Summit Hall

2401 N. Oregon St.

Contact: website

Miner Heights Apartments

300 W. Schuster Ave.

Contact: website

OTRAS OPCIONES

Sugerimos también las siguientes páginas web de búsqueda:

- Aparments.com
- ApartmentFinder.com
- Zillow.com

MÁS INFORMACIÓN

Cuando empiece a planear su viaje a El Paso, no deje de consultar la información más reciente y más detallada que aparece en nuestra página web en los siguientes recursos:

- For accepted students.
- Trámites al llegar a UTEP.

Teaching in the Department of Creative Writing

Second-year graduate students with a Teaching Assistant position funded by our department, and in good academic standing, are eligible to teach one of our introductory creative writing courses. Due to the limited number of courses offered, the selection process is competitive. You must submit an application early in the Spring semester of your first year to be considered for teaching assignments in the following academic year. All students, regardless of funding status, are eligible to apply for teaching opportunities during the Summer term.

REQUIREMENTS

To be eligible to teach, you must meet the following criteria:

- Complete the “Teaching Creative Writing Colloquium,” offered each Spring,
- Hold a Teaching Assistant position funded by the Department of Creative Writing,
- Maintain good academic standing and full-time enrollment,
- Submit a complete application by the specified deadline.

APPLICATION PROCESS

You must submit an application to the Director of Undergraduate Studies during the Spring semester to be considered for a teaching assignment. The application should include:

- **LETTER OF APPLICATION:** A statement explaining your interest in teaching and how your skills, experiences, and goals align with the role of an instructor for an introductory creative writing course,

- A SAMPLE SYLLABUS: A detailed syllabus outlining weekly assignments, readings, and grading policies¹.

WHY TEACH CREATIVE WRITING?

Teaching creative writing offers several opportunities for professional and personal growth:

- Gain hands-on teaching experience in a classroom setting,
- Mentor and collaborate with undergraduate student writers,
- Apply the knowledge and skills acquired in the graduate program to a teaching context,
- Develop and refine your ability to design syllabi and lesson plans,
- Enhance your own writing through the process of teaching and engaging with students.

BEST PRACTICES FOR TEACHING

While teaching, consider the following strategies to create an effective and engaging learning environment:

- Seek guidance and support from faculty and peers,
- Select readings and materials that resonate with your interests and expertise,
- Design a well-organized syllabus that balances structure with flexibility,
- Implement a grading system that is efficient and transparent, such as Engrade or Blackboard,
- Ensure that course materials, assignments, and activities reflect your own passion for writing and creativity.

¹For sample syllabi, contact the Director of Undergraduate Studies

Improvements and Grievances

Our department is committed to ensuring a positive experience for all students in our MFA program. However, there may be times when you stumble upon challenges or have ideas for improvement. This section outlines how to submit suggestions and address grievances.

SUGGESTIONS

We welcome your input to improve our MFA program. Suggestions may include, but are not limited to, the following areas:

- Proposals for new courses or workshops,
- Recommendations for new or revised policies affecting your experiences,
- Ideas for community-building initiatives, such as readings, workshops, or outreach projects.

To share your suggestions, you have the following options:

- Discuss your ideas with your student representative, who will present them at our next faculty meetings,
- Speak directly with the Director of Graduate Studies,
- Contact the Department Chair to share your suggestions,
- Request an opportunity to present your ideas directly at a faculty meeting.

GRIEVANCES

If you stumble upon issues that affect your personal experience in our MFA program, the following steps are available to address your concerns:

- **INSTRUCTOR:** If the issue is related to a course you are taking, discuss it with your instructor during their office hours.

IMPROVEMENTS AND GRIEVANCES

- **ADVISOR:** If the issue is unresolved or not specific to a single course, consult your academic advisor.
- **DIRECTOR OF GRADUATE STUDIES or CHAIR:** If the issue remains unresolved or extends beyond the MFA program but is still related to UTEP, contact the Director of Graduate Studies or the Department Chair.
- **COMMITTEE ON GRADUATE STUDIES:** For conflicts involving graduate advisors, faculty members, or compliance with degree program requirements, our department will organize an ad-hoc Committee on Graduate Studies to mediate and resolve a dispute.
- **STUDENT COMPLAINT PROCEDURES:** If the issue cannot be resolved within the department, follow the official UTEP [Student Complaint Procedures](#).

After Graduation

Our Bilingual MFA in Creative Writing is a terminal degree. This means that you are now qualified to pursue careers requiring this credential and to devote yourself to writing. Below are some possibilities you may wish to consider after completing the program.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

El programa Optional Practical Training (OPT) permite la conversión de su visa de estudiante a una que le permite trabajar por un año después de su graduación. Este programa está diseñado para ofrecer a los estudiantes la oportunidad de adquirir experiencia laboral después de finalizar sus estudios.

Los estudiantes interesados deben solicitar el OPT desde 90 días antes y hasta 60 días después del fin del programa de la visa I-20. Si la solicitud se presenta antes de la expiración de la visa I-20, se descontarán esos días de la visa de trabajo. Para más información sobre los requisitos y el costo de la solicitud, consulte la página del [Optional Practical Training UTEP](#).

IMPORTANTE: Los estudiantes interesados en solicitar el OPT **no deben salir de los Estados Unidos** hasta no tener la nueva visa.

OPORTUNIDADES DE TRABAJO

Después de su graduación, los estudiantes de nuestro programa tienen la oportunidad de trabajar en las siguientes instituciones:

- Otros departamentos en UTEP,
- Diario *El Paso*,
- Comité organizador del Congreso de Literatura Mexicana Contemporánea (UTEP),

- Uno de los *community colleges* en El Paso.

PH.D. PROGRAMS

Although the MFA is a terminal degree, you may choose to pursue further studies in a Ph.D. program. If you are considering this path, keep the following in mind:

- Most Ph.D. programs require at least five years to complete, and coursework from other institutions is typically not transferable,
- Application deadlines for Ph.D. programs usually fall between November and January of the year preceding the academic year in which you intend to begin (typically in the Fall),
- If you plan to request letters of recommendation, be courteous and provide your recommenders with ample time and necessary materials. Follow the guidelines under LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION below.

APPLYING FOR TEACHING JOBS

Teaching is one of the most common career paths for MFA graduates. If you pursue this option, consider the following:

- The job market is highly competitive. Do not be discouraged if you do not secure an interview during your initial applications,
- Publications, particularly in book form, can significantly strengthen your application,
- Teaching at a community college can help you build your resumé and gain valuable experience,
- For references, consider asking your capstone supervisor, your advisor, and supervisors, as they can provide personalized and detailed recommendations,
- If you need letters of recommendation, follow the guidelines under LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION below.

PUBLICATION

Many of our graduates go on to publish their projects. If this happens, remember to:

- Notify us so we can share the good news and add links to your work on our website,
- Acknowledge our program and your capstone supervisor in your publication,
- Continue writing, even as the demands of promoting your new publication may consume much of your time.

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Whether you are applying for further studies, teaching positions, or other academic opportunities, you will likely need letters of recommendation from our faculty. Keep the following guidelines in mind:

- Request letters of recommendation at least one month in advance,
- Ideally, ask faculty who served as your capstone supervisor, from whom you have taken at least two courses, or for whom you have worked as a teaching assistant,
- Provide the following information for each institution you are applying to:
 - The addressee of the letter,
 - The institution's name,
 - The department or program,
 - The mailing address.
- **IMPORTANT:** If the letter needs to be mailed via the US Postal Service, provide your recommender with a properly addressed and stamped envelope.

Students' Organization

The BCWSO (Bilingual Creative Writing Students' Organization) is a non-profit organization established by students in our residential MFA program. The primary goals of the BCWSO are:

- Represent MFA students at monthly Faculty Meetings,
- Organize events to showcase the work of MFA students,
- Conduct fundraisers to support MFA students in attending conferences,
- Host cultural events, such as conferences, readings, and workshops.

OFFICERS

The BCWSO's officers are elected annually and include the following roles:

PRESIDENT: Represents the student body, influences BCWSO policies, and attends monthly Faculty Meetings,

VICE-PRESIDENT: Supports the President in their duties and also attends monthly Faculty Meetings,

TREASURER: Manages all financial records and bookkeeping responsibilities,

PRESS SECRETARY: Records meeting minutes, maintains organizational records, and oversees promotion and outreach efforts.

ELECTIONS

Elections are held annually during the first week of classes (typically at the end of August). Usually, the current officers convene a plenary meeting, which all graduate students—particularly first-year students—are encouraged to attend. While it is customary for incoming students to be elected as officers, second-year students may also serve. To ensure continuity, at least one officer from the previous year should remain in a different role.

Once the election is complete, the transition of responsibilities should occur within one week. New officers typically attend the first Faculty Meeting of the Fall semester. If you are interested in becoming a BCWSO officer, please contact the organization for more information.

CURRENT REPRESENTATIVE

- Emmanuel Erenas
(eeerenassnchez@miners.utep.edu)

Frequently Asked Questions

These are some of the most frequently asked questions. If your question is not addressed here or elsewhere in this handbook, please contact the Director of Graduate Studies at jdepierola@utep.edu.

Can I request a leave of absence?

Yes. You may request a leave of absence by scheduling a meeting with the Director of Graduate Studies as soon as you decide to take time off. The terms of the leave depend on how far in advance you make the request, with the most favorable arrangements made well ahead of time. The maximum duration for a leave of absence is one year.

Can a residential student take online courses?

Yes. However, we strongly encourage residential students to take in-person classes, as the program is designed to facilitate direct engagement with faculty and peers. Online courses require the payment of additional fees.

Can I take CRW 5397 Capstone more than once?

Yes. You may enroll in CRW 5397 Capstone up to three times. However, we strongly advise against taking the course more than once, as your Capstone Supervisor may not be available to continue working with you. If you anticipate difficulties completing your project on time, communicate with your Capstone Supervisor as soon as possible. Note that students with a Teaching Assistant appointment will not receive funding beyond the fourth semester.

Can I take classes in other departments?

While the program is designed to help you complete your book through courses offered in our department, you may take one elective class outside the department (see “Electives” on page 7).

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What funding opportunities are available for MFA students?

Funding opportunities include Teaching Assistantships, scholarships, and fellowships. Teaching Assistantships provide a stipend and tuition support in exchange for 20 hours of work per week. For more information on other funding opportunities see the section “Financial Aid Resources” (page 28).

Can I participate in conferences or workshops during the program?

Yes. Students are encouraged to present their work at conferences and attend workshops. The BCWSO (Bilingual Creative Writing Students’ Organization) often organizes fundraisers to help cover travel expenses. Our department also has limited funds that can be requested in advance. Finally, UTEP also offers funds for traveling (see “Grants” on [this link](#)). Be sure to notify your faculty advisor if you plan to participate in such events.

What happens if I need to extend my time in the program?

If you need additional time to complete your degree, you must discuss this with the Director of Graduate Studies. Extensions are granted on a case-by-case basis. However, keep in mind that funding for your Teaching Assistant appointment is limited to two years.

How do I access writing resources and support?

The department provides access to writing workshops, peer review groups, and faculty mentorship. Additionally, the university library and writing center offer resources to support your academic work. For more information, contact the Director of Graduate Studies or your faculty advisor.

Feedback

Like any human endeavor, this handbook is a work in progress. We welcome your feedback, suggestions, and corrections to help us improve it. Please direct your comments to the [Director of Graduate Studies](#).
jdepierola@utep.edu.



Composed for MFA IN CREATIVE WRITING AT UTEP
using *EB Garamond* in 11 points. “EB Garamond is an open source project to create a
revival of Claude Garamont’s famous humanist typeface from the mid-16th century.
Its design reproduces the original by Claude Garamont.” (from
<http://www.georgduffner.at/ebgaramond/>)
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