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CONTACT INFORMATION

PROGRAM ADMINISTRATORS

Ann Neelon, Program Director
Faculty Hall 7B-17
Office: 270-809-4713
GENERAL PROGRAM INFORMATION

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the low-residency MFA program at Murray State University is to provide quality advanced instruction to creative writers while allowing them to live and work where they choose. Our foremost goal is to facilitate the creative and professional growth of writers, but the degree also offers the necessary academic credentials for a writer to teach creative writing at the college or university level. It also provides a foundation for careers in other writing-related fields.
PROGRAM SPECIFICATIONS

CREATIVE WRITING COURSES

All creative writing courses are taught in a 9-credit residency/tutorial sequence. One sequence includes the July residency and the fall-semester tutorial; the other sequence includes the January residency and the spring-semester tutorial. Although you will need to register separately for the 3-credit residency and 6-credit tutorial parts of the sequence, you must sign up for both. In order to graduate from the program, you will need to take three residency/tutorial sequences, usually all in your elected genre. You will also need to take one 9-credit thesis residency/tutorial sequence, followed by a 1-credit thesis residency.

ROTATION OF MFA STUDENTS THROUGH CREATIVE WRITING COURSES

Our goal is to rotate each student through three different mentors in the course of the three required residency/tutorial sequences. Our thinking here is that different mentors bring different strengths to the table, and you should get as much exposure to as many of these strengths as you possibly can in the course of your time in the MFA program. At the end of your three required sequences, you will be invited to choose a mentor as your thesis director. With any luck, the mentor you’d like to work with will be amenable to working with you and also available for the residency/tutorial sequence in which you aim to complete your thesis. Due to factors beyond our control (mentors opting out for a semester, students deciding to attend only in the summer/fall instead of alternating summer/fall and winter/spring, etc.), it does sometimes happen that we can only rotate you through two mentors before you enter the thesis semester. We will do everything we can, however, to rotate you through three.

SIGNING UP FOR A RESIDENCY/TUTORIAL SEQUENCE IN A DIFFERENT GENRE

If there is no question of thesis readiness, as determined by the director in consultation with your mentors, you may elect to do one of your three required non-thesis residency/tutorial sequences in a different genre from the one you elected when you entered the program. Permission to do so will usually be given only in your third residency/tutorial sequence. With the approval of the director, you may elect to take an extra (i.e., fourth) non-thesis residency/tutorial sequence in a different genre before signing up for the thesis semester (e.g., in order to enhance your adaptability for job-market purposes). **IF YOU PLAN TO ELECT AN EXTRA RESIDENCY/TUTORIAL SEQUENCE IN A DIFFERENT GENRE, YOU MUST DO SO BEFORE SIGNING UP FOR THE THESIS SEMESTER.** Due to Financial Aid regulations, the Graduate Admissions and Records Office cannot approve any post-thesis enrollment in courses not absolutely required for the degree.

GRADUATE LITERATURE COURSES

You must complete three graduate literature courses in order to graduate from the MFA program. **YOU MUST COMPLETE ALL THREE LITERATURE COURSES BEFORE SIGNING UP FOR THE THESIS SEMESTER.**
Please note that all graduate offerings in a given English department do not necessarily qualify as graduate literature courses. For example, courses in linguistics (or any other courses offered by MSU’s TESOL program) do not count. Nor do courses with a primary focus on teaching. For example, a graduate course in “Shakespeare” will fulfill the requirement, but a graduate course in “Teaching Shakespeare” will not. If you plan to enroll in a course offered at another university or to transfer a course you have already taken at another university, you should make absolutely sure that the course will be accepted as a graduate literature course at Murray State. To do so, email the director a course description and syllabus. If you want to check on whether a course from outside MSU fulfills the contemporary literature requirement, you should also email the director a course description and syllabus. (Before each registration period opens, we will alert you as to which MSU courses qualify as graduate literature courses and which fulfill the contemporary literature requirement.)

The expectations for graduate literature courses at Murray State are high. The assumption is that you will be able, right at the starting gate, to conduct thesis-driven research. If you do not know how to use the MLA bibliography and/or are unfamiliar with modes of literary criticism, you should try to rectify these deficits before signing up for a graduate literature course.

ENG 664: FIELD STUDY

Every student is required to serve as an intern for one semester on the editorial staff of New Madrid journal. Students become eligible to sign up for the field study once they have completed one semester in the program. Many students enroll in the field study in the same semester in which they enroll in their second or third poetry, fiction or nonfiction tutorial. Other students with less flexible schedules sign up for the field study in a semester in which they do not plan to complete a tutorial. **ALL STUDENTS MUST COMPLETE THE FIELD STUDY BEFORE SIGNING UP FOR THE THESIS SEMESTER.**

The reading load for the field study is significant. However, the only deadlines for completing the reading are the two online editorial meetings (dates to be determined by the group), and thus a lot of flexibility is built into the reading schedule. The writing load—which consists of one book review, to be written and revised one or more times for publication in the course of the semester—is also flexible. In other words, students who do choose to sign up for the field study on top of the tutorial in a given semester should be able to juggle the workload of the field study so that they can meet the fixed deadlines of the tutorial. Each student will gain access to submissions via a password, which will be assigned the first week of classes. The software used to access submissions is Submission Manager. The software used to participate in editorial meetings is Elluminate (which is now embedded in MSU’s Blackboard system).

PROTOCOL FOR ONLINE LITERATURE COURSES

If you have enrolled in an online literature course at MSU, do not expect to receive any course announcements in advance of the official first day of class. In the week or two before the course begins, it is possible that the professor who is teaching the course might not even be available to respond via email to questions you might have  (this is especially true for summer courses, when many professors are out of town on vacation). On the first day of class, you will receive an email from the professor alerting you as to course procedures.
DIRECTED STUDIES COURSES

If you plan to use *ENG 612: Directed Study* in fulfillment of one of the three graduate literature courses required by the program, you must file a Directed Study Form with the program. If you do not file this form, we will not have enough information to sign off on your “Graduate Program for Masters Degree” form.

DEGREE COMPLETION SCHEDULES

REQUIREMENTS FOR DEGREE COMPLETION (49 HOURS):

- Four on-campus residencies (12hrs.)
  - at least three must be in your chosen genre

- One on-campus thesis residency (1hr).
  - the final residency, during which you will defend your thesis, give a teaching presentation, and participate in other exit activities, but will not attend workshop or seminars.

- Three semesters of off-campus tutorial (18hrs.)
  - at least two must be in your chosen genre
  - tutorials are completed in the semester immediately following an attended residency

- One semester of field study (3hrs.)
  - should occur in your 2nd or 3rd semester

- One semester of thesis study (6hrs.)
  - should occur at the end of your program, once all other course requirements have been filled and immediately following your last residency

- Three semesters of graduate-level literature courses (9hrs.)
  - one class must focus on contemporary literature

SAMPLE SCHEDULES

One of the benefits of studying in a low-residency MFA program is the flexibility it offers. You can progress through the program at a pace that works in accordance with your lifestyles and their goals. Below are two sample schedules: the first schedule offers a timeline for students who wish to complete their degree quickly, attending four consecutive residencies and enrolling in a literature course or field study in addition to the tutorials. The second schedule offers a longer timeline for students who may be able to attend only one residency per year, or who are only able to enroll in one course per semester. These are by no means the only schedules you can follow;
they are meant simply to give you an idea of how you can build a timeline that works for your needs.

### SAMPLE SCHEDULE A (COMPLETION OF DEGREE IN TWO YEARS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR ONE</th>
<th>YEAR TWO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SUMMER</strong></td>
<td><strong>SUMMER</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July residency:</td>
<td>July residency:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3hrs.</td>
<td>3hrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FALL</strong></td>
<td><strong>FALL</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutorial:</td>
<td>Tutorial:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6hrs.</td>
<td>6hrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Lit Course:</td>
<td>Field Study:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3hrs.</td>
<td>3hrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WINTER</strong></td>
<td><strong>WINTER</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January residency:</td>
<td>January residency:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3hrs.</td>
<td>3hrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SPRING</strong></td>
<td><strong>SPRING</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutorial:</td>
<td>Creative Thesis:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6hrs.</td>
<td>6hrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Lit Course:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3hrs.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Hours/Year One:</td>
<td>Total Hours/Year Two:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24hrs.</td>
<td>25hrs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### SAMPLE SCHEDULE B (COMPLETION OF DEGREE IN FOUR YEARS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR ONE</th>
<th>YEAR TWO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SUMMER</strong></td>
<td><strong>SUMMER</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July Residency:</td>
<td>July Residency:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3hrs.</td>
<td>3hrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FALL</strong></td>
<td><strong>FALL</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutorial:</td>
<td>Tutorial:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6hrs.</td>
<td>6hrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SPRING</strong></td>
<td><strong>SPRING</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Lit Course:</td>
<td>Graduate Lit Course:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3hrs.</td>
<td>3hrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Hours/Year One:</td>
<td>Total Hours/Year Two:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12hrs.</td>
<td>12hrs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR THREE</th>
<th>YEAR FOUR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SUMMER</strong></td>
<td><strong>SUMMER</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Lit Course:</td>
<td>July Residency:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3hrs.</td>
<td>3hrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FALL</strong></td>
<td><strong>FALL</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutorial:</td>
<td>Creative Thesis:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6hrs.</td>
<td>6hrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SPRING</strong></td>
<td><strong>WINTER</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Study:</td>
<td>Thesis Residency:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3hrs.</td>
<td>1hr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Hours/Year Three:</td>
<td>Total Hours/Year Four:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15hrs.</td>
<td>10hrs.</td>
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**Total Program Hours:** 49
GENERAL STUDENT INFORMATION

ADMISSIONS

ADMISSION DEADLINE TO JANUARY RESIDENCY/SPRING TUTORIAL SEQUENCE

The deadline for application to the program with admission for the January Residency/Spring Tutorial Sequence is October 1. Applications will be evaluated in the first and second weeks of October. Admitted students must confirm their workshop spots by November 1.

ADMISSION DEADLINE TO THE JULY RESIDENCY/FALL TUTORIAL SEQUENCE

The deadline for application to the program with admission for the July Residency/Fall Tutorial Sequence is April 1. Applications will be evaluated in the first and second weeks of April. Admitted students must confirm their workshop spots by May 1.
ACADEMIC CREDIT

In order to receive official academic credit for a graduate course at MSU, students must achieve a grade of “C” or higher. If students receive a grade of “D” or “E,” they will need to retake the course in question or take another course in place of it.

STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS FOR ACADEMIC CREDIT

All courses listed on a student’s Graduate Program for Masters Degree Form (i.e., the form the Graduate Admissions and Records Office uses to decide whether you are eligible to graduate) must meet the 8-year statute of limitations in effect for graduate courses at Murray State. THE RELEVANT DATE FOR DETERMINING WHETHER OR NOT A COURSE YOU PLAN TO LIST ON THIS FORM MEETS THE STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS IS NOT THE DATE OF YOUR ACCEPTANCE INTO THE PROGRAM BUT RATHER THE DATE OF YOUR GRADUATION. For example, if a student started the program in 2010 and filed to graduate in May 2012, listing a literature course she took in spring semester 2002, she would not be approved for graduation.

TRANSFER OF CREDITS FROM ANOTHER INSTITUTION

You may transfer up to 9 hours of graduate credits from other institutions in fulfillment of the literature requirement. No other credits are transferrable. ALL TRANSFERRED COURSES MUST MEET THE STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS DESCRIBED ABOVE.

APPLICATION OF PREVIOUS MSU GRADUATE LITERATURE CREDITS TO THE MFA DEGREE

If you have taken graduate literature courses at MSU before enrolling in the MFA program, you may apply up to 9 hours of credits from these courses in fulfillment of the literature requirement. ALL COURSES MUST MEET THE STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS DESCRIBED ABOVE.

REAPPLICATION TO MURRAY STATE

If you opt out of the program for four or more semesters in succession, you will be required to reapply to the program.

M-NUMBER
As a student entering MSU, you will be assigned an M-Number, which will also appear on your
student ID card, which you will need to have made during your first visit to campus at the Racer
Card office on the first floor of the Curris Center. This card will provide access to campus
libraries and to the Wellness Center throughout your enrollment. The cost is nominal and can be
put on your MyGate account for payment later. Keep track of the card, as your M-Number
represents your identity in our Banner computer system.

MYGATE LOG-IN

All students entering MSU will also be assigned a MyGate log-in. IN ORDER TO KEEP IT
ACTIVE, YOU WILL NEED TO LOG INTO MyGATE AT LEAST EVERY TWO
WEEKS. If you forget to do so, you will need to call the Help Desk in the Center for Teaching,
Learning and Technology (CTLT) at 270-809-2346 to set up a new log-in. You will not be able to
see your grades (or even check course rosters, consult the university calendar, etc.) without an
active MyGate log-in.

FAMILY EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS & PRIVACY ACT OF 1974 (FERPA)

All MFA students should be aware of the privacy issues concerning the handling of educational
records. They should become familiar with FERPA policies included in the Appendix of this
document.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY

All MFA students should study the official MSU Sexual Harassment Policy in the Appendix of
this document and endeavor to comport themselves at all times in accordance with it.

The highly social nature of MFA residencies presents special challenges. The MFA program
expects all students to extend the traditional decorum of the classroom to all components of the
residency, including craft lectures, readings, faculty/student conferences, and (especially)
receptions, where alcohol is served. All MFA students are strongly urged to avoid relationships
of an amorous or intimate nature with all faculty. Behavior that violates MSU’s Sexual
Harassment Policy is grounds for dismissal. It should be noted, too, that according to this policy
no sexual relationship between a faculty member and a student qualifies as a relationship
between consenting adults (i.e., due to what the university sees as the inherent power bias built
into the faculty/student relationship).

MFA faculty or students who are witnesses to violations of MSU’s Sexual Harassment Policy by
other faculty members or students are required by law to report said violations. Faculty and
students to whom others may report violations of MSU’s Sexual Harassment Policy by other
faculty members or students must also report them. Violations may be reported directly to the
MFA Program Director or to the Chair of the English and Philosophy Department or the Director
of the Office of Equal Opportunity.
GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR GRADUATION

You MUST have a cumulative GPA of at least 3.00 (not including transfer courses) in order to graduate.

You MUST have completed ALL courses required for the MFA program in order to graduate. After receiving your Application for Graduate Degree, the Graduate Admissions and Records Office will check your file to verify that you have indeed done so.

You MUST have a zero balance or up-to-date loan payments, or your diploma and/or transcript will not be released.

FINANCIAL AID AND TUITION PAYMENT

Most students do not experience difficulty in attaining enough financial aid from Murray State to see them through the program. Contact the Financial Aid Office at 1-800-272-4MSU (ext. 3) or at (270) 809-2546 if you plan to seek financial aid. Someone in the office will walk you through the application process. Note that the financial aid awarded will not include grants. Only loans are available to graduate students.

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR THE FINANCIAL AID OFFICE

- Financial Aid phone number: 270-809-2596 or 800 272-4678 ext. 8
- Financial Aid website www.murraystate.edu/fas
- Financial Aid email: msu.sfa@murraystate.edu
- Financial Aid Counselors (assigned by last names):
  - A – F: Lauren Redd (270-809-5346 / lredd1@murraystate.edu)
Lori Mitchum, the Director of Financial Aid, asked that you speak with her or email her if you experience problems of any kind. Her email address is lmitchum@murraystate.edu.

**FASFA/FINANCIAL AID PROCEDURES**

**GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE FAFSA**

In order to obtain financial aid, you must first file a FASFA, which is found online ([www.fafsa.gov](http://www.fafsa.gov)). Please fill out any FASFAs that are available on that website. Sometimes there will be only one FAFSA (for the current year) and at other times there will be two FAFSAs- one for the current year and one for last year. If both of these are available online, that means you need to fill out both years. It depends on the time of year as to whether there are one or two FAFSAs available for you to complete. If you know you are going to need financial aid at any time during the coming year, go ahead and fill out the FAFSAs and have them on file. You will need to set up a pin number through [www.pin.ed.gov](http://www.pin.ed.gov) in order to access the forms. You will need to keep your FASFA file up-to-date, completing new FASFAs each academic year you apply for financial aid. A counselor in the FA office can't do anything to help you unless the FAFSA has been completed.

**FINANCIAL AID PROCEDURES**

1. If applying for federal financial aid, request a PIN number to be used as your electronic signature for all electronic documents for the Department of Education. Visit [www.pin.ed.gov](http://www.pin.ed.gov) to obtain a PIN.

2. To apply for federal aid complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Apply at [www.fafsa.gov](http://www.fafsa.gov).
   To complete this form, you will need a copy of your past year tax returns. If possible, within the FAFSA, use the IRS data retrieval option which brings in your prior year 1040 Tax Return information. This reduces your chance of being selected for verification. Students selected for verification should review documents needed through their myGate account.

3. It is important to complete the FAFSA as soon as possible to ensure that aid is available the semester you are enrolling. Please use either the IRS data retrieval if your taxes have been filed and processed or estimating your income for the prior year. If estimating your income for the prior year, mark your FAFSA as “will file”. Once your tax return has been processed by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), you will need to make corrections within your FAFSA by completing the IRS data retrieval. Visit [www.fafsa.gov](http://www.fafsa.gov) for more information.
4. You will receive an email from the Department of Education when your FAFSA has been processed. Please read your Student Aid Report for any required documents needed by the institution. The institution will receive your FAFSA electronically approximately 3 to 4 days after you receive your email. Once your FAFSA is loaded you need to review your MSU myGate account for any documents needed by the institution.

5. Once you are admitted to MSU, you will receive access to your myGate account located at https://mygate.murraystate.edu/cp/home/displaylogin. The Admissions Office will provide a user name and password for access. The myGate is your avenue for general information including, account status, financial aid, and academic.

6. All students must review the Terms and Conditions and accept or decline this option. For instructions on this process, you can access directions at http://www.murraystate.edu/Libraries/financial_aid/Procedures_for_Accepting_Terms_Conditions_and_Awards.sflb.ashx

7. Within your myGate account access the Money tab, click on the red check marks to view items needed. If you need assistance or have questions, please contact our office at 270-809-2546 or email msu.sfa@murraystate.edu.

8. Once you have cleared all required documents and have been awarded, visit the Money tab within your myGate account and go to the second box and click Financial Aid Awards. Using the drop down box, click the year you are attending, at the top click Accept Award Offer. Grants are accepted by MSU for you and this is performed internally. Scholarships must be accepted by you in order to receive these awards.

9. Loan types are as follows: Perkins Loan (interest-free while in school, 5% interest in repayment) or Subsidized Loan (interest-free while in school, 3.4% interest in repayment) are the best options, Unsubsidized Loan would be the third option and is different from the above loans as the 6.8% interest begins as soon as you receive the loan. All loans are deferred until 6 months after leaving the institution.

10. If you are considering accepting loans for the academic year, you must complete one-time documents. Those documents are Master Promissory Note and Entrance Counseling Session. You can complete both documents using your FAFSA pin number at www.studentloans.gov.

11. MSU offers numerous academic scholarships. The scholarship application is available from October to January 15. Please review and provide all documents requested by the January 15 deadline to be considered for University Scholarships. Please apply for scholarships at www.murraystate.edu/Students/Undergraduate/PayingforCollege/fas/scholarships.aspx also offers non-traditional student scholarships with an application deadline of June 1st.
FINANCIAL AID FOR THE DECEMBER/JANUARY INTERCESSION

The Financial Aid Office does not award funding specifically targeted at the new December/January Intercession. If you would like to enroll in a graduate literature course offered during the intercession, you will need to anticipate your financial needs when applying for financial aid for fall semester. Note that you must pay in full upon registration for the intercession.

FINANCIAL AID FOR SUMMER /JULY RESIDENCY

You must be enrolled for a minimum of 5 hours in order to qualify for summer financial aid. This is not a problem for the January residency because the Spring tutorial and the January residency are both considered Spring classes, so you have your minimum with those two classes alone. The problem is with the July residency because it is considered a summer class, while the tutorial is considered a fall class. In order to qualify for aid for the summer, you must add a summer lit class to get you up to the minimum of 5 hours. You must also take into consideration how much you have already borrowed and make sure that you have reserved enough since there is a maximum yearly amount that you can borrow.

Another option is to go ahead and borrow enough for the spring semester to carry you through the summer. Should your plans change, you can always return the money. All of this requires some advance planning because waiting until the last minute to apply for financial aid could jeopardize your plan to attend a residency. **We can't stress enough how pro-active you need to be if you are relying on financial aid.**

SECURITY

If you, or anyone you have designated to discuss your financial aid, would like to contact the Office of Financial Aid/Scholarship via telephone, please have the FERPA Security Answer available when you call. Please complete and submit the Consent to Release Student Information Form to the Registrar's Office. Please allow the Registrar's Office 5 business days for processing. Here is the link to the FERPA Consent Form: [http://murraystate.edu/bursar_files/FERPA%20Release%20of%20Information.pdf](http://murraystate.edu/bursar_files/FERPA%20Release%20of%20Information.pdf)

**NOTE:** Read the instructions on this form carefully because it must be notarized before you mail it in. They will not accept a fax. The FA counselors will not be able to assist you without the FERPA security questions. We suggest that you complete this form immediately, get it notarized and mail it as soon as possible.

TAKING A SEMESTER OFF: FINANCIAL-AID REPERCUSSIONS
If you decide to take a semester off from the program, you will have to file a deferment form with our Financial Aid Office in order to keep your financial aid in place. While there is no absolute guarantee that you will receive a deferment, there is usually no trouble with getting one the first time around. Requests for subsequent deferments may be eyed more critically. If you skip a residency/tutorial sequence, but will be enrolled in a graduate literature course and/or in the New Madrid Field Study in a given semester, you do not need to file a deferment form.

**USING MSU FINANCIAL AID AT OTHER INSTITUTIONS**

If you wish to fulfill your graduate literature requirement by enrolling in traditional courses (i.e., as opposed to in online courses) and you do not live within driving distance of the MSU campus, you may seek permission from our Financial Aid Office to use your financial aid to enroll in graduate literature courses at a university near your home. It will usually be granted.

**SCHOLARSHIPS**

**JESSE STUART FELLOWSHIP**

At present, the only scholarship available to all MFA students is the Jesse Stuart Fellowship, which provides a $5,000 stipend, $2,000 tuition discount and a waiver reducing out-of-state tuition to in-state, if applicable, for the academic year in which the fellowship is awarded. The fellowship is highly competitive. Full-time entering or first-year graduate students in Mass Communications, Humanities or Education are all eligible to apply for it. Applications are due April 1st of each year and must include a letter describing the applicant’s background, interests and career goals, including graduate study plans; a resume; three current letters of reference; transcripts of all college work; and a completed short application form. Currently, Dr. Timothy Johns serves as the coordinator of the Jesse Stuart Fellowship. You may reach him at (70) 809-4722 or at tjohns@murraystate.edu.

**NOTE THAT THE JESSE STUART FELLOWSHIP DOES NOT COVER THE JULY RESIDENCY OR ANY LITERATURE COURSES IN THE SUMMER SESSION. FUNDING IS LIMITED TO THE FALL AND SPRING SEMESTERS.**

**MINORITY FELLOWSHIP**

African-American graduate students from Kentucky are eligible to apply for the Minority Fellowship, which covers the cost of tuition and awards a stipend of $2,500 per semester for a maximum of four semesters to ten students in any field of graduate study available at the university. Criteria include: residency in the Commonwealth of Kentucky (as determined by MSU’s Admissions Services); an undergraduate GPA of at least 3.0; and acceptance into an MSU graduate degree program as a new student. Completed applications must be postmarked by March 1 for the fall semester and November 21 for the spring semester in order to qualify.
Ambre DuVentre in the Office of the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs coordinates this fellowship. You may reach her at (270) 809-5304 or at aduventre@murraystate.edu.

TUITION PAYMENT

Students must have enough aid to cover the balance of their account, or be enrolled in a payment plan and have made their first payment, or be paid in full by this date.

Students are required to sign up for a Murray State University Payment Plan (MSUPP) if they are not prepared to pay their balance IN FULL by the due dates listed above or by the first day of class (whichever occurs first). Payment plans are available by logging onto the student myGate site, clicking the MONEY tab, and following the MY ACCOUNT link. Students are required to sign up for a new payment plan each semester (summer included) if they wish to make monthly payments.

MSU PAYMENT PLAN INFORMATION

Murray State University is proud to be able to offer a payment plan to students for payment of their university bill. This payment plan makes it convenient to make monthly payments to the University, interest-free, over the course of the semester. They also make payments easy to manage by allowing students to enroll in automatic payments. Any student with a balance greater than $200 is eligible to enroll in a payment plan. Each semester, students are required to enroll or RE-ENROLL in the payment plan if they wish to make payments on their account each month. Even if the student has had a payment plan in the past, they will be required to set up a new payment plan each semester if they want to continue in the program.

Students are assessed a $30 enrollment fee when the payment plan is activated, but there is no additional charge to the student account unless a payment is made late (payments are considered "late" when the payment is made five (5) days after the posted payment due date). At the time of "late payment", 0.65% of the remaining balance will be charged as a late fee.

With a Murray State University Payment Plan (MSUPP) you can:

- Spread your payments out over a period of months, instead of paying in one large lump sum.
- Setup automatic payments using a credit card or electronic check (First time ACH users should allow four business days for account verification. You will receive an e-mail confirmation and be advised to return to the eBill website to submit payment).
- Receive real time email notifications if your MSUPP is recalculated due to account changes reflected on your student bill.

Payment Plan Options
At the beginning of each semester, students will be offered a payment plan based on a four (4)
pay system. The total cost of tuition, meal plan, housing, etc. NOT COVERED BY FINANCIAL AID, GRANTS, SCHOLARSHIPS OR OTHERWISE PAID will be broken down into four (4) equal payments, with one payment being due each month (August, September, October, and November for fall semesters; December, February, March, and April for spring; and **NEW** for the 2009-2010 academic year, a SUMMER payment plan with payments due in May, June and July).

Students may also choose to increase the initial down payment amount to reduce future installment payments. Financial aid requested later in the semester, or scholarships/other payments that apply after the deadline will cause the payment plan to recalculate and may also reduce the amount of future payments - or cancel the plan by paying the balance in full. Students are never penalized for paying off the payment plan early and can make payments any time during the semester (as long as the total amount due for the month is paid in full by the due date).

**Enrolling in a MSUPP**

Enrolling in a Murray State University Payment Plan is fast, easy, and safe. Simply:

1. Log onto the student myGate system
2. Click on your MONEY TAB
3. Follow the MY ACCOUNT link
4. Once you’ve entered the billing website, select the PAYMENT PLAN tab, or link across the top of the page
5. Select the available plan and agree to all terms & conditions.

Once you’ve selected your payment plan, you can choose (but are not required to select) a "saved payment" method - and have the amount of the monthly payment automatically debited from your credit card, checking/savings account, or debit card. You can also choose to sign back onto the system each month and complete the process manually by NOT electing to save a payment method.

If you have trouble setting up your payment plan, or have questions - please contact the MSU Bursar's Office at (270) 809-4227.

**Payment Plan: Frequently Asked Questions**

- *My Financial Aid award came in, is my payment plan automatically canceled?*
  - Any additional payments to your account, including Financial Aid, will automatically adjust your future payment plan. If your Financial Aid award exceeds your balance due, there will be NO future payments necessary as long as no additional charges are incurred. Be sure to check your CURRENT CHARGES section of the billing website to verify the entire amount is covered.
• *I have received an eBill from Murray State - I am paying my bills by payment plan, should I disregard the bill?*
  o No. You should first CHECK YOUR CURRENT STATEMENT ONLINE to see if any payments have been credited to your account. If you see no credited payments, you should then contact the Bursar's Office at (270) 809-4227 or via email at msu.bursar@murraystate.edu.

• *I would like to make payment plan arrangements. Who do I call?*
  o Review the information above or check out our HELP GUIDE to see if your question can be answered there. If you're still experiencing difficulties or need further assistance, please contact the Bursar's Office at (270) 809-4227 or by email at msu.bursar@murraystate.edu.

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**NON-THESIS RESIDENCIES**

**RESIDENCY DEADLINES**

Students who are already enrolled in the program must commit to attendance at the January residency by October 1 and to attendance at the July residency by April 1.

Note that these deadlines coincide with our admissions deadlines for new students. We have a limited number of spots in each genre at each residency, and we give priority to students who are already enrolled. However, we must get an absolute commitment from you by these deadlines in
order to guarantee you a spot at the residency. Any open spots will be offered to qualified new applicants after the announced residency deadlines have passed.

**PENALTY FOR DROPPING OUT OF A RESIDENCY**

Any student who commits to attending a residency and who, for any reason, subsequently drops the residency will be put on a waiting list the next time he or she commits to attending a residency. In other words, he or she will not be assigned a spot in a residency workshop until all newly accepted students have been accommodated. If no workshop spots remain, the student involved will have to wait until the succeeding residency to begin another residency/tutorial sequence. **IF THE STUDENT DROPS A SECOND RESIDENCY, HE OR SHE WILL BE ASKED TO LEAVE THE PROGRAM.**

**HOUSING**

MFA students have the options of staying in a dorm on campus during the residency or staying in a hotel; usually, the dormitory option is the cheaper of the two.

Should you choose to stay in the dorm, the costs are billed on your MyGate account following the residency. You will need to bring your own sheets (twin size), towels and pillows. **Alcohol is not allowed in the MSU dorms.** If you would like to keep alcohol in your room, we suggest choosing the option of staying in a hotel.

Should you prefer to stay in a hotel, you are required to make your own arrangements. We recommend the Murray Plaza Lodge (270-873-2255). There are other hotel/motels (Hampton Inn and Holiday Inn Express), but they are more expensive. Many students opt to share hotel rooms and split the cost; you may use the MFA student listserv to contact other students with roommate requests.

In advance of each residency, a letter from the director with general information will be sent to all students. If you are coming to residency, after you’ve received this letter, please respond to program assistant Nita King at nking3@murraystate.edu with housing requests.

**PARKING**

Students will be issued a temporary parking permit for use during the residencies. The owner of any automobile parked on campus without the appropriate permit displayed will be subject to the MSU parking violation fines found on the MSU website: www.murraystate.edu/HeaderMenu/Offices/PublicSafetyAndEmergencyManagement/ParkingManagement/ViolationsFinesAndPenalties.aspx

**EMERGENCY CONTACT INFO ON CAMPUS**
All campus emergencies (MSU Police)..............911
  • 24 hours a day

MSU Police (non-emergency)............................270-809-2222

Office of Environmental Safety and Health.......270-809-3480
  • Office hours 7a.m.-4p.m.

Facilities Management.............................................270-809-4291
  • Office hours 7a.m.-4p.m.

Student Health Services...........................................270-809-3809

IT Help line…………………………………......... 270-809-2346
  • Additional Help Information may be found here: www.murraystate.edu/helpdesk

Curris Center………………………………………270-809-6921

Faculty Club……………………………………….270-809-3831

**STUDENT NON-THESIS RESIDENCY RESPONSIBILITIES**

Students are expected to contribute to the residency experience in the following ways:

- Before residency, submit required creative work for workshop. **NOTE TO FICTION WRITERS: NO NOVEL EXCERPTS.**
- Be on time for and participate in all workshops.
- Come to workshop having read all assigned material and peer work, and having prepared comments or any additional materials as instructed by mentor.
- Be on time for and participate in respective genre seminar meetings, having read the assigned texts before arriving to campus.
- Attend the opening MFA banquet
- Attend the opening MFA program meeting
- Meet with their assigned mentor individually at least twice outside of workshop to discuss writing projects and reading lists for the tutorial semester
- Attend all scheduled readings by visiting writers and receptions afterward
- Attend all scheduled readings by MFA faculty
- Attend all scheduled readings by graduating students and receptions afterward
- Attend all craft lectures
- Attend and evaluate the student teaching presentations
- Make sure the reading list for each non-thesis tutorial is diversified and comprehensive and in compliance with the program requirement that 25% of the works listed be written before 1950 (thesis students are not required to compile a reading list, although they may choose to list a few craft books or other books they see as potentially helpful)
• Complete a semester contract (packet length and submission schedule to be determined in conference) and submit one copy to mentor and program director for signatures. See Appendix for example.
• Attend the closing MFA banquet/student reading
• Complete residency evaluation before departure

READING LISTS FOR THE TUTORIAL SEMESTER CONTRACT

In consultation with their assigned mentors during the residency, students must develop a reading list for the tutorial. Each list should comprise 8 to 10 works of poetry, fiction or nonfiction, plus a book or two on craft. Twenty five percent of the listed works must have been published before 1950. In some cases, adjustments to the numbers are acceptable. For example, *The Norton Anthology of Short Fiction* should count for more than one book. Master reading lists in each genre for use in conference with students can be found on the Residency and Program Resources section of the MFA program website: http://www.murraystate.edu/Academics/CollegesDepartments/CollegeOfHumanitiesAndFineArts/EnglishAndPhilosophy/GraduatePrograms/MFACreativeWriting/Resources/ReadingLists.aspx

NON-THESIS TUTORIAL SEMESTERS

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES FOR NON-THESIS TUTORIALS

During non-thesis tutorial semesters, student responsibilities include the following:

• Complete a minimum of three packets of original creative work (and revisions of said work) by the dates agreed upon in the student-mentor contract.
• Complete 7 to 10 annotations on works from the semester reading list by the dates agreed upon in the student-mentor contract.
• Communicate with mentor in the wake of each packet (communication can be via various methods—phone, email, U.S. mail, Skype, etc.)

PACKET DEADLINES
At the end of each residency for which you are enrolled, you will sign a contract agreeing to adhere to a number of specified packet deadlines for the succeeding semester. The assigned mentor will also sign the contract, as will the program director. If your mentor reports you to be in serious violation of one or more of these deadlines, you will be put on program probation for the following semester. (Here, serious violation is defined as three or more days behind the officially agreed-upon deadline.) Any further violations will result in your being asked to leave the program.

THE ANNOTATION REQUIREMENT

Annotations constitute the critical writing component of the tutorial semester. In each tutorial, a student must write 7 to 10 annotations on books on the reading list attached to the semester contract. The program follows the guidelines developed by Joy Castro, author of *The Truth Book* and *Island of Bones*, for The Solstice MFA in Creative Writing Program of Pine Manor College. (See Appendix.)

MLA HANDBOOK

MLA documentation style is required for all papers assigned in literature courses in the English and Philosophy Department, as well as for all MFA theses. MFA faculty will assume student familiarity, if not mastery, of MLA style; MFA students without such familiarity must do what they can to rectify this deficit before enrolling in graduate literature courses. All students are required to be in possession of *The MLA Handbook*, published by the Modern Language Association (the 7th edition is now current). The activation code inside each copy allows access to the online version of the handbook, which provides additional examples of formatting issues.

MFA students are encouraged to view annotations as an opportunity to put MLA documentation into practice. Students should pay attention to MLA rules in the three pre-thesis tutorials so that issues of MLA formatting do not usurp their time in the thesis tutorial. Absolutely no MFA thesis will be approved by the Dean’s Office unless it impeccably follows the rules for MLA formatting (and the rules for incorporating parenthetical citations and for organizing *Works Cited* pages are especially important).

THE THESIS PROCESS

ESTABLISHING THESIS READINESS

REMEMBER THAT IN ORDER TO BE APPROVED TO ENTER THE THESIS SEMESTER, YOU MUST HAVE COMPLETED ALL THREE GRADUATE LITERATURE
REQUIREMENTS AND THE FIELD STUDY, IN ADDITION TO THREE RESIDENCY/TUTORIAL SEQUENCES.

If you have completed all required course work, you may apply to enter the thesis semester. Assessment of thesis readiness will be based on official reports submitted by program faculty at the end of each of the required three non-thesis residency/tutorial sequences and confirmed by the director.

If you are not approved to enter the thesis stage, you will be required to enroll in a fourth residency and tutorial in your elected genre before seeking approval again to sign up for ENG 668: Creative Thesis.

If you are wary about your thesis readiness although you have not been expressly advised not to sign up for the thesis semester, you may seek the director’s permission to sign up for an extra residency/tutorial sequence in your elected genre before enrolling in ENG 668: Creative Thesis.

MEETING THE REQUIREMENTS FOR ENG 668: CREATIVE THESIS

At the beginning of your third residency/tutorial sequence, you should make an appointment with the program director to discuss your preferences for thesis director. At this point, the director should also be able to give you a good idea of which faculty members might be on campus the following residency and available to serve as the other two members on your committee. You will be invited to get a tentative committee in place in the wake of this meeting. PLEASE DO NOT APPROACH ANYONE TO BE YOUR THESIS DIRECTOR UNTIL YOU HAVE MET WITH THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR AT THE BEGINNING OF YOUR THIRD RESIDENCY/TUTORIAL SEQUENCE.

Note that all members of the committee must be Murray State faculty, either full-time or part-time, and that at least two members of the committee should be creative writing faculty in your own genre. For the third member of your committee, you could invite a) another creative writing faculty member in your own genre, b) a creative writing faculty member in a different genre or c) a literature professor you have had for a genre seminar or semester course. No outside faculty will be allowed to sit on your committee, even if they teach in other low-residency MFA programs.

We will do our best to give you your first or second choice of thesis director, but there are times when such accommodations are impossible. So, a word to the wise: it helps to be flexible. Your preferred mentor will not necessarily be on staff for the semester in which you want to write your thesis, and/or your preferred mentor may already be full up on thesis students (most mentors prefer no more than two thesis students and draw the line at three). In the second half of the third tutorial, your current mentor, in consultation with previous mentors and with the director, will make a determination of whether you are thesis-ready. The decision will be based primarily on whether you have enough good material on which to base a thesis.
Confirmation from the director constitutes permission to register for ENG 668: Creative Thesis. All thesis students in all genres are on the same class list for this course, which is always listed under the program director’s name. In other words, although your name will appear on the workshop list for the residency with those of other students in your genre who are studying with the same mentor (i.e., your thesis director), it will NOT appear in MyGate under the workshop leader’s name.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THESIS TUTORIALS

During their final tutorial, thesis candidates’ responsibilities include the following:

- With the assistance of his/her thesis director, assess which work from the preceding three sequences should be included in the thesis
- Develop a plan for filling in any gaps if the work from the preceding three semesters does not prove sufficient.
- Revise work from the first three residency/tutorial sequences and arranging it into a thesis
- Develop an approach to writing the required thesis introduction
- Submit a minimum of three packets of thesis installments (including revisions of poetry, fiction or nonfiction, and drafts of the required thesis introduction) by the deadlines agreed upon in the student-mentor contract.
- Communicate with thesis director in the wake of each packet (communication can be via various methods—phone, email, U.S. mail, Skype, etc.)
- Work with thesis director on the development of a teaching presentation for the thesis residency (see section below on Teaching Presentations)
- Email and mail copy of thesis to all members of the thesis committee.

THESIS MANUSCRIPT REQUIREMENTS

ORIGINAL CREATIVE WORK

In the thesis semester, you will work with your thesis director to develop a coherent original manuscript. You will revise material from your three earlier residency/tutorial sequences for inclusion and also (perhaps) generate some new work for inclusion. Your completed manuscript must meet the following page requirements:

- 36 to 48 pages for poetry
- 60 to 80 pages for prose

THESIS INTRODUCTION
Your thesis must also include a critical introduction, in which you should attempt to define something about who you are as a writer (see “Some Notes on the Thesis Introduction,” in the Appendix, for more information on how your introduction might take shape). There is no distribution requirement for the thesis-semester reading list. The list should include any books the thesis director and thesis student deem relevant to the process of editing and revising work for the thesis and writing the introduction. Reading lists from the three tutorial semesters, as well as the requisite annotations based on the reading lists, should provide some direction for the thesis introduction.

WORKS CITED

A Works Cited must be included in your thesis manuscript and should make note of all works referenced in your introduction. The Works Cited page should be formatted according to current MLA standards.

THESIS LIAISON

Dr. Danielle Nielsen of the Murray State Department of English & Philosophy serves as a thesis liaison for MFA students and the graduate school. MFA thesis candidates are required to meet with Dr. Nielsen as they enter their thesis tutorial, then to submit their thesis to her for final formatting editing after they’ve successfully defended their projects. Dr. Nielsen will provide feedback concerning the format of the thesis and assist with ferrying the thesis through the final steps of the administrative process.

SAMPLE TIMELINES FOR THESIS SUBMISSION

STUDENTS DEFENDING MFA THESIS IN JULY FOR DECEMBER GRADUATION

Students who defend their theses in July have not, in the experience of the MFA program administrators and mentors, been able to complete the necessary revisions and steps required by the MFA program and the MSU Graduate School quickly enough to qualify for summer graduation in August. Therefore, it is the standing policy of the MFA program that the earliest possible graduation date for July defenders is the December date following their successful July defense.
| JANUARY (RESIDENCY) | • Complete 4th residency  
• Submit contract for thesis tutorial with timeline for completion of thesis manuscript drafts |
| JANUARY-MAY | • Complete thesis tutorial |
| JUNE 1ST | • Deadline for sending polished thesis (complete manuscript & introduction) to committee members by email AND regular mail. |
| JULY (RESIDENCY) | • Defend thesis  
• Have committee members complete the required signature sheets (must be on Thesis Bond paper)  
• Give exit reading  
• Give teaching presentation  
• Meet with Dr. Danielle Nielsen, MFA thesis consultant, about revisions and procedures for submitting thesis for graduation |
| SEPTEMBER 1ST | • Submit revised thesis to Dr. Nielsen for proofreading |
| OCTOBER 1ST | • Submit revised thesis to Dr. Nielsen for proofreading (may not be necessary for all students, depending on revisions required by committee, thesis consultant, and the Dean’s Office) |
| NOVEMBER 1ST | • Deadline to mail or submit hard copy of FINAL VERSION OF THESIS to Dr. Nielsen  
• Complete the Graduate Thesis Payment and Processing Form*  
• Pay the graduate thesis processing fee of $105.50 using credit/debit card or by electronic check*  
• Complete the ProQuest Thesis Submission Form*  
• Forward copy of payment form and receipt for binding fee to Dr. Nielsen  
*Further information on these requirements can be found on at [www.murraystate.edu/finishyourthesis](http://www.murraystate.edu/finishyourthesis) |
| GRADUATION DATE | DEGREE CONFERRED  
(See MSU Website for exact date) |
| POST-GRADUATION | • Allow 6-8 weeks for your bound thesis copies to be mailed to you at the mailing address listed on the Graduate Thesis Payment and Processing Form. |
### STUDENTS DEFENDING MFA THESIS IN JANUARY FOR MAY GRADUATION

| JULY  
| RESIDENCY | • Complete 4th residency  
| | | • Submit contract for thesis tutorial with timeline for completion of thesis manuscript drafts |
| JULY-DECEMBER | • Complete thesis tutorial |
| DECEMBER 1ST | • Deadline for sending polished thesis (complete manuscript & introduction) to committee members by email AND regular mail. |
| JANUARY  
| RESIDENCY | • Defend thesis  
| | | • Have committee members complete the required signature sheets (must be on Thesis Bond paper)  
| | | • Give exit reading  
| | | • Give teaching presentation  
| | | • Meet with Dr. Danielle Nielsen, MFA thesis consultant, about revisions and procedures for submitting thesis for graduation |
| FEBRUARY 1ST | • Submit revised thesis to Dr. Nielsen for proofreading |
| MARCH 1ST | • Submit revised thesis to Dr. Nielsen for proofreading (may not be necessary for all students, depending on revisions required by committee, thesis consultant, and the Dean’s Office) |
| APRIL 1ST | • Deadline to mail or submit hard copy of FINAL VERSION OF THESIS to Dr. Nielsen  
| | | • Complete the Graduate Thesis Payment and Processing Form*  
| | | • Pay the graduate thesis processing fee of $105.50 using credit/debit card or by electronic check*  
| | | • Complete the ProQuest Thesis Submission Form*  
| | | • Forward copy of payment form and receipt for binding fee to Dr. Nielsen  
| | | *further information on these requirements can be found on at www.murraystate.edu/finishyourthesis |
| GRADUATION DATE | DEGREE CONFERRED  
| | (See MSU Website for exact date) |
| POST-GRADUATION | • Allow 6-8 weeks for your bound thesis copies to be mailed to you at the mailing address listed on the Graduate Thesis Payment and Processing Form. |
THESIS RESIDENCY

During a student’s final residency, he/she will defend the thesis, give a public reading from the thesis, meet with the thesis liaison, and give a teaching presentation to students and faculty.

THESIS DEFENSE

Scheduling of Thesis Defenses

Thesis defenses are always scheduled for the first day of the residency (usually between 8:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.) and may be scheduled simultaneously.

Using Skype for the Defense

The general expectation is that the thesis director be on campus for the thesis defense, which will occur at the very beginning of the next residency. However, when a thesis director is not already scheduled to teach in the next residency/tutorial sequence and thus is not absolutely required to be on campus, the director will be invited to attend the thesis defense via Skype. Defenses involving Skype will generally be scheduled in the Dean’s Conference Room on the third floor of Faculty Hall. In rare circumstances, the MFA director will grant permission for another committee member (i.e., a committee member who is not also the director) to be present at a defense via Skype. Under no circumstances will more than one member of a committee be present at the defense via Skype.

General Procedures

Defenses are scheduled for one hour. Though each thesis director may conduct the defense proceedings as he/she wishes, the hour usually includes a brief reading by the thesis candidate and an introduction to the work by either the candidate or the director, followed by questions and discussion of the thesis by the candidate and the committee members (this takes up the majority of the hour). After the discussion has finished, the candidate leaves the room while the committee members discuss their final evaluation in private. Then the candidate is invited back in the room, and the results of the defense proceedings are announced.

Each thesis committee member will give the candidate a thesis evaluation form which includes comments and suggestions for final revisions. Committee members may also give candidates a copy of the thesis with their edits or other commentary.

If the candidate passes the defense, the candidate must get the signatures of each committee member present on the thesis signature page. These signed copies should be placed in the marked envelope in the conference room.
PUBLIC READING

On the evening of the first day of the residency (and possibly the evening of the second day, depending on the number of thesis candidates), thesis candidates will give a public reading from their projects. Candidates are encouraged to consult with their thesis directors about appropriate excerpts for their time limits, and to practice their choices. Normally, these readings are held on campus in the Clara Eagle Gallery and are followed by a dessert reception at the Faculty Club.

MEETING WITH THESIS LIAISON

All candidates are required to meet with Dr. Danielle Nielsen, the MFA program’s thesis liaison, to discuss deadlines for submitting the thesis for graduation and any formatting questions or issues. Typically, these meetings take place during the first 1-3 days of the residency.

TEACHING PRESENTATION

Purpose

Because of the distance-learning approach of low-residency MFA programs, students receive more individualized time with their faculty mentors but fewer opportunities for practicing their teaching skills in a classroom of their own. One of our program goals is to create for our MFA students more pedagogical opportunities, starting with the thesis residency teaching presentation.

The purpose of the teaching presentation, which is given during your final residency in the days after your thesis defense, is twofold. First, it serves as an exhibition of your readiness for graduation and the culmination of your career as a graduate student in the MFA program. Second, the teaching presentation offers you the chance to practice your presentation and teaching skills in front of a smart, supportive “class” of your peers and mentors who can provide you with insightful and invaluable feedback.

Ideally, your presentation will grow out of one or more of the annotations you have written during your previous tutorials. It may work in tandem with the critical portion of the introduction to your thesis, which should also grow out of your annotations. In either case, you want your presentation to focus on what you believe is a fascinating, crucial, and/or overlooked element of craft in your particular genre, and you can use one source text (a story, novel, poem, essay, etc.) or several to illustrate your points. You should imagine your class to be comprised of students who are knowledgeable about literature or creative writing, but not experts – an intermediate or advanced undergraduate English or creative writing major, for instance. Your presentation should last 45-50 minutes; an additional 10-15 minutes will be scheduled for Q&A with the audience.
Process

During your final non-thesis residency, before you enter the thesis tutorial, you will meet individually with your Thesis Director, who will coordinate all teaching presentations, to discuss the teaching presentation and any preliminary ideas you may have. You will also set up a schedule of deadlines for the various documents you’ll be submitting as your presentation develops. As you progress through your thesis tutorial, you’ll complete the following preparatory documents according to the timeline agreed upon by you and your Thesis Director:

- **Proposal**
  - The proposal is a brief 300-500 word document in which you describe your presentation topic and source text(s) and provide a rationale for them.
  - *Note: your proposal must also be approved by the MFA program director.*

- **Statement of pedagogical practices**
  - This 3-5 page statement is a more thorough explanation of your plans for your topic and the text(s) you’ll be using. Some questions you might address in this statement: what approach do you plan to take for your presentation? Will it be a lecture with minimal student participation, or will it be more discussion-oriented with special attention given to student interaction? How will you introduce the material? What will be the major points of your presentation, and how will you proceed through them? What elements/excerpts will you highlight, and why? How will you use these highlighted elements to illustrate good writing practices? How will you involve the students?

- **Materials for use during the presentation**
  - These materials include any handouts you might distribute to the class, as well as media clips or powerpoint/electronic presentations that you might use. While we certainly don’t want your class to be overwhelmed with handouts or media clips, a couple of well-designed materials incorporated effectively into a presentation not only will make the students’ experience more enjoyable, but also will provide additional support for the lessons of your presentation.

- **Outline of presentation**
  - This is the document you will use to guide you through your presentation. It can be a bulleted outline, notes, a script, or any combination of those approaches.

- **Two follow-up assignments for students**
  - If this were an actual classroom, you would evaluate your students’ understanding of the material by giving them an assignment. What kind of assignments would you give? For this element of the presentation, you will design two assignments, one of which must be a prompt for an essay or short critical response. The other is your choice. You might design a prompt for a story or poem that incorporates the
After you’ve given your presentation, your audience will fill out an evaluation form, which will be collected and submitted to the Program Director. Before leaving campus, you will meet with the Program Director to discuss your presentation and the evaluations (you’ll receive a copy of the evaluation results at this conference). Your thesis director and/or the Program Director may also attend this conference.

**Evaluation of Student Progress**

**Program Grading Policy**

If there is a default grade for good students in the program, it is a “B,” not an “A.” The grade of “A” is reserved for students who have turned in a significant amount of high-caliber, thesis-ready work—students for whom there is absolutely no doubt of qualifying as thesis-ready in three residency/tutorial sequences. Note, too, that students will receive graduate credit at Murray State for a grade of “C.”

**Posting of Grades**

Grades for both the January residency and the spring-semester tutorial will be posted at the end of finals week in the spring semester. Grades for the July residency will be posted at the end of the summer session. Grades for the fall-semester tutorial will be posted at the end of finals week in the fall semester. Note that the July residency is defined within the MSU bureaucracy as a summer course, which causes a discrepancy in how July and January residency grades are processed.

**End-of-Semester Grade Reports**

At the end of each semester, you will receive an official end-of semester report from your mentor or the program assistant on your performance and progress during both the residency and the tutorial.

**Other**

**Staying Connected**
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENTS

Twice annually, current students will be invited via our listserv to submit updates for the “Student Achievements” section of our website. The limit for each entry is 75 words.

MSU-MFA ON THE WEB

Websites:

- MFA Program: [Low-Residency MFA at Murray State](#)
- MSU Department of English & Philosophy: [English & Philosophy at Murray State](#)

Facebook:

- [Murray State University Low-Residency Program in Creative Writing](#)
- [Murray State University Department of English and Philosophy](#)

ALUMNI

ALUMNI UPDATES

Twice annually, program alumni will be invited via our alumni listserv to submit professional updates for the “Alumni News” section of our website. The limit for each entry is 75 words.

ALUMNI EVENTS

In an effort to better serve and enjoy our growing alumni population, we’ve designated the first weekend of every July residency as our official, annual Alumni Weekend. Events this weekend will include alumni readings, as well as special alumni get-togethers, such as happy hours and brunch receptions. We are eager to develop more alumni programming, so if you have any ideas, please contact the directors or the administrative assistant. We’d love to get your input, even before you graduate!

ALUMNI LISTSERV

Once you graduate, be sure to request inclusion on our alumni listserv; it’s the means we most often used to stay in touch with our graduates.
APPENDIX: GUIDELINES & EXAMPLE DOCUMENTS

- EXAMPLE TUTORIAL CONTRACTS
  - CONTRACT FOR POETRY
  - CONTRACT FOR PROSE
  - CONTRACT FOR THESIS SEMESTER STUDENT

- GUIDELINES FOR ANNOTATIONS
- GUIDELINES FOR THESIS INTRODUCTION
EXAMPLE TUTORIAL CONTRACTS

- The following are examples of student contracts for semester-long tutorials. All contracts are designed and agreed upon by the student, mentor, and Program Director during residency. All signatures are required before the student leaves the residency.
- A template for the contract can be found under the Resources section of the MFA website. Faculty mentors and students may modify the document to accommodate their agreed upon content and goals.

EXAMPLE OF CONTRACT IN POETRY

PACKET SUBMISSION CONTRACT FOR SEMESTER-LONG GRADUATE TUTORIAL

(Fiction: ENG 661; Poetry: ENG 662; Creative Non-Fiction: ENG 663)
This contract is completed at the MSU Campus Residency in order to provide concrete expectations for work during the following semester’s graduate tutorial. The contract may be emended by the student during the tutorial with the approval of the faculty mentor and the program director. This contract should be signed and submitted to your faculty mentor at your second conference with him or her during the residency.

Note: You should be enrolled in the tutorial that corresponds with the genre in which you are working at the preceding residency.

Student
JANE DOE

Faculty Mentor
JACK SMITH

Genre
POETRY

Tutorial Semester
3RD

SUBMISSION SCHEDULE
Students should expect to submit at least three packets of work spaced throughout the semester. These will include a combination of original work and revisions. Number of packets, their length, and submission schedule will be determined by faculty mentor in consultation with student.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Packet #1: FEBRUARY 5</th>
<th>Contents: 1 revision, 3 new drafts, and 2 annotations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Packet #2: MARCH 5</td>
<td>Contents: 1 revision, 3 new drafts, and 2 annotations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Packet #3: APRIL 5</td>
<td>Contents: 1 revision, 3 new drafts, and 2 annotations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Packet #4: MAY 5</td>
<td>Contents: final portfolio: 8-10 revisions &amp; critical introduction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional Packets or Notes:
- The critical introduction included with the final portfolio of poems will incorporate Jane’s annotation work. Our goal is for this document to be not only the culminating statement of her progress this semester, but also a useful practice run for her thesis introduction.

BOOK LIST FOR TUTORIAL
- At least 25% of your list should be titles originally published before 1950.

Craft/Criticism:
- The Art of Description (Mark Doty)
• The Art of the Poetic Line (James Longenbach)

Pre-1950 Works:

  • Selected Poems (Gwendolyn Brooks)
  • Selected Poems (Robert Frost)

Post-1950 Works:

  • Fire to Fire: New and Selected Poems (Mark Doty)
  • When My Brother Was an Aztec (Natalie Diaz)
  • Lighthead (Terrance Hayes)
  • Above the River: The Complete Poems (James Wright)
  • Elegy (Larry Levis)
  • Selected Poems of Anne Sexton (Anne Sexton)

**BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF SEMESTER GOALS AND TIMELINE**

Though I’m happy with the progress of my work up to this point of my graduate school career, I don’t feel like I’ve produced as many poems I feel confident about as I will need for my thesis. Being in my third semester, I really want to concentrate on generating more new poems. After discussing it with my mentor, we decided that each of the first three packets will include more new poems than revisions this semester. I will also work hard on getting a draft of my thesis introduction in the works, using the annotations I complete this semester and maybe even material from my two previous semesters.

I’m going to concentrate on compressing language and streamlining the narratives in my poems this semester. I also want to work on letting go of my attachment to facts, so I can tell the story as it needs to be told and not bog it down with facts that aren’t necessary. My other main goal I am going to require of myself is to write poems that take more formal risks. To help with this goal, my mentor has agreed to give me some prompts that will require me to write outside of my comfort zone.

Student__________________________________________  Date ____________

Faculty Mentor____________________________________  Date ____________

Program Director__________________________________  Date ____________

**EXAMPLE OF CONTRACT IN PROSE**

**Packet Submission Contract for Semester-Long Graduate Tutorial**

(Fiction: ENG 661; Poetry: ENG 662; Creative Non-Fiction: ENG 663)
This contract is completed at the MSU Campus Residency in order to provide concrete expectations for work during the following semester’s graduate tutorial. The contract may be emended by the student during the tutorial with the approval of the faculty mentor and the program director. This contract should be signed and submitted to your faculty mentor at your second conference with him or her during the residency.

Note: You should be enrolled in the tutorial that corresponds with the genre in which you are working at the preceding residency.

Student  JANE DOE
Faculty Mentor  JACK SMITH
Genre  FICTION
Tutorial Semester  3RD

SUBMISSION SCHEDULE

Students should expect to submit at least three packets of work spaced throughout the semester. These will include a combination of original work and revisions. Number of packets, their length, and submission schedule will be determined by faculty mentor in consultation with student.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Received by</th>
<th>Contents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Packet #1:</td>
<td>FEBRUARY 24 short stories (complete drafts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Packet #2:</td>
<td>MARCH 23 short stories (complete drafts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Packet #3:</td>
<td>APRIL 20 short stories (full revisions)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional Packets or Notes:
- None

BOOK LIST FOR TUTORIAL
- At least 25% of your list should be titles originally published before 1950.

Craft/Criticism:
- From Where You Dream: The Process of Writing Fiction (Robert Olen Butler)

Pre-1950 Works:
- Huckleberry Finn (Mark Twain)
Post-1950 Works:

- *The Collected Stories of Peter Taylor* (Peter Taylor)**
- *The Complete Stories* (Flannery O’Connor)**
- *The Magic Barrel* (Bernard Malamud)
- *A Lesson Before Dying* (Ernest Gaines)
- *A Death in the Family* (James Agee)

**count as two selections because of length.

**BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF SEMESTER GOALS AND TIMELINE**

In the winter/spring tutorial of 2012, I have the end in mind. There are themes I feel have surfaced in my work; themes of family relationships set against the backdrop of Southern life, life in the context of trauma, and elements of the fantastical within the realistic. I want to explore those themes of literature that I read while studying craft issues such as differing points of view, setting, dialogue, etc. I find the books I read during the semester inform my work, so I plan to carefully examine form and function in the works of the authors listed above. By the end of the semester, my goal is to have a body of work that displays my progress as a writer, reader, and artist. I want to enter my thesis semester holding the reins of my own work firmly in one hand and the works of literary luminaries in the other.

Student__________________________________________ Date ____________

Faculty Mentor____________________________________ Date ____________

Program Director__________________________________ Date ____________

**EXAMPLE CONTRACT FOR THESIS SEMESTER**

**Packet Submission Contract for Semester-long Graduate Tutorial**

(Fiction: ENG 661; Poetry: ENG 662; Creative Non-Fiction: ENG 663)

This contract is completed at the MSU Campus Residency in order to provide concrete expectations for work during the following semester’s graduate tutorial. The contract may be emended by the student during the tutorial with the approval of the faculty mentor and the program director. This contract should be signed and submitted to your faculty mentor at your second conference with him or her during the residency.

Note: You should be enrolled in the tutorial that corresponds with the genre in which you are working at the preceding residency.
**Student**  
JANE DOE

**Faculty Mentor**  
JACK SMITH

**Genre**  
POETRY

**Tutorial Semester**  
5TH (THESIS SEMESTER)

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**Submission Schedule**

Students should expect to submit at least three packets of work spaced throughout the semester. These will include a combination of original work and revisions. Number of packets, their length, and submission schedule will be determined by faculty mentor in consultation with student.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Packet #</th>
<th>Received by</th>
<th>Contents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Packet #1</td>
<td>FEBRUARY 8</td>
<td>POEM REVISIONS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Packet #2</td>
<td>MARCH 1</td>
<td>POEM REVISIONS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Packet #3</td>
<td>APRIL 5</td>
<td>POEM REVISIONS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Packet #4</td>
<td>APRIL 19</td>
<td>COMPLETE DRAFT OF POEMS IN THESIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Packet #5</td>
<td>APRIL 26</td>
<td>COMPLETE DRAFT OF INTRODUCTION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Packet #6</td>
<td>MAY 13</td>
<td>COMPLETE DRAFT OF THESIS MANUSCRIPT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Additional Packets or Notes:**
- MAY 24: Complete draft of manuscript mailed and emailed to thesis committee members.

**BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF SEMESTER GOALS AND TIMELINE**

For the first half of the semester, my thesis director and I will work on revising the poems that will be included in my thesis. In April and May, I will focus on organizing the manuscript and writing the introduction. My goal is to have my entire thesis manuscript polished and ready to send to my committee members by May 24.

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**Student**  
______________________________  
Date  ____________

**Faculty Mentor**  
______________________________  
Date  ____________

**Program Director**  
______________________________  
Date  ____________
ANNOTATION GUIDELINES

- These guidelines were developed by Joy Castro, author of *The Truth Book* and *Island of Bones* for the Solstice MFA in Creative Writing Program of Pine Manor College

Annotation Guidelines for Murray State Low-Residency MFA Program

Annotations offer you the chance to demonstrate your own suppleness and sensitivity as a reader and to share the joy you take in noticing the strategies authors use to build a complex, layered work. As with the labor you expend on each other’s manuscripts in workshop, the labor you expend on these annotations will have a direct and beneficial effect on your own work.
So, the basics: You are required to compose six to eight double-spaced pages of a critical annotation this semester. These critical analyses of literary readings must be tightly focused on an issue of craft or the application of a literary theory.

But writing an annotation is primarily about discovery. By paying close attention to a text on a second or third reading, we come to notice its elements and how they work to produce its effects. Writing up our discoveries to share them with others in a clear way is the final step. Writing about what we have noticed forces us to dwell thoughtfully on it for longer than we otherwise would—and in a more exploratory frame of mind. Often, this process of articulation pushes us to deeper levels of discovery and insight, so here we are using writing as a tool for thinking. As E.M. Forster wrote, “How can I know what I think until I see what I say?” The written assignment also offers us the opportunity to think through how we can implement in our own work the technique we’ve been analyzing so closely.

But why write annotations in the first place?

Because people who want to be writers are almost always readers: passionate, devoted, voracious lovers of reading, lovers of books, lovers of literature. And when we pick up a book, we read to be swept away, to be transported, to sink or drift into another world. We suspend our disbelief and plunge in, willing to navigate whatever current the writer has created for us. We read for story, for revelation, for the music of language, for excitement, for awe, for grace—for a host of motivations and desires.

But rarely do we read with an eye toward technique. In fact, reading for all those other delicious reasons may well mitigate against our noticing an author’s strategies, because we become so immersed in what’s happening—we can see it, feel it, smell it—that we speed past or through technique without recognizing it.

Composing an annotation forces us to slow down and take a careful look not at the what of a piece, its content, but at its how, its strategies and techniques.

These can run the gamut, from the use of white space, to the use of questions, or verb tense, or animal imagery, or second person, or various poetic devices, or flashbacks, or whatever else you notice being used in a repeated way in a piece.

I say “repeated” because part of what your written essay needs to do is explain how the technique is working, and it’s easier to determine that if you have several examples to examine. You can look at all of them and figure out what the pattern means. Let me emphasize this point about explaining how the technique is working. It’s not sufficient to say, for example, “Author X marks every transition into a flashback with a reference to the color blue,” and then fill your paragraphs with quoted examples for six to eight pages. Rather, you need to explain how this choice works. What does it do to the piece? What is its effect on your reading? Why do you suppose the author is using it?

**Reading and Thinking**
As you reread a piece in order to annotate it, you’re being deliberately self-conscious about what you notice. Be especially alert for things that crop up again and again. Mark them in your text. When you finish this preliminary annotating, assess what you’ve got. Then try to choose the one element about which you have the most to say.

In any text, there will likely be several viable options from which to choose. Not only will different readers of a single piece will notice different things, as we’ll see later today when we discuss the Banks story, but each individual reader will probably notice a number of different elements that could be annotated. So once you have gone through your text and marked it up, you need to choose the one thing best to write about.

How do you choose? Speaking practically, you’ll want to choose something about which you have six to eight pages’ worth of legitimate things to say. So if you’ve noticed three different interesting strategies in a work, and one occurs once, one occurs twice, and the third occurs nine times, you might want to choose the third. On the other hand, if the third one bores you, but the one that occurs only twice is particularly complex and will require a richly developed explanation, then you might want to go that way instead. You might choose a single thing with several highly specific subsets, as in the sample student annotation, which announces that it will examine the poetic techniques of “rhyme and sound,” and then considers end rhyme, internal rhyme, consonance, alliteration, and assonance.

This is only a general guideline, and worthwhile exceptions may crop up. For example, if you want to look at titles, there will be, of course, only one instance of a title in a piece, and perhaps you could do a short annotation on it, or choose several texts and track the effects of their titles in a longer annotation. Quantity, the number of times a technique is used in a piece, isn’t a hard-and-fast criterion, just a guideline.

Alternatively, you could choose the technique from which you, as an individual, unique writer, have the most to learn—perhaps something that is outside your current range but which you’d love to try in the future. By examining closely how one author uses it, you can prepare to use it yourself. By understanding its function and effects, you can adapt it to appropriate moments in your own work. And really, this is our great hope for the annotations, our secret goal: that you will discover strategies you will love and use in your own writing.

**Drafting**

So once you have reread the piece, logged all your observations in the margins or in a notebook (or both), decided which strategy to write about, and figured out, at least roughly, how it is working in the text, how do you go about actually writing the annotation?

You can use a very simple, straightforward structure. In the first paragraph, you’ll want to introduce the author and the text by name, and perhaps briefly describe the text as a whole in a sentence or two. Then tell readers which aspect of the text you’ll be analyzing and how it works. You can state this in a clear, direct way, like a thesis statement in a college paper. Don’t go into detail yet, though; that’s for the body of your paper.
Another way to structure the opening would be to present a question about the text that puzzled you, as in the sample student annotation. Then answer the question by referring to the author’s technique.

Once you’ve introduced your focus clearly, one straightforward way to structure your paper is to devote a paragraph to each of your subtopics, as in the sample student annotation, or each of your examples. Provide an opening sentence for the paragraph that clearly indicates its topic. Introduce and quote the word, line, or passage as appropriate, using italics or bold to emphasize any specific element(s) to which you want to draw attention. Then explain exactly how you see the technique working in this particular instance. *Show* your reader what you perceive in the passage. *Show* your reader how to read and understand it the same way you do. Don’t assume that if you just drop the quotation in, the reader will find in it the same things you’ve found. Do the work of explaining what you see, and how you see it working. Leave room for discoveries, leaps, and illuminations as you write. They will happen.

Once you have written four or seven or twelve paragraphs, however many it takes to address the technique’s uses sufficiently, you’ll want to close with a concluding paragraph that shares your big-picture insights about the technique you’ve just analyzed—and, if applicable, explains how you might use it in your own future work.

The concluding paragraph would be a good place to connect the technique and its effects back to the content and larger meanings of the text, too, as the sample student annotation does in its final paragraph.

A good annotation can stand on its own. It presents all the context and textual evidence necessary to explain and support its points clearly. If your annotation is well written, even a reader unfamiliar with the literary text under discussion should be able to follow the thread perfectly well.

**Revising**

When you have a solid rough draft that pleases you, let it cool, and then revise it for economy and clarity. You may have been tempted to include summary or unnecessary references to the content of the piece. Cut them. Include only what is relevant to your point about the technique under discussion.

Remember that paragraph unity demands that everything in a paragraph be about the same tightly defined subtopic. If you notice a phrase or sentence that doesn’t relate to the point at hand, decide if there’s another paragraph in the paper where it belongs, or if it’s a good idea that needs to be developed into its own new paragraph, or if it’s simply off-topic and needs to be cut.

If you don’t naturally include signposts and transitions in a first draft, incorporate them now, in order to lead your reader more smoothly through your analysis. Opening lines of paragraphs link back to what has come before and forecast what is to come, carefully guiding the reader through the logic of her analysis.
After you have trimmed away excess and smoothed the flow for your reader, always do a careful copyediting to make sure your prose is clean and your citations are correct. If you can, ask a good reader who has not read the literary text to read through your annotation to see if there’s anything you need to add or clarify. If you don’t have anyone like that available, try to read it yourself from that perspective.

**Avoiding**

Based on my experience as a teacher, I would warn you away from three common errors. The first is fairly common. Some students do a fine job of the first two steps in writing an annotation:

1) Noticing a unique and interesting characteristic within a text, and
2) Providing textual examples of that characteristic.

They can largely miss the crucial third step, though, which is

3) Explaining how you see this characteristic/technique/strategy *working* in the text. What is the effect on the text as a whole? What is the effect on you as a reader and as a writer? How does it *work*?

A pattern I sometimes observe is that students tend to 1) make an assertion about what the work is doing, and then 2) include quoted passages from the text. Those steps are great—as far as they go. But think of these as only the first two steps. The missing third step is providing the reader with a crystal-clear explanation of your understanding of how the text is doing what you’re asserting it does.

Let me give you an example. Let’s say I was an art historian. I’m giving you a guided tour of the museum, and I say, “In this painting, Monet’s mastery of color conveys the harmony of the natural world.” And then I gesture toward the specific painting. And then I move on to the next painting.

Now, if you could read my mind, you’d know exactly which elements of color I was referring to in the painting, and you could figure out how they somehow contributed to a depiction of nature’s harmony.

But otherwise, you’d need me to use my laser-pointer and say, “Here in the shadow of this tree, you can see daubs of purple in the grass. If you look closely at the lake, here, you can see lighter echoes of that same hue. And if you look up here at the clouds in the corner, again, that same purple occurs. Monet ties each of the three major components of nature together with the subtle use of color to suggest that the natural world exists in a kind of harmony.” Or whatever. But I’ve already moved onto the next painting without explaining any of that, so you’re left guessing. Similarly, what students sometimes do on the page is to say, “Didion’s tone is ironic here,” and then quote (gesture toward) a passage. Sometimes those passages are dozens or even a hundred words long! Your reader doesn’t know which particular element is doing the work you’re asserting it does. The reader has to guess.
Get out your verbal laser-pointer and connect the dots for your reader. How does this passage exemplify the judgment you’ve made? Go in there and get your hands dirty. Tear it up. Point to exactly what you mean. Articulate your thought process, so we can follow along.

Without that work, you know what you mean, but the reader has to guess. It’s your job to do the work of making your assertions crystal-clear, so the reader can follow your reasoning. One assertion and one quotation can take whole paragraphs to analyze. Slow down and do that work.

One structural clue that you may be giving short shrift to analysis would be if you notice your paragraphs frequently ending with quotations. You’re presenting the evidence, which is a good and necessary thing, but then not following up with the work of analysis and explanation. Think of yourself as a lawyer in a courtroom. It’s not enough simply to hold up Exhibit A and Exhibit B; you must explain how they fit into your larger argument about what happened in the case. Your paragraphs should end, generally, with your own commentary about the passages you’ve quoted.

Another common mistake is to try to address everything interesting you notice about a text’s multiple strategies. This leads to an unfocused and superficial treatment. Any text you’ll be reading for your program is going to be richly patterned, so there will always be several things about which you could write. What happens when you try to squeeze them all into six to eight pages is that you pay each of them short shrift. Your annotation glances over the surface of the piece without really delving into how the strategies work. This is ineffective. Choose a focus and stick with it.

The other approach to avoid, which I have seen less often, would be choosing to analyze an element that you think does not work in the piece. Let’s say the author of an otherwise good published piece does something you find clumsy, and does it several times. It may be tempting to choose that element for an annotation. But obviously, if you can tell it’s not working, then you already know the principle(s) by which it is not effective, so you can’t really learn anything by describing and explaining the author’s examples of failure. That’s just showing off your superior knowledge. It’s great that you already have that knowledge, but the assignment doesn’t really do anything for you, because you’re not actively learning.

**In Summary**
This semester you will compose annotations on titles from the course reading list by following the preceding guidelines and suggestions generously shared with us by author Joy Castro. Your annotation should be double-spaced with 1-inch margins in 12-point TNR font that is documented in MLA style. If done well, this requirement may provide material to draw upon in composition of the apologia or introduction to your thesis wherein you discuss literary influences and aesthetic. At the very least, writing this annotation should enable you practice the essential art of reading like a writer.
GUIDELINES FOR THESIS INTRODUCTION

- The following guidelines are meant to help students as they write the introduction to their theses; students and mentors should not feel bound to these exact questions or this specific approach.

THESIS INTRODUCTION

*Caveat Emptor*

Good writing is not formulaic. There is no prescription for a good thesis introduction, any more than there is a prescription for a good poem, short story, work of creative non-fiction or work of literature for young people. As Greek poet George Seferis has said, “To say what you want to
say, you must create another language and nourish it for years with what you have loved, with what you have lost, with what you will never find again.” Only you can possibly say what you want to say. Our hope is that by the time you will need to start thinking about writing your thesis introduction, you will have begun to sense what it means to create and nourish another language, namely your own. There are many, many ways to write a good introduction to a creative thesis. These notes are intended only as (possibly helpful) hints to get you started.

**Purpose of the Introduction**

In an introduction of 7-12 double-spaced pages, you should attempt to define something about who you are as a writer. The introduction should not be a smorgasbord of comments on everything in your thesis or on every meaningful event in your life or on every writer you heard at the residencies or on everything of worth you have ever read. Whatever you write about your own work and that of other writers should coalesce around a few central points.

You may want to consider the following approaches in structuring your argument:

- Give a “reading history,” with special attention to those books/authors that moved you to write.
- Narrow your writing influences to the two or three most important authors/books, and explain how they influenced your writing, what you learned from them, and how your emulation of them will depart from their modeling.
- Give an account of the structuring of your thesis—how its structure was formed, how structure affected content, and vice versa.
- Give an account of what you think your thesis has accomplished, and what you see as the next step in its development, or (if you consider the thesis done) the next step in your writing.
- Locate your work generally in the landscape of contemporary American literature (poetry, fiction, etc.).

Think of the introduction as a map into your work. Just as there are many approaches to mapmaking (resulting in road maps, city maps, demographic maps, contour maps, satellite maps, weather maps, topographic maps, star charts, etc.), there are many approaches to mapping out your introduction. Your primary concern should be whether your introduction fulfills its fundamental duty of orienting your readers on their journey through your thesis.

**General Form of the Introduction**

In structuring your introduction, you might want to think dialectically, that is, in terms of the framework of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. In the thesis section, you might make a proposition about what shaped you as a writer. In the antithesis section, you might react to that proposition by citing literary sources. In the synthesis section, you might try to reconcile the differences between the thesis and the antithesis by forming a new proposition about yourself as a writer who has been influenced by the writers you have cited.
Let’s say you’re a poet, and you argue in the *thesis* section that your African-American roots instilled in you a great love of John Coltrane, Dizzy Gillespie, Thelonius Monk, Charlie Parker, et al., and that this love eventually led you to embrace a jazz poetics. In the *antithesis* section, you might analyze the work of William Butler Yeats and Wallace Stevens, two of the formalist poets with whom you had a love/hate relationship in college. In the *synthesis* section, you might argue that you now think you were actually lucky to have been exposed to the formalists first because when you did finally get around to reading jazz-influenced poets like Yusef Komunyakaa and Kevin Young and to experimenting with jazz poetics yourself, you discovered that having studied prosody meant that you could improvise with more authority.

Let’s say you’re a novelist, and you define yourself in the *thesis* section as a writer interested in utilizing the picaresque style to depict characters in contemporary urban settings. In the *antithesis* section, you might investigate your early passion for the picaresque style and analyze works by Laurence Sterne, Miguel de Cervantes and François Rabelais. In the *synthesis* section, you might discuss how you finally crossed the gap between wanting to write in a picaresque style and actually doing it when you read Saul Bellow’s *The Adventures of Augie March*, which gave you the clues you needed about how to modernize the picaresque style, and set you on the road toward telling a story employing what Sterne called "progressive digressions."

Let’s say you’re a non-fiction writer, and you argue that your 20 years as an environmental activist shaped you as a writer. In the *antithesis* section, you might discuss the profound effect reading Henry David Thoreau’s *Walden* had on you in high school—how it taught you to seek solitude in nature, to critique materialist attitudes, etc. You might also discuss how you love the poetry of Mary Oliver, who is sometimes considered a contemporary Transcendentalist. In the *synthesis* section, you might argue that although *Walden* is still a touchstone, you are really up to something very different from Thoreau in your own work because you believe that even the most urban environments should also pay tribute to the sacredness of nature.

**THESIS**

*What do you want to prove about yourself as a writer? Here are some questions you might want to ask yourself in the process of deciding. Remember that ALL these questions need NOT be addressed. In fact, some writers might not find these questions helpful AT ALL.*

*What is your mythology? Are you a practicing Christian? Are you a practicing Buddhist? Did you grow up Catholic, disavow your connection with Catholicism as an adult, but then discover you couldn’t shake everything about the religion of your youth? Have you spent the better part of your adult life working for environmental causes? Are you a feminist? Are you a Republican? Are you a Democrat? What is your ethnicity? How invested are you in your Italian or your Japanese or your African roots? Do you think you have working-class values? Are you a child of the 60’s? the 70’s? the 80’s? the 90’s? Do you feel as if you belong in the generation you were born into, or have you always felt out of sync with that generation?*
Where are you from? Have you spent most, if not all, of your life in one place? If so, what is that place and can you define what that place has given you as a writer (or taken away from you as a writer)? Are you an urban writer or a rural writer or a mixture of both? If you consider yourself an urban writer, why so? Were you born in the city, or did you seek out the city as an adult after spending your entire childhood in a remote rural area? If you are a rural writer, how attracted are you to the pastoral tradition? Were you born in a place very different from the place you have adopted as home as an adult? To what degree has travel influenced your sense of place? Did you move all over the world as a child, for which reason, placelessness defines you more accurately than place?

Do you have a secondary interest that influences your writing?

It’s no accident that Vladimir Nabokov’s novels are full of butterflies (especially blue butterflies, his specialty). He was a lepidopterist of serious note. Do you too have a compelling secondary interest? For example, are you so steeped in the lore and practices of a particular sport—baseball, basketball, sumo-wrestling—that that sport always creeps into your fiction? Are you an accomplished pianist? Do you think your embrace of classical meters derives from your early understanding of times signatures? Did you win a National Chess Championship as a middle-schooler, which is why every YA novel you try to write includes a chess player as a minor character? Did you start out your career as a scientist or a science teacher, but then decide you preferred to write non-fiction about science?

To what degree is your writing influenced by the other arts?

Do you love the visual arts? Are your strongest poems all ekphrastic? Do you watch a lot of films? If so, has watching them changed the way you think about narration in fiction (for example, are you more adventurous about switching points of view)? Does your lifelong love of jazz take you into more improvisational territory in terms of writing poetry, fiction or creative non-fiction? Do you think something from the plastic arts can serve as a model for the literary arts? (For example, poet Elizabeth Bishop took some cues from Joseph Cornell’s boxes, constructed from found objects.) Do you ever use a symphony or a fugue as a model for literary composition? Etc.

Is there a watershed event in your life?

Did the birth of a disabled child force you to acknowledge the dearth of literature aimed at disabled children? Did you always like to read, but never felt compelled to write until you experienced a divorce? Did you turn to writing to help you survive the death of a spouse or a child?

Is there a signature moment in your thesis?

What is your guiding principle or principles in matters of artistic beauty and taste? On the line from, say, Aristotle, to John Dewey, where are you? Do you think there is a connection between truth and beauty? Do you think literary art should be useful? Do you think literary art should give moral instruction? Do you think a writer should embrace politics? Do you think a writer
should eschew politics? Do you belong to any particular school of writers? Is your writing minimalist? Is it baroque? Have you written anything you might call a “signature piece”? If so, what is it about that piece that might give you a feel for where you want to go as a writer?

ANTITHESIS

In this section, you should make connections with writers who have exerted an influence on your work. What is the nature of a given writer’s influence? How did reading this writer help you or hurt you in your efforts to forge your own original voice? Think in terms of both craft and vision.

What do you want to say about your literary influences? Here are some questions you might want to ask yourself in the process of deciding.

• Do you have a strong affinity for the vision of a particular writer or writers?
• Which writers have taught you the most about the possibilities of your genre?
• Which writers have taught you the most about how to write a sentence?
• How would you define your literary style? Which writers have most helped you to forge it?
• Do you cherish any quotations about writing because they get to the heart of what you yourself want to do on the page? Could you cite any of these?
• During your time in the program, what has influenced your thinking about revision?
• Is there writing about craft which has exerted a strong influence on you? (Toni Morrison’s Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination and Charles Baxter’s The Art of the Subtext are two examples of books on craft.)
• Did a writer you thought you hated teach you as much, in the end, as a writer you thought you loved?

SYNTHESIS

In this section, as noted above, you will need to reconcile the differences between your thesis and antithesis by forming a new proposition about yourself as a writer. While this task may sound daunting, it is basically the same one you would face in writing a conclusion to a research paper. In a research paper, you would state your thesis, cite numerous points in its support, anticipate the counter-argument, then try to wrap up your argument in some kind of interesting manner. Think about the synthesis section in this way. In other words, you are writing an extended conclusion. Your conclusion should not be a mirror image of your introduction. It should reflect the distance you have traveled from the beginning of your argument. You might think in terms
of using this section to stake out your future as a writer. Where do you want to go from here? Think, too, in terms of reiterating the points you proved about yourself in the Thesis section.

N.B.: The words “thesis,” “antithesis” and “synthesis” should not appear in your introduction.

Final Thoughts

From the time you arrive at your first residency, you should start asking questions about writing and about yourself as a writer. How do you see the answers evolving across your time at Murray State? If you start thinking about these questions at the beginning of your first residency, you won’t need to push the panic button at the end of your third residency.

Caveat Emptor Redux

Again, good writing is not formulaic. We have no perfect prescription for a thesis introduction. Only you can possibly say what you want to say. Our hope is that you will cherish this invitation to think hard about who you are as a writer. There are many, many ways to write a good introduction to a creative thesis. These notes are intended only as (possibly helpful) hints to get you started.

FERPA INSTITUTIONAL POLICY

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords students certain rights with respect to their education records, including:

1. The right to inspect and review the student's education records within 45 days of the day the University receives a request for access. Students should submit to the registrar, dean, head of the academic department, or other appropriate official, a written request that identifies the record(s) they wish to inspect. The University official will make arrangements for access and notify the student of the time and place where the records may be inspected. If the records are not maintained by the University official to whom the request was submitted, that official shall advise the student of the correct official to whom the request should be addressed. A parent of a dependent student as defined in section 152 of the Internal Revenue Code may request permission to view a student’s educational records upon showing proof of dependency. Release of such information is at the discretion of the Registrar.

2. The right to request the amendment of the student's education records that are believed to be inaccurate or misleading. The student should write the University official responsible for the
record, clearly identify the part of the record they want changed, and specify why it is inaccurate or misleading. If the University decides not to amend the record as requested by the student, the University will notify the student of the decision and advise the student of his or her right to a hearing regarding the request for an amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the student when notified of the right to a hearing.

3. The right to consent to disclosures of personally identifiable information contained in the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent, as follows:

a) Disclosure without the student's consent is permissible to school officials with legitimate educational interests. A school official is a person employed by the University in an administrative, supervisory, academic, research, or support staff position (including law enforcement unit personnel and health staff); the University attorney; appropriate community safety and emergency personnel to whom information regarding students is to be provided pursuant to KRS 164.9495; a person or company with whom the University has contracted (such as an attorney, auditor, or collection agent); a contractor, consultant, volunteer, or other person or entity to which the University has outsourced institutional services or functions, and who is limited as to use, maintenance, and re-disclosure of information; a person serving on the Board of Regents; or a student serving on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee, or assisting another school official in performing his or her tasks. In addition, the following groups are specifically recognized as “school officials” within the definition of FERPA for the limited purpose of receiving at any time listings of names and addresses of students, including incoming students, and/or student directory information: MSU Alumni Association; Murray State University Foundation, Inc; a person or company who performs a service for MSU that serves a legitimate educational interest; authorized representatives of federal or State supported education programs if disclosure is in connection with an audit or evaluation of supported programs or for the enforcement of or compliance with legal requirements that relate to those programs.

A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review or receive any education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility or if the service to or for MSU is of a type that MSU would normally perform itself including one which MSU has outsourced.

As of January 3, 2012, the U.S. Department of Education's FERPA regulations expand the circumstances under which your education records and personally identifiable information (PII) contained in such records - including your Social Security Number, grades, or other private information - may be accessed without your consent. First, the U.S. Comptroller General, the U.S. Attorney General, the U.S. Secretary of Education, or state and local education authorities ("Federal and State Authorities") may allow access to your records and PII without your consent to any third party designated by a Federal or State Authority to evaluate a federal- or state-supported education program. The evaluation may relate to any program that is "principally engaged in the provision of education," such as early childhood education and job training, as well as any program that is administered by an education agency or institution. Second, Federal and State Authorities may allow access to your education records and PII without your consent to
researchers performing certain types of studies, in certain cases even when we object to or do not request such research. Federal and State Authorities must obtain certain use-restriction and data security promises from the entities that they authorize to receive your PII, but the Authorities need not maintain direct control over such entities. In addition, in connection with Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems, State Authorities may collect, compile, permanently retain, and share without your consent PII from your education records, and they may track your participation in education and other programs by linking such PII to other personal information about you that they obtain from other Federal or State data sources, including workforce development, unemployment insurance, child welfare, juvenile justice, military service, and migrant student records systems.

b) FERPA allows the institution to routinely release information defined as "directory information." The following student information is included in the definition: the student's name, addresses, telephone listings, campus e-mail address, date and place of birth, fields of study, participation in officially recognized activities and sports, weight and height of members of athletic teams, dates of attendance, enrollment status (including full-time, part-time, not enrolled), degrees (pending and received), awards or honors received and the most recent previous educational institution attended. When a student wants the directory information to remain confidential, an official request form must be completed in the Registrar’s Office within the first five days of class of the school term. If a student requests directory information withheld during a term and does not return to Murray state after that term, that request remains in force until such a time as a formal written statement removing that hold is received from the student rescinding that request. Murray State will release directory information to school officials or others with a legitimate educational interest.

4. The right to file a written complaint with the Family Compliance Office of the United States Department of Education concerning an alleged failure by MSU to comply with the provisions of FERPA.

   a) The complaint must contain specific allegations of fact giving reasonable cause to believe that a FERPA violation has occurred. A complaint does not have to allege that a violation is based on a policy or practice at MSU.

   b) To be timely, a complaint should be submitted to the Family Compliance Office within 180 days of the date of an alleged violation. The Family Compliance Office may extend the time limit for good cause shown.

   c) The complaint may be filed at: Family Compliance Office, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave, S.W., Washington D.C., 20202.

SEXUAL HARRASSMENT POLICY
Please go to the following website for complete information on Murray State University’s Sexual Harrassment Policy: