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Vermont
College of
Fine Arts
MFA in
Writing

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*Vermont College
of Fine Arts:
arts education
at its finest*

MFA

in WRITING

A mentorship model

Unlike traditional residential MFA programs, our low-residency model complements the practices of professional writers. After each residency, students return to their jobs, families, and communities to study, write, and resume their daily lives. They spend the majority of their time in at-home study, managing the solitary nature of a writing life while engaged in sustained dialogue with a faculty mentor.

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Perched at the top of a hill overlooking the state capital, Vermont College of Fine Arts pulses with unmatched creative and intellectual wealth, triggering transformative experiences for both emerging and established artists. A progressive national center for graduate arts education, VCFA offers a rigorous, student-centered academic model that allows artists to flourish in their mediums.

The MFA in Writing program at VCFA is one of the highest-ranked and most widely acclaimed of its kind. Our exclusive focus on graduate arts education, high academic and creative standards, and individualized structure, has produced an international reputation for excellence. We are a thriving, vibrant community of emerging and established writers who continually shape the literary world.

Our students tell us that the MFA in Writing program has transformed them, that in two years they've evolved, redefined themselves, continually asking and answering the quintessential questions: Does art matter? What makes a great writer? What makes me a great writer? Our students tell us that the MFA in Writing at Vermont College of Fine Arts has prepared them for a new future. It has given them confidence in their individual vision of the world and the courage to give voice to that vision.



JENNIFER

BOWEN HICKS

writing '11

I love this school, this “community” more than I did the day I began. I’ve learned how to follow my own energy, how to speak with what

I believe to be my own voice. I’ve been given the permission, encouragement, and hope, to get a running start. I don’t know what weird alchemy makes such feats possible through VCFA, only that they are. I’m grateful to the point of speechlessness.

an MFA in Writing

The goal of all creative writing, Rilke tells us, is to change our lives. Over and over, our students tell us that the MFA in Writing at Vermont College of Fine Arts has changed them, that they have never encountered such dedicated faculty, that they learn more in two years with us than they have in their lifetime, that they don't want to leave this "magical" place... and we understand what they mean.



Established in 1981, and named year after year as one of the "best of the best" writing programs by *The Atlantic*, the MFA in Writing was one of the first low-residency programs in the United States. Our more than 1,500 alumni have published hundreds of books and have received nearly every literary award in the country.



DAVID WOJAHN
*faculty chair
writing*

In the nearly thirty years that I have taught at Vermont College of Fine Arts, I have seen time and again how indelibly the MFA

in Writing program has transformed budding writers' lives—simply (and mysteriously) by helping them to realize their potential as artists. This seems to me a small but crucially good thing in this world, a world very much in need of the virtues good writing can offer it.

The MFA in Writing allows writers to focus intently on their genre, honing in on the fiction, creative nonfiction, and poetry they write. Writers come to the program ready to give their craft the attention, dedication, and intellectual examination it deserves. What they find is not only intense, high-level conversation about writing, but a whole community that embraces, celebrates, and fosters their art.

the residency

in just ten days, you'll belong to a lifelong community of writers

Residency allows students to immerse themselves in an idyllic writer's life in the small town of Montpelier, Vermont, or in historic Slovenia for a summer residency, or in the culturally-rich landscape of Puerto Rico for a winter residency.

The ten-day residency is a vibrant time of workshops, seminars, lectures, panel discussions, and readings by faculty, graduating students, and visiting writers from all over the world. Students participate in small, intensive, faculty-guided workshops in which each writer's work is carefully examined. Special workshops are regularly offered in translation, the novel, and many other focused topics. In the spaces between lectures and workshops, faculty, students, and guests read their work to each other in great halls and in quiet corners. Discussions begun in the classrooms continue over shared meals, pour into the minutes spent walking from one lecture to the next, and last into the late hours of the evening.

BETSY

SHOLL

faculty

What VCFA gives a writer is that crucial combination of solitude and community, the excitement and intensity of the

residency, then the focused ongoing dialogue with a mentor. What a gift—to know there's someone on the other end of the line! It's like the best of worlds—the modern classroom and the age-old experience of apprenticeship—a serious, personal, and thrilling way to learn.



WRITING

HEATHER
SHARFEDDIN
writing '11

I chose Vermont College of Fine Arts in order to deepen my writing through the intense one-on-one mentorship that

a low-residency program offers. As a previously published novelist, I was delighted to find that the level of instruction surpassed my expectations and challenged me in ways that have greatly enriched my work.

the vast anarchy of space.

DISTINGUISHED VISITING FACULTY & WRITERS IN RESIDENCE INCLUDE:

Richard Bausch
Rosellen Brown
Dan Chaon
Damien Echols
Lynn Emanuel
Claudia Emerson
David Ferry
Maureen Freely
Kathleen Graber
Patricia Hampl
Terrance Hayes
Wally Lamb
Brian Leung
Barry Lopez
Ernesto Mestre-Reed
Honor Moore
Lucinda Roy
Richard Russo
Tim Seibles
Jean Valentine
John Warner

FACULTY MFA IN WRITING

Laurie Alberts
Ralph Angel
Jen Bervin
Mark Cox
Trinie Dalton
Matthew Dickman
Connie May Fowler
Abby Frucht
Jody Gladding
Douglas Glover
Philip Graham
Robin Hemley
Richard Jackson
David Jauss
Ellen Lesser
Patrick Madden
Richard McCann
Clint McCown
Jess Row
Mary Ruefle
Natasha Sajé
Betsy Sholl
Sue William Silverman
Domenic Stansberry
Larry Sutin
Leslie Ullman
Robert Vivian
Nance Van Winckel
David Wojahn

our faculty: a dedicated team of distinguished writers

Our 5:1 student-faculty ratio guarantees a high level of individual attention and fosters close relationships between students and faculty mentors. The two years students spend in this program are only the beginning of a lifelong commitment to writing and reading. Our faculty provides a foundation from which students can continue to refine their craft, expand their knowledge of literature, and develop lasting writing practices.

earning an MFA at Vermont College of Fine Arts is just the beginning

Students spend four semesters at VCFA learning how to fully integrate a writing practice into their daily lives. After graduation, our alumni continue to write, to publish, to teach, to create, to live an authentic writer's life.

Our writing alumni have published over 800 books and received national and international recognition, including such awards as National Endowment for the Arts fellowships, The Pablo Neruda Prize for Poetry, the American Book Award, Pushcart Prizes, The May Swenson Poetry Award, the Flannery O'Connor Award for Short Fiction, National Poetry Series selections, and hundreds of others. But more importantly, our alumni continue to write, to find inspiration, and to feel part of a literary community.



the semester

a writer's life

Miracle of miracles, it's 5:30 and my family is still asleep.

Tip toe downstairs. Put water on. Don't bother with a sweater... too risky to go back up for one.

When I grow up I want to be able to wake at five and write for an hour. Don't get socks...too risky.

I'll freeze my butt off any day for a minute like this. Hot water. Tea bag. Milk. Honey. The tick of the clock. The windows dark. I read a story so good last night it renewed my faith in fiction. It was written by a friend and it hasn't yet been published. So good it made me gasp and so good it made my chest hurt and all of that gasping hurt enshrouded in love and beauty. What more could one ask for? It made me want to get up at 4 am and write stories again. It made me want to look harder for things I really love. This is the way to start a day. This is the way to bend down, as M. Oliver would say, and kiss the earth.

Robin MacArthur '10
from *Woodbird*

Over the course of the residency, students plan their work for the upcoming semester. They meet with their advisors, designing a course of study that is as unique as the individual. Semester study plans are designed around individual goals and passions to include both creative and critical work. With faculty guidance, students also create a substantial, personalized reading list specially designed to enhance students' writing progress for the semester. While the semester's work is termed "independent study," students maintain a constant dialogue with faculty and peers.

NON-DISCRIMINATION

Vermont College of Fine Arts does not discriminate in its admissions, employment, or policy procedures on the basis of age, race, color, sex, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, political party affiliation, or physical impairment.

admission

Admission to the MFA in Writing at Vermont College of Fine Arts is based primarily on the quality of original work submitted.

Candidate Requirements:

- Applicants must have completed a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university. In rare and special cases, we admit writers who have not earned an undergraduate degree. Such candidates must show evidence to the Admissions Committee of exceptional academic, literary, and/or publishing background.
- Work Samples: 10 pages of poetry; 20–25 pages of fiction or creative nonfiction (applicants may apply in one or more genres).
- Personal essay that gives the Admissions Committee an understanding of the applicant's experience with writing and criticism, goals for work in the program, readiness to work in the low-residency format, and the appropriateness of admission.
- A critical essay demonstrating the applicant's ability to read and critically discuss a literary work. The essay should in some way engage questions dealing with the writer's craft, subject and thematic concerns, and/or the ways in which the writer's work has served as a model for the applicant's literary ambitions.

Contact the Admissions Office or visit vcfa.edu for more information, including forms, application deadline dates, and current tuition and fees.

MFA in Writing
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