

STRUCTURE AND CURRICULUM

The NYU Creative Writing Program has distinguished itself for over forty years as a leading national center for the study of writing and literature, inviting promising new writers to work closely with distinguished faculty.

That tradition continues with the low-residency MFA Writers Workshop in Paris, which offers students the opportunity to develop their craft under the guidance of internationally-acclaimed writers—including **Catherine Barnett, Ken Chen, Nathan Englander, Jonathan Safran Foer, Uzodinma Iweala, Jonas Hassen Khemiri, Katie Kitamura, Hari Kunzru, Raven Leilani, Robin Coste Lewis, Leigh Newman, Meghan O'Rourke, Matthew Rohrer, Nicole Sealey, Darin Strauss, and Brandon Taylor**—while writing and studying in one of the world's most inspiring literary capitals.

Recent visiting writers have included **Anne Carson, Rachel Cusk, Edwidge Danticat, Lydia Davis, Mariana Enríquez, Melissa Febos, John Freeman, Terrance Hayes, Mira Jacob, Leslie Jamison, Donika Kelly, Etgar Keret, Karl Ove Knausgaard, Rachel Kushner, Nick Laird, Ben Lerner, Édouard Louis, Valeria Luiselli, David Mitchell, Nadifa Mohamed, Maggie Nelson, Joyce Carol Oates, ZZ Packer, Claudia Rankine, Taiye Selasi, Kamila Shamsie, Brenda Shaughnessy, Leila Slimani, Tracy K. Smith, Zadie Smith, Ocean Vuong, and Kevin Young**, among many others. For a complete list of program faculty and bios, please [click here](#).

PROGRAM FORMAT

The MFA Writers Workshop in Paris constitutes an intimate creative apprenticeship that extends beyond traditional classroom walls.

Over two years, students and faculty convene regularly in Paris for five intensive ten-day residency periods (held biannually in January and July). While in residence, students participate in a vibrant community engaged in all aspects of the literary arts, including workshops, craft talks, lectures, individual conferences and manuscript consultations, as well as a diverse series of readings, special events and professional development panels.

During the intervals between residencies, students pursue focused courses of study, completing reading and writing assignments under the close supervision of individual faculty members. These ongoing dialogues with faculty are tailored to specific student interests and needs; students are mentored by a different professor each term and work closely with four different writers during the two-year program.

Unlike the traditional MFA, the low-residency program offers both freedom and rigor, balancing the intense and stimulating community of each residency and the sustained solitary work completed in the intervals between. Students are expected to complete substantial writing and reading assignments each term, regularly submitting packets of work in exchange for detailed feedback and critique.

Graduating students leave the program with four new literary mentors and a portfolio of

letters written by acclaimed writers in response to their work.

MFA DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

In order to receive the MFA, students must attend five residencies, successfully complete 32 credits of coursework, and submit a creative project of at least 70 pages of fiction or nonfiction and 25 pages of poetry. This thesis project consists of a substantial piece of writing—a novel, a work of nonfiction, a collection of short stories, or a group of poems—submitted before the final residency. The project requires the approval of the student’s faculty thesis advisor and the program director.

RESIDENCY

Students attend an intensive series of workshops, craft lectures, readings, and special events while in residence in Paris. At the end of each residency, students confer with their advisors to plan their reading and writing projects for the upcoming semester, including a brief creative project description and a reading list of at least 10 books. The Project Proposal and Study Plan form—signed by each student and their advisor—is submitted by the final day of the residency to stipulate due dates for the packet exchanges and document expectations for the semester.

SEMESTER COURSE WORK

The individualized course of study is tailored to each student’s needs as determined by the faculty mentor; one student may spend the entire semester on a single short story or lyric sequence while another might make significant progress on a novel or collection of poems.

Each semester **three packets** are exchanged at regular intervals. Students and faculty work out submission dates together during advisory meetings and **students must meet the agreed-upon deadlines. There is no flexibility on this.** Faculty members are expected to return the packets within an agreed-upon amount of time. (Individual response times will vary, but students can expect faculty responses within approximately 10 - 14 days.) Please note that faculty may elect to hold Skype, Zoom, telephone, or in-person meetings in lieu of a letter as part of their feedback structure.

In addition to the packet exchanges, a 30-minute mid-point “office hours” type meeting (by telephone, Skype, or Zoom) allows an opportunity for live conversation with the faculty mentor during which students may ask questions relating to the writing project and reading list. These meetings will be arranged by the faculty advisor or organized by the program coordinator once the semester is underway.

Over the course of the semester students should plan to write (and/or significantly revise) a portfolio of creative work. Each student must also write responses to assigned readings. The advisor will determine the form of critical papers, which might include close-reading analysis or “annotations,” creative responses, or informal reader-response essays. The reading responses should not merely be a report on what the student “liked” or “didn’t like,” but a close analysis of craft, with clear textual examples provided. The focus is on reading as a writer (rather than as a theorist or critic); students in the program are expected to study exemplary novels, stories, and poems in order to learn how to write their own.

PACKETS

Each student packet must include:

- **Dated cover page** listing the contents of the packet: which number packet it is; the titles of the poems or prose pieces included; the book titles of the included reading responses.
- **A detailed and expansive letter** providing context about the enclosed creative work. This is the student's opportunity to initiate a dialogue with the faculty advisor regarding aesthetic questions or concerns, elements of craft, strategies for revision, and suggestions for the future direction of work in progress. The student should also respond to the mentor's feedback, answering questions posed in the previous packet exchanges.
- **Written critical responses to assigned readings.** The expectations and format for these responses will be communicated by the faculty advisor when completing the Project Proposal & Study Plan form during the residency.
- **Poetry students** are expected to send approximately **5-7 pages of new and/or revised poems.** *Note: Each poem should start on a new page.
- **Fiction and nonfiction students** are expected to send approximately **15-20 pages of new and/or revised work.**

Each faculty member's response packet will include:

- **An in-depth letter** addressing the student's creative work and reading responses as well as any questions enumerated in the student's letter.
*Note: Faculty teaching styles and preferences vary. In lieu of a comprehensive letter, faculty may elect to hold phone, Zoom, or in-person meetings to provide editorial suggestions and feedback on student work.
- **Marginal comments and line edits** on the written work.

Faculty and student communication will primarily take place via packets, which will be exchanged via email. Additional email exchanges should take place only in case of emergency rescheduling; email is not a place for clarifying questions from the packet. Those questions can be saved for the next packet's letter.

PACKET SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

It is critical that students and faculty observe the deadlines that have been agreed upon during the residency and outlined in the Proposal Study Plan. **Both students and faculty are asked to “cc” the following address each time a packet or letter is exchanged via email: lowrespacketsubmissions@gmail.com.** If this email address is not copied, the department will assume that the required materials have not been submitted.

SAMPLE POETRY PACKET

Packet #1, February 15, 2023

- A detailed and expansive letter
- 4 new poems
- 2 revised poems
- Written responses to reading

SAMPLE FICTION & NONFICTION PACKET

Packet #1, February 15, 2023

- A detailed and expansive letter
- 18 pages of a new story or a significantly revised work-in-progress
- Written responses to reading

SAMPLE FACULTY PACKET

Packet #1, February 24, 2023

- An individualized letter providing in-depth feedback and commentary (an in-person, phone, or virtual meeting may be arranged in lieu of a letter)
- Comments on poems/stories/novel/essays in progress
- Comments on reading responses

THESIS SEMESTER AND REQUIREMENTS

During the final semester of study, students work one-on-one with their faculty mentor on completing the thesis manuscript. The semester is much like the previous semesters, but in this case, in addition to the three course packets, students also prepare a polished final portfolio of at least 25 pages (poetry) or 70 pages (fiction and nonfiction). Some students will find themselves writing a lot of new work during their thesis semester; others will spend more time revising older work. The faculty mentor will advise on how best to approach the thesis.

Note: The thesis is due on the last day of the semester, which will be noted on the project proposal form. Detailed and extensive faculty feedback on the thesis is provided throughout the semester in response to the three packets. After the thesis is submitted, the faculty advisor provides a brief final response to the thesis as it stands and suggests directions for future work.

During the residency **before** the thesis semester (the **fourth residency**):

- The student meets individually with the faculty mentor to draw up a plan for the thesis semester.

During the **thesis residency** (the **fifth** residency):

This residency is a celebratory final capstone to the degree—an opportunity for students to return once more to Paris.

- Students attend readings, special events, and craft talks and participate in the residency as usual.
- Students are invited to participate in a thesis workshop, during which they have an opportunity to discuss their final projects.
- Students give a celebratory reading from their theses.