

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO
College of Arts and Sciences

MFA in Writing — Program Assessment Plan

Program Goals

1. Students will demonstrate a working knowledge of the fundamentals of artistic composition and craft.
2. Students will be able to read as writers, analyzing in works by published authors the ways in which literary meaning is made.
3. Students will be able to evaluate and analyze the techniques and intentions of literary manuscripts and to participate in constructive critical discussion of such works.
4. Students are prepared for entry into the public life of literature, which includes locating their own work in the context of contemporary literary practice, preparing their work according to professional standards, teaching creative writing, and participating in diverse literary communities.

Program Learning Outcomes

- Students will competently apply craft principles (e.g., plot development, characterization, exposition, poetic line, figurative imagery) to composing and revising their own stories, novels, poems, or works of nonfiction. (Goal 1)
- By completing a book-length work (creative thesis), students will demonstrate their ability to organize material, shape it into a whole, and sustain creative choices based on a knowledge of craft principles. (Goal 1)
- Students can identify structural elements and evaluate aesthetic choices in literary works of art across diverse historical and cultural traditions. (Goal 2)
- Students can analyze the relation between literary form (e.g., the use of craft principles) and literary content (e.g., theme, subject) in the work of published writers. (Goal 2)
- In responding to a draft manuscript students can identify the ways in which the writer's craft choices do or do not serve the aims of the work, applying craft theory and critical vocabulary in judging the effectiveness of the writing and in comparing it to works with similar themes, form, or style. Students can synthesize specific observations made in close reading of a manuscript to formulate accurate statements about how it works as a whole and to make suggestions for revision. (Goal 3)
- Students can integrate written and verbal critiques from peers and instructors in revising their own manuscripts, making selective decisions about how to improve the writing. (Goal 3)
- Students appraise their own and others' work in relation to contemporary literary practice and understand how to submit work to journals and publishers in accordance with standard practice in the field. (Goal 4)
- Students demonstrate competence in written communication that has application for professional writing and editing. (Goal 4)
- Students who wish to pursue a teaching career acquire a comprehensive knowledge of craft principles and pedagogy from teaching assistantships and core courses. (Goal 4)
- Students learn to value engagement with a literary community, demonstrated by participation in a wide array of literary events and programs and active efforts to publish their work. (Goal 4)

Curriculum Map

Key I = Introduces, M = Moderate Coverage, C=Comprehensive Coverage

Goals/Outcomes	Course Numbers								
	MFA 600 First Person	MFA 675 Teaching Writing	MFA 670 C+R	MFA 663 Ethical Issues	MFA 681 Blurred Boundaries	MFA 650 Word for Word	MFA 682 Foundations of NF	MFA 683 Art of the Essay	MFA 673 Prose of Fact
1. Students will demonstrate a working knowledge of the fundamentals of artistic composition and craft.									
a. Students will competently apply craft principles (e.g., plot development, characterization, exposition, poetic line, figurative imagery) to composing and revising their own stories, novels, poems, or works of nonfiction.	I		M		M	M	M	M	M
b. By completing a book-length work (creative thesis), students will demonstrate their ability to organize material, shape it into a whole, and sustain creative choices based on a knowledge of craft principles.									
2. Students will be able to read as writers, analyzing in works by published authors the ways in which literary meaning is made.									
a. Students can identify structural elements and evaluate aesthetic choices in literary works of art across diverse historical and cultural traditions.	I	M	M	M	M	M	C	C	C
b. Students can analyze the relation between literary form (e.g., the use of craft principles) and literary content (e.g., theme, subject) in the work of published writers.		M	C	M	C	C	C	C	C
3. Students will be able to evaluate and analyze the techniques and intentions of literary manuscripts and to participate in constructive critical discussion of such works.									
a. In responding to a draft manuscript students can identify the ways in which the writer's craft choices do or do not serve the aims of the work, applying craft theory and critical vocabulary in judging the effectiveness of the writing and in comparing it to works with similar themes, form, or style.	I								

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b. Students can synthesize specific observations made in close reading of a manuscript to formulate accurate statements about how it works as a whole and to make suggestions for revision	I								
c. Students can integrate written and verbal critiques from peers and instructors in revising their own manuscripts, making selective decisions about how to improve the writing.	I	C							
4. Students are prepared for entry into the public life of literature, which includes locating their own work in the context of contemporary literary practice, preparing their work according to professional standards, teaching creative writing, and participating in diverse literary communities.									
a. Students appraise their own and others' work in relation to contemporary literary practice and understand how to submit work to journals and publishers in accordance with standard practice in the field.								M	
b. Students demonstrate competence in written communication that has application for professional writing and editing.			M	M	M	M	M	M	M
c. Students who wish to pursue a teaching career acquire a comprehensive knowledge of craft principles and pedagogy from teaching assistantships and core courses.		C							
d. Students learn to value engagement with a literary community, demonstrated by participation in a wide array of literary events and programs and active efforts to publish their work.	I			M					

Goals/Outcomes	Course Numbers								
	MFA 664 Poetry Intl.	MFA 674 Prosody	MFA 686 Visionary Poetics	MFA 612 NF Workshops	MFA 622 SF Workshops	MFA 632 LF Workshops	MFA 642 Poetry Workshops	MFA 689 Major Project I	MFA 699 Major Project II
1. Students will demonstrate a working knowledge of the fundamentals of artistic composition and craft.									
a. Students will competently apply craft principles (e.g., plot development, characterization, exposition, poetic line, figurative imagery) to composing and revising their own stories, novels, poems, or works of nonfiction.	M	M	M	C	C	C	C	C	C
b. By completing a book-length work (creative thesis), students will demonstrate their ability to organize material, shape it into a whole, and sustain creative choices based on a knowledge of craft principles.				M	M	M	M	C	C
2. Students will be able to read as writers, analyzing in works by published authors the ways in which literary meaning is made.									
a. Students can analyze the relation between literary form (e.g., the use of craft principles) and literary content (e.g., theme, subject) in the work of published writers.	C	C	C	M	M	M	M		
b. Students can analyze the relation between literary form (e.g., the use of craft principles) and literary content (e.g., theme, subject) in the work of published writers.	C	C	M	M	M	M	M	C	C
3. Students will be able to evaluate and analyze the techniques and intentions of literary manuscripts and to participate in constructive critical discussion of such works.									
a. In responding to a draft manuscript students can identify the ways in which the writer's craft choices do or do not serve the aims of the work, applying craft theory and critical vocabulary in judging the effectiveness of the writing and in comparing it to works with similar themes, form, or style.				C	C	C	C		

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b. Students can synthesize specific observations made in close reading of a manuscript to formulate accurate statements about how it works as a whole and to make suggestions for revision				C	C	C	C		
c. Students can integrate written and verbal critiques from peers and instructors in revising their own manuscripts, making selective decisions about how to improve the writing.				C	C	C	C	C	C
4. Students are prepared for entry into the public life of literature, which includes locating their own work in the context of contemporary literary practice, preparing their work according to professional standards, teaching creative writing, and participating in diverse literary communities.									
a. Students appraise their own and others' work in relation to contemporary literary practice and understand how to submit work to journals and publishers in accordance with standard practice in the field.		M		M	M	M	M		C
b. Students demonstrate competence in written communication that has application for professional writing and editing.	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	C	C
c. Students who wish to pursue a teaching career acquire a comprehensive knowledge of craft principles and pedagogy from teaching assistantships and core courses.									
d. Students learn to value engagement with a literary community, demonstrated by participation in a wide array of literary events and programs and active efforts to publish their work				M	M	M	M		

Outcome Rubrics

Outcome	Very Poor Achievement of Outcome	Poor Achievement of Outcome	Average Achievement of Outcome [Benchmark Standard]	Good Achievement of Outcome	Very Good Achievement of Outcome
<p>1a. Students will competently apply craft principles (e.g., plot development, characterization, exposition, poetic line, figurative imagery) to composing and revising their own stories, novels, poems, or works of nonfiction.</p>		<p>Students lack consistent application of craft and are unable to apply craft principles during the revision process.</p>	<p>Students demonstrate a basic knowledge of craft: elements are consistently present, though not developed, and revision takes craft issues into account.</p>	<p>Students demonstrate an active application of craft principles (e.g. strong characterization, complex imagery) and consistently revise work with attention to specific and overall structure.</p>	<p>Students determine strategies that best serve intention when applying principles of craft and can consistently strengthen work in the process of revision via attention to several craft details.</p>
<p>1b. By completing a book-length work (creative thesis), students will demonstrate their ability to organize material, shape it into a whole, and sustain creative choices based on a knowledge of craft principles.</p>		<p>Student compilation is disorganized, and one or more pieces or parts lack development (e.g. indiscriminate use of poetic line, unclear plot development), obfuscating meaning.</p>	<p>Thesis is organized in a way that suggests unity as a whole as well as in parts and has literal clarity, and the work shows application of craft principles across a range of writing.</p>	<p>The work shows clear and developmental organization, in which parts relate to the whole, and a consistent, strong use of several craft elements in each piece or part.</p>	<p>The work as a whole demonstrates purposeful structural design and organization and utilizes craft elements in sustained innovative ways to create a consistent literary style.</p>
<p>2a. Students can identify structural elements and evaluate aesthetic choices in literary works of art across diverse historical and cultural traditions.</p>		<p>When reading the work of published writers, students are unable to recognize patterns of craft, and cannot analyze the ways in which writers across a spectrum make esthetic choices.</p>	<p>Students can identify craft elements in the works they are reading, and can analyze how and to what end diverse authors make esthetic choices.</p>	<p>Students' reading is informed by their study of writing; they can recognize and analyze structural elements and details in others' work and can recognize how and why diverse choices constitute a writer's style.</p>	<p>Students approach reading as writers, analyzing craft and style elements with a knowledge of how such choices are made in their own work and maintaining a sense of historical literary developments in form and style.</p>
<p>2b. Students can analyze the relation between literary form (e.g., the use of craft principles) and literary content (e.g., theme, subject) in the work of published writers.</p>		<p>Students cannot recognize dynamic elements in the work of authors they are reading and cannot interpret them according to principles of craft.</p>	<p>Students respond analytically to the work of others and are able to chart the interaction between formal and thematic elements.</p>	<p>Students can identify and analyze elements of both form and content in work they are reading and can critically evaluate the ways in which each informs the other.</p>	<p>Student responses to reading are consistently informed by an awareness of writing choices, and they approach issues of meaning in relation to issues of craft and style.</p>
<p>3a. In responding to a draft manuscript students can identify the ways in which the</p>		<p>Students can identify craft elements (plot development in</p>	<p>Most of the time students can identify the central aims of a manuscript and</p>	<p>Employing a precise critical vocabulary, students can identify the</p>	<p>Employing a precise critical vocabulary, students can identify the central aims of a</p>

<p>writer's craft choices do or do not serve the aims of the work, applying craft theory and critical vocabulary in judging the effectiveness of the writing and in comparing it to works with similar themes, form, or style. Students can synthesize specific observations made in close reading of a manuscript to formulate accurate statements about how it works as a whole and to make suggestions for revision.</p>		<p>narrative, line breaks in poetry) but often cannot accurately define how they serve the central aims of the work. Students cannot always recognize the literary forms and traditions that inform the work or provide evidence from the manuscript to support their evaluation of the work. Suggestions for revision are piecemeal; students can identify what does not work but cannot consistently propose possible solutions.</p>	<p>can analyze the ways in which some craft elements do or do not serve these aims. Students apply basic critical vocabulary to the practice of other writers and can make comparisons with literary models that inform the work. Students marshal adequate evidence from the manuscript for their evaluation of the work, and they suggest craft strategies for solving technical problems. They cannot always infer how craft elements function together in the specific work.</p>	<p>central aims of a manuscript and can analyze the ways in which craft elements do or do not serve these aims. Comments on manuscripts relate a writer's practice to craft theory and to literary models that inform the work. Most of the time students marshal substantial evidence from the manuscript for their evaluation of the work, and they suggest specific craft strategies for solving technical problems. Their interpretation often makes accurate inferences about how craft elements function together in the specific work.</p>	<p>manuscript, analyze the ways in which craft elements do or do not serve these aims, and consider an array of choices open to the writer. Comments on manuscripts relate a writer's practice to craft theory and to literary works that illustrate appropriate strategies for revision. Students marshal substantial evidence from the manuscript for their evaluation of the work, and they suggest specific craft strategies for solving technical problems, with the capacity to speculate on more than one possible solution. Their interpretation consistently makes accurate inferences about how craft elements function together in the specific work and offers possible models for a more ambitious work.</p>
<p>3b. Students can integrate written and verbal critiques from peers and instructors in revising their own manuscripts, making selective decisions about how to improve the writing.</p>		<p>Students can respond to concrete and literal revision suggestions (e.g., make copy editing changes) but most of the time cannot reconstruct the formal elements of the work to solve technical problems posed by the previous draft.</p>	<p>Students respond to revision suggestions selectively. They apply craft principles to solve technical problems posed by the previous draft but revise to correct error rather than to reconceive the work.</p>	<p>Students respond to revision suggestions selectively. They apply craft principles to solve technical problems posed by the previous draft and pursue recommended changes to formal elements to better serve the aims of the work.</p>	<p>Students respond to revision suggestions selectively. They apply craft principles to solve technical problems posed by the previous draft and not only pursue recommended changes to formal elements but also employ new inventive strategies to achieve the aims of the work.</p>
<p>4a. Students appraise their own and others' work in relation to contemporary literary practice and understand how to submit work to journals and</p>		<p>Students cannot define their own aesthetic in relation to contemporary writing. They are unable to determine when their own work or the work</p>	<p>Most of the time students can identify the aesthetic tradition (s) in which their work belongs and are sometimes able to determine when work is of</p>	<p>Students can identify the aesthetic tradition(s) in which their work belongs and most of the time are able to determine when work is</p>	<p>Students can identify the aesthetic tradition(s) in which their work belongs and are able to determine when work is of a publishable quality. They prepare work for</p>

publishers in accordance with standard practice in the field.		of others is of a publishable quality. They may not prepare work for submission according to professional standards.	a publishable quality. They prepare work for submission according to professional standards.	of a publishable quality. They prepare work for submission according to professional standards.	submission according to professional standards.
4b. Students demonstrate competence in written communication that has application for professional writing and editing.		Students translate to a professional setting the ability to communicate clearly in writing. They cannot always appraise the rhetorical purpose of the task accurately or organize information logically, and cannot correct all errors in grammar and usage that interfere with readability.	Students translate to a professional setting the ability to communicate clearly in writing. They appraise the rhetorical purpose of the task accurately and organize information logically, and correct significant errors in grammar and usage that interfere with readability.	Students translate to a professional setting the ability to communicate clearly in writing. They appraise the rhetorical purpose of the task accurately and organize information logically, and they analyze their own written work and that of others with precise critical judgment. Students correct most errors in grammar and usage.	Students translate to a professional setting the ability to communicate clearly in writing. They appraise the rhetorical purpose of the task accurately and organize information logically, and they analyze their own written work and that of others with precise critical judgment. As editors or as writers, students make stylistically effective choices in sentence structure and diction and correct substantive errors in grammar and usage.
4c. Students who wish to pursue a teaching career acquire a comprehensive knowledge of craft principles and pedagogy from teaching assistantships and core courses.		Students recognize the fundamentals of the discipline (literary criticism and craft analysis) but cannot always outline how craft principles function in a given literary work or manuscript. Students recognize the components of effective pedagogy (e.g., formulating questions that prompt discussion) but are inconsistent in applying these concepts when they teach.	Students recognize the fundamentals of the discipline and can often outline how craft principles function in a given literary work or manuscript. Students recognize the components of effective pedagogy and most of the time can apply these concepts when they teach. They pursue opportunities to serve as teaching assistants in undergraduate courses at the university or in other settings.	Students recognize the fundamentals of the discipline and can outline how craft principles function in a given literary work or manuscript. Students' understanding of craft enables them to analyze accurately the technical challenges of beginning writers. Students recognize the components of effective pedagogy and consistently apply these concepts when they teach. They perform effectively as teaching	Students' understanding of craft enables them to outline how craft principles function in a given literary work or manuscript and to analyze the technical challenges of beginning writers in ways that foster successful revision. Students recognize the components of effective pedagogy and effectively apply these concepts when they teach, organizing coherent lessons that solicit imagination and critical thinking. They perform exceptionally as teaching assistants in undergraduate courses at the university or as

				assistants in undergraduate courses at the university or teach in other settings.	teachers in other settings.
4d. Students learn to value engagement with a literary community, demonstrated by participation in a wide array of literary events and programs and active efforts to publish their work.		Poor achievement: Students have a poor record of attendance at MFA Program readings by published authors that are a required part of the curriculum. They may or may not attend community literary events.	Students participate in the required MFA Program reading series and regularly attend community literary events.	Students participate in required program-sponsored literary events, regularly attend community literary events, and take advantage of internship opportunities and program-sponsored projects (e.g., the program's online literary journal, student readings). They pursue opportunities to publish their work.	Students participate in required program-sponsored literary events, attend community literary events on a regular basis, and take advantage of internship opportunities and program-sponsored projects. During their time in the program and after they graduate, students generate and/or administer reading series, launch and/or serve as editorial staff for literary journals and presses, form writing groups, volunteer to serve the program by speaking at information meetings and program events, and participate in community literary or literacy programs. Students publish their work in journal and/or book form.

Assessment Methods

Learning goal 1, outcomes a and b

- The thesis itself constitutes program-level assessment of student progress on learning outcomes. Major Project I and II instructors complete a letter of evaluation and submit it to the program's Academic Director for annual review, so that student progress is assessed at the halfway point and at completion of the program.
- After the Major Project II instructor approves the thesis, an additional thesis reader, a member of the thesis approval committee, determines the work has met written program standards and writes a letter of acceptance or a letter asking for corrections.
- To help measure the program's overall effectiveness, designated faculty will, for a select number of students in each graduating class, compare a selection from the student's thesis to the first submission in the introductory course for all entering students, as an additional measure of the student's progress in writing.

Learning goal 2, outcomes a and b

- Every semester the Academic Director reviews course syllabi and recommends revisions where these do not satisfy requirements set out in course descriptions.
- Curriculum Committees, specific to each genre, conduct curriculum analysis to ensure that course descriptions emphasize diverse literary traditions and significant writers and that written assignments ask students to respond creatively and analytically to literary tradition.
- Curriculum committees in each genre will develop rubrics for the evaluation of critical papers in select literature courses. These rubrics are intended to form the basis for program evaluation; instructors complete them for first and last assignments in the course and the respective curriculum committees evaluate effectiveness.
- Narrative course evaluations (developed by the MFA program) solicit information from students on their learning progress.

Learning goal 3, outcomes a and b

- Narrative course evaluations (developed by the MFA program) solicit information from students on their learning progress.
- Some workshops embed revision in the course assignments, and in other cases, Major Project I and II directly address the revision process and instructors comment on successive drafts.
- Instructors collect and comment on students' written critiques of the creative manuscripts of their peers.

Learning goal 4, outcomes a, b, c, and d

- The preface to the student thesis articulates the aims of the work and defines the aesthetic tradition in which the writer is working. Where a thesis preface does not meet this criteria, the second reader seeks corrections or revisions. Approval of the thesis provides program-level assessment of student competence.
- Curriculum committees in each genre will develop rubrics for the evaluation of critical papers in select literature courses that emphasize contemporary practice. These rubrics are intended to form the basis for program evaluation; instructors complete them for first and last assignments in the course and the respective curriculum committees evaluate effectiveness.
- Some of the instruction students receive in relation to learning outcomes 4c and 4d is extracurricular— via teaching assistantships, occasional events in the MFA program reading series, student-run online journal, and an annual panel on publishing and teaching. The program will devise a rubric to be completed by English Department faculty members who supervise teaching associates.
- Exit survey of graduating students will seek their evaluation of how well they were prepared for engaging various literary community activities, such as publishing, reading series, editing journals, etc. *We need funding from the university in order to devise a survey and send it to graduates.*
- Program documents the publishing and literary achievements of graduates and tracks their progress in publishing their work and participating in readings, journals, etc. over a minimum of a six-year period of time. Program also documents the success of graduates in obtaining teaching positions.

Time Frame

We'd like to collect data for learning goals 1 and 2 in the first year; for learning goal 3 in the second year, learning goal 4 in the final year. However, to assess the thesis itself as evidence of student progress for all of the methods outlined, we might not be able to complete collection of data for learning outcome 1b until fall 2010.

Who Will Do the Assessment?

This is a huge concern for us, since we have an almost-entirely part-time faculty. In addition, the student writing that we analyze might run 300-400 pages for just one thesis (such as a novel), so how can we devise a process that might rely on the thesis reader as the data gatherer? Similarly, can course instructors evaluate student work according to the rubric and report on this, or do we have to have a second faculty member evaluate student progress according to the rubric? Given the volume of written work, how is this to be accomplished?

Do our present systems of ensuring rigor fit within the framework of assessment as they are? Course syllabi are reviewed every semester by the director; we have task forces on curricular matters and this year are instituting curriculum committees to evaluate curriculum and recommend changes to the faculty and the Academic Director.

How data will be used to improve program or revise curriculum

A task force, committee, or designated faculty member would report to the faculty any areas of concern, and any action taken might first be studied by a curriculum committee in a given genre that would make recommendations. We need guidance from the dean's office on who determines whether to implement these recommendations when our faculty is largely part-time.