

Northwestern University Department of English

2024-2025

# Guide to Graduate Study

Litowitz MFA+MA Program in Creative Writing and English

*The Department of English Guide to the Litowitz Creative Writing Graduate Program supplements the Graduate School website, which contains general regulations and deadlines on a wide range of academic and financial matters pertaining to graduate study. The Guide contains information about departmental regulations and requirements for the MFA+MA degree. When departmental regulations concerning a particular aspect of the program change during your tenure of study at Northwestern, you will ordinarily follow the rule in effect when you matriculated, except by permission of the Director of Graduate Studies. The Guide sometimes refers to general regulations of the Graduate School, but it must always be used in conjunction with the most recent update to the Graduate School website.*

*As a student in the Graduate School, you will at any moment be one of over 4000 degree candidates, and during your stay here you will have to interact directly and indirectly with a set of bureaucracies that includes, among others, the Federal Government. It is your direct responsibility to keep abreast of the general regulations and deadlines of the Graduate School and to comply with them in a timely fashion. The Department will help you, but you should not rely on it to tell you what you need to do and when. While the Graduate School will be compassionate in dealing with difficulties that are beyond your control, equity and time constraints make it hard for rules to be bent when problems arise from students' negligence.*

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Chicago, IL 60604  
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(800) 397-6251

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**Abbreviations used below:**

**CWDGS:** Creative Writing Director of Graduate Study (faculty person who administers the Litowitz Creative Writing Graduate program in English; your liaison for programmatic and substantive concerns to do with courses, requirements, exams, thesis, as well as any other personal or structural concerns relevant to your graduate study);

**ADCW:** Assistant Director of Creative Writing

**GPC:** Graduate Program Coordinator (Nathan Mead), tasked with the administrative and programmatic implementation of the Graduate Program, maintenance of the department's website, institutional liaison with The Graduate School, as well as serving as your contact for information concerning fellowship and travel grant applications;

**GA/RA/TA:** Graduate, Research, and Teaching Assistant. Research Assistants typically work with one member of the faculty, or with a specific faculty committee, on matters not related to an ongoing course. Teaching Assistants work with the faculty member leading an undergraduate writing class. "Graduate Assistant" is an umbrella term, encompassing any work a department assigns to a graduate student in return for receiving funding in the form of an assistantship. Your Summer quarter work with the TriQuarterly Magazine is an example of a GA assignment;

**P/NP:** Pass/No Pass. A grading standard that requires formal enrollment in a class and a certain minimum amount of work as determined by the instructor. Not all departments allow students to take their classes P/NP, and graduate students must consult with the instructor if they wish to take a class P/NP when a regular letter grade is also an option. Taking a class P/NP is not the same as auditing a class;

**TGS:** The Graduate School, the administrative unit which determines graduate policy, regulations, admissions, benefits, and funding.

## **1.REGISTRATION,REQUIREMENTS,EVALUATIONS**

### **1.1. Course and Residency Credits**

If you are a full-time student in The Graduate School (TGS), credits are based on full enrollment and course registration rather than credit hours. Registration in three classes per quarter is required for full-time standing. You may take a fourth course without incurring additional tuition expenses.

Within the framework of TGS residency requirements, the English Department determines the number and distribution of courses required for the MFA+MA. In consultation with the Creative Writing Director of Graduate Studies (CWDGS), you will choose your courses from seminars offered in the English Department as well as in other departments and programs at Northwestern. In year one, you take three courses per quarter (Fall, Winter, and Spring). In year two, you take two courses per quarter as well as a unit of credit when you work as a Graduate Assistant (GA), for three total credits. In year three, you will register for three units of credit per quarter as you work on your thesis.

The following registration levels and types can be counted toward full-time standing as a student in TGS:

#### **300-level undergraduate courses**

You are strongly encouraged to pursue all of your coursework at the graduate (400) level. Undergraduate classes do not replicate graduate seminars, either in terms of intellectual

complexity or mandated active participation essential to your preparation as a writer and teacher. MFA+MA candidates may enroll in only one 300-level undergraduate or 400-level course in another department to fulfill required coursework. *All students must contact the CWDGS before registration to justify the necessity of any 300-level course to your program of study.* Only 300-level courses listed in CAESAR under Course Career "Graduate School" can confer credit toward your MFA+MA. Upon CWDGS approval, you must contact the professor to determine whether they are willing to accept graduate students in the class, and to establish the extra workload (at minimum, an additional or enhanced research essay) requisite for graduate credit. *300-level undergraduate classes cannot be used to fulfill the pre- and post-1800 course requirements.*

#### **400-level graduate courses**

These graduate seminars make up your foundational coursework. Most will be taken in the English Department, but be sure to consult graduate course offerings in Comparative Literature, History, the Program in African Studies, Gender & Sexuality Studies, Philosophy, Political Science, Art History, and beyond. *MFA+MA candidates may enroll in only one 300-level undergraduate or 400-level course in another department to fulfill required coursework.*

#### **English 403: Writers' Studies in Literature**

MFA+MA students take three sections of English 403 over the first two years, and the focus, topics, and genres will vary. Students will learn about literature from a writers' perspective through close reading, as well as contextualization through

generalized thematic as well as formal lineage. Central to the program's interdisciplinary foundation, these courses will be taught by either creative writing faculty or literature faculty, with at least one major assignment in each course relying on research and critical writing. English 403 is open to English PhD and MA students, as well as to all other university graduate students by department permission.

#### **English 410: Introduction to Graduate Study**

English 410, "Introduction to Graduate Studies," is required of all doctoral and MFA+MA students to help you prepare for the scholarly side of the program. This seminar introduces students to library resources, research methods, and scholarly endeavors, such as textual editing, constructions and deconstructions of literary history and canons, influential theories underlying analytic and critical practices, the history of the profession of literary studies, and contemporary issues within and around the discipline. English 410 also includes a Friday discussion section in which professors, librarians, and other professionals will give informal talks and lead conversations about various issues of intellectual and professional development. Possible topics may include editing and peer review at academic journals, archival research, using digital technology in research and teaching, writing for a public audience, and so on. Depending on availability, the section may not meet every week, and/or may offer several sessions during the Winter and Spring quarters.

#### **400-level Creative Writing Workshops (English 496, 497, 498)**

These creative writing workshops are the basis of your training as a writer in the program. Eng 496, 497, and 498 are genre specific. There will be a mixture of genre-specific workshops each year, depending on the cohorts present and instructors available. Every student will have four workshops in their home genre over the course of two years. The fifth genre-specific workshop will be one of the other two (and the sixth can be in-genre or out of genre). Creative writing workshops may be open to graduate students in other Northwestern programs. Creative Writing workshops offered by the School of Professional Studies or the School of Communication may be taken as a fourth course elective, but cannot substitute for any workshops offered by the English Department.

#### **English 490: Reading and Pedagogy**

MFA+MA students will register for one unit of English 490 per quarter when working as a GA. This registration carries no specific assignments or duties, but gives you course credit for work as a GA. English 490 registrations carry an automatic passing grade for students in good standing.

#### **English 491: Editorial Practicum (summer only)**

This registration will appear on your transcript in order to demonstrate your work as an Editorial Assistant on TriQuarterly Magazine. This registration will be administered as a part of your Summer funding package, and students will be expected to attend training sessions and complete remote work over the Summer. This registration is not graded and confers no credit, but may impact funding.

#### **English 499: Independent Study**

The graduate seminar offerings in English and other departments or programs will be your primary means of earning credit for coursework. You should contemplate independent faculty-supervised work for credit only if you can justify the exceptional urgency of the material or situation. All Independent Study requests must be reviewed and endorsed in advance by the CWDGS in concert with the Creative Writing Graduate Policy Committee. Approval of requests for Independent Study work is not guaranteed.

To make such a request, discuss the independent study with your chosen professor. The two of you will then outline a syllabus for the 10 weeks of the quarter. The responsibility of creating and finalizing this syllabus will be on the student. If the professor agrees to the proposed course syllabus, you will then email the Director of Graduate Studies in Creative Writing to inform them of your intention to propose an independent study, cc'ing the professor, the Assistant Director of Creative Writing, and the GPC on this email. The Director will then evaluate if you've demonstrated exceptional urgency for the independent study. They will notify you, the GPC, and the Assistant Director of their decision. All requests for independent study must be made formally and should be emailed to relevant parties by the end of the first week of the registration period for that quarter.

#### **500-level graduate courses**

These courses, such as English 590: Research, are not necessarily more advanced in nature than 400-level classes. They confer specific amounts of residency credit depending on a student's year, standing, and funding status.

#### **English 571: Teaching Creative Writing**

You will register for this class in Winter quarter, year one. This class confers graduate credit. It is taken for a letter grade.

#### **English 590: Research**

MFA+MA students register for English 590 during the Summer Quarter of both their first and second years in the program, with the purpose of maintaining full-time student standing.

#### **English 591: Thesis Tutorial**

Under the supervision of the CWDGS, MFA+MA students register for English 591 starting in Fall Quarter of year three in the program. Students will be writing their MFA Thesis with their advisor. The advisor may convene occasional meetings of English 591 students so they may workshop and share their individual work. After year two, English 591 is your default registration for any quarter during which you receive funding from internal or external sources. English 591 confers full residency status and all related benefits, including the TGS health insurance subsidy. It also obliges you to continue paying the Student Activity Fee.

#### **TGS 512: Continuous Registration**

In any quarter (with the exception of Summer Quarter) during which you do not receive funding, you must register for TGS 512 (tuition: \$100/ quarter). This registration confers minimum residency status, continued access to email and other Northwestern online resources,

and library and other privileges, but does not confer the TGS health insurance subsidy. The Student Activity Fee is not required with registration for TGS 512 and its benefits are not available

## **1.2. Transfer Credit**

Requests to transfer credits from a previous graduate-level degree must be made to the CWDGS, and will be evaluated by the Graduate Policy Committee.

## **1.3. Pre- and Post-1800 Course Requirements**

In order to ensure that students gain master's-level expertise with literature from diverse historical periods and contexts, we require that all MFA+MA students take four courses defined along historical lines:

- Two courses dealing primarily with pre-1800 literature;
- Two courses dealing primarily with post-1800 literature.

All courses from each group must be at the 400 level. Seminars taken to fulfill the pre- and post-1800 course requirement must be offered by the Department of English, though you may petition the CWDGS in exceptional cases. Eligible courses cannot be audited or taken P/N. Ordinarily, Independent Study courses (English 499) may not be used to satisfy this requirement, though you may petition the CWDGS in exceptional cases. If a given course straddles the line between the two periods, your professor will make the determination depending on your chosen area of research focus for the class. For a course in literary theory to count for post-1800 credit, it must engage some significant aspect of the literary canon after 1800. The CWDGS will adjudicate these requests on a case-by-case basis.

## **1.4. Grades**

At Northwestern, undergraduate and graduate professors use letter grades with "+" and "-" distinctions. Your grades will appear in this format in departmental records, TGS records, and transcripts released by the Office of the Registrar.

## **1.5. Incomplete Work**

In order to remain in good standing, you must make up incomplete work from any academic year no later than two weeks prior to the beginning of classes in the following Fall Quarter. This rule overrides any rule set down by TGS. We strongly recommend that you complete all work for your courses before the beginning of the subsequent quarter whenever possible. In unavoidable circumstances like illness or a family emergency, you should work with your professors and the CWDGS to establish an extended schedule of deadlines. It is crucial for you to communicate with the CWDGS and your professors if you foresee obstacles to your timely completion of coursework

## **1.6. Departmental Evaluations**

### **1.6.1. Course Evaluations**

For every course taken in the first year of the MFA+MA program, your professor will be encouraged to complete a formal written evaluation. A key part of your permanent record in the department office, these evaluations are available to you if you'd like to consult them and are given close attention in deliberations about continuation. Students should consult them as they appear and use them in measuring achievement and planning goals. The graduate faculty may consult all student records.

### **1.6.2. Teaching Assistant Evaluations**

Professors to whom students are assigned as Teaching Assistants are encouraged to provide an evaluation of the work performed for them. All submitted evaluations are available in your permanent record in the department office.

## **1.7. Annual Progress Reports**

Students meet annually with the CWDGS in Spring Quarter of the first year (and second year, as necessary), bringing with them a progress report on their studies and writing, as well as a proposal for Summer research.

## **1.8. Good Standing Notifications**

As noted above, graduate assistantships and other fellowship commitments to WCAS and TGS require that you remain in good standing as a full-time student.

Up until the five-year thesis deadline, the English Department is required to notify each student active in the MFA+MA program of their standing at the end of every academic year (after Summer quarter). Letters indicating the passage of the first-year review at the end of year one, the Capstone Essay at the end of year two, and the MFA thesis at the end of year three are considered indicators of good standing unless any problems are specified. If a student's standing is in question, the CWDGS will, in consultation with the student, devise a schedule to restore their good standing in the Department. The student will receive a letter outlining these conditions, with which they must affirm their agreement. A student who takes more than three years to finish the program, must consult with the CWDGS to devise a schedule for completion. This schedule must be created by week 3 of the Fall Quarter after the end of year 3. TGS does not permit an extension beyond the end of Spring Quarter of Year Five.

## 2. EARNING TWO DEGREES

### 2.1. Degree Description and Requirements

As a student in the Litowitz Creative Writing Graduate Program, students will earn two degrees over the course of three years, an MFA in Creative Writing and an MA in English. Students will take courses toward both degrees in years one and two of the program, completing the requirements for the MA at the end of the second year with a Capstone Essay and completing the requirements for the MFA with the MFA thesis. Both degrees will be awarded simultaneously upon completion of all degree requirements. Students who depart the program early, but after completing all requirements for the MA, will be awarded the MA only. It is not possible to receive the MFA without also completing requirements for the MA. Coursework specific to each degree is as follows:

#### 2.1.1. MA coursework

- English 410: Introduction to Graduate Studies
- Three sections of English 403: Writers' Studies in Literature
- Four 400-level seminars in English, two of which must be pre-1800 and two of which must be post-1800
- One additional literature or theory course at the 300- or 400-level, in English or in another department.
- The MA Capstone Essay: an article-length literary critical essay, either new or expanded from a seminar paper

**Non-English seminars:** The CWDGS must grant permission to substitute a course outside English for one of the four required pre/post-1800 PhD seminars. CAESAR lists courses for all departments and programs, so check the listings there in the lead-up to registration. A class must fall under the course career "The Graduate School" for it to count towards your degree. If a course requires the permission of the instructor, do not hesitate to reach out to them; faculty across the arts and humanities at Northwestern generally welcome such requests. It is important that graduate seminars not only support the writing of the MA capstone but also the student's creative endeavors.

**N.B.** If you find a 300-level course that is not listed under the course career "The Graduate School" in CAESAR but is imperative to the writing of your MA Capstone or supportive of your creative work, you may ask the CWDGS for permission to enroll in an English 499 Independent Study in place of the course in question. Permission of the instructor is also required, and the presumption is that you will arrange for additional work to bring the course content to the level of what would be expected in a graduate course.

#### 2.1.2. MFA coursework:

- English 491: Editorial Practicum (one each Summer Quarter)
- Six Creative Writing Workshops (Eng 496, 497, 498): four in your home genre, one in either of the two remaining genres, and one in any of the three genres
- English 571: Teaching Creative Writing

- The MFA Thesis: the first draft of a book-length work of original fiction, creative nonfiction, poetry, or mixed-genre work

### 2.2 Regulations Concerning Degree Completion

The schedule for the completion of the Litowitz Creative Writing Graduate Program assumes that you will finish the MA Capstone Essay and coursework by the end of the Spring Quarter of the second year and the MFA Thesis by the end of the first week of the student's final quarter (normally Spring of the third year). We very strongly advise that students finish their MA Capstone at the end of the second year so that it does not interfere with time needed to write the MFA Thesis. However, if you need more time to polish the final document, you may choose to submit the Capstone Essay for review during Summer quarter of the second year. Pursuit of this alternative schedule must be approved by the CWDGS before the end of the Winter quarter in your second year. Similarly, if you need more time to polish the MFA Thesis, you may submit the thesis for review in Summer quarter of the third year. Pursuit of this alternative schedule must be approved by the CWDGS before the end of the Winter quarter.

According to TGS regulations, a student in the Litowitz program has five years from the initial quarter of matriculation to complete all degree requirements. To maintain student standing over this extended period, you must register for TGS 512 (tuition: \$100/quarter) for each academic quarter during which no coursework is taken. This includes Fall, Winter, and Spring Quarters, but you are not required to register in Summer. Failure to register during the academic year will result in discontinuation from the program, which can only be reversed by submitting a petition for readmission and paying a fee determined by TGS



### 3. YEAR ONE

#### 3.1 Registering in the First Year

The program is designed with these eleven courses in mind for a Litowitz student's first year:

- English 410: Introduction to Graduate Studies
- Two sections of English 403: Writers' Studies in Literature
- Four 400-level PhD seminars
- One or two Creative Writing Workshops (at least one in your home genre)
- English 571: Teaching Creative Writing
- English 491: *TriQuarterly* (Summer)
- English 590 (Summer)

#### 3.2 Advising

Your main programmatic advisor in your first year and throughout the program will be the CWDGS, supplemented by the Assistant Director of Creative Writing. For advising on specific course assignments, you should visit professors during office hours.

#### 3.3 First-Year Review

A review of each student's work at the end of the first academic year gives students an opportunity to assess their coursework and writing during their first year. Each student will meet with the CWDGS and one other member of the creative writing faculty, chosen by the CWDGS. No later than a month prior to the meeting, faculty in whose courses students have enrolled will be asked to submit brief evaluations. No writing sample from the student is required, but the meeting will include discussion of the student's creative work, scholarly explorations, and sense of productivity. A full week before the meeting, the student is required to send to the DGS a Summer Writing, Research and Planning Proposal (1000 words maximum). This will be the basis of discussion and will also look ahead to the planning of the MFA thesis.

On the basis of your academic record and writing in the first year, the first-year review should lead to departmental faculty approval for your continuation. The committee reserves the right to recommend against continuation. In the event of uneven progress, the committee may put a student on second-year probation. In this instance, the student works closely in year two with an assigned faculty mentor with the goal of developing strengths and working through difficulties; at the end of year two, the student undergoes a second-year review during Reading Week of Spring Quarter. Weak performance in the second year may require a student to leave the program, as recommended by the committee. The graduate faculty as a whole makes final decisions on all committee recommendations.

#### 3.4. Year One Summer

You will begin work as an Editorial Assistant on *TriQuarterly* journal, reading manuscripts and performing other duties as assigned by the Managing Editor of *TriQuarterly*, a genre editor

at *TriQuarterly*, and/or the ADCW, for up to 15-20 hours per week. You will register for English 491: Editorial Practicum, to show this editorial work on your transcript. You will also need to register for one unit of English 590: Research, in order to maintain full-time student status and funding. You may travel while working for *TriQuarterly*. Any questions regarding your work for *TriQuarterly* can be directed to the ADCW. Your Summer work for *TriQuarterly* is the basis for your Summer funding; failure to complete assigned duties for *TriQuarterly* may impact your funding. Your funding will be provided as an assistantship.

#### 3.5 Anticipating Year Two

You will begin to work as a Graduate Assistant (GA), teaching classes or conducting other duties as assigned. Your funding will likely be provided solely in the form of a graduate assistantship, though you might receive fellowship funding during some quarters in special situations. Plan accordingly, and make sure to verify which types of funding you will have in each quarter. Scheduling of Year 2 GA assignments will usually take place in the Spring of Year 1. You should also begin to think about who you would like as your MFA Thesis Advisor and who you would like as your other MFA Thesis Committee members (see Year Two below).

## 4. YEAR TWO

### 4.1. Registering in the Second Year

The program is designed with these eleven courses in mind for a Litowitz student's second year:

- One 400-level seminar
- One section of English 403
- Four Creative Writing Workshops
- English 490: one credit in any quarter during which you are working as a GA
- English 491: TriQuarterly (Summer)
- English 590 (Summer)
- English 591: In your second year, you may request to use up to two units of English 591 in place of a PhD seminar, MFA workshop, or GA assignment. Students may use one unit in two separate quarters, or use two units in the same quarter. *Courses or assignments replaced with this enrollment must be taken in the third year.*

### 4.2. Advising

The CWDGS remains your main program advisor, supplemented by the ADCW. By December 1<sup>st</sup>, you will find an advisor who will work with you on the MA Capstone Essay and inform the GPC.

### 4.3. Academic Year Assistantships

During the Fall, Winter, and Spring quarters of your second year, you will be assigned work as either a TA (which covers both assisting a professor and teaching as the instructor of record), RA, or GA. Your assignment during this year will be based entirely on Department needs. The most common assignments are teaching a section of an introductory creative writing class or working closely with a professor as a TA, though work as an RA, as a GA for Northwestern University Press, or work as a GA in other areas are possible in situations of demonstrated need. The courses to which TAs will be assigned are:

- English 202: Introduction to Creative Writing;
- English 206: Reading & Writing Poetry;
- English 207: Reading & Writing Fiction; and
- English 208: Reading & Writing Nonfiction.

Though we will try to accommodate your preferences, Department need is the final determining factor of GA assignments.

Regardless of the specific assignment, it is important to keep in mind that assistantships are meant to be part-time positions involving a maximum of 15-20 hours/week. Your primary responsibility is to continue progress toward your degree, and it is imperative that you strive to balance your pedagogical and programmatic commitments. Do not allow teaching or research work to become all-consuming. Your professors are aware of the fact that the work asked of you must not exceed the 15-20

hour/week restriction, but you should consult with the CWDGS immediately if there are any questions or conflicts between this policy and what is being asked of you.

As a Graduate Assistant, you hold an appointment in TGS, with duties assigned by the Department. As such, it is your responsibility to keep abreast of all TGS and governmental regulations that relate to the appointment, remuneration, tax status, and academic standing for those in this role, as well as those regulations set forth by your graduate student union

### 4.4. Capstone Essay for the MA

Satisfactory completion of the MA Capstone Essay, an article-length literary critical essay. This 20-25 page essay may be an expanded version of a scholarly paper written for an English Department graduate seminar. Alternatively, it may be an expanded version of a course paper for English 403. In either case, the MA Capstone Essay may be written either as a scholarly journal article or a literary-critical essay (not a lyrical essay). You will find an advisor to work with while completing the MA Capstone Essay. This will often be the instructor from the seminar in which you completed the initial version of the paper, but this is not mandatory. Revisions to the original paper will be in response to comments from, and as appropriate in consultation with, the Capstone Advisor. A final draft of the essay must be submitted to your advisor no later than May 15th of your second year. They will in turn submit their approval to the CWDGS by June 1st. There is no second reader for the MA Capstone Essay.

### 4.5. MFA Thesis Planning

By May 1st of your second year, you must notify the CWDGS and GPC of who your MFA Thesis Advisor will be. You may ask any member of the graduate creative writing faculty to serve as your Thesis Advisor. You will select an advisor in your genre, or mix of genres, with whom you have experience working, either in class or as a GA. Faculty may decline to advise regarding any particular thesis projects. Students are encouraged to consult with the CWDGS about approaching prospective MFA Thesis Advisors. The formal request to a prospective advisor should be accompanied by a 500-word thesis prospectus, which will also be sent to the GPC by May 1st. This advisor, a member of the graduate creative writing faculty in your genre, will guide you through the year-long process. The CWDGS will continue to provide guidance as needed, as well.

After securing your MFA Thesis Advisor, you will establish the rest of your Thesis Committee. Your Thesis Committee will be comprised of at least two Litowitz MFA+MA faculty members (one of whom serves as your advisor) and one other faculty member, who can come from another discipline. You will establish this committee by the last day of classes of Spring quarter of your 2nd year. At that time, you will submit the list of its members, in writing, to the GPC.

While your advisor must work in your primary genre, your

second committee member from the Litowitz faculty can come from any genre. The third member of the committee can be a faculty member from another discipline, either within the English department or from another department. Your second and third committee members are meant to give further context and feedback, but you should defer to your advisor on questions pertaining to your thesis planning, direction, and submission. When making the initial written request to these second and third committee members, provide justification for your request and copy the Assistant Director on the written request.

Please note that faculty are not obligated to serve as your advisor or as committee members, so you should be prepared to ask multiple faculty members, if need be. Again, stay in close contact with the CWDGS as you form your committees.

#### 4.6. Year Two Summer

As with the Summer Quarter of your first year, you will work as an Editorial Assistant on *TriQuarterly* Journal, reading manuscripts and performing other duties as assigned by the ADCW, Managing Editor of *TriQuarterly*, or a genre editor at *TriQuarterly*, for up to 15-20 hours per week. Registration and funding are identical to the previous Summer Quarter. You are not required to be on campus while working for *TriQuarterly*.

#### 4.7. Anticipating Year Three

By the end of Spring quarter, you must identify and secure an advisor and committee with whom you will begin working on your MFA Thesis. You may ask any member of the graduate creative writing faculty who has taught in your genre to serve as your Thesis Advisor. You should select an advisor with whom you have experience working, either in class or as a GA. Faculty may decline to advise regarding any particular thesis projects. Students are encouraged to consult with the CWDGS about approaching prospective MFA Thesis Advisors and committee members. The formal request to a prospective advisor or committee member should be accompanied by your 500-word thesis prospectus. This prospectus should be a detailed plan for your thesis, including its focus, its intended audience, and a timeline.

### 5. YEAR THREE

#### 5.1. Coursework in the Third Year

- English 490: one unit in any quarter during which you are working as a GA
- English 591: as many units as necessary to maintain full-time student status and funding

\* If you have a remaining workshop, it should be taken Fall quarter of your third year

#### 5.2. Thesis Advising

If you experience serious impediments to your ability to advance with the MFA thesis in year three, you should consult the CWDGS as soon as is possible. Whether the source of the block is advisory, structural, intellectual, or personal, the CWDGS will work with you to attempt to resolve it. It is the student's responsibility to seek assistance when needed and it is crucial to your progress in the program that you communicate the need for this assistance. The CWDGS will keep all communications confidential with the exception, if relevant, of mandatory reporting to TGS as required to maintain Northwestern University's compliance with Title IX.

According to Departmental policy, your thesis advisor should read individual thesis chapters or sections within three weeks, but it is the student's responsibility to set due dates in consultation with your advisor and to check in with your advisor and committee members after establishing due dates. When you submit an entire thesis to your advisor or committee members, you can expect to discuss it no sooner than one month after they have received it. Consult your advisor to determine an appropriate timeline of when to share drafts with other committee members.

Advisors and committee members also have an obligation to read your thesis while they are on leave. During faculty leave and the Summer Quarter, anticipate potential delays in communication and longer lead time prior to the turnaround of your work. To ensure that you can maintain your thesis work schedule, be sure to work out turnaround times before your advisors and committee members leave town for research, writing, Summer travel, or are unavailable for other reasons.

#### 5.3. The MFA Thesis

The MFA Thesis is a book-length work of original fiction, creative nonfiction, poetry, or mixed-genre work. On or before Friday of the first week of your final quarter in the program, you will submit a final draft of your Thesis to your advisor and your Thesis Committee. Failure to do so can result in delays in program completion and graduation.

Upon submitting your thesis to the advisor and committee, you will also schedule a time for your Thesis Defense Conversation. This scheduling includes three primary tasks: 1) You will have to schedule with your advisor and committee members to see

when all can meet, sometime mid-to-late in the quarter, 2) You will find a room where the Thesis Defense Conversation can take place, and 3) You will make the GPC aware of the date, time, and place of your Thesis Defense Conversation.

The Thesis Defense Conversation will be a discussion of your MFA Thesis. The committee will ask questions pertaining to methodology, craft, and/or future plans for your Thesis, though the Thesis Defense Conversation does not have a set structure and can range widely. Consult with your Thesis Advisor on expectations.

After your Thesis Defense Conversation, your advisor will communicate the Thesis Committee's decision to the MFA+MA Graduate Policy Committee for their review. The Graduate Policy Committee will make their final decision by the Spring quarter grading deadline. In extreme cases, they may recommend revisions or other changes.

Consult the Registrar's website and the GPA for graduation deadlines, which are in accord with those required for students in a single-degree MA program.

## **5.4. Formatting Guidelines**

**Fiction and Creative Nonfiction**—Times New Roman 12 point; double-spaced; half-inch margins; standard publishing format; page limits based on your advisor's approval

**Poetry**—Times New Roman 12 point; page limits based on your advisor's approval

**Mixed Genre**—page limits based on your advisor's approval, with formatting adhering to the requirements listed above as appropriate; the predominance of the content is expected to be in the genre you were admitted into (work with your advisor to determine the proportions appropriate to the work you're producing).

## **6. FUNDING & ASSISTANTSHIPS**

### **6.1. Funding**

Departmental recommendation of continuation into year two is prerequisite to the award of assistantships and all other forms of fellowship that involve Northwestern University funds. In addition, TGS requires that you be in good academic standing to receive an assistantship. Good academic standing requires at least a 3.0 GPA and no more than three incomplete grades.

Other circumstances that may jeopardize or otherwise negatively impact university funding include failing to make up incompletes by two weeks before the beginning of the Fall Quarter or failing to complete required duties for TriQuarterly during the Summer quarter.

University fellowships and assistantships are provided to students in the MFA+MA program. Support is provided through Spring quarter of the third year to all MFA+MA students who have been continued into the second year and who remain in good standing in subsequent years. By accepting graduate funding, students have contractually agreed not to undertake significant additional remunerative work without TGS and departmental approval. Please see the TGS website for details of this policy.

Funding for year two takes the form of assistantships, which will include teaching. In rare circumstances, year two assignments can include up to one quarter of fellowship.

As in Year One, funding in Year Three will be in the form of a university fellowship, but might also include up to one quarter of assistantship.

### **6.2. TGS External Award Policy**

TGS considers "graduate funding to be a collaborative effort between students and Northwestern University" (TGS website). Even though outside funding for MFA students is scarcely available, you may seek outside awards and fellowships.

In the event a student wins an external monetary award or fellowship, this may be, but is not required, to be used to support what would otherwise have been supported by a graduate assistantship.

If the external funding to be used to support writing is lower than the TGS basic stipend, The Graduate School will determine on an ad hoc basis to provide a stipend supplement of \$500 per month and/or a stipend top up to the TGS base stipend for students enrolled in MFA programs. Consult "TGS External Award Policy" on the TGS website to stay abreast of current provisions. TGS policy is subject to change. You should consult the CWDGS, the GPC and the Northwestern Office of Fellowships to identify short- and long-term external funding opportunities.

### **6.3. Departmental/TGS Conference Travel Support**

Students must be currently enrolled in the Litowitz MFA+MA program in good standing and be currently receiving university funding to be eligible for conference grant support. Travel should not conflict with department responsibilities, such as attending classes or teaching. See section 1.4.

TGS will not fund conference travel prior to three completed quarters of graduate work at Northwestern. Only in cases of extreme professional urgency will the Department support conference travel other than AWP in the first year. In year 2 and 3 students should first apply for a TGS Conference Travel Grant, and then ask the department for supplemental funding. See the Conference Travel Grant website for when applications open. TGS sometimes runs out of funding for Conference Travel Grants, so it is advised that students apply as soon as applications open (even if you are uncertain you will attend a given conference).

You are strongly discouraged from conference participation in Spring quarter, year two. Except for AWP, it is recommended that you conserve your allocated conference travel until you have completed your MA Capstone work. See section 4.4.

### **6.4. Conference Travel Approval**

Conference travel grants must be approved by the CWDGS to ensure that the planned travel does not conflict with graduate assistantship responsibilities and any other departmental requirements, which always take priority. Upon approval by your director, you must submit a Conference Travel Request Form for the CWDGS's approval and signature. Faculty endorsement of travel requests signals professional confirmation of the legitimacy of the conference and the merit of the commitment of student time. Faculty are expected to weigh this endorsement seriously; approval is not assured. See 1.4.

### **6.5. Extra-Departmental Travel/ Research Support**

Northwestern University's Roberta Buffett Institute for Global Studies supports graduate work in globalization studies, research in the Middle East, and travel related to international and comparative studies. The Program in African Studies (PAS) offers Morris Goodman Awards to support language study, Foreign Language and Area Studies awards, PAS Travel Awards, and other grants. TGS also offers a range of competitive short-term graduate grants, including Summer Language Grants and Graduate Research Grants (a one-time award of up to \$3,000). You are encouraged to consult the websites of relevant Northwestern institutes, programs, and departments, as well as TGS and the Office of Fellowships for further information about short-term grant opportunities at Northwestern. Some of these sources of funding do not support MFA students.

### **6.6. Reimbursement Deadline**

For third year students graduating at the end of Spring quarter,

all reimbursements must be processed by the day before degree conferral. To make this possible, all reimbursement requests must be made by May 31<sup>st</sup>, or the closest prior business day. No exceptions can be made.

### **6.7. Other Program Support**

The Litowitz MFA+MA program provides \$110 per student, per year, to cover writing contest and publication submission fees. These funds are available via reimbursement, in accordance with university policies. Receipts must be complete, including payment information and submitted for reimbursement within 90 days of purchase. These funds do not carry over from year to year.

## **7. OTHER MATTERS**

### **7.1. Departmental Organization**

All Department of English Graduate Programs operate under the authority and rules of TGS. Responsibility for curricular matters, admissions, fellowships, and other academic and financial matters rests with the graduate faculty of the Department, but much of the programmatic business is delegated to the CWDGS and Graduate Policy Committee. The CWDGS is the executive officer of the Graduate Program in Creative Writing.

### **7.2. English Graduate Student Organization**

The English Graduate Student Organization (EGSO) is headed by a pair of PhD students and a pair of MFA+MA students who are elected for one-year terms, as well as two elected representatives of students in coursework and in candidacy, respectively. As the graduate body that organizes and advocates for the social, intellectual, and professional well-being of the PhD, MFA+MA, and MA cohorts, EGSO offers mentoring to graduate students in their first year and in adjusting to coursework; assists in recruiting prospective entrants to the PhD program during their campus visit; helps assess job candidates in the Department of English; organizes graduate student colloquia and the faculty-graduate student events and reading groups; and convenes less formal opportunities for collegiality and community. Most critically, EGSO brings the graduate community's needs and concerns to the attention of the Chair, the PhD DGS, and the CWDGS. The Department offers funds to support EGSO programming.

### **7.3. Placement Services**

Students should consult on placement with their thesis advisor, the CWDGS, and take part, as much as possible, in the department's job placement activities.

### **7.4. University Policies and Behavior**

The Northwestern University Student Handbook describes the expectations for behavior and conduct in the Northwestern community and outlines the procedures to be followed when these expectations are not met. It includes the Student Code of Conduct, the Academic Integrity Policy, as well as other rules, regulations, and policies governing student life.

[www.northwestern.edu/student-conduct/about-us/student-handbook/](http://www.northwestern.edu/student-conduct/about-us/student-handbook/)