

## Information about Creative Writing Samples

We understand that you'll have questions about your application to the undergraduate emphasis in creative writing. While it's not possible for us to discuss your individual application materials in detail, we can pass along a general sense of what we're looking for.

First of all, please understand that decisions about acceptance to the creative writing emphasis are based on your writing sample. We check transcripts to make sure that you have completed the prerequisites, but we do not take grades into consideration. We know that final grades in creative writing classes are based on a variety of factors in addition to the stories, essays, and poems you produced (participation, exercises, papers, presentations, effort at revision, etc.), when we read applications, we take only the creative writing itself into consideration.

We judge applications based on the following criteria:

- How well the writing demonstrates that the writer has learned the basic lessons of the introductory class in each genre
- How well we think the writer will fare in the upper division classes in each genre, particularly in classes at the 400 level

And, if we have more applicants than we can accommodate:

- How the applicant's writing compares to the writing of other students at the same time.

The most basic criteria we look for in the writing sample include:

In prose (fiction or personal essay)

- An ability to write clear and grammatical sentences, unless the nature of the story or essay demands otherwise and this is consistently demonstrated
- An ability to use concrete sensory details
- An avoidance of clichéd or hackneyed language
- A sense of character development
- A sense of movement from first page to last, even if traditional narrative is not used

In poetry

- An ability to use concrete sensory details rather than abstract language
- An avoidance of clichéd or hackneyed language
- An ability to create original or knowledgeable images, metaphors, and forms

In all cases, we aim to ensure that students enrolled in the emphasis can graduate in a timely manner and receive a challenging and rewarding education in creative writing.