



**Grady College of Journalism
and Mass Communication**
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

MFA in Narrative Media Writing

(Updated October, 2022)

The Grady College's Master of Fine Arts program in Narrative Media Writing is designed to train writers who will be published or who will have their screenplays produced. The program has two distinct tracks: Narrative Nonfiction Writing and Screenwriting. The program draws mainly on the resources and facilities of two of the College's three departments: the Department of Journalism, and the Department of Entertainment & Media Studies.

The primary objective of the low-residency Narrative Nonfiction Writing track is to teach current writers advanced skills, enabling them to write a publishable nonfiction manuscript in just over two years. The program offers students an unparalleled opportunity to develop narrative journalism skills that will equip them for long and varied careers. The program features a committed and diverse roster of accomplished authors, literary agents and other industry professionals who work closely with students to inspire and support each writer's emerging craft and voice. Low-Residency MFA in Narrative Nonfiction graduates are prepared to write nonfiction books and/or long-form articles for national and international publishers. Because it is a terminal degree it also allows graduates to pursue faculty positions teaching writing at the university level.

The primary objective of low-residency Screenwriting track is to teach current writers advanced skills, enabling them to write producible screenplays in two years. The low-residency MFA in Screenwriting Degree program offers students an unparalleled opportunity to develop screenwriting skills that will equip them for long and varied careers. The program features a committed and diverse roster of accomplished screenwriters and other industry professionals who work closely with students to inspire and support each writer's emerging craft and voice. Low-residency MFA in Screenwriting Degree graduates are prepared to write screenplays for major motion picture, independent film projects and television companies, or teach screenwriting at the university level.

Faculty

The Narrative Nonfiction program track is taught by a diverse group of faculty members, visiting writing mentors and industry experts. In addition to our core faculty mentors, a variety of accomplished writers and recognized industry leaders are brought in to share their knowledge with our students at each residency.

The Screenwriting degree program is taught by a diverse group of working screenwriters, visiting writing mentors and other industry experts. In addition to our core faculty mentors, a variety of accomplished writers and recognized industry leaders such as agents, managers, and entertainment lawyers are brought in to share their knowledge with our students at each residency.

Narrative Media Writing Graduate Committee

Administration of the low-residency MFA program is the responsibility of the Executive Director and the two track directors. The Executive Director is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the program; the Executive Director and track directors comprise the MFA Graduate Committee are involved in matters of policy, admissions, procedures, and requirements.

Procedures for Admission and Selection of MFA Students

The Executive Director establishes the number of students admitted, taking into account available faculty and funding resources each academic year. Typically, each track of the program admits 10-15 applicants per year. Admission is restricted to ensure quality education and individualized attention. The program strives for a student-faculty ratio of no more than five to one. Announcement of the program, response to inquiries, and collection of application materials are the responsibility of the Executive director, the track directors, and the program administrative assistant. Applications are reviewed by the two Track Directors, in consultation with program faculty members who also review the application materials. Based on all of feedback, the MFA Graduate Committee makes the final selection of candidates for acceptance into the program.

Admission Requirements and Application Procedure

Applicants for admission to the MFA Narrative Media Writing Program must have a bachelor's degree from a recognized institution of higher education, and demonstrate strong writing and creative abilities. Admission is based on (1) grade point average, (2) writing samples, (3) a statement of purpose, and (4) three or more letters of recommendation. The Graduate Record Exam (GRE) is **not required** to apply for this program. Students may submit other examples of professional and scholarly and creative works. International students are required to submit official TOEFL or IELTS scores.

The statement of purpose should describe the applicant's goals and motivations for pursuing the MFA in Narrative Media Writing. Relevant information about interests and experiences should be included, as well as biographical information. Academics and/or professionals may submit letters of recommendation.

The graduate application form, application fee, TOEFL or IELTS scores (if required), and official copies of all transcripts, letters of recommendation, and the student's statement of purpose should be uploaded to the Graduate School application website.

Applicants should meet the following admission standards: a 3.0 undergraduate GPA or higher, or if an applicant has a graduate degree, a 3.5 graduate GPA, a well-reasoned and crafted statement of purpose, and strong letters of recommendation. If an applicant presents outstanding professional qualifications and/or other evidence of potential to succeed in the program, the GPA standards may be adjusted.

All low-residency MFA students enter the program in the fall term, starting with a six-day residency usually in late July and early August. The application deadline for best consideration is April 1. Notification of acceptances is typically complete by May 15th.

Applications from international students should be submitted as early as possible since several months may be required for processing. Academic success in the MFA program is strongly dependent upon the ability to communicate in English; listening, reading, and writing proficiency must be well-developed.

Degree Requirements, Policies, and Procedures

The MFA is a 36-credit program that typically takes two years to complete. All requirements, except the final manuscript, must be completed within five years, dating from the first registration for graduate courses to fulfill the degree requirements.

Curriculum

The MFA Narrative Media Writing curriculum in both tracks is comprised of five semesters: Fall and Spring semesters in the first year, and Fall, Spring and Summer semesters in the final year. Each Fall and Spring 15-week semester begins with a campus residency that features a demanding program of writing workshops in which student work is discussed and evaluated. The residencies run for six days, with students immersing themselves in an intensive writing environment for a full, enriching week. The flexible schedule accommodates professionals who have two weeks of paid leave — while providing students with the opportunity to build a sense of community with their peers and to engage in serious, focused study with their faculty mentors. Each residency includes daily seminars and craft lectures, as well as panel discussions and readings by faculty members, visiting writers, editors, agents and other publishing and entertainment-industry professionals.

All individual core courses are 4 credits each. The normal load is 8 credits per semester, except for the final semester (4 credits). Following are the courses by track:

Narrative Nonfiction Track:

Year 1: Fall Semester:

JNMW 6000E Nonfiction Writing I: Explorations and Beginnings

JNMW 6001E Nonfiction Craft and Reflection I: Research, Reporting, and Ethics

Year 1: Spring Semester

JNMW 6002E Nonfiction Writing II: Developing the Manuscript

JNMW 6003E Nonfiction Craft and Reflection II: Analyzing Narrative

Year 2: Fall Semester

JNMW 6004E Nonfiction Writing III: Work-in-Progress Manuscript

JNMW 6005E Nonfiction Craft and Reflection III: Critical Essay

Year 2: Spring Semester

JNMW 6006E Nonfiction Writing IV: Final Manuscript

JNMW 6007E Nonfiction Craft and Reflection IV: Seminar Preparation

Year 2: Summer Semester

JNMW 6008E Nonfiction Writing V: Craft Seminar Presentation and Public Reading

Screenwriting Track:

Year 1: Fall Semester:

JNMW 6100E Writing for the Screen I: Explorations and Beginnings
JNMW 6101E Screenplay Craft, Criticism, and Reflection I: Directed Readings

Year 1: Spring Semester

JNMW 6102E Writing for the Screen II: Completing the Screenplay
JNMW 6103E Screenplay Craft, Criticism and Reflection II: Analyzing Narrative

Year 2: Fall Semester

JNMW 6104E Writing for the Screen III: Work-in-Progress Screenplay
JNMW 6105E Screenplay Craft, Criticism and Reflection III: Critical Essay

Year 2: Spring Semester

JNMW 6106E Writing for the Screen IV: Final Manuscript
JNMW 6107E Screenplay Craft, Criticism and Reflection IV: Seminar

Year 2: Summer Semester

JNMW 6108E Writing for the Screen V: Screenplay Seminar Presentation, Public Reading

JRMC 8050 – Directed Readings

Should you be required to carry more than 8 credits a semester for financial aid reasons, you can sign up for Directed Readings (aka Independent Study) credits.

Grade Point Average

To be eligible for graduation, a student must have a 3.0 average (B) in all graduate courses taken and in all courses on the Program of Study.

Faculty Mentor and Advisory Committee

The Track Director will assign a faculty mentor to each incoming student. Faculty mentors may remain the same or it may change from semester to semester based on consultation with the program faculty and input from each student. The student's final manuscript advisory committee will be determined by the Track Chair, and will consist of the faculty mentor in the final two semesters of the program, the Track Chair herself/himself, and one additional faculty member.

The student's advisory committee will be responsible for approving the student's Program of Study as well as his/her final manuscript. Both the Program of Study and the final manuscript will be forwarded to the MFA Executive Director and the Dean of the Graduate School for final approvals.

First Year Evaluation

The Executive Director, the Track Director and the student's faculty mentor will evaluate carefully and fully each MFA student's academic progress and qualifications at the end of the first year of study in order to advise the student whether or not to continue in the program. Members of the faculty outside the committee may be consulted.

Students will receive a brief written evaluation from their faculty mentor and sometimes from the Track Director. Students not receiving a cumulative 3.0 average may be dismissed from the program.

Student Appeal/Petition Procedures

MFA student appeals are handled in the following manner:

The MFA student writes a letter to the MFA Executive Director and the Track Director, and takes the letter to the faculty mentor. The faculty mentor writes a letter either supporting or not supporting the appeal and provides that to the Executive Director who will distribute it to the NMW Graduate Committee for a final decision. If the student wishes to contest the decision, they can appeal it to the Grady College Executive Committee. Any appeals of the Executive Committee's decision are to be sent to the UGA Graduate School Dean.

Deadlines, Forms, and Other Necessary But Bothersome Irritations

Each student is responsible for meeting Grady College and Graduate School deadlines and program requirements. All required forms are located on the web at: <https://grad.uga.edu/index.php/current-students/forms/>. They must be submitted on time and properly completed; plan and keep written records of your program of study. The Grady Graduate Studies Office will attempt to notify students of deadlines, requirements, etc. (will post on bulletin board and listserv notices), but individual students are responsible staying informed and taking appropriate action.

- Be informed
- Read and comprehend Graduate School requirements.
- Plan ahead
- Develop a time line with a preliminary program of study and paperwork dates.
- Be attentive
- Read posted notices,
- Check your UGA email.

NOT KNOWING IS NOT AN ACCEPTABLE EXCUSE.

PLEASE READ ALL OF THE FOLLOWING ENROLLMENT INFORMATION CAREFULLY IN ORDER TO:

- Finish your degree on time
- Learn how to save money by complying with this policy

GRADUATE STUDENT ENROLLMENT POLICY: Degree-seeking graduate students at the University of Georgia are required to register for a minimum of 3 hours for at least two semesters in each academic year (fall, spring, summer – YES, summers count). Please note that the graduate enrollment policy does not replace any more stringent policy affecting your enrollment. International students and persons receiving financial aid must register for the number of hours required by those categories. You must register for a minimum of 3 hours during the semester you complete degree requirements even if you were registered for the two previous semesters.

Please contact your Track Director or gradinfo@uga.edu if you have other questions. Deadlines and other pertinent information are provided by the Graduate School.

Students are responsible for being informed, for completing and submitting required forms in an accurate and timely manner, and for meeting all deadlines.

GUIDELINES FOR SUBMITTING YOUR MFA FINAL MANUSCRIPT

NARRATIVE NONFICTION TRACK:

The final step in the MFA program: submitting your final manuscript.

Your MFA final manuscript is a curated portfolio of your best work from the two years of the MFA program. If you are including disparate pieces written over the course of the program, please write an introduction (roughly 3 to 5 pages) to your portfolio that articulates how all of the chosen pieces are in conversation with one another or how they represent the body of work you've produced in the program. Your final manuscript portfolio should show cohesion. The pieces should complement one another and show a progression of thought. They should, in essence, cohere, and you should polish them so that they are ready to be published. An MFA manuscript is a published work, one that represents the best of your thinking and writing. You will be alerted to the deadline for your final manuscript the semester prior to your graduation and again at the start of your final semester.

First, we list what to include, then how to download the template for formatting and organizing your final manuscript, then formatting requirements and how to submit your final manuscript.

What to Include:

Title page: This will prominently display the name of your final manuscript. It also could be the title of your proposed book, if you so desire.

Here are some sample titles from previous MFA graduates:

- Stealing Away: Alzheimer's and One African-American Family's Journey
- A Journey of Lives: A Collection of Reporting Narratives on Faith and Family
- We Lift Our Voices, We Stake Our Claim: Stories of Black Land Loss, Resistance and Citizenship
- Untitled Manuscript (in the case of a student with an existing book contract who didn't want the title to be searchable)

Include your name and past degree(s). (Also keep the section in the template that says "Submitted to the Graduate Faculty...")

Copyright page: Use the page from the template in the links provided later in this document. Add your name and year below the copyright mark and before the "All Rights Reserved" line.

Approved By page: Repeat your title and list the following individuals, by using the template from the link provided later in this document.

Major professor:

Moni Basu

Director of Narrative Nonfiction, Low-Residency MFA Program

Associate Professor

Charlayne Hunter-Gault Distinguished Writer in Residence

College of Journalism and Mass Communication

University of Georgia

For the Committee section, include the name of your faculty mentor, Moni Basu, and Dr. Jeffrey K. Springston.

Under the Electronic Version Approved section, use Dr. Springston's name and title:

Jeffrey K. Springston, Ph.D.

Executive Director for the MFA Narrative Media Writing Program

College of Journalism and Mass Communication

University of Georgia

Table of Contents: Include the above pages, introduction, each written work that comprises your final manuscript and source list, as well as page numbers. If you are including a portion of a book manuscript, you can use section or chapter titles for those.

Introduction: Your introduction (3 to 5 pages) can be the prologue or introduction to your book, but for those not doing book-length work, it should articulate how all of the included pieces are in conversation with one another or how they represent the body of work you've produced in the program.

Hint: Writing your introduction first could help you determine a title for your final manuscript.

Cohesive body of work: As stated above, your final manuscript portfolio should represent the best of your work from the MFA program and should show cohesion. The pieces should complement one another and show a progression of thought. Arrange your pieces in the form of chapters, sections or stories, depending on what best makes sense based on your work in the program.

Source sheet: List documents, books, videos or any other non-live material that you used in your work. Then provide names, titles and contact info for live sources. You might want to provide a separate source sheet for each independent piece of work, or if you are submitting a manuscript or individual chapters of a book, you could submit one source sheet at the end. **Don't worry about doing this in a particular bibliographic style** (such as MLA or Chicago); just devise a source sheet that best fits your final manuscript.

OPTIONAL PAGES

- Dedication page
- Acknowledgements

These come before the Table of Contents. Follow the template linked below.

TEMPLATE

For a template with all of these required and optional pages, visit:

<http://grad.uga.edu/index.php/current-students/policies-procedures/theses-dissertations-guidelines/formatting/>

Select Theses and Dissertations Templates (found on the right side of the page, in the Creating and Formatting section).

Choose your software version and the margins and page number format you want to use, and a template will download for you.

You do not need to use the first page (with the words Abstract and Index Words on it), but use the second page for your Title Page.

You do not have to use all of these pages in the template, but the ones noted above are required. For example, a list of tables and figures are in the template but will not generally be applicable to MFA

students, along with the appendices section. These can be deleted from the template that you download.

FORMATTING

A number of formatting guidelines are noted on the UGA Grad Studies website, but **not all of them** are required for the MFA final manuscript. For example, the **format check submission page** is not required.

Your final manuscript must have:

- Margins (minimum left margin of 1")
- Double-spaced copy
- Indented paragraphs
- Page numbers

AP style is preferred: If you do not have an AP Stylebook, you can purchase an online subscription (<https://store.stylebooks.com/apstylebookonline.html>)

Don't worry about: widows

Once the formatting is done, **you must convert it to a PDF**. Leave yourself time before the deadline to do this because of the size of the file. This link provides the process and tips for this step:

<http://grad.uga.edu/index.php/current-students/policies-procedures/theses-dissertations-guidelines/theses-and-dissertations-overview/>

SCREENWRITING TRACK:

Final Manuscript Requirements

The final screenplay or teleplay should become at least the second acceptable screenplay/teleplay the student has written. Prior to submission (4 weeks minimum) of the final manuscript proposal, the student should present to his/her final manuscript advisor an acceptable feature-length screenplay or television pilot screenplay written prior to the final manuscript proposal. This work may be the result of successfully completing work in the first year of the program. Or, it may be satisfied by a screenplay written in another course or out of academia. This work must be deemed to be of acceptable quality by the final manuscript advisor before the student may proceed to the formal final manuscript proposal. You will be alerted to the deadline for your final manuscript the semester prior to your graduation and again at the start of your final semester.

For the Committee section, include the names of your current faculty mentor, Dr. Nate Kohn and Dr. Jeffrey K. Springston.

Include in your proposal:

1. A logline that best sums up your story that can be used as the quick-pitch for the project.
2. A brief synopsis of proposed screenplay. You will expand this section of the proposal with a longer treatment later in the proposal. Include here (briefly):
3. Theme (what will the movie say?)
4. Plot (general chain of events that provide story infrastructure)

5. Characters (Who are the primary characters, what is their want/need?)
6. World (what is the environment(s) that the story exists in? How will you use location as a key screenplay element?)
7. Images (to convey mood and tone of the work)

Once your final manuscript advisor approves your proposal complete the following:

Statement of vision

Briefly explain why you think this script should be written and why you are the one to write it. How will this work contribute to the field of tv/cinema? How are the idea (theme) and/or approach (structure/form) unique, or how does it bring new light to the familiar?

Who are you?

In a short essay tell who you are and how the art of screenwriting, and this proposed screenplay/teleplay in particular, will aid the evolution as you as an artist/professional.

Research and Development

In a few paragraphs describe the major influences (writers and works) on your work. You may include specific books, screenplays, individual screenwriters, and films/TV series used in the development of this work. Within the context of the work (i.e., personal, historical, political) explain the types of research that you will conduct to aid in the creation of the screenplay.

Treatment

Write a 5-15 page treatment of the work.

Supplemental support materials (at discretion of final manuscript advisor)

If this screenplay were to make it to the screen, create the poster/promotional art that would best sell the product. Note: You will not be judged on graphic art skill; however, make it a professional looking design. You may also include additional supportive materials such as storyboards, production design materials, or other production plans.

Completed Work

A feature length screenplay or teleplay completed to the satisfaction of your final manuscript advisor.

And then what?

As a screenplay is not a terminal product, but a means to an end, upon completion how do you intend to get it out there (i.e., competitions, festivals, submissions to agencies, self-production, etc.)?