

To the members of the FCPC, Provost Mattson, and President Byerly:

The English department requests permission to hire for a tenure-track position in creative writing, with an emphasis on prose fiction. With the impending retirement of Greg Smith at the end of the coming 2023-24 academic year, the department faces a pressing need for someone to teach creative writing at all levels. The need is compounded by the simultaneous retirement of Susan Jaret McKinstry, who also teaches 2 courses in creative writing in most years.

Enrollment data and staffing needs

Enrollment for creative writing courses has been consistently very strong at all levels. We typically have been able to offer 9-10 courses per year over the past few years, and an average of 140 students a year have taken a creative writing course from the English department. ENGL 160, Introduction to Creative Writing, is offered sophomore priority every single term and has nonetheless had a waiting list every term for at least the past three years. The intermediate and advanced workshops in prose fiction taught solely by Greg Smith (ENGL 270 and 370) have had similarly strong enrollment throughout the past decade, averaging 37 students per year. Over the four years she has offered it, Susan Jaret McKinstry's ENGL 265 (News Stories) has enrolled 57 students (out of a maximum possible number of 60 seats).

We have never been fully able to satisfy student demand for creative writing, as indicated by our enrollments in 2016-17. In that year, thanks to the hiring of several visiting faculty in addition to our usual offerings, we offered 12 courses in creative writing and enrolled a total of 174 students. This demand has been all the more remarkable given the creation of various other creative writing courses in other departments and programs, including Travel Writing in CCST, Playwriting in Theater, and Screenwriting in CAMS. It's difficult to estimate what would be peak demand for creative writing courses across the college, but it's safe to say that we have not yet met it.

Demand for creative writing is not just broad, but deep; many students take more than one course. Since its creation in 2019, the Creative Writing minor has proven consistently popular, with an average of 10 graduates per year over the past three years. Greg Smith has been serving as the coordinator for the minor – a role that will also need to be filled when he retires. Every year the Creative Writing minor is the single greatest subject of questions from prospective and newly admitted students. Our creative writing students continue to be admitted to top-tier MFA programs, including the University of Iowa, NYU, Boston University, and Johns Hopkins. Our creative writing courses have been the launching pad for successful careers in prose fiction, essay, poetry, and memoir, including [Gwen Kirby](#), [Aisha Sabatini Sloan](#), [Rafael Frumkin](#), [Asiya Gaildon](#) and [Bonnie Nadzam](#). Carleton students have repeatedly won the ACM's Nick Adams short story prize; last year the winner and two of the other four finalists were Carleton English majors. In short, creative writing is one of Carleton's long-standing strengths.

The English major offers multiple options for senior comps, including an option in creative writing. In recent years approximately 25% of our majors have chosen this option (i.e., 4-8 students per year). While all of us can and do advise creative writing comps as needed, this flexibility depends on students receiving considerable training in the fundamentals of their genre before reaching this stage. For students working in prose fiction, this means learning the basics of characterization, plotting, and dialogue (among other challenges). Such training can only come from experienced instructors in creative writing. Without our current staffing in creative writing, maintaining this comps option would be impossible.

The submission requirements on the Provost's website require a "three-year staffing plan with and without this position." Without a tenure-track hire for this position, we would be left with at least 5 courses to fill every year going forward, presumably with visitors. This would include 2 sections of ENGL 160, 1 section of ENGL 270 or its equivalent, 1 section of ENGL 370 or its equivalent, and 1 section of either ENGL 265 or its equivalent. In reality, we are losing three tenure-track positions all at once: in addition to Greg Smith and Susan Jaret McKinstry, Tim Raylor is retiring at the end of next year as well. We expect to request to hire visiting faculty to fill in some of this gap while we determine further priorities, but the need to hire a tenure-track position in creative writing is urgent. Waiting on this hire would mean running multiple searches for visitors each year for years to come.

Nature of the position and the direction of the English Department

Hiring for this position presents us with an opportunity to reimagine our course offerings in creative writing. Susan Jaret McKinstry's retirement means we will lose our only regular offerings in creative writing beyond poetry and short fiction. Her News Stories class (ENGL 265) has proven consistently popular, as was her Memoir (ENGL 273) class in the years before 2019. The only other opportunities to vary our classes have come through one-off courses taught by visitors, who have offered classes in creative nonfiction and memoir.

Various forms of creative nonfiction, once seen as less prestigious or comparatively minor modes of writing, have become areas of exciting innovation and are increasingly central to many writers' careers. The output of our recent invited speakers, Jesmyn Ward, Edwidge Danticat, and Teju Cole, is representative of these trends: although best-known for their novels, each has published essay collections, memoir, children's literature, travel writing and cultural criticism in equal quantity. Students also want to explore a diverse range of forms and modes, especially speculative fiction and "genre" fiction (fantasy, horror, etc.). MFA programs have responded to these changing expectations, and offer more opportunities for creative non-fiction writers.

At the same time, demand for classes in the traditional short story and novel forms remains quite strong. We don't expect to stop offering such courses, and they also have some of the strongest connections with the literature courses we currently offer. Although we are engaged

in a thorough reevaluation and redesign of the English Major, we don't anticipate the relevance of creative writing courses changing in any significant way as part of this process. Credits from creative writing courses will still count towards our major requirements. We have even briefly considered requiring majors to take at least one creative writing course, but that isn't possible with our present staffing levels. For all these reasons, we expect that the faculty member hired for this creative writing position will offer a range of courses that may be more varied than what we currently offer, but that still includes courses centered on prose fiction.

In some English departments, the Creative Writing program functions as a separate entity – and sometimes even as a separate department. That has never been the case at Carleton, and we have prized the strong connections between our creative writing courses and our literature courses, as well as the sense of mutual interest between faculty across this divide. Greg Smith, Susan Jaret McKinstry, and Greg Hewett, like their predecessors Wayne Carver and Keith Harrison, have considerable expertise in teaching literature as well as creative writing. We think this remains a desirable attribute for this position, and will welcome candidates who demonstrate both an interest and a capacity to teach courses outside of creative writing. This might take the form of a first-year A&I seminar, a traditional literature course, our ENGL 295 course in theory and methodology, or the Craft of Academic Writing (ENGL 109). Given the ongoing demand for creative writing courses, we don't expect such courses will ever be a primary responsibility for this position, but the ability to teach a variety of courses will preserve our flexibility in curricular offerings.

Connections to other programs and to the College's liberal arts mission

This position is closely connected to Carleton's liberal arts mission. The college's Arts Practice requirement puts courses such as Introduction to Creative Writing squarely at the center of the curriculum. Indeed, the Arts Practice requirement remains something of a bottleneck for students, with relatively few introductory-level 6-credit courses available for students, and the English department has been one of the primary sources of such students. According to the Registrar's Office, 66 students in the class of 2022 depended on an Arts Practice class from the English Department in order to graduate. In most years, only Studio Art offers more opportunities for students to take a 6-credit Arts Practice course without prerequisites. Creative writing classes are simply essential.

We will prioritize potential connections to other departments and programs in our search. Such connections will depend largely on the particular strengths and interests of the successful applicant. These might include strengths in nature writing and environmental memoir (ENTS), essay, memoir, or critical reflections on identity (GWSS, Africana Studies, and American Studies), screenwriting or playwriting (CAMS and Theater), or digital storytelling (CAMS and DGAH). When the search has identified finalists for the position and their respective interests,

we would actively include representatives from relevant departments and programs in the search process.

IDE goals, recruitment, and mentoring

This hire would present a valuable opportunity to make gains towards the College's IDE plan, particularly in diversifying the faculty. In recent years, the English department has made a concerted effort to promote writers of color with the resources available to us. Diversity – both in terms of faculty identities and demonstrated experience in teaching a diverse student body – has been prioritized in our hiring of Aisha Sabatini Sloan, Kao Kalia Yang, Hubert Cook, Sun Yung Shin, and Chris Martin over the past decade. We have also prioritized inviting a diverse roster of visiting writers for public readings, such as Jesmyn Ward, Shane McRae, Teju Cole, Edwidge Danticat, and this spring's Light Lecturer, Douglas Kearney. We have not had the opportunity to hire for a tenure-track position, so we are eager to seize this chance to diversify our department, our curricular offerings, and our ways of supporting students.

As several articles published between 2015 and 2020 have pointed out, MFA programs – particularly elite ones – have traditionally been white spaces that present challenges for writers of color. Many of these programs have emphasized their own IDE goals since then, and the situation may be improving, but we know that we will need to look beyond a small list of top MFA and PhD programs to ensure a diverse applicant pool. In addition to the placement of our advertisement with the job lists of the Modern Language Association and the Association of Writing Programs, the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, and *Inside Higher Ed*, we will reach out to residency programs and associations that bring together writers of color, such as [Kimbilio](#), [Mizna](#), [Kundiman](#), and the [National Latinx Writers Gathering](#). Our hiring of visiting writers over the past few years has given us an additional network of valuable contacts. We also have close ties to alumni on the faculty of two of the most highly regarded MFA programs for nurturing writers of color (the University of Michigan and the Michener Center at UT Austin), and we will seek their counsel at the earliest stages of the search process. We also believe the rich and diverse literary scene in the Twin Cities will be a helpful recruitment tool. We have discussed the College's required Inclusive Hiring Workshop with Anne Phibbs, and if our request is approved, we would attend the workshop on Monday, May 1st.

We recognize that mentoring a new colleague will take special attention and a collective commitment. The demographics of our department – our last tenure review was more than 10 years ago – are both a benefit and a potential challenge for mentorship. On the one hand, we collectively have considerable experience with Carleton's resources for faculty, college governance, and the workings of the promotion process. Several of us have been actively involved in the mentorship of junior faculty outside our department. On the other hand, we recognize that any new member of the English department will need a strong community of support among junior and recently tenured faculty outside our department, and we will consciously help build that community.

Our proposed job advertisement is included below. Thank you for considering our request. Please let me know if you have any questions or need further information.

Sincerely,

George Shuffelton
Department Chair, English

PROPOSED JOB AD:

The Carleton English Department invites applications for a tenure-track position in creative writing at the rank of Assistant Professor, beginning September 1, 2024. We seek candidates to teach fiction writing, including a mixed-genre introductory workshop, intermediate and advanced fiction workshops, and literature courses in any area of the candidate's expertise. We welcome candidates with expertise in creative non-fiction (such as essay and memoir), speculative fiction, or genre fiction. We are particularly interested in candidates committed to teaching and recruiting a diverse student body. Applications should include a statement that addresses ways in which you raise issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion in your teaching, scholarship, and/or service, as well as a cover letter, c.v., and contact information for letters of recommendation.

Candidates with an MFA with significant graduate training in literature or candidates with a Ph.D. in English and significant experience teaching creative writing will be considered. Carleton is committed to developing its faculty to better reflect the diversity of our student body and American society. Women and members of underrepresented minority groups are strongly encouraged to apply. Carleton College does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, ethnicity, religion, sex, national origin, marital status, veteran status, actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, status with regard to public assistance, disability, or age in providing employment or access to its educational facilities and activities. Carleton is a highly selective liberal arts college with a student body of approximately 2,000. Located in the thriving two-college town of Northfield, Minnesota, it is forty-five miles from the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, in easy reach of a vibrant metropolitan area that is home to three million people and rich cultural resources.

The teaching load for this position is five courses annually, over three ten-week terms. Our review of applications will begin on December 15, 2023.