

Major Proposal for Creative Writing

Matthew Sharos
Class of 2010

Seven out of the eleven courses required for an English major at Hendrix focus on literature as opposed to writing. “Literary Analysis” and “Senior Thesis Seminar” teach critical skills vital to any study of English, which leaves only two courses for an optional study of creative writing or some other aspect of writing. To prepare properly for graduate school programs in creative writing, I must study more contemporary examples of literature and practice writing in more creative genres, such as poetry and creative non-fiction. A proficiency in creative writing is impossible to achieve in the small exposure offered by a traditional English major. Literature courses expose me to rhyme, meter, characterization, metaphor, personification, and anecdotes, but give me no chance to practice applying these techniques to my own writing, only a chance to analyze how other authors use those tools. Majoring in Creative Writing will give me a strong foundation in the study and practice of contemporary writing, allowing me to be competitive with other creative writing majors when applying for graduate schools.

My proposed major has two main parts: writing and literature. The writing portion of my major follows the Hendrix tradition of “learning by doing”—assuming writing is the best way to learn how to write. The literature portion provides polished examples of writing to model and exemplify.

Writing courses I have taken are “Advanced Academic Writing,” “Creative Writing: Nonfiction,” “Creative Writing: Poetry,” and “Screenwriting,” all of which involved extensive writing and critiquing. In screenwriting, I wrote a 100-page script that taught me how to plan an extensive plot and follow it diligently to create a complete work. In contrast, “Creative Writing: Poetry” showed me that each individual word is important, sharpening my critical writing and

reading skills. These classes guided me to the conclusion that successful writers pay attention to both scope and detail. I plan to extend these lessons further in “Advanced Creative Writing: Poetry,” “Creative Writing: Exploring Nature,” and “Creative Writing: Fiction.”

The literature courses I have taken are “Shakespeare and Poetry” and “Short Fiction.” “Shakespeare and Poetry” focused on the uses of dramatic dialogue in characterization, and “Short Fiction” presented me with a variety of easy-to-read prose—this type of influence is important because the majority of people find the novel to be the most accessible form of writing. I am currently enrolled in “Modern American Poetry,” “Romanticism,” and “American Literary Modernism”—I believe these courses will further benefit my study of traditional forms and models of literature.

My Senior Capstone Experience will entail extensive reading and writing of poetry. My goal is to create a cohesive chapbook of poetry, where the poems work together to tell a story. In preparation for this book, my attention will be given to the techniques of poets who have created groups of poems that “speak to each other” in a narrative way. My findings will be analyzed and presented in the form of a short thesis paper. Then, I will write my own chapbook of poetry and reflect on my writing experiences in the later stages of my thesis paper. I will conduct this study under the auspices of the English “Senior Thesis Seminar” course. The grade for the seminar course will be the grade for my Senior Capstone Experience.

Having a Bachelor of Arts in Creative Writing from Hendrix College would greatly increase my chances of acceptance into a graduate-level creative writing program. This degree would make me competitive with students who have gained a creative writing major from other schools. Moreover, the effort and initiative I am taking to create my own major will show other schools my dedication to creative writing and my belief in its importance.

The requirements below meet a “rigorous and diverse curriculum” suggested by The Association of Writers & Writing Programs (AWP). Hendrix College does not currently offer a three-tiered workshop in any genre or a seminar course designed for my chosen craft of poetry. Instead, I will take Poetry, Advanced Poetry, Non-fiction, Fiction, Advanced Fiction, Nature Writing, Screenwriting, and center my senior seminar course on poetry. Thus, I will study creative writing as “rigorously” as Hendrix currently allows.

Major Requirements

Twelve courses distributed as follows:

- ENGL 280- Literary Analysis, Spring '09
- ENGL 497- Senior Thesis Seminar, Spring '10

Four courses on any type of creative writing

- ENGL 203- Creative Writing: Poetry, Spring '08
- ENGL 204- Creative Writing: Fiction, Fall '09
- ENGL 301- Creative Writing: Non-Fiction, Fall '07
- ENGL 306- Creative Writing: Exploring Nature, Fall '08

Two ENGL courses on advanced creative writing

- ENGL 303- Advanced Creative Writing: Poetry, Spring '09
- ENGL 304- Advanced Creative Writing: Fiction, Spring '10


Four ENGL courses focused on creative literature

- ENGL 313- Shakespeare and Poetry, Fall '07
- ENGL 325- Romanticism, Fall '08
- ENGL 330- Modern American Poetry, Fall '08
- ENGL 335- American Literary Modernism (1900-1945), Spring '09

My advisor is Dr. Tyrone Jaeger, and my interdisciplinary studies committee consists of Dr. Alex Vernon, Professor Hope Coulter, and Dr. Jaeger. Dr. Vernon will approve the proposal electronically, since he is on sabbatical.



 Hope Coulter



 Dr. Jaeger