WRITING PROGRAM

Wesleyan offers students a vibrant writing community and a multitude of ways to pursue their interest in writing. Writers, editors, and publishers visit campus throughout the year, and students support more than 20 magazines, journals, and literary groups. The curriculum emphasizes academic writing in many subject areas and also offers courses in fiction writing, creative nonfiction, poetry, screenwriting, playwriting, and mixed forms. The establishment of the Shapiro Creative Writing Center at 167 High Street signals the importance the University attaches to writing. The Shapiro Center serves as a hub for writing activities and provides a venue for readings, workshops, colloquia, informal discussions, student-generated events, and receptions. Its lounge is open to all students enrolled in creative-writing courses. The Shapiro Center also houses writing faculty, including fiction writer Amy Bloom, the Distinguished University Writer-in-Residence.

The creative writing concentration in the English major. This concentration allows students to pursue creative writing at a high level in the context of advanced literary study. The concentration fosters the study of the history and practice of individual genres and of new hybrid forms and offers students the opportunity to work closely with the University's full-time writing faculty: the Shapiro-Silverberg Professor of Creative Writing, the internationally renowned poet Elizabeth Willis; Lisa Cohen, a writer of creative nonfiction, fiction, and poetry; and editor Anne Greene. Recent visiting faculty includes such distinguished writers as Hilton Als, Andre Aciman, Paul La Farge, Douglas A. Martin, and Clifford Chase. Enrollment in creative-writing courses in the English Department is not limited to English majors.

Creative writing in the College of Letters. Creative writing has long been an important component of the College of Letters curriculum, with an entry-level and an advanced course offered every year and open to students in all majors. COL majors are encouraged to write creative honors theses.

The Writing Certificate. The University's Writing Certificate (catalog.wesleyan.edu/certificates/writing), essentially a minor, is open to students working in any major who wish to make writing an area of concentration. Courses that may count toward the certificate are drawn from many departments. They range from fiction writing, poetry, and creative nonfiction to journalism, biography, arts and film criticism, translation, and writing about science. In addition to fulfilling the coursework requirements for the certificate, students create a portfolio of their work and present their writing in public. The certificate sponsors a number of courses that carry the WRCT designation.

The Writer's Block. This small residential community provides an opportunity for first-year students and upper-class students with a particular interest in writing to live together and collaborate on formal and informal programs.

FACULTY

Amy B. Bloom
BA, Wesleyan University; MSW, Smith College
Shapiro-Silverberg Professor of Creative Writing; Professor of the Practice in Creative Writing; Professor of the Practice, English

Elizabeth Ann Hepford
BA, University Of Kansas; MA, Arizona State University; PHD, Temple University
Assistant Professor of the Practice in ESL; Assistant Professor of the Practice, English

Douglas Arthur Martin
BA, University of Georgia Athens; MFA, The New School; PHD, CUNY The Graduate Center
Assistant Professor of the Practice in Creative Writing; Assistant Professor of the Practice, English

Sean McCann
BA, Georgetown University; PHD, CUNY The Graduate Center
Professor of English; Director, Academic Writing

Lauren Silber
BA, University of Connecticut; MA, University of Massachusetts Amherst
Assistant Professor of the Practice in Academic Writing; Assistant Professor of the Practice, English

VISITING FACULTY

Tess Bird
BA, University of Connecticut; MSC, Oxford University; PHD, Oxford University
Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow for Writing in the Social Sciences

WRCT120F Uncertainty and the Future (FYS)
The world we live in is full of risk and uncertainty. Science, politics, and economics all tell us that this is a hazardous era in which great changes are inevitable and catastrophes are possible. How do people manage living in such an uncertain world? This first-year seminar introduces students to research and writing in the social sciences by studying a driving factor in the human search for knowledge: the uncertainty of the unknown future. We will consider how the ways in which humans define, relate to, and experience uncertainty influence social well-being and the production of the future. We begin with the anthropological study of uncertainty, which is rooted in the study of ritual and magic, and then consider perspectives in psychology, economics, and ecology. While we will reflect on the "negative" side of uncertainty, such as risk, precariousness, and insecurity, we will also examine the way the creative management of uncertainty is sometimes romanticized and consider the opportunities for creativity, adaptation, resilience, and imagination in uncertain times.

Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-ENGL
Identical With: SISP120F
Prereq: None

WRCT130F Living within the Bio-Logical
How do biology and society relate to each other? This first-year seminar provides an introductory overview of how the biosciences have been entangled in social contexts, from the Enlightenment to the current technoscience era. We will focus on four contemporary case studies where society impacts biology and biology impacts society. We will look at how rates of obesity relate to inequality and insecurity. We will consider how, in Russia, the Chernobyl nuclear disaster has provided a platform for individuals to claim a "biological citizenship" from the state. We will examine the ways that in Brazil and the U.S., synthetic hormones are used for self-enhancement, raising issues with gender and class. Finally, we will discuss emergent research on how the gut influences the rest of the body, including our brains, and the way that research suggests that our environments are even more influential on our bodies than we previously thought. In all these case studies, we will focus on the interrelation of the biological with the social, political, and economic, and we will critically reflect on the influence of politics and economics on human biological agency. By using a case-study approach to social science theory, this course introduces students to how empirical data drives theory and how theory influences the production of new knowledge.
Offering: Host  
Grading: A-F  
Credits: 1.00  
Gen Ed Area: HA-WRCT  
Identical With: SISP121F  
Prereq: None

**WRCT150 The Science Behind Popular Scientific Literature**  
The Science Behind Popular Scientific Literature. This course focuses on academic STEM writing and is an exploration of the scientific literature in the reference list of Elizabeth Kolbert's "The Sixth Extinction." Assignments will consist of numerous low-stakes writing prompts with extensive peer and instructor feedback, and a term project paper constructed along the lines of a STEM review paper. This course fulfills a key need in developing science literacy and teaching students how to find and use reliable sources to critically evaluate popular science writing.  
Offering: Crosslisting  
Grading: A-F  
Credits: 1.00  
Gen Ed Area: NSM-CIS  
Identical With: CIS150  
Prereq: None

**WRCT150F The Science Behind Popular Scientific Literature (FYS)**  
The Science Behind Popular Scientific Literature. This course focuses on how to present material to a scientific audience and is an exploration of the scientific literature in the reference lists of Rachel Carson's "Silent Spring." Assignments will consist of numerous low-stakes writing assignments with extensive peer and instructor feedback, and a term project paper constructed along the lines of a STEM review paper. This course fulfills a key need in developing science literacy and teaching students how to find and use reliable sources to critically evaluate popular science writing.  
Offering: Crosslisting  
Grading: OPT  
Credits: 1.00  
Gen Ed Area: NSM-CIS  
Identical With: CIS150F  
Prereq: None

**WRCT221 Writing about Science and Other Specialized Topics: A Journalistic Perspective**  
This seminar teaches students—both scientists and nonscientists—how to become more effective writers. Students will learn the basics of news reporting and feature writing, including the best ways to develop ideas, how to efficiently conduct research, how to organize information, how to ask effective questions, and how to craft different types of articles and essays on deadline. While science journalism is the course's primary focus, students will also explore reportage in other specialized subjects such as business, education, technology, and politics.  
Offering: Host  
Grading: A-F  
Credits: 1.00  
Gen Ed Area: HA-WRCT  
Prereq: None

**WRCT222 Writing About Science and Other Specialized Topics: A Journalistic Approach**  
This seminar emphasizes journalistic writing and will help students learn to present specialized material in a way that will interest general readers. While science journalism is one focus of the course, students may also explore reportage in other subjects such as technology or education. Students will learn the basics of news reporting and feature writing, including the best ways to develop ideas, efficiently conduct research, organize information, ask effective questions, and craft different types of articles and essays on deadline.  
Offering: Host

**WRCT223 Translating a Story**  
This course aims to survey the process of "translating" an experience into a creative written work. With an emphasis on creative nonfiction, students will consider how a real-life event becomes most alive on the page. What parts are best transformed into scene? How do we choose the right language for dialogue, time period, or a work's mood or tone? What should, or can, we omit? In reading writers who have used both fiction and nonfiction to present a given autobiographical experience, and practicing writing an experience for different audiences, students will compare the craft tools that make a story work within its given form. Concurrently, the class will pursue exercises in translation from other languages into English to assess these same language and narrative choices in microcosm.  
Offering: Host  
Grading: A-F  
Credits: 1.00  
Gen Ed Area: HA-WRCT  
Prereq: None

**WRCT224 Science & Environmental Journalism**  
This course will concentrate on the challenges of reporting on scientific and environmental news as well as on writing about complex scientific subjects for the non-science reader. It will also address the rapidly changing nature of journalism and the new forms of story-telling.  
Offering: Host  
Grading: A-F  
Credits: 1.00  
Gen Ed Area: HA-WRCT  
Prereq: None

**WRCT227 Life Writing: Writing About the Self and from Experience**  
This course aims to survey the process of "translating" an experience into a creative written work. With an emphasis on creative nonfiction, students will consider how a real-life event becomes most alive on the page. What parts are best transformed into scene? How do we choose the right language for dialogue, time period, or a work's mood or tone? What should, or can, we omit? In reading writers who have used both fiction and nonfiction to present a given autobiographical experience, and practicing writing an experience for different audiences, students will compare the craft tools that make a story work within its given form. Concurrently, the class will pursue exercises in translation from other languages into English to assess these same language and narrative choices in microcosm.  
Offering: Crosslisting  
Grading: A-F  
Credits: 1.00  
Gen Ed Area: HA-WRCT  
Prereq: None

**WRCT250 An Introduction to Data Journalism**  
This course serves as an introduction to the field of data journalism. Students will learn to apply the processes of a data scientist to journalism using the R software platform. Through case studies and practical assignments, students will gain knowledge of data journalism's rich history and potential, while practicing modern, hands-on methods in acquiring, exploring, analyzing, and reporting about data. By the end of the course, students will be able to produce polished data stories and be prepared to continue pursuing their interests in either journalism or data science.  
Offering: Crosslisting  
Grading: A-F  
Credits: 1.00  
Gen Ed Area: SBS-QAC
or political; sometimes because of a failure to do adequate research; and
and publication at the speed of Twitter, journalism falls short of describing the
dance, the delight of travel. All too often, especially in today’s world of wonks
public. Journalists seek to give an accurate depiction of the world around us--
Journalism is a kind of nonfiction writing about the present, in the service of the
Gen Ed Area:
Grading:
Offering:
particularly by traditional media outlets in the United States.
has coincided with an acute dearth of resources to support foreign reporting,
with spin at a dizzying pace. The avalanche of information and disinformation
militaries accountable. Yet it’s worth asking whether war stories can ever be
them, war stories are endlessly rich in high-stakes human drama. From the
Iliad and the Bible to the videotaped beheadings of ISIS hostages in Iraq, these
tales and images grab our attention and don’t let go. This course will have dual
aims: to help students understand how journalists have historically covered
conflict and how that work is done today; and to explore war stories, both
fictional and journalistic, with special attention to style, technique, narrative
coherence, reliability, and the relationship between facts and truth. Our
conversations will be guided by an emphasis on the complex and shifting
relationships between combatants, journalists, and other kinds of storytellers
and the role of perspective in war reporting. Who is telling the story, and how
does the narrator’s experience influence what she sees and recounts? War
 correspondents have an important responsibility to hold governments and
militaries accountable. Yet it’s worth asking whether war stories can ever be
truly “objective”–and even whether they should be. We’ll look closely at the way
contemporary journalists cover war, the practice of “embedding” reporters with
military forces, and how the expansion of propaganda and “information warfare
have changed and complicated the work of war reporting. In an age of instant
messaging and online news, battlefield correspondents find themselves grappling
with spin at a dizzying pace. The avalanche of information and disinformation
has coincided with an acute dearth of resources to support foreign reporting,
particularly by traditional media outlets in the United States.

WRCT250F Topics in Journalism: Literary Journalism
In this course, we will explore the art and craft of magazine-length journalism
that strives to do something different than reporting the news—it aspires to
achieve the goals of literature. While this kind of writing tends to be timely, as
almost all journalism must be when it’s first published, at its best, it ought to
be worth reading for decades to come. Truman Capote, for example, conceived
of IN COLD BLOOD, which he first published as a series of articles in THE NEW
YORKER in 1965, as a “non-fiction novel”: a work of journalism that employed
the techniques and artistry of fiction. We will study the writing of new journalists
such as Joan Didion, Tom Wolfe, Nora Ephron, and Gay Talese, who pioneered
the idea that there is no such thing as unbiased reporting: The writer can’t help
but bring a point of view to his or her storytelling, so why not admit it? These
writers broke with journalistic convention and admitted that there was an “I”
behind the typewriter, a mediator between the “true” story and the reader.
We will focus on reading and writing two forms in particular, the profile and
the essay. While an excellent profile can be a straightforward examination of
another person and his or her place in the world, in the hands of a master like
Janet Malcolm or George Trow, it can become an eruption of invention. Essays
ask a question or argue a point—but how? There are as many ways as there are
writers who explore the form, and in this course we will seek to join them.
Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-WRCT
Identical With: CSPL250F
Prereq: None

WRCT250H Topics in Journalism: Writing Op-Ed Pieces and Political Essays
This course offers practice in writing op-eds and political essays in short
and long forms. This class may be of interest not only to writers but also to
students studying political science, history, economics, ethics, sociology, or an
interdisciplinary field, such as American studies. The main goal of this class is
teaching students how to engage in debate in the public sphere over the major
themes and issues of our time. Other than an intense reading schedule and
a writing workshop, the other major component will be guest speakers. They
include journalist, essayists, and scholars working in their fields but with an
authoritative presence in the public sphere.
Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-WRCT
Identical With: CSPL250H
Prereq: None
WRCT250J Topics in Journalism: Literary Journalism
In this course, we will explore the art and craft of magazine-length journalism that strives to do something different than reporting the news—it aspires to achieve the goals of literature. While this kind of writing tends to be timely, as almost all journalism must be when it’s first published, at its best, it ought to be worth reading for decades to come. Truman Capote, for example, conceived of IN COLD BLOOD, which he first published as a series of articles in THE NEW YORKER in 1965, as a "non-fiction novel": a work of journalism that employed the techniques and artistry of fiction. We will study the writing of new journalists such as Joan Didion, Tom Wolfe, Nora Ephron, and Gay Talese, who pioneered the idea that there is no such thing as unbiased reporting: The writer can’t help but bring a point of view to his or her storytelling, so why not admit it? These writers broke with journalistic convention and admitted that there was an "I" behind the typewriter, a mediator between the "true" story and the reader. We will focus on reading and writing two forms in particular, the profile and the essay. While an excellent profile can be a straightforward examination of another person and his or her place in the world, in the hands of a master like Janet Malcolm or George Trow, it can become an eruption of invention. Essays ask a question or argue a point—but how? There are as many ways as there are writers who explore the form, and in this course we will seek to join them. The course will be taught by Steve Almond, the 2016–17 Koeppel Journalism Fellow. He has been an investigative journalist in Miami and El Paso and is an award-winning writer of nonfiction and fiction. He is the author of eight books, including several New York Times bestsellers, and is currently teaching narrative journalism at the Nieman Foundation at Harvard.
Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-WRCT
Identical With: CSPL250J
Prereq: None

WRCT250K Topics in Journalism: Writing, Wit, and the Natural World
This course will engage students as readers and writers of essays, opinion pieces, and long-form articles about the natural world. We live in the shadow of climate change and the sixth great extinction event. So when is outrage effective, and when does wit or irony allow a writer to find a more persuasive voice? What’s the role of objectivity in a world where everybody seems to be shouting? We will consider the work of such writers as Gerald Durell, David Quammen, Elizabeth Kolbert, and Peter Matthiessen. Students will also write regularly and collaborate together in class to critique and improve one another’s work.
Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-WRCT
Identical With: CSPL250K
Prereq: None

WRCT250M Topics in Journalism: Storytelling and Social Change
How did a TV show help reduce the rate of teen pregnancy to the lowest point in recorded history? Why did a new narrative approach to gay marriage enable the movement to go from losing 31 state referendums to suddenly winning? Storytelling, across mediums and social platforms, has the power to change behavior and shift the cultural narrative. This class will explore the nature of “effective” stories, across a wide variety of issues, that engage audiences and often prompt action. We will discuss how this process works and ways to develop social impact campaigns. Students will have the chance to question some of the leading creators/practitioners who will join as guest speakers.
Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-WRCT
Identical With: CSPL250M
Prereq: None

WRCT250N Writing Reality: Journalism in the Age of Trump
How should the news media cover Donald Trump? How did the Internet, the 24-hour news cycle, and rising polarization help change the nature of journalism itself, but also lead to an era of “Fake News” accusations in which Americans exposed to different sources of information come away with completely different sets of facts? This class will explore our new digital and highly partisan media landscape, grounded in a close study of current events. We will study the impact and consequences of today’s media -- both how to consume it, and how to write for it.
Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-WRCT
Identical With: CSPL250N
Prereq: None

WRCT256 Writing for Television
This demanding, writing-intensive course focuses on (1) the creative development of a script, individually and collaboratively; (2) scene structure, character development, plot, form and formula, dialogue, and the role of narrative and narrator; and (3) understanding the workings and business of television. Each student will conceive of, synopsize, and pitch a story idea with their “producing partners” to “network executives.” Each student will also serve as producer and as an executive for others. After absorbing the feedback, students will construct a detailed beat outline and will turn in an original script at the end of the semester.
Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-FILM
Identical With: FILM455
Prereq: None

WRCT259 Writing About Film
This course will introduce students to the major concerns of popular film criticism. Primary emphasis will be placed on actors and styles of acting, the impact of changing social ideologies on film, and the effects of big-budget filmmaking on production. Students will be asked to think and write critically as well as personally about these concepts. Each week will include a screening, a lecture, and a group discussion. Students will be graded based on class participation, weekly writings, a midterm, and a final project.
Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-FILM
Identical With: FILM452
Prereq: None

WRCT260 Advanced Fiction
This demanding, reading- and writing-intensive course focuses on character, structure and plot; sentence structure, development of a strong and idiosyncratic voice, the role and history of the narrator, points of view, and writing with meaning. (This course previously carried the title Reading and Writing Fiction II.)
Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-ENGL
Identical With: ENGL381
Prereq: None

WRCT263 Writing for Television II
This advanced course requires that each student act as writer, producer/network executive, and lead discussant on one of the professional scripts we read.
Students will be responsible for two meetings with the professor during the semester, two to three meetings with their producing partners, and one meeting with their actors (who will perform a short scene from the student’s script at the end of the semester). Each student will conceive of and pitch three story ideas in the first classes, winnowing down to one idea for which they will write a story area, an outline, and a final script (which will go through three major revisions). Students are expected to come to class with a background in creative writing, focusing on character and dialogue as well as having completed one TV screenplay.

Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-ENGL
Identical With: FILM459, ENGL357
Prereq: None

WRCT264 Creating Children’s Books I
In this course each student will create and illustrate a children’s book, at the picture book or illustrated chapter book level. Assignments include examining a variety of children’s books (from 1930 to the present) and emulating specific authors and illustrative techniques as we develop original work. We will discuss both text and illustration in published picture books, and the creative assignments and workshop discussions will focus on both components, and their interaction. We will look at a range of questions: What is this book for? Who is it for? Does it appeal to children and adults in different ways? What assumptions does it make about the world of childhood and the relationships children have? How does it obscure, reveal, comment on, or attempt to change the truths of life—things like love, desire, satisfaction, hurt, difference, sickness, and death? What values or norms does it establish—or subvert? What do the words and pictures do to each other? What values or expectations are at stake as the story or pattern unfolds? We will use questions like these to help drive our experiments and revisions as we workshop all stages of our books.

Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-ENGL
Identical With: ENGL297
Prereq: None

WRCT266 Creating Children’s Books II
In this course, each student, already experienced in writing for children, will create and illustrate a children’s book, at the picture book or illustrated chapter book level. Assignments include examining a variety of children’s books (from 1930 to the present) and emulating specific authors and illustrative techniques as we develop original work. We will discuss both text and illustration in published picture books, and the creative assignments and workshop discussions will focus on both components, and their interaction. We will look at a range of questions: What is this book for? Who is it for? Does it appeal to children and adults in different ways? What assumptions does it make about the world of childhood and the relationships children have? How does it obscure, reveal, comment on, or attempt to change the truths of life—things like love, desire, satisfaction, hurt, difference, sickness, and death? What values or norms does it establish—or subvert? What do the words and pictures do to each other? What values or expectations are at stake as the story or pattern unfolds? We will use questions like these to help drive our experiments and revisions as we workshop all stages of our books.

Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-WRCT
Prereq: None

WRCT317 Special Topics: Plot
In this special topics course, we will study classic and contemporary novels, stories, and television dramatic series that immerse the reader and viewer in an absorbing fictional plot. Our priorities will be close reading and watching for the pleasure and enlightenment of the works as wholes, as well as an examination of the choices storytellers make to snag our imaginations, drag them into a fictional world, and keep them there. The study will culminate in new creative work: short stories you will write and the class will critique in a workshop setting.

Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-ENGL
Identical With: ENGL317
Prereq: ENGL292 OR ENGL296

WRCT347 Special Topics: Day Books, Diaries, Notebooks, Etc.
This class will take as its focus both creatively and critically the daily and episodic tracking of our own and others’ insights, observations, inspirations, motivations; incidents and encounters that seem worthy of (personal) note, whether this be for instant gratification, imprint, or later expansion, simple records as well as flights of writing. We will read and keep journals of various kinds. Very little will be out of bounds.

Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-ENGL
Identical With: ENGL347
Prereq: ENGL292 OR ENGL296

WRCT350 Writing Certificate Senior Seminar: Writing and Publishing
This is the required capstone for the Writing Certificate Program. This new version of the course offers you an opportunity to develop your writing, work closely with other certificate seniors, and receive advice from professionals about editing and compiling work for publication. Visiting writers and editors will speak in class and the schedule includes several social occasions—receptions, talks, and dinners. Guest speakers from the world of writing and publishing will talk about their experiences with new media.

Offering: Host
Grading: OPT
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-WRCT
Prereq: None

WRCT401 Individual Tutorial, Undergraduate
Topic to be arranged in consultation with the tutor.

Offering: Host
Grading: OPT

WRCT402 Individual Tutorial, Undergraduate
Topic to be arranged in consultation with the tutor.

Offering: Host
Grading: OPT

WRCT411 Group Tutorial, Undergraduate
Topic to be arranged in consultation with the tutor.

Offering: Host
Grading: OPT

WRCT412 Group Tutorial, Undergraduate
Topic to be arranged in consultation with the tutor.

Offering: Host
Grading: OPT

WRCT491 Teaching Apprentice Tutorial
The teaching apprentice program offers undergraduate students the opportunity to assist in teaching a faculty member’s course for academic credit.
WRCT492 Teaching Apprentice Tutorial
The teaching apprentice program offers undergraduate students the opportunity to assist in teaching a faculty member's course for academic credit.
Offering: Host
Grading: Cr/U