

The Writer's Loft: MTSU's Low-Residency Certificate in Creative Writing

Middle Tennessee State University
Murfreesboro, Tennessee

College of Continuing Education and Distance Learning
www.mtsu.edu/~theloft

The Writer's Loft

The Writer's Loft is an intensive, three-session program that is the focal point of a certificate in creative writing offered through MTSU's College of Continuing Education and Distance Learning. It is a unique program consisting of one-on-one mentoring by a group of highly qualified, published authors. The Loft's focus is on developing the student's maximum skills, style, and voice as a writer, and it is a supportive, open environment in which the student can become the best writer possible at this point in his or her development. Additional certificate goals include the following:

- developing a student's skills in the art and craft of poetry, fiction, and/or nonfiction writing;
- providing a foundation in the analysis of nonfiction, fiction, and/or poetry;
- expanding a student's grasp of grammar and syntax;
- preparing the student to face the business aspects of the publishing industry; and
- coaching the student in effective marketing techniques.

Low-Residency

The program's low-residency feature allows a huge range of students spanning many different generations, lifestyles, and schedules to pursue their craft on a customized, individual basis. The Writer's Loft is essentially a one-on-one experience between student and mentor.

Students meet with their mentors to plan the session and decide what type of writing the student will work on. Afterward, the aspiring authors exchange three packets of writing with the mentors by U.S. mail. The mentors reply in detail, and communication continues by e-mail as the session unfolds. In addition, the program's Internet site keeps students informed of the latest happenings.

For additional information, please contact us at (615) 898-5651, www.mtsu.edu/~theloft or theloft@mtsu.edu.

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MIDDLE
TENNESSEE
STATE UNIVERSITY

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Sessions begin in
January, May, and September
Registration Form

Open Enrollment

The Writer's Loft has an open enrollment approach, giving the student a great deal of control and flexibility. While the successful completion of three sessions is required to earn the certificate, they need not be back-to-back. A student may take all three sessions consecutively and complete the program in as little as a year. Others may choose to sit out a session or two. The decision is up to the student.

Each session consists of a day of orientation followed by three full months of one-on-one study with a mentor. The first session in the calendar year is from January to April. The second session is from May to August. The last session is from September to December.

A Day of Orientation

The Day of Orientation is the Loft's cornerstone event, allowing students, mentors, and members of the public to network and prepare for the coming months of writing and reading. Orientation takes place on MTSU's 500-plus acre campus in the heart of Murfreesboro, Tennessee. The program has at its disposal a wide assortment of on-campus facilities and venues, including the University's theatre, the James E. Walker Library, and the MTSU Foundation Reception House. Events throughout the day will include:

- formal welcome to the session
- graduate recognitions and certificate presentations
- program overview (nuts and bolts session*)
- getting to know our mentors (lunch with mentors)
- mentor and student public readings
- session literary panel discussion
- student semester planning with mentors

*During the program overview, students will receive a formal introduction to the Writer's Loft including packet contents (semester forms, orientation info, etc.), writing formats, session expectations, and so on.

Our Mentors

Where would the Writer's Loft be without its mentors? Since the beginning of the program, a dozen instructors from six states have converged at MTSU to create and run the Writer's Loft. These professionals are from as far away as the Gulf Coast and Portland, Oregon, and they share their enthusiasm for the written word as they instruct our students. Mentors currently associated with the Writer's Loft include

Betsy Woods Atkinson, M.F.A. (Slidell, Louisiana)

Charlotte Rains Dixon, M.F.A. (Portland, Oregon)

River Jordan (Nashville, Tennessee)

Alvin Knox, M.F.A. (Baxter, Tennessee)

Randy O'Brien (Nashville, Tennessee)

Linda Busby Parker, Ph.D., M.F.A. (Mobile, Alabama)

David Pierce (Murfreesboro, Tennessee)

Inside the Packets

The packet's cover letter is the primary method of communication between the students and their mentors. Here, students explore any issues that may have come up in the session. It is a thoughtful dialogue, not just a simple inventory of what is in the envelope.

As agreed upon by the mentor and the student, each packet will contain 10–25 pages of nonfiction, fiction, poetry, screenwriting, or any combination thereof. In addition, each student will read one novel, collection of short stories, nonfiction work, or book of poetry for each packet. For that one book, the student will write a short essay on what he or she learned "as a writer" from the work. The mentor and student establish the session packet deadlines, which are usually 30 days apart.

Publication Opportunities

Literary Contests

The Writer's Loft sponsors a contest each session for its students. Each student may submit one collection of poetry and/or a piece of other creative writing (fiction, nonfiction, memoir, etc.). There is NO charge for the contest. (This contest is not open to the general public.)

The Trunk: A Creative Companion

The Trunk is the official magazine of the Writer's Loft, published each summer. In addition to some brief information on the current semester's program, the contest winners are published in *The Trunk*, and the magazine contains some material from current students as well as a variety of literary columns, how-to articles, and so on.

Public Participation: Panel Discussions

While the majority of the Writer's Loft is reserved for our students, our panel discussions are open to the public. As each session begins, usually on the day of orientation at MTSU's campus, the Writer's Loft sponsors a panel discussion that focuses on an area of interest to our students. These popular panels have included such topics as the publishing process, literary agents, breaking into publication, and much more.

The Application Process

Applicants interested in the Writer's Loft are asked to submit the following material:

- standard cover letter;
- two (2) pages of sample writing, double-spaced (any combination of fiction, poetry, nonfiction, and/or personal narrative);
- a current resume (if available);
- one (1) typed, single-spaced page on why the applicant feels that this is the right program for him or her; and
- a certificate application fee of \$200 (required with application; applied toward tuition; make check or money order payable to MTSU.)

Name _____

Address (street) _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

E-mail Address _____

Daytime Phone _____

Home Phone _____

Date of Birth _____

Social Security Number _____

Female Male U.S. Citizen

Ethnic Background

Caucasian American Indian Asian
 Hispanic Black Other

Interested Genres

Fiction Nonfiction Children's Literature
 Songwriting Poetry

Payment Method

Check MasterCard Visa

Card No. _____

Exp. _____

\$200 application fee. I choose to pay the application fee at this time. Please invoice me for the balance. (I understand that my account will be credited with my application fee.)

Tuition and Payment. The total cost for all three sessions of the Writer's Loft is \$3,000. Students must pay in installments (\$1,000 each semester). Payment is due upon acceptance to the program. All accounts must be settled BEFORE a student will be assigned a mentor.

Make check payable to MTSU. Mail to
Continuing Education and Distance Learning
Attn: The Writer's Loft
Box X109, 1301 E. Main St.
Middle Tennessee State University
Murfreesboro, TN 37132

Space Below for University Use

Receipt No. _____ Date _____

Amount Rec. _____

Check Cash Other

For A & R Use C N C