Summer Writing Program

"The artist's job: to propel the century a few inches. Start now. Inquire."
—Anne Waldman, after William Carlos Williams

The Summer Writing Program is a three-week convocation of students, poets, scholars, fiction writers, translators, performance artists, activists, Buddhist teachers, musicians, printers, editors, and others working in small-press publishing. In dialog with renowned practitioners, students engage in the composition of poetry, prose fiction, cross-genre possibilities, inter-arts, translation, and writing for performance. Participants work in daily contact with some of the most accomplished and notoriously provocative writers of our time, meeting individually and in small groups, so that both beginning and experienced writers find equal challenge in the program. The tradition emphasized is that of the “Outrider” lineage, a heritage of powerful scholarship and counter-poetics that operates outside the normative academic mainstream.

As political and ecological crises intensify across our planet, the questions surrounding the role of the writer only intensify—banned, “unacknowledged legislator,” prophet, or marginal wordmonger—and part of the work of each Summer Writing Program is to continue to think through these vital questions collectively. The program provides three distinct forums that address these concerns: writing workshops directed by guest and resident faculty; lectures, readings, and colloquia; and faculty-student conferences in which writings and ideas are discussed in face-to-face intimacy. In these forums, the traditional roles of “teacher” and “student” break down and communication and learning flow between writer and writer.

The Summer Writing Program (SWP) is the birthplace of the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics, founded in 1974 by Anne Waldman and the late Allen Ginsberg, with input from Diane di Prima. In this program we examine—and continue to extend—the “Outrider” lineage, a heritage of powerful scholarship and counter-poetics that operates outside the normative academic mainstream.

The Summer Writing Program (SWP) has always been aligned with experimental, open forms and practices of avant-garde postmodernist writing. The program is designed to give students a sense of where they might begin to locate their own work and interests within the contemporary literary world.

Students sign up for one workshop each week, and also have access to all the other weekly events of readings, panels, lectures, and other special performances. Each week has a separate organizing and generative theme and focus; and past weekly themes have included “The Scholarly Writer,” “Writing for Performance,” “Writing the Body,” “Cross-language Studies and Translation,” “Politics of Identity,” “Feminism and Gender,” “Investigative Poetics,” “Black Mountain School,” “Eco-poetics,” “San Francisco Renaissance,” “The Outrider Lineage,” “Cultural Activism: Writing Under the New World Order,” “Meditative Poetics and the Poetics and Politics of Place,” “Lineage of the ‘New American Poetry’ and Beyond,” “Other Worlds: Language/Translation, Editing, New Pedagogies,” and “New Directions in Experimental Writing.”

Open to any interested participant, the Summer Writing Program is populated by students of different backgrounds and interests. The Summer Writing Program may be taken for undergraduate credit, graduate credit, or as a noncredit student. For-credit students will be given a list of academic requirements to fulfill, including attendance and final writing portfolios collected at the end of the program.

Courses

Week 1

- WRI351 Summer Writing Program Week 1 [2]
- WRI451 Summer Writing Program Week 1 [2]
- WRI651 Summer Writing Program Week 1 [2]
- WRI751 Summer Writing Program Week 1 [2]

Week 2

- WRI352 Summer Writing Program Week 2 [2]
- WRI452 Summer Writing Program Week 2 [2]
- WRI652 Summer Writing Program Week 2 [2]
- WRI752 Summer Writing Program Week 2 [2]

Week 3

- WRI353 Summer Writing Program Week 3 [2]
- WRI453 Summer Writing Program Week 3 [2]
- WRI653 Summer Writing Program Week 3 [2]
- WRI753 Summer Writing Program Week 3 [2]

Summer Writing Program Portfolio in Bombay Gin

Each student attending the Summer Writing Program is invited to submit one to two pages of work for possible inclusion in the Summer Writing Program Portfolio published in Bombay Gin.

SWP Scholarships

There are many scholarship opportunities for degree-seeking and non-degree-seeking Summer Writing Program students. Please see the Financial Aid section.