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# Contact Information for MFA Faculty and Staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Writing Specialty</th>
<th>Email Address</th>
<th>Work Phone</th>
<th>Cell Phone</th>
<th>Home Phone</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alexander, Sally</td>
<td>Children's Writing</td>
<td><a href="mailto:shalexan@verizon.net">shalexan@verizon.net</a></td>
<td>412-421-6354</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cokinos, Christopher</td>
<td>Creative Nonfiction, Nature &amp; Env.</td>
<td><a href="mailto:chris.cokinos@usu.edu">chris.cokinos@usu.edu</a></td>
<td>435-797-3351</td>
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<td>435-245-7769</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coppoc, Jim</td>
<td>Poetry and Spoken Word Performance</td>
<td><a href="mailto:coppoc@iastate.edu">coppoc@iastate.edu</a></td>
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<td>515-708-4343</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fisher-Wirth, Ann</td>
<td>Poetry</td>
<td><a href="mailto:afwirth@olemiss.edu">afwirth@olemiss.edu</a></td>
<td>662-234-4089</td>
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<tr>
<td>Flick, Sherrie</td>
<td>Fiction</td>
<td><a href="mailto:sdflick@gmail.com">sdflick@gmail.com</a></td>
<td></td>
<td>412-488-1751</td>
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<td>Fox, Melanie</td>
<td>Creative Nonfiction, Nature &amp; Env.</td>
<td><a href="mailto:mdylanfox3@yahoo.com">mdylanfox3@yahoo.com</a></td>
<td></td>
<td>412-320-1621</td>
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<tr>
<td>George, Kathleen</td>
<td>Fiction</td>
<td><a href="mailto:georgeke@pitt.edu">georgeke@pitt.edu</a></td>
<td>412-624-6795</td>
<td></td>
<td>412-321-2395</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hirsch, Aubrey</td>
<td>Fiction</td>
<td><a href="mailto:aubrey.hirsch@gmail.com">aubrey.hirsch@gmail.com</a></td>
<td></td>
<td>216-533-3417</td>
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<tr>
<td>Juran, Debbie</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:djuran@chatham.edu">djuran@chatham.edu</a></td>
<td>412-365-1685</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nieson, Marc</td>
<td>Fiction, Screenwriting</td>
<td><a href="mailto:msnieson@verizon.net">msnieson@verizon.net</a></td>
<td></td>
<td>412-441-3273</td>
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<td>Oresick, Peter</td>
<td>Poetry</td>
<td><a href="mailto:poresick@chatham.edu">poresick@chatham.edu</a></td>
<td>412-363-1264</td>
<td>412-362-2772</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ray, Janisse</td>
<td>Creative Non-fiction, Nature &amp; Env.</td>
<td><a href="mailto:wildfire1491@yahoo.com">wildfire1491@yahoo.com</a></td>
<td></td>
<td>802-254-5852</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simms, Michael</td>
<td>Poetry, Literary Publishing</td>
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<td>412-381-4261</td>
<td>412-381-0217</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>St. German, Sheryl</td>
<td>Program Director</td>
<td><a href="mailto:sstgermain@chatham.edu">sstgermain@chatham.edu</a></td>
<td>412-365-1190</td>
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<td>412-661-1809</td>
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<tr>
<td>Williams, Karen</td>
<td>Children’s Writing, Travel</td>
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<td>N/A</td>
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<td>412-422-1165</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Low-Residency MFA Curriculum Requirements

PROGRAM OF STUDY

Chatham University’s Low-Residency MFA program is a program of 39 hours that can be completed in two years with two summer residencies. Coursework includes mentorships with publishing writers. While the majority of classes are taught online, students must complete two residencies of ten days each in their first and second summers. Residencies will take place on the Chatham campus in Pittsburgh, and will consist of intensive workshops, craft lectures, panels and readings with well-known creative writers. Low-residency students also have the opportunity to take one of our creative writing field seminars along with our residency students in lieu of one of the summer residencies.

CURRICULUM (39 CREDITS)

- Mentorship 1, completed over two semesters (6 cr)
- Mentorship 2, completed over two semesters (6 cr)
- Residency 1 (or field seminar (3 cr)
- Residency 2 (3 cr)
- Travel Writing (3 cr)
- Nature and Environmental Writing (3 cr)
- Five content courses, two of which must be literature courses (15 cr)

Thesis

Students must write a creative thesis, which will consist of a collection of poems, stories, essays or a novella or novel. They must pass a final oral board on the thesis, and read from the thesis at the second residency.
Mentorships

Poetry: Jim Coppoc, Ann Fisher-Wirth, Peter Oresick, Michael Simms
Children’s Writing: Karen Williams, Sally Alexander, Katherine Ayres
Creative Nonfiction: Janisse Ray, Christopher Cokinos, Melanie Dylan Fox
Fiction: Kathy George, Marc Nieson, Aubrey Hirsch, Sherrie Flick

MENTORSHIPS I  (first year mentorships)
Over the course of the typical four-month mentorship a student will do the following:
• read at least five books (or their equivalent)
• produce craft-based analytical writing in every packet
• draft and revise at least 3 to 5 stories, or a novella, or equivalent sections of a novel; or 10-15 poems; or 3 to 4 pieces of nonfiction, or equivalent sections of a book. The student will complete approximately 25 to 30 pages of “finished” writing.

A typical packet from the student will include:
• new and/or revised creative work
• a bibliography of the reading the student has completed
• critical analysis of the reading
• responses to directions and questions posed by the mentor in the previous exchange of packets

MENTORSHIPS II (second year mentorships including thesis)
In the third or fourth semester, the assignments change in order to facilitate the student’s preparations of a creative thesis. This work necessarily displaces some of the reading and writing assignments quantified above.

A typical packet from the mentor will include:
• a holistic critique of the student’s creative work and suggestions for new and substantially revised work
• a return of the student’s manuscripts with marginalia and line-specific suggestions comments on the student’s critical analysis of reading assignments
• suggestions for related reading, especially books that provide models of craft pertinent to the student’s particular ambitions and style of writing
• individualized instruction about specific aspects of craft

**FREQUENT EXCHANGE OF PACKETS**

Packets should be exchanged between student and mentor approximately every four weeks. For a mentorship period roughly equivalent to four months, students should receive feedback from their mentors a minimum of three times.

**ATTENTIVENESS TO REVISION**

In addition to frequent reading and writing, the mentor requires frequent revision of student work, and the teacher provides suggestions for improving the work as well as references to literary models that may be helpful.

**A VARIETY OF TUTORIALS AND WORKSHOPS**

A student should study with a different accomplished writer in tutorial each semester, and with a different workshop leader each residency, as study with writers of varied artistic sensibilities serves a student best.

*Adapted from AWP Hallmarks of and Effective Low-Residency MFA in Creative Writing*
Residencies

Residencies of ten days each will take place the second week of August beginning August 2009. August 7-16th 2009 will be the dates of the first residency session held on the beautiful Chatham arboretum campus in Pittsburgh for the duration of the residency. Details about lodging options will be provided at least two months ahead of time. The residency will consist of workshops, craft lectures, panels and readings with some of our mentors and other well-known writers. Graduating students will be asked to read from their theses at their second residency session. Each session will include a trip to a nearby site such as Frank Lloyd Wright’s Fallingwater.

Students will need to register for the summer residencies by June 1 each year. A detailed schedule of each residency along with names of participating writers and editors will be published six weeks before the residency.
EMAIL

All students are required to check their Chatham e-mail account on a daily basis, as instructors may communicate assignments, announcements, schedules, etc., via e-mail correspondence. **Other, personal e-mail accounts are not permitted to be used for class purposes.** It is the responsibility of each individual student to check his or her e-mail daily, as well as three days prior to the beginning of each term and at least 24 hours before returning to campus following a university scheduled break.

An e-mail account will be set-up for each student by the Information Technology (IT) staff at Chatham University, and all questions regarding technical assistance and support should be directed to the IT staff. The IT staff may be contacted via phone at (412) 365-1112, or via e-mail at helpdesk@chatham.edu.
Register for field seminars when you register for the Spring semester.

Fees for national/local field seminars will vary, but usually you should count on an additional $3,000 for an international field seminar, which will cover international travel, lodging, and most expenses while in the foreign country. Financial aid may be used to pay additional funds.

In 2010 we are planning a trip to Costa Rica.
I. **Participation Conditions** – Students must submit the signature page of this contract 12/15/2008 otherwise your candidacy for the Field Seminar is forfeited.

A. **Academic Responsibilities:**

The undersigned agrees to the following policies and procedures relative to academic matters:

1. **Attendance:** Students must attend all regularly scheduled classes and course meetings, both on the Chatham University campus and in the foreign country destinations. If students fail to attend any required classes or course meetings, the student may be dismissed from the program, without refund.

B. **Financial Responsibilities:**

The undersigned agrees to the following policies and procedures relative to financial matters:

1. **Administrative Costs:** All students participating in field seminars are responsible for all fees related to the trip as specified in the course description. A $1000 deposit will be required of each student.

2. **Spending Money:** Students are responsible for their own spending money and for costs of personal incidentals on the Chatham Abroad course.

3. **Refunds:** Students have until January 15th 2009 to withdrawal from field seminars that take place in May, and until April 1, 2010 to withdraw from field seminars that take place in July. After this date, any amounts pre-paid by the student will become non-refundable. This refund policy is required as Chatham University expends monies on behalf of student participants in order to secure travel arrangements well in advance of the trip.

C. **Medical Responsibilities:** The undersigned acknowledges that there are certain risks inherent to international travel and that Chatham University cannot assume responsibility for the provision of medical services to its students or the payment of medical costs that might be incurred by students.

1. **Consultation with Medical Doctors:** The undersigned is expected to consult with a medical doctor prior to participating in the course as she deems necessary regarding all individual medical issues or needs. Further, the undersigned is aware that Chatham University cannot be responsible for attending to the medical needs of the undersigned.

2. **Hospitalization:** The undersigned acknowledges that should she be hospitalized in a foreign country during the course, Chatham University cannot assume responsibility for the payment of such costs. The undersigned agrees to assume all risk and responsibility for any such costs. The undersigned agrees to obtain adequate insurance to meet all needs for payment of medical or hospitalization costs during the Chatham Field Seminar course.
D. Consent to Emergency Medical Treatment: The undersigned acknowledges that, on rare occasions, an emergency may develop which necessitates the administration of medical treatment, hospitalization or surgery. In the event of injury or illness to myself that necessitates emergency medical care, I hereby authorize Chatham University and/or its authorized representatives or agents to secure any necessary treatment deemed appropriate, including the administration of anesthetics and surgery. Chatham University shall not assume responsibility for student medical expenses. I agree to reimburse Chatham University for all expenses incurred on my behalf.

E. Health Insurance: The undersigned understands that all Chatham Field Seminar participants are required to maintain sufficient health, accident, disability, and hospitalization insurance while participating in this program. Chatham University shall not assume responsibility for student medical expenses.

F. Release from Liability: In consideration for being permitted to participate in a Chatham Field Seminar course, the undersigned agrees that Chatham University, its officers, directors, employees, governing board members, agents, representatives or related entities shall not be liable for any claims, demands or causes of action based on or arising out of any illness or injury (including death), property loss or damage, deviation, delay or curtailment, however caused, that I might suffer in connection with my enrollment or participation in any Field Seminar.

G. Indemnification: In consideration for being permitted to participate in a Field Seminar and its attendant activities, the undersigned shall indemnify and hold harmless Chatham University, its officers, directors, employees, governing board members, agents, representatives or related entities from any and all claims, demands, and causes of action and all expenses incidental thereto (including reasonable attorney's fees), based upon or arising out of any personal injury (including death) and property loss or damage caused by or resulting from any acts or omissions by Chatham University, its officers, directors, employees, governing board members, agents, representatives, related entities or any acts or omissions caused by the undersigned during enrollment or participation in any Field Seminar course.

H. Behavioral Responsibilities: The undersigned is aware of expected behavioral responsibilities while participating in a Field Seminar. As a guest in (a) foreign country(ies), there are certain behaviors which are considered unacceptable and could lead to possible disruption of the program. The undersigned agrees to conduct herself at all times in an appropriate manner, which does not infringe upon the customs and mores of the country (ies) in which the course is being conducted. The undersigned further agrees to conduct herself at all times in a manner, which does not infringe upon the rights and safety of the undersigned and of other participants in the course. Additionally, the undersigned agrees to adhere to all policies and procedures outlined in Chatham University's Student Handbook and understands that those policies and procedures apply to the student even when in a foreign country. The undersigned acknowledges that inappropriate behavior is cause for dismissal from the course without refund, and may also lead to disciplinary actions as provided in the Chatham University Student Handbook and Honor Code.

I. Drugs:

1. Illegal Drugs: The undersigned understands that the use or possession of illegal drugs during the course is prohibited and cause for immediate dismissal from the course without refund, and may also lead to disciplinary actions as provided in the Chatham University Student Handbook and Honor Code. In addition, Chatham University cannot be responsible for the consequences of illegal drug use or possession.

2. Prescription Medication: Prescription medication should be stored in its original container with the name and telephone number of the prescribing medical doctor clearly marked thereon. Students are responsible for ensuring that they have enough of any prescribed medication to last the duration of the course.
Contract for Chatham MFA Field Seminar Courses (cont.)

J. **Involuntary Withdrawal:** The undersigned acknowledges that return passage and all other expenses incurred as a result of a participant's involuntary withdrawal from the course shall be the sole and exclusive financial responsibility of the student concerned.

K. **Program Cancellation:** The undersigned understands that Chatham University reserves the right to cancel or reschedule any course without notice.

L. **Alterations of Travel Arrangements/Accommodations:** The undersigned agrees that she is not permitted to extend or otherwise alter the Field Seminar travel arrangements or accommodations.

M. **Course Beginning and Conclusion:** The Field Seminar courses depart from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and return to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Students are not permitted to join or depart the Field Seminar from differing locations. Students are responsible for assuring that they are in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania prior to course departures. Thus, insuring their travel arrangements to Pittsburgh, students will bear sole responsibility for the possibility of travel delays or cancellations due to poor weather conditions, acts of God, and other unforeseen circumstances.

N. **Documents:**

1. **Passports:** All students are required to obtain—at their own cost—a passport valid through at least December 2009.

2. **Visas:** All students are required to obtain—at their own cost—any necessary visas to travel to course destinations. Chatham University shall not assume responsibility for student visa applications.

3. **International Student Identification Cards (ISIC):** All students are encouraged to obtain an International Student Identification Card, which provides student discounts and some insurance.

4. **Copies of Passport:** All students must deliver one clear copy of their passport by Feb. 15, 2009. Failure to hand in copies of any of these forms may result in dismissal from the Field Seminar, without refund.
CHATHAM UNIVERSITY

Signature Page

Contract for Field Seminar Courses

I hereby agree to comply with the provisions of the Contract for Chatham Field Seminars. I certify that I have read this document and that I understand the provisions therein and agree to be legally bound hereby. I further understand that if I withdraw from a 2009 Field Seminar I will be asked to pay a cancellation fee of $1,000.

Student Name (Printed)  Program Location

Signature of Student  Date

Submit this page to:
MFA Program Secretary
ADD/DROP/WITHDRAW FORM

Students requesting to add/drop or withdraw from courses after the published deadlines must petition CAS (Undergraduate) or Academic Affairs (Graduates) and are subject to a $25.00 Late Add/Drop Fee.

Student ID ___________________ Name ____________________________

Class: FY SO JR SR GR Term: FA SP Maymester SU Year: _____________

Phone # ______________________ Email Address _____________________

ADD THESE COURSES:
Undergraduate students requesting to add a graduate level course must obtain the Graduate Program Director’s signature.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Pass/Fail</th>
<th>Dept.</th>
<th>Course Number</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Credit Hours</th>
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DROP/Withdraw these courses:
After the published Add/Drop Deadline and before the Withdraw Deadline, a “W” grade will be recorded on the student’s transcript.

Students who are dropping/withdrawing from all courses must obtain the signature of the Director of Academic Advising (Undergraduate) or their Program Director (Graduate).

Check here to drop/withdraw from all courses (individual courses do not need to be listed below)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dept.</th>
<th>Course Number</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Credit Hours</th>
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Faculty Advisor Signature (or Director of Academic Advising or CE Academic Advisor) ________________________ Date ____________

Office of International Programs (for international students only) _____________________________ Date ____________

Graduate Program Director or Director of Academic Advising Signature _____________________________ Date ____________

I understand that:

• Adding or dropping courses may change my on-campus residency, billing and/or financial aid status especially if this action changes my full or part-time status.
• I am financially liable for any course in which a “W” is recorded and that withdrawing from this course(s) could affect my financial aid.
• In accordance with the Institutional Refund Policy, I will be charged a percentage of the tuition for the course(s) I drop. (Further information can be found in the Chatham College Catalogue)

I have read and agree with the above Statements of Understanding:

Student Signature ___________________________ Date ____________
Independent Study Proposal

Student ID __________________ Name ______________________

Class: FY SO JR SR GR Term: FA SP Maymester SU Year: __________

Phone # __________________ Email Address ______________________

Course and Section Numbers can be found in the current class schedule. If the information is not listed for your course or instructor, the course/section number will be assigned by the Registrar.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Course Number</th>
<th>Section Number</th>
<th>Credit Hours</th>
<th>Grade Option</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Purpose of Independent Study:

Implementation Strategy:

NOTE: Independent Studies must be approved by the Division Chairperson to count toward major requirements.

This section to be completed by Faculty

I have reviewed this proposal and am satisfied that it is adequate, and that the student is capable of carrying it out as stated. Additionally, I am willing to undertake the responsibility of supervising it.

Faculty Director of Study Signature __________________ Printed Name __________________ Date __________

Faculty Advisor Signature __________________ Printed Name __________________ Date __________

Division Chair or Graduate Program Director Signature __________________ Printed Name __________________ Date __________

Office of International Programs: ____________________________ (International Students ONLY)

Major Credits Approved: Yes ______ No ______ Chairperson’s Initials: __________

I have read and understand the guidelines for my Independent Study on the reverse side of this form.

Student Signature __________________________ Printed Name __________________ Date __________
Guidelines for Independent Study:

1. A student may enroll in no more than one independent study per term.
2. The normal purpose of an independent study is to undertake an academic project not available in the college’s regular curriculum. The interest and availability of faculty sponsors will depend upon a number of factors, including the faculty member’s workload and departmental policy.
3. Before approaching a faculty member concerning sponsorship of an independent study, student should define his or her goals, interests, and resources, as far as possible, in writing. The advice and direction available from the faculty member is not a substitute for the initiative of the student.
4. A faculty sponsor should be in an academic field related to the subject under study. When a faculty member wishes to sponsor a project outside his or her known competencies, an arrangement should be made to co-sponsor the study with a faculty member related to the field in question.
5. Students and faculty should try to define projects well in advance of advising week and registration.
Honor Code

Chatham University Honor Code and Policies
(Excerpt taken from the Chatham University Student Handbook, page 55)

Chatham University Honor Code

Honor is that principle by which we at Chatham form our code of living, working, and studying together. The standards of honor at Chatham require that all Chatham students residing on Chatham’s campus act with intellectual independence, personal integrity, honesty in all relationships, and consideration for the rights and well being of others. As citizens of the campus community focused on education, students must accept certain obligations that accrue by virtue of such citizenship. Individual rights are ensured to the degree that these rights require a respect for the rights of all within the community to the same extent. In accepting admission to Chatham University, undergraduate and graduate students automatically agree to be personally responsible in all matters pertaining to honor and pledge to abide by those rules, which are considered by the community, as part of its Honor Code. While the University articulates specific community standards, both academic and social, the Honor Code is maintained through the acceptance of personal responsibility by each community member in their on and off campus behavior. Upholding the tenets of the Honor Code is essential in promoting a safe and secure living and learning community for which students, faculty and staff share responsibility. The Chatham University Honor Code is reviewed every four academic years with student input.

Please see the Chatham University Student Handbook, pages 55-86 for the complete Honor Code by going to this link: http://www.chatham.edu/studentlife/documents/studenthandbook.pdf
Dates to Remember
October 15, February 15, June 15 (due dates for first boards)

Statement of Philosophy

One of the requirements for obtaining a Master of Fine Arts in Writing degree is a thesis project. The thesis is the culmination of a student’s work towards the MFA. Thus, it should represent the best work a student is capable of and, when complete, be a manuscript of publishable quality.

Checklist for the MFA Thesis and Graduation

1. At the end of your first year, with the Program Coordinator identify a director (an MFA faculty member working in your primary genre). The thesis advisor will work closely with you throughout the project. Please note that the MFA thesis is an independent project. It is an opportunity to show that you can craft a significant body of work on your own with important, but minimal input from others.

2. Have the program director sign an Add/Drop form you have filled out (available on the Intranet or in this manual) to register for thesis credits. You will not be able to register for thesis credits until you have your committee together and have turned in this Add/Drop form.

3. Write a 5-10 page proposal. Include in your proposal a description of the manuscript that you will complete; a discussion of the major influences (writers and/or works) on your thesis; a discussion of your aesthetic vision; and a discussion of the literary context of your work. You should also mention any challenges you expect to face in writing the thesis, and include a bibliography of 20-40 books of contemporary literature that you consider influential. You must have your first board by October 15 if fall, February 15 if spring, and June 15 if summer.

4. Attach to the proposal a sample of work that you will include in your thesis (5 pages of poems or 10 pages of prose). Also attach a one-page schedule of dates by which you will write and complete drafts and revisions of the thesis (or parts of the thesis).
Thesis Manual (cont.)

5. Edit and proofread the proposal scrupulously. Careless errors suggest that you are not prepared to write the proposed creative work. Committee members will be instructed not to accept any proposals that contain significant technical errors, typos, or awkward sentence construction. You are a creative writer: this is your chance to show us you know how to write well.

6. Submit the proposal to your thesis director. The director may ask you to revise, or they may, after reading your proposal, accept it.

7. Over the course of next year, write your thesis and a ten-page introduction. The page length of the thesis requirement is somewhat flexible, but a guideline is 50-60 pages of poetry and 115-125 pages of prose. For those who have produced longer projects, the entire manuscript can be included in the thesis, but the committee is only responsible for detailed response to the revised work of up to 125 pages that satisfies the thesis requirement.

The completed thesis will include an introduction of at least 10 pages in which you provide a literary context for your work. The introduction should talk about the work and its various literary influences, how it relates to or builds on those influences, what you were trying to accomplish and what you think you have accomplished. It may incorporate personal meditation as well as analytic language, as long as it places the thesis within a literary tradition. The introduction may be based on the proposal you wrote or not, depending on how closely you have adhered to the proposal in the actual writing of the thesis.

You will work out the schedule for writing with your thesis director, but generally you will want to be giving your director significant chunks of work on a regular basis that have gone through revision already, then you will meet with your director for comments and suggestions. It is your responsibility to keep your director and committee informed of your progress.

8. Turn in your application for graduation early in semester you intend to graduate.

9. Make revisions as needed to your thesis. Submit a final copy to your thesis director. You need to give her/him two weeks to read and respond to your thesis.

10. During your second residency, you will be asked to read from your thesis and answer questions from both students and faculty about your thesis. You will work with the Associate Director of the low-residency program to set up a time and date for your reading and board.

11. Prepare at least a ten-minute introduction for your thesis board. You may use note cards, but do not read from your thesis. In your oral remarks you should be able to clearly articulate your creative vision, what you think you have accomplished with the thesis, what challenges you encountered, and what you learned in the process. You should also be able to talk about what kind of reader you envision for the thesis, what you hope a
reader will take from your thesis, and should be able to discuss literary influences in a sophisticated manner.

12. After your thesis board, you may be asked to make more revisions, so you should not make any bound copies until your thesis director tells you to do so.

13. Make any revisions suggested by your committee and then make three bound copies of your thesis. Give one to your thesis director, one to the program director, and one to the library. Also give the library an electronic version of your thesis. Make sure you have followed the following formatting guidelines:
Thesis Manual (cont.)

General comments about the final board:

The purpose of your final board is to provide you with an opportunity for you to articulate the extent of your growth as an artist in the program as well as your future plans for development. The board is a conversation among writers about the art, craft, and process of writing, using your thesis and the works you’ve included in your bibliography as focuses. Most often, boards turn into lively discussions, a final rigorous workshop of sorts, a last test to pass to demonstrate your proficiency and growth as a writer. This session is directed primarily toward the thesis, but may contain other topics with which you would be expected to be familiar at the completion of the MFA degree.

During this conversation, you are to synthesize the reading, thinking, and writing that go into earning the MFA degree. Your board is the first of potentially many occasions when you will be asked to discuss your work intelligently, as a practicing writer. Whether in interviews for teaching and other positions or as part of the public appearances and interviews that accompany book publication, the writer needs to be able to talk about his/her work, placing it in the broader context of literature and answering questions about his/her writing process and artistic judgments.

At the board, you’ll be expected to answer a range of questions that have a general focus on your thesis, your reading list, courses taken, etc., but you should be prepared to speak on a range of topics in dialogue with your thesis committee as a working artist. Your goal here is to provide a background and context for your work, discuss the writing and presentation of the work itself, expand and defend your personal aesthetic principles, and discuss plans for further revision of the thesis. Consider holistically your experience at Chatham, what you learned, what challenges you faced, and what your plans after the MFA are.

To prepare for your final board:

- Prepare a ten-minute introduction for your thesis board. You may use note cards, but do not read from your thesis. In your oral remarks you should be able to clearly articulate your creative vision, what you think you have accomplished with the thesis, what challenges you encountered, and what you learned in the process.

Things to think about (and makes notes on!) for the final board:

- Consider specifics such craft issues as focus/theme, organization/structure; be able to explain and support your particular artistic choices;
- You should be able to talk about what kind of reader you envision for the thesis, what you hope a reader will take from your thesis;
- Be prepared to discuss literary influences in a sophisticated manner, those you used directly or indirectly for your thesis;
- You should also demonstrate that you have a thorough understanding of other work in the larger literary genre in which you’re writing and be able to answer questions about your work as related to that genre: What related works are out there? How does yours fit in with other similar works? How is this project unique and different? How could you see this being marketed?
- Make sure you have also thought about "what's next": Where will you go with the writing now? What plans, if any, do you have for the project? Will you expand it? Submit parts/all of it for publication?
- Think about what you learned, what posed challenges/problems, and what you might do differently, etc.
You can expect all sorts of questions and comments during the examination, for instance:

- What are the salient larger ideas/themes in the collection? What is the universal connection you are trying to make with the reader?
- What will the reader learn/take away from your thesis, what is at stake?
- How did you work to create a consistent narrative voice for all the pieces?
- Can you discuss the issue of narrative point(s) of view in your work?
- How did you create continuity between all the pieces to create a unified whole? How do you think writers can achieve this continuity?
- Discuss the significance of and how you came to select the story/essay titles? The title of the thesis?
- How and why did you make the organizational or structural choices you have?
- What was your research process during this project like? How did you integrate research into the work? Was it difficult or challenging? Were you successful?
- How did you deal with some of the ethical issues inherent in writing creative nonfiction, like writing truthfully about real-life events and people, “prettying” up or embellishing the truth? Did you find yourself wrestling with any of the hard questions this genre often asks?
- What are the relationships between specific works included in your thesis and works by writers in your references/bibliography, particularly in terms of style and technique?
- Think about all the works you included in your references/bibliography and discuss, in general, how these authors’ concerns compare, contrast, or qualify your concerns as a writer? How have other people's words influenced you? As a writer? In the thesis specifically?
- Go through the process you used to compose your thesis in its book-length state; which influences/writers/works/experiences were most useful in guiding or inspiring you? Why? Which were least useful? Why?
- How have you evolved as a writer while writing the thesis? During your degree program? How have these experiences changed you? Is there anything you’d do differently?

**Thesis Format**

The complete creative thesis must be printed clear and readable font, at least 12 point in size. Both bound copies must be on 8-1/2 x 11 bond paper of at least 20-pound weight containing 25% or more rag content. The left hand margin should be set at 1.5 to 2 inches and all other margins should be set at 1 inch. The thesis must be double-spaced throughout, with the exception of poetry, which may be single-spaced. The appropriate title page, thesis committee approval page, and table of contents should be included (refer to the end of this manual for examples). A student may also include an acknowledgements page if he/she wishes to do so. A bibliography must conclude the thesis. Students should follow Associated Press guidelines for documentation of source material. The thesis must be bound by Icon with a black cover that has Chatham’s logo on it.

**Elements of the Thesis**

1. **Signature Page.** This page should contain the date, followed by the statement, "We hereby recommend that the thesis of (insert your name) entitled (insert the title of your thesis) be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts." Following this statement, there should be a list of three blank lines for the signatures (Director, Reader, Reader)
2. **Title Page.** Include the full title of thesis, your full name, as you would like it to appear on the final manuscript, and the following language: "A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts Chatham University MFA in Creative Writing". Include the month and year the work is submitted.

3. **Acknowledgments.** (optional)

4. **Introduction.** The introduction is your opportunity to present your own view of the work included in the thesis. It should include information concerning the work's development, literary influences, and aesthetic aims.

5. **Table of Contents**, with page numbers.

6. **Text of Creative Thesis.** This book length collection represents your completed and revised work in your genre of study.
Thesis Manual (cont.)

Pagination

1. A thesis contains two sets of numbers. The preliminary pages (items 1-6 of the thesis) should be numbered consecutively in small Roman numerals. The title page should be considered "i" but should not be numbered. Beginning with the text, all pages must be numbered consecutively in Arabic numerals (items 9-11 of the thesis).

Extensions

1. Extensions will be given as long as the student continues working in good faith towards the completion of the thesis. Students must register for ENG 800 (Graduate continuing credit) to continue working on their thesis in a semester where they are not registered for any other classes.

Grading

Grading will be based on the following criteria:

1. Originality: The thesis is an original piece of writing developed solely by the student
2. Quality: The thesis is the culmination of the student's program of study and will represent the best work of the graduate student. Therefore, it will be a final draft of the highest quality and will include no errors of fact, content, grammar, spelling, style or format.
3. Length: The core of the thesis is a book-length piece of fiction or non-fiction or a collection of linked, shorter pieces
4. Format: The thesis is to written according to the printed guidelines

Professional standards for approval of the thesis will be as rigorously applied as in any other area. The grade for the thesis will be determined by a consensus of the committee and will be awarded on a scale of High Pass, Low Pass, Fail. Key factors in grading include originality, clarity, voice, and style. Manuscripts that contain errors will be returned to the student for correction before a grade is determined.
Thesis Manual (cont.)

Children’s and Adolescent’s Writing

1. Format The writing for children thesis is to be written according to the printed guidelines of the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators.

2. Literature Review: The thesis will include a thorough and exhaustive literature search that explores books of similar topic, genre and/or style.

3. Critical Component: The thesis will include a critical component demonstrating a thorough grounding in children's literature and the place of this work in that context.
SAMPLE TITLE PAGE

[3 Hard Returns/Enters]

THESIS TITLE

[7 Hard Returns/Enters]

A Thesis in [Nonfiction/Fiction/Poetry] Writing
By
Your Name

[7 Hard Returns/Enters]

Submitted in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Fine Arts

Chatham University
August 2008

SAMPLE TABLE OF CONTENTS PAGE

Introduction ........................................................................................................ iv
Chapter One – Chapter Title ........................................................................ 1
Chapter Two – Chapter Title ....................................................................... 19
Chapter Three – Chapter Title .................................................................... 49
(Etc.)
Bibliography ................................................................................................ 103

Or,

Poem Title ...................................................................................................... 60

MFA Thesis Committee Recommendation Form

This form must be completed, signed and attached to your thesis after the title page.
We hereby recommend that the thesis of ________________________________

entitled ________________________________

be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts.

Chair: ________________________________

First Reader: ____________________________

Second Reader: __________________________

Signature of Program Director: ________________

Date: ____________________________

CHATHAM UNIVERSITY

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Low-Residency MFA in Creative Writing Webpage

http://www.chatham.edu/ccps/mfa.cfm/

The website contains current events, information about the Low-Residency program, reading series; information about the curriculum, important notices, photos from recent events, and contact information about faculty.

The website for the residency program is:

http://www.chatham.edu/departments/writing/graduate/writing/
A Note about Grading

Following are the kinds of grades you may receive in graduate school.

A    Excellent work
A-   Good work
B+   Acceptable work
B    A sign that you need to work harder
B-   Almost failing. Verging on not being acceptable
C+   Failure! Work does not meet graduate standards
C    Failure! Work does not meet graduate standards

You must repeat any grade of C+ or under.

You will receive a P or F for thesis credits. You cannot graduate with your MFA unless you pass your thesis. Grading, for thesis, unlike grading for courses, is based solely on the quality of your writing and your performance in the final board. Remember that the thesis represents independent work, and you need to show the ability to work independently.