

**Statement of Values and Practices for the Department of Creative Writing**  
**University of North Carolina Wilmington**  
<http://www.uncw.edu/writers/>

1. *We are practicing literary artists: our authority to teach arises directly from the discoveries we make in our own writing, daily and over a lifetime.*

**Values:** According to diverse aesthetics, we use words to engage the world and create beauty. We cultivate an artistic sensibility through language, on the page and out loud, both for its accuracy and for its music. We achieve artistic excellence through the diligent practice of craft. Our collective goal is to inspire each other and our students to our best creative work—expressed in writing that is technically proficient, clean, and professionally presentable. Grammar, diction, and syntax are the paint and brushstrokes by which we build drama and artistic meaning. We believe in helping our students establish sound, professional working habits so they will approach their craft with respect; we also encourage their engagement with other arts.

**Practices:**

- CRW offers courses in the creative process, which incorporate other arts.
- Faculty integrate film, music, and visual art into craft classes, workshops, and performances.
- Faculty write and teach across genres.
- All teaching faculty and GTAs grade undergraduate work both for “artistic merit” and “presentation,” the latter including all aspects of grammar and usage.
- A required course in Editing for Publication is now offered for our BFA majors.

2. *We believe in the book as an essential endeavor.*

**Values:** The book expresses a whole, sustained vision. Short forms all have their undeniable virtues, but the literary marketplace is a marketplace of books. We write them and teach our students to write not only short stories, essays, and poems, but unified books. Reading, a lifelong engagement with books of literary quality, is central to the writer’s life and our individual and collective identity. Reading books helps a writer calibrate an original aesthetic and challenges the writer to grow beyond comfortable certainties and habits.

**Practices:**

- All BFA seniors produce a chapbook or anthology in the Pub Lab.
- The MFA curriculum includes semester- and year-long courses in the book-length prose narrative and poetry collection.
- The Publishing Laboratory explores the artistic as well as the practical facets of designing, editing, and printing books.
- All tenure-track faculty are expected to publish books for promotion and tenure.

3. *We value research as a creative act.*

**Values:** Broadly conceived, research means going out into the world and finding out what is necessary to know in order to write about a chosen subject perceptively, knowledgably, and imaginatively. The value of research lies not only in its product but in the very act of discovering one’s

truest self in public subjects. Research at its best enlarges the writer's vision and the scope of subjects available, as well as challenging the writer to develop new structures and forms to address it. Finally it helps a writer achieve an effective balance between self-awareness and awareness of the world.

**Practices:**

- CRW offers a graduate course in "Research for Writers" organized around direct experience pursuing creative projects.
- CRW integrates the practice of research—as a deliberate attempt to enlarge and deepen knowledge of a subject—into writing in all genres.
- CRW requires BFA students in Creative Nonfiction to write beyond memoir and autobiography, using what they already know to explore subjects they passionately want to find out about.
- CRW supports the research of MFA students and CRW faculty with travel grants.

*4. Teaching is a complementary and parallel art.*

**Values:** Our faculty are engaged and available. For us all, teaching our craft and mentoring new writers is an important way to become better writers, for the act of articulating one's aesthetic requires exploring it, continually testing basic assumptions and evolving as an artist. We are part of a tradition, and our students' experience and work are a significant part of our collective legacy. This legacy extends beyond campus to the larger community of which we are a part.

**Practices:**

- All faculty share the teaching and mentoring of BFA and MFA students and rotate by turn serving as master teachers in CRW 201, our Basic Studies introductory course.
- The CRW Department has developed a culture of community, in which much informal mentoring goes on.
- Teaching is closely observed; excellence and innovation are rewarded.
- Through outreach programs such as Writers in Action, the Young Writers Summer Camp, the Bald Head Island Writers Retreat, and workshops sponsored by the Osher Lifelong Learning Center, we expand opportunities for MFA students and faculty to teach in non-traditional settings to reach populations that normally would not have access to a university.

*5. A piece of Poetry, Fiction, or Creative Nonfiction completes itself in the imagination of the reader.*

**Values:** Creative Writing is, at heart, an act of extraordinary communication. Just as we as faculty strive to find the right audience for our work, so too we encourage our students to find their readership, rather than write merely for therapy or self-expression. The publishing process is one more stage in the writer's apprenticeship.

**Practices:**

- CRW conducts workshops for MFA and BFA students in performing creative writing for an audience.
- The Publishing Laboratory offers both a Publishing Certificate for BFA majors and other courses for BFA and MFA students which de-mystify the process of shepherding work into published form and addresses both the artistic concerns and the practical challenges.
- Individual faculty mentor their advisees in finding agents and appropriate venues for their work when they are ready.