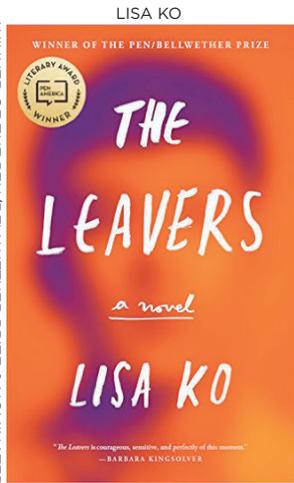
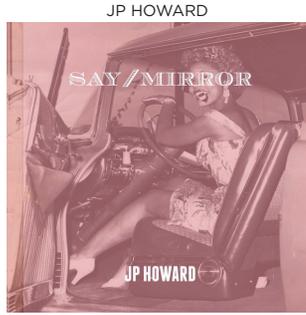
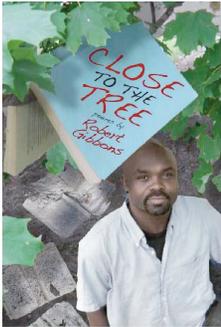


RECENT ALUMNI PUBLICATIONS

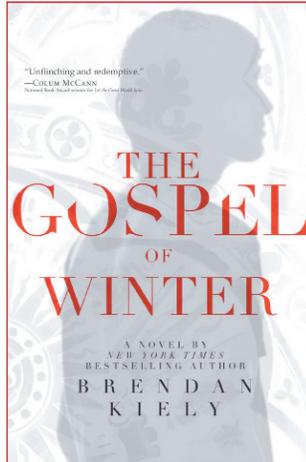
WINNER OF THE PEN/BELLWETHER PRIZE & NOMINATED FOR NATIONAL BOOK AWARD



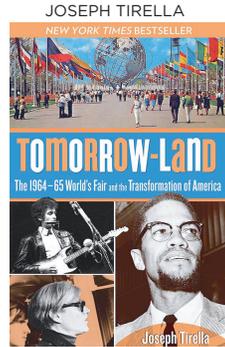
ROBERT GIBBONS



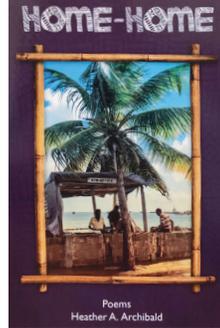
BRENDAN KIELY



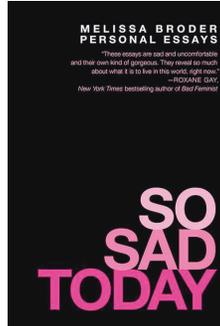
NY TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR



HEATHER A. ARCHIBALD



MELISSA BRODER



“Severely shaken by a series of big-life ordeals, including a cancer diagnosis, I decided to give myself the gift of an MFA for 50th birthday - because, you know, ‘if not now, when?’ I entered the program quite unsure of my talents, my relevance, and, indeed, my life going forward. I left CCNY a poet. Enough said.

Michele Karas



AT THE CITY COLLEGE OF NEW YORK

DIVERSITY
INCLUSION
EXCELLENCE



“CCNY and its terrific writing program provided me with a beacon of hope - for where else could working class immigrant kids go for such first rate guidance and encouragement?”

Oscar Hijuelos, Pulitzer Prize in Fiction

MFA PROGRAM IN CREATIVE WRITING
THE CITY COLLEGE OF NEW YORK
North Academic Center 6/219
160 Convent Avenue
New York, NY 10031

To learn more about the program, please visit:

<https://www.cuny.edu/english/creativewriting>

The City College
of New York
Division of
Humanities and the Arts

MFA
PROGRAM IN
CREATIVE WRITING

ABOUT OUR PROGRAM

The Creative Writing Program at The City College of New York is in its fourth decade. During its history we have had some of the most distinguished writers in America teach - Gwendolyn Brooks, Donald Barthelme, Joseph Heller, William Matthews, Grace Paley and Susan Sontag, to name a few. Our graduates include New York Times Bestsellers and Pulitzer Prize winners, including Walter Mosley, Oscar Hijuelos, and Ernesto Quinonez.

Our campus is in the heart of Harlem - the location of one of the most important literary/cultural movements in America, the Harlem Renaissance. The exceptional diversity of students in our program naturally translates into a broad spectrum of aesthetics - including experimental works and genre fiction - in the practice of writing.

Our conviction is that a writing program should not only help student hone the skills they already have, but should guide them to discover new ones as well. We require that our students take at least one workshop outside of their concentration, regardless of their admission as writers of poetry, nonfiction or fiction. As part of our unique program, our MFA students are also required to take literature courses with City College's distinguished English Literature faculty.

“Doing my MFA at CCNY is probably the best decision I’ve made in the last twenty years. I had been a writer for some time, but never thought I could do the fiction and essay writing I really wanted to do. CCNY’s first-rate teachers, supportive environment, and my own hard work, showed me I could.”

Rodger Fell

Recent Visiting Writers

Tyehimba Jess
Kimiko Hahn
Hasanthika Sirisena
Tracy K. Smith
Ngugi Wa Thiong’o
Walter Mosley
Tina Chang
Vijay Seshadri

Chris Abani
Noviolet Bulawayo
Cynthia Cruz
Heather Sellers
Christopher Carmona
Edwidge Danticat
Rebecca Solnit
Paul Muldoon

Chinelo Okparanta
Jacqueline Woodson
Ru Freeman
Bob Holman
Melissa Broder
Willie Perdomo

Writing Faculty

Amir Arian Ahmadi Guest Faculty, Nonfiction
Salar Abdoh Fiction & Nonfiction
Robert Barron Dramatic Writing
Lyn Di Iorio Fiction & Nonfiction
Nicole Dennis-Benn Guest Faculty, Fiction
Keith Gandal Fiction
David Groff Guest Faculty, Poetry & Nonfiction
Pamela Laskin Children’s Literature
Mark Jay Mirsky Fiction
Emily Raboteau Fiction & Nonfiction
Nicole Sealey Guest Faculty, Poetry
David Unger Literary Translation
Michelle Yasmine Valladares Poetry, MFA Program Director

COMMUNITY

The Rifkind Center for the Humanities and Arts supports interdisciplinary scholarly exchange, guest speakers and conferences

FICTION, the legendary literary journal

The MFA Reading Series showcasing work of faculty and students

The CUNY Turnstyle Reading Series - a CUNY tradition of MFA graduate faculty and students reading together at the CUNY Graduate Center each spring

The Chinua Achebe Legacy Reading Series featuring writers of color, in partnership with City College’s Black Studies Program

City's Graduate Creative Writing Program — A Tapestry of Perspectives and Talent

By Esther Tolkoff '68

A center of hardworking, stellar alumni and faculty has been at the heart of CCNY for some 40 years.

That is the MFA (Master of Fine Arts) degree program in Creative Writing, which prides itself on its in-depth yet flexible approach and on exploring a wide range of perspectives.

"We are among the largest master's degree programs on campus, with some 120 students," says Emily Raboteau, co-director with Salar Abdoh '96MA. The program, which is part of the English Department, was transformed from an MA to the more comprehensive MFA degree program in 2005 under the leadership of longtime former director, Linsey Abrams.

"We are not genre snobs," Raboteau says. In most MFA programs, students focus on one specialization—be that fiction, creative nonfiction, poetry, short stories, playwriting, screenwriting, children's literature or experimental work.

Of the five writing workshops City's students must take, among other coursework, at least one such workshop has to be in an area other than their speciality. They are also welcome to explore other genres of interest to them, such as romance writing, science fiction, mystery, among others.

Raboteau and Abdoh stress that diversity is a key element of the program. City's Harlem location makes for a center of expressing outlooks seldom found in MFA writing programs elsewhere.

"We have students of all backgrounds in terms of race, ethnicity, nationality and age," Raboteau told *Publishers' Weekly* in May 2015. "No one group is the majority and therefore none of the work is treated like minority literature."

Outstanding alums and faculty—now and before

The latest of the department's star achievers is **Brendan Kiely '11MFA**, who was recently honored at the White House as an invitee of the organization Innovation & The Arts: Prison Reform and Reentry in the 21st Century for his young adult novel, "All American Boys" (Simon & Schuster, co-written with Jason Reynolds), focusing on how victims of police brutality—often young men of color—are affected by their experiences and how their white peers react upon being confronted with such an incident. The book was favorably reviewed in December 20th's *New York Times* Sunday Book Review and is being used by schools across the nation.

Kiely says, "I was drawn to City's program for the same reason many students are. I was working full-time teaching English at the Calhoun School. I attended City at night. Many City students work full-time and study part-time so that the program is affordable is a major thing. Also, you run into many different kinds of people. There is a tremendous feeling of community in the department." He says he is deeply grateful to Professors David Groff and to Linsey Abrams.



Ernesto Quiñonez '96, '06MFA

Kiely wrote his first book, "The Gospel of Winter," about sexual abuse by priests, while he was a student in the MFA program. Translated into eight languages, the book was selected as among the American Library Association's Top Ten Best Fiction for Young Adults 2015.

Another alumnus whose work has attracted much notice is novelist **Ernesto Quiñonez '96, '06MFA**. His first book, "Bodega Dreams" (Vintage Books, 2000), which is in the process of being turned into a play, was named a "Notable Book" by both *The New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times*, and given the Barnes & Noble Great New Writers designation. His second book is "Chango's Fire" (Rayo: New York, 2004). Quiñonez, who is a Sundance Writers Fellow, teaches in Cornell University's MFA program.



Emily Raboteau

Many MFA students specializing in poetry take part in the Poetry Outreach Center, headed by lecturer Pamela Laskin. They give readings and instruction to public school students.

Poetry alumna **Juliet P. Howard '09MFA** founded the Women Writers in Bloom Poetry Salon. She and the salon were featured in the October/November 2015 issue of *Poets & Writers Magazine*. Her first collection, "SAY/MIRROR," was published in 2015 (Operating System). **Robert Balun '14MFA's** poetry chapbook, "Self (Ceremony)," was published in 2015 (Finishing Line Press).



Salar Abdoh '96MA

Joseph Tirella's '11MFA nonfiction book, "Tomorrow-land: The 1964-65 World's Fair and the Transformation of America," (Lyons Press, 2014), contrasts the festive atmosphere of the Fair with the serious upheavals of the early 60's. The book was a *New York Times* best seller.



Brendan Kiely '11MFA

Tirella had freelanced for leading magazines before turning to writing fiction. He took two independent study courses with Raboteau. He worked closely with her on "Tomorrow-land," submitting chapters throughout. He returned to his fiction work with her and received his MFA in that area. Tirella is director of media relations at Lehman College.



Joseph Tirella '11MFA

Earlier alumni who rose to topflight status are the late **Oscar Hijuelos '75, '84MA**, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of "The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love," (Farrar Straus and Giroux 1989), among

many other works, and **Walter Mosley '91MA**, 2004 Honorary Doctorate, CCNY, named the Mystery Writers of America's 2016 Grand Master. "The Devil in the Blue Dress" was the first in Mosley's 13-book Easy Rawlins series, just one part of his prolific body of work.



Walter Mosley '91MA

Playwright **Wendy Wasserstein '73MA's** biographer Julie Salomon wrote in "Wendy and the Lost Boys," "At City College, she began to work on the approach that would become her signature—mingling memory, observation, reality and fiction."

And then there are the program's many illustrious faculty members, ongoing and visiting over the years. They have included: Donald Barthelme, Susan Sontag, Kurt Vonnegut, Gwendolyn Brooks, **Frederic Tuten '59**, who headed the program for 15 years, Joseph Heller and Grace Paley.

Acclaimed poet Thomas Sayers Ellis and Nigerian fiction writer Chinelo Okparanta were visiting faculty members this past fall. Ellis is credited for launching The Dark Room Collective, a black poetry movement that is considered to be an extension of the Harlem Renaissance.

Raboteau's second book, "Searching for Zion: The Quest for Home in the African Diaspora" (Grove/Atlantic), won the 2014 American Book Award, was grand prize winner of the New York Festival, and was named best book of 2013 by *The Huffington Post* and the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Her short story, "Oysters," topped 35,609 entries from 149 countries as winner of the International Flash Fiction Competition.

Abdoh, a native of Iran, wrote the novels "The Poet Game" (2000), "Opium" (2004), "Tehran at Twilight" (2014), and is editor and translator of the anthology "Tehran Noir" (2014). In 2010, he edited *Callaloo Journal's* issue of Middle Eastern and North African writers. He has won the 2008 New York Foundation for the Arts award and the 2010 National Endowment for the Arts award in 2010 for his prose.

What the program consists of

Students must submit a substantial writing sample when they first apply. Once accepted, in addition to the intensive writing work-



Oscar Hijuelos '75, '84MA



Wendy Wasserstein '73MA

shops in their areas of specialization, they take literature courses and critical practice courses, which focus on the craft and technique of a given type of writing. The emphasis on craft was a major part of the transition from an MA to an MFA program.

One example of the program's special awareness of multicultural perspectives is a workshop in translation, taught by David Unger, an expert in the field. Abdoh points out there are nuances to be aware of when writing in a language other than one's own.

A further example of the focus on multicultural perspectives is the department's close ties to the Black Studies Department. It collaborates on the Chinua Achebe Legacy Series and Langston Hughes Festival. Walter Mosley received the Festival's Langston Hughes Medal in 2014.

The program offers an extracurricular Professional Practice Series. Agents, representatives of top publishing houses and small niche presses explain to students what they look for in a writer and how to become active elsewhere in the field—as publicists, as editors. "I met my agent Rob Weisbach there," says Kiely, who with his wife, **Jessie Chaffee '11MFA** (yes they met at City) was active in bringing the program into being. They note that

previously, this sort of program was rarely found outside of private universities.

Chaffee, who was MFA coordinator for two years, won a Fulbright Grant to Italy and has written a novel, "Florence in Ecstasy."

Within the English Department, Walter Mosley initiated the Publishing Certificate Program in 1997, creating paths for students of diverse backgrounds to work in the publishing industry.

Another ongoing MFA activity is a series of off-campus readings—poetry, nonfiction, fiction—in which students, alumni and faculty members take part. There are monthly Turnstyle Readings with students from other CUNY MFA programs—usually held at the CUNY Graduate Center. And there is a Visiting Author Series.

And so the storytelling, the tapestry of outlooks and the productivity of the Creative Writing Program at City continue. ■

Prestigious Fiction Magazine Long Centered at City

Fiction Magazine, published at City College, is read in many nations by serious followers of literature. The magazine aims to bring experimental work to a broader audience. *Fiction* was founded by CCNY English Professor Mark J. Mirsky, short story writer Donald Barthelme, Swiss playwright and novelist Max Frisch and novelist Jane DeLynn. "We are proud to have kept *Fiction* going since 1972," says Mirsky, who is still editor-in-chief, a frequent contributor and a faculty member at City.

"We have published Nobel Prize winning authors side by side with emerging writers," he explains.

Among the many well-known writers whose work has appeared have been: Samuel Beckett, Joyce Carol Oates, Russell Banks, Primo Levi, Marguerite Duras, Jamaica Kincaid, Aharon Appelfeld, Mario Vargas Llosa,

Cynthia Ozick, Julio Cortazar, **Frederic Tuten '59**, Raymond Carver, Anton Chekhov, and many relative newcomers.

After a committee, including MFA students and graduates, reads submissions, the actual selection is made under the supervision of managing editor Kristen Hamelin Tracy and by Mirsky. At times, *Fiction* has focused on specific cultures, such as a special issue devoted entirely to Norwegian literature. Submissions come from serious writers all over the world. In recent years, nonfiction pieces have been published as well. *Fiction Online* features editors' blogs.

Those who wish to learn more about *Fiction Magazine* can go to www.fictioninc.com



WHAT MAKES THE CCNY MFA IN CREATIVE WRITING DIFFERENT FROM OTHER PROGRAMS?

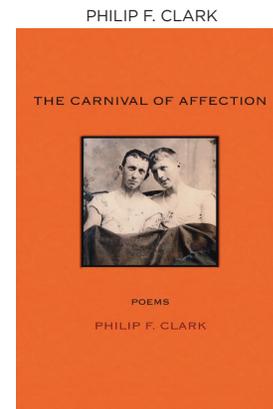
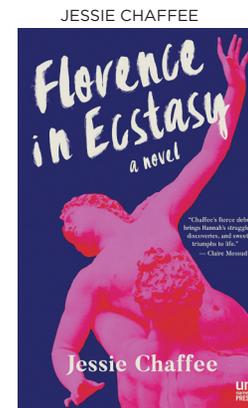
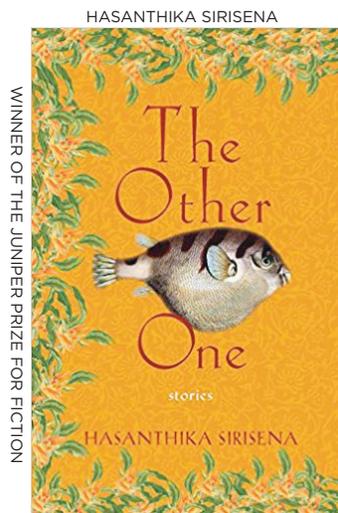
Diversity. We're located in Harlem. Our unofficial tagline is "Ten times the diversity for one tenth the price," because we're also comparatively affordable. Last year *The New Yorker* ran a piece called "MFA vs. POC" [people of color] by Junot Diaz that went viral. His argument was that predominantly white workshops often feel alienating, dismissive, and outright hostile to writers of color. In contrast with the MFA programs he was criticizing, our program is more reflective of what the U.S.A. actually looks like--certainly what NYC actually looks like. We have students of all backgrounds in terms of race, ethnicity, nationality, and age. No one group is the majority, and therefore none of the work is treated like minority literature. There are radical implications for the kinds of work our students are putting out into the world for it to be nurtured, respected, celebrated, and intelligently critiqued in the classroom. Another thing that sets our program apart is its strong sense of community. Our students have a great deal of affection for one another. They're loving rather than competitive.

EMILY RABOTEAU, Professor
Publisher's Weekly - May, 2015

The program has been a solid landing place to grow my poetic craft. I am inspired by my peer poets and writers and have expanded my process and my connection to craft. I have entered writers' circles -- that occur off campus with CCNY Alums which had led to more contact with poets/writing groups. I feel poetry all around me."

Allia Abdullah-Matta

RECENT ALUMNI PUBLICATIONS



CCNY's MFA in Creative Writing not only offered me the chance to study in the company of a diverse and supportive professional community of writers, it enabled me to publish professionally, teach, and get my first book contract."

Philip F. Clark

