

ASU launches online creative writing degree

New concentration is embedded in top-ranked English bachelor's program

By Kristen LaRue-Sandler, ASU News
August 10, 2026

It's time to dust off that story draft that's been smooshed in the back of your sock drawer.

Aspiring writers can now access guidance from established, internationally recognized teachers from almost anywhere in the world in a new degree program offered by Arizona State University's Department of English. The degree will enroll its first cohort this fall.

The [Bachelor of Arts in English with a concentration in creative writing](#) is a fiction track available through ASU Online. Guided by faculty in ASU's top-ranked creative writing program, the curriculum mirrors the Tempe campus program in its focus on close mentorship and professionalization.

"What we're hearing is that there's a great deal of interest among online students in fine-tuning personal projects," said [Manushag N. Powell](#), chair of ASU's Department of English. "People everywhere want to hone their craft a bit, and they want superb teachers and a community for creative expression. It is so important to our mission that we can and will provide that."

"This is what access looks like," said Jeffrey Cohen, dean of humanities in The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, in which the Department of English is an academic unit.

ASU's BA in English was named a [top online degree by Forbes](#) in 2026, and the new concentration is embedded within that program. Online creative writing at ASU distinguishes itself with an interdisciplinary, flexible curriculum led by award-winning writers and teachers; access to funding for mentorship and professionalization; and an emphasis on community-building and literary citizenship.

The goal? To turn out graduates prepared with creativity, superior writing skills and adaptability to navigate any present or future path, professional or personal. Creative writing grads may enter or continue in the fields of writing, publishing, marketing, social media, teaching — or a career not yet invented. According to new [LinkedIn data](#), English graduates are among the most "resilient" in today's challenging, AI-driven job market.

"Our department's motto is, 'Start here; go anywhere,' but this lets us also say, 'Start from anywhere; we'll get you going,'" Powell said.

The curriculum

ASU's online creative writing program requires upper division credits in fiction, poetry and nonfiction, plus the General Studies Gold curriculum. Sample class topics will include "Developing as Writers: Vision and Strategy" and "Story Across Genre." Additional courses, like "Writing Science Fiction" and "Research-Based Fiction," are in development.

In addition to focused electives, program coursework centers on a set of three fiction workshops of increasing complexity. In the workshop model, students share drafts, respond to peers and revise writing using detailed feedback. It's an instructional framework well-suited for the online environment.

"ASU Online students have a unique opportunity to develop intimate artistic relationships within creative writing classes," said Assistant Teaching Professor [Katie Berta](#), who is helping develop curriculum for the program.

Berta, who holds master's and doctoral degrees in creative writing from ASU and Ohio University, respectively, is author of the poetry collection "[Retribution Forthcoming](#)" (2024) and a forthcoming, Iowa Poetry Prize-winning volume, "Collective" (2027). She teaches one of the program's online workshop courses and is creating and coordinating creation of other courses.

"In workshops, students build intellectual communities that will last well beyond the end of classes," Berta said. "There aren't many programs like ours — that maintain the relationships and rigor of traditional workshops in an online environment."

Senior Instructor [Kathleen McNamara](#), author of the forthcoming story collection "Gold in the Furnace" (2027), and Clinical Assistant Professor [Andrew Dana Hudson](#), author of the just-published speculative novel "[Absence](#)" (2026) are other new faculty members dedicated to helping build and teach in the program.

Funded mentorship and recognition

In addition to the innovative curriculum, another pillar of the ASU creative writing experience is a set of competitive writing fellowships and awards — for which online students are eligible. Contests are announced each spring.

Six ASU undergraduates who are about to enter their final year of study at ASU may apply for [Glendon F. Swarthout Fellowships](#). Fellows receive financial and mentoring support to apply to Master of Fine Arts in creative writing programs, including the payment of all test and admission fees, to help ensure that their voices find a national stage.

The related [Glendon and Kathryn Swarthout Awards in Writing](#) are among the most lucrative of U.S. university writing contests, with first-place awards of \$2,000. Undergraduate students in any program at ASU, at any location, may enter.

Both opportunities are funded by the [Swarthout family](#), a longtime philanthropic supporter of creative writing whose first gift to ASU was in 1962.

Other [Department of English scholarships, fellowships and awards](#) are open to undergraduate ASU Online students as well.

Community engagement and professionalization

A longtime distinguishing feature of ASU's creative writing program is its emphasis on preparing students as community-engaged, artist-citizens. The online iteration is no different.

Many current program events, like alumni readings, community discussions and book groups, are held in hybrid or online formats or recorded for later viewing. Additional opportunities just for online students are in the works.

Specific professionalization opportunities may be available through ASU's [Virginia G. Piper Center for Creative Writing](#), a community resource for storytelling and literature based at ASU.

Directed by ASU Regents Professor [Alberto Ríos](#), the Piper Center houses ASU's award-winning, international literary journal, Hayden's Ferry Review. The journal offers remote and in-person editorial internships for undergraduate students.

Another enrichment resource, the [Center for Imagination in the Borderlands](#), is directed by Pulitzer Prize-winning poet and ASU Professor [Natalie Diaz](#). It hosts writers and other artists for intensive workshops, classes and public events throughout the year.

The [Worldbuilding Initiative](#), situated in the [Humanities Institute](#), is yet another ASU hub for burgeoning storytellers. With fiction writer and ASU Professor [Matt Bell](#) at the helm, the initiative aims to nurture the imagination in pursuit of a better, more innovative and inclusive future. It brings science fiction writers and thinkers to ASU's campus for virtual and in-person visits.

"We are incredibly excited to be offering this opportunity to students," said Teaching Professor [Kathleen Hicks](#), director of the Department of English's online programs. "Very few creative writing programs are available fully online. This program will make creative writing accessible to students who cannot study in a traditional program on a physical campus.

"Students are able to join our vibrant ASU creative writing community from wherever they are, with access to some of the most talented faculty in the country."

Career futures for creative writers

Creative writing students have access to the Department of English's robust Internships and Career Futures program, where 92% of students who completed an internship said it led directly to a job (2024–25 numbers).

Recognized for its effectiveness by [U.S. News and World Report](#), the program boasts over 300 internship partners across industry, government and nonprofit organizations. Both in-person and remote opportunities are offered.

Funding is available through the [Department of English's unpaid internship scholarships](#), [Research Internship Awards](#) and [High Impact Internship Awards](#).

This story originally appeared on [ASU News](#).

Main image



Assistant Teaching Professor Katie Berta chats with a creative writing student in ASU's Ross-Blakley Hall. Photo by Jill Richards/ASU

Text image(s)



Sally Ball (center right), ASU professor of English in creative writing, speaks with students in her office. Photo by Bruce Racine/ASU



Emerson (Sheyla) Amaya, a '26 English (creative writing) graduate, won Swarthout Awards in two categories and was the featured speaker at the Department of English's Graduate and Awards Reception last May. Photo by Ashley Sorensen/ASU



The Department of English at ASU offers many of its events virtually or in hybrid format. Here, ASU Professor Mitchell Jackson, a Pulitzer Prize winner, discusses his memoir at an ASU Book Group event with both an in-person and online audience. Photo by Chris Goulet/ASU News