

The William Paterson University of New Jersey
College of Humanities & Social Sciences
Department of English
Master of Fine Arts in Creative & Professional Writing

Craft Essay Guidelines

The MFA Craft Essay is a dozen-page analysis that discusses the forms and themes of selected published work in relation to your own writing. The essay, which is started in ENG 7900 MFA Thesis Seminar and finished in ENG 7950 MFA Thesis Project, should demonstrate a strong working knowledge of textual issues and authors in your genre as you situate your work within the larger literary landscape of contemporary publishing.

1) With your advisor, choose 3-5 exemplary works that have inspired your thesis; most of the works selected should be contemporary. Reflecting on these literary influences, explain what draws you to the work selected. [1-2 pages]

2) Through close readings of specific passages, analyze how the writing operates stylistically and/or thematically. In treating the various passages, you might consider the following.

- a) What literary or rhetorical techniques are employed?
- b) How is emotion conveyed?
- c) How is meaning made to resonate?

[4-6 pages]

3) Discuss what you learned about writing through your reading of the selected authors. Specifically, which of their writing techniques have you practiced in order to improve your own writing? [3-4 pages]

4) Describe your own thesis project as you might to a potential publisher. Touch on its genre, content, style and themes. How does your work compare/contrast to similar recently published work in your genre? Be sure to explain what you think distinguishes your work from others' work. [1-2 pages]