



LITERARY ARTS

FIND YOUR STORY HERE

Student Handbook

Writing Classes

2026-2027



Welcome to Literary Arts!

Whether you are a new or returning student, we hope you will find this handbook useful. It includes information about class policies and expectations, and tips to help you get the most out of your class experience.

We offer classes in a variety of genres, including fiction, memoir and poetry. Classes vary in length from one day to 9 months. Our classes meet online on Zoom or in person at Literary Arts.

Many of our writing classes are taught by Oregon Book Awards authors and fellowship recipients; all our classes are taught by experienced teachers.

We strive to build a supportive community of writers that provides opportunities for students from a wide range of backgrounds and interests to participate in an enriching experience. We offer classes that allow students to achieve short-term and long-term goals and deepen their writing practice.

We value experimentation, making mistakes, and learning from others as part of the artistic process.



The Literary Arts Café and Bookstore

In 2021, Literary Arts purchased an historic building at 716 SE Grand Ave. in Portland, becoming the new, permanent headquarters for the organization. The building, named The Susan Hammer Center, includes a bookstore, classroom and event space, staff offices, and café space. The Literary Arts

Bookstore opened in December 2024, and the Literary Arts Café opened in June 2025. If you've taken a class in the new space since we opened in December 2024, congratulations you are a member of the inaugural class of writing students at Literary Arts!

There are spaces on the ground floor and mezzanine of the café and bookstore for writers to bring their laptops or notebooks and write, before or after a class, or any time!

More About Literary Arts

Literary Arts is a statewide, nonprofit arts organization. Our mission is to engage readers, support writers, and inspire the next generation with great literature. The programs of Literary Arts are the Programs for Writers, Delve Readers' Seminars, Portland Arts & Lectures, the Portland Book Festival, and Youth Programs.

Mission: Our mission is to engage readers, support writers, and inspire the next generation with great literature.

Vision: Reading and writing builds engaged, inclusive, and strong communities. Literary Arts is a national leader in empowering people to tell their stories, and in placing all forms of literature at the center of civic life.

Values:

Community: We create space for the exchange and amplification of diverse stories and ideas.

Accessibility: We strive to identify and remove barriers in our work.

Adaptability: We respond to the shifting needs of our community.

Art: We uplift the arts as central to the fabric of a healthy civic society.

Literary Arts Anti-Harassment Policy

Literary Arts has a zero-tolerance policy for harassment of any kind, including but not limited to: race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, gender presentation, sexual orientation, age, body size, disability, appearance, religion, citizenship, pregnancy, marital or familial status, military or veteran status. Harassment includes but is not limited to: stalking, verbal or physical intimidation, offensive verbal or written comments including conversations online, physical assault and/or battery, harassing or non-consensual photography or recording, bathroom policing, inappropriate physical contact, unwelcome physical attention.

Literary Arts recognizes that reading and writing, by their nature, include exposure to controversial and challenging ideas. Therefore, harassment does not include respectful disagreement or critique in good faith.

This policy extends to employees, vendors, independent contractors, event attendees, presenters and speakers, and seminar workshop or class participants. This policy covers all events at Literary Arts as well as events sponsored by or produced by Literary Arts in third-party venues. This policy also extends to conversations online.

Literary Arts reserves the right to revoke, without refund, tickets of any event attendee or participant not in compliance with this policy; the right to remove from an event, seminar, workshop or class any attendee or participant not in compliance with this policy; the right to delete offensive comments from online, and the right to cancel a contract with a vendor or contractor that is not in compliance with this policy.

Any employee, vendor, independent contractor or event attendee who believes they have witnessed or been subjected to prohibited harassment or discrimination should report it immediately to a Literary Arts staff member, the Executive Director of Literary Arts and/or member of the Literary Arts Board.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Literary Arts recognizes that a public commitment to equity is crucial to both our own growth and that of the Portland arts and culture ecosystem. It is our hope that by addressing racial inequity in our community, we will create a space in which readers, writers, and youth of all identities feel welcome.

We commit ourselves programmatically to:

Define our mission broadly to include all forms of literature and storytelling. Support more writers of color and highlight their stories.

Build a diverse, intergenerational audience for literature. Create equitable access to our programs.

We commit ourselves administratively to:

Create a staff, board, and volunteer base reflective of our community.

Apply the best practices and tools to ensure that the organizational systems are equitable.

In all of the above, we strive to work with humility and in collaboration with our community to be adaptable and responsive, and to better accomplish these important goals.

Literary Arts Community Agreements for Classes and Meetings

- Practice active listening and respectful curiosity
- Give space for grace and assume positive intent
- Notice the role of power in shaping culture
- Uphold what's confidential with care & support
- Allow space for multiple truths and ways of being, feeling, thinking, and sounding

Registering for a Class or Seminar

Adult writing classes and seminars at Literary Arts are for people 18 years of age and older.

Our classes often sell out quickly. We recommend registering as soon as possible. We process all registrations on a first-come, first-served basis. We are not able to reserve a spot for you without payment.

The easiest and fastest way to register is online, at www.literary-arts.org.

Our current offerings are listed at <https://literary-arts.org/events/category/writing-classes/>. You can also call us at 503-227-2583; the box office line is staffed on this phone line during the following hours: Monday-Thursday from Noon-4:00 p.m.

Once a workshop is full, it is listed as "SOLD OUT" on our website. You can email us at writers@literary-arts.org and ask to be emailed if a spot opens up on the website. These spots are available on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Accessibility

Our building is an accessible space and fully ADA-compliant. If you have access needs we can assist with, please contact us in advance of the first class meeting.

In-Person Classes at 716 SE Grand

Plan your transit/parking ahead of time—Sometimes a difficult commute is outside of your control, but to set yourself up for success in the way of arriving on time for class, consider arriving early (and hanging out in our bookstore and café), planning your route ahead of time, or even carpooling with fellow classmates if you feel comfortable doing so.

Online Classes

Though we work hard to ensure a smooth online learning experience, dealing with technology means that inevitable glitches or issues might occasionally happen anyway. We recommend you:

Check your email regularly for any class details or updates

Look in your spam folder for the Zoom link email if you don't see it in your main inbox

Test the strength of your internet connection

Check that you have enough laptop battery or easy access to an outlet

Access Tuition

Our Access Program offers writing class registrations at a reduced rate. The access program covers 75% of the class tuition. Most writing classes have at least one access spot available. Priority is given to students who have not taken classes or seminars with us before, and students who identify as BIPOC. Access spots are filled no later than 7 days before a class begins. Access tuition cannot be applied retroactively if you have already registered at the full tuition price. There is a link on every class page to the online application for access tuition. Applicants will receive a response 1-2 weeks before the class begins.

Class Liaisons

Every in-person class and seminar at Literary Arts has one liaison position. Liaisons perform specific duties for each class meeting. If you are a liaison for a class or seminar, the full amount of your tuition is covered by Literary Arts. There is a link on every class page to the online liaison application. All liaisons must complete a 30-minute training session at Literary Arts before the first class session and commit to attending every class meeting.

Liaisons are the first to arrive and last to leave. They arrive at least 15 minutes before the class or seminar start time each week and greet the other participants. After each class, they return the meeting space to the pre-class levels of cleanliness and order. The teacher might also have other duties that they assign.

Liaison applicants will receive an update about the status of their application approximately 1-2 weeks before the class begins, depending on the number of applicants. Tuition can't be waived retroactively if you are approved for a liaison spot after registering for a class.

Class Cancellation Policy

If Literary Arts cancels a class, participants will receive a full refund.

For students who need to cancel registration for a class before it begins, the following refund schedule applies:

If you cancel at least 5 business days or more before a class begins, you will receive a credit minus 15% of the tuition. Or you can request a refund minus 25% of the tuition.

If you cancel 4 business days until 24 hours or less before a class begins, you will receive a credit minus 20%. No refunds are given 4 business days or less before a class begins.

24 hours or less before a class begins, no refund or credits will be given.

Refunds and recordings for missed classes

Literary Arts cannot provide refunds, transfers, or makeup sessions for individual classes and seminar sessions that students miss. Literary Arts does not record Zoom classes for students who are absent.



Email Etiquette

Email expectations will vary from class to class; your instructor will let you know their expectations. Here are some tips to consider:

- Be mindful about CC'ing the whole class or CC'ing the instructor. If you have a specific question or comment for a classmate, email them on a new thread—not the class's weekly email chain. You don't need to include the instructor on those direct emails unless you feel their input is needed.
- Including your name and the name of the class in your subject line is helpful.
- If you have a question for the instructor that only pertains to you and your work, you most likely don't need to CC the whole class.
- If you have a question or comment that can't be covered in 1-2 short paragraphs, consider asking it face to face, either in person or a Zoom meeting.
- Although the initial email sent to your class will BCC everyone's email, eventually the instructor will need to start CC'ing everyone so that you can communicate with each other. If you'd rather not have your email shared with the class, please create a new free dedicated email account (like Gmail or yahoo), separate from your personal email, that you can share with the class.
- Teachers sometimes have full-time jobs and multiple commitments. It can sometimes take up to 2 days for an instructor to respond to your email.

Tips for a Successful Writing Class Experience

Reflect and set intentions—Before your class even starts, think about what you'd like to learn from the experience and consider writing down 1-3 goals for yourself. Even if these intentions are never shared with anyone else—and even if they change by the end of the class—they can still help you focus your mind-set and stay motivated throughout the class sessions.

Attend class – Your presence is expected each week: everyone's writing benefits from engagement from the whole class. Teachers can often update you on missed activities and materials but are not required to meet with you outside of class to explain everything you missed. We do not recommend missing more than one session of a 6-week class, or more than two sessions of longer multi-weeks. Literary Arts classes are not recorded under any circumstances, and we do not offer hybrid class models for in-person classes.

Learn about your teacher—All Literary Arts teachers have a short biography listed on their writing class page and on the teacher roster on our website. We also occasionally publish interviews with new teachers on the Literary Arts blog. Reading these in advance can help set your expectations for the class by providing useful context about your teacher, including their publications, what genre of writing they specialize in, and their teaching style.

Be curious, kind, and open-minded to others—While it's the responsibility of the writing teacher to ensure a safe and inclusive environment to the best of their abilities, you can do your part by bringing a positive attitude to the classroom and being respectful to your classmates.

Communicate if you need support—If you're struggling with something in class or would like to read additional resources on a particular topic, check in with your teacher to see if they can assist. If something comes up that you feel is best addressed by someone other than your teacher, you can get in touch with Director of Programs for Writers Susan Moore (susan@literary-arts.org) or Programs for Writers Associate Manager Alexa Winik (alexa@literary-arts.org).

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Plan your transit/parking ahead of time—sometimes a difficult commute is outside of your control, but to set yourself up for success in the way of arriving on time for class, consider arriving early (and hanging out in our bookstore and café), planning your route ahead of time, or even carpooling with fellow classmates if you feel comfortable doing so.

The writing workshop: getting feedback from teacher and peers

Broadly speaking, a workshop in a class is an opportunity for you to give and receive feedback from the other students in a class. Not every class has a workshop component; some writing classes are devoted to writing to prompts or other material, and lecture. Usually, the class description on the website will indicate if there's a workshop component. If you have expectations about the amount and type of feedback your teacher will provide, you're encouraged to share that expectation to ensure your teacher agrees and that the class is right for you.

Workshopping another writer's work: (advice collected from Literary Arts' teachers)

Try to approach another writer's draft with the best of intentions. Instead of pushing another's draft towards your own writing style, try to understand where the draft wants to go on its own terms (or using the intentions the draft's writer has provided).

Respectful language and good faith engagement are vital to a successful workshop. Try to avoid using language that can come across as unnecessarily directive or absolute. For instance, phrases that start with "You must" or "Don't" can be perceived as commanding or judgmental, which might make writers feel defensive or discouraged.

The aim of workshopping is not to show off how smart we are but about to understand another writer's interests, drives, and questions—and, in the best-case scenarios, help that writer understand themselves a little bit better in the process.

Honor Individual Voices and exercise cultural sensitivity. Everyone comes from different backgrounds, and that includes their linguistic choices and dialects. In a writing workshop, it's essential to recognize that different ways of speaking and writing are valid. Any suggestions made should be framed in a way that allows the writer to decide whether they want to incorporate changes, without feeling like their identity or background is being corrected.

Often, the most helpful feedback you can give someone else comes in the form of questions, rather than solutions, that help us think more deeply or in new directions. i.e. How can I as an early reader help the writer more clearly uncover and articulate their aims for the piece? Vs. "This is what I think you should do."

For writers offering feedback to their peers, one teacher says, my encouragement is to approach it in terms of good intention and service: how can we as early readers help the writer more clearly uncover and articulate their aims for the piece rather than art direct or impose our preferences (or prejudices) onto their work? Helpful feedback is not about showing off how smart we are but about understanding another artist's interests, drives,

and questions. The most helpful feedback often comes in the form of questions rather than solutions ("This is what you should do") that help us think more deeply or in new directions.

Remember that the process of engaging with and reading other's work is just as important as writing your own. It will make you a better writer and a better literary community member.

Receiving feedback in a workshop . . .

Every workshop setting is a little bit different. Your best approach, as always, is to remain flexible and open to the structure and expectations put forth by your teacher and fellow classmates, knowing that there is no one right way to run a workshop.

Sharing your writing, whether read aloud or passed around before class starts, can be a vulnerable experience, and that's ok! It's very normal to feel nervous, especially if it's your writing being workshopped. Even so, try not to spend valuable time in the workshop by apologizing for your writing or over-explaining your work before sharing it with others. Alternatively, try to see each workshop as a unique opportunity to practice self-belief, trust, and acceptance towards your writing in a safe and supportive environment.

Be mindful of how much time you take to introduce or talk about your own work. There is only so much time in each session and being mindful about how that time is used is important for students and teachers alike.

Most writing teachers will try to facilitate active engagement between you (the writer) and those giving feedback, encouraging you to guide the process without controlling it. Feel free to ask specific questions so that the readers focus their comments on where you most need help, which helps you evaluate your work in the process as well. i.e. Asking "is it good?" or "I'd love to hear what you think" is probably not going to yield the most helpful responses.

Remember, not all feedback is equal and writing, like any art form, is always subjective to a degree; give yourself permission to not incorporate every single comment from every reader (you can acknowledge it with a thank you and move on). Resistance to well-intentioned feedback may reveal something important about your process that could help you. This tension between taking feedback on board and knowing when to let something go can itself help you develop your voice as a writer.

Ideally, feedback in a workshop is a dialogue and an exchange, not an experience in which the writer is silenced at the whims of a harsh judge and jury. Feel free to gently push back, ask questions of your readers, and get excited about fresh possibilities in your work.



Student feedback

Student evaluations are distributed electronically at the end of every class. These evaluations are anonymous and shared with the instructor.

If you have feedback or concerns about a class, or questions about which class is right for you, please contact us at writers@literary-arts.org. We'd love to hear from you!

“Writers have to get used to launching something beautiful and watching it crash and burn. They also have to learn when to let go control, when the work takes off on its own and flies, farther than they ever planned or imagined, to places they didn’t know they knew.” - Ursula K. Le Guin