



# Muse Teaching Artist Handbook 2024

**The Muse Writers Center**  
2200 Colonial Ave. Suite #3  
Norfolk, VA 23517  
757-818-9880  
[the-muse.org](http://the-muse.org)

## **Our Mission:**

The Muse Writers Center works to ensure the transformative power of the literary arts is accessible to all writers and readers.

## **Our Vision:**

The Muse Writers Center is the core of a vibrant literary arts movement in Coastal Virginia, with an extensive nationwide and global reach.

## **Our Values:**

- We are a sanctuary for writers
- We are a diverse, inclusive, and equitable community.
- We are committed to growth and open to change.
- We believe the literary arts are the bedrock of all human expression.
- We believe the transformative power of writing must be accessible to all.
- We are professional and passionate, dedicated to the craft of creative writing and instruction.

## **What it Means to be a Muse Teaching Artist**

We believe the literary arts changes the world for the better every day and our job is to ensure that this continues in abundance. None of that is possible without you—the writers, the artists, the craftspeople, the teachers. The literary arts would not exist without the artists. Without you, there would be no reason for The Muse.

So, please, remember the reasons all of you are here, not just at The Muse, but on this earth—to create. And teaching is creating. What you give to the students you will work with at The Muse may prove to be some of the most vital work you will ever do as an artist. Take pride in this position. Be accountable for the responsibility and trust we are bestowing upon you. What you do every day with us can change the world. Remember that as you do

what we know you can do... what you were put here to do.

## **Teaching Creative Writing at The Muse**

We provide creative writing craft education and strive to help our students develop their individual voices—not enforce our own voices upon them. Within reason, we allow writers to explore any subject or employ any style appropriate for their genre. We want to create warm, supportive environments and encourage our students to become the best writers they can be.

*Welcome to The Muse Writers Center! Thank you for sharing your talent, skills, knowledge and creativity with our community.*

## **Class Types**

We teach creative writing classes, workshops and seminars:

**Classes:** A class is typically more structured, for our teaching artists to impart knowledge and skills to a group of students over an extended period, typically spanning weeks or months. The purpose of a class is to provide a comprehensive understanding of creative writing craft in a broader spectrum and/or a more specific element of craft and genre. Classes may involve a mix of lectures, reading and writing assignments, and guided workshops.

**Workshops:** A workshop is a highly interactive and hands-on learning experience for intermediate, advanced, and professional writers. Our workshops are designed to help writers develop their writing skills through feedback from fellow writers and experienced educators. Workshops need active participation; all participants are expected to engage actively and apply what they learn during the session.

**Seminar:** A seminar is a shorter, focused educational event usually delivered in one meeting. Seminars encourage active participation from attendees. Although some seminars are very informative, we also encourage leaving room for student participation, including asking questions, engaging in discussions, and sometimes presenting their own ideas or insights.

## **Class Length**

- All classes, workshops, and seminars meet for 2.5 hours. (A 10-15 minute break is encouraged.)
- Seminars are typically one meeting, but in some cases can be two meetings held on the same day or different days.
- Classes and Workshops have 4 or 6 meetings. Meeting once a week or once every other week.

## **Class Size**

- Seminars are capped at 12 students (3 minimum).

- Classes and Workshops are capped at 8 students (4 minimum).

## Online, In Person, or Hybrid

We deliver our classes, workshops, and seminars in three ways!

- **Online** meetings are held over zoom. The students and teaching artist attend all meetings virtually.
- **In Person** meetings happen at The Muse in an assigned classroom. All students and teaching artists must be at the Muse to attend.
- **Hybrid** meetings are available in three classrooms at the Muse. Students can attend meetings online or in person at the Muse. The teacher must be at The Muse for every meeting.

## Class Times

Most classes and workshops meet during the week from 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m. or 7-9:30 p.m. (Eastern Time)

Seminars and some classes and workshops meet on Saturdays from 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m. and 1-3:30 p.m. or Sundays from 1-3:30 p.m. (Eastern Time)

## About The Muse Writers Center

**Open Hours:** Currently The Muse's literary center is open to the public 10 a.m.-7 p.m. on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday and 10 a.m.-4 p.m. on Saturdays.

**Parking:** Everyone is welcome to park in the Ghent Market Shops parking lot. There is additional parking in the rear. Street parking is also available.

**Library:** All levels of a Muse membership come with library check out privileges, but books may only be checked out during open hours. If you or your students use books from our library during class, please return them to the exact space you found them or place them on the library return cart located next to the front reception desk.

**Rest Rooms:** Two unisex, ADA-compliant restrooms are at the rear of the center. Extra paper towels and toilet paper are on the shelf in the rear foyer.

**Kitchen:** A small kitchen is at the rear of the center. Sodas and coffee (Keurig) are available in the kitchen. They are free, but we encourage a 75-cent donation per drink. Please, clean up after yourself and don't leave any food or drink in the refrigerator overnight.

**Auditorium:** The auditorium is used for readings and special events. Classes may also utilize the space. If a class wants to use the auditorium, please contact the Program Director in advance.

**Classrooms:** We have four classrooms at The Muse. Classrooms 1-3 are hybrid classrooms and Classroom #4 is for in person only classes, generally devoted to youth classes. Complete Hybrid instructions for Hybrid use are available on our teacher links page. The televisions in the classrooms are all google Chromecast compatible. Please ensure you are logged in to the staff Wi-Fi in order to connect. Staff Wi-Fi name and ID available on the staff link page.

**Garbage/Recycling:** There are no trash cans in classrooms, so please put all trash in one of trash bins in the center. (Do not move trash bins to your room). There is a small

trash bin in the front foyer, one in the auditorium, and two large trash bins in the back foyer and kitchen. There is also a blue trash can in the back foyer for recycling. If a trash bin is full, you can help everyone by emptying it. The dumpster is outside, but you can also leave the bag by the back door. Replacement bags are in the back foyer with all the cleaning and other center supplies.

**Center Supplies:** Please help us out by replenishing supplies. Paper towels and toilet paper are on the shelf in the rear foyer; cups, sodas, and coffee K-pods are in the cabinets in the kitchen. Please let us know if any supplies are needed.

**Teacher Supplies:** There is a teacher supply closet in Room 5 to the left, across from the copy machine. You may use any of the supplies available for your class but please return all supplies when finished.

**Copy Machine:** There is a copy machine in Room 5. Please feel free to make any copies you need for your classes (free of charge). Students are welcome to use the copier as well (10 cents/copy). To make hard copies of your digital work, files must be in pdf form on a thumb drive.

**Alcohol:** Drinking alcohol is not permitted at the Muse during official Muse classes.

**Smoking:** There is no smoking or vaping inside the Muse (of any kind). Please smoke outside, at least 20 feet from the entrance or exit.

## Arriving at and Leaving the Muse

**Access:** Teachers will receive a door code to the center on the first day of classes. Please memorize your door code or write it down in a secure place.

**Locking/Unlocking:** If you are the first to arrive, please unlock the door with your code. If you are the last to leave, please lock the door with your code. Please check to **make sure both the front and back doors are locked** and the deadbolt on both is all the way extended. Once all your classmates have arrived, someone needs to lock the front door (unless it's during the Center's Open Hours).

**Meet Other Teachers:** When you come to teach, please say Hi to the other teachers there and figure out who is going to be locking the doors.

**Late Students/Locking the Door/Doorbell:** Staff will lock the doors when they leave for the night which will usually be after the start of class. There is a sign on the front door asking students to ring the doorbell if the door is locked. The front and rear doors have separate doorbells.

**Lights:** There are three main switches at The Muse. As you walk in the front, the first light switch controls one light in the library and all the hall lights go back to the rear foyer. The second switch turns on the front of the library. The switch on the back wall of the library (under the mirror) controls the back of the library (and powers the first light switch in Classroom #2). If you open the building, please turn on these three switches. If you are the last to leave, please turn off all three. Please also make sure the kitchen, rest room, writers' room, and classroom lights are also turned off.

**Re-Arranging:** If you move tables or chairs, please return all furniture to its original placement, remove any trash, and return all supplies to the supply closet.

**Temperature:** Feel free to adjust the thermostat when you arrive. Just be sure to set the thermostat back to the original temperature when you leave.

**Classroom Doors:** All classroom doors that feature a window should be left open after you use the room. This will ensure better air flow when the room is not in use.

## Teacher Responsibilities

### The Basics

**Your Behavior:** Please conduct yourselves professionally when dealing with students, in classes, and at events. Illegal, harassing, or discriminatory behavior by anyone during class meetings or at events will not be tolerated.

**Promptness:** Be at least 10-15 minutes early to class.

**Communication:** Email is the most dependable way to contact your students and The Muse. Make sure The Muse and your students have your best email that you check regularly. The Muse can provide an email address for you. Contact Shawn if you are interested.

**Class Publicity:** We expect that all our teachers do what they can to promote their classes—distributing flyers, sending out e-mails, posting on Facebook and Twitter, mentioning us in your bio on other websites, and using any other relevant contacts help to fill your classes and those of your colleagues. You can post about your class on our Writers Reservoir on Facebook as well ([www.facebook.com/groups/WritersReservoir](http://www.facebook.com/groups/WritersReservoir)).

**Respect the Space:** Clean up after yourself and remind your students to do the same.

### Before Class

**[the-muse.org](http://the-muse.org):** As a muse teaching artist, you will have a the-muse.org teacher account. Please visit the website and ensure you have correct password information so that you have access throughout the session.

**Teacher Links Page:** The teacher links page (<https://the-muse.org/teacher-links/>) will be your hub page as a Muse Teaching Artist; here you will find:

- Links to all forms (including end of meeting and rescheduling form).
- Links to your class page
- Links to class roster and past rosters
- Profile Tab (where you update your photo, bio, etc.)
- Information and Procedure Tab All zoom, hybrid, website, communication, etc. Procedures and updates will be available under this tab.

**Class Roster:** You will be notified by email every time a student registers for your class. Your current roster details can be found on the from page of the teacher's link page.

**Class Roster Size Requirements:** All multi-week classes and workshops require at least **four** (4) students to run; seminars require **three** (3) students. You will be contacted by Shawn the Thursday of the week before the start of your class to discuss

cancellation or a deadline for cancellation.

**If your class meets the roster size requirements:**

- email your student, no later than ONE WEEK before the beginning of class. Please include a zoom link, meeting time, and room number if in person.
- BCC all your students before the first meeting. Inform all your students that their emails WILL be shared with the class's students before you do it.
- All classes, workshops, and seminars must have some sort of **syllabus**. This can be as simple or detailed as you want and can be delivered as a hard copy in class or digitally through email (Examples of syllabi will be available).

**During Class**

All classes should maintain a positive working environment. It's vital that the teacher set the tone. If you sense that a critique is becoming counter-productive, redirect the conversation.

**Student Participation:** Students are a vital part of the class. Attendance and class participation is critical, as students will be helping each other to develop their craft.

**Student Behavior:** Appropriate standards of behavior should be respected during all class sessions, including not interrupting other classes and being respectful of other students and teachers. If you find a student difficult in terms of behavior, please speak to them privately and tell Shawn about the problem. If you continue to have a problem, students may be subject to removal from a class with no reimbursement of tuition, but this should be done in coordination with Shawn. Take no punitive action before speaking to Shawn.

**Workshopping:** Please provide students with detailed workshop guidelines that include instructions on formatting and submission. It is important that all our students understand the professional standards of the writing industry. If you are teaching an intermediate, advanced or professional workshop, always provide a quick refresher of your workshop standards and critique etiquette.

**A Safe Environment:** It's important to create the classroom to be a safe place for expression. Occasionally students are dealing with subject matter that may be troubling to other students. If so, encourage students to try to be open, and encourage those submitting to let others know if there may be "trigger-warning" content.

**After Class**

**Leaving the Classroom:** You should always be the last person to leave the classroom. Make sure that that the room is reset, all trash is removed, and you are signed out of hybrid meetings. Turn off the light before you leave.

**End of Meeting From (INVOICE):** Complete your end of meeting form as soon as possible. This is your invoice. You will not be paid until you do this: <https://the-muse.org/teacher-end-of-class-form/>

**Student Survey:** At the end of the last class, we would love for you to email all your students the link for the student survey and encourage them to send it out: Here is the link: <https://the-muse.org/the-muse-student-survey-page/>

**Grow the Community:** Support Muse events, and encourage your students to

support them, too. Come to the readings, the Writers Happy Hours on Wednesday evenings, the 1st Friday Writers Coffee Breaks, our summer and winter parties, and other special events and readings. Our events calendar is on our website: <https://themuse.org/events/month>

## **Rescheduling Meetings**

We understand that things happen. If you must cancel a class for any reason, you can reschedule the meeting date, but it must be done the correct way.

### **Planned rescheduling—more than 48 hours (about 2 days) before class:**

1. Inform your students of the conflict and offer three potential make up dates that will work for all students (Same day and time are preferred, but there is flexibility there).
2. Complete the change of meeting date form as soon as you have your three alternate date choices.
3. Wait for email confirmation and instructions which will be delivered within 48 hours (about 2 days).

### **Sickness/Sudden rescheduling—48 hours (about 2 days) or less prior to class:**

1. Email or call students immediately and inform them of the situation. MUST confirm contact with each student.
2. Email Shawn and inform him of the situation and ensure that your students have been contacted.
3. Offer three potential make up dates that will work for all students.
4. Complete the change of meeting date form as soon as you have your three alternate date choices.
5. Wait for email confirmation and instructions which will be delivered within 48 hours (about 2 days) of form completion.

### **Emergency cancelation and rescheduling—less than 2 hours before class:**

1. ASAP, call the Muse Center and let them know the situation.
2. ASAP, email Shawn and inform him of the situation.
3. ASAP, contact students and let them know of the situation and apologize.
4. After emergency is resolved, contact students and offer three potential make up dates that will work for all students.
5. Complete the change of meeting date form as soon as you have your three alternate date choices.
6. Wait for email confirmation and instructions which will be delivered within 48 hours (about 2 days) of form completion.

## **Economics of Teaching**

Currently, we pay \$150 per 2.5-hour teaching meeting.

- Classes and Workshops are limited to 8 students and Seminar are limited to 12.
- All payments will be made via direct deposit. You will have access to all your pay stubs and direct deposit information after your electronic onboarding.
- Pay day is every 2 weeks. Depending on your bank, your payment will be direct deposit will be available Fridays or Mondays.

**Example:** End of meeting forms completed on Monday, Jan. 8 and Monday, Jan. 15. Your pay day for direct deposit on Friday, Jan. 19 will be \$300.

**Taxes:** As part of your onboarding, you will complete a W-9 form. For tax purposes, you are a self-employed independent contractor with The Muse Writers Center. This is the same as any other free-lance writing job. You may want to speak with the kind woman who works with many Muse teachers: Gay Roberson at GHR Tax Service (810 Kempsville Rd. Suite #3, Virginia Beach, 757-962-9755)—you should be filing self-employed tax forms, and you'd be amazed at all the things (rent, utilities, travel, more) you can write off.

**Discount for Classes:** Muse teachers are welcome to take other Muse classes.

- Current teachers, as well as their children, parents, and significant others, will receive a 30% discount on classes on the current schedule.
- Any membership-related discounts available to you will still apply.
- You must register for the class on the website and apply the teacher discount code during the checkout process. The code is given out to teachers when the class schedule is announced.
- Tuition assistance and payment plans are also always available

## **Equal Employment Opportunity Policy**

The Muse Writers Center (“The Muse”) is an equal opportunity employer. It is our policy to prohibit unlawful discrimination against any employee or applicant for employment based on race, color, religion, sex, gender identity, age, national origin, disability, veteran status, marital status, sexual orientation or any other factor prohibited by law. The Muse is dedicated to both the letter and spirit of the equal employment opportunity laws. Specifically, we are committed to recruiting, hiring, training and promoting qualified persons to all job titles without unlawful discrimination and to administering all personnel actions, and social learning and recreational programs, without unlawful discrimination. All participants, applicants, independent contractors and employees will be evaluated based on their ability, experience, competence, qualifications, references, and performance of their positions.

## **No Harassment Policy**

The Muse Writers Center strives to provide a professional and congenial work and learning environment and will take all necessary steps to ensure that the environment remains pleasant for all. An integral part of this type of environment is for all participants to treat each other with courtesy, consideration and professionalism.

The Muse prohibits harassment on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, gender identity, age, national origin, disability, veteran status, marital status, sexual orientation or any other factor prohibited by law. The Muse will not tolerate harassment of any employee, student, teacher, intern, event attendee, or volunteer by any other employee, supervisor, vendor, student, teacher, intern, event attendee, or participant. Harassment can occur, and is prohibited, both in the workplace and off the premises, including at social activities conducted or sponsored by The Muse or at events where The Muse is participating.

All employees, teachers, students, interns, event attendees, and volunteers of The Muse must comply with this policy. Violations of the policy will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of the relationship with the Muse.

## **Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment is defined as any unwelcome or unwanted sexual advance, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature from someone that creates discomfort and/or interferes with the job or learning experience.

Conduct constitutes sexual harassment when:

- Submission to such conduct is made, either explicitly or implicitly, a term or condition of an individual's employment, or participation as a teacher, student or volunteer, or other participant.
- Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment or participation decisions and/or retaliation affecting such individual, or
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment.

Though sexual harassment encompasses a wide range of conduct, some examples of specifically prohibited conduct include the following:

- Intentional physical conduct that is sexual in nature, such as touching, pinching, patting, grabbing, brushing against another person's body or poking another person's body;
- Unwelcome sexual advances, propositions or other sexual comments, sexually oriented gestures, noises, remarks, jokes, or comments about a person's sexuality or sexual experience;
- Preferential treatment or promises of preferential treatment to an employee, student, teacher, intern, participant, or volunteer for submitting to sexual conduct;
- Repeated unwelcome requests for a romantic relationship;
- Displaying pictures, posters, calendars, graffiti, objects, promotional materials, reading materials or other materials that are sexually suggestive, sexually demeaning or pornographic; and
- Retaliation for sexual harassment complaints.

## **Harassment Other than Sexual Harassment**

Harassment, other than sexual harassment, is verbal or physical conduct that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion because of race, color, religion, sex, gender identity, age, national origin, disability, veteran status, marital status, sexual orientation or any other factor prohibited by law when the conduct:

- Has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with work, participation, or academic performance;
- Creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work, academic environment, or event environment; and/or
- Otherwise adversely affects an individual's opportunities.

Such harassment may include, but is not limited to:

- Verbal abuse, ridicule, including slurs, epithets, and stereotyping, offensive jokes and comments;
- Threatening, intimidating, or hostile acts; and
- Displaying or distributing offensive materials, writings, graffiti, or pictures.

Criticism of a participant's work in a classroom setting is not generally considered

harassment in violation of this policy. Appropriate standards of behavior as described above are expected in all classroom settings. If any participant is uncomfortable with the content of a class discussion or material exchanged, please communicate these concerns to Shawn or the Executive Director.

## **Procedure for Complaints**

If anyone associated with the Muse believes that he or she has been subject to, or has observed, an incident of harassment or unwelcome attention as described above, he or she may address the situation directly and immediately to the harasser, if possible. If the inappropriate conduct does not cease, or if the employee, teacher, student, intern, participant, or volunteer is unable to address, or is uncomfortable with addressing, the alleged harasser directly, he or she should report the incident to the Executive Director, who will immediately notify the Human Resources Committee of the Board of Directors (the “HR Committee”), which will undertake an investigation into the incident. If the incident involves the Executive Director, the incident should instead be reported directly to a member of the HR Committee. The members of the HR Committee are identified on the website posting identifying the Board of Directors.

Report all concerns of harassment or inappropriate conduct as soon as possible. The Muse must be made aware of the situation so that it can conduct an immediate and impartial investigation and take appropriate action to remediate or prevent the prohibited conduct from continuing. Reports will be handled confidentially to the extent possible; however, the identity of the complainant is usually revealed to the respondent and witnesses. The Muse will take steps to ensure that the complainant is protected from retaliation during the period of investigation. All information pertaining to a complaint of harassment and the investigation into the same will be maintained in secure files separate from an employee’s personnel file and teacher/student files and will only be shared on a need-to-know basis.

The Muse prohibits retaliation against any individual bringing forth a good faith complaint, assisting in an investigation, opposing harassment or otherwise exercising rights protected by law. Any employee, teacher, student, intern, participant, or volunteer who violates The Muse’s policies against discrimination, harassment or retaliation will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including immediate discharge from employment or participation in the organization’s classes and programs. If you have any questions about this policy or its application, or about harassment of any form, you are encouraged to contact The Muse’s Executive Committee at [board@the-muse.org](mailto:board@the-muse.org).