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"Creative Writing […] has a place in the curriculum" Robert Wunsch at Black Mountain College, 1933-43

Lucy Burns

Accounts of the history of writing at Black Mountain College have focused primarily on the rectorship of Charles Olson and the writers associated with *The Black Mountain Review* (195457.[1] Donald Allen's influential grouping of the "Black Mountain School" in his *New American Poetry* (1960) anthology not only continues to ensure the exclusion of the writing of pre-Olson students and faculty from any Black Mountain 'canon,' but it falsely reimagines Olson as the origin of the college's literary and pedagogical experiments. In its various forms, creative writing was one of the few subjects that was taught throughout the life of the college. Broadening our understanding of how writing was taught at Black Mountain and the transformations of the discipline offers a vital insight into the pedagogy of the college as a whole.

This article examines the transition from John Andrew Rice's experimental writing seminar, an informal creative writing group in which participants were given complete freedom as to the form and content of their writing, to Robert Wunsch's creative writing course, a programme of study that introduced techniques and writing exercises from Wunsch's co-authored creative writing handbook, *Studies in Creative Writing* (1933). At the foundation of this transition was a changing sense of the function of creative writing at Black Mountain College: from a progressive educational tool designed to aid the individual development of the student, to a sense in which writing, "as an artistic and creative medium," could be taught alongside music, drama, and the fine arts as part of the college's arts-led curriculum.[2] From the founding of the college in 1933 to the early 1940s, creative writing pedagogy facilitated the discussion of the principles at the core of the Black Mountain's identity as a progressive and experimental institution: what was the role of experience, expression, and imagination in the process of education – and how could the college encourage the development of the individual while sustaining the needs of the wider college community?

Wunsch had been a colleague of Rice's at Rollins College in Florida, joining Black Mountain in 1935 as an instructor in English and Dramatics.[3] Prior to Rollins, Wunsch had led creative arts departments in high schools across North Carolina. As a committed progressive educator, leading workshops for the Progressive Education

Association across the United States, Wunsch was a key architect of the early pedagogy of Black Mountain College, later serving as rector following the resignation of Rice.

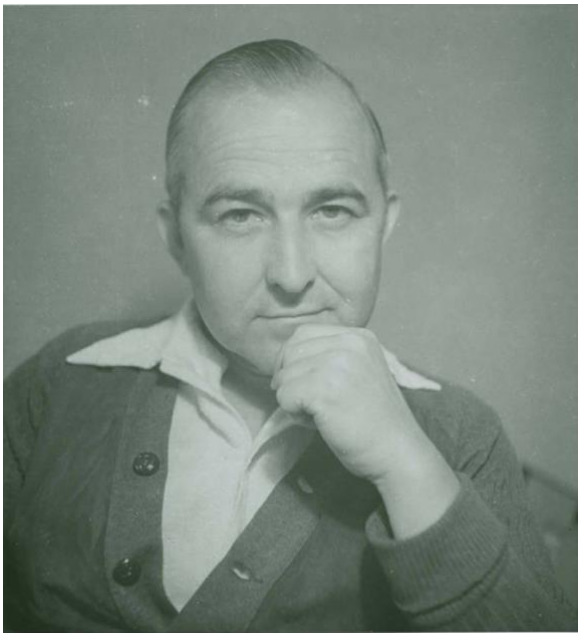


Figure 1. Robert Wunsch at Black Mountain College.
Courtesy of the Western Regional Archives, State Archives of North Carolina.

Understanding Wunsch's creative writing pedagogy offers a vital insight into the early aims and aspirations of the college as a whole. Initially developed by Rice as a progressive pedagogical experiment, with "no requirement as to who shall write, or what is being written," the writing seminar occupied a complex position on the college's scale from the "art experience" of the individual to the "self-expression" of the individualist.[4] Advertised to prospective students and faculty in the first Black Mountain College catalogue, in many ways creative writing represented "the model progressive subject," serving as a key example of the progressive foundations of Black Mountain's curriculum.[5] Where Rice's writing seminar represented the ideals of the Progressive Education movement – experiential, active learning for the transformation and development of the individual – Wunsch's creative writing pedagogy was informed by a complex combination of progressivism, the models of craftsmanship and professional writing employed in the creative writing manuals of the early twentieth-century, and the language of authentic personhood deployed as part of the college's experimental practice of 'group influence.'

Group influence was an experimental – and controversial – educational technique based on early theories of the psychological dynamics of the group. It was founded on the social psychology and group dynamics of Floyd Allport and Kurt Lewin, whose ideas were in circulation at the college through the presence of John French, a Black Mountain psychology graduate who returned to the college to teach in the early 1940s after studying with Lewin at the Harvard Psychological Clinic. Far from displacing the college's focus on the individual student and their education *as an individual*, group influence functioned as a means for the college to produce "individuals rather than individualists," as Rice explained.[6] Foregrounding the qualities of interdependence, responsibility, and accountability – so essential to life at Black Mountain – group influence utilised the dynamics of the group as a means to work against egoism and individualism.

Black Mountain during this early period was a growing, thriving institution. Founded with just thirteen students and twenty-four members of faculty, by the start of the Second World War the college had experienced a near threefold increase in student enrolment, the scale of which was comparable to national trends in the interwar period.[7] The following graph maps the college's changing student and faculty population[8]:

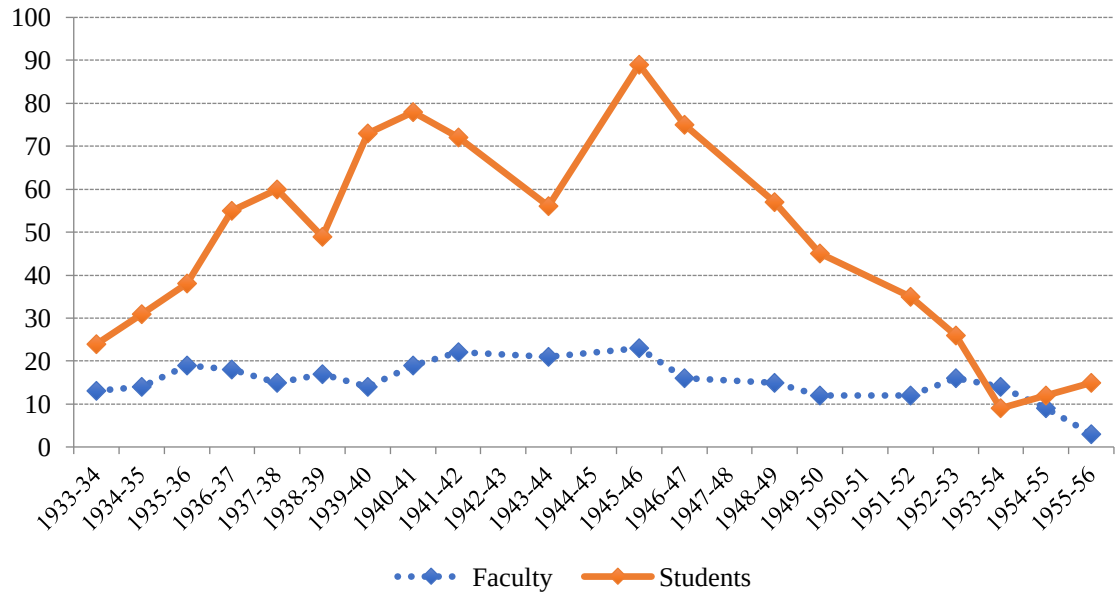


Figure 2. Black Mountain College, 1933-56

The gradual increase in student enrolment at Black Mountain, at a college that did not offer formal accreditation or transferable credits, not only attests to the extent of the expansion across the spectrum of American higher education, from new universities to small liberal arts colleges, but to the fact that Black Mountain's geographical isolation did not afford it an exemption or immunity from wider trends in higher education.

At the foundation of my interest in creative writing at Black Mountain are thus two readings of the college, the tension between which make the history of Black Mountain so fascinating: first, Black Mountain was a higher education institution, with timetables and tuition fees and examinations, subject to national trends in enrolment and pedagogy; second, Black Mountain was a radical experiment in democratic education and new forms of community, where faculty and students were subject to little constraint. Wunsch's creative writing pedagogy encapsulates this tension between these two versions of Black Mountain.

Early writing pedagogy at Black Mountain College can be seen to reflect the three "pedagogical imperatives" as distilled by Mark McGurl in his account of the rise and expansion of creative writing in post-war America: 'write what you know,' 'find your voice,' and 'show don't tell.'[9] Though it wouldn't be until the arrival of the poet M.C. Richards that the college would embrace the freedom and imagination to 'find your voice,' Wunsch routinely encouraged students to write from lived experience about the world around them, enshrining the values of "authenticity, memory, [and] observation" that McGurl associates with the call to 'write what you know.'[10] Wunsch's model of writerly craft and technique is grounded in 'show don't tell' pedagogy, which utilised the writing manuals of the early twentieth century to emphasise "tradition, revision, [and] concentration."[11] As McGurl writes:

> Supplementing the charismatic presence of the writer at the head of the table were the published stories that students were encouraged to study, frequently gathered in textbooks edited by the instructors themselves.[12]

Used to develop Black Mountain's creative writing curriculum, Wunsch's co-authored creative writing textbook is just one example of a series of manuals that "stabilized a set of literary values even as it put them in circulation throughout the U.S. educational system."[13]

Though we can read Wunsch's Black Mountain pedagogy in relation to in relation to these wider trends in creative writing, the first creative writing course represents a unique and complex combination of the ideas that were in circulation at Black Mountain in the first decade: first, Progressive Education's model of active, experiential learning for the development of the individual; second, the authentic expression of individuality offered by the practice of group influence; third, the professionalised model of creative writing as a means to publication, popularised by early twentieth-century writing manuals and handbooks.

In the college's first prospectus, Rice outlined Black Mountain's commitment to the "tested and proved methods of education" that the Progressive Education movement had sought to install in secondary schools across America since the late nineteenth century; however, he also maintained latitude for the college's own experiments with "new methods" of pedagogy, curricula, assessment, and organisation, explored and "tried out in a purely experimental spirit."[14] It was this combination of the progressivism of John Dewey and the college's commitment to experimentation that created the ideal conditions for the early establishment of creative writing at Black Mountain in 1933, six years before the first Writers' Workshop at the University of Iowa in 1939 and more than ten before the first writing seminars at Johns Hopkins in 1946, and Stanford, Denver, and Cornell universities in 1947.[15]

The writing seminar

At the core of Black Mountain's investment in both progressive methods of education and the dynamics of social groups was a desire to build a model of education that supported the development of the *individual* – aware of their role within and responsibility to the college community and thus wider society – rather than the egoistic *individualist*. This differentiation between individual and individualist was not only based on one's relationship to a community or group, but on a distinction upheld by Rice, Wunsch, and Josef and Anni Albers – the key pedagogues at early Black Mountain – between the individual's valuable cultivation of "art-experience," and the individualist's inauthentic act of "self-expression."[16] In his 1934 manifesto of Black Mountain's Bauhaus-influenced model of art instruction, Josef Albers justified his exclusion of expressive drawing from his programme of study, warning that self-expression "in young people […] encourages artistic conceit

but hardly results in a solid capability."[17] Josef Albers's exclusion of self-expression – a remnant of the emphasis on functionality and rationality at the Bauhaus – proved to be congruent with the college's progressive foundations and indebtedness to the philosophy of John Dewey, who had warned against "mere indulgence in emotional outpouring."[18] This warning against self-expression accompanied a belief that the purpose of arts instruction was not to prepare students for careers as artists. Thus Josef Albers acknowledged that though "most of our students will not become artists," the skills practiced in his colour and design classes would not only suit a range of professional careers, but would help the student "achieve an understanding vision, clear conceptions, and a productive will."[19]

The progressivism of Josef Albers's statement, and its emphasis on arts instruction as process, practice, and experience is striking. Several decades before his influential role at Black Mountain began, Dewey had framed the ideal relationship between the child and the school as one that mirrored the individual's connection to society:

> I believe that the individual who is to be educated is a social individual, and that society is an organic union of individuals. If we eliminate the social factor from the child we are left only with an abstraction; if we eliminate the individual from society, we are left only with an inert and lifeless mass.[20]

The Black Mountain seal, designed by Josef Albers in 1934, reflected this sense of the college as an "organic union of individuals."[21] Josef Albers explained that his roundel design symbolised "coming together, standing together, working together."[22] The concentric design bears a strong resemblance to Walter Gropius's topography of curriculum at the Bauhaus[23]; however, stripped of its prescriptive curriculum, the "union" design represents the mutually constitutive relationship between the individual and the community at Black Mountain: the sense in which "the individual, to be complete" must both "know himself" and "be aware of his relation to others."[24]

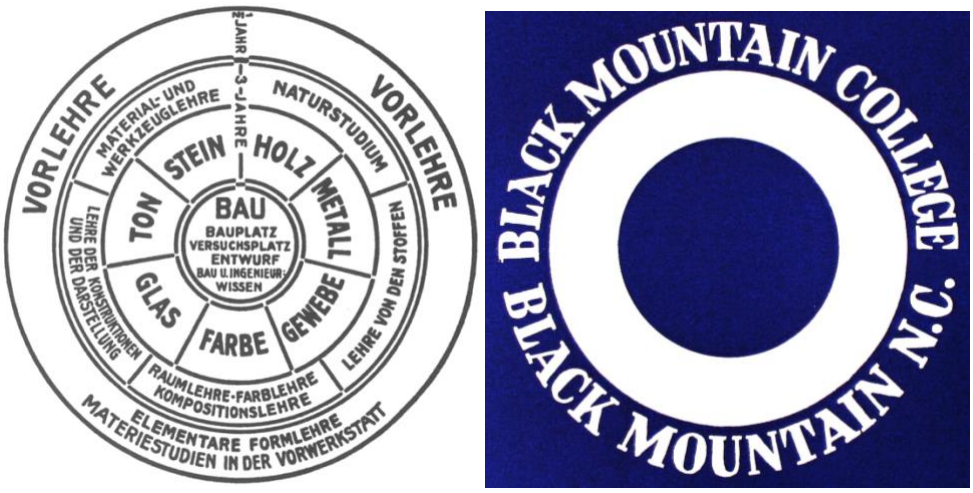


Figure 3. *Staatliches Bauhaus* (1922); Black Mountain College (1934)

Education in the arts was to be the primary setting for this self-knowledge and awareness, since it was experiential, arts-led education that held the capacity to enrich "emotional experience" and "the human world of vision."[25]

Advocating dynamic, active learning that reflected the student's "present experience," Dewey's experiential model of development lent itself to a discipline like creative writing, in which individuals were encouraged to write freely from their personal experiences, continually forming and reforming these experiences through the process of writing.[26] The writing seminar at Black Mountain offered an ideal environment for this "development of experience into experience."[27] Like the close-knit environment of the college community, the writing seminar offered a space for "continued growth" through the "continual reorganizing, reconstructing, transforming" of experience.[28]

The college's first prospectus outlined its investment in experimental and diverse teaching methods, foregrounding its "experiments" with the pedagogical environment of the seminar:

> Every teacher has complete freedom in choosing methods of instruction; as a consequence, a visitor will find classes conducted as recitations, lectures, tutorials, and seminars. One of the experiments that is being made is in the conduct of the latter. At the present time there are two seminars, one in writing, and another in English literature and history, in which there are four or more instructors who attend every meeting and who represent in their training several fields of knowledge. The intention is to let the student see the way in

> which an idea, a movement, a period in history, an art form, appear to a group of specialists, and also to get the student away from the habit of trying to please the teacher.[29]

Though it would not become 'creative writing' until 1936, the writing seminar at Black Mountain was distinguished from classical instruction in rhetoric and composition, instead involving the exchange, discussion, and critique of students' and faculty members' creative work. Our sense of Rice's writing seminar is largely derived from Louis Adamic, a writer and journalist who visited the college in mid-1930s, whose extensive, effusive account of his time at Black Mountain was published *Harper's Magazine*.

Following his observation of Rice's seminar at Black Mountain, Adamic praised the quality of students' work, commenting that "a few of the stories and poems read there were definitely publishable," while others "suggested talent or genius."[30] Adamic noted, however, that Rice was "restraining them from trying to get published."[31] In accordance with Josef Albers's belief that most of his students would not become artists, Rice's guidance suggests that the function of creative writing during this early period was not for the writer to achieve publication. Rather, the writing seminar provided an environment for the development of the individual student, as both self-directed activity and as a process through which the student could consolidate their experience.

Rice's writing seminar was grounded in both the progressive reorientation of the subject-matter of education to engage the experiences of the individual student, and Dewey's reconfiguration of the relationship between student and teacher, who was now no longer "engaged […] simply in the training of individuals, but in the formation of the proper social life."[32] Unlike Wunsch's creative writing course, in Rice's seminar there was "no requirement as to who shall write, or what is being written" and students were free to choose the form and content of their writing to reflect their interests and experience.[33] Creative writing thus offered an opportunity for Black Mountain to place the student at the centre of college life, as advocated by Dewey:

> The child is the starting-point, the center, and the end. His development, his growth, is the ideal. It alone furnishes the standard. To the growth of the child

> all studies are subservient; they are instruments valued as they serve the needs of growth. Personality, character, is more important than subject-matter. Not knowledge or information, but self-realization is the goal.[34]

The self-directed activity of creative writing offered the "continuous formation" of experience essential to the individual's sense of self, since "the self is not something ready-made, […] but something in continuous formation through choice of action."[35] Extending Dewey's progressivism, Wunsch sought to explore how the group setting of creative writing could be used to aid the formation and development of the individual.

The group

Group influence has captured the attention of visitors, critics, and scholars of the college over the past eighty years: from Adamic's decision to devote the majority of his *Harper's* article to a discussion of the practice, to Bernard DeVoto's devastating critique of the "downright dangerous" use of the experimental technique, to Martin Duberman's attempt, forty years after the college closed, to understand Black Mountain history by recreating the practice in his own seminars at Princeton University.[36] Group influence, or 'group process,' would take on a new significance at the post-war college under the direction of Black Mountain psychologist John Wallen; however, the college's early practice of 'group influence' represented a combination of Dewey's functionalism and its environmental model of behaviour and Black Mountain's "experimental spirit."[37]

Like Rice's writing seminar, our main sense of the college's controversial practice is taken from Adamic's *Harper's* article. Adamic described how the technique was "one of the most important elements of Black Mountain education," used to help the new student overcome their "superficial" or "individualistic" self.[38] Adamic claimed that group influence had developed at Black Mountain "unconsciously and accidentally" as a practical response to the conditions of living in a small, isolated community.[39]

> [T]hey abruptly found themselves in extremely tight quarters and had to get along on a basis of freedom, not as students and teachers, but as persons

> endowed with various degrees of vitality. They had to rub the individualistic corners off one another's characters. [40]

Adamic observed that Wunsch was "passionately devoted" to group influence, writing that although Wunsch was "not as obviously brilliant as Rice or Albers," he was "an almost unerring instinctive psychologist, and immensely valuable to 'group influence.' "[41]

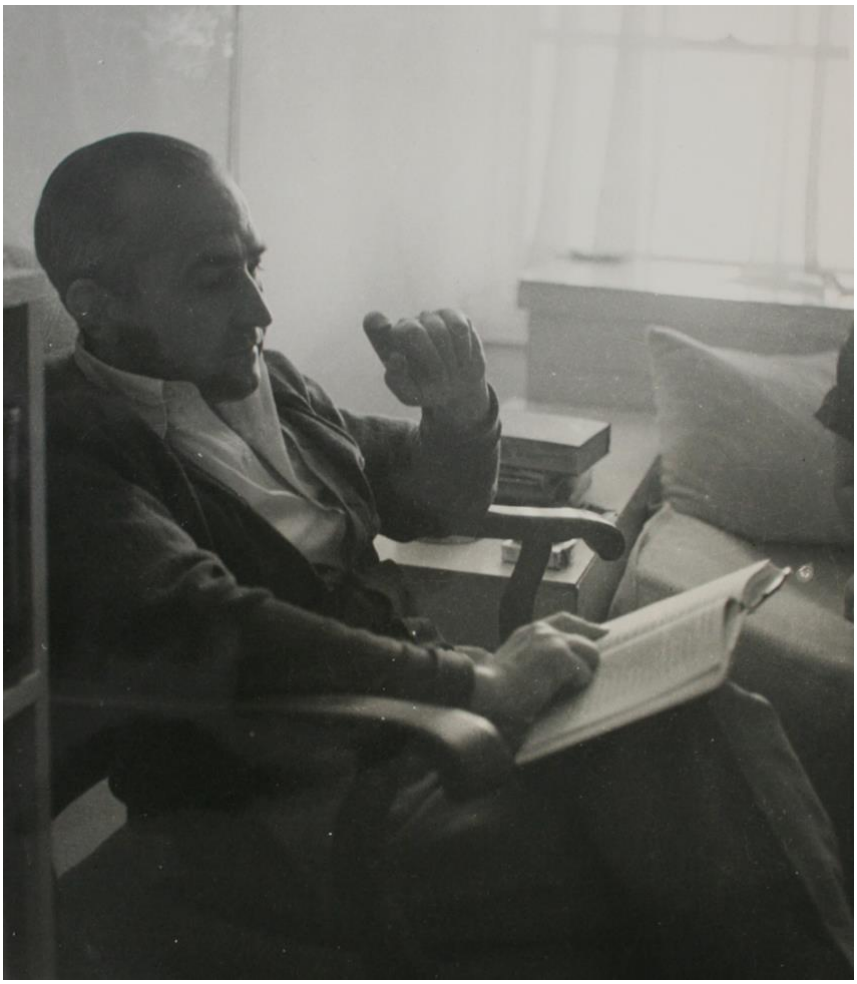


Figure 4. Robert Wunsch at Black Mountain College.
Courtesy of the Western Regional Archives, State Archives of North Carolina.

Wunsch explained to Adamic that his dramatics course was "tied up with 'group influence,' "[42] and the college prospectus describes how dramatics offered the means by which an individual "may become more fully aware of himself as a person."[43] Like the focus on the development of the individual in Rice's progressive seminar, Wunsch argued that acting foregrounded the individual student through its

emphasis on experience, expression, and authenticity. “The student, therefore, not the play, is the thing,” explained Wunsch, just as the development of the individual student, rather than their finished, publishable piece of writing, was conceived as the goal of Rice’s progressive seminar.[44] Wunsch described the usefulness of the process of group influence in terms of its ability to help the student express themselves authentically:

> [W]e believe that it is vitally important that a student knows what sort of person he actually is, what kind of fictitious self he has built up around that actual self, and what the social group in which he moves thinks of those actual and fictitious selves.[45]

Group influence was to help students find or understand this “actual self,” and for Wunsch, the experiential process of acting and the imaginative process of creative writing were the ideal vehicles for “self-knowledge” because they were “the nearest thing to experience.”[46]

The creative writing course

Wunsch was able to maintain his interests in Progressive Education during his time at Black Mountain College, leading programmes and workshops for the PEA at local high schools and colleges and co-editing an anthology of short fiction, *Thicker Than Water: Stories of Family Life* (1939) for the Progressive Education Association (PEA) Commission on Human Relations.[47] Edited by Wunsch and Edna Albers, the anthology was part of a series of books commissioned by the PEA to explore the potential value of literature and writing to solve “the urgent problems of personal and social living today.”[48] Like Louise Rosenblatt’s *Literature as Exploration* (1938), which argued that reading literature helped to develop the “sensitivity and imagination” essential to “the citizen of a democracy,” *Thicker Than Water* aimed to train students to respond empathetically to human lives and narratives.[49] Comprised of short, moral tales on the importance of optimism, modesty, kindness, and loyalty, the stories were designed to provoke classroom discussion and supplement the “technical study of family life with the kind of experience literature offers.”[50]

Early handbooks and anthologies like *Studies in Creative Writing* (1933) and *Thicker Than Water* not only codified the early experience- and craft-based creative

writing pedagogy, but they maintained a sense that the practice of creative writing was a personal, psychological endeavour. As Wilber Schramm, the first director of the Iowa Writers' Workshop, explained in *The Story Workshop* (1938):

> The process of writing a short story begins not with a handbook nor with a search for distant and unusual material, but with yourself. You must know your mind before you know others. What interests you? What sense of impressions have you received in a given situation? What stories are in your life?[51]

The imaginative act of storytelling and writing was thus conceived of as a way to explore or express the personal experiences of the individual. Wunsch's PEA anthology was supplemented with writing exercises, asking students to produce "written biographies" or "short dramatic sketches portraying the earlier life of certain […] characters"; this emphasis on character and biography rather than structural elements like plot or form reflects this sense that literature provided an insight into "the complexities of human personality" and "human behavior."[52] Wunsch writes:

> In studying [the writer's] characters we are, in essence, seeing ourselves, but without crude, painful, and perhaps harmful self-exposure.[53]

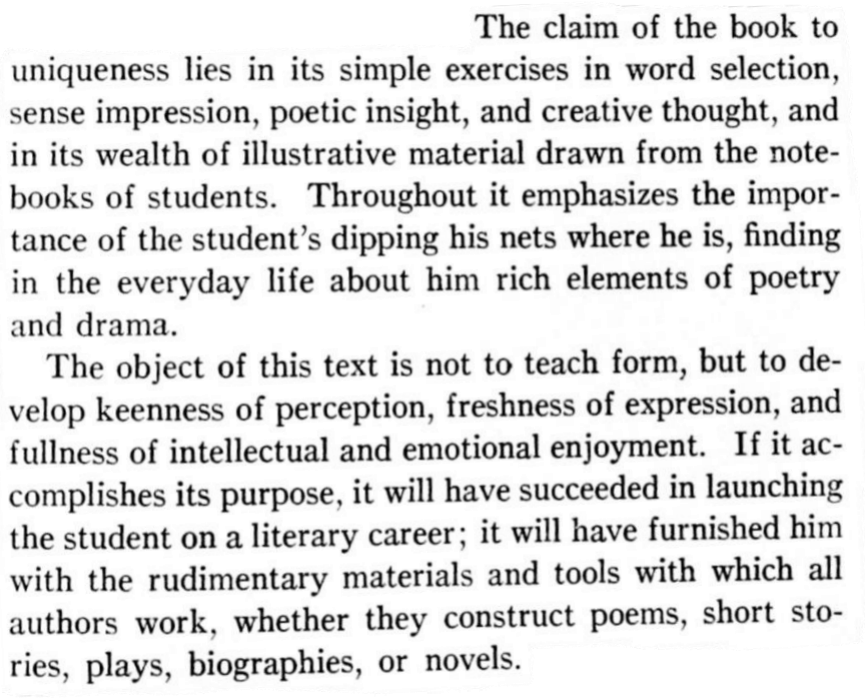
Wunsch writes that the empathetic practices of reading and writing offered a healthy and safe way to explore the psychology of the self. "Depending on our own previous experience, interests, and desires," the anthology's editors explained, "we identify ourselves with one or more of the characters and live vicariously the life the author depicts."[54]

Representing a combination of interest in both Progressive Education and group influence, Wunsch's creative writing pedagogy was designed to help students develop as individuals through an understanding of their relationship to others – be that the writing group, the college community, or wider society – while teaching students how to express themselves authentically by grounding their writing in everyday experiences and perceptions. *Studies in Creative Writing*, a creative writing handbook co-written with Mary Reade Smith and published two years before

Wunsch joined Black Mountain, represents a culmination of Wunsch's early creative writing pedagogy and his experiences as a high school and college creative writing instructor. Wunsch and Smith's creative writing handbook was designed to teach the student "how to describe and interpret his environment, see beauty in the commonplace, understand the higher meanings of life, and to use and enjoy his leisure time."[55]

Though Wunsch's use of textbook instruction at Black Mountain seems to mark a significant departure from Dewey's progressive stance against passive or receptive methods of education, *Studies in Creative Writing* is one of many examples of creative writing handbooks published during this period and held in the Black Mountain College library.[56] In the face of an unprecedented expansion of schools, educators were forced to codify their new pedagogy in manuals and textbooks in order to quickly teach progressive methods to a new generation of teachers. The PEA established a Creative Writing Committee to investigate the potential uses of creative writing, publishing the results of their investigations in an early manual, *Teaching Creative Writing* (1937). Based on the successes of Hughes Mearns's experiments into the potential of employing the creative process in schools, the textbook "serve[d] both as a handbook for teachers in service and as a textbook for teacher-training classes."[57]

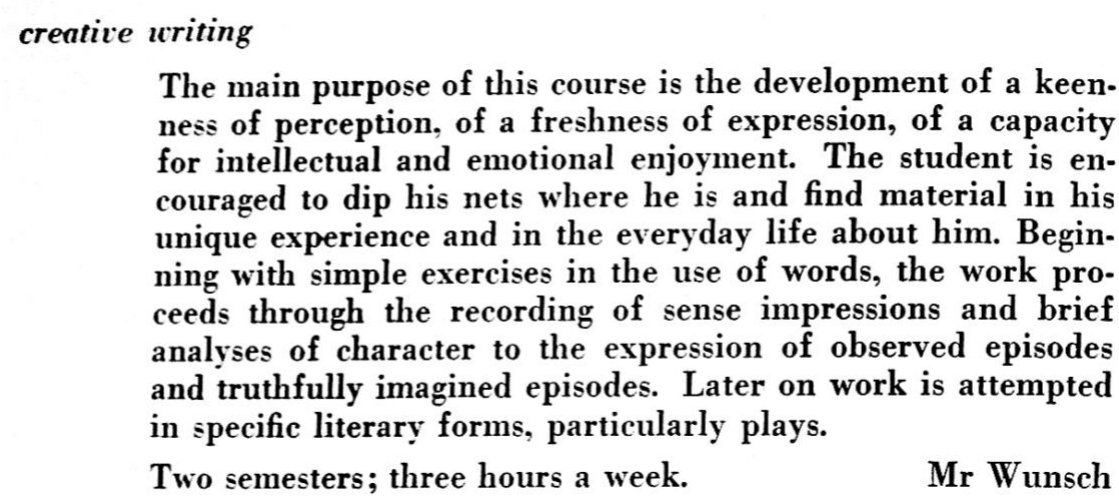
Studies in Creative Writing offered guidance and writing exercises in eleven areas considered to be relevant to prose, poetry, and drama: "Inspiration"; "Words"; "Impressions"; "Dialogue"; "Action and Conflict"; "Suggestion and Recall"; "Feeling and Mood"; "Comparison"; "Reflection and Thought"; "Imagination"; "Style."[58] The handbook provided the blueprint for Wunsch's first creative writing course at Black Mountain College and Wunsch borrowed heavily from the book's preface for the first description of creative writing in the 1936-37 college prospectus, as the figures below indicate.



The claim of the book to uniqueness lies in its simple exercises in word selection, sense impression, poetic insight, and creative thought, and in its wealth of illustrative material drawn from the notebooks of students. Throughout it emphasizes the importance of the student's dipping his nets where he is, finding in the everyday life about him rich elements of poetry and drama.

The object of this text is not to teach form, but to develop keenness of perception, freshness of expression, and fullness of intellectual and emotional enjoyment. If it accomplishes its purpose, it will have succeeded in launching the student on a literary career; it will have furnished him with the rudimentary materials and tools with which all authors work, whether they construct poems, short stories, plays, biographies, or novels.

Figure 5. *Studies in Creative Writing* (1933)[59]



creative writing

The main purpose of this course is the development of a keenness of perception, of a freshness of expression, of a capacity for intellectual and emotional enjoyment. The student is encouraged to dip his nets where he is and find material in his unique experience and in the everyday life about him. Beginning with simple exercises in the use of words, the work proceeds through the recording of sense impressions and brief analyses of character to the expression of observed episodes and truthfully imagined episodes. Later on work is attempted in specific literary forms, particularly plays.

Two semesters; three hours a week. Mr Wunsch

Figure 6. *Black Mountain College, 1936-1937*

Both descriptions stress the importance of grounding students' writing in the 'everyday,' with Wunsch reusing the metaphor of the process of writing as 'dipping nets'; however, Wunsch made two crucial changes to the Black Mountain course description in line with the college's focus on the development of the individual.[60] Though Wunsch's course suggests the use of class-wide writing exercises rather than the individual, self-directed activities of Rice's writing seminar, the emphasis on the student's "perception" and "sense impressions" in *Studies in Creative Writing* is

extended in the course description to an acknowledgement of their "unique experience" as an individual.[61] Wunsch also removed the explicit reference to the study of creative writing as a means to a professional literary career, in line with Josef Albers's and Rice's sense of the purpose of the arts education. Though Wunsch's pedagogy remains fundamentally unchanged from the progressive handbook, this slight shift in the sense of the function of creative writing suggests that Black Mountain was beginning to conceive of creative writing as a discipline of study in the arts, rather than an exercise in experimental or progressive methods of education.

Through the introduction of a course of study, Wunsch established creative writing as "an artistic and creative medium" that could be taught alongside drawing, painting, or weaving.[62] Unlike the Alberses classes, however, whose place on the Black Mountain curriculum had been firmly established since the college's founding, it remained necessary to defend the artistic status and legitimacy of creative writing. In line with Black Mountain's distinction between "art-experience" and "self-expression" in the first college prospectus, Wunsch explained that the emphasis of his creative writing course was on "art expression as distinguished from self-expression."[63] Though in many ways Wunsch's pedagogy marked a continuation of Rice's progressive seminar and its attempt to facilitate students' self-development and self-realisation through the "continuing reconstruction of experience," by the early 1940s, creative writing at the college was beginning to be conceived of as an artistic endeavour.[64] Where Rice had discouraged his students from seeking publication, in the early 1940s Wunsch produced the college's first literary magazine of students' work.

Printed in the early 1940s as the U.S. entered into the Second World War and the college began its most intensive period of change and upheaval since its founding, *.....toward a projected College magazine* represents the pervasive influence of the progressive model of creative writing for the self-development of the individual, as well as Wunsch's writing exercises and model of writing as craftsmanship. Unlike the college's later literary magazines – M.C. Richards's *The Black Mountain Review* (1951) and Charles Olson and Robert Creeley's *The Black Mountain Review* (1954-57) – Wunsch's creative writing magazine exclusively published Black Mountain students. The students' writing not only demonstrates the influence of Wunsch's progressive understanding of literature and creativity, but it reflects the sense that creative writing at Black Mountain was beginning to be valued as an artistic practice rather than an educational exercise. Examples of students' writing in the college's first creative writing magazine suggest that Wunsch may have used writing exercises from *Studies in Creative Writing* in his classes at Black Mountain.

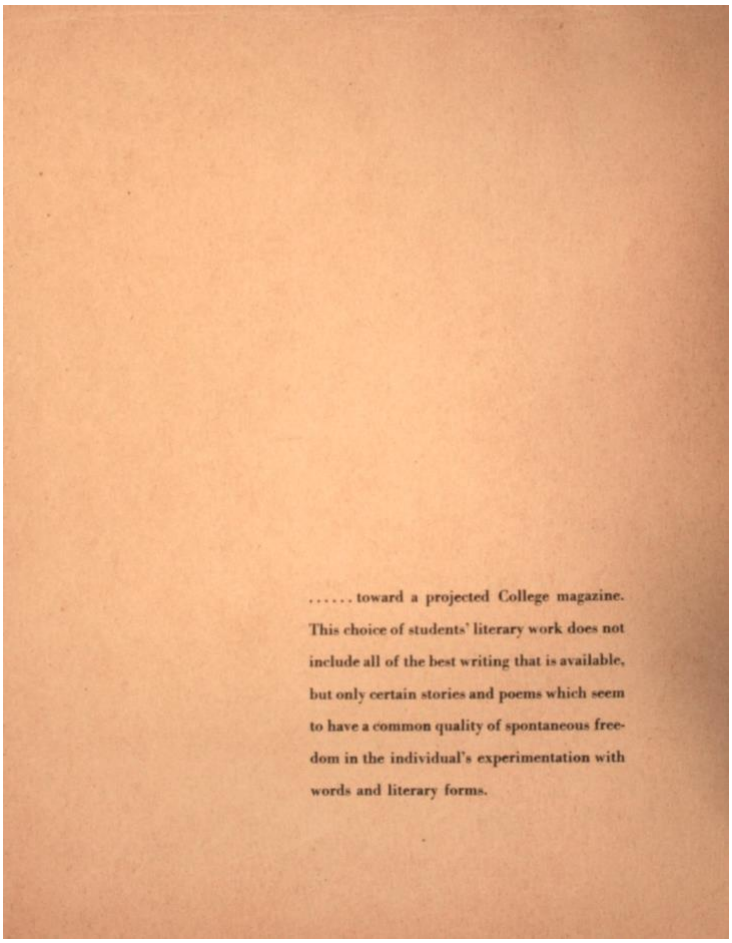
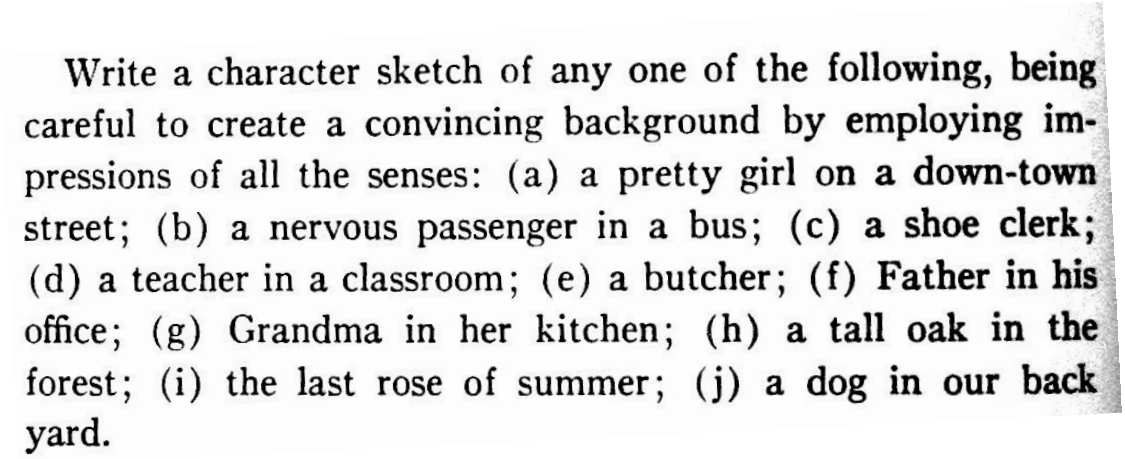


Figure 7. *.....toward a projected College magazine*

The front cover of the magazine offered a brief editorial, describing how the four short prose pieces and three poems shared "a common quality of spontaneous freedom in the individual's experimentation with words and literary forms."[65] Featuring work by Black Mountain students Jane Mayhall, Frances Goldman, Emil Willimotz, Robert Sunley, and Sue Spayth, several pieces not only bear a strong resemblance to writing exercises in *Studies in Creative Writing*, but they are suggestive of the progressive ideas about creativity and individuality in circulation at Black Mountain during the 1930s and early 1940s.

The didactic tone of the prose pieces by Jane Mayhall and Sue Spayth mimic the moralistic, 'life lesson' stories in Wunsch's PEA anthology, which explored qualities like greed, gluttony, and kindness. *Studies in Creative Writing* likewise includes a series of exercises asking students to write fables that illustrated "moral lessons" like "honesty is the best policy" or "evil communications corrupt good manners."[66] In "Holiday" by Mayhall, a young girl buys an ice cream soda on her day off from work, deciding on the way home to buy a new dress without trying it on first. When she returns home, she finds she is unable to fit into the dress and is berated by her parents for frittering her money away. Mayhall's story may have been based on writing prompts from *Studies in Creative Writing*, in which students were asked to describe the interiors of an "ice cream parlour" and a "haberdashery"; however, the story principally serves as a lesson in modesty and frugality. The young girl did not need to eat the luxurious ice cream soda, nor did she need a new dress, and her greed causes the dress to not fit.[67]

Spayth's short prose piece, "The Creative Nature," features a detailed description of an elderly shopkeeper, Mr Goldfinch. The written description is suggestive of the impression and character sketch activities in Wunsch's creative writing handbook, which were designed to help the student "open his eyes to the world in which he lives."[68]



Write a character sketch of any one of the following, being careful to create a convincing background by employing impressions of all the senses: (a) a pretty girl on a down-town street; (b) a nervous passenger in a bus; (c) a shoe clerk; (d) a teacher in a classroom; (e) a butcher; (f) Father in his office; (g) Grandma in her kitchen; (h) a tall oak in the forest; (i) the last rose of summer; (j) a dog in our back yard.

Figure 8. *Studies in Creative Writing* (1933), 26.

Extending progressive ideas about "instinctive artistry"[69] and innate creativity, the story depicts Mr Goldfinch as unsatisfied with a working life spent "weighing out nails and measuring rope."[70] Instead, "he wants to create":

> [Mr Goldfinch] sits on the wooden bench in front of his store and looks thoughtfully across the street at the dusty-green railway station and says, 'I want to create.'[71]

Though the speaker seems sceptical of Mr Goldfinch's intentions or abilities – "I wonder what he wants to create," they ask – the piece is largely sympathetic to Mr Goldfinch's frustrations with his unsatisfied "creative nature."[72]

Frances Goldman's piece describes the sights, sounds, and smells of a delicatessen from the narrator's childhood in great detail. The story begins with the speaker struggling to recall a memory:

> I don't remember them so well. Only once in a while if the day is gray and dull, and I smell pickles or dim mustiness. Suddenly it comes back to me in one flood I wonder why it's stuck so far back and only the smell […] or feel of a gray day brings it out.[73]

Goldman's story not only appears to have been based on Wunsch's "suggestion and recall" writing exercises, in which students were asked to produce a first person

account of a "feeling memory," noting their associations with "the sound of rain on the roof" or "the musty odor of a cellar" – but like the pieces by Mayhall and Spayth, it is informed by similar progressive ideas about the moral role of literature.[74] The adolescent narrator in the story is sent to the local delicatessen by their parents, who describe the owners as "bad," "sick," and "no-good."[75] Over the course of several visits, the narrator finds the delicatessen owners to be pleasant, kind, and hardworking. Thus the moral of the story is that one should not judge others without knowing them first. The story ends with the speaker recognising that now their "childhood was over" they must think independently of their parents:

> And at that time I knew never again would I believe as I had in my mother, father, and all the adult word, never again would I accept wholly, completely, what they said as absolute.[76]

Goldman's narrative serves as an allegory for the college experience at Black Mountain, in which students moved away from their parents and were encouraged to develop as individuals. As Adamic described, group influence helped the student realise that they must take responsibility for their education and their actions, that "there is no one here to protect him."[77]

The poetry included in the magazine is more difficult to read in relation to Wunsch's progressive and textbook pedagogy. Emil Willimotz parodies nonsense verse, Shakespeare, Romantic poetry, and the Bible, describing the interactions of "dying outlaw," "Prince Hamlet," "my poor friend Philip," and a horse called Henry. Mayhall's "Madonna" is a nonsense poem about life and death, telling "Woowoo Spigle-Wam" to "laugh a little" before "the funny-face worms have made mince-meat | of dear love." Both of these pieces are led by experiments with sound and language, with no clear moral meaning. Another poem by Mayhall,"Waiting," is written as if based on an abstract noun writing exercise on 'patience,' similar to those in *Studies in Creative Writing* that ask students to write poems based on "anger, pity, sorrow, terror, jealousy."[78]

> Patience is longer than we know.
> Patience is white and slow
> like the mountain-tipped dawn

that reaches long summits
and still has many lands to go.[79]

Echoing Robert Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" (1923) and its closing refrain: "and miles to go before I sleep," Mayhall's poem suggests that students were imitating the styles of poets they were reading at the college.[80] Thus students were no longer conceiving of their creative writing as an educational, psychological, or moral exercise, but as analogous to the work of published poets and writers. Robert Sunley's poem "subway met," provides a further example of this, concluding with an echo of the "apparition of […] faces" in Ezra Pound's "In a Station of the Metro" (1912).[81]

unsurrendered into the cortical centers,
unduly medullated on the brain
unreversable retained, the bright
unspeakably suddenly medallion of a face appeared.[82]

Like several other poems included in the magazine, Sunley's poem is led by experiments with sound and repetition rather than sense. The poem is heavily alliterative and largely unpunctuated, recording the thought processes of "the burrowed mind" processing the movement and sound of a subway station.[83] The lurching and shrieking of the train serves as a metaphor for the immediacy of the speaker's perceptions and thought processes, as the speaker "transfers, changes, | regrets even waiting, […] aimlessly impatient."[84] Like Goldman's description of the delicatessen, Sunley's poem reflects the emphasis in Wunsch's pedagogy on "the recording of sense perceptions."[85] The speaker makes use of physiological terms reminiscent of the scientific methods of early twentieth-century experimental psychology: the image is processed in the "cortical center," the largest region in the brain responsible for sensory functions, then internalised within the body (or "medullated," from 'medulla oblongata,' describing the internal tissue of an organ) and thus "unreversably retained."[86]

In the early 1940s, creative writing exercises appeared for the first time on the college's senior division examinations, which marked the student's transition to

mature, specialised, independent study and from which students were expected to answer questions from a range of disciplines. The creative writing exercises were designed to test students' "imagination [and] ability to write," asking students to describe how they "enjoy or react to the colouring of the fall leaves" or "write a familiar essay on 'The Black Mountain College Ducks' " on the Lake Eden campus.[87] Creative writing had become a core element of the arts education at Black Mountain and the college prospectus mounted a forceful pedagogical justification of the discipline. Wunsch's introduction of creative writing to the college in 1936 had focused on the "discipline" of writing, conceding that "ultimately only technique can be taught"; however, by the early 1940s, a new distinction was made between the "personally relevant" and "socially relevant" creative writing of students.[88] The prospectus explained the new value of creative writing to the college:

> [T]he student, subjected to an evaluation of his communicative efficacy, can become more and more aware of an audience; and, in acclimating himself to the notion of language as the preeminent social phenomenon, can gain a direct knowledge of the distinction between the personally relevant and the socially and artistically relevant.[89]

This distinction between personally and artistically relevant creative writing would collapse in the post-war period, as the college moved away from its earlier eschewing of "mere indulgence in emotional outpouring" and the "expression of emotion" in favour of a new valuation of creative writing as an activity in personal self-expression, replacing the progressive educator with a poet, M.C. Richards, and conceiving of students as fellow writers alongside their new creative writing faculty.[90] By the time Wunsch left Black Mountain in 1943, he had not only transformed creative writing from progressive experiment to artistic expression, but he had provided the pedagogical justification necessary to ensure the future of creative writing at the college.

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[1] Following the publication of Donald Allen's anthology, *The New American Poetry, 1945-1960*, this group of writers typically includes Robert Duncan (who taught at Black Mountain for a semester in 1956) and Robert Creeley (who taught at the college between 1954 and 1956), and former students Ed Dorn, Joel Oppenheimer, and Jonathan Williams. Allen also includes Paul Blackburn, Paul Carroll, Larry Eigner, and Denise Levertov, who were all published in *The Black Mountain Review* (1954-57).

Allen, introduction to *The New American Poetry, 1945-1960* (Berkeley: University of California, 1960), xi.
[2] *Black Mountain College, 1939-1940* catalogue (Series 506.2, Box 26), 16, Black Mountain College Records (BMCR), Western Regional Archives, State Archives of North Carolina (WRA).
[3] As Katherine Reynolds notes, Wunsch was responsible for helping to find the original Black Mountain College campus at the Blue Ridge Assembly. Reynolds writes that Wunsch "knew of a campus-like area eighteen miles east of Asheville, just south of the town of Black Mountain, known as Blue Ridge Assembly. A collection of buildings on 1,619 acres, constructed in 1906 by the Blue Ridge Association, the site was used as summer conference and camp facilities for the YMCA and various Christian religious groups and for the summer educational program of the YMCA Graduate School." Katherine Chaddock Reynolds, *Visions and Vanities: John Andrew Rice of Black Mountain College* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1998), 97.
[4] *Black Mountain College, 1933-1934* (506.2, 26), n.p., BMCR, WRA; *Black Mountain College Bulletin*, no. 1 (506.2, 26), n.p., BMCR, WRA.
[5] D. G. Myers, *The Elephants Teach: Creative Writing Since 1880* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1996), 101.
[6] John Andrew Rice, quoted in Louis Adamic, "Black Mountain: An Experiment in Education," *My America: 1928-1938* (London: Harper and Brothers, 1938), 626.
[7] As John Thelin describes, between 1918 and 1939, college and university enrolment in America increased from two hundred and fifty thousand to 1.3 million, a fivefold increase Thelin attributes to the earlier extension of access to public secondary school education. See John R. Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 2011), 205.
[8] This graph is compiled from nine sources: Black Mountain College catalogues (available between 1933-42, 1951); community lists (1933-42, 1943-44, 1948-49); Board of Fellows papers (1944-47, 1949); college announcements (1942-44, 1946-47); college bulletins (1949-50, 1952-53); Martin Duberman, *Black Mountain: An Exploration in Community* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1972); "Areas of Study at Black Mountain College" (Series 61.12.2, Box 10), n.p., Black Mountain College Research Project (BMCRP), WRA; "A Summary of Information on Black Mountain College as of January 1st, 1954" (506.2, 27), n.p., BMCRP, WRA; Eloise Turner to Miriam Jones, 19 March 1956 (61.12.2, 10), n.p., BMCRP, WRA. There were seven data points where data sources provided differing figures; in these cases, I placed reliance on sources in the sequence outlined above.
[9] Mark McGurl, *The Program Era: Postwar Fiction and the Rise of Creative Writing* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 23.
[10] McGurl, 23, 235.
[11] McGurl, 23.
[12] McGurl, 132.
[13] McGurl, 132.
[14] *Black Mountain College, 1933-1934* (506.2, 26), n.p., BMCR, WRA.
[15] See Myers, 146.
[16] *Black Mountain College, 1933-1934* (506.2, 26), n.p., BMCR, WRA.
[17] Josef Albers, "Concerning Art Instruction" (1934) (506.2, 26), 4, BMCR, WRA.
[18] Dewey, *On Education*, 159.
[19] Josef Albers, "Concerning Art Instruction" (1934) (506.2, 26), 7, BMCR, WRA.
[20] John Dewey, *John Dewey on Education: Selected Writings*, ed. Reginald D. Archambault (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1964), 429-430.
[21] Dewey, *On Education*, 429.
[22] *Black Mountain College, 1934-1935* (506.2, 26), n.p., BMCR, WRA.
[23] See Hans M. Wingler, *The Bauhaus: Weimar, Dessau, Berlin, Chicago* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1969), 52.
[24] Rice, quoted in Adamic, 626.
[25] Dewey, *On Education*, 163.
[26] Dewey, *On Education*, 345.
[27] Dewey, *On Education*, 349.
[28] John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of John Dewey* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1955), 62, 59.
[29] *Black Mountain College, 1933-1934* (506.2, 26), n.p., BMCR, WRA. The first Black Mountain Bulletin specified that the literature and history seminars were on "the Eighteenth Century," and "Philosophies of Social Reconstruction." *Black Mountain College Bulletin* 1, no. 1 (1933) (506.2, 26), n.p., BMCR, WRA.
[30] Adamic, 635.

[31] Adamic, 635.
[32] Dewey, *On Education*, 439.
[33] *Black Mountain College Bulletin* 1, no. 1 (1933) (506.2, 26), n.p., BMCR, WRA.
[34] Dewey, *On Education*, 343.
[35] Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 408.
[36] Bernard DeVoto, "Another Consociate Family," *Harper's Magazine* 172 (1935): 608; Martin Duberman, *Black Mountain College: An Exploration in Community* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1972), 268-74.
[37] *Black Mountain College, 1933-1934* (506.2, 26), n.p., BMCR, WRA.
[38] Adamic, 632, 631.
[39] Adamic, 632.
[40] Adamic, 632.
[41] Adamic, 641.
[42] Adamic, 641.
[43] *Black Mountain College, 1936-1937* (506.2, 26), 21, BMCR, WRA.
[44] *Black Mountain College, 1936-1937* (506.2, 26), 21, BMCR, WRA.
[45] Adamic, 641.
[46] Adamic, 641.
[47] See "BMC's Who's Who: Robert Wunsch" (506.3, 7), n.p., BMCR, WRA.
[48] Alice V. Keliher, preface to William Robert Wunsch and Edna Albers, eds., *Thicker Than Water: Stories of Family Life* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1939), v. Edna Albers was not a relative of Josef and Anni Albers.
[49] Louise M. Rosenblatt, *Literature as Exploration* (New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1938), 326.
[50] Wunsch and Albers, introduction to *Thicker Than Water*, ix.
[51] Wilber Schramm, *The Story Workshop* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1938), 5.
[52] Wunsch and Albers, xi.
[53] Wunsch and Albers, xi.
[54] Wunsch and Albers, xi.
[55] William Robert Wunsch and Mary Reade Smith, *Studies in Creative Writing* (New York: Henry Holt, 1933), 4.
[56] The Black Mountain College library held numerous examples of creative writing manuals and textbook-anthologies, including: Warren Bower, *The College Writer: An Anthology of Student Prose* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1935); Dorothy McCleary, *Creative Fiction Writing* (Boston: The Writer, Inc., 1947); George G. Williams, *Creative Writing for Advanced College Classes* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1935).
[57] Lawrence H. Conrad, *Teaching Creative Writing* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1937), ix.
[58] Wunsch and Smith, v.
[59] William Robert Wunsch and Mary Reade Smith, *Studies in Creative Writing* (New York: Henry Holt, 1933), iii.
[60] *Black Mountain College, 1936-1937* catalogue (506.2, 26), 22, BMCR, WRA.
[61] Wunsch and Smith, iii.
[62] *Black Mountain College, 1939-1940* (506.2, 26), 16, BMCR, WRA.
[63] *Black Mountain College, 1939-1940* (506.2, 26), 16, BMCR, WRA.
[64] Dewey, *On Education*, 434.
[65] *.....toward a projected College magazine* [ca. 1941] (506.2, 6), n.p., BMCR, WRA.
[66] Wunsch and Smith, 84.
[67] Wunsch and Smith, 23.
[68] Wunsch and Smith, 16.
[69] Mearns, 27.
[70] *.....toward a projected College magazine* (506.2, 6), n.p., BMCR, WRA.
[71] *.....toward a projected College magazine* (506.2, 6), n.p., BMCR, WRA.
[72] *.....toward a projected College magazine* (506.2, 6), n.p., BMCR, WRA.
[73] *.....toward a projected College magazine* (506.2, 6), n.p., BMCR, WRA.
[74] Wunsch and Smith, 50.
[75] *.....toward a projected College magazine* (506.2, 6), n.p., BMCR, WRA.
[76] *.....toward a projected College magazine* (506.2, 6), n.p., BMCR, WRA.
[77] Adamic, 631.
[78] Wunsch and Smith, 54.
[79] *.....toward a projected College magazine* (506.2, 6), n.p., BMCR, WRA.

[80] Robert Frost, *Selected Poems of Robert Frost* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), 140.
[81] Ezra Pound, *Selected Poems* (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), 53.
[82] *.....toward a projected College magazine* (506.2, 6), n.p., BMCR, WRA.
[83] *.....toward a projected College magazine* (506.2, 6), n.p., BMCR, WRA.
[84] *.....toward a projected College magazine* (506.2, 6), n.p., BMCR, WRA.
[85] *Black Mountain College, 1936-1937* (506.2, 26), 22, BMCR, WRA.
[86] *.....toward a projected College magazine* (506.2, 6), n.p., BMCR, WRA.
[87] "Examinations for Senior Division" (1941-42) (506.2, 10), n.p., BMCR, WRA.
[88] *Black Mountain College, 1939-1940* (506.2, 26), n.p., BMCR, WRA.
[89] *Black Mountain College, 1939-1940* (506.2, 26), 16, BMCR, WRA.
[90] Dewey, *On Education*, 159.