

English

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Degree: Master of Arts
Major: English

The Master of Arts degree with a major in English offers the opportunity for formal study of literary texts as well as critical and cultural theory. The graduate curriculum in English prepares students for professions in teaching, publishing, and for entering a Ph.D. program in English and related fields. Graduate study in English requires extensive reading in selected works of poetry, prose and drama as well as the writing of carefully researched, thoughtful analyses of these works.

Admission Requirements

Applicants to the Master of Arts program are expected to have a Bachelor of Arts in English, although well-qualified applicants from other disciplines are eligible for admission. All students seeking admission must make formal application to the Graduate School and submit an academic writing sample to the Department of Languages and Literature. Those applying for assistantships must also submit three current letters of recommendation.

Once students are admitted to the Graduate School and their applications for the M.A. program in English are submitted to the Department of Languages and Literature, the graduate coordinator for English will evaluate the applicants' undergraduate records to determine their admission status, their need for leveling courses and their foreign language proficiency. Graduates with B.A. or B.S. degrees from other disciplines who have had few English courses, other than freshman English, will be required to take a maximum of 12 hours of leveling courses (Eng. 221, 222, 251 and 252) concurrently with their graduate work.

Foreign language proficiency is required of M.A. students in English. Reading knowledge of a modern language can be demonstrated in one of four ways: A student who has successfully completed two years of college-level modern language courses (receiving no grade lower than "C") will be considered to have reading proficiency. (Any grade lower than "C" earned in any of the undergraduate modern language courses will need to be made up or compensated for by passing a reading proficiency test in that language.) For students who have not already studied a modern language, this requirement may be met by taking four semesters of French or Spanish coursework concurrently with their graduate coursework, or by passing (with a grade of "B") a test devised by members of the modern language faculty. As a fourth alternative, students may offer the scores they have earned on an approved national, standardized foreign language examination.

International students can demonstrate fluency in their native language by passing a standardized national exam or by passing, with a grade of "B" or better, a translation project read by a qualified reader, arranged for by the student.

After being admitted to the program, but before enrolling in any courses, students should have an interview with the graduate coordinator to develop a degree plan and to become familiar with the expectations of the graduate English faculty.

A student admitted to the Graduate School with non-degree status may enroll in graduate English courses; however, no more than six graduate credits earned while the student held non-degree status may be applied toward the requirements for the degree once he or she has gained regular admission.

A transfer graduate student may apply no more than nine graduate hours of English courses toward the M.A. degree, provided these courses are approved by the student's graduate committee, the graduate coordinator and the graduate dean.

Masters Exam and Masters Thesis Requirements

Master of Arts students in English must complete a minimum of 24 credit hours of coursework and six thesis credit hours. Before beginning work on the thesis, students must pass a four-hour written exam based on a reading list set by the graduate faculty. This exam will be given during the third week of the spring and fall semesters. Students who fail the comprehensive examination are eligible to retake it one time only. This retake must be done the following semester, but may not be done before then. After completing the exam, and after receiving approval for a thesis prospectus from the student's thesis committee, the graduate coordinator and the graduate dean, students may begin work on the thesis, a project generally 50–60 pages in length, in consultation with the thesis director and other committee members. Students may also opt to write a creative writing thesis.

Candidates must defend the thesis in a two-hour oral exam covering the thesis topic and the core area related to the thesis. Students who fail the oral examination are eligible to retake the examination one time only. This retake may occur only within the student's six-year limit. The second exam may not be taken before the following semester and before remediation of any deficiencies identified by the graduate advisory committee. Candidates who fail the exam the second time are no longer eligible to participate in graduate study in the program as degree-seeking students.

Core Areas of Study

All candidates for the M.A. in English must take English 500, Literary Theory; English 502, Bibliography and Methods; English 560, Seminar: Literature before 1800; and English 590, Seminar: Literature after 1800. All English graduate students' formal degree plans must include a minimum grade of "B" on these four core courses. Furthermore, the degree plan must show no more than one three-hour course with the grade of "C." All candidates for the M.A. who hold teaching assistantships must take English 501, Pedagogy of College Writing.