



English

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Introduction to English

Recognizing that the aim of a liberal arts education is to bring students to a critical understanding of themselves, the world, and the intricate relationship between the two, the English Department seeks to assist majors in coming to this understanding through a comprehensive study of literature and language. Students have the opportunity to select from courses in a variety of literary subfields and allied disciplines, shaping their curriculum according to their specific intellectual and creative interests.

English as a Major

Requirements for the major focus on English literature written in Britain, North America, and in Anglophone traditions from across Africa, Asia, and the Pacific. The curriculum also offers opportunities in creative writing, film, and composition theory. The major seeks to give students a knowledge of the way literature and language have evolved, exposure to a broad range of texts, and theoretical understanding of the ways in which those texts are produced and can be read. English courses situate books and films within the specific cultures that give them rise, highlighting traditional notions of genre and form. But they also investigate texts through dynamic and intersectional lenses (race, gender, sexuality, environmental stewardship, and others) that emphasize the transhistorical and cross-cultural implications of literary writing.

English as a Minor

Students may also minor in English. The English minor consists of several core English courses and additional courses chosen by the student. Many students find that an English minor enriches their study of another field, such as a foreign language, history, philosophy, journalism, or business. Students majoring in various disciplines have chosen an English minor to give themselves an undergraduate education that balances the sciences or social sciences with the humanities.

Learning Environment

Classes are small, which means that the faculty get to know their students individually and meet with them regularly. Enrollments in creative writing classes are limited to 15–18 students. Most literature and film classes enroll 16 students. All majors take two seminars that focus on special topics; enrollment is restricted to 12 students.

Each year, several English faculty teach community-based learning courses, which take advantage of the rich culture and history of both the city of Richmond and the Commonwealth of Virginia. For example, a course on the literature of war allows students to consider how Richmond itself has been affected by war in general, and by the American Civil War and World War I in particular. Professors invite a combat veteran and a psychologist who works on war trauma to class, and they take students to local war memorials, and to meet with veterans at McGuire VA Medical Center and to share poetry with them, making the course a model of interdisciplinary study.

Internal and external grants periodically allow the department to create unique classroom experiences. Such grants often bring visiting authors and artists to campus to help teach a course or give public lectures and performances. For example, in a recent course on *Blurred Boundaries*, students explored the nature of cultural, aesthetic, social, and artistic borders with novelists Jonathan Ames and Jonathan Lethem, radio and television host Ira Glass, Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Suzan-Lore Parks, screenwriter and novelist Trey Ellis, and performance artist DJ Spooky. Students concluded the semester with a day trip to Kara Walker's exhibit at the Whitney Museum of Modern Art in New York.

In collaboration with the Creative Writing program, which is housed in English, the department also hosts a yearly Writers Series that brings prominent writers of fiction, poetry and drama to campus. Students have opportunities to meet with and learn from these authors in the classroom and at public readings and lectures. Recent

guests have included Lauren Groff, Mary Ruefle, Paul Beatty, Roxane Gay, Zadie Smith, and Yusef Komunyakaa.

Special Learning Opportunities

The English major and minor both emphasize the study of literature, but the department offers varied opportunities for involvement in creative writing, including six regular courses, independent study courses, an editing and publishing course taught in conjunction with *Verse* magazine, interaction with distinguished writers who regularly visit campus, and a student literary magazine, *The Messenger*. In addition, students can work as paid writing consultants in the University's Writing Across the Curriculum Program or in the Writing Center. Membership in the English Honor Society, Sigma Tau Delta, offers a national conference where students can present their research and opportunities for publication in the society's journal.

The department's honors program allows highly motivated students — through the writing of an honors thesis — to do extensive, guided research on topics of their own choosing. In addition, students can work on individual summer research projects in a tutorial relationship with a faculty supervisor and receive monetary support for this work. During one recent summer project, a student examined the influence of Shakespeare's plays on a number of important 20th-century novels. Another involved research in London on material objects and the fiction of Virginia Woolf.

Students can earn English credit toward graduation for internships that involve supervised writing and editing, either in the summer or during the academic year. For example, one student interned with Simon and Schuster in New York, and another spent his summer working in Washington, D.C., for Organizing for America. There are also many internship opportunities in the Richmond area. Our students have interned at the Valentine Museum; *Style Weekly*; the Women's Health Care Center at Virginia Commonwealth University; the Virginia

Department of Juvenile Justice; the office of a Virginia senator; the Virginia Film Office; and at law firms and public relations, marketing, and communication agencies.

Students interested in interdisciplinary study can enrich their work in the English major by choosing the allied fields option and participating in interdisciplinary studies concentrations, such as Medieval and Renaissance studies; in interdisciplinary programs like American Studies or film studies; or by choosing from among eight combined majors. English majors and minors also regularly participate in the Humanities Fellows Program, a selective, close-knit, and interdisciplinary community of students and scholars investigating critical questions about human experience from diverse perspectives. The program combines a seminar and field experience in Washington DC with the opportunity to apply for mentored summer research and continued professional mentorship.

Career Opportunities

Students majoring in English go on to careers in such fields as advertising, business, editing, journalism, marketing and communications, museum curatorship, public relations, software development, teaching, health care, television and movie production, or web development and writing. Or they may enter graduate programs in English, law, or other fields. The reading, writing, analytical, and critical thinking skills acquired by English majors make them attractive to employers in business, industry, government, and nonprofit organizations.

Graduate School Acceptances

- American University
- Boston College
- Boston University
- Brandeis University
- Brown University
- College of William & Mary
- Columbia University
- Cornell University
- Duke University
- Emory University
- Fordham University
- The George Washington University

- Georgetown University
- Harvard University
- Indiana University
- New School for Social Research
- New York University
- Northwestern University
- Notre Dame University
- The Ohio State University
- Pennsylvania State University
- Princeton University
- State University of New York, Buffalo
- Tufts University
- University of California, Irvine
- University of California, Santa Barbara
- University of Chicago
- University of Connecticut
- University of Edinburgh
- University of London
- University of Maryland
- University of Massachusetts, Amherst
- University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
- University of Oxford
- University of Pennsylvania
- University of St. Andrews, Scotland
- University of Texas, Austin
- University of Virginia
- University of Wisconsin
- Vanderbilt University
- Yale University

Faculty Areas of Specialty

- African American Literature and Culture
- American Humor
- American Literature and Culture (Colonial Period to the present)
- Arab-American Literature
- British Literature and Culture (Medieval Period to the present)
- Children's and Young Adult Literature
- Comparative Literature (English, French, Italian)
- Computers and Composition
- Contemporary Poetry
- Creative Writing (Fiction, Poetry, and Creative Nonfiction)
- Diasporic Literatures
- Documentary Studies
- English Prosody
- Faulkner Studies
- Film Studies
- Global Short Story in English
- History of Technology
- Irish Literature
- Literary and Critical Theory
- Literature and Philosophy
- Literary Translation
- Medical Humanities
- Milton Studies

- Modernism
- Native American Studies
- North American Ethnic Literatures
- Philosophies of Humor
- Postcolonial Literatures and Theory
- Posthumanism
- Race and Slavery
- Renaissance Studies
- Sexuality and Gender Studies
- Social and Cultural Foundations of Education
- Transnational Studies
- U.S. Apocalyptic Literature

A full list is available on the department's website: english.richmond.edu



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Jul 2023