

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

# Graduate Student Handbook



2025-2026

 **WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY**

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## From the Department Chair

Dear Current and Prospective Graduate Students:

The Department of English at Western Michigan University offers one of the very few programs in the nation where students can study, on equal terms, the fields of literature, creative writing, and the theory and practice of teaching English. Our faculty take pride in this distinction, and we take equal pride in the abilities and accomplishments of our graduate students. Because the vast majority of our students are funded by teaching assistantships, their work as teachers is at the very core of our mission to provide a quality undergraduate education. Likewise, our students make a vital contribution to the university's research and creative activity. In a typical year, English graduate students compile a record of publications, presentations, productions, and prizes that testifies to their success as scholars, writers, and artists. It also testifies to the dedicated mentorship of our faculty. We believe this mentorship makes for a uniquely supportive and productive environment.

If you're reading this because you're interested in one of our programs, please know that we welcome the opportunity to talk further with you. And if you're already a member of our department and have come here seeking clarity on our policies and procedures, we hope this handbook has anticipated and answered your questions. If not please let us know.

If you wish to discuss any aspect of our programs, please get in touch with me or with the Graduate Director. We'd be happy to speak with you in person or via email, phone, or video conference. Just let us know how we can be of assistance.

Sincerely,

Todd Kuchta  
Chair, Department of English  
Western Michigan University  
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## Departmental Information

Location: 6th floor Sprau Tower  
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## Contact Information

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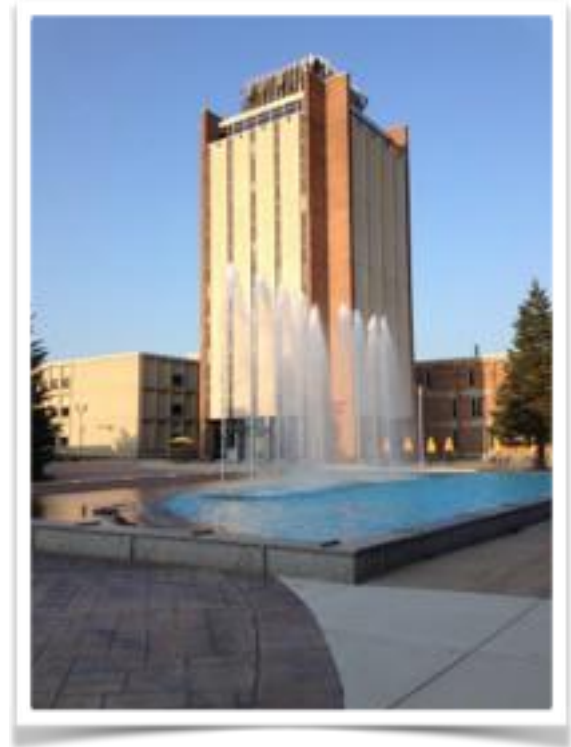
## Directions to Sprau Tower

### From I-94:

- Take exit 74B to merge onto US-131 north toward Grand Rapids.
- Drive 2.8 miles.
- Follow the directions below for US-131.

### From US-131:

- Take exit 36A toward Kalamazoo.
- Turn east onto Stadium Drive.
- Drive 2.0 miles.
- Turn left onto Howard Street at the light.
- Immediately after crossing the railroad tracks, take the first right onto Western Avenue.
- Turn left at the stop sign onto Ring Road South.
- At the next stop sign, make a right onto Roell Drive.
- Proceed to the parking structure.



### Visitor Parking

Metered visitor parking is available inside the parking structure. Visitor parking is 25¢ per 10 minutes. An ATM is located near the entrance to the parking structure at Roell Drive.

### Sprau Tower

Sprau Tower is located northeast of the parking structure next to the large fountain.

# Admission Procedures



## Master's Degree Programs

All applicants to the master's degree programs must fill out the online Western Michigan University application. The application deadline for the M.A. and M.F.A. programs is **January 15**. Applicants will need to have submitted a completed application to the university before January 15. The Graduate Office informs applicants of the status of their application beginning in mid-February.

Applicants to the Master's Degree Programs must provide:

- ✓ Writing sample
- ✓ Statement of purpose
- ✓ Teaching philosophy (if applying for funding)
- ✓ Three letters of recommendation
- ✓ Western Michigan University Graduate College Application

In order to apply for admission, applicants must present a 34-hour undergraduate major with a minimum 3.0 GPA. At least 20 hours of the student's undergraduate major must be in literature, including 15 hours of literature courses at the junior/senior level. Students who have taken substantial English coursework but cannot meet the 20-hour literature course requirement, may still apply for admission but may have to remedy any deficiencies through undergraduate or graduate coursework as determined in consultation with the Graduate Office.

**Please Note:** The M.A. with an emphasis in English education does not provide teacher certification. For information on teacher certification please visit <https://wmich.edu/teacher-certification/certified-teachers>



## Doctoral Programs Admissions

All applicants to the doctoral degree programs must fill out the online Western Michigan University application. The application deadline for all graduate programs is **January 15**. Applicants will need to have submitted a completed application to the university before January 15. The Graduate Office informs applicants of the status of their application beginning in mid-February.

In order to apply for admission, most applicants **must** present an M.A. in English, an M.A.E.T., or an M.F.A. in creative writing with a minimum GPA of 3.0. In rare instances, students may be admitted directly from the B.A. to the Ph.D. level, if they also have a great deal of professional or academic experience. Students with degrees in areas other than English, English education, or creative writing may have to take additional coursework to fill deficiencies in content.

Applicants to the doctoral program must provide:

- ✓ Writing sample
- ✓ Statement of purpose
- ✓ Teaching philosophy (if applying for funding)
- ✓ Three letters of recommendation
- ✓ Western Michigan University Graduate College Application

## Non-Degree Seeking Students

Students who wish to take English department graduate courses for credit may do so by applying for non-degree status with the Graduate College. Up to nine hours of coursework will transfer to a student's graduate program at Western Michigan University. These courses will count toward the student's program and GPA.

To obtain non-degree status:

- ✓ Complete the online application form
- ✓ Pay a non-refundable, one-time fee

Non-degree status takes about five business days to process, after which you may sign up for courses. It is recommended that you consult with the Graduate Office before registering.



# New Student Orientation and Teaching Assistantships

## New Student Orientation

All students must arrive on campus in time to attend mandatory orientation sessions that take place in August. Every new student must participate in the Graduate College orientation and the departmental new student convocation. Students will have an opportunity during this time to obtain parking permits and Bronco IDs and familiarize themselves with the campus.

## Teaching Assistant Orientation

All new teaching assistants must attend an orientation with the director of First-Year Writing, held during the week before Fall classes begin. Students will learn:

- ✓ Pedagogical theory
- ✓ Syllabi construction
- ✓ Classroom management

First-Year Writing instructors are also required to attend four professional development sessions during each semester they teach in the program.

All returning teaching assistants must attend a one-day orientation for the course they will be teaching. These sessions will typically take place in the week before Fall classes begin.

The Graduate College orientation is a separate event requiring registration. The Welcome Lunch and new student departmental convocation are also scheduled for late August.

## Teaching Assistantships

Funded M.A. and M.F.A. students are assigned to teach in the English Department's First-Year Writing program. This program is comprised of three courses:

- ✓ ENGL 1050: Foundations in Written Communication (3 credits)
- ✓ ENGL 1060: Writing, Research, and Inquiry (3 credits)
- ✓ ENGL 1040: Writing Studies Lab (a 1-credit companion to specifically designated
- ✓ ENGL 1050 sections for students identified as needing additional college-level writing support)

Funded M.A. and M.F.A. students teach three courses each academic year. First-year students teach one section of ENGL 1050 in the fall and two sections of ENGL 1050 in the spring semesters.

Second- and third-year students will be assigned to teach ENGL 1050 (possibly with a section of

ENGL 1040) or ENGL 1060. These students often teach two sections in the fall and one section in the spring.

Funded Ph.D. students typically teach two classes each academic year. In the first two years of their funding, Ph.D. students teach in the English Department's First-Year Writing program, which is comprised of three courses: ENGL 1050: Foundations in Written Communication; ENGL 1060: Writing, Research, and Inquiry; and ENGL 1040: Writing Studies Lab. In the second two years of their funding, Ph.D. students may teach other courses for the English Department, depending on enrollment and staffing needs.



## Responsible Conduct for Research (RCR) Elearning Course

The Graduate College requires new students to complete an online course by the end of the fall semester as part of their training. Responsible research conduct and ethics training is a best practice in higher education and for careers outside of academia. Employers in the academy and the private sector consider such education a value added for employees, and federal agencies require this training of researchers for grant eligibility. Failure to complete the RCR results in a hold placed on the student's account and an inability to register for classes.

# Registration, Courses, and Grades

## Initial Advising and Registration

Once students are admitted into a graduate program, they will receive information about course offerings. All students are strongly encouraged to contact the Graduate Office with questions before they register themselves for classes.

**Note:** Courses can fill quickly, so students should register themselves immediately for any class they deem highly desirable. Students may place themselves on the waitlist for a closed course. If a seat becomes available, the Registrar's Office will notify the student, who then has twenty-four hours to register. Students on a waitlist must check their email daily or risk losing the opportunity to register. More information on the waitlist can be found on the [Registrar's site](#).

A "permanent program" is the official departmental record of the student's coursework and is set up and maintained by the graduate director. The permanent program helps students gain a solid understanding of the coursework requirements for their degrees.

Students who wish to begin taking classes early can enroll in up to nine hours of transferable course work under non-degree seeking status. Please see the non-degree section (p. 8) of this handbook for instructions on obtaining non-degree status.

## Registration Requirements

**Note:** Please consult the *Graduate Catalog's* policies on academic regulations and full-time/part-time status for information on the way that enrollment influences payment of fees to the university.

### **Full-Time / Part-Time Students without Funding**

Six hours constitutes full-time status during fall and spring semesters. Three hours constitutes part-time status during the fall and spring semesters and full-time status during summer sessions.

### **Funded Master's Students**

In order to maintain funding awards, Master's students must register for *at least* six hours during the fall and spring semesters. Funding covers up to nine hours during the fall and spring semesters. First-year students might consider taking only six hours in their first semester to ensure a balance among scholarship, teaching, and service.

### **Funded Doctoral Students**

Funded doctoral students must register for *at least* six hours during the fall and spring semesters. Funding covers up to nine hours during the fall and spring semesters. How many

hours students take in their first year depends on a number of factors, including how students meet the world language requirement, and the number of hours should be discussed with the graduate director or the associate director.

### **Delayed Tuition Remission for Teaching Assistant Appointees**

Teaching assistants who do not use their full eighteen hours of credit during the regular academic year may apply those credits to summer coursework provided they request a delayed tuition remission waiver (under “assistantships”) from the Graduate College. Any student applying for a waiver must consult with the graduate director about submission of a program of study. A student must have been a teaching assistant during the spring semester to exercise this option.

### **All But Dissertation (ABD) Doctoral Students**

After completing all of their coursework (including the world language requirement), qualifying examinations for the Ph.D., and the prospectus defense (Literature and Language) or readings examination (Creative Writing), doctoral students must register for ENGL 7300: Doctoral Dissertation. Students must take *at least* one hour of ENGL 7300 during the fall and spring semesters until graduation for a minimum total of fifteen hours.

## **Course Offerings**

Graduate students should take courses at the 5000, 6000, or 7000 level. 5000-level courses include a mixed enrollment of advanced undergraduate and graduate students. Courses listed at the 6000 and 7000 levels are taken **only** by graduate students.

Before the registration process begins, faculty-authored descriptions of each semester’s course offerings are posted on the English department’s website.



## **Independent Reading and Research Courses**

Students may sign up for a maximum of four hours of ENGL 5980: Directed Reading during their entire time in their program.

Students may not take more than two sections of ENGL 7100: Independent Research during the course of their program of study, and they may not take more than one section in a single semester. A practicum may replace one or both ENGL 7100 sections for students at the master’s level. Students who wish to enroll in ENGL 7100, ENGL 7120, or ENGL 7130 must discuss their plans with the graduate director or associate graduate director.

Only in unusual circumstances may students be allowed to exceed the limit of two 7100s per program, and only in consultation with and approval by the graduate director and the department chair. This option should be used infrequently and preferably no more than once during a program of study.

In order to arrange an ENGL 5980, ENGL 7100, or ENGL 7130 course a student should:

- ✓ Consult with Graduate Office explaining the need for an independent or research course.
- ✓ Find a faculty member in the area to supervise the project.
- ✓ Fill out the Permission to Elect Form *with* the supervising professor. The description of the independent research project should articulate how the section of 7100 differs from regular course offerings and how it contributes to the student's program of study.
- ✓ Sign the form and collect signatures from the faculty member and the graduate director or associate director.
- ✓ Submit the permission to elect form to the Graduate Office for review by the department chair.

Students should remember that ENGL 5980 and ENGL 7100 are for use when required courses are not available and other special circumstances that the student discusses with the graduate director or associate graduate director.

## Adding and Dropping Courses

Students are responsible for informing the Graduate Office in a timely manner of your decision to add or drop

Registration for Fall classes begins in mid-March, and for Spring classes in mid-October. Course descriptions for each semester circulate several weeks before registration opens and students should meet with the graduate director or associate graduate director to discuss selecting courses once the schedule is available.

All students should be registered for Fall by April 1, for Spring by November 1, and for Summer by March 1.

Permission to Elect forms will be collected by the Graduate Office and evaluated by the department chair for Fall by April 15, for Spring by November 15, and for Summer by March 15.

According to the *Graduate Catalog*, students can add any course through the first five days of a semester or session. If students drop a course through the fifth day of the semester, the course

Funded students **must** remain enrolled in *at least* six credit hours each fall and spring semester.

will not be reflected on their transcripts. The Registrar publishes the final date for the drop/add period in the Academic Calendar.

Students are allowed to drop courses without academic penalty (though there may be a financial penalty) subject to the following provision:

*All withdrawals received after the Drop/Add period will be reflected on the student's academic record as a non-punitive "W."*

If students suffer a hardship that requires them to drop a course after the last official day to add/drop, they must complete a hardship withdrawal appeal form, which can be obtained from the Office of the Ombuds. As noted in the *Graduate Catalog*:

*Withdrawal from a course at any time after the end of the student-initiated withdrawal period is effectively a grade change. As such it will be permitted only through the Grade Appeals Process, as described in the section Students Rights and Responsibilities, "Course Grade and Program Dismissal Appeals." To change an assigned grade to "W," documented hardship must be determined to have existed by a GAPDAC Hardship Assessment Panel, as described in the section Students Rights and Responsibilities, "Hardship Status".*

Anyone who drops a course after having received a tuition waiver with a teaching or research assistantship will be asked to pay for the course. (Tuition waivers only cover *completed* coursework.) Students may file an appeal to have this charge waived, but they should consult with the Graduate Office prior to dropping the course and filing the appeal.

## Incompletes

Students receive incompletes when illness, family emergency, or other reasons beyond the control of the students prevent them from completing course requirements for a specific semester. To qualify for an incomplete grade, the student must have a passing grade in the course and have completed the majority of the course work. Incomplete grades given at the 5000 and 6000 level will convert to an E if they are not removed within one calendar year.

The *Graduate Catalog* stipulates that "students who receive an incomplete grade in a course must not reregister for the course in order to remove the 'I.'"

## Grade Appeals

Students wishing to appeal a grade should read the university policy.

# Policies and Procedures

## Student Academic Conduct

Please consult the *Graduate Catalog* for specific information regarding academic honesty and conduct in research.

## Policies Governing Funding

### Applicants

In January and February of every year, the Graduate Committee evaluates graduate program applications and ranks those applications prior to offering admission to prospective students. Once admissions decisions are finalized, the Graduate Committee uses the rankings, financial resources, and teaching needs to award assistantships. Because the department's budget and teaching needs vary each year, there is no set number of awards available in any given year.

### Enrolled Students without Funding

Students who have been admitted into a graduate program without an award may re-apply for an assistantship in any subsequent year. To be considered, students must:

- ✓ Be in good standing in the program
- ✓ Notify the Graduate Office that they would like to be considered for funding
- ✓ Submit a letter of request as an email attachment to the Graduate Office by January 15 explaining the student's progress toward degree and reasons for requesting funding. (This letter will be forwarded to the appropriate review committee.)

The department announces new funding for current students concurrently with all other departmental awards during the Spring semester.

### Funded Students

Once students sign their contracts, they are bound to the terms of that contract for the upcoming academic year. At the end of each year, if the students have satisfactorily carried out their duties, they may expect to receive another contract for the next academic year.

Doctoral students who receive awards from outside the department, such as from the Graduate College or the Writing Center, will move onto departmental funding when these other awards have expired. Please be aware that the total years of funding that a Ph.D. student will receive, regardless of the origination of that funding, is four years.

- |  |
|--|
| * <b>M.A. students</b> are offered awards for two years.     |
| * <b>M.F.A. students</b> are offered awards for three years. |
| * <b>Ph.D. students</b> are offered awards for four years.   |



### **Fifth-Year Doctoral Funding**

The availability of additional funding beyond the fourth year of doctoral study depends upon a number of factors, including the admissions cycle, the departmental budget, and staffing needs for the coming academic year. These factors make awards of fifth-year funding extremely rare.

Doctoral students who wish to apply for an additional year of funding must submit to the Graduate Office via email attachment a letter of application by January 15 outlining reasons for the request and progress toward degree. The Graduate Office will forward any requests to the appropriate review committees, where they will be considered alongside requests for funding from program applicants. Successful applicants will likely be assigned to teach ENGL 1050: Foundations in Written Communication or ENGL 1060: Writing, Research, and Inquiry, and might be asked to teach two courses per semester.

## **Academic Dismissal Policy**

### **Students with Funding**

Funding is subject to the terms and limitations in the letter of appointment. Student funding may be removed by the department chair on the recommendation of the director of graduate studies, Graduate Committee, dissertation advisor, and other relevant faculty. Reasons for removal of funding typically relate to the student's failure to make adequate progress toward completing degree requirements, which might include:

- ✓ Failure to meet language requirements
- ✓ Failure to meet deadlines in establishing committees or submitting required paperwork
- ✓ Accumulation of multiple incomplete grades
- ✓ Failure to maintain minimum GPA requirements

Evaluation of progress is based on a comprehensive review, which includes the department's annual review of students in accordance with the WMU Graduate College policy regarding annual reviews of graduate students. Violations of the WMU Student Code may also provide grounds for dismissal. Any appeal of the revocation of funding must begin with a written appeal to the Graduate Committee that includes a rationale and any appropriate documentation. The Graduate Committee will then review the appeal and make its recommendation to the department chair. Procedures for appeal beyond the department are provided in the *Graduate Catalog* and the student code. Procedures for, and appeals of, revocation of funding for reasons related to student performance as employees are provided by the TAU Agreement.

### **All Graduate Students**

Students may be dismissed from the English graduate program by the department chair on the recommendation of the director of graduate studies, Graduate Committee, dissertation advisor,

and other relevant faculty members. Reasons for dismissal typically relate to the student's failure to make adequate progress toward completing degree requirements. These requirements might include:

- ✓ Failure to meet language requirements
- ✓ Failure to meet deadlines in establishing committees or submitting required paperwork
- ✓ Accumulation of multiple incomplete grades
- ✓ Failure to maintain minimum GPA requirements

Evaluation of progress is based upon the department's annual review of students in accordance with the WMU Graduate College policy regarding annual reviews of graduate students. Violations of the WMU Student Code may also provide grounds for dismissal. Any appeal of the dismissal must begin with a written appeal to the Graduate Committee that includes a rationale and any appropriate documentation. The Graduate Committee will then review the appeal and make its recommendation to the department chair. Procedures for appeal beyond the department are provided in the *Graduate Catalog* and WMU Student Code.

## Annual Graduate Student Assessment

The Graduate College requires departments to administer an assessment to encourage graduate students to reflect upon their progress in the program and to enable faculty members to mentor graduate students better. In response to this requirement, the Graduate Committee has developed an assessment process designed to provide graduate students with the opportunity to self-assess their progress.

In the spring semester, each graduate student receives an email containing a link to a graduate student self-assessment survey.

**All** graduate students are **required** to fill out each section (general information, scholarship, teaching, and professionalism) and select two faculty members to submit evaluations on their behalf, one of which must be the faculty mentor or dissertation advisor.



The purpose of this assessment is to ensure that graduate students are making good progress. If the Graduate Committee thinks that a student is having difficulty, the student will be asked to meet with the department chair, the graduate director, and the major advisor. In this meeting, the student will help devise an action plan to get back on track and make good progress toward

the degree. If a student's assessment report reflects problems in the next year, that student will again be asked to meet with the department chair and the graduate director to consider available options. Regardless of positive or negative reviews from the departmental assessment, the student must maintain the Graduate College's requirements for good standing, particularly the GPA requirement.

The Graduate Committee faculty believes that this assessment benefits graduate students in a number of important ways. Students will reflect on their progress and on their future professional goals, and it enables them to receive timely feedback and mentoring from the faculty. Students who have questions or concerns should contact the Graduate Office.

## Graduation Auditing

In order to graduate, students must fulfill all of the requirements of their graduate program and

GRADUATION AUDIT REQUEST DEADLINES	
Graduation Semester	Last Day to Apply
Spring	October 1
Summer I	February 1
Summer II	February 1
Fall	February 1

must have gone through the graduation auditing process. During the semester **prior** to their anticipated graduation date, students should meet with the graduate director or advisor to finalize their permanent program. At this point, the graduate director will sign and forward the permanent program to the Registrar's Office, and each student will need to make a formal request for a graduation audit.

The Registrar's Office will charge a \$55.00 processing fee to the student's account after requesting a graduation audit.

[Get Information about Graduation](#)



## Association of Graduate English Students (AGES)

In Fall 2000, the department's graduate students formed the Association of Graduate English Students (AGES) as a registered student organization. Each spring, graduate students elect officers who serve for a one-year term. Officers appoint graduate students to serve on a variety of AGES subcommittees and departmental committees. The mission of AGES is to connect students in the graduate English program through social events, community service, and professional development. Programming includes general and executive board meetings, social outings and networking opportunities, and annual fundraisers benefiting the local community.



# Master's Degree Programs

## M.A. Transfer Credits

Incoming master's degree students are allowed to transfer six semester hours of credit earned from another accredited graduate program into their English department permanent program.

To transfer credits, a student should meet with the graduate director and fill out a transfer of credit form that will be sent to the Registrar's Office for approval. If the hours are approved, they are placed on the student's permanent program; the grades are recorded as CR (Credit) and do not factor into the student's overall GPA.

For courses to qualify as transfer credits, students must have:

- ✓ Paid for courses as graduate credits
- ✓ Received a B (3.0) or higher
- ✓ Earned the credits in the previous six years

## Master of Arts in English Requirements (33 hours)

The M.A. is a thirty-three-hour degree. The required courses that all M.A. students must take are:

- ✓ ENGL 6150: Literary Criticism
- ✓ ENGL 6900: Scholarship and Writing in the Profession

ENGL 6900 should be taken during the last semester of a student's program of study. The additional courses required to fulfill the thirty-three hours are chosen in consultation with the Graduate Office.

In addition, students select one of the three tracks to pursue.

The **M.A. in English with an Emphasis in Literature and Language** requires 27 hours of elective credit.

The **M.A. in English with an Emphasis in Medieval Literature and Language** requires:

- ✓ ENGL 5300: Medieval Literature
- ✓ ENGL 5760: Introduction to Old Norse
- ✓ ENGL 6760: Old English
- ✓ Two of the following:
  - ✓ ENGL 5550: Major Writers (appropriate to the medieval period)
  - ✓ ENGL 5760: Icelandic Sagas in Translation
  - ✓ ENGL 5770: Advanced Readings in Old Norse
  - ✓ ENGL 5970: Studies in English (appropriate to the medieval period)

- ✓ ENGL 6100: Seminar (appropriate to the medieval period)
- ✓ ENGL 6420: Studies in Drama (appropriate to the medieval period)
- ✓ 12 hours of elective credit

The **M.A. in English with an Emphasis in English Education** requires:

- ✓ A course in children's/adolescent literature
- ✓ 3 sections of ENGL 6780: English Education Seminar (topics vary)
- ✓ 15 hours of elective credit

## Master of Fine Arts Requirements (48 hours)

The M.F.A. is a forty-eight-hour creative writing degree. The required courses for M.F.A. students depend on the student's area of specialization. The requirements for this degree are:

- ✓ Fifteen hours of creative writing workshops selected from the following:
  - ✓ ENGL 5660 or 6660
  - ✓ ENGL 5660 or 6660 (at least 3 hours) outside the area of specialization
- ✓ ENGL 6110: Literary Forms in the area of specialization
- ✓ ENGL 6110: Literary Forms in another genre
- ✓ At least six hours in literature from among 5000- and 6000-level courses
- ✓ ENGL 6990: M.F.A. Project (3-6 hours)
- ✓ Any additional electives to bring the total hours to 48
- ✓ A public performance of material selected from the student's M.F.A. Project
- ✓ The submission of an approved M.F.A. Project

M.F.A. students cap their degree by writing a thesis of approximately 20 to 80 pages (with the page length established by reasonable expectations in the genre and agreed to by the thesis director). During their final year of study—usually the third year—students form a thesis committee, submit the MFA Project Committee Declaration Form, and register for three to six hours of English 6990: MFA Project.

A thesis committee usually consists of three members: the director of the thesis, another member of the creative writing faculty, and a non-creative writing faculty member, such as a member of the literature faculty. Students should select a thesis director and establish a committee in the fall semester of their third year.

Then, in the opening weeks of the spring semester, the student should confirm with the thesis director and the committee a deadline or series of deadlines for completion of the thesis project. These deadlines should provide adequate time for all committee members to read and respond to the work. The final draft of the thesis should be approved by the committee no later than a week before the end of the spring term. Once the thesis is approved, each committee member completes the Thesis Approval Form and turns it in to the Graduate Office.

## Doctoral Programs

### Ph.D. Transfer Credits

Upon entering the Ph.D. program with a master's degree, students are credited with up to thirty hours toward the ninety hours required for graduation.

### Doctoral Course Requirements

#### Ph.D. in English with an Emphasis in Literature and Language Requirements

In order to receive the Ph.D. in English with an emphasis in literature and language, the student must fulfill through transferred or WMU-earned credits the following requirements:

##### **Required Courses:**

- ✓ ENGL 6150: Literary Criticism
- ✓ A course in the student's area of specialization
- ✓ 24 hours of elective credit

##### **Teaching Component:**

Students must take two courses in teaching and pedagogy. This component can be fulfilled by taking six hours elected from courses or practica in the teaching of composition, literature, creative writing, or English language. Practica are taken in classes at and below the 4000-level. Students teaching ENGL 1050: Foundations in Written Communication for the first time **must** enroll in ENGL 6690: Methods of Teaching College Writing during the semester in which they teach.

##### **Area of Specialization:**

Beyond their required courses, students will select an area of specialization in preparation for their dissertation.

##### **Readings in Doctoral Specialization:**

Ph.D. in literature and language students must take 3-9 hours of ENGL 7110: Readings in Doctoral Specialization in preparation for their qualifying examination and dissertation prospectus defense.

##### **Doctoral Dissertation:**

Students must take fifteen hours of ENGL 7300: Doctoral Dissertation and must continue to enroll in ENGL 7300 for at least one hour during each fall and spring semester until graduation.



## Ph.D. with an Emphasis in Creative Writing Requirements

In order to receive the Ph.D. in English with an emphasis in creative writing, the student must fulfill through transferred or WMU-earned credits the following requirements:

### Required Courses:

- ✓ ENGL 6150: Literary Criticism
- ✓ One forms course in the student's genre
- ✓ A course in contemporary literature in the student's genre
- ✓ At least 12 hours of specialization (i.e., workshop)
- ✓ 9 hours of elective credit

### Teaching Component:

Students must take two courses in teaching and pedagogy. This component can be fulfilled by taking six hours elected from courses or practica in the teaching of composition, literature, English language, or creative writing. Practica are taken in classes at and below the 4000-level. Students are encouraged to complete practica out of their area of specialization, either in non-creative writing courses or in creative writing courses outside of their genre. Students teaching ENGL 1050: Foundations in Written Communication for the first time **must** enroll in ENGL 6690: Methods of Teaching College Writing during the semester in which they teach.

### Readings in Doctoral Specialization:

Ph.D. in creative writing students must take 3-9 hours of ENGL 7110: Readings in Doctoral Specialization in preparation for their qualifying examination and readings exam defense.

### Doctoral Dissertation:

Students must take fifteen hours of ENGL 7300: Doctoral Dissertation and must continue to enroll in ENGL 7300 for at least one hour during each fall and spring semester until graduation.

## World Language Requirement



The Department of English requires Ph.D. students to have reading proficiency in one world language. Such proficiency allows students to read scholarship and literature in another language, thus keeping abreast of new developments in a particular field. It also allows students to appreciate the grammar, structure, vocabulary, and nuances of English. The world language

requirement should not be viewed as an obstacle, but as an opportunity to broaden and deepen one's understanding of other languages and of English itself. Students should consider how they can make this opportunity beneficial to their goals and interests as scholars, writers, or teachers.

Doctoral students must meet the world language requirement prior to the start of their third year (i.e., by end of summer session II of their second year in the program). Students should therefore talk to the graduate director about this requirement in their first year, ideally in their first semester. The purpose of this conversation is to assess the student's prior language background and to plan a way forward, as there is more than one way to meet this requirement.

Students whose primary language is not English may fulfill the world language requirement through a translation exam, provided that there are WMU faculty available with expertise in the language. (See details about the translation exam below.) Those who wish to fulfill the requirement in their primary language must consult with the Graduate Office in their first semester of study.

Only students who earned a major or a minor in an approved world language during their undergraduate years, or who passed a world language examination at the graduate level from another institution, may have their world language requirement waived, if the work was carried out within the last seven years and if the student earned a B or better in the courses or on the examination.

There are several ways students can demonstrate reading proficiency by taking courses.

- (1) Two-course graduate reading proficiency sequences are offered in **French** and **German** (course numbers 5000 and 5010) in alternate summers. These two courses are designed for graduate students who have little to no previous experience in either language. By passing French or German 5000 and 5010 with a B or better, students will have fulfilled the world language requirement. Each class is 3 credit hours. Note that Spanish does not offer such courses.
- (2) Year-long courses in **Old English** and in **Old Norse-Icelandic** are offered by the English department in alternating years. Students who pass both semesters with a B or better will have fulfilled the world language requirement. For students in creative writing, the Old English sequence may be worth considering since studying the development and vocabulary of the English language supplements crucial skills for teaching and writing in English.
- (3) Students may also take undergraduate coursework in a language. If students have a background in French, German, or Spanish, they should take WMU's free online placement exam to determine their level of proficiency. To read about the online placement test in **French** and **German**, go to

<https://wmich.edu/languages/advising/placement>. To read about the online placement test in **Spanish**, go to <https://wmich.edu/spanish/onlineplacement>. It is important to note that you can only take the placement exam once.

Students can also take placement tests in languages other than French, German, and Spanish but these are not online. To read about how to take a placement test in **Arabic, Chinese, Greek, Japanese, or Latin**, go to <https://wmich.edu/languages/advising/placement>.

Once students have completed the placement exam, they will be notified of their scores and the level of the language class they should take. As soon as students have received their scores or talked to the appropriate language advisor for that language, they should contact the Graduate Office to plan the next step.

- **If you place into 2000**, there are two options to complete the requirement:
  - a) Take 2000 and pass it with a grade of B or better, and then take the translation exam in that language. Passing the translation exam fulfills the world language requirement.
  - b) Take 2000 and then take 2010 or, if available, another 2000-level course. Passing both courses with a grade of B or better fulfills the world language requirement.
- **If you place into 2010**, take that course. Passing it with a grade of B or better fulfills the world language requirement.
- **If you place into a 3000-level course**, then plan to take the translation exam as soon as possible. Passing the translation exam fulfills the world language requirement.

IMPORTANT: graduate students do not register for undergraduate courses in any language under the number listed in the catalog. Instead, graduate students enroll, with permission from the instructor, in FREN, GERM, LAT, or SPAN 5020. The course number 5020 is a placeholder created for graduate students to receive graduate credit while enrolled in undergraduate language courses.

Since taking courses can both fulfill the requirement or lead to the translation exam, students need to understand what this exam is and how it is structured.

### **Translation Exam**

Students who have studied a world language before or who place into a 3000-level course based on their performance on a language placement exam may wish to choose this option. The Department of World Languages and Literatures (WLL) and the Department of Spanish

will offer translation exams twice a year, once in October and once in March.

To arrange the translation exam:

- Students should meet with the Graduate Director in the first semester to confirm the language they intend to examine in and what semester they intend to do this;
- The Graduate Director will contact the appropriate faculty member for that language and set up a meeting between the student, the faculty member, and the Graduate Director;
- Once this introductory meeting has taken place, the student, who now has met the appropriate faculty member, is welcome to engage with that person to discuss texts or seek out study tips. Please respect the time of the faculty member who is providing the English department and the student with this service.

Before taking the translation exam:

- The student is to provide the examiner with three primary texts (literary works) and three secondary works (i.e., scholarly or critical ones)—all originally written in the language of choice;
- Pay a fee of \$50.00 made out to the appropriate department. Before paying the fee, students should consult with the Graduate Director for further information. Note, that at the discretion of the chair, the English department may cover the cost for graduate students taking the translation exam for the first time.

The translation exam:

- The translation exam itself consists of two passages, each 300-400 words. All English department students will be asked to translate a primary text (a piece of literature) as well as a secondary text (a commentary, an essay, and/or a scholarly article). Creative writing students **must** translate a literary piece within their genre of specialization (i.e., drama, fiction, or poetry). The student will have three hours to translate the texts and should bring a hard-copy dictionary to the exam.

Communication of results:

- The faculty member overseeing the exam notifies the Graduate Office of the results. The Graduate Office will notify students about their results once the exams have been graded by the language faculty. In the case of a borderline performance, the Graduate Office will consult further with the faculty member(s) who graded the exam to determine next steps.

## Timeliness to Degree

Students have seven years to complete their degree from the beginning of their program. Please consult the Request to Extend Time of Program section (p. 41) of this handbook for information on how to request an extension.



# Doctoral Qualifying Examinations

## Requirement and Eligibility

All doctoral students must pass qualifying examinations prior to advancement to candidacy for the doctoral degree. Students should begin selecting examination areas and reading from the core lists mid-way through their coursework (i.e., the summer after their first year in the program). Examinees will draft a pre-exam proposal that identifies the areas of study, selected texts for the core (when required) and specialty lists, primary mentors, and choice of and rationale for each exam mode for the written examinations. To take the qualifying examinations, students **must** have met the world language requirement and are expected to have completed all of their course work.

## Structure and Scheduling

The qualifying examination format consists of two distinct exams, each covering a different field. Students should contact the graduate director in their first year to discuss areas of study and possible examination modes. Students must write at least one sit-down exam. For the second area, students may complete a second sit-down exam; write an article-length, ready-for-submission scholarly piece; conduct a 30-minute conference- or job-style research presentation; or examine in an approved student-designed mode. Each sit-down exam will take place over the course of one four-hour period. Examining committees reserve the right to refuse to allow a student to examine in an area if circumstances dictate. Examinees may choose from the following fields:

1. African American Literature to 1940
2. African American Literature after 1940
3. American Literature to 1865
4. American Literature 1865-1945
5. Early Medieval Literature
6. Late Medieval Literature
7. Renaissance Literature (through Milton)
8. Restoration and 18th-Century Literature
9. 19th-Century Romantic Literature
10. Victorian Literature
11. Modern British Literature (1900 to 1950)
12. Postcolonial Literature
13. Comics Studies
14. Children's and YA Literature (by permission of the examining committee)
15. Literary Theory
16. The Theory and Practice of Teaching English
17. Specialty Topic in English Education

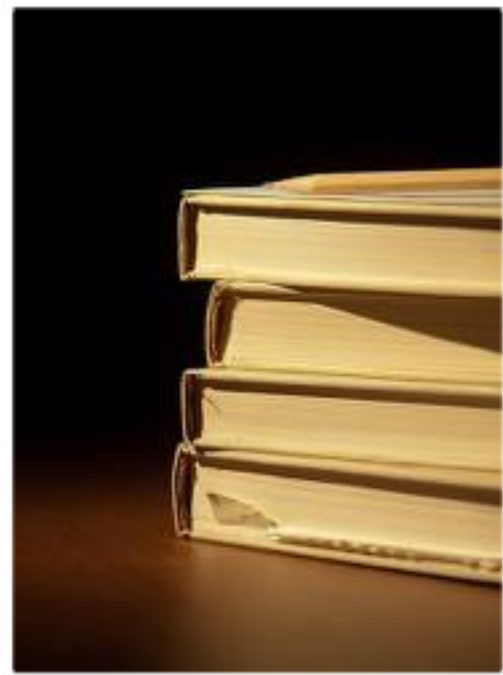
Only Creative Writing students may take exams in contemporary fiction, contemporary drama, and contemporary poetry.

18. Contemporary Fiction
19. Contemporary Drama
20. Contemporary Poetry

Regardless of examination mode, students are expected to know the core lists for each area of study. In addition to studying each core list, students are required to develop a “specialty list” for each study area; if a student replaces a sit-down examination with an article, presentation, or other project, then the works cited are presumed to constitute the specialty list for that study area. The only stipulations as to choice(s) of examination areas are:

- ✓ Doctoral students in creative writing **must** examine in contemporary literature of their own genre as their major field of study.

In preparing to specialize and eventually examine in any given field, students should first learn which faculty members have been appointed to each area’s qualifying exam committee, information which can be found on the department’s website. Then, students should consult with the graduate director about selecting a primary mentor for each exam area. After identifying possible primary mentors, students may contact each faculty member to discuss the exam and ask that person about serving as primary mentor. If there is no one on the qualifying exam committee willing to serve as primary mentor, then those students should discuss the matter with the graduate director. Students should also consult with the other faculty member on the qualifying exam committee prior to developing the pre-exam proposal.



Students design and submit specialty lists geared to their interests—such as a topic that will help them with their dissertation—and based upon their individual research, provided faculty who serve on the appointed qualifying examination committee and who specialize in the area approve. Students should populate their specialty lists with at least twenty works of their choosing, approximately ten of which are primary texts and ten of which are secondary texts. No textual repetition should occur among the specialty lists for sit-down examinations.

Sit-down examinations will be administered in mid-to-late October and mid-March during each academic year. Each sit-down exam has four questions, two addressing the core list and two addressing the student’s specialty list. Students must answer one core question and one specialty question. Examinees will have four hours to answer the two questions in accordance with each question’s instructions. Typically, written exams are between ten and fifteen double-spaced



pages in length. Projects replacing one of the sit-down exams are due during the week the sit-down examinations are administered.

Students will have access to a word processing program to type their exam answers, and the Graduate Office will provide scrap paper. Examinees may bring the following items into the examination room:

- ✓ Food and drink (but must remain courteous to other examinees)
- ✓ Earphones
- ✓ Exam lists
- ✓ Full bibliographic citations of sources

Examinees in need of accommodations must work with the Office of Disability Services for Students.

*Note on Literary Theory Exam Format:* Unlike the other exams, the literary theory exam asks students to identify a key figure, define a key term, trace the history and trajectory of a particular theory, and employ a theory in a specialized question addressing the student's specialty reading list. Students will select from among four key figures, four key terms, two histories, and two specialty questions. Students must only answer one per section.

Key dates and estimated exam periods appear in the table below:

Fall Examinees	Spring Examinees
<b>At least one year before examining:</b> Meet with the graduate director to begin planning exams	<b>At least one year before examining:</b> Meet with the graduate director to begin planning exams
<b>End of April:</b> Turn in pre-exam proposal	<b>Early September:</b> Turn in pre-exam proposal
<b>Mid-October:</b> Written Sit-down Exams (usually the week after Fall Break); alternate exam mode projects due	<b>Mid-March:</b> Written Sit-down Exams (usually the week after Spring Break); alternate exam mode projects due
<b>Late October-early November:</b> Oral Exams (roughly within two weeks of learning written exam results)	<b>Late March to early April:</b> Oral Exams (roughly within two weeks of learning written exam results)

## Oral Exam

Students must pass both written exams to move to the oral. A student who fails any part of the written exam must retake the exam in that area of study during the next exam cycle or, with the permission of the relevant faculty exam committee, at an earlier scheduled date. Students will take the oral examination within two weeks of receiving the written exam results.

The oral examination provides an opportunity to discuss the two exam areas with faculty from each area. It encourages students and faculty alike to elaborate on the written exams; to pursue issues not addressed by the written exams; and, where possible, to consider connections between the student's areas of study. In addition to the content of the two written exam documents, examinees should be prepared to discuss any texts from the core list for each area of study and any works from the specialty list for each exam mode.

Examinees should treat the oral exam as a professional event in their careers and dress appropriately, as if they were about to teach a class or present at a professional event. The oral exam typically begins with the examinee directly and succinctly reflecting for no more than ten minutes on the written performance—discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the written examination and demonstrating, when appropriate, additional knowledge about each of the study areas. During questioning, students should expect to field inquiries that ask them to expound further on their written responses and to consider topics and texts from the reading lists which might not have been addressed in the written exams. The goal is for students to demonstrate mastery of their fields—a flexible breadth of knowledge that allows them to answer a range of questions with reference to various texts on the reading lists.

Each oral exam will have four faculty members present:

- ✓ The student's two primary advisors (each representing one of the study areas)
- ✓ A student-selected faculty member (perhaps from the major area)
- ✓ The graduate director or the associate graduate director (who observes but does not vote)

Students may ask any English department faculty member who has graduate faculty status to serve as the person of choice. Often, this individual has some familiarity with the student's major field of study, but students may wish to consult the graduate director if they have a reason to request a faculty member from another area (e.g., for a theoretical or methodological approach). Occasionally, a faculty member serves as primary mentor in both areas of study; in such cases, examinees are allowed two persons of choice to fill out the committee. Faculty serving on an oral exam committee will read all of the student's written exams.

The oral examination will last a minimum of one hour and a maximum of two. Only the student, the oral exam committee, and the graduate director or associate director may attend.

## Assessment and Notification of Results

A two-person committee in each area of study writes the questions for a sit-down exam and grades the submitted work, be it a sit-down exam or a project (such as an article or presentation). The committee members will evaluate the written exam within their area and award it a grade of either "Pass" or "Fail." Students are notified of results via email approximately one week after the

last sit-down exam is taken. (Occasionally, results may be slightly delayed if faculty members have other professional commitments.)

In order to pass the written portion of the qualifying examination, the student must receive a grade of “Pass” on both area examinations. A student who passes one question on the sit-down exam but fails the other must retake the entire exam area. Students who wish to appeal a failing grade should contact the graduate director, who will ask the Graduate Committee to evaluate the examination in consultation with the relevant examination committee. If the faculty on the Graduate Committee determine that the grade should not be changed, the student will need to schedule a retake. Students who do not pass one or more study areas of the qualifying examination may retake those area(s). If they do not pass the retake(s), they will meet with the department chair, the graduate director, and their advisor to assess the situation. Students are allowed two retakes in any study area of the written portion of the qualifying examination.

If a student chooses to write a scholarly piece in place of a sit-down exam, the final draft should be ready for submission to an academic venue. Ready for submission means the draft should be proofread, coherent, and polished so that the examinee need make only minor changes to the content based upon comments received at the oral exam. Readiness for submission as defined above is the criteria by which an exam-article will be evaluated as pass or fail.

A student’s performance during the oral examination is evaluated immediately afterward. The examinee will be asked to leave the room to allow the committee to discuss the student’s performance. Oral exams are graded pass/fail, with each of the three committee members receiving one vote. Once the committee arrives at a decision, the student is called back into the room and given the results.

Students who fail the oral exam will have two opportunities to retake it, and they should meet with the oral exam committee as early as possible to receive feedback so they can prepare for and schedule the retake. The retake should be scheduled as soon as possible so that the original committee can be reconstituted. If one of the original committee members cannot participate, then that exam committee will choose the second reader to serve on the oral. If possible, the retake should be scheduled at the end of the semester of the original exam. If this is not possible, the retake should be scheduled early in the next semester.

Students who fail may also change their examination areas. The Graduate Office strongly encourages examinees to discuss this option with their advisor if they fail more than once.

# Dissertation Requirements

## Defense Examination and Admission to Doctoral Candidacy

If they have not already unofficially started, the candidates now begin the research process necessary to write their dissertation prospectus or their doctoral readings exam.

Doctoral students who have completed all their coursework, satisfied the world language requirement, and passed all their qualifying examinations then proceed to appoint their dissertation committee by completing the Graduate College form and obtaining the requisite signatures. Students should select a dissertation director and consult with this person about who might serve on the dissertation committee, including who might become the student's outside committee member.

University regulations require that a student's dissertation committee be composed of at least three members: a chair, one graduate faculty member from the student's home department, and one graduate faculty member from outside the student's department or outside the university. The English department asks for **two** graduate faculty members from the home department, making for a total of **four** dissertation committee members.

As part of WMU policy, all committee members from outside the university must submit a current vita to the administrative assistant so that the necessary paperwork can be completed and sent to the Graduate College. This is essential to forming the dissertation committee.

Once the dissertation committee is in place and the form submitted to the Graduate College, students in literature and language begin to craft a prospectus while creative writing students begin drafting their readings exam. Although the move to more independent study can be liberating to students, it is also the time at which they benefit most from mentoring. Advisors are encouraged to set up regular appointments with their mentees and to monitor their progress.

When the dissertation advisor believes the document is ready for the full committee to read, the student arranges for the prospectus defense or readings exam to take place. To schedule the doctoral readings examination or the dissertation prospectus defense, the student should contact the dissertation committee to find a date and a two-hour block of time in which the committee can meet. The exam should then be scheduled by the administrative assistant *at least* two weeks in advance of the agreed upon date. Please note that the committee appointment form must be filed before a prospectus defense can be scheduled.

**Literature Candidates | Dissertation Prospectus Defense** The dissertation prospectus is typically a 20-30-page document that outlines the project, reviews previous scholarship, presents the project's thesis, and provides a rationale for the study.

Lasting a maximum of two hours, the prospectus defense begins with the student briefly explaining the project's origins, the guiding question(s) behind the study, and the basic rationale for the structure of the dissertation. The student might also solicit advice from the committee about key concerns that arose while writing the prospectus. When the student finishes, committee members will begin to ask questions and offer constructive criticism about how best to proceed with the project. Once the committee members have finished, the student will be asked to step out while faculty discuss whether to approve the project. The student is then invited to return and is immediately informed of the results. Students who pass the defense gather the appropriate signatures on the department's Project Approval Form. This form should be completed prior to the defense so that it is ready to be signed by the committee members. Once this form is submitted to the Graduate Office, the student is considered a doctoral candidate (ABD—All But Dissertation).

### **Creative Writing Candidates | Doctoral Reading Examinations**

The doctoral readings examination is a 20-30-page document that helps students contextualize a creative dissertation within a larger literary, generic, or stylistic tradition. Students read a list of at least twenty titles that will help them write a critical essay; many students choose to use this experience as an opportunity to write an introduction to their creative work or to write a piece that they might use on the academic job market.

Creative writing candidates **must** pass the doctoral reading examination **before** defending their dissertation. Ideally, the doctoral reading examinations will not occur on the same day.

Like the prospectus defense, the readings exam lasts a maximum of two hours and begins with a brief introduction of the project by the student, after which the committee asks questions. Once the committee is satisfied, the student will be asked to step out while faculty review the performance. Students who pass the readings exam gather the appropriate signatures on the department's Project Approval Form. This form should be completed prior to the defense so that it is ready to be signed by the committee members. Once this form is submitted to the Graduate Office, the student is considered a doctoral candidate (ABD—All But Dissertation).

Students should approach the prospectus defense and the readings exam as professional events in their careers. Thus, they should dress professionally, as if they were about to teach class or present a paper at a conference.

Students who are ABD can now apply for Admission to Doctoral Candidacy through the Graduate College. For teaching assistants, achieving doctoral candidacy includes a pay increase that takes effect the semester after which the form is submitted and approved. A doctoral candidate is also eligible to apply for a dissertation completion fellowship. Students should consult the Graduate College's webpage for application criteria and procedures.

## Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB)

Advisors must assist those students conducting field research to make sure that their project is first approved by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB). Information on this process can be obtained going to the HSIRB website.

## The Dissertation Advisor/Advisee Relationship

Once a student has selected a dissertation advisor, the student and advisor need to discuss the plan for submitting chapters to the advisor and the rest of the dissertation committee. The ideal scenario is:

- ✓ The student begins by submitting a chapter to the advisor who reads it and gives the student feedback on how to revise.
- ✓ The student revises and continues work on the particular chapter.
- ✓ Only after the dissertation advisor has approved the chapter—meaning that the advisor believes that it is ready to go to the other members of the committee so that they can give their feedback—should the student submit the chapter to the rest of the committee.
- ✓ The committee members provide feedback on the revised chapter.

The reasons for this are that the members of the committee may not be the specialists in the field that the advisor is, and that one of them is an outside reader, which may mean that he or she is further removed from the subject matter. It is, though, very important for the student to get feedback on all the chapters, with the possible exception of the conclusion, from all the committee members before compiling the defensible draft.

If a student submits what seems a defensible draft to the committee without having had the committee members see the chapters prior to this, the student runs a risk of being told the dissertation defense must be postponed. The defensible draft is one that, barring minor revisions, should be ready to be submitted to the Graduate College.

Both students and dissertation advisors should also be aware of deadlines and reasonable expectations of the time necessary to read and comment on a chapter, and they should make all attempts to submit and return chapters in as timely a manner as possible. The one exception to this is that the defensible draft needs to be submitted to the committee with a minimum of four weeks before the defense date; it is a good idea for the student to contact the committee members to see how much time they will need to read the dissertation.

## Dissertation

After passing the dissertation prospectus defense examination (literature) or the doctoral readings examination (creative writing), the student should begin working on the dissertation in earnest by enrolling in ENGL 7300: Doctoral Dissertation. To enroll for the first time, a student must fill out the Permission to Elect form.

This form requires the signatures of:

- ✓ The student
- ✓ The advisor
- ✓ The graduate director or associate director
- ✓ The department chair

Once students have enrolled in ENGL 7300 for the first time, they must take at least one credit hour of ENGL 7300 for each fall and spring semester continuously until graduation. For dissertation hours, the Permission to Elect form need be completed only once.

Once the dissertation is complete, the student needs to work with the dissertation committee and a representative from the Graduate Office to set up a dissertation defense date and fill out the Dissertation Defense Scheduling Form. A graduate office representative attends the dissertation defense in an advisory role, so the Graduate Office should be included in the scheduling process.

The Dissertation Defense Scheduling Form must be given to the administrative assistant for submission to the Graduate College *at least* three weeks prior to the dissertation defense date – this is a very strict deadline – there are no exceptions. The student should also find out the deadline for scheduling a defense – these dates change each semester and can be obtained by consulting the Graduate College Calendar of Deadlines. Finally, the student should consult with the administrative assistant to reserve a conference room and should be sure that all four committee members have the final draft of the dissertation *at least* one month prior to the defense date. A copy should also be submitted to the Graduate Office.

At the dissertation defense, the student should bring three copies of the Dissertation Approval Form to be signed by all the committee members. The forms must be typed up in advance by the student. Once the forms are signed, they should be handed back to the student for inclusion in the submitted dissertation. Graduate students should download the Dissertation Check-In Form, which includes up-to-date information on the fees that must be paid and forms that must be obtained from the Graduate College in order to submit the dissertation. Each semester, there is a deadline for submission of dissertations – graduate students who are planning to defend should obtain the Dissertation Check-In Form and the deadline information in order to plan out the defense within the time limits set by the Graduate College.



The Graduate College has specific requirements for formatting the dissertation. Students should familiarize themselves with these requirements **before** writing the dissertation. Therefore, students should consider writing the dissertation with the formatting required for submitting the manuscript to the Graduate College or plan two to four weeks for formatting at the end of the dissertation to meet this requirement.



As with the prospectus defense and the readings exam, students should treat the dissertation defense as a professional event and dress appropriately. A typical dissertation defense lasts between ninety minutes and two hours. The session usually begins with an introductory presentation designed by the student to provide an overview of the dissertation. For literature students, this presentation is usually an overview of the project and its findings; for creative writing students, it usually consists of a reading from the dissertation. After the presentation, the committee will ask the student questions and contribute observations about how the dissertation can be improved. At the end of the defense, the student will be asked to leave while the committee deliberates. Once the committee has reached a consensus, the student will be recalled and the results of the defense announced. Often the committee will have suggestions for revisions even if the dissertation has been successfully defended, and the student will work with the dissertation chair to incorporate these comments into the final draft of the document before it is submitted to the Graduate College. Unless the Graduate College detects formatting problems, submission of the dissertation is the final step in the process before graduation.

## Request to Extend Time of Program

If circumstances compel students to request an extension beyond the seven-year deadline for earning the Ph.D. or the six-year deadline for earning the M.A. or M.F.A., they should obtain a form entitled Request to Extend Time to Complete Graduate Degree Program (under “special circumstances”).

The student should fill out the request portion, ask the faculty advisor and the graduate director to fill out their portions, request the chair’s signature, and submit the form to the Graduate College. The student typically will hear within a week whether the request has been approved.

## Appendix A: Rights and Responsibilities

Since advising and supervising constitute two of the most significant professional relationships of faculty members and graduate students, it is important to highlight the rights and responsibilities of both advisors and advisees.

### General Rights and Responsibilities

1. Graduate faculty and graduate students should observe the Modern Language Association's Statement of Professional Ethics. Both advisor and advisee should understand that their relationship is professional rather than personal. All faculty members advising graduate students must know and abide by Western Michigan University's policies, including provisions of the AAUP, TAU, and PIO Agreements.
2. Graduate faculty should be candid with their advisees about their performance and career prospects. Graduate faculty should provide prompt feedback on research and writing for coursework, including timely reading of thesis drafts. Whenever discussing a student's situation with other faculty or university staff, graduate advisors should use discretion and respect for a student's privacy.
3. Good, accurate advising from faculty depends on willingness of graduate students to initiate communication, identify key issues, and listen to advice with an open mind. All graduate students should recognize that they, in the end, have primary responsibility for their own graduate education and for their development as scholars and teachers.
4. Graduate faculty and graduate students should know the rules of the programs of study contained in the English Graduate Handbook and the Graduate College Catalog, especially the required coursework, language training, general/preliminary examinations, and all stages of thesis preparation from prospectus to completion. Faculty should keep themselves informed about the current program requirements. Graduate students are responsible for knowing and abiding by the rules of their program of study, even if they have been misinformed on a particular issue by a faculty member. Students and faculty should consult the Graduate Office if there is or has been the potential for misinformation.
5. Faculty working with students, together with the Graduate Office, should ensure that their students make timely progress in completing their program of study. Both faculty advisors and graduate students need to be familiar with deadlines for the different stages of the student's program and should allow ample lead time for meeting such deadlines, which are outlined in the department's *Graduate Handbook* and the *Graduate College Catalog*.

### Responsibilities of Dissertation Advisors

1. Dissertation advisors will provide a written response to the advisee's annual graduate

review to the student and to the director of graduate studies, for inclusion in the permanent file. While such evaluations occur formally each year, they should be part of the ongoing supervising dialogue between advisor and advisee.

2. When the student passes the prospectus defense or readings examination, the advisor should send an email to the Graduate Office confirming the completion of this requirement.
3. Dissertation advisors should advise their students on how to develop and sustain an intellectual agenda and build a professional career. In addition to regular communication with their advisees, dissertation advisors should discuss the full range of issues relating to the chosen program of study and professional development. Such issues will vary depending on advisee and circumstances but would usually include: conducting and presenting research, teaching, developing and completing a thesis, grant seeking, publication venues, and potential job market and career strategies. When dissertation advisors or student advisees are not in residence, dissertation advisors and graduate students should continue to communicate regularly.
4. Dissertation advisors should expect to write letters of recommendation on behalf of their students for grants/fellowships and employment opportunities.

### **Responsibilities of Supporting Graduate Faculty**

Faculty members who play supporting roles in the graduate student's education (as seminar instructors, supervisors of teaching assistants, members of exam or thesis committees) have responsibilities similar to those of dissertation advisors. Some aspects of these roles merit highlighting separately:

1. In the first year or two of the Ph.D. student's program, his or her mentor (more than likely the person who will become the dissertation advisor) provides a written response to the advisee's annual graduate review to the student and to the director of graduate studies, for inclusion in the student's permanent file. While such evaluations occur formally each year, they should be part of the ongoing supervising dialogue between advisor and advisee.
2. Faculty who teach graduate courses or serve on examination and thesis committees have an obligation to provide complete, candid evaluation of all students in a timely fashion.
3. Faculty who teach graduate courses or serve on examination and thesis committees should expect to write letters of recommendation on behalf of their students for grants/fellowships and employment opportunities.
4. Faculty who serve on dissertation committees should provide written responses to the dissertation in a timely fashion, including the kinds of revision required for approval.

## Appendix B: Timeline to Degree

This timeline<sup>2</sup> provides an *ideal* outline for the timeliness for degree for full-time students. Every student's own educational trajectory will vary in some ways from this suggestion. Nonetheless, students should still find a larger scope timeline like this useful when planning their permanent programs. All new graduate students are advised to take six credit hours in their first semester of study, though students may take nine at their discretion.

### Master's Timeline (M.A.)

Master's	Year One	✓ ✓	Familiarize yourself with program requirements. Begin coursework.
Master's	Year Two	✓ ✓ ✓	Continue taking coursework and fulfilling graduation requirements. Fulfill M.A. capstone project. Potentially apply for admission to Ph.D. programs.

### Master of Fine Arts Timeline

M.F.A.	Year One	✓ ✓	Familiarize yourself with program requirements. Begin taking in-genre workshops and elective coursework.
M.F.A.	Year Two	✓ ✓	Continue taking workshops in area of specialization. Take one to two workshops outside area of specialization.
M.F.A.	Year Three	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	Continue taking workshops in area of specialization. Fulfill and submit M.F.A. thesis project. Complete public performance (reading) of a portion of the M.F.A. thesis project Potentially apply to Ph.D. programs.

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<sup>2</sup> This timeline is gratefully adapted from Gregory Colón Semenza's *Graduate Study for the 21st Century*.

## Doctoral Timeline

Doctoral	Year One	✓	Familiarize yourself with program requirements.
		✓	Begin taking coursework and fulfilling graduation requirements.
		✓	Contemplate how to meet the world language requirement.
		✓	Begin studying for qualifying exams during summer.
Doctoral	Year Two	✓	Complete coursework.
		✓	Meet world language requirement.
		✓	Begin compiling qualifying exam specialty lists.
		✓	Submit qualifying specialty lists for approval.
		✓	Continue studying for qualifying exams during summer.
Doctoral	Year Three	✓	Complete qualifying examination.
		✓	Assemble dissertation committee.
		✓	Write and defend dissertation prospectus/readings exam.
		✓	Begin drafting dissertation.
Doctoral	Year Four	✓	Continue writing dissertation chapters and finish a first draft.
		✓	Begin revising dissertation.
Doctoral	Year Five	✓	Complete and defend dissertation.
		✓	Submit properly formatted dissertation to the Graduate College.
		✓	Complete job applications.
		✓	Graduate.

## Appendix C: Course Offerings

Listed below are the catalog descriptions for the courses that are offered by our department at the 5000, 6000, and 7000 level.

**ENGL 5220: Studies in American Literature, 3 hrs.**

Study of a movement or a recurring theme in American literature, such as romanticism, realism, naturalism, humor, or racial issues.

**ENGL 5300: Medieval Literature, 3 hrs.**

Readings in the medieval literary tradition. Some Middle English works will be studied in the original; works in Old English and continental literature will be studied mainly in translation.

**ENGL 5320: English Renaissance Literature, 3 hrs.**

Readings in representative writers of the period 1500-1660.

**ENGL 5340: Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Literature, 3 hrs.**

Readings in representative writers of the period 1660-1800, focusing on the diversity of literary forms in the period.

**ENGL 5360: Romantic Literature, 3 hrs.**

Readings in poetry and criticism, with emphasis on such writers as Blake, Burns, the Wordsworths, Coleridge, Scott, Byron, the Shelleys, and Keats.

**ENGL 5370: Victorian Literature, 3 hrs.**

Readings emphasizing such writers as Carlyle, Mill, Dickens, Thackeray, Eliot, Tennyson, the Brownings, and Arnold.

**ENGL 5380: Modern Literature, 3 hrs.**

Readings in representative writers in the period 1890-1945, not exclusively in British and American literature.

**ENGL 5390: Post-Colonial Literature, 3 hrs.**

At the start of the twentieth century, a handful of western powers ruled over four-fifths of the earth's surface as colonies or other imperial possessions. By the end of the twentieth century, scores of these colonies had gained their independence, and the colonial era was over. But the legacies of colonialism live on in the present day. This is the subject of postcolonial literature, which refers to writing from newly independent nations in Africa, South Asia, the Caribbean, the Middle East, Australasia, and elsewhere.

This course examines how works of postcolonial literature relate to their unique historical and cultural contexts, illustrate prominent postcolonial themes, and engage with postcolonial theory. Thematic and theoretical issues may include the power dynamic between colonizer and colonized, the relationship between European and non-European cultures, depictions of ethnic/racial difference, and the challenge of shaping new nations in the aftermath of colonial rule.

**ENGL 5400: Contemporary Literature, 3 hrs.**

Readings in representative writers who have come to prominence chiefly since 1945.

**ENGL 5550: Studies in Major Writers, 3 hrs.**

Study of the works of classical, European, British, or American writers. Limited to one or two authors. May be repeated for credit as long as the authors covered are different.

**ENGL 5660: Creative Writing Workshop—Fiction, 3 hrs.**

A workshop and conference course in the writing of fiction, with emphasis on refinement of the individual student's style and skills. May be repeated for credit.

**ENGL 5670: Creative Writing Workshop—Poetry, 3 hrs.**

A workshop and conference course in the writing of poetry, with emphasis on refinement of the individual student's style and skills. May be repeated for credit.

**ENGL 5680: Creative Writing Workshop—Playwriting, 3 hrs.**

A workshop and conference course in playwriting, with emphasis on refinement of the individual student's style and skills. May be repeated for credit.

**ENGL 5700: Creative Writing Workshop—Creative Non-fiction, 3 hrs.**

A workshop and conference course in the writing of creative non-fiction, with emphasis on refinement of the individual student's style and skills. May be repeated for credit.

**ENGL 5750: Icelandic Sagas in Translation, 3 hrs.**

Readings in medieval Icelandic literature. This class provides students an opportunity to explore medieval Iceland through its rich mythology, literature, and culture. No previous coursework required in either Old Norse/Icelandic or medieval literature.

**ENGL 5760: Introduction to Old Norse, 3 hrs.**

An introduction to the fundamentals of Old Norse grammar and language. By translating prose and poetry, students will develop an appreciation of the literature and culture of medieval Iceland as well as a reading knowledge of Old Norse.

**ENGL 5770: Advanced Readings in Old Norse, 3 hrs.**

A review of the fundamentals of Old Norse grammar and language learned in ENGL 5760 by

focusing on longer selections from sagas and poems. This class will further students' knowledge of the language and the literature through discussion of them.

**ENGL 5820: Studies in Children's Literature, 3 hrs.**

A study in depth of significant themes, movements, and types of children's literature.

Prerequisite: Permission of the department.

**ENGL 5830: Multi-Cultural American Literature for Children, 3 hrs.**

A course designed to develop an understanding of the cultural diversity of the American experience through multi-cultural oral and written literature for young people. Attention will be paid to developing criteria for selecting and evaluating literature which reflects diversity within the American heritage. Prerequisites: 16 hrs. of English course work.

**ENGL 5970: Studies in English: Variable Topics, 1-3 hrs.**

Group study of special topics in literature, film, English language, and writing. Many of these special courses are organized around special events or speakers on campus or in the community, or in response to special needs or interests of students. Some topics are announced in the schedule of course offerings; some are added during the semester. Further information and full listing of topics may be obtained from the Department of English, sixth floor Sprau Tower.

**ENGL 5980: Readings in English, 1-4 hrs.**

Advanced students with good scholastic records may elect to pursue independently the study of some topic having special interest for them. Topics are chosen and arrangements are made to suit the needs of each student. Approval of English advisor required. May be elected more than once.

**ENGL 6100: Seminar, 3 hrs.**

Study of a problem in literary history or criticism. May be repeated once with the permission of the Graduate Advisor.

**ENGL 6150: Literary Theory, 3 hrs.**

Readings in several significant theorists on the nature of literature, the characteristics of audience response to literature, and principles underlying the analysis and evaluation of literature. Works in at least two genres will be examined in light of these theoretical writings.

**ENGL 6110: Literary Forms, 3 hrs.**

A study in form and technique in one of the four major literary genres: poetry, fiction, drama, non-fiction.

**ENGL 6300: Professionalization in English Studies, 3 hrs.**

This course is intended to prepare graduate students to enter the profession of English Studies.



Topics include: Preparing for the job market and interviewing, writing for the profession, scholarship and the publishing process, attending and presenting at conferences, research and library skills, developing strong teaching practices, and exploring nonacademic careers.

**ENGL 6400: The Nature of Poetry, 3 hrs.**

A study of styles, techniques, forms, and conceptions of poetry, involving practice in explication, both oral and written, of individual poems.

**ENGL 6410: Studies in Modern Poetry, 3 hrs.**

An intensive study of the work of several modern poets.

**ENGL 6420: Studies in Drama, 3 hrs.**

Selected areas of drama from classical times to the present.

**ENGL 6440: The Novel to 1900, 3 hrs.**

An examination of the growth of the novel from its beginnings to the end of the nineteenth century. Particular attention will be paid to the development of its form and narrative conventions. Participants will consider the historical roots grounding the development of the novel as well as the many burgeoning subgenres. Some attention may also be paid to how pre-1900 novels influenced or anticipated novel-writing practices of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

**ENGL 6450: The Novel Since 1900, 3 hrs.**

A study of the growth of the novel from the early twentieth century to the twenty-first century. Particular attention will be paid to the development of its form and narrative conventions since 1900. Participants will consider the historical roots grounding the development of the novel as well as the many burgeoning subgenres. Some attention may also be paid to how novels of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have been influenced by novel-writing practices established in publications of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

**ENGL 6520: Shakespeare: Theater and Culture, 3 hrs.**

This class will focus on a variety of Shakespeare plays with attention to several contexts. We will discuss early-modern theater history and the socio-political aspects of the culture in which Shakespeare's plays were created and first performed. We will also attend to the changing nature of these plays in global performance venues in later historical periods. Topics include Shakespeare's vision of the Middle Ages; his plays' participation in religious, political, and gender controversies of his time; and the effect of cross-gender and colorblind casting on roles in performance on film and stage. We will also discuss where early-modern Islamophobia and anti-semitism figure in the plays, and how their attendant stereotypes have been countered on the contemporary stage and in film. We will also discuss why we are always drawn to compare heads of state to Shakespeare's tragic heroes.

**ENGL 6660: Graduate Writing Workshop, 3 hrs.**

Any given section of this course will focus on either poetry, fiction, non-fiction, or drama. Course organization will emphasize roundtable discussion of student writing. Course may be taken more than once; a student may elect up to 12 credit hours in one genre and up to 18 hours in all. M.F.A. candidates must take at least six hours in their area of specialization.

**ENGL 6670: Topics in Teaching and Learning, 3 hrs.**

A rotating special topics course in advanced study of pedagogical approaches or methods.

**ENGL 6690: Methods of Teaching College Writing, 3 hrs.**

A course required of those teaching the first-year writing course, ENGL 1050, for the first time. Establishes the basic structure and methodology for teaching such a course. Participants prepare assignment sequences for their classes, design appropriate learning activities, and practice evaluating and responding to student writing. Participants are introduced to activities that reflect different theories and approaches to the teaching of composition.

**ENGL 6760: Old English, 3 hrs.**

A course dealing with the grammatical structures of Old English and the sociolinguistic context in which this language was spoken and written, with a view to applying such linguistic study to translating and interpreting pre-1066 English literary texts, both poetry and prose, including *Beowulf*.

**ENGL 6780: English Education Seminar, 3 hrs.**

Built around a core set of concepts while simultaneously tailored to student participants' interests. Covers a variety of English Education topics.

**ENGL 6790: Studies in Composition Theory, 3 hrs.**

A course which examines various approaches to the teaching of composition. Aims to increase awareness of the relationship between theory and practice, acquaint participants with ongoing dialogues within the field, and help them identify and formulate their own professional stances. Attention will be given to the impact on composition theory of scholarship in fields such as classical rhetoric, linguistics, literary theory, cognitive psychology, human development and learning, social constructionism, and ethnology.

**ENGL 6900: Scholarship and Writing in the Profession, 3 hrs.**

In this seminar, students will analyze and evaluate journals and articles in areas relevant to a research topic, review and edit a scholarly or pedagogical essay with the support of their peers and an expert reviewer, and prepare for oral presentation and discussion of the work in a public event. This course also acts as the culminating requirement for the M.A.

Note: Graded on a credit/no credit basis. Open to graduate students only.

Prerequisites/Corequisites: Prerequisites: At least 18 hours of credit toward the Master of Arts in English.

**ENGL 6910: Research and Scholarship in English Education, 3 hrs.**

As reflective practitioners in English classrooms, participants in this seminar will develop a research question, review relevant professional literature, conduct classroom and/or academic research using appropriate research techniques, and present findings orally and in a written paper or report that will be the capstone paper for the M.A. in English with an Emphasis on Teaching.

**ENGL 6970: Studies in English: Variable Topics, 1-3 hrs.**

Group study of special topics in language, literature, and composition. These special courses and workshops may be offered on campus, in the off-campus centers, or as in-service work in schools. Students may repeat this course, providing topics vary. For further information, consult the Graduate Office.

**ENGL 6990: M.F.A. Project, 3-6 hrs.**

A collection of short fiction, a collection of poetry, a collection of one-act plays, a full-length play, or a novel. The work presented in fulfillment of this requirement must be judged by a committee of the graduate faculty to be worthy of publication or production; a public reading or performance is required.

**ENGL 7100: Independent Research, 2-6 hrs.**

**ENGL 7110: Readings in Doctoral Specialization, 3-6 hrs.**

In consultation with a faculty member, the doctoral student will design a reading list of 20 to 30 books in a specialized area; students wishing additional guided reading may register a second time. The student will master these works independently and, in consultation with faculty members, select a representative list of approximately 20 works on which to be evaluated in a two-hour oral exam, conducted by a committee of at least two faculty members. Prerequisite: Doctoral candidacy.

**ENGL 7120: Professional Field Experience, 2-12 hrs.**

**ENGL 7130: Practicum in Teaching in the Discipline, 3 hrs.**

A practicum in teaching in the discipline will be done as collaborative teaching with an experienced faculty member in a broad-based undergraduate course in literature, language, creative writing, or advanced composition. There will opportunity for both guided praxis and reflection on praxis. May be repeated. Prerequisite: Consent of advisor.

**ENGL 7300: Doctoral Dissertation, 15 hrs., minimum**

## Appendix D: Resources and Links

### Student Success

#### COMPASS

<https://wmich.edu/grad/COMPASS>

### Admissions

#### Western Michigan University Graduate College Application (All Programs)

<http://www.wmich.edu/apply/graduate/>

#### English Department Graduate Admissions Information

<https://wmich.edu/english/academics/graduate>

#### Teacher Certification Information

<https://wmich.edu/teachercertification/certified-teachers>

### Registration, Courses, and Grades

#### Permission to Elect Form

<https://wmich.edu/english/academics/graduate/resources>

#### Grade Appeals

<https://wmich.edu/ombudsman/appeal-grade>

#### Academic Calendar

<https://wmich.edu/registrar/calendars/academic>

### Policies and Procedures

#### Graduate College Annual Review Policy

<https://wmich.edu/grad/forms>

#### WMU Student Code

<https://wmich.edu/studentrights>

#### Graduation Audit Form

<https://wmich.edu/registrar/graduation/graduation-requirements>

## Dissertation

**Notification of Appointment to a Dissertation, Thesis or Specialist Project Committee**

<https://wmich.edu/grad/forms>

**Human Subjects Institutional Review Board Website**

<https://wmich.edu/policies/human-subjects-research-protection>

**Permission to Elect Form**

<https://wmich.edu/english/academics/graduate/resources>

**Dissertation Defense Scheduling Form**

<https://wmich.edu/grad/forms>

**Graduate College Calendar of Dissertation Deadlines**

<https://wmich.edu/grad/dissertation-deadlines>

**Dissertation Approval Form**

<https://wmich.edu/grad/forms>

**Dissertation Check-In Form**

<https://wmich.edu/grad/forms>

**Request to Extend Time to Complete Graduate Degree Program**

<https://wmich.edu/grad/forms>

## Rights and Responsibilities

**MLA Standards of Professional Conduct**

[http://www.mla.org/repview\\_profethics](http://www.mla.org/repview_profethics)