ENGLISH, LITERATURE AND TEXTUAL INTERPRETATION - MASTER OF ARTS

(Code 540-808)

Designed for those who are in or aspire to a career requiring high-level communication skills, who teach or aspire to teach in high school or college, or who wish to pursue further graduate work in English or a related field, the Master of Arts—English: Literature and Textual Interpretation program offers courses in literature, critical theory, film, linguistics, technical and creative writing, rhetoric, and composition pedagogy. Advanced courses in literature and film emphasize textual interpretation from a variety of theoretical perspectives and provide practical training in literary and film research and criticism. Other advanced courses focus on theories of rhetoric, pedagogy, writing, and language.

The Literature and Textual Interpretation curriculum consists of 33 credits of coursework and thesis work. All, but 3 of these credits must be in English. Students typically take 27 semester credits in graduate course offerings and write a 6-credit critical interpretive thesis.

Required Courses

ENGL 711 Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing 3

700-level literature umbrella courses

Select three of the following: 9

ENGL 715 Critical Theory and English Studies
ENGL 733 Studies in World/Postcolonial Literature
ENGL 743 Studies in North American Literature
ENGL 753 Studies in British and Irish Literature
ENGL 769 Studies in Figures and Groups
ENGL 779 Studies in Themes and Genres
ENGL 789 Studies in Theory and Culture

Plus additional elective credits in English graduate course work (500-level or higher) to total at least 33 credits, with at least 18 credits at the 700-level.

Thesis Option

As a culminating project for this program, students produce a thesis for 3 or 6 credits. (See Thesis Options below.) 3 6

1 Should be taken in the first or second semester
2 If a student elects a 3-credit thesis option, he or she must take 30 semester hours of graduate coursework.

Please note that students may include no more than 3 semester credits of independent or directed study courses. Independent and directed study credits must be approved in advance by the Graduate Director.

Thesis Options

To respond to the diverse needs of its master’s program students, the English Department offers 4 thesis options.

Critical Interpretive Thesis (6 credits):

The traditional critical interpretive thesis is an option for all graduate students. The critical thesis will consist of an argument of approximately 60 pages that the student will complete under the guidance of a committee of two English Department graduate faculty members and one graduate faculty member from a different department in a related field. The student will defend the thesis in an oral exam. Writing the thesis provides experience in designing and executing a sustained research-based writing project that requires effective independent research, writing, and revision. Students will demonstrate knowledge of the field by including a literature review appropriate to the project and a sustained, theoretically informed main argument. The project increases the student’s depth of knowledge in a chosen area of inquiry within English studies.

Scholarly Publishable Paper (3 credits):

An alternative option for the exceptional student in the MA—English: Literature and Textual Interpretation program is the scholarly publishable paper. With the approval of the Director of Graduate Studies and an English graduate faculty member, a student may produce a scholarly paper of publishable caliber. The publishable paper will typically originate from a writing project completed in a graduate seminar course or an independent study experience. It will consist of an advanced work of textual criticism of approximately 25-30 pages that the student will complete under the guidance of two English Department graduate faculty members and one graduate faculty member from a different department in a related field. The student will defend the paper in an oral exam. The project will include an explicit and compelling, if brief, argument for the contribution the article will make to prevailing disciplinary conversations. The paper will make a rhetorically sophisticated and theoretically informed argument. The project will demonstrate that the student has achieved familiarity with the audience expectations of relevant publications. This work must be submitted to a peer-reviewed publication to qualify as completed. This option will give students experience in preparing the kind of publication they will be expected to produce as practicing scholars in literary criticism, including the research and argumentation skills necessary to produce a rigorous and compelling textual analysis.

Students writing a scholarly publishable paper to complete their degree must take a minimum of 30 course credits in addition to 3 thesis credits.

Creative Thesis (6 credits):

A student enrolled in the MA—English: Writing program opt for a Creative Thesis consisting of a minimum of 30 pages of original poetry or 75 pages of original prose or drama. The Creative Thesis, which must include an introduction, will demonstrate the author’s ability to produce work of a publishable caliber. To be eligible for this option, students must acquire the approval of two members from the creative writing graduate faculty or, as appropriate to the project, the approval of one graduate faculty member from science and technical writing and one graduate faculty member from creative writing. The student will work under the guidance of a committee of two English Department graduate faculty members and one graduate faculty member from a different department in a related field. The student will defend the thesis in an oral exam.

Pedagogy Paper (3 credits):

MA students who are currently working as middle or high school teachers may use this option to explore a teaching question related to textual analysis and/or production in English that has emerged from their graduate studies. The pedagogy paper will consist of approximately 25-30 pages intended for other practitioners in the field, which the student will complete under the guidance of one specialist in English Education, one English Department faculty member
who is not in English Education, and one member of the graduate faculty from a different department in a related field. The student will defend the paper in an oral exam. The study will bring contemporary practices of textual analysis and/or production to bear on classroom practice, and it must include a review of literature that theoretically informs the research question(s) and justifies the selected mode(s) of inquiry. This option will provide middle and high school teachers a bridge from the study of textual analysis and/or production to classroom practice.

Students writing a pedagogy paper to complete their degree must take a minimum of 30 course credits in addition to 3 thesis credits.