

# English

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## Degrees Offered

- Master of Arts
- Master of Arts in Professional Writing and Editing
- Master of Fine Arts
- Doctor of Philosophy

## Nature of the Program

### MASTER OF ARTS

The Master of Arts (M.A.) in English is a two-year program designed for students who have shown an aptitude for sustained literary study and who desire to pursue a more intensive and extensive academic training. The M.A. program has five primary goals: (1) to extend the student's knowledge of the cultural, linguistic, and literary heritage of Great Britain, America, and other English-speaking lands, (2) to introduce students to the critical and professional discourses of academics in literary and linguistic studies, (3) to develop the student's research, writing, and analytical skills, which are necessary for professional success, (4) to provide professional training to prepare students to teach English at the post-secondary level, and (5) to counsel students to craft their program of study to meet their professional and personal needs.

The M.A. program meets these goals by providing a rotation of courses in literature, linguistics, theory, and pedagogy that require extensive reading, writing, research, and oral presentations. With small classes, students receive individual attention from the faculty, which facilitates student progress. M.A. students are eligible for teaching assistantships within the English Department, which provides training in pedagogy.

The knowledge and skills that students acquire in the M.A. program provide the requisite foundation to pursue doctoral work in English, with the ultimate goal of becoming a professional scholar and academic at a post-secondary institution. The academic training provided by the M.A. also is applicable for careers in secondary education, professional writing, and editing.

### MASTER OF ARTS IN PROFESSIONAL WRITING AND EDITING

The M.A. in Professional Writing and Editing is a thirty-hour degree that combines theories of writing with practice in real-world writing situations. Students will study professional writing theory, the history of rhetoric, editing, rhetorical analysis, new modes of digital composition, and writing ethics. This degree prepares students for a variety of career options, including technical writing and editing, project management, writing consulting, writing instruction, and advanced graduate study in rhetoric and composition. The degree is designed for both newly-graduated undergraduates and working adults who want more training in writing and editing.

### MASTER OF FINE ARTS

The Master of Fine Arts in creative writing is a three-year academic/studio program that combines an apprenticeship to the craft with more traditionally academic elements. This approach seeks to train students in ways that reflect the realities of the writer/artist's evolving role in the academy. Because writers, when hired to teach, are often asked to handle a variety of courses beyond the creative writing workshop, the academic/studio format requires students to take literature and pedagogy courses in addition to writing workshops.

Thus, the M.F.A. is both an academic and a professional degree. As part of WVU's comprehensive Center for Writing Excellence, this degree allows students to prepare for careers in teaching or professional writing/editing. Our objective is to nurture and mentor the many writers in the region seeking professional training. We also intend to attract student writers from all over the country to West Virginia for the opportunity to live and write in this culturally-rich state and to work with our faculty. The ultimate goal is to produce writers who will publish literature and contribute to the culture. A secondary goal is to offer practical skills and opportunities to writers interested in pursuing writing-related professions.

### DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

The doctoral program in English offers opportunities for specialization in literary studies, cultural studies, or composition and rhetoric. The program has five goals: (1) to build upon the broad foundations of the M.A. degree's focus on the cultural, linguistic, and literary heritage of Britain, America, and other English-speaking lands, (2) to help students to develop fluency in the critical discourses of the profession, (3) to help students to develop professional competency in three fields of research, as dictated by the Examination for Formal Admission to Candidacy, (4) to help students to develop the research, writing, and analytical skills necessary for professional success, and (5) to provide professional training and counseling to prepare graduates to teach English professionally on the post-secondary level.

These goals are met by the various features of our program, which include coursework, examinations, and both formal and informal instruction and advising regarding professional teaching and research responsibilities. Doctoral study culminates in the writing of the dissertation, which is designed to contribute to the critical and/or theoretical discussion in its field and to prepare the doctoral candidate for further research and publication as a professional scholar and teacher.

## Publications

*Calliope*, a publication of WVU student writing, is sponsored by the Department of English and the English Honorary and Club.

Cheat River Review (<http://cheatriverreview.com/>), is a literary magazine edited by MFA students and the Council of Writers of the West Virginia University MFA program.

*Resilience* is a digital, peer-reviewed journal of the Environmental Humanities. It provides a forum for scholars from across the humanities disciplines to speak to one another about their shared interest in environmental issues, and to plot out an evolving conversation about what the humanities contributes to living and thinking sustainably in a world of dwindling resources.

*Victorian Poetry*, a critical journal of Victorian literature, is edited by the Department of English. The journal was established at WVU in 1963 and has become internationally known, with subscribers in 27 countries.

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## FACULTY

### CHAIR

- Brian Ballentine - Ph.D. (Case Western Reserve University)

### ASSISTANT CHAIR

- Christine Hoffmann - Ph.D. (University of Arkansas)

### M.A. & PH.D. PROGRAM SUPERVISOR

- Adam Komisaruk - Ph.D. (University of California, Los Angeles)

### M.F.A. PROGRAM SUPERVISOR

- Mark Brazaitis - M.F.A. (Bowling Green State University)

### M.A. P.W.E. PROGRAM SUPERVISOR

- Brian Ballentine - Ph.D. (Case Western Reserve University)

## PROFESSORS

- Brian Ballentine - Ph.D. (Case Western Reserve University)  
Technical and professional communication, Rhetoric
- Laura Brady - Ph.D. (University of Minnesota)  
Eberly Family Distinguished Professor of Outstanding Teaching, Composition and Rhetorical Theory, Writing Program Administration, Women's Studies
- Mark Brazaitis - M.F.A. (Bowling Green State University)  
Creative Writing: Fiction
- Cari Carpenter - Ph.D. (University of Michigan)  
19th-century American Literature, Native American Literature
- Lara Farina - Ph.D. (Fordham University)  
Medieval Literature and Culture, Gender Studies
- Stephanie Foote - Ph.D. (University of Buffalo)  
Jackson and Nichols Professor of English, Gender and women's studies, Critical theory
- Marilyn Francus - Ph.D. (Columbia University)  
Restoration and 18th-century Literature and Culture, Women's Studies
- Michael Germana - Ph.D. (University of Iowa)  
American Studies, 19th and 20th-century American Literature, Popular Culture
- Catherine Gouge - Ph.D. (West Virginia University)  
Professional writing, Medical rhetoric
- Rosemary Hathaway - Ph.D. (The Ohio State University)  
Folklore, English Education, 20th-century American Literature
- Kirk Hazen - Ph.D. (University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill)  
Linguistics, Sociolinguistics
- Adam Komisaruk - Ph.D. (University of California, Los Angeles)  
Romanticism and 18th-century British Literature
- Kathleen O'Hearn Ryan - Ph.D. (University of Massachusetts-Amherst)  
Eberly Family Professor of Outstanding Teaching, 20th-century American Literature

- Mary Ann Samyn - M.F.A. (University of Virginia)  
Creative Writing: Poetry
- Timothy Sweet - Ph.D. (University of Minnesota)  
Eberly Family Distinguished Professor of American Literature, American Studies (17th-19th Century), Literature and Environment, Native American Literature

## ASSOCIATE PROFESSORS

- Gwen Bergner - Ph.D. (Princeton University)  
African-American and Multi-ethnic Literatures, Post-colonial Studies
- Anna Shannon Elfenbein - Ph.D. (University of Nebraska)  
American Literature, Women's Studies, Film
- Christine Hoffmann - Ph.D. (University of Arkansas)  
Early Modern British Studies
- Glenn Taylor - M.F.A. (Texas State University)  
Creative Writing: Fiction
- Lisa Weihman - Ph.D. (New York University)  
19th and 20th-century British and Irish Literature and Culture

## ASSISTANT PROFESSORS

- Brian Broome - M.F.A. (University of Pittsburgh)  
Creative Writing: Non-fiction
- Erin Brock Carlson - Ph.D. (Purdue University)  
Professional and Technical Communication, Rhetoric
- Rose Casey - Ph.D. (Cornell University)  
Modern British Literature
- Jenny Johnson - M.F.A. (Warren Wilson College)  
Creative Writing: Poetry
- Sarah Morris - Ph.D. (University of Maryland)  
human science phenomenology, embodiment, writing process, and student-centered teaching
- Christa Parravani - M.F.A. (Rutgers University)  
Creative Writing: Non-fiction
- Johanna Winant - Ph.D. (University of Chicago)  
Modern American poetry and poetics

## SERVICE PROFESSORS

- Nathalie Singh-Corcoran - Ph.D. (University of Arizona)  
Writing Center Theory and Practice, Writing Assessment

## SERVICE ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR

- Ann Pancake - Ph.D. (University of Washington)  
Fiction, Appalachian Studies

## TEACHING ASSOCIATE PROFESSORS

- Nancy Caronia - Ph.D. (University of Rhode Island)  
Contemporary British and American literature
- Douglas Phillips - Ph.D. (Carnegie Mellon University)  
Professional and technical writing

## TEACHING ASSISTANT PROFESSORS

- Amy Alvarez - M.F.A. (University of Southern Maine)  
Poetry
- Amanda Berardi Tennant - Ph.D. (Carnegie Mellon University)  
Composition and rhetoric

## INSTRUCTORS

- Jill Woods - Ph.D. (West Virginia University)  
Business and technical writing

## PROFESSORS EMERITI

- Gail Galloway Adams
- Dennis Allen
- Rudolph Almasy
- Patrick Conner
- Ellesa High
- Elizabeth Juckett
- John Lamb
- Byron Nelson
- Carolyn Nelson
- Kevin Oderman
- Ethel Morgan Smith

## Admissions

The Department of English admits students to the M.A. in English, the M.A. in Professional Writing and Editing, the M.F.A. in Creative Writing, and the Ph.D. in English. Admission requirements for each program are described below.

The GRE is not required for admission to any of the programs.

### M.A. IN ENGLISH

In addition to the university admission requirements (<http://catalog.wvu.edu/graduate/graduateeducationatwestvirginiauniversity/#classificationtext>), prospective candidates for the degree of Master of Arts are expected to have completed work comparable to that required for the department's undergraduate degree in English (<http://catalog.wvu.edu/undergraduate/eberrycollegeofartsandsciences/englishlanguageandliterature/#majortext>). Applicants typically have an undergraduate GPA of 3.5 or above and strong recommendations from instructors.

### M.A. IN PROFESSIONAL WRITING AND EDITING (PWE)

In addition to the university admission requirements (<http://catalog.wvu.edu/graduate/graduateeducationatwestvirginiauniversity/#classificationtext>), prospective candidates for admission are expected to have completed an undergraduate degree in English or an allied field with a record distinctly above average or to have at least two years' work experience in writing and editing. The program recognizes, however, that not all potentially excellent graduate students fit this profile and welcomes applications from individuals who can make a strong case that they will succeed.

### M.F.A. IN CREATIVE WRITING

In addition to the university admission requirements (<http://catalog.wvu.edu/graduate/graduateeducationatwestvirginiauniversity/#classificationtext>), prospective candidates for the degree of master of fine arts are normally expected to have completed a bachelor's degree in English. However, the program welcomes applicants from any field of study. Admission to the program is based primarily on the excellence of a substantial writing sample in fiction, nonfiction, or poetry.

### PH.D. IN ENGLISH

In addition to the university admission requirements (<http://catalog.wvu.edu/graduate/graduateeducationatwestvirginiauniversity/#classificationtext>), applicants for admission to the program are generally expected to have completed an M.A. in English or a related field. Students who have completed only a B.A. in English, however, may apply for direct admission to the Ph.D. program. Direct admission is highly selective and limited to exceptionally qualified students with superior standing in their bachelor's degree. Students of this caliber are generally expected to have a cumulative GPA of 3.75 or higher.

#### List of Admission Requirements for all programs:

- See the steps to apply for admissions and access the application here (<https://graduateadmissions.wvu.edu/how-to-apply/>).
- Transcripts from all institutions attended.
- Three letters of recommendation, written by people in a position to evaluate the applicant's academic strengths.
- Statement of purpose (personal statement) appropriate to the program of application, as described below.
  - M.A. in English: The personal statement (2-3 pages) should outline the applicant's academic and professional goals.
  - M.A. in PWE: The statement should outline the applicant's interests and motivations for graduate work in PWE which highlights undergraduate achievements and/or prior experience with writing and editing, speaks to interests in writing and composition instruction as well as any prior teaching-related experience, and showcases the promise for success in graduate studies.

- M.F.A. in Creative Writing: The personal statement (2-5 pages) should outline the applicant's background, literary and other influences, and the reasons for pursuing graduate study.
- Ph.D.: The personal statement should outline the applicant's academic and professional goals.
- Writing sample appropriate to the program of application, see below.
  - M.A. in English: A 10–15-page essay demonstrating strong skills in literary or cultural analysis is required.
  - M.A. in PWE: A writing sample that consists of a portfolio of written work is required.
  - M.F.A. in Creative Writing: A substantial writing sample in fiction, nonfiction, or poetry (10-20 pages of poetry; 20-30 pages of prose) is required.
  - Ph.D.: A 15–20 page analytic essay demonstrating research skills in literary/cultural studies or writing studies, awareness of scholarly subfields, and persuasive argument is required.

### International Applicants:

- See the steps to apply for admissions and access the application here (<https://graduateadmissions.wvu.edu/how-to-apply/>).
- International applicants should view additional requirements here (<http://catalog.wvu.edu/graduate/graduateeducationatwestvirginiauniversity/#internationaltext>) and here (<https://graduateadmissions.wvu.edu/information-for/international-students/>).
- Language proficiency is required in order to hold a graduate teaching assistantship. See here (<https://elli.wvu.edu/testing-resources/english-proficiency-gtas/>).

### Application Deadlines:

- The graduate programs in English only admit for the Fall semester.
- The priority review deadline for the M.A. and Ph.D. is January 5<sup>th</sup>.
- The priority review deadline for the M.A. in Professional Writing and Editing is January 15<sup>th</sup>.
- The priority review deadline for the M.F.A. is January 15<sup>th</sup>.
- Completed applications for admission submitted after the deadline may be reviewed on a space-available basis.
- Exceptional applicants for the Doctoral Program may be nominated by the department of English for competitive University Fellowships. Qualified applicants will be notified if they are nominated. More information on WVU fellowships can be found here (<https://graduateeducation.wvu.edu/finances/fellowships/>).

Certain application requirements may be waived based on a preliminary review of an application by the program.

## ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS 2024-2025

The Admission Requirements above will be the same for the 2024-2025 Academic Year.

M.A. Major Code: 1442

M.A. in Professional Writing and Editing Major Code: 1481

M.F.A. Major Code: 1486

Ph.D. Major Code: 1442

**For specific information on the following program, please see the link to the right:**

- English, M.A.

**For specific information on the following program, please see the link to the right:**

- Professional Writing and Editing, M.A.

**For specific information on the following program, please see the link to the right:**

- English, M.F.A.

**For specific information on the following program, please see the link to the right:**

- English, Ph.D.

## Degree Progress

### M.A.

Graduation Requirements: Students have the option of completing the M.A. through either (1) 30 credits of coursework, or (2) 24 credits of coursework plus M.A. thesis. The optional M.A. thesis is a work of scholarship in the form of an extended research paper (usually 50-75 pages). The thesis is directed by a regular member of the graduate faculty and two additional committee members. It is recommended that one member be from outside of the Department of English. Students must satisfactorily defend their completed projects before their committees and anyone else who wishes to attend. All theses must be filed electronically.

### M.A. IN PWE

Graduation Requirement: Students have the option of completing the M.A. in Professional Writing and Editing through either (1) completing a graduate level internship, or (2) researching, writing, and defending a thesis.

Internship (3 hours): Students who choose the internship option will work for a local or regional company, program, or organization for 8-10 hours a week for 12-15 weeks. Students will engage in a variety of supervised writing tasks, including research, editing, proofreading, project management, and content development. At the end of the internship period, students will submit a portfolio to the Professional Writing Coordinator that documents and reflects on their internship experience.

Critical Thesis (3-6 hours): The M.A. thesis is a work of scholarship in the form of an extended research paper (usually 50-75 pages) on a topic in the field. The thesis is directed by a regular member of the graduate faculty and two additional committee members. Students must satisfactorily defend their completed projects before their committees and anyone else who wishes to attend. All theses must be filed electronically.

### M.F.A.

Students will work with faculty to develop a progress-toward-degree plan. In the third year, students must follow submission timelines for application for graduation and Thesis Defense Declaration form. In addition, they must be aware of ETD guidelines and generally work with their thesis advisor and committee members to insure ample time for reading the manuscript before the defense date.

### PH.D.

Graduation Requirements: Students earn the Ph.D. by satisfactorily completing all of the following:

1. required coursework;
2. a portfolio of academic work;
3. the foreign-language requirement;
4. the Examination for Formal Admission to Candidacy; and
5. a prospectus, full text, and defense of the doctoral dissertation.

**Coursework:** For students who enter the program with an M.A. already in hand, up to 30 hours may be waived at the discretion of the M.A./Ph.D. Program Supervisor.

**Portfolio:** By September 1 of the second year past the completion of 30 credit hours, each student will submit a portfolio consisting of:

- a research paper (approximately 20 pages) of his/her choosing, most likely stemming from a first-year course;
- a self-evaluation of his/her coursework, research, writing, teaching, and department participation; and
- a plan of study, including possible dissertation field and list of primary courses.

A three-member committee, constituted in advance from the English graduate faculty, will evaluate all portfolios. A portfolio deemed unsatisfactory must be resubmitted in January of the same academic year.

**Foreign-Language Requirement:** Students must demonstrate proficiency in a foreign language in one of the following ways:

- successfully completing the fourth semester of a foreign language at the university level, with a minimum grade of B, within the past five years; or
- passing a graduate translation examination administered by the WVU Department of World Languages.
- International students who have submitted the results of an English language proficiency exam (e.g. TOEFL or IELTS) as part of their application to the program may request a waiver of the requirement.

**Examination:** At the beginning of preparations for the Examination for Formal Admission to Candidacy ("Booklist Exam"), the student must constitute a Ph.D. committee. The committee consists of a chair (a regular member of the Department of English graduate faculty), two additional members from the English faculty, and one member external to the English faculty. The examination is designed to have the student gain more detailed familiarity with

his/her field and to refine an original topic for the dissertation. The student compiles a list of 75-100 core texts, writes a brief preface, then sits for a two-hour oral examination with the committee.

**Dissertation:** Passage of the Booklist Exam is followed by the writing and committee approval of the dissertation prospectus, then the writing of the dissertation. The dissertation is intended to be an original contribution to the scholarship in its field. A two-hour oral defense of the completed dissertation is required. For the student to pass the dissertation defense, no more than one member of the committee may dissent. All dissertations must be filed electronically.

**Summary:** The portfolio of academic work must be submitted in September of the second year past completion of 30 hours of coursework; and resubmitted, if applicable, in January of the same academic year. Preparations for the Booklist Exam may begin once all but three credits of coursework are complete. All degree requirements, including the dissertation defense, must be completed within five years of the student's passing the Booklist Exam. For more details, please consult the Graduate Handbook on the English Department website.