

School of Arts and Sciences

ENGLISH LITERATURE

www.english.pitt.edu

A culture's writing is the cornerstone of learning about its people, its history, and its development. The study of literature welcomes those who like to challenge themselves and the way they think, not just those who like to read.

The undergraduate English program at Pitt is responsive to many of the traditional goals of a liberal arts education: It seeks to develop a broad critical and historical understanding of influential cultural traditions, and to foster a range of reading and writing strategies, as well as skills of critical analysis.

The undergraduate literature program is designed to develop a critical understanding of literary and cultural traditions in English literature that is at once informed, skeptical, and appreciative. One of the distinctive features of the literature curriculum at Pitt is the recurrent concern, from introductory to the most advanced undergraduate courses, with questions of how and why we read and write and participate in cultural activities. Classes also examine the contexts in which a range of literary texts and films are produced, understood, evaluated, and used, as well as examining the changing role of art and culture in the contemporary world. The major offers students opportunities to study canonical works of British and American literature from medieval times to the present, often in conjunction with historical or philosophical works, films, or works of popular culture. In many courses, your own writing will be an important object of study.

A degree in literature prepares you for much more than reading books for the rest of your life. The Pitt literature program prepares students fairly directly for careers in teaching or writing. But the skills and knowledge it imparts are widely useful in numerous business and professional settings. An English major is highly regarded, for example, as a pre-professional major for further training in law, medicine, or business. The director of academic affairs for the Association of American Medical Colleges has said that English majors have a higher rate of acceptance at medical schools than students who have majored in the biological and physical sciences.

Required Courses for Majors

The English literature program requires that you complete 12 courses (36 credits), distributed as follows:

1. Critical Reading

ENGLIT 0500 Introduction to Critical Reading

Designed to prepare prospective or beginning majors for upper-level work, this course should be taken early in one's path of study. It aims to make students aware of the role of critical practices in shaping the way we read and respond to literature and other cultural practices. Doing this, it also enables students to develop their own critically informed readings. The course is taught in multiple sections, so texts and reading will vary. In each, a selection of texts, which may include drama, poetry, fiction, and film, will be read closely and in conjunction with the work of a variety of literary and cultural critics.

2. Four Historical Period Courses (one from each of the following three groups plus a fourth from any of the three groups)

GROUP A

ENGLIT 1100 Medieval Imagination (3 cr.)

This course will explore some of the ways in which people in the Middle Ages perceived their world, as reflected in a variety of literary works and other arts created between the years 800 and 1500. In reading selections from ancient Irish tales, epic poetry such as *Beowulf*, mystical visions of the saints, and the complex tradition of King Arthur, you will study historical changes that formulated the imagined world of medieval culture.



ENGLIT 1125 Renaissance in England (3 cr.)

The Renaissance was a period of major social change and featured the emergence of a modern secular world. You will read texts that explore issues such as radical politics, love, and sex; the connections between literature, politics, and history; writing by women; and the culture of theatricality. The course will include poetry, prose, and especially, drama.

ENGLIT 1135 Early Modern Literatures in English (3 cr.)

This historical period course will survey British literature from the late 16th through the late 17th centuries. Beginning with the assumption that this period saw the formation of certain fundamental models of "literariness" that continue to influence our approaches to literature today, we will look at the following: 1) the emergence of the lyric poem, particularly of the sonnet, as the site for individuality; 2) the increasing emphasis on drama's value as literary as well as performative "work"; and 3) the re-creation of classical and biblical themes to meet the demands and aspirations of the rising middle classes.

GROUP B

ENGLIT 1150 From Enlightenment to Revolution (3 cr.)

This period starts with the political agitation that leads to the Glorious Revolution of 1688, and ends with the controversies over the Revolution in France in the aftermath of 1789. Writers of every sort play a part in the controversies that threaten civil war, and also help to develop the argument, imagery, and practices that establish a peaceful society upon new terms, a society that practices the conventions of free speech. Studying writers such as Defoe, Swift, Pope, Johnson, Burney, Burke, and Wollstonecraft will enable you to explore the literary resourcefulness of writers who, for reasons of social class, religion, gender, or national origin, suffered political and social disadvantages that threatened to deny them full access to a public hearing.

ENGLIT 1175 19th Century British Literature (3 cr.)

This course will investigate the changing uses and values attributed to literary culture as writers confronted a rapidly growing reading public and new technologies of book production, literacy education, and social interaction during this period. It attends especially to the widespread interest in the language and cultural practices of marginalized social groups, and to the adaptation or appropriation of such language in various literary texts.

ENGLIT 1200 American Literature to 1860 (3 cr.)

The course will investigate the formation of "American literature," its "usefulness," and its relationship to the construction of a national culture. It will address the diverse claims for literature's territory, function, and value in the "New World." American writers of this period often described themselves as powerful formers of national experience, responsible for new language, forms, styles, and subjects. They represented the time, place, and situation as a cultural turning point, as a brave experiment in reforming the moral and imaginative practices of the Old World. At the same time, they feared that literature had little status or value in an industrial democracy beset with divided cultural interests. Much of the writing of this era is marked by its instruction of readers and by the emergence of women, blacks, and working-class writers and readers.

GROUP C

ENGLIT 1220 Emergence of Modern America (1860–1914) (3 cr.)

The interconnection of the nation by railroads and telegraphs, the official closing of the frontier, the further entrenchment of struggles between labor and capital, the legalization of racial segregation, and increasing urbanization and industrialization resulted, somewhat paradoxically, in both standardizing many features of American society and putting key populations more violently at odds. The literature emerging from this ferment is self-consciously modern, aesthetically sophisticated, and socially attentive. In this course, we will read realist fiction (ranging from gritty urban fiction to novels of genteel high culture), modernist experiments in prose and poetry (influenced by developments in psychology, among other things), and other writings that shed light on the volatile social and cultural history of the era. We'll pay special attention to what it means for America to be "modern" and what fears and desires are evoked by modernity.

ENGLIT 1325 The Modernist Tradition (3 cr.)

The 20th century was a time of revolutionary change—in politics, in the shape of society, in ideas, and in the economic and technological bases of our lives. The movement, which became known as Modern Art, has always been a part of that process of change, whether reflecting it, criticizing it, or helping us to become a part of it by constructing new ways to see the world. This course will examine some of the major literary works of the modernist tradition, including works by Henry James, Joseph Conrad, T.S. Eliot, William Faulkner, and Virginia Woolf.

ENGLIT 1380 World Literature in English (3 cr.)

This course explores concepts of individual and social identity in relation to language in a variety of post-World War II English-language novels from various countries. The principal thesis of the course is that, as English becomes the global mode for expressing an increasing variety of different experiences and understandings of the world, it also indicates new forms and modes of social formation.

3. Junior Seminar

ENGLIT 1900

The junior seminar in English literature is designed to help you articulate conceptual relationships among the multiple historical periods that you encounter as a major, by examining theoretical issues of what it means to read historically. Though different sections treat different topics, all offer ways of thinking through the historical organization of the field and of critical practices, with attention to issues such as changing literacies and reading practices, changes in the history of books and textuality, questions of periodization, notions of “tradition and the new,” national frames and crossings, and the classification of texts.

4. Five Elective Courses

These courses may be in English literature, English writing, or advanced English composition.

5. One Senior Seminar

ENGLIT 1909 or 1910

The senior seminar is a “capstone” course for the English literature major. It invites you to reflect on the discipline of English studies, and to think critically and creatively about how to take the knowledge and practices you have learned during your time at Pitt out into the world, whether to graduate school in English, education, or to some other undertaking. The focus of the seminar varies each semester it is offered, but all senior seminars seek to mediate between the specific materials and concerns of a topic, and the more general goal of encouraging you to reflect on the major as a whole—its purposes, value, and coherence.

Job Opportunities

An English major is central to a liberal arts education and combined with other classes, prepares students to become teachers, for which, according to the National Association of Secondary School Administrators, there is a serious need. It is highly regarded as a pre-professional major for further training in law, medicine (provided the appropriate science and math classes are also taken), business, and a variety of careers in writing.

Popular Programs of Graduate Study

Law

Education

Medicine (when English is taken in conjunction with a natural science program)

Creative Writing

Journalism

Drama

Film

Business

Literature

For more information on the English

Literature major, please contact:

University of Pittsburgh

Department of English

Dr. Fiore Pugliano, Dr. Linda Orbach

617B Cathedral of Learning

Pittsburgh, PA 15260

412-624-6510

www.english.pitt.edu

For information on other majors, please contact:

University of Pittsburgh

Office of Admissions and Financial Aid

Alumni Hall, 4227 Fifth Avenue

Pittsburgh, PA 15260

412-624-PITT

E-mail: oafa@pitt.edu

www.pitt.edu/~oafa

Special Programs and Opportunities for English Literature Majors

The English Club

The English Club fosters intellectual and social interactions among Department of English students and faculty in informal settings. The club holds faculty/student parties and discussions, hosts lectures by poets and playwrights, organizes readings, and screens films. Any English major can join and be elected to one of the four officer positions. Decisions about activities are made collectively by all students who participate and are facilitated by a faculty sponsor.

Other Programs and Certificates

Studies in English can be enriched through courses offered in many other Pitt departments. Many students of literature and writing earn certificates in film studies (based in the English department with facilities available through Pittsburgh Filmmakers and the Carnegie Museum of Art), women’s studies (one of the oldest such programs in the country), children’s literature (cooperatively taught by faculty in the School of Arts and Sciences and in the Schools of Information Sciences, Education and Social Work), Afri-

cana studies, and Medieval and Renaissance studies. You also can pursue certificate programs in area studies (East and West European studies, East Asian studies, and Latin American studies) through the University Center for International Studies.

Internships

The English Department maintains its own internship office that emphasizes writing-oriented positions and serves those writing majors required to complete internships. It also serves other English and non-English majors interested in writing internships. Interns have been placed with a variety of companies and organizations. Placements have included all local media outlets (*Pittsburgh Magazine*, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*, *Pittsburgh City Paper*, WQED) and other organizations ranging from the Pittsburgh Zoo, to the Pittsburgh Film Office, to various public relations firms around the city.

Awards

Several prizes are available for students who produce outstanding work in English courses: the Snead Award, administered by the director of literature, rewards outstanding essays in African American studies, German, or film; the composition program offers prizes each year for outstanding work produced by students in composition courses; and the Burkhardt-Alumni Scholarship and the English Major Merit Award are given to outstanding English majors nominated by the faculty.

Related Area

School of Arts and Sciences students, as part of their graduation requirements, are required to complete at least 12 credits in an area that is related to their majors and specified by the department of their major. This related area is like a minor and complements your major. The related area totals 12 credits in any one Arts and Sciences department approved by the departmental advisors. Completion of the requirements of a certificate program fulfills the Arts and Sciences requirement for a related area.

Foreign Language

Although there is no language requirement beyond that required by Arts and Sciences, those who contemplate graduate study in English should remember that many schools do require foreign language competence, sometimes in more than one language.

Volunteer Service

Volunteering gives you valuable experience that enhances your learning, personal development, and the process of discovering your interests. The Student Volunteer Outreach Center coordinates a variety of volunteer opportunities with over 100 local community agencies and annual programs such as the mentoring and tutoring programs, Junior Achievement, Alternative Spring Break, annual volunteer agency fair, and Scouting for Food. English majors have been active as volunteers for the Literacy Council, as peer volunteers in the Pitt writing center, and as volunteers for numerous other activities such as the United Way and the Pittsburgh Zoo.

Study Abroad Options for English Literature Majors

You are strongly encouraged to add an international dimension to your undergraduate education through studying abroad. By participating in a study abroad program, you will earn credits toward your degree in English literature. While earning those credits, you broaden your personal experience and gain an appreciation of other cultures. Furthermore, only 4 percent of American students study abroad, so this experience can distinguish you as a candidate in the job market. Scholarships are available, and financial aid is applicable. The Nationality Rooms Fellowships fund summer studies in a number of foreign countries.

Examples of study abroad programs that are of particular interest to English literature majors include:

Pitt in London

This semester-long program takes you to the heart of London, which is one of the most vibrant, artistic, and cultural cities in the world. You will be blocks away from the Kensington Palace and Gardens, and within walking distance of classrooms, computer labs, libraries, and social facilities. Both a Pitt faculty member and British faculty members teach classes in a variety of disciplines. Internships are also available with numerous British organizations. Three required field trips (Oxford, Blenheim Palace-Stonehenge, and Bath-Stratford) are included in this program, and continental Europe, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales are all easily accessible to students. Participants can live either in a student residence facility in Kensington or with a family in Wimbledon.

The University College of Wales at Aberystwyth

This yearlong program is located on the shores of Cardigan Bay on the West Coast of the United Kingdom. The university overlooks the Atlantic Ocean and the expansive countryside. This program features a full curriculum taught in English, close interaction with Welsh students, and an internationally rich student body. Students live in single rooms in the college's residence halls. The cost for the Aber program is the same as Pitt for tuition, room, and board.