

Advising Helpsheet for English Majors

The goal of this document is to help English majors make the best choices for courses in the major, in line with our goals for your education:

- 1) A broad knowledge of literature written in English, which reflects its diversity across time, geography, culture, and modes of linguistic and artistic expression.
- 2) An ability to produce focused, intensive literary-critical prose.
- 3) A critical relationship to the “tradition” of English literature, including knowledge of non-English texts to which that tradition responds and literary and non-literary critiques of the inclusiveness or necessity of the tradition.

The English major has only three requirements:

- 9 courses in the major (ENGL prefixed courses, ENGL101 included)
- One Writing Intensive in the Major (GMWI) course
- The comprehensive exam, taken one’s last semester

The shape of the comprehensive exam provides a structure for the organization of the major, especially the distribution of the courses that students should take. You can find a sample comprehensive exam on the English website, at <https://new.sewanee.edu/programs-of-study/english/resources/comprehensive-examination/> as well as a Frequently Asked Questions section.

Students are required to take at least 1 Writing Intensive in the Major (GMWI) course. We suggest that students do not put this off until their last semester, and taking more than one is recommended.

The exam expects that you have competency in 5 “periods” of English literature, though these are properly organized by both time and geography. You will need to answer essay questions and discuss passages from 5 periods out of the 8 that we identify, and therefore **you should take at least 1 course at the 300/400 level in 5 of those periods** (there is no difference in difficulty between a 300 and 400 level course). Our **ENGL349: Special Topics** changes from year to year and may contribute to any period depending on the topic. You can get an idea of what texts might be read in a particular course from its description on our website, in the e-catalog, and by consulting our Reading List:

<https://new.sewanee.edu/programs-of-study/english/resources/reading-list-for-majors-in-english/>
This suggests the texts that might be covered and would be useful for that period on the comprehensive exam; we certainly do not expect any student to read everything listed under any period during their college career.

Following are the periods and the courses in the catalog that fit in those periods:

I. MEDIEVAL LITERATURE

ENGL 347 Old English Literature
ENGL 348 Middle English Literature
ENGL 352 Chaucer

Partial (contains some Medieval literature):

ENGL 353 English Drama to 1642
ENGL 354 Early Women's Voices

II. RENAISSANCE LITERATURE

ENGL 359 Renaissance Literature I
ENGL 360 Renaissance Literature II
ENGL 362 Milton

Partial (contains some Renaissance literature):

ENGL 353 English Drama to 1642
ENGL 354 Early Women's Voices

III. SHAKESPEARE

ENGL 356 Shakespeare Seminar
ENGL 357 Shakespeare I
ENGL 358 Shakespeare II

IV. RESTORATION AND EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH LITERATURE

ENGL 365 The Restoration and Eighteenth Century
ENGL 367 Inventing the British Novel
ENGL 369 Authorship and Authority in 18th Century Britain

Partial (contains some Restoration and 18th cent. literature):

ENGL 362 Milton
ENGL 368 Fictions of Empire
ENGL 371 Blake

V. NINETEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH LITERATURE

ENGL 370 British Romanticism: The Early 19th Century
ENGL 371 Blake
ENGL 373 Victorian Poetry and Prose
ENGL 374 The Victorian Novel

Partial (contains some 19th cent. literature):

ENGL 368 Fictions of Empire
ENGL 389 Gothic Literature

VI. AMERICAN LITERATURE THROUGH THE 19TH CENTURY

- ENGL 331 Melville and his World
- ENGL 377 American Literature, Beginnings to 1855
- ENGL 378 American Literature from 1850-1900
- ENGL 379 Origins and Development of the American Novel: 1790 to 1920
- ENGL 380 Emily Dickinson

Partial (contains some pre-20th cent. American literature):

- ENGL 395 African-American Literature
- ENGL 402 African American Poetry

VII. MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN LITERATURE

- ENGL 330 The Life and Literature of Tennessee Williams
- ENGL 338 Border Fictions: Literature of the U.S.-Mexico Border
- ENGL 390 Power Plays: Modern and Contemporary Drama
- ENGL 391 Modern American Poetry
- ENGL 392 Modern American Fiction
- ENGL 393 Faulkner
- ENGL 394 Literature of the American South
- ENGL 395 African-American Literature
- ENGL 396 American Environmental Literature
- ENGL 397 Contemporary American Fiction
- ENGL 398 American Poetry Since World War II
- ENGL 402 African American Poetry
- ENGL 491 Contemporary Latinx Literature

VIII. MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY BRITISH AND WORLD LITERATURE

- ENGL 316 The Novel in the Global Age
- ENGL 368 Fictions of Empire
- ENGL 381 Making Nothing Happen: Modern and Contem. British and Irish Poetry
- ENGL 382 British Fiction From "On or about December 1910"
- ENGL 383 British Fiction Right Now
- ENGL 384 Fantasy Island: Visions of England in Modern and Contemporary Brit Lit
- ENGL 385 Revivals, Riots, Roots: Modern and Contemporary Irish Literature
- ENGL 386 Joyce
- ENGL 390 Power Plays: Modern and Contemporary Drama
- ENGL 399 World Literature in English

EXPECTATIONS FOR DIVERSITY

We expect students to experience diversity in a variety of ways, not just in terms of the “periods” listed above. Students should take courses that focus on **different genres**, that is, **drama, fiction poetry, etc.** These often cross periods. A number of these are available at the 200 level.

ENGL 210	Studies in Poetry
ENGL 211	Studies in Fiction
ENGL 212	Studies in Literature
ENGL 215	Studies in Drama
ENGL 216	Studies in Literature: American Literary Journalism
ENGL 218	Studies in Literature: Literature and Religion
ENGL 221	The Literature of Memoir
ENGL 227	Studies in Speculative Fiction

Upper-level courses like **ENGL 320: Poetry, Nature, and Contemplation**, and **ENGL 402: African-American Poetry**, while crossing periods, provide an excellent grounding in the genre of poetry. **ENGL 390: Power Plays: Modern and Contemporary Drama**, provides grounding both American and British drama, and **ENGL 389: Gothic Literature** does the same for fiction. Numerous courses at the 300 and 400 level provide in-depth approaches to genres of literature. **We do not recommend taking more than two 200 level courses; this can make coverage for the comprehensive exam difficult.**

We also expect students to experience **linguistic diversity**, that is, not just modern Standard English. Therefore, we suggest taking at least one course in Medieval, Renaissance, or Shakespearean literature for learning about Old, Middle, and Early Modern Englishes; this could also be done by taking **ENGL 251: History of the English Language(s)** or **ENGL 301: Old English Language and Literature**.

We expect students to take courses that include significant examples of modern and contemporary non-standard English and **cultural and gender diversity**, such as

ENGL 207	Women in Literature
ENGL 224	Slavery and Race in the American Literary Imagination
ENGL 316	The Novel in the Global Age
ENGL 338	Border Fictions: Literature of the U.S.-Mexico Border
ENGL 395	African-American Literature
ENGL 399	World Literature in English
ENGL 402	African American Poetry
ENGL 491	Contemporary Latinx Literature

Note that a number of English courses not in this list have a Women’s and Gender Studies attribute.

We also offer a course, **ENGL401: Literary Criticism** which focuses on literary theory, that is, the ways in which critical and philosophical approaches shape the reading of literature. Open to all students, it is recommended (though not required) for students considering pursuing honors in English, especially in Easter of their sophomore or junior year.

While they do not satisfy a “period” for the comprehensive examination, taking one of the following courses is recommended for understanding the **sources of the English tradition**:

ENGL 200 **Representative Masterpieces**
ENGL 203 **Roots of the English Literary Tradition**

The material in these courses, in addition to being important for understanding periods and traditions of English literature, can also be used in the cross-period essay on the comprehensive exam.