English, Ph.D.

The Doctor of Philosophy program in English is designed as preparation for the teaching, publishing, and administrative service required of a career in academia or academic-adjacent fields, and to provide depth of study in the field of English. Concentrations are offered in areas such as literary history and critical theory, as well as interdisciplinary areas such as cultural studies, pedagogy, and the digital humanities.

The department now offers a streamlined version of the Ph.D. that incorporates book studies, including a certificate from the Center for the Book. For further information, see English literary studies and the specialization in book studies on the department's website.

Learning Outcomes

Historical Knowledge
Comprehensive historical knowledge of literary history, reflected in courses taken across a range of literary periods and national/international traditions.

Critical Theory and Approaches
Rigorous study of critical methodologies and interpretive strategies.

Research Skills
This includes familiarity with library research into secondary scholarship on primary texts, archival research methods, and field research, where applicable.

Writing Skills
Proficiency in writing means Ph.D. publishable-quality writing at the academic level (e.g., what one would expect from an article placed in a scholarly journal).

Teaching Skills
Ideally, students will move from foundations-based graded positions under the supervision of tenure track faculty (introduction to the major) to rhetoric/composition coursework (rhetoric), and then on to literary analysis focused courses (general education literature). Students learn to build their own syllabi, develop a teaching portfolio, and manage their own courses independently.

Professional Development
This includes conference presentations, curriculum vitae and résumé building, and teaching statements, along with exposure to career tracks, both academic (e.g., tenure track jobs, liberal arts colleges, community colleges, etc.) and alternative professions (e.g., digital humanities, humanities organizations, publishing, etc.).

Requirements

The Doctor of Philosophy program in English requires a minimum of 72 s.h. of graduate credit. Students may receive credit for up to 18 s.h. of transfer courses. They must maintain a cumulative University of Iowa g.p.a. of at least 3.00. Concentrations are offered in areas such as literary history and critical theory, as well as interdisciplinary areas such as cultural studies and transnational studies.

Of the minimum 72 s.h. required for the degree, at least 51 s.h. must be in graded coursework numbered 3000 or above. Of those, at least 30 s.h. must be in English courses numbered 5000 or above, 21 s.h. in courses numbered 3000 or above may be taken in the Department of English or in another unit, and 9 s.h. taken in independent studies related to a comprehensive exam. The remaining 12 s.h. of post-comprehensive courses numbered 3000 or above may be taken as graded or independent study coursework.

The book studies specialization requires 72 s.h. in courses numbered 3000 or above. Of those, at least 24 s.h. must be in English courses numbered 5000 or above, 15 s.h. must be in Center for the Book courses numbered 4000 or above (see Center for the Book in the Catalog), 12 s.h. in courses numbered 3000 or above may be taken in the Department of English or in another unit, and 9 s.h. taken in independent studies related to a comprehensive exam. The remaining 12 s.h. of post-comprehensive courses numbered 3000 or above may be taken as graded or independent study coursework.

Students must gain formal admission to Ph.D. candidacy by a vote of the Graduate Steering Committee, usually during the third semester of doctoral study.

Students complete coursework in literature and culture of any four of these historical periods, as expressed in texts of the English-speaking and -writing world (usually but not always British or American): pre-1500, 1500-1660, 1660-1800, 1800-1900, 20th and 21st centuries. They also complete three seminars in the Department of English at the University of Iowa.

Students also must fulfill the program’s world language requirement, usually by taking a standardized test or completing an advanced undergraduate course numbered 3000 or above in a language other than English.

The comprehensive examination consists of the following: a portfolio of five scholarly questions based on a period of literary history (usually British or American), a review essay and annotated bibliography in a special area of interest, two course syllabi or alternate materials pertaining to an academic-adjacent career, an article to be submitted for publication, and an introduction to the portfolio that synthesizes its parts in preparation for a two-hour oral exam.

A dissertation is required. Students present their prospectus formally to a faculty committee and must undergo a final exam defending the dissertation.

All doctoral candidates are strongly advised to gain teaching experience, preferably in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Department of Rhetoric and in GE CLAS Core literature courses.

For application forms and a complete description of the Ph.D. program, contact the department’s graduate program academic coordinator.

Admission

Applications and all supporting documents for graduate admission must be submitted electronically by December 14. Applicants should submit their applications and supporting materials to the University of Iowa Office of Admissions website.

Applicants must meet the admission requirements of the Graduate College; see the Manual of Rules and Regulations on the Graduate College website.
Financial Support

Graduate scholarships, fellowships, and teaching and research assistantships are awarded on a competitive basis. The department strives to provide five years of support for students who enter with an M.A. and six years of support for students who enter with a B.A. Students must be in good standing, which requires a University of Iowa g.p.a. of at least 3.00, full-time enrollment, and satisfactory progress through the program.

Financial aid applications are considered only from students who have applied or been admitted to a degree program in the Graduate College. Applications and all necessary supporting material must be submitted by the end of January for the following academic year. Forms are available from the Department of English Graduate Studies Office.

Career Advancement

Most Ph.D. graduates seek employment at colleges and universities. Although the Department of English cannot guarantee such employment, it does supply vigorous assistance. Because there is no certainty that all doctoral graduates in English will find continuing academic employment, it is valuable to remain open to the opportunity of jobs outside the profession of teaching. A number of graduates are finding employment in academic administration, the digital humanities, business, and government.

See Ph.D. Placement for information about Ph.D. job placement within and without academia on the department's website.

Academic Plans

Sample Plan of Study

Sample plans represent one way to complete a program of study. Actual course selection and sequence will vary and should be discussed with an academic advisor. For additional sample plans, see MyUI.

English, Ph.D.

Course Title Hours

Any Semester

72 s.h. of graduate level coursework must be completed; up to 18 s.h. of graduate transfer credits from an accredited institution allowed upon approval. More information is included in the General Catalog and on department website. a, b, c

Maintain a cumulative GPA of at least 3.00.

First Year

Fall

ENGL:5000 Introduction to Graduate Study d 3
ENGL:6000 Introduction to Contemporary Theory 3
Seminar course e 3
Historical Period course f 3
ENGL:6950 Colloquium: Teaching Foundations of the English Major 1

Hours 13

Spring

Seminar course e 3
Elective course g 3
Historical Period course f 3
ENGL:6950 Colloquium: Teaching Foundations of the English Major 1

World Language requirement h Hours 10

Second Year

Fall

Historical Period course f 3
Elective course g 3
Seminar course e 3
RHET:5350 Colloquium: Teaching Rhetoric 3

Hours 12

Spring

Historical Period course f 3
Elective course g 3
English Elective course (numbered 5000 or above) g 3

Hours 9

Third Year

Fall

Elective course g 3
Elective course g 3
English Elective course (numbered 5000 or above) g 3

Hours 9

Spring

Elective course g 3

Hours 3

Fourth Year

Fall

ENGL:7910 Advanced Studies in a Literary Period 3
ENGL:7960 Advanced Studies in a Literary Theme f 3
ENGL:7970 Advanced Studies in Literary Criticism k 3
ENGL:6960 Colloquium: Teaching Literature l 2
Comprehensive Exam m

Hours 11

Spring

ENGL:7999 Ph.D. Thesis n 1

Hours 1

Fifth Year

Fall

ENGL:7999 Ph.D. Thesis n 1

Hours 1

Spring

ENGL:7999 Ph.D. Thesis n 1

Hours 1

Sixth Year

Fall

ENGL:7999 Ph.D. Thesis n 1

Hours 1

Spring

ENGL:7999 Ph.D. Thesis n 1

Hours 1
Final Oral Exam (Dissertation Defense)

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Hours</td>
<td>72</td>
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a. Students may pursue certificates (including the book studies/book arts and technologies certificate), in conjunction with completing the degree requirements for the PhD. For more information check with the Graduate Program Coordinator.

b. A minimum of 51 s.h. must be graded coursework numbered 3000 or above with at least 30 s.h. in English courses numbered 5000 or above.

c. Students must complete specific requirements in the University of Iowa Graduate College after program admission. Refer to the Graduate College website and the Manual of Rules and Regulations for more information.

d. Typically this course is offered in fall semesters only. Check MyUI for course availability since offerings are subject to change.

e. Prior to Comprehensive Exam, complete three seminars (ENGL:7000 level) in the department.

f. Prior to Comprehensive Exam, complete coursework in literature and culture of any four of these historical periods, as expressed in texts of the English-speaking and -writing world (usually but not always British or American): pre-1500, 1500-1660, 1660-1800, 1800-1900, 20th and 21st centuries.

h. Prior to Comprehensive Exam, take a standardized test or complete an advanced undergraduate course numbered 3000 or above in a language other than English.

i. Independent studies with historical Comprehensive Exam faculty members.

j. Independent studies with special area Comprehensive Exam faculty members.

k. Independent studies with article Comprehensive Exam faculty members.

l. Required for TA employment.

m. Requires a portfolio of five scholarly questions based on a period of literary history (usually British or American); a review essay and annotated bibliography in a special area of interest; two course syllabi; an article to be submitted for publication; and an introduction to the portfolio that synthesizes its parts in preparation for a two-hour oral exam. See the General Catalog and department website for specifics.

n. Post-Comprehensive Exam registration for thesis credit is required every fall and spring semester until graduation.

o. Students present their prospectus formally to a faculty committee and must undergo a final exam defending the dissertation.