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 grading 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.).