The Department of English offers courses in literature, cultural studies, language, and critical and creative writing. In these courses, students read poetry, fiction, essays, criticism, and theory to acquire methods for understanding literature and culture and respond creatively to the texts. In addition to providing these essential elements of a liberal arts and sciences education, the department's courses can augment students' specialized interests in other fields. Visit the Department of English website to learn more about courses and upcoming events.

Many undergraduate and graduate students enroll in the department's degree programs. Most Ph.D. students in English are preparing for careers as teachers and scholars, and many M.F.A. students in the creative writing program and the nonfiction writing program are preparing for lives as published writers. The B.A. and M.A. programs provide valuable training for careers in a variety of fields. Students who have earned English degrees from the University of Iowa write for advertising firms, newspapers, the entertainment industry and book publishers; teach in primary and secondary schools; practice law and medicine; work in business, industry, and nonprofits; and participate in state and federal government. Many students who earn a B.A. go on to pursue a M.F.A. in creative writing fields. As much as possible, each student's course of study is arranged to meet individual needs and objectives.

The Department of English participates in several of the University's interdisciplinary units: the Departments of American Studies, Cinematic Arts, and Gender, Women's, and Sexuality Studies; the African American Studies Program; the Native American and Indigenous Studies Program; and the Center for the Book.

Creative Writing Programs

For the past 75 years, the University of Iowa has been a national leader in all areas of creative writing. The University offers graduate degrees in creative writing, with specializations in fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. Undergraduate students may declare a major in English and creative writing. All qualified undergraduates in other majors may enroll in many of the creative writing courses offered by the Department of English.

View creative writing courses (prefixes CW, CNW, and ENGL) under Courses [p. ] in this section of the Catalog. See which ones are offered in certain semesters by searching for course subjects CW, CNW, and ENGL on the MyUI Courses page.

GE CLAS Core

All students earning a degree from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, except English majors, must take ENGL:1200


The Interpretation of Literature (ENGL:1200), or its equivalent by examination or as a transfer course, is prerequisite for courses ENGL:1320 Heroes and Villains through ENGL:1350 Literature and Sexualities. The pass/nonpass option is available only for students in the Colleges of Nursing and Engineering with consent of a student's advisor and the instructor.

Department of English Opportunities

Several periodicals are published under the department's aegis. The Iowa Review, Walt Whitman Quarterly Review, and Philological Quarterly offer opportunities for especially qualified graduate students to work as research assistants or editorial associates, and pursue some undergraduate volunteer opportunities.

The Department of English, the Nonfiction Writing Program, and the Iowa Writers' Workshop sponsor a rich and extensive series of readings and lectures by poets, fiction writers, and scholars, all open to students in the department.

The English Society, a student organization for those focusing on literatures in English, creative writing, and related areas, is open to all students and organizes events of interest throughout the year. The Department of English also collaborates with Alpha Tau Iota, the University of Iowa chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, the International English Honors Society. Sigma Tau Delta's central purpose is to confer distinction for high achievement in English language, literature, and writing.

The Association of Graduate Students in English sponsors social and intellectual events during the year and provides a forum for student opinion. All graduate students in the department are members.