English (M.A.)

Academic Unit Head
Dr. Dabney A. Bankert

Graduate Program Director
Dr. Brooks E. Hefner

Location: 215 Keezell Hall, MSC 1801
Phone: (540) 568-6170
Website: http://www.jmu.edu/english/grad_welcome.html

Professors

Associate Professors

Assistant Professors
D. Babcock, P. Bogard, A. Fagan, M. Godfrey

Print Version of Catalog

**English Admission Criteria**

Applicants are responsible for assuring that all materials have been received by the February 1 deadline. If any documents are likely to arrive after this deadline, please contact the Director of Graduate Studies as accommodation is possible in such cases.

**To Apply**

It is crucial that applicants read and follow instructions on both the Department of English and Graduate School websites carefully. Prospective applicants should visit The Graduate School website for information about the application process. Specific questions should be directed to the Director of Graduate Studies in English.

Applicants must apply online at http://www.applyweb.com/apply/jmug.

Follow the instructions on that site for submitting all application materials (GRE scores, transcripts, letters of recommendation, personal statement, writing sample, resume, etc.). Note that letters of recommendation, personal statement, writing sample, and
resume may also be sent directly to the English Department at the address below, although we encourage use of the online system. GRE scores, transcripts, and application must be uploaded to the Graduate School online application site. Questions about the online application process should be directed to The Graduate School.

An online recommendation form is provided, however, the English department prefers and strongly encourages applicants to ask references for a detailed letter addressing the applicant's preparation for graduate study; motivation; maturity; reading, writing, and analytical skills; and particular areas of strength and weakness. Letters of recommendation may be uploaded to the online application site or, if the recommender prefers, sent directly to the graduate director at the following address.

Dr. Brooks Hefner  
James Madison University, Director of Graduate Studies, Department of English  
210 Keezell Hall, MSC 1801  
921 Madison Drive  
Harrisonburg, VA 22807  
(540) 568-6994

Prospective applicants are welcome to communicate directly with the Department of English’s director of graduate studies, and prospective students are encouraged to visit campus and attend a seminar with advance notice. An interview with the graduate director is also recommended but not required.

 Required Materials

- Transcripts from all undergraduate and graduate programs.
- Graduate Record Examination General Test (GRE). We do not require the GRE subject examination in English.
- At least two letters of recommendation from faculty familiar with the applicant's academic performance and potential for graduate work. Additional letters may be sent if relevant to a candidate's application.
- If an applicant has been out of school for some time, he or she should contact the graduate director for advice about appropriate recommenders.
- A substantial academic writing sample of at least 6 pages, with 10 pages preferred, showing the applicant's best work.
- A statement of approximately 500 words articulating the applicant's specific research interests, academic training, goals for graduate study, and career aspirations, as well as the applicant's reasons for applying to the JMU Department of English graduate program.
- A resume is strongly recommended (this might include academic information, employment history, publication(s), research interests, and skills not provided in other application materials).
- Any additional materials that offer the committee information about an applicant’s suitability and preparation for graduate study.
Recommended Materials

Evaluation Measures

The graduate committee considers the overall strength of an application rather than focusing on fixed requirements. The committee reads and evaluates all completed applications. We consider all available material to help us judge whether a student is prepared for and capable of successful work on the graduate level and we stress the importance of a solid personal statement that is specific and focused as well as a writing sample that demonstrates strong intellectual and interpretive capabilities, facility with literary research, and excellent writing skills.

In addition to satisfying all admission requirements of the JMU graduate school, applicants must meet the requirements of the English department, which include the following:

- A minimum overall GPA of 3.0 and a minimum GPA of 3.5 in English courses is recommended.
- Satisfactory scores on the verbal and writing portions of the Graduate Record Examination General Test (GRE). While we have not established minimum scores, recent applicants and matriculated students have scored between 550-800 or 156-170 on the new scale (verbal) and 4.5-6.0 (writing).
- At least 15 credit hours in upper-division English courses showing some breadth of study are recommended. The Committee may favorably acknowledge more diverse backgrounds (such as a concentration in creative writing, an English minor, or another major in the humanities), but may specify provisions for admittance (such as additional prerequisite undergraduate courses), to assure that the student is adequately prepared for graduate seminars.
- A writing sample that demonstrates strong intellectual and interpretive capabilities, facility with literary research, and excellent writing skills.
- A personal statement that details the applicant's specific research interests, academic training, goals for graduate study, and career aspirations, as well as the applicant's reasons for applying to the JMU Department of English graduate program. We recommend that applicants seek guidance on how to write effective personal statements from faculty at their home institutions.

Application Deadlines

Admission is offered for fall semester only; however, a student may discuss with the graduate director the possibility of taking seminars as a non-degree candidate prior to application to the program. Students may transfer up to 9 credit hours into the graduate program if they receive a grade of "B" or better in the seminars and are admitted to the program. Complete applications must be received by February 1. If any documents are likely to arrive after this deadline, please contact the Director of Graduate Studies as some accommodation is possible in such cases. For non-degree applicants only, this deadline is flexible. Please consult with the graduate director for more information.
Funding

All applicants are automatically considered for funding; no additional application is required. See the Financial Support tab on the English department website (http://www.jmu.edu/english/graduate/grad_financial.html) for more information about allocation of assistantships.

Application Review Procedure and Timetable

The graduate committee begins review of all complete applications after February 1. The number of applications and committee members' workload affects the time necessary to review applications, to rank applicants, and to make offers, however, we try to complete our review in a month's time. Candidates are welcome to contact the graduate director for information about where we are in the process after three weeks or at any time if the candidate has received other offers and needs to make an earlier decision.

Note: Students must achieve unconditional status before applying for admission to candidacy.

Mission

The English department emphasizes preparation for Ph.D. work and advanced training both for secondary education teachers and those for whom an M.A. in English would enhance career options. We welcome students who, for whatever reasons, are eager to read literature on an advanced level, who enjoy research and writing, and who appreciate the responsibilities and pleasures of pursuing one's intellectual goals within an academic community.

Goals

• To excite and maintain in students a permanent desire for an expanded knowledge and understanding of the world through the study of diverse authors and genres.
• To help students to discover and appreciate the English language, and to learn how richly language clothes our responses to the world.
• To actively promote, through formal study, both the self-examination and the imaginative understanding that are among the central values of advanced study in the humanities.
• To encourage in post-baccalaureate students a broader, more formal inquiry into specific authors and movements in both western and non-western literatures, and to teach them by example the professional practices of reading and interpretation.
• To cultivate the practical talents gained by the study of literature: the ability to recognize the functions of analysis and synthesis in one's professional life, to construct an argument, to think critically, to write efficiently, clearly, and gracefully, to develop confidence in the validity of one's judgments about many kinds of writing, and to learn to see the interstices as well as the architectural whole in widely different encounters with the written word.
• To stimulate the kind of intellectual self-scrutiny and the passion for reading that will lead to successful work on the doctoral level, and to help students gain admittance into excellent Ph.D. programs throughout the country.
• To provide an opportunity for qualified students who are considering teaching as a career to work with faculty in undergraduate courses or to teach their own first-year composition class through the awarding of graduate and teaching assistantships.
• To foster in those who are interested in pursuing careers in writing and editing, politics, business, nonprofit work or other less obviously English-related fields the kinds of attention and analysis that are concomitant with the formal study of vastly different kinds of writing – fiction, poetry and drama, argumentation and analysis, opinion, review essays, and creative nonfiction.
• To both broaden and deepen the needed practical knowledge of the fields of writing, literature and literary history for future English teachers in high schools, business schools and community colleges.
• To offer career teachers of English a place to improve their knowledge of these fields and rejuvenate their commitment to the study and teaching of literature.
• To enhance the professional opportunities of career teachers of English through advanced study.

The JMU graduate faculty in English is committed to the belief that encountering and interacting with literature, thinking critically about texts, learning the skills of scholarly research, and writing about one’s ideas effectively provide the kind of education from which the world continues to benefit.

To fulfill these beliefs, we offer students a superior faculty who are recognized for their scholarship, their excellence in teaching and their supportive relationships with graduate students. All classes are in small seminar format with a maximum enrollment of 15 students.

The Department of English offers the Master of Arts degree.

**Degree Requirements**

The minimum requirement for the Master of Arts degree is 33 hours of graduate credit in English. All students must take ENG 600, Research Methods, in their first semester. Completion of the second year of a college foreign language course or passing an examination demonstrating intermediate competency in a foreign language is required for all students of the Master of Arts degree. Toward the end of their course work, students must pass a formal M.A. examination, the details of which are available on the Department of English website.

All students should plan a program of study with the director of graduate studies in English before registering for graduate courses in English. In addition, each student meets with the graduate director for a mid-semester progress conference during the student's first semester; after the first semester regular progress conferences are strongly encouraged.

**Course Offerings**

**English**

ENG 512. Special Topics Seminar. 3 credits.
Cross-listed with 400-level courses, for graduate credit. Additional academic work required of graduate students. Registration requires a proposal and permission of the graduate coordinator and the faculty member teaching the course. May be repeated twice only for credit when content varies.

**ENG 595. Graduate Internship in English.** 1 credit.
English graduate student internships. Graduate students identify a prospective employer and work as an intern during the summer, fall or spring semester. Credit may not be applied to program requirements. **Prerequisite: Graduate student status.**

**ENG 600. Research Methods.** 3 credits.
Introduction to research and writing in the discipline for beginning graduate students. Advanced training in research methods and citation, in critical analysis and scholarly writing, and in disciplinary history and the workings of the academy. Required for all Master of Arts students in their first semester.

**ENG 601. History of Literary Criticism.** 3 credits.
Advanced readings in the nature, function and development of literary criticism, from the classics to modernism (from Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus to Marx and Freud).

**ENG 602. Contemporary Critical Theory.** 3 credits.
Advanced study of the major debates in current critical discourse, covering such topics as formalism, structuralism, deconstruction, Marxism, new historicism, cultural studies, feminist and queer studies, postcolonial and race studies, and post-humanism.

**ENG 603. Studies in the History of the English Language.** 3 credits.
Social, cultural, political, and grammatical history of the English language, with attention to changing forms of spoken and written language in terms of phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics.

**ENG 604. Contemporary Linguistics.** 3 credits.
Survey of linguistics, with some emphasis on the English language, and of contemporary issues in the application of linguistic theory.

**ENG 605. Professional Seminar in Literature Pedagogy.** 3 credits.
Practical examination of the content and methodology of teaching college-level English courses for the training of beginning teaching assistants. Required for all beginning teaching assistants.

**ENG 608. Textuality.** 3 credits.
A study of material textuality and literary production. Topics may include manuscript and print culture, the History of the Book, bibliography, the history of commercial publishing, periodical studies, graphic novels, historical lexicography, and post-print textual practice. Topics may be determined by period or geography, culture or politics, theme or genre. May be repeated when content varies.

**ENG 610. Studies in Gender and Sexuality.** 3 credits.
An examination of literature through the lens of contemporary theories of gender and sexuality. May be repeated when content varies.

**ENG 612. Topics in Theory and Cultural Studies.** 3 credits.
Advanced readings in contemporary critical or linguistic theory or in cultural studies that are focused by topic, period, culture, or theme. May be repeated when content varies.

**ENG 615. Studies in Medieval Literature.** 3 credits.
Medieval literatures in the original or in translation produced between ca. 500-1475 in England, Ireland, Iceland, Scandinavia, the European Continent, and the Middle East. Topics may be determined by period or geography, culture or politics, theme or genre. May be repeated when content varies.

ENG 620. Studies in Renaissance and Early Modern Literature. 3 credits.
British literature of the Renaissance and Early Modern Periods (1476-1660). Topics may be determined by period or geography, culture or politics, theme or genre. May be repeated when content varies.

ENG 630. Studies in Restoration and 18th-Century British Literature. 3 credits.
British literature from ca. 1660 to 1800. Topics may be determined by period or geography, culture or politics, theme or genre. May be repeated when content varies.

ENG 640. Studies in 19th-Century British Literature. 3 credits.
British literature of the 19th century. Topics may be determined by period or geography, culture or politics, theme or genre. May be repeated when content varies.

British literature of the 20th and 21st centuries. Topics may be determined by period or geography, culture or politics, theme or genre. May be repeated when content varies.

ENG 650. Studies in Early American Literature. 3 credits.
American literatures of the colonial and early national periods (16th, 17th, and 18th centuries, through ca. 1820). Topics may be determined by period or geography, culture or politics, theme or genre. May be repeated when content varies.

ENG 651. Studies in 19th-Century American Literature. 3 credits.
American literature of the 19th century. Topics may be determined by period or geography, culture or politics, theme or genre. This course may be repeated when content varies.

ENG 656. Studies in Latin American Literature. 3 credits.
Works by Latin American writers in translation. Topics may be determined by period or geography, culture or politics, theme or genre. Although the majority of these writers will be Spanish-speakers, there may also be some coverage of Brazilian literature. May be repeated when content varies.

American literature of the 20th and 21st centuries. Topics may be determined by period or geography, culture or politics, theme or genre. May be repeated when content varies.

ENG 664. Studies in Drama. 3 credits.
Dramatic literature and performance, broadly construed. Topics may be determined by period or geography, culture or politics, theme or genre. May be repeated when content varies.

ENG 666. Studies in Film and Media. 3 credits.
Advanced study of mass media, such as film, broadcast television and radio, and digital media. Topics may be determined by period or geography, culture or politics, theme or genre. May be repeated when content varies.

ENG 668. Studies in African Literature. 3 credits.
Literatures of Africa in translation. Topics may be determined by period or geography, culture or politics, theme or genre. May be repeated when content varies.
ENG 671. Studies in South Asian Literature. 3 credits.
Non-U.S., non-British literature in English or in translation. Topics may be determined by period or geography, culture or politics, theme or genre. May be repeated when content varies.

ENG 672. Studies in African-American Literature. 3 credits.
African-American literature of the 20th and 21st century in the context of the cultural and intellectual currents of the period. Topics may be determined by period or geography, culture or politics, theme or genre. May be repeated when content varies.

ENG 673. Studies in Caribbean Literature. 3 credits.
Advanced study of the literary achievement of novelists, poets and dramatists of the Caribbean, with emphasis on diverse theoretical and historical approaches. Topics may be determined by period or geography, culture or politics, theme or genre. May be repeated when content varies.

ENG 675. Reading and Research. 3 credits.
Supervised reading and research in a particular topic or field. Admission by permission of the director of graduate studies; may not be repeated.

ENG 698. Comprehensive Continuance. 1 credit.
Continued preparation for the comprehensive examinations. May be repeated as needed.

ENG 699. Thesis Continuance. 2 credits.
Continued study, research and writing for the thesis. May be repeated as needed.

ENG 700. Thesis. 6 credits.
Six credits taken over two consecutive semesters. Graded on a satisfactory/unsatisfactory (S/U) basis.