

Degrees

Requirements

M.A. students are required to complete 30 semester hours (typically 10 course credits), which may be done in two ways. All students will take 8 courses, normally enrolling in two courses per summer. After earning these credits, students seeking to earn the M.A. may earn their final course credits either by writing a thesis or by enrolling in two more courses. Students seeking the M.F.A. after completing 8 courses (4 workshops and 4 literature classes), will submit a final thesis. No course with a grade lower than B- may be applied toward the degree. The “core” for all M.A. students will consist of courses in English literature, of which one must be Shakespeare, courses in American literature, of which one must cover literature written before 1900, and at least one class in non-English literature in translation. Beyond that, students are encouraged to strike a balance between courses covering material from before and after 1800. As many as two Creative Writing Workshops may be counted toward the M.A. degree.

Thesis

All M.F.A. students must complete a thesis. This is a substantial creative manuscript: a novel or sustained nonfiction narrative, a collection of short stories or essays, or a collection of poems. Length for the M.F.A. thesis may be anywhere from 80 to 200 pages of prose or 40 to 50 pages of poetry. M.A. students may choose to complete a thesis in lieu of a final two courses. The M.A. thesis is an original scholarly monograph, 40 to 60 pages in length.

Work on the thesis for either program may begin at any time after required course work has been completed. The thesis is written under the supervision of an advisor, chosen by the candidate and appointed by the Director of the School of Letters, who may be any willing member of the School of Letters faculty. As the project nears completion, a second reader will be appointed by the Director. When the thesis has been completed and conditionally approved, the candidate for the degree will submit to a one-hour oral examination conducted by the advisor and second reader.

Students engaged in thesis work should register for ENGL 599. Thesis work carries six hours of graduate credit.

Learning Expectations for M.F.A. Program

The School of Letters expects graduates of its M.F.A. program to have developed the following skills and areas of expertise:

1. They should develop a rich and articulate understanding of the formal elements of the genre in which they write.
2. They should acquire sufficient knowledge of the history and traditions of that genre to be able to place their own work in relation to these.
3. They should develop and employ techniques of intensive revision.
4. They should be able to produce polished literary work of publishable quality.
5. They should be able to articulate verbally the purposes of their work, accounting for their artistic choices and explaining the work’s place both within its genre and within their own developing craft.

Learning Expectations for M.A. Program

The School of Letters expects graduates of its M.A. program to have developed the following skills and areas of expertise:

1. They should be able to write clear, professional English prose.
2. They should be familiar with the conventions of literary criticism, including its characteristic terminology.
3. They should be sufficiently familiar with the history of literature in English to be able to place individual works in historical context.
4. They should be able to read an individual literary text closely, with due attention to both content and technique.
5. They should be able to identify and locate published scholarship and criticism with which to supplement their reading of a text, and to incorporate the insights gained from these sources into that reading.
6. They should be able to combine all these skills in a convincing, well-developed argument about the meaning of a literary work.