

Graduate Manual

Policies and Procedures

Master of Arts in English Degree Program



TEXAS SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY

Department of English

Martin Luther King, Jr. Humanities Building

College of Liberal Arts and Behavioral Sciences



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Welcome to the Department of English at Texas Southern University!

As Department Head of English Graduate and Undergraduate Programs, it is my pleasure to share the news of our passion for the written and spoken word. We are dedicated to preparing leaders to excel in diverse careers that demand artistically and technically driven communication. The global community is attuned to the words – written and spoken – that connect and define as well as delineate our lives towards creating communities that reimagine the explicit and implicit shaping of social, political, and economic change.

Faculty in the Department of English at Texas Southern University (Houston, TX) are at the forefront in providing expert instruction as well as internal and external experiential opportunities that prepare expert communicators towards evolutionary means of communication whether in nonfiction, fiction, or poetic arenas.

Our curriculum includes courses in African-American, American, British, Caribbean, and Postcolonial literatures, as well as Creative Writing. Foundationally, the department prepares students for intensive literary study through courses in the history and structure of the language, intensive grammar review, and advanced composition studies.

The English major (graduate and undergraduate levels) at Texas Southern University (TSU) requires students to immerse themselves in close reading, analyzing, and writing about literatures. TSU English courses are defined by in-depth textual discussions, primary and secondary analyses, and documented research. The requirements for the major ensure students acquire a foundation in literary history, as well as many opportunities to select courses that reflect and develop their potential career interests. Students majoring in Literary Studies choose from an array of courses organized by the following:

- Authors
- Critical Theories
- Genres
- Periods
- Surveys
- Themes

A system of rotating course topics assures that students have a wide variety of courses to choose from during their years at Texas Southern University.

In Academic Year 2014-15, the English Department will host a Visiting Writer-in-Residence through invitations to nationally and internationally renowned writers

(including alumnae writers) for public readings and writing workshops. This program will be an on-going initiative of the department.

English majors are encouraged to take one or more creative writing courses to develop their writing and as another way of looking at literary texts. English majors also may take advantage of internship opportunities in the City of Houston at magazines, newspapers, publishing houses, theaters, public relations firms, and radio and television stations.

A major in Literary Studies at TSU prepares students for prominent careers in which analysis and communication skills (oral and written) are premium. Many of our graduates go on to professional and graduate work in legal studies, literature, journalism, and publishing. Recent admissions and teaching positions include:

- Clark Atlanta University
- Howard University
- Lone Star College
- Rice University
- Texas A & M University
- Thurgood Marshall School of Law
- University of Houston

Dr. Emily Allen Williams
Department Head of English

Program Overview

This section provides a brief description of the Master of Arts in English degree program. Readers are provided with a general overview of the program's focus, its underlying substantive themes, and its expectations for students who successfully complete the program.

The Master of Arts in English

Texas Southern University focuses on excellence in preparing students in the areas of literary analysis, theory, and cultural studies. Students engage in intensive study and research towards a command of the broad and diverse range of literatures written and/or translated into English.

Master of Arts (M.A.) students will immerse themselves in both rhetorical and contemporary theoretical approaches to literary texts. Through expert instruction, workshops, and graduate experiential opportunities, the Master of Arts in English prepares successful graduates for exemplary higher education entry teaching opportunities; communication (oral and written) leadership opportunities in arts, business, educational and legal entities; and entrance into prestigious Ph.D. programs in literature and rhetoric and composition.

Application Deadlines

Fall Admission: January 15

Spring Admission: October 15

Minimum Requirements for Admission

- Bachelor of Arts in English or twelve (12) upper division hours in English and American Literature with a Bachelor of Arts and/or Bachelor of Science in another discipline
- Minimum of 3.0 overall G.P.A. in undergraduate studies and 3.0 G.P.A. in the discipline
- GRE general test

Qualifications for Graduate Assistantships*

- Highly Competitive
- Limited – three per semester
- Entry undergraduate G.P.A. of 3.5 or above
- Maintenance of G.P.A. of 3.5 or above while enrolled in the program

*Students who achieve 3.4 or above in semester three of residence are eligible for graduate assistantship consideration.

Application Materials

Students must submit the following materials to the Texas Southern University Graduate School:

- The online application
- Academic transcripts from all (attended) institutions of higher learning
- The GRE general test score
- Application fees

*All materials are required for admittance consideration.

The following materials should be submitted to the Graduate Program Committee, Department of English:

- Three letters of recommendation
- The student's statement of intent (1-2 pages)
- A ten to fifteen (10-15) page critical writing sample with bibliography

Requirements for the Degree

- Thirty (30) hours of coursework
- The passing of a reading examination in one foreign language, or students can provide evidence of the completion of at least twelve (12) semester hours in a single foreign language
 - ❖ English is considered as a foreign language for foreign students who have received their pre-college and college education in a non-English language.

Conditional Admittance

- There is no conditional admittance to the Master of Arts in English Program at Texas Southern University.
- All requirements must be met before admittance to the Master of Arts Program (completed tests, fees paid, letters of recommendation submitted, et. al.).

Program Degree Plans

This section describes the curricula and concentration areas associated with the Master of Arts in English. This discussion is then followed by a listing [with descriptions] of the courses that have been available to students over the past four (4) years.

Degree Program Options

The minimum requirement for the Master of Arts degree in English consists of thirty (30) semester hours of graduate work. To meet this requirement, students may pursue either a Thesis option or a Non-Thesis option. Students must declare [in writing] the option they intend to pursue in consultation with their adviser at the close of the first semester. The specific requirements for each option are given below:

- **Concentration A (Thesis Option)**
 - Completion of twenty-four (24) hours of graduate work in English exclusive of ENG 835 (Directed Reading and Research) and ENG 837 (Thesis)
 - Completion of the three (3) required Core Courses with a grade of B or higher in each: ENG 502 (Cornerstone Seminar), ENG 533 (Methods of Research), and ENG 638 (Survey of Literary Theory)
 - The passing of a reading examination in one foreign language or evidence of the completion of at least twelve (12) semester hours in a single foreign language
 - ❖ English is considered as a foreign language for foreign students who have received their precollege and college education in a non-English language.
 - Successful completion of a written comprehensive examination
 - Presentation of a thesis approved by the Department of English graduate faculty and Texas Southern University Graduate School
 - Successful oral defense of the approved [written] thesis
 - GPA of 3.0 or higher
- **Concentration B (Non-Thesis Option)**
 - Completion of thirty (30) hours of content-specific graduate work in English (students in this option do not take ENG 835 [Directed Reading and Research])
 - Completion of the three (3) required Core Courses with a grade of B or higher in each: ENG 502 (Cornerstone Seminar), ENG 533 (Methods of Research), and ENG 638 (Survey of Literary Theory)

- The passing of a reading examination in one foreign language or evidence of the completion of at least twelve (12) semester hours in a single foreign language
 - ❖ English is considered as a foreign language for foreign students who have received their precollege and college education in a non-English language.
- Successful completion of a written comprehensive examination
- Presentation of a successful portfolio [approved by English Graduate Faculty] consisting of six seminar length (15 pages or more) papers covering each of the sub-discipline areas [African, American, African American, and British Literatures] and showcasing competency in literary theory
- Successful oral presentation of the approved [written] portfolio
- GPA of 3.0 or higher

Core Courses for the Degree

There are three core courses towards the Master of Arts in English degree:

- ENG 502 (Cornerstone Seminar)
- ENG 533 (Methods of Research)
- ENG 638 (Survey of Literary Theory)

These courses provide standard and expected knowledge and practices with the literary and cultural sub-disciplines found within the Master of Arts in English degree program.

Scheduling of these core courses is orchestrated such that students are exposed to all of the core courses during their initial year of study at TSU.

Course Descriptions

ENG 502 CORNERSTONE SEMINAR (3)

An intense and comprehensive period-based survey of Western literature from the ancient through the modern and postmodern (Prerequisite: graduate standing)

ENG 529 STUDIES IN LITERARY BIOGRAPHY AND NONFICTION (3)

A study of the relationship of author and text in works of notable British and American writers

(Prerequisite: graduate standing)

ENG 530 AFRICAN AMERICAN FICTION (3)

An examination of the literary presentation of the passage from slavery to free personhood in selected texts of African American fiction, with a special concentration on rhetorical structure (Prerequisite: graduate standing)

ENG 532 AFRICAN AND AFRICAN DIASPORA LITERATURE (3)

A study of selected poetry, fiction, and drama of Africa and the African Diaspora (Prerequisite: graduate standing)

ENG 533 METHODS OF RESEARCH (3)

An introduction to techniques of independent graduate study, with emphasis on bibliographical studies and textual criticism (Prerequisite: graduate standing)

ENG 536 SEMINAR IN ADVANCED TECHNICAL WRITING (3)

The second of two technical writing courses that offer focused instruction on writing skills appropriate to the technical demands of the modern workplace such as business, science, and government (Prerequisites: ENG 412 and the consent of both the department chair and the instructor)

ENG 629 SEMINAR IN AMERICAN LITERATURE (3)

A special topics course focusing on American poetry, drama, and fiction. (Prerequisite: graduate standing)

ENG 638 SURVEY OF LITERARY THEORY (3)

An historical survey of theories of literary criticism from Aristotle to the present
(Prerequisite: graduate standing)

ENG 640 SEMINAR IN CHAUCER, SHAKESPEARE AND MILTON (3)

An intense study of major works of Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Milton
(Prerequisite: graduate standing)

ENG 641 SEMINAR IN CREATIVE NONFICTION (3)

A study of techniques of creative non-fiction prose, both as a genre and in historical context

(Prerequisite: graduate standing)

ENG 732 THE AMERICAN NOVEL (3)

A study of selected American novelists in conjunction with modern critical theories (Prerequisite: completion of all required core courses)

ENG 734 SEMINAR IN MODERN POETRY (3)

An examination of the primary trends in modern poetry, devoting attention to the masterpieces in the canon and engaging students in a systematic study of the techniques and philosophical tendencies in these works (Prerequisite: completion of all required core courses)

ENG 735 THE BRITISH NOVEL (3)

An intensive survey of the British novel from Defoe through the authors of contemporary British fiction (Prerequisite: completion of all required core courses)

ENG 736 STUDIES IN BRITISH LITERATURE TO 1900 (3)

A study of British poetry, drama, and prose from Shakespeare to the era of modernism (Prerequisite: completion of all required core courses)

ENG 835 DIRECTED READING AND RESEARCH (3)

An individualized course for students wishing to work with a specific professor in a well-defined area of scholarship (Prerequisite: completion of all required core courses and the consent of both the department chair and the instructor)

ENG 837 THESIS IN PROGRESS (3)

The writing of the thesis under the supervision of a thesis advisor from the graduate faculty of the Department of English (Prerequisite: All preceding requirements for the Master of Arts in English)

The above listed courses are made available on a regular rotation based on the necessity of providing core courses, which is in turn based on the number of both entry and returning graduate students in any given semester. Graduate faculty also are often required to teach undergraduate courses.

ENG 501 GRADUATE PROFESSIONAL WRITING (3) – Additional Course Taught by Graduate English Faculty (across all university majors)

A course for students who have not achieved writing proficiencies appropriate for graduate work, including the master's thesis and doctoral dissertation. This is a service course provided by the Department of English for students across disciplines at the university. Incoming students (at the Master's or Doctoral level) who score less than 3.5 on the Analytical Writing segment of the Graduate Record Examination are required to take this course, generally, in the first semester of their matriculation at the university. These are large classes [often capping at 35 students] and taught only by graduate English faculty. Both ground and online sections are offered each semester to accommodate the large number of students that are required to enroll in this course.

Department of English Timelines

- **Fall**
 - Comprehensive Examination – Third week of September (Friday)
 - Oral Defense – Second week of October
 - Draft Copy of Thesis to the Graduate School – Third week of October
 - Final Manuscript (three copies; two for binding in the Graduate School and one for department files) – Third week of November
- **Spring**
 - Comprehensive Examination – Third week of February (Friday)
 - Oral Defense – Second week of March
 - Draft Copy of Thesis to the Graduate School – Third week of March
 - Final Manuscript (three copies; two for binding in the Graduate School and one for department files) – Third week of April
- **Summer**
 - No Comprehensive Examination in Summer I or Summer II
 - No Oral Defense in Summer I or Summer II
 - Draft Copy of Thesis to the Graduate School – Third week of June
 - Final Manuscript (three copies; two for binding in the Graduate School and one for department files) – Third week of June

Thesis Committee Composition

- The Thesis Committee will consist of a Thesis Committee Chairperson selected by the student, two additional members of the Graduate English Faculty, and an external reader with Graduate Faculty status.
- Generally, the external reader is a member of the TSU faculty; however, credentialed faculty outside of the TSU community will be considered with the proper documentation, which will be reviewed by the Department Chair.
- The three members of the Thesis Committee will be selected by the Thesis Committee Chairperson in consultation with the student, with consideration to the faculty members' areas of specialization and the student's thesis focus.
- All members of the Thesis Committee must have a specialization in the student's thesis focus.
- The Department Chairperson will review the credentials of all selected committee members and inform the student of the approval or disapproval of the committee structure.
- All Thesis Committee members are to read the thesis concurrently and meet with the student three times (beginning, middle, and end) in each semester of the thesis-in-progress to provide both verbal and written feedback. All committee members must be present at the scheduled review meetings.

Guidelines for Comprehensive Examinations and Thesis Defense

*Comprehensive Examinations are given once per semester. If a student does not pass the examination, the student must sit for the examination in the next or a subsequent semester.

*Comprehensive Examinations are scored by all regular graduate faculty and/or a majority of the faculty present. Examinations are scored on a pass or fail scale using a departmental rubric. Students select to write on three writing prompts from a list of ten specific prompts developed by regular graduate faculty.

*After the initial attempt, students are allowed to sit two additional times for the comprehensive examination. Three attempts without passing will necessitate the student permanently withdrawing from the program.

*Unsuccessful defense of thesis will result in a student requesting to defend in the next or a subsequent semester. The student may defend the thesis only one additional time after the initial defense. Two unsuccessful attempts will necessitate the student permanently withdrawing from the program.

Graduate Faculty



Alexis Brooks de Vita is Professor of English with a Ph.D. and Master of Arts in Comparative Literature (University of Colorado at Boulder). Her areas of specialization include Women's Literature, Literary Criticism, Film Studies, and African and African Diaspora Literatures (in English, French, Italian, and Spanish). Professor Brooks de Vita's published works include analyses, translations, and novels. Two of her recent novels include *Left Hand of the Moon* and *The Third Book of Joy: Burning Streams*. Her essays are included in journals such as *The Griot*, *English Language Notes*, and *Journal of the Fantastic in Arts*. Professor Brooks de Vita's professional affiliations include the College Language Association, National Association of African American Studies, International Association for the Fantastic in Arts, and National Research Council of Ford Fellows, among others.

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Charlene Evans is Professor of English with teaching and research specializations in Nineteenth Century American Literature, African American Women's Literature, and American Southern Writers. She holds the Ph.D. in English (Rice University) and two Master of Arts degrees (Rice University and Atlanta University/Clark Atlanta University). Professor Evans has published in journals such as *The Griot*, *Language and Literature*, and *The Suno Review*, among others. Her book publications include an edited collection of essays on President Barack Obama and a text entitled, *I Say What I Mean: Writing to Learn/Learning to Write*. Professor Evans' professional affiliations include the Hermann Park Conservancy (TX), Houston Center for Independent Living, and Lambda Iota English Honor Society, among others.

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Albertina Walker-Hughey is Associate Professor of English. She holds the Ph.D. in Interdisciplinary Studies (University of Cincinnati) and the Master of Arts in English (University of Florida). Professor Hughey specializes in Rhetoric and Discourse Studies with an emphasis in discourse structures and use. She teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in English composition, advanced writing, rhetorical criticism, linguistics, history and theory of the English language, and Southern Literature. She has published articles on art as socio-cultural discourse and visual-print literacy (*Dialogues: Arts in the Midwest*), and the role of public narratives in cross-cultural civic engagement (*Higher Education Exchange*).

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Iris Lancaster is Assistant Professor of English. She holds a Ph.D. in Critical Literacy (Texas A & M) and a Master of Arts in English (Texas Southern University). Professor Lancaster teaches Composition and Rhetoric courses as well as American Literature. Her specialization area is American Literature, 1899-1946. Professor Lancaster's publications include work in the collection, *The Street: A Critical Response to Ann Petry* and an article on composition, literature, and classical rhetoric in the *Louisiana English Journal*. Her memberships and affiliations include the Modern Language Association, National Council of Black Studies, and College Language Association.

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Ronald C. Samples is Associate Professor of English. He holds the Ph.D. in English (Rice University) and the Master of Arts in English (Texas Southern University). Professor Samples' areas of specialization include the American Novel, American Literature to 1910, and the work of Henry James. He is a charter member of The Henry James Society and holds membership in many professional organizations to include the College Language Association, Southern Conference of African American Studies, Conference of College Teachers of English, among others. Professor Samples' published work includes a text, *By Precept and Example: An Illustrated Guide to Analysis and Composition*.

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Michael Sollars is Associate Professor of English. He holds the Ph.D. in English from the University of Missouri in Kansas City. His specialization areas include modernism, literary theory, existentialism, aesthetics, and theater as literature. Professor Sollars is the editor of the two-volume, *The Companion to the World Novel, 1900 to the Present* and the five-volume, *The Encyclopedia of Literary Characters*. Prior to his academic career, Professor Sollars was a professional editor, writer and publisher of medical journals.

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Michael Zeidler is Associate Professor of English and holds the Ph.D. and Master of Arts in English (Johns Hopkins University). His area of specialization is British Literature. Professor Zeidler's book publications include *Representations of Culture: Thomas Hardy's Wessex and Victorian Anthropology* and an edited collection of essays on President Barack Obama. He has published essays in the following journals, among others—*The Journal of Theory and Practice*, *Litera: A Journal of Western Literature*, *EAPSU Online: A Journal of Creative and Critical Work*, and *The Hardy Review*. Professor Zeidler holds memberships in the Modern Language Association, Victorian Interdisciplinary Society of the Western United States, College English Association, College Language Association, John Steinbeck Society, and Conference of College Teachers of English, among others.

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About the Department Head, Dr. Emily Allen Williams

Full Professor of English



Dr. Emily Allen-Williams is a Fulbright Scholar with a former residency at the University of the West Indies (Jamaica). She has served as Founding Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences at Paine College. She also has served as Founding Director of the MFA Professional Writing Program at Savannah College of Art and Design-Atlanta Campus and Tenured Professor of English at Morehouse College (Atlanta, GA).

She is the author of *Beyond the Canebrakes: Caribbean Women Writers in Canada* (Africa World Press, 2008); *Changing Currents: Transnational Caribbean Literary and Cultural Criticism* (Africa World Press, 2006); *The Critical Response to Kamau Brathwaite* (Praeger Press, 2004); *Anglophone Caribbean Poetry, 1970-2001: An Annotated Bibliography* (Greenwood Publishing Group, 2002); and *Poetic Negotiations of Identity in the Works of Brathwaite, Harris, Senior and Dabydeen* (Mellen, 1999).

Williams is the Founding Editor of *Caribbean Vistas: Critiques of Caribbean Arts and Cultures*, a peer-reviewed online journal. Her essays, interviews, and reviews appear in the journals *Wasafiri*, *Canadian Literature Review*, *African American Review*, *The Caribbean Writer*, *Journal of African American Men*, *CLA Journal*, and *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, among others. Williams has been interviewed on a number of international radio forums on Caribbean Literature. Dr. Williams currently has several forthcoming books (under contract) that focus on the internationally renowned author Kamau Brathwaite, Caribbean Women Writers in Canada, and The Harlem Renaissance.

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