Welcome to Department of English

The Department of English offers students the unique opportunity to write not only their own future but the future of the world.

At TSU students take part in one of the most dynamic centers of education to gain the needed insights, tools, and experience to become successful professionals in many areas of pursuit. The tools you gain at TSU help you to write your very own important future. Employers seek applicants who can communicate clearly and effectively. Students will experience the intensity of and insights into imaginative literature, crucial encounters that will forever change their lives and help them shape the world ahead of them. These works cover every form of literature, from ancient epics by Homer, to drama by Shakespeare, to poetry by Keats and Shelley, to Modernism by Richard Wright and Virginia Woolf, and to contemporary writers like Toni Morrison.

The department is led by highly talented and concerned professors who relate directly and meaningfully with students every day. We have a hands-on approach to advising, which minimizes the time to complete a degree as well as guide students toward a path of advanced education. The department prides itself on fostering exceptional creative as well as critical writing and thinking skills. A degree offers a great range of versatility. An English degree will provide an invaluable set of skills and core competencies in critical thinking, oral and written communication, and creativity. Previous English graduates have excelled as published authors, teachers, professors, lawyers, government specialists, communication experts, journalists, marketing specialists, public relations professionals, editors, and a host of other careers.

Mark Twain once said there are only two really important days in each person’s life. The first is the day you were born. The second critical day can be discovered through your study of literature—the reason you were born in the first place. You will discover enrichment in our department, including academic achievement, teacher-student mentoring support, advising, and friendship among students. Our English majors, graduate students, and faculty comprise a success-oriented academic community. Our faculty enjoy sharing their knowledge and intellectual passion with students. At TSU you can gain an understanding of African American Literature, American and British Literature, Dramatic Literature, Literary Theory, Creative Writing, and Technical Writing.

Our graduates go on to become highly successful professionals in many areas. These meaningful roles include teaching, law, graduate school, editors, published writers, and many other professional pursuits.

I invite you to become a part of our successful department. We strive to help our students succeed.

Michael D. Sollars
Ph.D. Chair
Degree Program
Undergraduate Degrees

The Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) Degree in English, with two concentrations, Non-Teaching Concentration I, and Teaching Concentration II. Course requirements for the major and minor programs are summarized as follows:

- **The major in English, Non-Teaching Concentration I** – 120 semester hours are required, including the following three-credit courses: ENG 231 (prerequisite ENG 230), ENG 301, ENG 302, ENG 303, ENG 304, ENG 338, ENG 430, ENG 432, ENG 433, and ENG 440 or ENG 441.
- **The major in English, Teaching Concentration II** – 120 semester hours are required, including the following three-credit courses: ENG 231 (prerequisite ENG 230), ENG 301, ENG 302, ENG 303 or ENG 304, ENG 338, ENG 430, ENG 432, ENG 433, and ENG 440 or ENG 441. Individuals interested in seeking certification for teaching in the public schools of Texas should contact the Teacher Certification Officer in the College of Education at Texas Southern University for application instructions.
- **The minor in English** – 21 semester credit hours are required, including the following three-credit courses: ENG 231 (prerequisite ENG 230, ENG 301 or 302, ENG 303 or ENG 304, ENG 338, ENG 430, ENG 432, and ENG 440 or 441.

Admission Criteria

Applicants to the program must meet admission requirements of both the Graduate School and the English Department of TSU. The requirements for admission to the graduate English program are as follows:

- A cumulative grade-point average of 2.75 in general undergraduate studies and 3.0 in English studies
- Completion of 12 semester hours in foreign language(s)

Students with fewer than 21 undergraduate hours in English must enroll in specified undergraduate courses to remove noted deficiencies. Having remedied noted deficiencies, the student may reapply for admission to the program.

Degree Requirements

There are two tracks leading to the granting of the Master of Arts in English. Track A (thesis option) is designed for students who anticipate pursuing graduate study beyond the Master’s degree. Track B (non-thesis option) is designed to prepare candidates for entry to the professional world or further graduate study.

- Students who have not passed the writing portion of the GRE at the level specified by the Graduate School must successfully complete English 501 during their first year of graduate study.
- Students must complete a total of 30 semester credit hours. With permission from the Chair, students may count up to 6 hours of 400-level English courses designated as senior/graduate towards the 30-hour course requirement.
- Students must maintain a 3.0 cumulative average, with no more than 6 hours of courses with grades lower than B-; grades of C- or below cannot be used to satisfy degree requirements.
- Students must successfully complete 30 credit hours of course work and pass a comprehensive examination before completing the thesis.

Master of Arts in English Degree Plans

The English Department offers two options leading to the Master of Arts degree designed to prepare students for entry to the professional world or further graduate study:

- **Track A** – Masters of Arts degree (thesis option – 30 semester credit hours, including 3 research hours for thesis) – in literature study with an emphasis in American, African-American, or British literature.
- **Track B** – Masters of Arts degree (non-thesis option - 30 semester credit hours for non-thesis) – with a generalist concentration in literary studies. With the approval of the Department Chair and the instructor, the student will devote three credits to a “Directed Reading and Research” course resulting in two or more longer papers.

Online Master of Arts in English Degree Plan

You can obtain you MA in English degree fully online. As a student, you follow the very same course content work and choose either the thesis or portfolio track.
Meet our Faculty

Michael Sollars  
Professor/ Chair  
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.

Michon Benson-Marsh  
Assistant Professor  
She is a graduate of Jack Yates High School and long-time resident of Houston’s Third Ward community. Dr. Benson has been a secondary school teacher and an instructional leader for over 25 years. In 1990, Dr. Benson received her undergraduate degree from the University of Texas at Austin in Studio Art, a Master’s degree in Rhetoric and Composition from Texas Southern University in 1996, and her PhD in African American Literature in 2007.

Alexis Brooks de Vita  
Professor  
Dr. Alexis' holds 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.

Charlene Taylor Evans  
Professor  
As one of the senior members of the Department of English, I have thirty-five (35) years of experience at Texas Southern University, with seventeen (17) years in the classroom, and six (6) years as department head of English and foreign languages. I managed various institutional units including athletics, information technology, marketing and communications, development, external affairs, governmental relations, human resources, public safety, and alumni affairs.

Arbolina Jennings  
Assistant Professor  
She also serves as Co-Chair of the TSU Subcommittee on General Education. Professor Jennings is also involved with several committees of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB).

Professor Jennings is ABD for the Ph.D. in Comparative Literature at New York University, and she holds a M.A. in English (New York University), a M.A. in Spanish Language and Literature from New York University, and a Bachelor of Arts in English, French, and Spanish (Notre Dame University). Her research specialization focuses on Rhetoric and Composition, specifically on nontraditional African American students' writing experiences in the freshman English composition classroom.

Philip R. Jones  
Assistant Professor  
Dr. Jones holds a MA in English with a concentration in 19th Century British Literature from University of Houston-Clear Lake, a second MA in English with a concentration in Rhetoric and Composition from Indiana University-East, and a BM in Vocal Music from The University of Houston. Professor Jennings is ABD for the Ph.D. in Comparative Literature at New York University, and his research specialization focuses on Rhetoric and Composition, specifically on nontraditional African American students’ writing experiences in the freshman English composition classroom.

Iris Lancaster  
Assistant Professor  
Professor Lancaster holds a Ph.D. in Critical Literacy (Texas A & M) and a Master of Arts in English (Texas Southern University). 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.

Ronald C. Samples  
Associate Professor  
Dr. Samples holds the Ph.D. in English (Rice University) and the Master of Arts in English (Texas Southern University). His 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.

Michael Zeitler  
Professor  
Dr. Michael holds the Ph.D. and Master of Arts in English (Johns Hopkins University).

His area of specialization is British Literature. Professor Zeitler’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.

Dr. Michael has a MA in English (Texas Southern University) and a BA in English, French, and Spanish (Notre Dame University).
## Faculty Contact

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<td>Harmon, Donna</td>
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<td>Hughey, Albertina Walker</td>
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<td>Jennings, Arbolina</td>
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<td>Samples, Ronald</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sollars, Michael</td>
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<td>Williams, Linda</td>
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Opportunities & Activities

Advising and Mentoring

Academic advising is to assist you in your growth and development by constructing meaningful educational plans which are compatible with your life goals.

It is a continuous consistent process which is built upon the basis of frequent, accumulated personal contacts between advisor and advisee. Academic advising fosters the development of the whole student who is a self directed, motivated, responsible decision-maker and encourages the successful completion of degree requirements and timely graduations.

English Club

This organization is open to all English majors, minors, graduate students, and those interested in literary endeavors.

Poetry Day

Each semester students are encouraged to read their original poetry during a festive event.

J. Marie McCleary Interdisciplinary Symposium

Students are invited to present their research papers at the this scholarly annual venue.

Creative Writing

The English Department offers many opportunities for students interested in creative writing, including classes, writing groups, reading opportunities, and publication strategies.

University Attendance Policy:

University policy states that class attendance is mandatory for all freshmen and sophomores. Within the first 20 days of a class, a student may be dropped from the course after accumulating absences in excess of 10 percent of the total hours of instruction (lecture and/or lab). In other words, a three credit-hour class meeting three hours per week results in 48 total hours of classroom instruction; consequently, a student can be dropped after six hours of absence. Failure to withdraw officially may result in a grade of F in the course. Students who wish to drop a course or withdraw from the university are responsible for initiating this action. Students may be dropped from courses in which they have accrued excessive absences. Class absences will be recorded and counted only from the actual day of enrollment for the individual student in this specific class.

Make-up Policy and Acceptance of Late Assignments

Students who miss class or work due to an absence bear the responsibility of informing the instructor of university-excused absences within one week following the period of the excused absence and of making up the missed work. The instructor shall give the student an opportunity to make up the work and/or the exams missed due to an excused absence within the semester. The method of making up this work shall be determined by the faculty member. If a student has an excused absence on a day when a quiz is given, the instructor may deny permission for a makeup exam and simply calculate the student’s grade on the basis of the remaining requirements. The faculty member should discuss the decision with the student.

Excused Absences

Fall into two categories: mandatory and discretionary. Mandatory excused absences must be granted students whenever they are representing the University in an official capacity and have been granted permission by the Office of the University’s top Academic Office (Provost). Students are responsible for all work missed while representing the University and are responsible for requesting makeup work when they return. Excused absences are at the discretion of the instructor and may be granted for verified illness, death in a student’s immediate family, obligation of a student at legal proceedings in fulfilling his or her responsibility as a citizen, major religious holidays, and others determined by individual faculty to be excusable.

Scholastic Honesty

Students are held accountable for doing their own work and for learning to research and to document material ethically. Students should avoid all forms of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism (appropriating another person’s words or ideas as one’s own), collusion (working with another person in the preparation of written work for credit unless that collaboration is specifically approved in advance by the instructor), cheating (offering, soliciting, or using prepared material during a test), and impersonation (allowing another person to attend class, take examinations, or complete graded work on behalf of an enrolled student).

Classroom Rules

- Cell phones or headphones may not be used in the classroom or be audible or visible.
- Laptops may be used in the classroom only with permission from the instructor.
- Students entering the class after roll call will be marked absent.
Quick Facts

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