

English

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Degree Requirements

PhD in English and American Literature or English and Comparative Literature

The AM/PhD program in English at Washington University in St. Louis is a six-year course of study leading to a doctorate in English and American Literature or in English and Comparative Literature. All English graduate students take a minimum of 12 elective 3-credit courses at the 400 or 500 level, along with two compulsory classes: Introduction to Graduate Study and Practicum in the Teaching of Composition. Aside from these two classes, there are no specific course requirements, although students must take at least two courses in historical periods before 1780 (not in the same period) and at least two in historical periods after 1780 (again, not in the same period).

For students entering in the fall semester of 2014 and after, at least six of the 12 elective courses must be 500-level, graduate-only seminars; four such 500-level seminars must be taken by students who entered in the fall of 2013 or before. Students are encouraged to enroll in courses of special interest in other departments or programs, whether or not they are cross-listed with the English department; however, at least eight of their 12 electives must be home-based English courses, including (save in exceptional cases) at least six of their seminars.

The English department requires a minimum of competency in one foreign language, ancient or modern, for all doctoral candidates. "Competency" is understood as a basic comprehension of the grammar, structure and core vocabulary of a language. Native speakers of another language or students who have had two full years of undergraduate language study with a grade average of B+ or better will be considered to have satisfied the competency requirement. Other students may demonstrate competency either by taking an introductory reading course designed for graduate students or by passing a translation exam administered by the appropriate language department.

It is assumed that all entering graduate students are aiming for the PhD; the English department does not admit students aiming for a terminal AM degree. The AM is awarded during the course of study when a student has completed 36 credit units, usually at the end of the second year. To satisfy the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences, requirement of demonstrated excellence, candidates for the AM may also be asked to submit a graded seminar essay (or the equivalent) for review by the English Graduate Committee.

Students entering the program with a master's degree in hand normally follow the standard first-year curriculum. At the end of their third semester, the director of graduate studies will review their AM credits taken elsewhere and determine how many credits (normally a limit of 9-12) may be applied toward the PhD at Washington University. Although students receiving transfer credit may be able to complete the PhD in fewer than six years, it is to their advantage to enter the program as first-year students, since this ensures them four full semesters of study without teaching responsibilities. If, after three semesters and the review of transfer credit, the director of graduate studies determines that the student has fulfilled the course requirements for the PhD, the student may elect not to take classes in semester four and instead to begin major field reading instead; their 6 credits of major field preparation during semester four will complete the requirements for the Washington University AM degree.

Students who wish to receive the combined PhD degree in English and Comparative Literature (<https://english.wustl.edu/phd-requirements/#anchor-group-10759>) may do so by fulfilling the English department's requirements for combined degrees. More information about the combined degree may be found on the departmental website.

During the first seven semesters, credits are earned by taking courses, independent study and directed reading. More precisely, students complete 13 courses (39 credits) total across years one and two; the Practicum in Teaching (3 credits) in the fall of year three; 6 credits of directed reading in the spring of year three; and 6 credits of directed reading in the fall of year four.