

ENGLISH, PHD

Degree: Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

Field of Study: English

Program Overview

The department offers a doctoral program devoted to literatures in English, with opportunities to pursue creative writing or writing history and theory.

Admissions

Candidates for graduate work in English should present an undergraduate major in English or a minimum of 18 credit hours of English (or its equivalent) beyond the first-year level. In some cases, students will be required to make up deficiencies in their preparation without receiving graduate credit. Candidates must also submit a writing sample, consisting of at least 15 pages of academic writing.

Graduate Assistantships

New and continuing graduate students are normally supported with graduate assistantships providing tuition remission and a living stipend. Assistantships are awarded by the dean on the recommendation of the department. All graduate assistants are required to take university- and department-level teacher training courses in their first semester of work at the university.

Teaching is viewed as an essential part of the education of graduate students aspiring to academic posts, and is required of all students working under assistantships. The department provides opportunities for graduate assistants to gain teaching experience in a variety of courses and in the Writing Resource Center.

PhD Policies

For PhD policies and procedures, please review the School of Graduate Studies section of the General Bulletin.

Program Requirements

Students admitted to the PhD after completing an MA must complete 24 credit hours of coursework. All PhD students must complete ENGL 506; and ENGL 487 (or another theory course). Those who have not completed the equivalent of ENGL 400 in the course of MA work must complete that essential training as soon as possible. There are no distribution requirements for doctoral coursework.

PhD students complete a minimum of 18 credit hours of dissertation research in addition to a Qualifying Examination. Doctoral students admitted with prior MA degrees typically take the Qualifying Examination in the spring semester of their second year. Working with an advisory committee, students prepare a list of approximately 75 works in two or three areas of concentration. They also prepare four research questions in these areas, from which the committee will select two for submission after a 72-hour period. (Examination answers to all four questions may be drafted in advance of the 72-hour period between receipt of the assignment of questions and the submission of the completed exam.) The written exam is followed by an oral examination. Both portions of the

Qualifying Examination must be passed in order for students to Advance to Candidacy.

All doctoral students must demonstrate proficiency in at least one foreign language, normally by completing an upper-division (200-level) undergraduate course in the language at CWRU with a grade of "B" or better. Non-native speakers of English are exempt from this requirement; students who have completed a minor or major in a foreign language in the course of undergraduate study, or who have completed a comparable foreign language requirement as part of prior graduate study, may petition to have the prior work satisfy the language requirement.

No later than the semester following successful completion of Qualifying Exams, a dissertation prospectus must be accepted by the dissertation committee. The student should complete and defend the dissertation within six semesters following the acceptance of the prospectus.

Writing History and Theory (WHIT) Project Emphasis

English Graduate students at the PhD level can elect to focus their research in Writing History and Theory (WHIT) as part of their degree program. Students pursuing a WHIT doctoral research emphasis work closely with faculty to ensure that their work fulfills the aims of the WHIT Rationale. WHIT students select courses, define exam areas and build reading lists, and design dissertation projects that represent scholarly interventions in the history, theory, and practice of writing in all of its aspects.

WHIT Rationale: The Writing History and Theory (WHIT) doctoral emphasis addresses writing in all of its aspects, including its material bases—its diverse technologies, sites, and economies; its conventions, forms, and pedagogies; and its practices and uses, both contemporary and historical. Students who pursue this emphasis investigate a variety of writing practices, historicizing them in sophisticated ways and relating them to dominant strands in literary, cultural, and rhetorical theory. WHIT projects emphasize the relationships among texts and the larger social, economic, and political contexts in which they are produced and circulated, exploring, for instance, the legal infrastructure of creative production; the origins, uses, and revisions of generic forms; the remediation of texts; and the material practices of invention, dissemination, and display.

The WHIT research emphasis prepares doctoral students for an academic job market that calls on them to teach in a number of areas (composition, literature, linguistics, technical writing) and demonstrate familiarity with digital forms of scholarship. It also anticipates alternative academic and non-academic markets in which graduates will profit from a broad and deep understanding of the history and theory of writing practices.

Creative Writing Coursework Practicum

The creative writing coursework practicum addresses not only the production of creative writing but also its contemporary theory, history, and pedagogy, beginning with ENGL 504. Students who pursue this practicum will be able to focus on their own creative work in the context of two or more advanced workshop courses, explore the connections between that work and contemporary scholarship, and prepare to teach creative writing at the college and university levels. Their selected courses will ideally be a mixture of practicum and focused literary scholarship that provide a wide range of marketable skills, preparing them for an academic job market that calls on them to teach in more than one area.

English PhD students who pursue the creative writing coursework practicum work closely with the creative writing faculty to pursue

writing and teaching in several genres. The practicum is satisfied by the completion of the following:

- ENGL 504 and two 400-level workshop courses with a grade of B or better
- An approved experience in or around Writers House (serving on a program committee, leading a writing group, engaging in community writing, etc.)
- A portfolio that includes a syllabus for a college-level creative writing course, a collection of the student's own creative work, and a critical introduction

The practicum's guidelines need not be completed in the first two years of coursework (the Fellowship Course Option can be used to supplement regularly required courses), and there is no expectation that students include creative writing as part of qualifying exams or subsequent dissertation work. On the other hand, students who wish to pursue further scholarly work in the theory and history of contemporary creative writing may do so under the guidance of an approved doctoral committee. (Please see the doctoral program's guidelines for constituting committees and preparing for exams.)