Program Overview
The Western Illinois University Department of English offers graduate-level study in literature, writing and cultural studies. All students must satisfy three requirements totaling 30 student credit hours (30 sh).

Students take courses in traditional and emerging literatures, professional writing and editing, composition, new media, film and popular culture. Through course-work, students define their interests, learn powerful research methodologies and develop their intellectual and scholarly identities.

Students in the graduate program in English collaborate with our graduate faculty to develop individualized plans of study that suit their scholarly and professional goals. We actively help students with financial support and professional development.

In the final “exit-option sequence,” students work under the direction of a faculty committee to develop, complete and defend an ambitious project that makes a significant, intellectual contribution. Students can choose one of three exit-option projects to complete the program:

- **Thesis:** 40-60 pages of original scholarly writing
- **Directed Readings and Exam:** Reading extensively in primary and secondary texts to master a particular field
- **Applied Project:** A significant, comprehensive project that may include a creative component (creating a website, writing a screenplay) or be tied to an internship in a professional setting

Many students also earn credits with internships in teaching, professional writing, library science and other fields, while gaining hands-on experience and establishing valuable professional connections.

Why Choose English at WIU?
- We emphasize individual, one-on-one mentorship by faculty with national reputations in their fields.
- Our students define the problems they want to work on, develop the knowledge and methodology necessary to address them and establish their scholarly identities through intellectually transformative final projects.
- Flexible full-time or part-time options are available to complete the program.
- A rich department culture of conferences, colloquiums, roundtables and talks by nationally-recognized scholars and creative writers.
- The English graduate faculty offer courses in every area of English studies and publish innovative scholarship in both traditional and emerging fields. All English graduate faculty members have degrees from competitive programs at accredited institutions, and all are recognized experts in their fields.
- Competitive funding packages are available, with tuition waivers and living stipends for full-time students.
- Our graduates find success in information-intensive careers in business, especially those demanding intensive writing, editing and sophisticated literacies.
- The M.A. qualifies our graduates to teach English at community colleges.
- We prepare our students for success in Ph.D. programs, and we have an exceptional record of funded placements in prestigious programs nationwide.
- Recent graduates are working as professional writers in Chicago, Denver, St. Louis, and other major cities. Many are teaching at community colleges and universities across the nation. Others have accepted assistantships at top doctoral programs including: University of Notre Dame, University of California Riverside, SUNY Buffalo, University of Minnesota, University of Connecticut, and Saint Louis University.
From Our Graduate Students

“The English graduate program at Western helped me gain agency over my degree with critical coursework, professional opportunities, and immersive teaching experience. Faculty in the department are immensely knowledgeable but always willing to learn more, and they imparted valuable, patient mentorship throughout the program. I graduated knowing I was wholly prepared to move forward while fondly reflecting on great fun, friends, and memories made along the way.”

—Nicholas Nusbaumer, M.A. 2019, Associate Lecturer/English Composition, University of Wisconsin-Green Bay

“If I were to contemplate today, the preceding two years of my life spent at Western Illinois University, I would choose no other English graduate program in the world. This is not to take away from any reputable university, local or abroad—I am merely stating, the English department at WIU is exceptional. In my collegiate career, I am blessed to have met so many inspiring professionals and intellectuals, whom I am lucky to call mentors and friends. Reflecting on my first year as an instructor at Georgia Southern University, I credit my preparedness, awareness, and compassion, to the individuals working and providing guidance throughout the halls of Simpkins. Thank you to my professors, mentors, graduate colleagues, and the staff of Simpkins.”

—Ishimine Goins, M.A. 2019, Instructor, First-Year Writing, Georgia Southern University, Statesboro, GA

“The English graduate program was ideal for helping me facilitate and advance my scholarly interests, professional skills, and teaching experience. The program’s multidisciplinary faculty and staff actively worked to establish a comfortable, goal-oriented learning environment geared toward the prosperity of my own individual interests in film, literary studies, and pop culture. Professors work candidly to challenge students to become better writers, readers, and overall academics. I will always cherish the opportunity that I received to be a candidate in a program driven by excellence and community.”

—Dakota Carlson, M.A. 2019, Lecturer of English, Quincy University

Opportunities for Our Students

In the English graduate program, students have opportunities to develop their intellectual interests well beyond the classroom.

• Present at local and regional conferences. In recent years, students have traveled to present their work at the Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association in Washington D.C. and California; Craft, Critique, Culture Conference in Iowa; and the Sigma Tau Delta conference in Saint Louis, Missouri and Louisville, Kentucky.

• Compete for funding to travel for research. Through the John Mahoney Award, students have traveled to archives at Yale University, researched Byron in Ireland, and secured funds to travel to conduct interviews throughout the U.S.

• Full-time students can compete for teaching assistantships that include tuition waivers and living stipends.

Extracurricular Opportunities

Our graduate students run the English Graduate Organization (EGO). They plan the annual EGO Conference, inviting other graduate students and faculty from around the country, to present papers with them on exciting and emerging fields of study. Additionally, EGO students organize roundtables and talks, plan local events such as picnics and softball games, and participate in other organizations on campus such as Sigma Tau Delta English Honor Society and events sponsored by the Interdisciplinary English and the Arts Society (IDEAS) based at WIU’s Quad Cities campus.

Student Success

Recent graduates have made careers in copywriting, editing, technical writing, management, and public relations. Many of our graduates also teach writing in community colleges and universities, or teach English abroad. Students have also gone on to further graduate study in prestigious schools around the country, including programs leading to the Masters of Library Science and the Ph.D. in English Studies Visit wiu.edu/english for student profiles and other information.