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.

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 and ambitious project, often 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.
- Students define 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- or part-time options are available.
- A rich department culture of conferences, colloquia, roundtables and talks by nationally-recognized scholars and creative writers are offered.
- Faculty have extensive experience mentoring secondary education teachers to successful completion of their graduate degrees.
- Competitive funding packages are available, with tuition waivers and living stipends for full-time students.
- 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 and other major cities. Many are teaching at community colleges across the nation. Others have accepted assistantships at top doctoral programs nationwide.

The Western Illinois University Department of English offers graduate-level education in all areas of English studies. Our graduates pursue information-intensive careers in business and education, including those demanding intensive writing and editing, as well as secondary or community college teaching in composition or literature. Many students also complete further graduate study in the humanities.
Our Faculty
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 have doctoral degrees from competitive programs at accredited institutions, and all are recognized as experts in their fields.

Selected Recent Articles by English Graduate Faculty

- Roberta Di Carmine, “Comedy Italian Style” and *I soliti Ignoti (Big Deal on Madonna Street, 1958),” A Companion to Film Comedy*, 2013.

Books by English Graduate Faculty


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 QC 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, 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.

“Professors are adamant about challenging students to work outside of the familiar, to stand on original thought and their passion is infectious. When I finished school, it was the work ethic and intellectual curiosity I gained in the program that allowed me to move to Chicago and ‘live the dream’ as a professional writer. The people you meet at WIU will shape your story well beyond graduation.”

— Cody Cunningham, M.A. 2016. Senior Copywriter at JLL Commercial Real Estate, Chicago