MERCY UNIVERSITY MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH LIT

PROGRAM HANDBOOK

INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE FOR CURRENT AND PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS

Program Information for Current and Prospective Students

Mercy University Master of Arts in English Literature Program
School of Liberal Arts, Department of Literature & Language
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Program Director, MA in English Literature: Dr. Christopher Loots

Chair, Department of Literature & Language: Dr. Kristen Keckler

Dean, School of Liberal Arts: Dr. Peter West

"Words will never fully express the gratitude I have for the life changing experience of this program."

– Casi Kapadia, MA 2023

"It was truly an inspiring time for me being in the Mercy MA program. The quality of the coursework and instruction was outstanding. I miss it every day!"

– Kari O'Driscoll, MA 2021

"This is an amazing online program."

- Jevon Bolden, MA 2018

"I consider the two years I spent with Mercy's MA program easily the best experience I've had with a college."

– Christina Covey, MA 2017

"I have been offered a place in some great PhD programs. It would not be possible without Mercy first providing me with a wonderful MA program and education. I appreciate everything you have done to help me prepare for a PhD program."

- Angie Still, MA 2014

"Receiving my masters in English Literature from Mercy was one of the best things I have ever done for myself."

- Landon Funk, MA 2023

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About the Program

The Master of Arts in English Literature program at Mercy University offers a rigorous and accessible learning opportunity for students aspiring to a variety of academic, professional, and personal goals. The program started in the brickwork halls of our Westchester New York campus along the Hudson River, then expanded to offer the graduate degree entirely online, thereby making our MA program available to anyone with a computer and an internet connection, anywhere in the world. We are one of the first fully-accredited universities in the world to offer the MA English Literature degree fully online. And we continue to be a pioneer in online literary studies. We continuously develop and hone the program to anticipate and serve the needs of our online students around the region, country, and globe through the virtual Blackboard environment. In the wake of the Covid pandemic, other graduate programs are racing now to enact some semblance of an online curriculum. We have been doing this online for over two decades.

Students in the program learn theory and advanced methodologies of literary criticism, while engaging with British, American, and World literature. Attention is paid both to traditional authors, genres, and eras, as well as to literature of diverse cultural and historic traditions. Courses focusing on creative writing, and on the teaching of writing, are offered as well. Our program allows for unparalleled student choice, empowering students to chart unique and preferred paths to their MA degree.
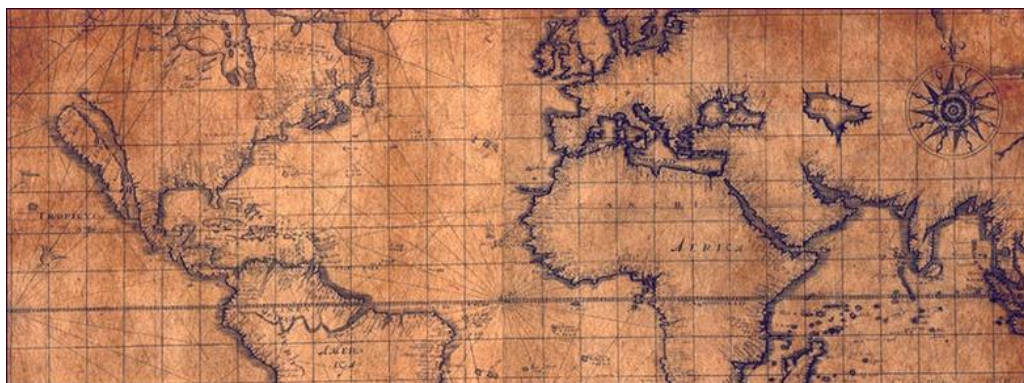
Students in the Program

Students join the Mercy MA program for a variety of reasons, and come from a variety of backgrounds. Many students in the program come from traditional preparations and aspire to traditional academic and professional goals. Such students tend to have a BA in English or a closely related field, such as History or Philosophy, and are here continuing their scholarly path either toward a college teaching position, or toward a PhD program.[1] We have many other students, though, with other backgrounds and goals. This includes aspiring and professional writers, creative and otherwise, who know that, other than writing a lot, intense literary study remains the primary way to improve one's own writing. This as well includes students who join the program in hopes of increasing their marketability in non-academic fields related to English studies, such as editing, publishing, and media. Our student body includes primary and secondary school teachers seeking to increase their content knowledge, or to earn credits necessary for promotion, salary increase, re-licensing, or job retention. We have students who are professionals in other fields and students who are retired, all here to enrich their lives through the study of literature. We have students who fit none of those descriptions and who simply love literature and studies in English, who are curious to explore and experience the tremendous power, mystery, and meaning that moves through and emerges from literature. Our program includes students of practically all ages located throughout the U.S. and across the globe.

All such students who meet our application criteria are welcome here. Anyone interested in studying literature at an advanced level, in courses taught by PhDs who are published experts in their fields, is welcome here.

The Mercy MA program is specifically designed to give all students the experience they need and want. Those needing a rigorous preparation in traditional British and American literature will find courses that meet their needs and an advising structure which clearly charts the best courses to take to achieve as much. Those seeking to improve their pedagogy will find curriculum that studies the theory and teaching of expository writing, the writing taking place in most composition classes. Those who prefer to chart a more unique path to the MA degree have the freedom to take courses ranging from the traditional to the eclectic. Whatever you need the program to be, we've designed it so that it will flex to meet those various needs, all while providing every student with the same rigorous level of high quality literary study.

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[1] The MA qualifies you to teach composition and literature at community colleges, and to apply to full-time faculty positions at most community colleges. It tends to be the preferred degree for community college English literature faculty postings, as applicants possessing the PhD tend to be seen as only temporarily passing through. Current trends in higher education and the U.S. economy suggest that many students are opting for community college over more costly senior four-year college, which in turn suggests that demand for community college faculty will only increase in the years ahead. The MA also qualifies you to teach composition and literature as an adjunct professor at most senior colleges and universities. To be considered for a full-time faculty position at most senior colleges, the PhD is required.

Admissions Requirements

Students applying to the program should meet one of the following three criteria:
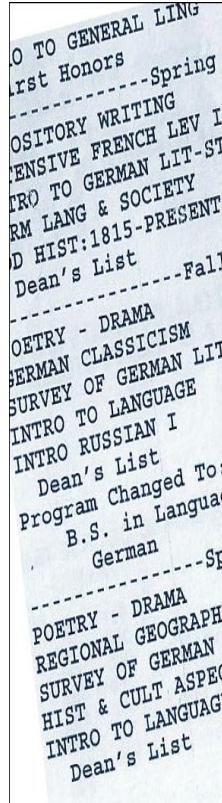
- Applicant should possess a BA in English or another humanities discipline with an average GPA of 3.00 or better in the major field. It is preferred that students with non-English humanities degrees have 15 credits of literature or relevant writing coursework on their transcript. **OR**

- Applicant should possess a BA or BS with a minor in English or another humanities discipline with an average GPA of 3.00 in the courses meeting the minor. **OR**

- If the applicant does not meet either of the first two conditions —for example if the applicant has a degree in psychology, or business—the applicant will still be considered for admission provided that the student's supporting application materials demonstrate the potential to succeed in a graduate literature program. Such applicants should make good use of the required personal essay to express their impetus for applying to graduate study, and should consider submitting a second writing sample (see "Application Procedures" on page 4). We encourage such applicants, as we believe that a diversity of backgrounds and preparations adds to the learning experience of all students.

Potential applicants who have questions about these requirements, or who might be unsure about whether or not their preparation, background, or situation falls outside of the above three criteria, should contact the Program Director for more information. The MA program operates within Mercy University's greater mission statement which is to offer opportunities for students from a variety of backgrounds and preparations to transform their lives through higher education.

☎ **Program Director:**
Dr. Christopher Loots
914-674-7423
cloots@mercy.edu

Application Procedures

Students applying to the program must first complete the standard Mercy University graduate application. The online application should be completed and submitted online

☎ **Admissions Dept:**
1-877-637-2946

at Mercy.edu. Admissions advisors in our Student Services Support Center (SSSC) will reach out to students to secure any required application materials not attached to the online application (the application allows you to upload up to three documents to it before submitting it). Students can contact the SSSC or the Program Director at any time for help with this process.

In addition to the main form, applicants must submit the following items:

• Two letters of recommendation. These can be from former professors, or professional or military supervisors, or other colleagues who can speak to the qualifications of the applicant, and will vouch for the character of the applicant.

• A writing sample. This can take the form of a personal essay speaking to the applicant's reasons for pursuing graduate literary study. Or this can be an essay or research paper written for an earlier college course. Applicants who fall into the third criteria grouping under "Admissions Requirements" on page 3 should consider submitting both the personal essay and the academic essay.

• Transcripts. Because official transcripts can take a long time to process by your undergraduate degree-granting institution, unofficial transcripts can be submitted with the application in order to expedite its review. Official transcripts are required, though, to begin taking coursework, and should be ordered when submitting the application.

All materials not submitted along with the online application form can be submitted later and added to the application dossier. This can be accomplished by sending the materials directly to our Graduate Admissions Dept.

Transfer Credits:
Up to six credits of comparable completed graduate coursework in which the student earned a B or better may be allowed, at the Program Director's discretion and approval, and credited toward the MA degree. Such transfer credits can only be considered and allowed at the time of the student's acceptance into the program. Applicants who hope to transfer in graduate-level credits should make this clear to Graduate Admissions and the Program Director upon first entering into the program.

The Structure of the Program

Requirements for the Degree

The MA degree requires 10 three-credit courses (or, requires thirty credits), a comprehensive exam, and a culminating thesis paper written during the final course in the program, the ENGL 599 *Master's Thesis*. The program runs full class schedules during fall and spring semesters, and a shorter schedule during the summer semester. Active students are not required to maintain matriculation over the summer, yet must maintain matriculation during the fall/semester months (see "Maintenance of Matriculation" on page 6 for more).

Course Requirements for the 30 credit MA in English Literature Degree:	
Theory and Practice of Literary Criticism (ENGL 500)	3 Credits
One Course, Writing & Literary Forms (ENGL 505 – 510, 517)	3 Credits
One Course, Literature Group 1 (ENGL 521 – 540)	3 Credits
One Course, Literature Group 2 (ENGL 541 – 560)	3 Credits
One Additional Course from Literature Group 1 or 2	3 Credits
Four Electives (Any course, ENGL 501 – 598)	12 Credits
Master's Thesis (ENGL 599)	3 Credits
Total =	30 Credits

Full Time / Part Time:

We recommend taking six credits (two courses) per semester. This is the traditional MA courseload and is the preferred pace for internalizing the knowledge of each graduate course. Students can move at an even slower pace and take three credits (one course) per semester, but these students would not qualify for financial aid. Both 2/semester and 1/semester courseloads are officially considered "part time" by the University. Students seeking to earn the degree at an accelerated pace may attempt to take nine credits (three courses) per semester, which is the official "full time" graduate courseload at the University. This accelerated pace is *not advisable*, though, except in extreme situations (such as a student who is operating under a funding deadline, or who must have the degree as soon as possible for job retention) as the courseload of 3/semester can become overwhelming for many students. This can endanger a student's grade in all courses that semester, which can ultimately endanger the student's standing in the program (see "Maintenance of Good Academic Standing" on page 6). Both 3/semester and 2/semester courseloads qualify for financial aid.

University & Program Policies, Links, & Resources

About Asynchronous Learning

Our online-asynchronous graduate courses are structured around weekly units, and so, unless otherwise stated by a particular professor, require weekly interaction between and among class members in each weekly unit throughout the semester. Asynchronous courses are not *correspondence courses* in which the student is only communicating with the professor and/or handing in work/assignments outside the due dates specified. And except for the final ENGL 599 Master's Thesis, asynchronous courses are not tutorials. Therefore, to maintain the academic rigor of a Master's program and its promotion of scholarly engagement, as well as to engender a vibrant academic community within each online class, students must log into Blackboard regularly, check the weekly requirements listed by the professor, and adhere to the due dates and deadlines set forth by the professor for each weekly unit, and overall for the semester. More information about attendance follows:

Mercy University's Overall Attendance Policy

Each individual class will have its own attendance policy expressed in the syllabus, however Mercy University overall has an attendance policy which speaks to the need for regular attendance and potential consequences of excessive absences. [The policy reads](): "Excessive absence interferes with the successful completion of a course of study and diminishes the quality of group interaction in class. To encourage students to accept their obligation to attend class the following policy is established: Class attendance is a matter between the instructor and the student. Instructors are obliged to announce and interpret specific attendance policies to their classes at the beginning of the term and include the policy in the course syllabus. Any student who has been excessively absent from a course and does not present adequate documentation to the instructor and fails to officially withdraw from the course before the last day for course withdrawal may receive the grade of FW (fail-withdrawal), which is computed as an F for GPA purposes and may result in a reduction of financial aid monies."

To clarify the "adequate documentation" part of the above university policy: such documentation involving medical- and mental-health situations, and anything to do with disability or accessibility, should be filed with the [Office of Accessibility]() ([accessibility@mercy.edu](), 914-674-7764) to maintain confidentiality and ensure proper protections. Professors are not expected to review medical and other diagnoses and conditions or make decisions based on confidential documentation; the Office of Accessibility has the authority to determine the accommodations that are reasonable on a case-by-case basis and provide the professor with a letter documenting the adjustments a student is entitled to under the law.

Department Attendance Policy

The general Department of Literature and Language attendance policy is that students are allowed two absences per semester, meaning a student can miss two weekly units of an asynchronous class. Professors will further specify in each individual syllabus whatever is required for the student to be counted as attending a weekly unit. Students are responsible for notifying instructors when they must miss class for any reason. Students are responsible for material covered in a missed class week or unit. Each extra absence beyond the two allowed per semester will increasingly put a student's final grade in jeopardy. Students should be speak with their professor and/or PACT in a timely manner if situations arise which jeopardize one's good attendance in a class.

Academic Integrity Policy

[Per the university catalog](#): "Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly activity in an honest, truthful and responsible manner. Students are required, to be honest, and ethical in carrying out all aspects of their academic work and responsibilities. Dishonest acts in a student's academic pursuits will not be tolerated. Academic dishonesty undermines the University's educational mission as well as the student's personal and intellectual growth. In cases where academic dishonesty is uncovered, the University imposes sanctions that range from failure of an assignment to suspension and expulsion from the University, depending on the severity and reoccurrence of the case(s). Examples of academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism (including use of AI), obtaining an unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents."

Incomplete "I" Policy

A student who has difficulty completing all of the required work before final grades are due can **request** of the instructor an incomplete "I" in place of a real final grade. Students can only make up *work* beyond the end of the semester, not *attendance*. Professors do *not* have to grant an incomplete. If a student is granted an incomplete by a professor, the professor will set a due date by which the student must complete all missing work and be considered for a real letter grade. The maximum amount of a time a professor can allow for a student to remedy an incomplete "I" is one full year from the end of the semester in which the "I" is granted; however professors do not have to allow the full year. Students should also be aware that the longer one gets from the end of the relevant semester, the further one gets from the contextual experience of the class, and so the more difficult it becomes to write papers and complete missing work related to that class. In any case, no matter how near or far a professor sets the deadline to remedy the incomplete, students should work as quickly as possible after the end of the semester to remedy the incomplete.

Netiquette

Netiquette is defined as the "rules of etiquette that apply to online communication." Click here to see Mercy's overall guide for netiquette. Netiquette is critically important in our program as our asynchronous courses don't have the benefit of embodied forms of expression: e.g. body language, facial expressions, verbal cues, and other signifiers we rely on when in-person and having face-to-face conversations. Making the situation even more complex is that graduate courses tend to be populated with a diverse range of adults, people from different parts of the world, from different cultures, of different ages and in different life phases. Netiquette therefore helps foster an online learning community built on respect and professionalism; and it helps make the online classrooms a pleasant, positive, stimulating, and respectful virtual environment for grad students and faculty.

Different professors might express different rules for netiquette in their courses, but here are some general Departmental tips for netiquette:

- Add an avatar to your Blackboard account.
- Carefully review the syllabus for each class, and the instructions in each weekly unit, and adhere to the instructions.
- Draft your discussion posts and then re-read them carefully, spell-check them, and edit them, before posting them. Often it helps to take some time, if even a few minutes, between drafting and reviewing, in order to let your mind refresh and be able to see more clearly what you've just drafted.
- Post in a timely way each week. Doing so does more than just meet the attendance requirement for the week; it helps nurture a learning community built on exchange of ideas, as opposed to a situation where people are only dropping in at the last moment to quickly post their thoughts and do the minimum before the unit closes.
- Avoid cursing, crude language, combative language, sexual language, defensive language, and referencing potentially triggering topics that are not related to the current discussion and textual analysis.
- Avoid sarcasm or other types of "joking" which might not translate to the online environment due to lacking the embodied in-person context which might otherwise help your audience understand the tone of the "joking."
- Write in full and grammatical sentences, even in discussion forums. What might be appropriate in casual social-media exchanges (e.g. using abbreviations, slang, compacted versions of words such as "u" instead of "you") is not appropriate in a graduate online classroom.
- Be professional and respectful in communications with your professors, both in class and elsewhere. Provide contextual information in any email so that your professor knows who is writing, and what about. Address your professor politely, and sign off with your name.
- For further info on netiquette contact the Program Director, Dr., Christopher Loots, at cloots@mercy.edu.

Maintenance of Matriculation:

If a student wishes to take a semester off from coursework during a fall or spring semester, the student may do so twice during the course of earning the degree. To do this the student must enroll in ENGL 899 *Maintenance of Matriculation* (for a fee) to remain active in the program and so eligible for the degree upon returning to the program. Students who do not enroll in courses during a semester and who do not enroll in ENGL 899 during that semester will be required to pay the maintenance of matriculation fee for each missed semester before enrolling in future courses. Students who do not maintain matriculation may also be deactivated by the Registrar in the University's system. *Activate Military or activated Military Reservists are not required to pay the maintenance of matriculation fee.* Students do not need to enroll in ENGL 899 or do anything else to maintain matriculation over the summer.

Military Times lists Mercy as a "Best College for Vets."

Maintenance of Good Academic Standing:

Students must maintain a cumulative GPA of no less than 3.0. If a student's average GPA falls below 3.0 the student will be placed on academic probation, as described in "Academic Probation" below.

If a student receives a grade of F or FW (FW is a failing grade which designates that the student stopped attending the course) the student may be subject to dismissal from the program.

Students who receive a final grade of less than a B in a course may be required to repeat the course in order to earn a higher grade. If a student repeats a course and earns a higher grade, the previous grade remains on the transcript but does not count toward the GPA. Students are allowed to repeat a course for this reason only once.

A student's final cumulative GPA must be 3.0 or higher to be awarded the MA degree.

Academic Probation:

Any student whose cumulative GPA dips below 3.0 will be placed on academic probation. At this point the student's progress and grades will be closely monitored. The student will have a reasonable amount of time, to be determined by the Program Director, to return the cumulative GPA average to 3.0 or higher. If the student is unable to achieve the 3.0 minimum cumulative GPA in the determined time the student will be dismissed from the program. If the student achieves the 3.0 cumulative GPA in the determined time, the student must thereafter maintain the 3.0 cumulative GPA throughout all future semesters. For such students, failure to maintain a 3.0 or higher cumulative GPA will result in dismissal from the program. For students on probation, course registrations must be reviewed and approved by the Program Director as well as the Dean of the School of Liberal Arts. Academic probation can include other stipulations as well beyond just the GPA requirement.

Final Requirements for the Degree

As students near the culmination of their coursework they should keep in mind the comprehensive examination requirement, the procedures for enrolling in ENGL 599 *Master's Thesis*, and the due dates to apply for degree conferral. These are described below:

The Comprehensive Examination:
In the time between a student's penultimate and ultimate semesters in the program, the student must take and pass the comprehensive examination. The examination is disseminated by the Program Director to students preparing to take ENGL 599 *Master's Thesis*. Online students must request the exam from the Program Director at the culmination of their penultimate semester in the program. The Program Director then emails the exam to the student. Upon receipt, the student has a ten day window in which to self-administer the exam. The exam allows four hours and requires two essays to be written during that time in response to a selection of questions based upon the student's MA coursework. The self-administration of the exam functions on the honor system. Any instances of plagiarism will result in dismissal from the program.

Upon completion of the exam the student emails the essay responses back to the Program Director, who distributes the essays to a panel of MA faculty, who evaluate and determine whether or not the essays pas. Students must successfully pass the exam before beginning their final semester. A student who does not pass on the first attempt will be given feedback and a second attempt; a student who does not pass on the second attempt will face dismissal from the program.

The Master's Thesis:
The Master of Arts degree requires a culminating thesis paper of approximately twenty-five pages. The thesis paper is written during the final course of the degree sequence, ENGL 599 *Master's Thesis*, which is always taken during the student's final semester. The course is a one-on-one tutorial involving the student and a professor functioning as a mentor. In order to enroll in ENGL 599, students must have passed the comprehensive examination (see above). The procedures for enrolling in ENGL 599 *Master's Thesis* are different than for any other course, and are as follows:

1. The student develops a general idea for a thesis topic. Topics for the master's thesis may be developed from a research paper or project submitted by the student in a previous course. Creative writers or active teachers can request to pursue a hybrid thesis paper involving creative or education elements. The student then emails this general thesis idea to a preferred professor from the graduate faculty and asks that professor if she or he would be the student's tutorial mentor. If the professor is unable to mentor the student, the student can either continue to ask other program faculty, or can contact the Program Director and request that a mentor be assigned. Alternately, if a student is uncomfortable asking any professor outright, the student can contact the Program Director first and request that a mentor be assigned.

2. Once a mentor is established, the student must put together a thesis proposal using the guidelines listed below in "Guidelines for the Thesis Proposal" section. A mentor may have additional or alternate requirements for the proposal, which must be respected by the student. Once the student has submitted the proposal to the mentor, the mentor will assess the suitability and viability of it; revisions to the proposal may be required. When the mentor determines that the proposal is ready, he or she will send the proposal to the Program Director, who will then enroll the student in ENGL 599 *Master's Thesis* with the mentor as tutorial professor.

3. Throughout the tutorial course, the mentor will guide the student's research and writing, and oversee the student's progress. By the end of the course the student must produce a polished thesis paper that meets the approval of the mentor and a second reader, as described below.

4. When the mentor determines that the final draft is ready, the mentor sends the draft to a second reader. The second reader is selected by the mentor, though the student may request that the mentor seek out a specific faculty member to be the second reader. The second reader may (A) approve the draft *without revision*; may (B) approve the draft with *suggested revisions* for the mentor to enforce as he or she deems appropriate; or, (C) may *require revisions* which the student must then address. In the last instance the second reader may insist on reviewing the revised draft, or may waive this right and at this point grant second-reader approval trusting the mentor's judgment. Ultimately the thesis must receive the approval of the mentor and the second reader in order for the student to pass ENGL 599. In extreme cases where the mentor and second reader cannot agree on an outcome, a third reader will intervene and deliver a decision on the thesis. The third reader will be the Program Director except in cases where the Program Director is already mentor or second reader.

Guidelines for the Thesis Proposal:
A thesis proposal typically includes:

1. A brief description of the project (approximately 500 words) including the thesis pursuit that the student will work to explore, explain, express, and defend.

2. A preliminary bibliography listing an assortment of primary and secondary sources that the student plans to involve. Whether or not this is to be an annotated bibliography will be determined by your mentor. This bibliography is mutable and should and will naturally change as the student begins working on the thesis. The purpose is for the student to establish a starting point by locating reasonable potential/likely primary and secondary sources.

Thesis mentors can vary these requirements; can ask for more or different information from potential thesis students.

Degree Conferral Procedures:

Students are responsible for submitting their degree conferral form and for monitoring the required due dates for the submission of the form. Procedures for the process can be found on Mercy.edu by clicking here. Students can also submit the form through Mercy Connect by clicking on the "Student" tab then clicking on "Degree Conferral Form" and completing the form online. Application deadlines are as follows:

Degree Conferral Application Deadlines:	
October 15	February degree conferral
February 2	May degree conferral
May 17	August degree conferral
April 10	August degree conferral but requesting to participate in May Commencement Ceremony.

Program Learning Goals (PLGs):

- Students will develop their knowledge and comprehension of a variety of literary texts (Program Learning Goal 1)
- Students will develop their knowledge and comprehension of critical approaches and literary concepts (Program Learning Goal 2)
- Students will develop their critical and creative thinking, and their research and writing skills, toward the aim of developing a professional-level proficiency in these areas (Program Learning Goal 3)

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

By the end of the MA program students are expected to be able to:

- Analyze and interpret literary texts (Student Learning Outcome 1)
- Apply critical approaches and concepts to the analysis and interpretation of literary texts (Student Learning Outcome 2)
- Conduct research relevant to the field, and evaluate source quality (Student Learning Outcome 3)
- Create original research topics and produce writings on those topics which demonstrate clear writing and accurate documentation style (Student Learning Outcome 4)

Methods by which the SLOs will be assessed:

1. Aspects of all four outcomes will be assessed in various ways in most courses (as relevant, and save for ENGL 517 *Advanced Creative Writing* which emphasizes creative writing as the outcome for the course) through the creation of one or more research papers involving written analysis and evidencing (to various degrees) comprehension of the literature, theory, or criticism under consideration, as well as clear writing and accurate documentation style [SLO1-4].

2. By evaluations of the quality and comprehensiveness of each student's contributions in the semester's online classroom discussions [SLO1-4].

3. By other evaluations which professors might employ at their discretion; e.g. final exams, quizzes, and other forms of testing [SLO1-4].

4. Through a comprehensive examination which all students must take between their penultimate and ultimate semesters in the program [SLO 1-4].

5. By way of a final thesis paper written under the guidance of a faculty mentor during the final course in the program (ENGL 599 *Master's Thesis*). The thesis paper is ultimately assessed against the SLOs by both the mentor and a second reader, either of whom can send the draft back for further development and revision should it not sufficiently demonstrate proficiency in the relevant SLOs [SLO 1-4].

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Curriculum Offerings

The program typically runs between four and six courses each fall/spring semester and two courses each summer. The required ENGL 500 theory course runs once a year during the fall. Fall and Spring semester schedules always include at least one course that fulfills each of the Writing and Literary Forms, Literature Group 1, and Literature Group 2 categories. Below are *some* of the courses we run and that cycle into the schedule at different periodicities over time (no particular course is guaranteed to enter the schedule during any particular student's stint in the program, other than 500 and 599). We regularly introduce new and experimental courses into our schedule as well, so this list is *not* comprehensive; is intended to give an overview of what our curriculum looks like for the most part.

ENGL 500 Theory And Practice Of Literary Criticism(CC)
An introduction to major movements and figures of the theory of criticism. The question "what is literature?" is the primary concern of this course. Such an inquiry necessarily engages other, closely affiliated signifiers such as work/text, writing, reading, interpretation, and signification itself. After brief encounters with ancient antecedents and seminal moderns, influential contemporary approaches to the question concerning literature and its cultural significance are engaged. An assessment of the relative strengths and weaknesses of current trends in the practice of literary criticism, and their theoretical groundwork, is the ultimate objective of this course. 3 credits.

Writing & Literary Forms requirement: Students must take at least one of ENGL 505, 506, 507, 508, 509, 510, or 517.

ENGL 505 Transformations of The Epic
This course is based on the conception of the epic as an encyclopedic narrative of substantial length featuring a central figure who reflects the values of a particular culture. It will proceed chronologically, studying the taxonomy and transformations of the epic, from its earliest manifestations through its emergence in Classical, Medieval, and

Renaissance texts, to its incorporation after the Renaissance into the modern novel. 3 credits.

ENGL 506 History of Poetic Forms

The course will study the major forms and conventions of poetry that have developed in English and then American literature from classical models to the present. Wherever possible, particular poems from different historical contexts will be compared and analyzed to demonstrate how these forms and conventions have developed and been adapted to specific personal, ideological, or cultural pressures. 3 credits.

ENGL 507 Narrative Strategies in the Novel:

This course will study various works in the narrative mode. Students will study a range of novels selected from both or either the English and American tradition, with the specific focus dependent upon the professor's area of expertise. Students will examine works demonstrating various narrative styles and techniques; will work to evolve an understanding of what choices and forces inform these various styles and techniques; and will explore the potential and the limits endemic to writing in the narrative mode. 3 credits.

ENGL 508 History of Drama in English

This course will study selected dramatic works from the vantage of the cultures of the historical epochs from which the works emerged. It will use a chronological approach, beginning with the medieval mystery cycles and morality plays; moving up to the emergence of secular drama in the sixteenth century and earlier seventeenth century, focusing on the precursors and contemporaries of Shakespeare; then on to Restoration drama, and to the development of sentimentalism and the adaptation of drama to an increasingly middle class audience in the Eighteenth Century; proceeding to the closet drama of the Romantic era; nineteenth-century melodrama in Britain and America; and finally to the emergence of the modern theater in Britain and United States. 3 credits.

ENGL 509 Perspectives on The Essay

The course will study the essay as a distinct literary genre; its characteristics and types; its history; and its role in reflecting authorial consciousness. This course will examine the taxonomy of the essay in terms of its medium (verse or prose), its tone and level of formality, its organizational strategies, and its relationship to its audience and to particular modes of literary production (speech, manuscript, pamphlet, book, magazine, newspaper). It will trace the development of the essay from its origins to the modern era. 3 credits.

ENGL 510 Theory and Practice of Expository Writing

The course is encouraged for any student who is a teacher or who aspires to teach secondary school or community college English, or to adjunct at senior colleges. The course will address the techniques of expository writing as reflected in academic discourse. Students will learn the general practices of critical writing, but

focus their work in their individual fields of interest. The course will specifically address techniques of analytic organization, and will consider the pedagogy and andragogy of writing. 3 credits.

ENGL 514 Major Authors (Generic Course Code)

ENGL 514 is not itself a specific course but is rather a course code under which runs a variety of new curriculum focusing on various major authors. And so students will not see ENGL 514 *Major Authors* listed in a semester schedule but might instead see ENGL 514 *Cervantes*, or ENGL 514 *Toni Morrison*, or ENGL 514 *James and Lawrence*, etc. Authors studied will vary and will be selected by consultation between individual instructors and the Program Director. ENGL 514 courses by default fulfill one of the four open electives, but can fulfill literature category requirements as appropriate, and with the permission of the Program Director. 3 credits.

ENGL 515 Special Topics in Literature (Generic Course Code)

ENGL 515 is not itself a specific course but is rather a course code under which runs a variety of new curriculum focusing on various literary topics. Recent ENGL 515 course have included *The Graphic Novel*, *Mythologies*, *African and Caribbean Lit., Sport Literature*, *Modern Irish Drama*, *Alchemy and Literature*, and *Animals in Myth and Literature* ENGL 515 courses by default fulfill one of the four open electives, but can fulfill literature category requirements as appropriate, and with the permission of the Program Director. 3 credits.

ENGL 517 Advanced Creative Writing

This course is intended for writers who wish to hone a practice of creative writing as a part of their MA studies. The course helps to develop each student's creative writing ability through a close study of various writing styles and techniques, matched with assignments and workshops which encourage the students to further hone their creative writing informed by such literary study. The emphasis of the course will shift depending on the expertise of the professor running it, and could involve an emphasis on or mixture of poetry, fiction, non-fiction, or other forms. Students do *not* need prior experience in creative writing to enroll in this course. 3 credits.

> **ENGL 521 through 540 emphasize British Literature and fulfill the Literature Group 1 degree requirement.**

ENGL 521 Themes and Genres of Medieval Literature

This course is designed to cultivate students' awareness of the themes, genres, and issues related to the study of medieval literature. Students will study the major genres of medieval literature, including epics, lays and romances. 3 credits.

ENGL 522 Humanism in Renaissance Texts

This course will focus on humanism and the concepts arising from it in relation to the production and appreciation of literature during the Renaissance. The revival of interest in the arts and ideas of Greco-Roman antiquity and the dependence of

Renaissance thought on classical themes will be among the issues discussed. 3 credits.

ENGL 523 Tragedy

This course explores the history and theory of tragedy as both dramatic genre and philosophical motif. Beginning with its origins in ancient Greek ritual, the course traces a history of the genre to the present, with emphasis on the classical and English literary traditions. The course considers such elements as: the relationship between tragedy and the tragic; the role tragedy plays in the histories of Western drama and ideas; ways in which tragedy is distinct from other dramatic genres, such as comedy and melodrama; the essential elements of tragedy; comparisons between Classical and Elizabethan tragedy; and the possibility of modern tragedy. 3 credits.

ENGL 524 Reason and Imagination

This study of English literature between 1650 and 1850 examines Neoclassicism and Romanticism as two opposed aesthetic and philosophical stances. It traces the political, ideological, and literary roots of Neoclassicism in the English "Glorious Revolution" of 1688, the late seventeenth-century growth of rationalism and empirical science, followed by the flowering of Neoclassicism and then the shift in sensibility that led to the emergence of Romanticism. 3 credits.

ENGL 525 The Victorian Age in Literature

An exploration of literature from the Victorian age, with attention to the wider context of the Victorian culture and society from which these works emerged. Works studied might include those of Charles Dickens, Charlotte and Emily Bronte, George Eliot, Thomas Hardy, Anthony Trollope, Elizabeth Gaskell, Alfred Tennyson, Robert Browning, and Oscar Wilde, among others. 3 credits.

ENGL 526 Modernism

This course explores the various "isms" of Modernism while questioning if these trends are of the past or remain present and relevant to contemporary intellectual and aesthetic sensibilities It traces the anti-mimetic shift in the arts in the age of mechanical reproduction, as found in the literature of symbolism, expressionism, futurism, dadaism and surrealism. Among the features of modernism that emerge in this course are themes of fragmentation, parody, and irony, the self-conscious retrieval of myth, the collapse of traditional distinctions between subjective and objective reality, and the iconoclastic transgression of Victorian norms of religion, the family, and sexuality. 3 credits.

ENGL 540 Topics in British Literature (Generic Course Code)

ENGL 540 is not itself a specific course but is rather a course code under which runs a variety of new curriculum focusing on literary topics that emphasize English and British literature. Any course running under the ENGL 540 number fulfills the Literature Group 1 category requirement. 3 credits.

ENGL 541 Search for Identity in American Literature
The course will examine manifestations of personal identity and human community in American culture and literature from Colonial beginnings to the turn of the twentieth century. 3 credits.

ENGL 542 Classics of African American Literature
Students in this course will study a range of works of African-American literature. Selections that could include modern-era classics (e.g. writings by Jean Toomer, Zora Neale Hurston, James Baldwin, Ralph Ellison, or Langston Hughes) as well as new and contemporary classics (e.g. writings by John Wideman, Toni Morrison, August Wilson, Maya Angelou, Lynn Nottage, Suzan-Lori Parks, Branden Jacobs-Jenkins, or Tayari Jones). 3 credits.

> **ENGL 541 through 560 emphasize American literature and fulfill the Literature Group 2 requirement.**

ENGL 543 The American Renaissance
This course explores the writings of the American Renaissance—a term that encompasses but is not limited to American Romanticism, American slave narratives and abolitionist texts, progressive American literature, popular American fiction, and other noteworthy American writings of the mid-nineteenth century. 3 credits.

ENGL 544 Frontiers of American Literature
This course explores the frontiers of American literature. This includes works which ride the metaphoric frontier of American literature, meaning groundbreaking, progressive, and iconoclast works. It also includes works which involve encounters with or in the geographic American frontier, works that bespeak that ever-expanding westernmost edge of the nation and the wildness, wilderness, and difference encountered along that edge. Readings will be drawn from across various eras of American writing, and will include a diverse range of authors and works unbound by genre. 3 Credits.

ENGL 545 Literature of the Left Bank, Paris
This course will examine the people, culture, and writings of the expatriate community of the Parisian Left Bank during the early and mid twentieth century. This will include an exploration of the significance of Sylvia Beach's Shakespeare & Company bookstore and lending library, and of intellectual and artistic salons such as those of Natalie Barney and Gertrude Stein. The course will additionally consider the doings and writings of expatriate authors moving through or closely associated with the Left Bank's modernist enterprise. An emphasis will be placed on studying the cultural geography of this location which attracted so many of the world's great artists and gave rise to so many works now considered twentieth century literary masterpieces. 3 credits.

ENGL 560 Topics in American Literature (Generic Course Code)
ENGL 560 is not itself a specific course but is rather a course code under which runs a variety of new curriculum focusing on literary topics that emphasize American literature. Any course running under the ENGL 560 number fulfills the Literature Group 2 category requirement. 3 credits.

ENGL 599 Master's Thesis
In this course, students work under the guidance of a faculty mentor on researching and writing a twenty-five page thesis paper. The finished paper must receive the approval of the mentor and a second reader in order for the student to pass the course. See pages 7 and 8 of the Graduate Student Handbook for more on the course, how to enroll in it, and its procedures. Students in the course will be encouraged to submit versions of the thesis paper to read at literature conferences. The thesis topic selected by the student may be developed from one pursued in a previous course, or it may be new. 3 credits.

ENGL 899 Maintenance of Matriculation
Students are expected to register in successive fall/spring semesters to maintain status as a matriculated student. However, if a student cannot enroll in a semester, maintenance of matriculation is required. A student may enroll in ENGL 899 a maximum of twice over the course of earning the degree. The fee is $100 per term and is processed as a registration. Students who have not enrolled in courses during a fall/spring semester, and who have not maintained matriculation during that time, will be required to repay the matriculation fee for each term missed before being allowed to enroll in future courses; or, students may return to find that the Registrar has deactivated the student's account and status in the University's system. Activated U.S. Military Reservists are not required to pay the fee. Students are not required to maintain matriculation over the summer. No credit.

Useful Links for MA English Students

The Mercy MA Program blog (check here regularly)

Mercy University Office of Accessibility

Mercy University Academic Policies (Graduate Catalog)

Upenn's call for conference papers

Mercy University's online library resources

Mercy University's MA in English Literature main webpage

The Modern Language Association

An MLA style guide from Purdue's Online Writing Lab

Advising Sheet

This is an informal guide which might help students determine which courses to take for some of the category requirements. Note that there are no actual formal tracks within the MA English program, just the one program structure explained on page 5 of this handbook. But students can chart varying paths toward the same MA degree by focusing on different sorts of coursework. Consider which option below best describes your primary reason for being in the program, then follow your selection to the appropriate track on the next page to see any recommended coursework.

A) I am here to enrich my life through the study of literature. I have no immediate plans or need for the MA to lead to a professional outcome or a PhD program.

> **FOLLOW TRACK 1**

B) I am earning the MA in hopes of increasing my marketability in the non-education job market, for example in publishing, editing, writing, media, etc.

> **FOLLOW TRACK 1**

C) I am a published or aspiring creative writer here to improve my craft by studying literature. I do not have any immediate plans or need for this to lead to a teaching career or a PhD program.

> **FOLLOW TRACK 1 and take *517 Advanced Creative Writing* for the Writing and Literary Forms category requirement.**

D) I am currently a teacher and am here to increase my content knowledge, or to earn credits necessary for promotion, salary increase, or job retention.

> **FOLLOW TRACK 1 and take *510 Theory and Practice of Expository Writing* for the Writing and Literary Forms category requirement.**

E) I am here to earn the MA so that I can become a teacher, or apply to faculty positions at community colleges, or adjunct at four-year colleges.

> **FOLLOW TRACK 2 and take *510 Theory and Practice of Expository Writing* for the Writing and Literary Forms category requirement.**

F) I aspire to apply to PhD literature programs after earning the masters degree.

> **FOLLOW TRACK 2 and take one of ENGL 505 – 509 for the Writing and Literary Forms category requirement.**

TRACK 1:

Track 1 is basically the "take whatever seems most interesting to you" track and is recommended for students who are in the program primarily to enrich their lives through the study of literature; for current teachers seeking to earn credits or deepen content knowledge and who can take whatever courses they wish; or for any student who feels prepared by previous literary study and so who feels comfortable adding to her or his existing foundation of literary expertise by selecting from the widest assortment of coursework. We recommend that teachers, potential or active, take *Theory and Practice of Expository Writing* for the Writing & Literary Forms requirement or as an elective.

1. ENGL 500 (required course)
2. Writing & Literary Forms: ANY course 505 – 510 or 517
3. Literature Group 1: ANY course 521 – 540
4. Literature Group 2: ANY course 541 – 560
5. Literature Group 1 or 2: ANY course 521 – 560
6. Elective: ANY course 501-599
7. Elective: ANY course 501-599
8. Elective: ANY course 501-599
9. Elective: ANY course 501-599
10. ENGL 599 *Master's Thesis* (required course)

TRACK 2:

Track 2 is recommended for students who want to ensure a more balanced foundation of knowledge across many of the standard literary eras and genres. This can include those who feel unprepared by undergraduate study, or who simply for any reason want to ensure a literary wider foundation in multiple genres and eras. This track is also recommended for students who aspire to apply to PhD literature programs, though such students should communicate regularly with the Program Director about course selection to ensure a proper preparation. This track is also recommended for those who aspire to teach community college or adjunct at senior colleges. Those students should take *Theory and Practice of Expository Writing*.

1. ENGL 500 (required course)
2. Writing & Literary Forms: 505 – 509 or *Theory/Practice of Expository Writing*
3. Literature Group 1: ANY course 521 – 540
4. Literature Group 2: ANY course 541 – 560
5. Literature Group 1 or 2: Take ANY course 521 – 540 if focusing on British literature; or ANY course 541 – 560 if focusing on American literature
6. Elective: Another course from 505 – 510
7. Elective: Another course from 521 – 540, or 514, or 515
8. Elective: Another course from 541 – 560, or 514, or 515
9. Elective: ANY course 501-599
10. ENGL 599 *Master's Thesis* (required course)

Program Faculty

The following faculty teach in the MA program and are therefore eligible to mentor students for the 599 *Master's Thesis.*

Sean Dugan, EdD
SDugan@mercy.edu
Areas of expertise: linguistics; language and writing; Irish and European lit

David Fritz. PhD
dfritz@mercy.edu
Areas of expertise: early American literature, medieval and Renaissance lit

Miriam Gogol, PhD
mgogol@mercy.edu
Areas of expertise: American lit, American realism, Dreiser, gender studies, working-women's lit

Kristen Keckler, PhD
Chair, Department of Literature & Language
kkeckler1@mercy.edu
Areas of expertise: creative writing (fiction, poetry, creative nonfiction), American lit, literary journalism

David Kilpatrick, PhD
dkilpatrick@mercy.edu
Areas of expertise: modernism, history of drama, theory of criticism, comparative lit, sports studies

Christopher Loots, PhD
Program Director, MA in English Literature
cloots@mercy.edu
Areas of expertise: modernism, speculative fiction, cyberpunk and technoculture, nineteenth- and twentieth-century American lit

Richard Medoff, PhD
rmedoff@mercy.edu
Areas of expertise: contemporary American and European theatre, Spanish and Catalan theatre, history of drama; graphic novel

Donald Morales, PhD
dmorales6@mercy.edu
Areas of expertise: African lit, African-American lit, Caribbean lit, Toni Morrison

Laura Proszak, PhD
lproszak@mercy.edu
Areas of expertise: rhetorical education, cultural and ethnic rhetorics, writing and composition, historiography, archival studies

Celia Reissig-Vasile, PhD
cvasile@mercy.edu
Areas of expertise: Latino/Hispanic literature, Cervantes, creative writing

Boria Sax, PhD
bsax@mercy.edu
Areas of expertise: animals in literature, lyric poetry, mythology, esoteric literature, Continental literature, creative writing

More Student Testimonials:

"Having experienced other online colleges, I have to say that Mercy's MA program has really gotten the 'online experience' right! This degree program has really been everything I could have hoped for - extraordinary professors, meaningful and thought-provoking coursework, coupled with an intelligent, stunningly warm, welcoming and diverse cohort."

- Cheryl Kennedy, MA 2017

"I was worried about coming back to school after so many years, but right away the program faculty made me feel like I had ideas and insights worth sharing. The courses show a high standard of excellence and that always inspired me to put my best thinking into every paper. I have thoroughly enjoyed these last two years and will miss the learning environment at Mercy College. Thank you for providing such an amazing program."

- Jamie Wright, MA 2020

"I want to express how much I feel I've personally benefited from my education at Mercy. I really treasure my degree and the expansion of my craft and spirit that got me there. I definitely got more than I paid for, even though I don't think you can really put a price on the things we examined together."

- Bernard Sell, MA 2015

"My experience at Mercy has been amazing and I feel like I would have NEVER received an education like this anywhere else. I love this school. You guys always follow through and are always on it. I'm so glad I went here!!"

- David Mannino, MA 2017

"I love my new job and I feel that my MA has helped me in so many ways, not the least of which is giving me the confidence to know that anything can be accomplished with a lot of hard work."

- Raissa Fitzgerald, MA 2015

"I ended up getting an adjunct position with my local community college and I absolutely love it. I truly appreciate the guidance and direction the MA faculty gave me years ago. I'm very, very pleased with the position I have now. I can honestly tell you the education and experience I received through the MA program at Mercy helped guide me to where I am now and I will always be grateful."

- Sarah Nanan, MA 2015

"I was a bit leery about doing an online program, but I really couldn't have asked for a better start to my graduate studies."

- Jennifer Fiore, MA 2018

"My experience at Mercy University has been enriching and transformative. I feel empowered both as a student and teacher of literature, which is exactly what I had hoped for in embarking on this journey."

- Nicole Petrone, MA 2024

"English lit grad school at Mercy has been a wonderful experience and quite an enlightening journey!"

- Kelly Hopkins, MA 2020

"The program is excellent and very rewarding. It has a varied and interesting group of students, a nice amount and variety of courses each semester, and faculty who are actively engaged and inspiring, who practice optimal use of the online platform."

- Charlotte Wray, MA 2023

"The professors are knowledgeable and empathetic, creating an online classroom environment that is respectful and academic. Moreover, I was able to make meaningful connections with my classmates. This program pushed me, helped me grow as an academic, and set me up for success in academia. I cannot recommend this program enough."

- Landon Funk, MA 2023

"I could not have asked for a greater experience."

- Casi Kapadia, MA 2022