MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH: CONCENTRATION IN LITERATURE

Admission to Program

Applicants must meet general university requirements as stated in this Bulletin. Admission to the literature concentration is competitive.

In addition to the materials sent to the graduate admissions office, the applicants must submit the following items to the English Department. Contact the graduate secretary in English for the department application and deadlines:

- the departmental application;
- at least two academic letters of recommendation, preferably from a current or former literature professor;
- one official set of transcripts; a one to two-page statement of purpose detailing why the applicant is interested in the study of literature;
- and a writing sample (a critical or scholarly essay of five to ten pages, preferably one written as part of a literature course).

If the applicant’s undergraduate record, writing samples, and letters of recommendation meet the basic requirements and give promise of a successful pursuit of graduate work, the department will recommend that the applicant be admitted either to classified graduate standing (which means that the student may immediately proceed to take graduate courses and seminars) or conditional standing, specifying the conditions and time limit within which they must be met.

To be considered for classified admission to the graduate program in Literature, an applicant must have

1. completed an undergraduate degree in English comparable to the undergraduate major program at SF State, and
2. have achieved a grade point average of at least 3.3 in the major.

A classified graduate student is ready to take ENG 741, the seminar which functions as a “portal course” to further seminar work. Applicants whose undergraduate major was not English or whose GPA in the major falls below 3.3 may be given conditional admission. Applicants given conditional admission may not take seminars in the range 741–790 until they have achieved classified status.

There are three categories of conditional admission:

- With subject matter deficiency: Usually given to applicants with a 3.3 or higher GPA in an undergraduate major other than English with either some courses in literature (with a 3.3 or higher GPA) or a background showing substantial personal interest in literature. The applicant will be directed by a graduate advisor to complete course work in this university’s undergraduate major, but such courses may not be credited toward the M.A. program.

- With a grade point average deficiency: Usually given to applicants with a GPA of 3.0 to 3.3 in an undergraduate English major. The applicant is required to take nine to 12 units of upper division literature courses, with a GPA of at least 3.3 attained in them, before being admitted to graduate work. These courses may be credited toward the Master of Arts in English with Concentration in Literature program. If the required GPA is not attained, the student will be disqualified from the M.A. program in literature.

- With both subject matter and GPA deficiency. The applicant is in conditional status as described in “grade point average deficiency” while earning undergraduate major units as described in “subject matter deficiency.”

Written English Proficiency Requirement

Level One

The Graduate Literature Curriculum Committee will evaluate the writing sample submitted as part of the application packet for

1. mechanics and usage of English,
2. coherence and argumentation, and
3. understanding of the conventions of writing literary critical arguments.

Level Two

This requirement will be satisfied in one of two ways:

1. The CE thesis will be evaluated using a rubric addressing
   a. mechanics and usage of English,
   b. coherence and argumentation, and
   c. understanding of the conventions of literary criticism. Students must score at least satisfactory on all three criteria to pass Level Two writing. Students who do not achieve these standards may revise and resubmit their thesis.

2. Students pursuing the CE exam will submit a seminar paper to be evaluated according to the criteria outlined above.

Program

The program consists of 10 courses (minimum 30 units) of which eight courses (minimum 24 units) must be graduate level courses. Of these graduate courses, six (18 units) must be English Department courses, of which six (18 units) must be seminars from the 742–790 range, or ENG 820. Students may choose either an emphasis in General Studies or Special Studies. See guidelines for each emphasis after the Program Requirements.

English (M.A.): Concentration in Literature — 30 Units

Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ENG 741</td>
<td>Seminar: Literary Theory and Research Methods</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENG 742–ENG 790</td>
<td>Select six courses from the following:</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENG 820</td>
<td>The Constructed Body in Literature</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Select two elective courses to be taken with the approval of an advisor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENG 898 or ENG 896</td>
<td>Master’s Thesis Directed Readings in Preparation for the CE Examination</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The only pedagogy courses that may be included among the electives are ENG 717 and ENG 803. ENG 704 and ENG 715 may not be included. Related courses from other departments (up to 6 units with approval of advisor) may be included.

Students must earn a grade of B or better in all courses listed on the ATC.
All students follow the General Studies Emphasis unless the Special Studies Emphasis is chosen before completing four of the required ten courses (see below).

**General Studies Emphasis**

Students are required to take one course from those listed below under the category Literary History, and one course from those listed under the category Literary Theories and Methods. The department recommends that students take at least two courses from each category.

**Literary History**

**Graduate Seminars**

ENG 750–ENG 789

**Literary Theories and Methods**

**Graduate Seminars**

ENG 742 Seminar: Studies in Criticism 3  
ENG 744 Seminar: Literature and Psychology 3  
ENG 746 Seminar: Opera and Literature 3  
ENG 747 Feminist Criticisms 3  
ENG 748 Rhetoric, Politics, and Ethics of Deconstruction 3  
ENG 790 Seminar: Selected Studies 3  

or classes approved by an advisor

**Early Period Requirement**

Three of the 30 units in the General Studies Emphasis must be chosen from graduate courses in literature before 1800. The early period requirement may be met by courses that also fulfill the program requirements listed above (for example, the early period course might also count as the Literary History or Literary Theories and Methods required course, or it might count as an elective). Thus, the early period requirement is a distribution requirement, not a course requirement.

**Special Studies Emphasis**

The special studies emphasis is available to students whose proposed fields of study (for example, cultural criticism or reader response approaches to literature) do not fall readily within the Literary History and Literary Theories and Methods rubrics of the general studies emphasis. Students who wish to focus on special studies must define their course of study in a written proposal submitted early in their graduate career and before completing four of the required 10 courses. The proposal must be approved and signed by a graduate advisor and by the English Department’s graduate literature program coordinator.

The number of courses and seminars, graduate level courses, and electives selected individually by the student and proposed for the special studies emphasis must conform to the program requirements (see above).

**Culminating Experience**

All students, whether they are pursuing General or Special Studies Emphasis, must choose one of the following options:

1. **Master’s Thesis** Before beginning writing the thesis, a student prepares a prospectus conducted by the two thesis readers. The prospectus is a written statement that typically indicates the controlling purpose of the thesis; the selection of literary materials; the relevant scholarship and criticism; and the value and interest of the study.

A candidate who has failed the oral examination may not take it again before the next regular semester. A candidate who failed the examination twice will not be permitted to continue in the program for the M.A. in Literature. Consult *The Prospectus and the Thesis* handout available in the English Department for more information.

2. **Written and Oral Examination.** Students pursuing this option will be examined on texts in three fields of the discipline based on departmental reading lists and student’s special area of interest. One of the three fields must be pre-1800.

A list of the required readings for each historical field is kept on file in the English Department. For each field, students will typically select 20 texts from a list of 30 primary texts, and five texts from a list of 10 works of criticism. The students’ CE exam, then, will typically be based on a total of 60 primary texts and 15 works of criticism. For each of their three fields, students will submit a five to six-page written assignment. The CE culminates in a 90-minute oral examination. The exam will be conducted by three faculty members who will each examine the student in one of their three chosen fields. To receive Credit for ENG 896, students must pass all three sections of the CE Examination. It is up to each field examiner to determine a passing or failing grade of his or her field. A student who fails one of the three fields of the CE Examination may retake that one exam within the two weeks following the oral examination (if the oral examination is given by the 14th week of instruction; if the exam takes place after the 14th week of instruction, the exam will be conducted the following semester). A student who fails two or more fields of the CE Exam may retake the entire CE Exam for Credit the following semester.

Consult the handout *Procedures & Timeline For CE Exam (ENG 896)* available in the English Department for more information. Candidates who have selected the thesis option (ENG 898) as their CE project may NOT switch to the exam option (ENG 896), or vice versa, except upon advisement.