

Northwestern University Department of English

2024-2025

Guide to Graduate Study

Graduate PhD and MA Programs in English Literature

The Department of English Guide to Graduate Study supplements the Graduate School website, which contains general regulations and deadlines on a wide range of academic and financial matters pertaining to graduate study. The Guide contains information about departmental regulations and requirements for the master's and doctoral programs and degrees. When departmental regulations concerning a particular aspect of the program change during your tenure of study at Northwestern, you will ordinarily follow the rule in effect when you matriculated, except by permission of the Director of Graduate Studies. The Guide sometimes refers to general regulations of the Graduate School, but it must always be used in conjunction with the most recent update to the Graduate School website.

As a student in the Graduate School, you will at any moment be one of as many as three thousand degree candidates, and during your stay here you will have to interact directly and indirectly with a set of bureaucracies that includes, among others, the Federal Government. It is your direct responsibility to keep abreast of the general regulations and deadlines of the Graduate School and to comply with them in a timely fashion. The Department will help you, but you should not rely on it to tell you what you need to do and when. While the Graduate School will be compassionate in dealing with difficulties that are beyond your control, equity and time constraints make it hard for rules to be bent when problems arise from students' negligence.

The English Graduate Office

English Department Chair:

Katharine Breen

Director of Graduate Studies:

Kasey Evans

Graduate Program Coordinator:

Nathan Mead

University Hall 215

Phone (847) 491-3341

E-mail: n-mead2@northwestern.edu

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Emily Babb
Associate Vice President for Civil Rights & Title IX Compliance | Title IX Coordinator
Tiffany Little
Senior Director, Civil Rights and Title IX Compliance | Deputy Title IX Coordinator
Office of Civil Rights & Title IX Compliance
1800 Sherman Ave., Suite 4500
Evanston, IL 60201
(847) 467-6165
OCR@northwestern.edu

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Laura Conway
Director, ADA Compliance | ADA Coordinator
Sam Milgrom
Deputy ADA Coordinator
Office of Civil Rights and Title IX Compliance
1800 Sherman Ave., Suite 4500
Evanston, IL 60201
(847) 467-6165
Accommodations@northwestern.edu

Inquiries about Title IX or the University's prohibitions against discrimination, harassment, and retaliation can be directed to the Associate Vice President for Civil Rights and Title IX Compliance, the ADA/504 Coordinator (for disability-related questions) or to the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights at the contact information listed below:

Complaints and inquiries regarding discrimination, harassment, and retaliation involving federal laws may be directed to:

U.S. Department of Education
Office for Civil Rights
John C. Kluczynski Federal Building
230 S. Dearborn St., 37th Floor
Chicago, IL 60604
(312) 730-1560
OCR.Chicago@ed.gov

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
John C. Kluczynski Federal Building
230 S. Dearborn St., Suite 1866
Chicago, IL 60604
(312) 872-9777

Any person who believes that the University as a federal contractor has violated nondiscrimination or equal opportunity obligations may contact the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) at

OFCCP
U.S. Department of Labor
200 Constitution Ave. NW
Washington, D.C. 20210
www.dol.gov
(800) 397-6251

Doctoral Program quarter-by-quarter overview

	Quarter	Registration	Milestones/Requirements	Quarters of Funding	Details
Year one	Fall	Eng 410 2 seminars		UF (1/20)	
	Winter	3 seminars		UF (2/20)	
	Spring	3 seminars	First-Year Review	UF (3/20)	
	Summer	Eng 590	must fulfill the language requirement by the end of the quarter	UF (4/20)	apply for non-terminal MA
Year two	Fall	GA quarters: Eng 490 2 seminars UF quarter: 3 seminars	at least 1 member of the QE committee must be selected	GA or UF (5/20)	December 1 st deadline
	Winter		QE committee must be formed draft QE list due	GA or UF (6/20)	March 15 th deadline for both
	Spring		final QE list due	GA or UF (7/20)	May 15 th deadline
	Summer	Eng 590		UF (8/20)	
Year three	Fall	TGS 500	Qualifying Exam	UF (9/20)	One seminar in any quarter – * may be taken P/NP * students with prior English MA are exempt Eng 520 can be taken from this point forward, any quarter in which it's offered
	Winter	TGS 500		GA (10/20)	
	Spring	Eng 570 TGS 500	submit Prospectus, due last day of Spring Reading Week	GA (11/20)	
	Summer	TGS 500	fulfill remaining candidacy requirements advance to candidacy by quarter's end	UF (12/20)	
Year four	Fall	TGS 500		GA or UF (13/20)	apply for internal or external funding
	Winter	TGS 500		GA or UF (14/20)	
	Spring	TGS 500 (Eng 520)		GA or UF (15/20)	Eng 520 – can be taken any year after candidacy; required once to graduate
	Summer	TGS 500		UF (16/20)	
Year five	Fall	TGS 500	annual progress report	UF (17/20)	
	Winter	TGS 500	receive committee approval of at least one dissertation chapter	UF (18/20)	dissertation chapter due in March apply for department VAP positions
	Spring	TGS 500 (Eng 520)		UF (19/20)	Eng 520 – can be taken any year after candidacy; required once to graduate
	Summer	TGS 500		UF (20/20)	
Year six+	Fall	until completion: TGS 500 if funded TGS 512 if unfunded	annual progress report	GA or UF depending on availability	apply for Summer Session teaching
	Winter				apply for department VAP positions
	Spring				Eng 520 – can be taken any year after candidacy; required once to graduate
	Summer	TGS 500 if funded Don't register if unfunded		UF if available	

Abbreviations used below:

DGS: Director of Graduate Study for Literature. Also known as the DGS-Lit, to distinguish this role from that of the Director/DGS of the Litowitz MFA+MA program, the DGS administers the PhD and MA programs in English literature, serving as the liaison for programmatic and substantive concerns to do with coursework, requirements, exams, committees, the prospectus, and the dissertation, as well as for any other personal or structural concerns relevant to your graduate study).

GA/RA/TA: Graduate, Research, and Teaching Assistant. Research Assistants typically work with one member of the faculty, or with a specific faculty committee, on matters not related to an ongoing course. Teaching Assistants work with the faculty member(s) leading an undergraduate class, typically a large lecture with discussion sections. “Graduate Assistant” is an umbrella term, encompassing any work a department assigns to a graduate student in return for receiving funding in the form of an assistantship. A position as an editorial assistant on a journal is an example of a GA assignment.

GPA: Graduate Program Assistant (Nathan Mead). Nathan is tasked with the administrative and programmatic implementation of the PhD and MA programs and serves as the department’s institutional liaison with The Graduate School. He is usually graduate students’ first point of contact for administrative matters ranging from stipends to course enrollments to travel grants.

GPPC: Graduate Policy and Placement Committee. An annually rotating committee of four or five faculty who assist the DGS with programmatic directives, graduate policy, and student reviews in addition to supporting the placement process for ABDs and recent PhDs. The DGS serves as chair of the GPPC.

P/NP: Pass/No Pass. A grading standard that requires formal enrollment in a class and a certain minimum amount of work as determined by the instructor. Not all departments allow students to take their classes P/NP, and graduate students must consult with the instructor if they wish to take a class P/NP when a regular letter grade is also an option. Taking a class P/NP is not the same as auditing a class.

TGS: The Graduate School. The administrative unit that determines graduate policy, regulations, admissions, benefits, and funding.

1. REGISTRATION, REQUIREMENTS, EVALUATIONS

1.1. Coursework

For full-time students in The Graduate School (TGS), credits are based on full enrollment and course registration rather than credit hours. Registration in three classes per quarter is required for full-time standing. You may take a fourth course (including undergraduate language courses) without paying additional tuition.

Within the framework of TGS coursework requirements, the English Department determines the number and distribution of courses required for the PhD in English. In consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), you will choose your coursework from seminars offered in the English Department as well as in other departments and programs at Northwestern and in Chicago. In year one, you will take three courses per quarter (Fall, Winter, and Spring). In year two, you will take two courses per quarter during the two quarters in which you serve as a TA, and three courses during your non-teaching quarter. In year three, you will take one course on a P/NP basis during a quarter of your choosing (students who enter the PhD program with an MA in English are exempted from this requirement). Students pursuing the MA in English will enroll in three courses per quarter. The following registration levels and types can be counted toward full-time standing as a student in TGS:

300-level undergraduate courses - You are strongly encouraged to pursue *all of your coursework at the graduate (400) level*. Undergraduate classes do not replicate graduate seminars, either in terms of intellectual complexity or mandated active participation essential to your preparation for this profession.

PhD candidates may enroll in a maximum total of **two** 300-level undergraduate courses to fulfill your required coursework. Students pursuing the MA may register for up to four such courses. All 300-level courses must be approved by the DGS, and must be listed in CAESAR under the Course Career “Graduate School.” After securing approval from the DGS, you must contact the instructor of the relevant 300-level course to determine whether they are willing to accept graduate students, and to establish the extra workload (at minimum, an additional or enhanced research essay) requisite to confer graduate credit. *300-level undergraduate classes cannot be used to fulfill the department’s breadth requirement.*

400-level graduate courses - These graduate seminars make up your foundational coursework. Be sure to consult graduate course offerings in CLS, History, the African-American Studies, Gender & Sexuality Studies, Philosophy, Political Science, Art History, and beyond. PhD students are also eligible to enroll in graduate seminars for Northwestern credit at local institutions such as the University of Illinois at Chicago or the University of Chicago under the auspices of the Big Ten Academic Alliance (“BIG”) or the Chicago Metropolitan Exchange Program. Students may also take graduate seminars at the Newberry Library. MA students are not eligible to participate in the BIG arrangement or in the Chicago Metropolitan Exchange Program.

Creative Writing courses - PhD students may take one MFA workshop (English 496, 497, or 498) in place of a literature seminar as part of their degree coursework. With the permission of the DGS, doctoral students may take a second MFA workshop in place of a literature seminar; permission will be granted only when this substitution supports the development of students’ research specializations. MFA courses cannot be used to satisfy

the breadth requirement or any other departmental requirement.

English 490: Independent Reading - PhD students will register for one unit of English 490 per quarter during year two of the program. This registration carries no specific assignments or duties, but gives you course credit for time spent working as a Graduate Assistant. English 490 registrations carry an automatic passing grade for students in good standing.

English 499: Independent Study - The formal graduate seminar offerings in English and other departments or programs should be your primary means of earning credit for coursework. You should contemplate independent faculty supervised work for credit only if you can justify the exceptional urgency of the material or situation. All independent study requests must be reviewed and endorsed in advance by the DGS in concert with the GPPC. Approval of requests for Independent Study work is not guaranteed.

500-level graduate courses - These courses are not necessarily more advanced in nature than 400-level classes. They confer specific amounts of credit toward full-time student status.

English 520: Professionalization Seminar - Students should complete this seminar once before they graduate, ideally in the third year. It is offered annually in Winter or Spring and provides a protected and low-stress environment for the discussion of professional norms and expectations in academic, alt-ac, and nonacademic jobs. English 520 is graded P/NP and requires minimal preparation outside of class. Students may opt to substitute alternative professional development courses for English 520 in consultation with the dissertation committee and the DGS. Doctoral students who take other professional development courses may substitute such courses for 520 with DGS permission. Alternatively, students may substitute a professional development course for one required literature seminar if they have not already taken a creative writing workshop in place of a literature seminar. Please reach out to the DGS for clarification or discussion of specific options.

English 570: Seminar in Teaching Composition - Students take this course in the Spring Quarter of year three to prepare for independent teaching. Offered by the Cook Family Writing Program, it meets weekly to cover issues of writing and pedagogy. It is taken for a letter grade, and does not take the place of the P/NP seminar required in year three. With permission of the DGS and the Writing Program, MA students can also enroll in this class.

English 590: Research - PhD students register for English 590 during the Summer Quarters of their first and second years in the program, with the purpose of maintaining full student standing.

TGS 500: Advanced Doctoral Study - PhD students register for TGS 500 starting in Fall Quarter of year three in the program, when their course work is largely complete. After year two, TGS 500 is the default registration for any quarter during which a student receives funding from internal or external sources. TGS 500 confers full student status and all related benefits, including the TGS health insurance subsidy. It also obliges you to continue paying the Student Activity Fee.

TGS 512: Continuous Registration - In any academic-year quarter in which you do not receive funding, you must register

for TGS 512 and pay a nominal tuition of \$100/quarter. TGS 512 registration confers minimum student status, continued access to email and other Northwestern online resources, and library and other privileges, but does not confer the TGS health insurance subsidy. The Student Activity Fee is not required, and its benefits are not available, with registration for TGS 512.

1.2. Transfer Credit

PhD candidates who arrive with an MA in English may, upon request, transfer one unit of MA credit to be used in year three instead of taking a seminar for P/NP credit. *Transfer credits cannot be used to fulfill the breadth requirement.* At the discretion of the DGS, transfer credit may be awarded to those with an MA in a related field.

1.3. Breadth Requirement

To support professional competency in literature from a range of historical periods and contexts, doctoral students must take six courses from two historical categories: three dealing primarily with literature written before 1800 and three dealing primarily with literature written after 1800. Courses that include literature written both before and after 1800 may be used for credit in either category with faculty permission; in such cases, final papers (or other major assignments) should focus on texts written in the appropriate time period. All six courses must be at the 400 level and offered by English Department faculty. Eligible courses cannot be audited or taken P/N. Ordinarily, Independent Study courses (English 499) may not be used to satisfy this requirement. To have a graduate seminar taken at a Chicago-area institution under the auspices of either the Big Ten Academic Alliance (B1G) or the Chicago Metropolitan Exchange Program count for pre- or post-1800 credit, students must secure advance approval from the DGS. The DGS has the discretion to approve exceptions to these qualifications on a case-by-case basis.

1.4. Grades

At Northwestern, undergraduate and graduate professors use letter grades with “+” and “-” distinctions. The A+ grade is not available. Your grades will appear in this format in departmental records, TGS records, and transcripts released by the Office of the Registrar.

1.5. Incomplete Work

In order to remain in good standing, you must make up incomplete work from any academic year no later than two weeks prior to the beginning of classes in the following Fall Quarter. This rule supersedes any rule set down by TGS. We strongly recommend that you complete all work for your courses before the beginning of the subsequent quarter whenever possible. In unavoidable circumstances such as illness or a family emergency, you should work with your professors and the DGS to establish an extended schedule of deadlines. *It is crucial for you to communicate with the DGS and your professors if you foresee obstacles to your timely completion of coursework.*

TGS and the Department closely monitor incomplete work. While there are any incompletes on your record, PhD students will be considered ineligible for Departmental or TGS travel funding and will be unable to advance to candidacy. Please see Section 5.6. on admission to candidacy for further details on the ramifications of a late advance to ABD status. MA students cannot graduate with any unresolved incompletes on their record.

1.6. Departmental Evaluations

1.6.1. Course Evaluations

For every course taken in the first year of the doctoral program, your professor will complete a formal written evaluation. A key part of your permanent record in the department office, these evaluations are given close attention in deliberations about continuation and fellowships. Students should consult them as they appear and use them in measuring achievement and planning goals. The graduate faculty may consult all student records. MA students will not receive this formal evaluation.

1.6.2. Teaching Assistant Evaluations

Professors to whom doctoral students are assigned as Teaching Assistants are encouraged to provide an evaluation of the work performed for them. All evaluations submitted are available in your permanent record in the department office.

1.6.3. In-Candidacy Annual Progress Reports

Doctoral students advancing to year five and beyond must submit a progress report at the end of each summer quarter. The form will be distributed by the GPA in August, after which it is to be completed and submitted to the dissertation committee chair for approval by the end of September. The committee chair will then return the approved form for review by the DGS, who will address any issues or concerns raised.

1.6.4. Standing Notifications

As noted above, Graduate Assistantships and other fellowship commitments to WCAS and TGS require that you remain in good standing as a full-time student.

The English Department is required to notify all students active in the PhD program before the nine-year dissertation deadline of their standing at the end of every academic year. Letters indicating the satisfactory completion of the first year, including a Summer Research and Planning Proposal drafted under the guidance of the first-year mentor, the Qualifying Exam (in the Fall of year three), and the prospectus (at the end of year three) are considered indicators of good standing. If students' standing is in question, committee chairs and the DGS will, in consultation with these students, devise a schedule to restore their good standing in the Department. Such students will receive letters outlining these conditions, with which they must affirm their agreement. In early Fall Quarter of years eight and nine, students must consult with their directors and the DGS

to determine whether a defense is feasible and, if so, to devise a schedule for completion.

1.7. The Language Requirement

Knowledge of a second language and experience of written traditions in that language vitally enrich the study of English, American, and Anglophone literature. Doctoral students must possess an advanced reading knowledge of a second language broadly relevant to the study of English, American, and/or Anglophone Literature. *Completion of the Language Requirement is a prerequisite for admission to candidacy at the end of year three.* The Language Requirement is not part of the Master's degree.

Although we do not stipulate that the language requirement must demonstrate connections to your particular research interests, you are strongly encouraged to choose the language that will be most beneficial to you in the pursuit of your dissertation work.

The language requirement may be satisfied in one of four ways:

With a "Pass" on the three-hour translation exam, comprising three to four individual passages. Your translation must be handwritten and dictionaries are permitted. Translations into English must demonstrate more than a basic knowledge of vocabulary and grammar; they must grasp the idiomatic, syntactical, and connotative complexities of each source passage. French, German, Italian, Latin, and Spanish translation exams are composed, administered, and graded by the English Department. In other cases, the exam is composed and graded by an outside expert.

With a grade of A– or higher in a graduate course at Northwestern in Spanish, French, Latina/o Studies, Italian, etc., which must be pre-approved by the DGS. The course must require readings in the original language, though it may be conducted in English. To fulfill the departmental Language Requirement by this route, a student must take this course during the first year in the PhD program. An independent study cannot satisfy the language requirement.

By earning a grade of A– or higher in a year-long undergraduate language sequence taken as a fourth class during the first year in the PhD program.

By earning a grade of A– or higher in a summer intensive language course taken at Northwestern or at another approved institution. If the intensive course is graded in several weeks-long increments, the average grade must be at least an A–.

The language requirement should be satisfied before the beginning of the second year. In exceptional cases, which must be approved by the DGS, the language requirement may be fulfilled during year two or during the summer after year two. Due to increased demands on student time in the second year, this schedule is not recommended.

Incoming students may elect to undertake an intensive summer language class prior to fall of the first year. In some cases, fulfilling the requirement in advance of coursework offers logistical or scheduling benefits. Incoming students can fund

intensive summer language study by matriculating early, but should be aware by in doing so they use one quarter of their total guaranteed funding package.

In the summer or in early September before the first academic year starts, incoming graduate students must take the diagnostic exam used at Northwestern to determine the competency of entering undergraduates in languages other than English. Student will take the exam in their chosen language in consultation with the appropriate Northwestern department or program and the Northwestern Council on Language Instruction. This diagnostic exam establishes the student's level of proficiency. If students test into the third year or above of language study (i.e., if they test out of the Weinberg College of Arts and Science Language Requirement), they should take the departmental translation exam as soon as possible. Students who test into the first or second year of language study must pursue one of the other options. *You must determine your plan for completion of the language requirement with the DGS.*

Students not ready to take the translation exam in fall of year one may undertake the exam later in the year after a taking additional coursework, studying independently, or working with a tutor. Reading and translation groups geared to graduate research may be available during the year; please check with the relevant language department or program.

Students specializing in medieval literature must demonstrate proficiency in two languages other than English. Ordinarily, one will be a classical language used in the Middle Ages (Greek, Latin, Hebrew, or Arabic), and the other will be a modern language such as French, German, Italian, or Spanish.

Proficiency in the modern language will be measured as described above. Proficiency in the classical language will be measured by passage of an exam administered by either the English Department or the Medieval Cluster, or through an alternate means approved by the student's advisor and the DGS.

Medievalists only need to demonstrate proficiency in one of these two languages in order to advance to candidacy.

The language requirement is waived for students whose native language is not English. Please communicate with the DGS as soon as possible to confirm your eligibility for this waiver.

THE MASTER'S PROGRAM

2. THE ONE YEAR MA

As a terminal, one-year program, the Master's degree is designed to be completed in three quarters of full-time registration. The program provides students with considerable freedom in the choice of their coursework while still providing them with a broad historical overview of English, American, and Anglophone literature.

2.1. Coursework

As a student in the Department of English year-long Master's Degree program, you will take a total of nine classes over its three-quarter span.

You have a number of different options in the distribution of your coursework:

At least five of your nine overall seminars must be at the 400 (graduate) level.

Up to three of your nine overall seminars may be chosen from among those offered by other departments or programs.

You must take two graduate seminars focusing on literature written before 1800 and two graduate seminars focusing on literature written after 1800. As with the breadth requirements for the PhD program (see item 1.3 above), courses taken to fulfill the pre- and post-1800 requirement must be at the 400-level and must be offered by the Department of English. You must petition the DGS for any exceptions to these rules.

You may arrange to take no more than four of your nine overall seminars chosen from among those advanced undergraduate classes at the 300 level, with additional graduate-level requirements designed and supervised by the faculty member teaching the course. The instructor in such cases must be a member of the Northwestern graduate faculty. Check with the DGS and Graduate Program Assistant if you have any questions about whether a given professor falls in this category. You cannot earn graduate credit for classes taught by Visiting Assistant Professors except by permission of the DGS.

Although it is not required, we strongly recommend that you take the Fall Quarter Introduction to Graduate Studies seminar (English 410) with the incoming PhD class.

2.2. Master's Capstone Essay

As the culminating project for your MA degree, you must complete a Capstone Essay of 6,000 to 8,000 words (20–24 double-spaced pages). The Capstone Essay is an expanded and revised version of an essay written for a Fall or Winter Quarter English Department graduate seminar, revised in response to comments from, and as appropriate in consultation with, the seminar instructor. The seminar instructor for whom you wrote the seminar essay thereby serves as your Capstone Essay advisor.

You must consult the DGS for approval should you wish to pursue your Capstone Essay with an advisor for whom you did not write the seminar essay.

By the end of Reading Week in Spring Quarter, your completed Capstone Essay must be approved by your advisor and submitted to the Department. The exact date will be communicated to you during the summer before matriculation, but Reading Week is typically the tenth week of the quarter. The approved thesis is reviewed by the DGS.

2.3. Regulations Concerning Degree Completion

The schedule for the completion of the MA program assumes that you will finish the MA Capstone Essay and coursework in time to graduate at the end of the Spring Quarter. However, if you need more time to polish the final document, you may choose to submit the Capstone Essay for review during Summer Quarter. Your degree is then conferred early the following September without additional tuition expense. Pursuit of this alternative schedule must be approved by the DGS and your Capstone Essay advisor before the end of the Winter Quarter.

According to TGS regulations, a student in the MA program has five years from the initial quarter of matriculation to complete all degree requirements. To maintain student standing over this extended period, you must register for TGS 512 (tuition: \$100/ quarter) for each academic-year quarter during which no coursework is taken. This includes Fall, Winter, and Spring Quarters, but you are not required to register in Summer. Failure to register will result in discontinuation from the program, which can only be reversed by submitting a petition for readmission and paying a fee determined by TGS.

THE DOCTORAL PROGRAM

3. THE FIRST YEAR OF THE PHD

The PhD program provides scholarly training in literary theory and the history and criticism of literature written in English. Our regulations governing the first three years of doctoral work aim to give you a broadly based historical knowledge of English, American, and Anglophone literature and to engender your critically informed understanding of the field in which you propose to write a dissertation. Whether you enter with a BA or MA, your first year in the doctoral program consists exclusively of coursework.

3.1. English 410: Introduction to Graduate Studies

English 410, “Introduction to Graduate Studies,” is required of all doctoral students. This seminar introduces students to library resources, research methods, scholarly endeavors such as textual editing, constructions and deconstructions of literary history and canons, influential theories underlying analytic and critical practices, the history of the profession of literary studies, and contemporary issues within and around the discipline. English 410 also includes a Friday discussion section in which professors, librarians, and other professionals will give informal talks and lead conversations about various issues of intellectual and professional development. Possible topics may include editing and peer review at academic journals, archival research, using digital technology in research and teaching, writing for a public audience, and so on. Depending on availability, the section may not meet every week, and/or may offer several sessions during the Winter and Spring quarters.

Your goal in the first year will be to explore the field of literary study, gain facility in the discursive and analytic protocols of academic work in literature, and discover the resources of the English Department as you begin to define your field of specialization. The formal requirements of year one in the PhD program include:

English 410, “Introduction to Graduate Studies,” taken in Fall Quarter;

Eight other seminars (three graduate classes per quarter), which may fulfill breadth requirements, develop general knowledge, and refine your methodological and research interests;

The language requirement;

Spring Quarter first-year review, which involves a meeting with the DGS and the first-year mentor, and the submission of a Summer Research and Planning Proposal devised in consultation with the latter. In cases where the work completed during the first year has consistently failed to meet faculty expectations, the DGS and first-year mentor may recommend probationary status or discontinuation. In such cases, the recommendations of the DGS and the first-year mentor must be formally ratified by the graduate faculty of the full department.

3.2. Coursework Mentor

At the beginning of your first year, you will be assigned a faculty mentor who has significant experience advising graduate students and with whom you have cognate interests or methodologies. You will meet with your mentor at least once per quarter to discuss course selection and, during Spring Quarter of the first year, to discuss your Summer Research and Planning Proposal. You and your coursework mentor are also encouraged to have expansive conversations about your intellectual trajectory and graduate student life. While you may develop a close connection with your mentor, there is no expectation that your quarterly meetings will extend into the qualifying exam or dissertation stages of the program. Meetings with your mentor do not supplant meetings with the DGS, who will also meet with you several times during your first two years.

3.3. First-Year Review

The satisfactory completion of all courses is a necessary but not sufficient condition for continuation in the program, which depends on the graduate faculty's confidence that you have demonstrated the ability and motivation to plan and execute a substantial scholarly project within the time limits for the degree.

During reading week of the Spring Quarter, the DGS will schedule a meeting with each first-year doctoral student and their faculty mentor. This meeting will concern your evolving interests, your development during year one, and your plans for the future; the DGS and coursework mentor will also offer advice and feedback based on your course performance and evaluations. You will also review your Summer Research and Planning Proposal of approximately 500 words, developed in consultation with your coursework mentor, and submitted to the DGS two weeks in advance (typically by the second week of May). The content of this document will depend on each student's particular profile, but will typically include a reading plan, an exploratory research plan, and language training goals that reflect both the departmental language requirement and anticipated research needs. The Proposal is an occasion to begin to formulate the topics of your proposed exam lists and to identify possible exam committee members. Remember that you will begin working as a TA in year two, which will be an engrossing experience, so it is important to make headway on your research during the summer. This is no less true if you are also engaged in intensive language training during the summer.

Students placed on probation will be assigned a second-year mentor (who may or may not be the same as the first-year mentor). The student will work closely with this mentor with the aim of building on strengths and remediating any difficulties that raised concerns during the prior year. During the reading period of Spring Quarter in year two, these students will undergo a second-year review with the DGS and second-year mentor.

3.4. The Master's Degree as Part of the PhD Program

Upon successful completion of nine courses with at least a B average, you are eligible to receive a non-terminal MA degree upon request, whether or not you remain in the PhD program.

4. THE SECOND YEAR OF THE PhD

In the second year of the doctoral program, you must complete your breadth requirements, fulfill the Language Requirement if you have not already done so, draft and revise your three Qualifying Exam lists, and constitute your Qualifying Exam Committee.

4.1. Coursework and English 490

Your course load in the second year will consist of two seminars during each quarter when you are serving as a GA, and three seminars during your non-GA quarter. While you are serving as a GA, you must also register for one unit of English 490. This registration does not involve classroom attendance or coursework, but serves to confer course credit for your duties as a GA.

4.2. Graduate Assistantships

Beginning in year two, you are funded in part by Graduate Assistantships. Typically, these are quarterly Teaching Assistant positions, which can involve a range of different assignments as determined by the Department. In rarer cases, you may also work as a non-teaching research assistant for one quarter in year two. To prepare you to teach lecture discussion sections, you are required to attend the department's TA training, offered near the beginning of Fall Quarter. You may also wish to take advantage of additional training and workshops offered by the Searle Center for Advancing Learning and Teaching.

As you adapt to the classroom and develop your pedagogical skills, keep in mind that the GA position is meant to be part-time (maximum 20 hours/week). Your primary responsibility is to continue to progress toward your PhD, and it is imperative that you strive to balance your pedagogical and programmatic commitments. Do not allow teaching to become all-consuming. Consult with the course professor to discuss strategies for achieving this balance and preserving time for your coursework and research.

As a Graduate Assistant, you hold an appointment in TGS with duties assigned by the Department. It is your responsibility to keep abreast of all TGS regulations that relate to the appointment, remuneration, tax status, and academic standing of Graduate Assistants. As of March 2024, graduate students who are "providing research or instructional services for Northwestern" are covered by a collective bargaining agreement reached between NUGW-UE (Northwestern University Graduate Workers—United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers of America) and the University. During quarters of fellowship or certain GA-ships (not TA-ships), students are not covered by that bargaining agreement. The full text of the collective bargaining agreement is [here](#). Each department or program has a graduate student union representative who serves to liaise between students and NUGW-UE.

4.3. Teaching Assistant Responsibilities

As a new Teaching Assistant, you will typically be assigned to a 200-level lecture class, where you are primarily responsible for running weekly 50-minute discussion sections. In this capacity, you will lead two discussion sections containing no more than 20

students apiece. The mandatory duties of this position include:

- Careful, active reading of all assigned texts on the syllabus;
- Participating in weekly TA meetings convened by the course professor;
- Attending all lectures;
- Giving advance notice of any necessary absence from lecture;
- Teaching weekly discussion sections;
- Grading your students' essays and/or exams in accordance with the professor's standards;
- Holding office hours (two hours total; according to WCAS requirement, on two different days of the week);
- Communicating with the course professor about any disciplinary, academic, or other issues that arise with students in your section;
- Helping the course professor with logistical, technological, or other aspects of the lecture class.

GA positions are assigned by the DGS in consultation with the Chair, the Associate Chair, and the GPA. While we solicit your preferences in advance, all GA assignments depend on a number of variables beyond departmental control: undergraduate enrollments, which often fluctuate widely over the course of registration; overall availability of graduate labor; availability of experienced TAs; and extra-departmental needs of contiguous departments or programs. We make every effort to match your interests and provide you vital literary coverage, but undergraduate curricular needs ultimately must take precedence over the requests of both students and faculty. While GA positions for the following year are typically assigned during the preceding Spring Quarter, please be aware that due to unforeseen and unavoidable scheduling exigencies, your GA duties may have to be changed from the original assignment.

As a GA in the Department of English, you may also be assigned to a course in Comparative Literary Studies, Gender & Sexuality Studies, Latino/a Studies, or other department or program. The regulations of the English Department still apply to you in that case. Be sure to notify the DGS if you are asked to teach more students than you would in an English class, or if the workload otherwise exceeds the limit of 20 hours per week.

While bringing outside speakers to campus and organizing conferences provides useful professional experience, you are not expected to perform more than several hours a week of non-remunerated organizational labor (usually called "service" in the academic context). Please contact the DGS if you have any questions about this policy, which is intended to preserve your time for your primary goal of progress toward candidacy and the PhD.

For further details about TA duties, please consult the English Department's Teaching Assistant Handbook, distributed at the start of each academic year.

4.4. Preparing for the Qualifying Exam

The goal of the Qualifying Exam is to demonstrate your facility in a teaching field, a research field, and a theoretical or topical disposition, as you begin to define these in relation to a possible dissertation project. It is designed to encourage you to elaborate

positions and claims that reflect your most vital intellectual interests, but to do so within the context of a larger framework defined by one of the major fields within English Literary Studies and by a theoretical or topical commitment conducive to scholarly conversation beyond that field.

4.4.1. Reading Lists

Students will develop three distinctive and non-redundant reading lists in close consultation with their exam committees. These lists should include a total of 100 works, spread among a Teaching Field, a Research Field, and a list on a Genre, Theory or Topic as the student and their exam committee see fit. In this context, a "work" usually refers to a book-length text (e.g., novel, collection of essays or stories, volume or selection of poems, or an academic monograph). Students must begin to discuss the rubrics for these three fields with at least one committee member no later than December 1 in the Fall Quarter of the second year. The full committee of three faculty members must be selected and a first draft of the lists turned into the committee by March 15 in the Winter Quarter of the second year. (While you may revise the membership of your committee after the Qualifying Exam, you should choose faculty with whom you expect to sustain an advisory relationship throughout the program.)

No later than May 15 in the Spring Quarter of the second year, a final draft of the lists must be submitted to the committee and to the DGS along with a brief rationale (approximately 750 words, or, in some cases, three headnotes of approximately 250 words for each individual list). At this time, students must identify one examiner as the committee chair (although this designation is encouraged sooner if possible). Upon committee and DGS approval of the lists, the student's research interests on the department website will be changed to express their professional interests as defined by the lists' titles. An examination date will normally be set during reading week of the Fall Quarter of the student's third year, but students who feel ready to schedule the exam earlier in the quarter are encouraged to discuss this possibility with their committees.

Teaching Field

This list consists of a representative group of canonical works in the student's primary teaching "field." The field designation ought to encompass a significant area of instructional expertise sought by universities and colleges. It might define a common historical field, such as "early modern/Renaissance," "nineteenth-century British," "multiethnic American literature, 1900-present," or "postcolonial Anglophone literature," or it might encompass a broader historical frame such as "African-American Literature, origins to the present." Most commonly, the list will reflect the major genres of literary production (dramatic, narrative, poetic, critical). The field designation should be a relatively capacious and recognizable category arrived at in close consultation with the committee, in view of the student's intellectual interests and desired area of teaching expertise.

The department does not maintain an exhaustive list of fields or of works regarded as representative within them; the shape of established fields changes over time, and new fields continue to emerge and find institutional recognition. However, in

constructing their lists, students may wish to consult, in addition to their committees, the prior examination lists in the Virgil database, including the “Oral Qualifying Exam” (QE1) lists formerly offered by the department.

Research Field

The research field list is made up of a mixture of primary and scholarly literature, generally with an emphasis on primary sources. It should outline a focused area of research intended to form the core of a dissertation prospectus bibliography. The list may be organized around a specific historical criterion (e.g., literatures of the American Civil War); it might be composed around a topic (e.g., early modern fictions of Utopia); or it might represent a specific genre and its context (e.g., multiethnic speculative fiction, 1973-present; or interwar lyric poetry). In general, the work of finding and selecting the corpus should involve a significant act of original assembly.

Genres, Theories and Topics

This list should examine a topical or theoretical approach related to the proposed research area and/or that might constitute a secondary teaching field. Examples include affect theory, theory of the novel, disability studies, poetics, animal studies, new philology, environmental studies, media theory, postcolonial theory, psychoanalysis, theories of translation, feminist theory, and so on. In general, this list ought not to be narrowly construed as a list of period-focused scholarship or criticism, but instead should aim for an ambitious intellectual thread that is articulated across areas or periods. (For example, a student interested in the processes of nineteenth-century U.S. settler-colonialism might be expected to link a few texts on this topic to theories and critiques of coloniality from the Transatlantic Renaissance to the era of decolonization.)

Each list must be organized either alphabetically or chronologically, and each item on each list must include the basic bibliographic data specified by the *Chicago Manual of Style*:

Name of the author or authors, the editors, or the institutions responsible for the writing of the book
Full title of the book, including subtitle if there is one
Series (if any)
Volume number
Edition, if not the original
City of publication
Publisher’s name
Date of publication

For articles:

Name of the author or authors
Full title of the article
Title of the periodical
Volume number/date/both as appropriate
Pages occupied by the article

There is no agreed upon format for the citation of individual poems, so please use the following:

For poems published in a magazine:

Last name followed by a comma, then first name and a period

Title of the poem in quotation marks, with a period inside the closing marks

The title of the magazine in italics, and follow that with a comma and the date of publication

For poems in a collection:

Last name, a comma, then first name and a period

Title of the poem in quotation marks, with a period inside
“In” followed by the book’s name in italics, followed by a comma

“Edited by” and the name of the editor, followed by a comma

List the page number(s) where the poem can be found

List the city of publication followed by a colon, and conclude your citation with the name of the publishing house, a comma and the year of publication

If the student wishes to organize the lists differently, with the permission of the exam committee, the rationale for this departure from usual practice should preface the lists.

Samples list trios from an Early Modern perspective:

Teaching Field: Early drama (medieval to Restoration), or history of English drama

Research Field: Theatrical representations of the body in the Elizabethan era

Theories & Topics: Gender, queer, and/or disability studies.

Teaching Field: Renaissance/early modern literature, 1500-1650

Research Field: 16th c. intellectual texts and the genealogy of republicanism

Theories & Topics: Political theory or religious studies or media studies

Teaching Field: Tudor literature, with or without a Shakespeare specialization

Research Field: Poetry, dissemination, and the new materialism

Theories & Topics: Ecocriticism / environmental humanities, including plant studies, environmental models from the period, and encompassing contemporary theories of materialism and object studies

Teaching Field: Renaissance literature, comparative

Research Field: Forms of address in sixteenth-century English texts

Theories & Topics: Affect theory

Samples list trios from Modern/Contemporary Perspective:

Teaching Field: Multiethnic American Literatures, 1900-present

Research Field: Geopolitical Imaginaries in Latinx Literature since NAFTA, 1990-2016

Theories & Topics: Hemispheric Studies, origins to the present

Teaching Field: Transnational/Global Anglophone Literatures, 1880-1989

Research Field: Modernization and Decolonization in African Literature, 1945-1989

Theories & Topics: Postcolonial Studies, emphasis on Post-colonial Ecocriticism

Teaching Field: Modern and Contemporary Anglophone Poetry & Poetics (American, British, Caribbean, African)

Research Field: Race and Media in Contemporary Poetry

Theories & Topics: New Media Studies

4.5. Anticipating Year Three

Your third year in the PhD program will be particularly challenging, logistically and intellectually. You must take the Qualifying Exam by the end of Fall Quarter, typically during reading week. In Winter or Spring (depending on when it is offered), you will take English 520, the academic professionalization seminar (though other professionalization experiences may be substituted with the approval of the committee chair and the DGS). By the end of Spring Quarter, you must complete a dissertation prospectus that is approved by your dissertation committee and by the DGS. At that point, you will formally advance to candidacy for the PhD, which means that you have satisfied all requirements (including coursework and the Language Requirement) for the PhD except the dissertation. The Summer Quarter after your second year of coursework is thus a critical time to prepare for your Qualifying Exam. This summer also marks an important transition from the formalized demands of coursework to self-directed work, requiring more active and independent planning from you. While you will still receive guidance from your committee, and should never hesitate to seek it, your achievements will depend increasingly on your own discipline, organization, ambition, and imagination.

5. THE THIRD YEAR OF THE PhD

By the end of year three, you should have completed all departmental and TGS requirements for admission to candidacy: fulfilling the departmental Language Requirement; completing your coursework; passing the Qualifying Exam; and completing the dissertation prospectus. The third year completes your preparation for the ultimate task of your graduate study: the research and writing of your dissertation. Your achievements in year three contribute critically to your overall goal of becoming a mature, self-motivated scholar, thinker, and writer.

5.1. Qualifying Exam

While the majority of the preparation for the Qualifying Exam should be completed during year two and the following summer, the Fall Quarter will entail an intensive period of final reading, synthesis, reflection, and review. When possible, and contingent on Departmental teaching needs, students will receive funding in the form of a fellowship during the Fall Quarter of the third year in order to allow them to devote themselves to exam preparation full-time.

In consultation with the GPA and the exam committee, students should schedule the Qualifying Exam for reading week of the Fall Quarter of the third year, allotting 2.5 hours for the examination itself and an additional 30 minutes for debriefing. They should plan to meet with the exam committee chair (or, at the request of the committee chair, with the entire committee) no later than two weeks prior to the exam date. At this meeting, the student and the exam committee chair will discuss the student's developing intellectual preoccupations as well as the parameters of the oral presentation with which they will begin the examination and the format of the exam itself. Commonly, the three examiners will take turns interviewing the candidate for approximately 20 minutes each on any text or topic related to the examination lists or to the presentation. The exam will then open up into a final hour of collective conversation. However, the precise format of the examination is determined by the committee chair in consultation with the rest of the committee. Students can expect that questions will emphasize the teaching, research, and theory components of the exam with some degree of parity. For the majority of the exam, students can expect a ranging conversation on distinct topics; ideally, the exam will also include some explicit thought toward dissertation prospectus development.

After the examination, the committee will determine whether the performance merits a Pass, a Pass with Distinction, or a Fail. In the case of Fail, a consultation among the exam committee, the DGS, and the Department Chair will determine whether to exclude the student from the program or to recommend a retake of the exam or some portion thereof. While there is no formal written evaluation of the Qualifying Exam, students can expect oral feedback immediately after the exam, as well as emailed comments identifying especially productive avenues of thought, possible pitfalls or lacunae to be addressed, and ways to think about moving from the Qualifying Exam to the prospectus.

5.2. Coursework

In Spring Quarter, all third-year students will enroll in English 570: Expository Writing and Pedagogy, offered through the Cook Family Writing Program. This class, which covers issues of writing pedagogy, confers graduate credit and must be taken for a letter grade. Students who enter the PhD program without an MA in English (or commensurate discipline as approved by the DGS) must also take an additional graduate seminar, which may be taken on a P/NP basis. While this additional seminar may be taken at any time during the academic year, it often makes the most sense to take it in Fall or Winter.

Before registering for the additional seminar, you must confirm that P/NP is acceptable to the professor. Because *the P/NP rubric is not the same as auditing*, you and the professor must determine in advance the work you must do to earn a P grade for the class. Typically, you will complete the class readings, participate in discussions, and undertake some light writing (e.g., ongoing notes on the reading), but will not write an extended essay for the class. *Please be absolutely sure that your professor understands in advance that you must complete some work to receive P/NP credit.* It is impossible to confer credit retroactively when no work has been submitted for evaluation.

5.3. The Prospectus

The dissertation prospectus establishes a blueprint for the major accomplishment of your career in the doctoral program: the dissertation. As a document that motivates and justifies the chapter breakdown of your projected dissertation, the prospectus should anticipate the structure of a book-length argument. It should chart the research plan as well as the interpretive and/or theoretical analysis you plan to undertake, placing this evidentiary and analytic work in relation to the current critical scholarship that you aim most vitally to engage. In addition, your prospectus should anticipate the specific critical, literary-historical, and/or methodological intervention your dissertation aspires to make. Attention to logical articulations between chapters and the method through which your argument will be sustained by evidence is crucial to the persuasiveness of your prospectus.

The prospectus should thus accomplish the following:

- Describe the topic under consideration and formulate the argument to be proposed;
- Identify the methodological principles on the basis of which the research will be conducted;
- Specify the scope of the inquiry;
- Explain the relation of the dissertation to relevant scholarly categories and critical trends in the field;
- Outline the chapters, with a brief exposition of what each one seeks to accomplish;
- Provide an extensive bibliography of both primary and secondary texts.

Insofar as it delimits the literary-historical and critical scope of your dissertation, your bibliography is especially important. Different fields require different kinds of bibliographies with different degrees of inclusiveness. In general, your bibliography should include every primary item that would make a difference to the dissertation, not only as core evidence but also as a constituent of the literary-historical field your dissertation

addresses; and, every secondary item whose argument your dissertation engages or to whom your dissertation is relevant. Consult with your advisor to discuss the desired depth and specificity of your prospectus's bibliography.

The body of the prospectus should comprise about 5,000 words double-spaced (roughly 14–18 pages) in length, excluding the bibliography. As a formal, professional document, the prospectus must consistently conform to one scholarly formatting style (typically, either Chicago or MLA style). All bibliographic entries must be correctly formatted. Pervasive typographical and/or formatting errors are grounds for rejection by the DGS. The GPA maintains a file of approved prospectuses on Virgil, which you are encouraged to consult.

5.3.1. Committee Approval & Meeting

During Winter and Spring Quarters of the third year, the student will work closely with the dissertation committee to craft a viable prospectus, a process that requires multiple drafts.

No later than the last day of WCAS Reading Week in Spring Quarter, the student must secure the dissertation committee's approval of the prospectus. This approval must be communicated to the GPA and DGS by the committee chair.

No later than the last day of Exam Week in Spring Quarter, the student and dissertation committee will conduct a conversation about the prospectus, lasting up to two hours. This conversation will address any final minor revisions to the prospectus; it will also chart a course for initial dissertation research and writing subsequent to the prospectus.

5.3.2. Department Approval of the Prospectus

Shortly after the deadline for the Prospectus Meeting, the student will submit the final prospectus with any revisions arising from the Prospectus Meeting to the GPA and DGS. Final approval of the prospectus rests with the DGS. Prospectuses must be submitted no later than one week after the Prospectus Meeting.

The DGS will review the prospectus and, in the vast majority of cases, approve it. In exceptional cases, if the document is judged in need of extensive revision, the DGS will return it for resubmission. You and your dissertation director will receive discursive comments, with the notification of approval or non-approval, via letter (both hard and digital copies) by the end of June, year three.

If the prospectus is sent back for revision, it must be revised and approved by the full dissertation committee no later than one week before the beginning of Fall Quarter, year four. At this point, it will be re-evaluated by the DGS as rapidly as possible; you and your dissertation director will be notified of the DGS's decision by email and letter before the end of September, year four.

5.4 English 520

In either Winter or Spring of the third year, depending on when it's offered, students should enroll in English 520, the "professionalization workshop." The aim of English 520 is

to offer PhD students an open and supportive community for discussing professionalization issues of all kinds. The course is designed to be low-stress: it is graded N/NP and requires minimal preparation outside of class. With the approval of the dissertation chair and the DGS, students may substitute alternative professionalization experiences for English 520; likely candidates for substitution include the [GEO Community Practicum](#) offered by Chicago Field Studies, or the [Public Humanities Practicum](#) offered by the Kaplan Institute for the Humanities. English 520 will introduce specific genres that you will need in the latter half of the PhD (the chapter, the conference abstract, the CV); it will also cover strategic matters such as managing committee expectations, balancing teaching and research, and navigating challenging workplace relationships.

5.5 Admission to Candidacy

Admission to candidacy is a TGS benchmark that indicates your completion of all degree requirements with the exception of the dissertation (thus the acronym “ABD,” for “All But Dissertation”). In English, students advance to candidacy when they have met the breadth and language requirements; finished all coursework and resolved all incomplete grades; passed the Qualifying Exam; and completed an approved prospectus. *No student may advance to candidacy with an incomplete on their record. No student may advance to candidacy without fulfilling the language requirement.* These departmental requirements are strictly administered by TGS; it is critical that you satisfy them well in advance of Fall Quarter of the fourth year.

TGS requires that you achieve candidacy by the end of the first week of classes after your twelfth quarter in the program (that is, the first week of classes, Fall Quarter, year four). If you have not passed all departmental requirements by this time, TGS will place you on probationary status. According to TGS policy, students on fourth-year probation have Fall and Winter Quarters to complete their outstanding work. Failure to do so within this timeframe may result in exclusion from TGS and the Department of English. If you have not advanced to candidacy by the start of Spring Quarter, year four, all further fellowship and/ or travel funding may be forfeited.

A delay in your advancement to candidacy seriously impedes your ability to make progress on your dissertation. In the event of outstanding requirements at the start of year four, *your sole focus must be the completion of all outstanding work.* In consultation with the DGS and dissertation director, you will be expected to draft a schedule of work for Fall and Winter Quarters with the aim of fulfilling all outstanding coursework or requirements. This schedule will be recorded in the form of a letter from the DGS detailing the plan for completion. Once candidacy is achieved, you must register for TGS 500: Advanced Doctoral Study in any quarter in which you receive funding. If you are unfunded as a result of late advancement to candidacy, you must register instead for TGS 512: Continuous Registration, which enables you to maintain minimal student status.

6. THE FOURTH YEAR OF THE PhD

As soon as your prospectus is approved, you should begin targeted research and writing with the goal of drafting your first dissertation chapter. *You must make significant progress in writing your dissertation during year four.* To be competitive for external fellowship opportunities, you should aim to have completed one solid, committee-approved chapter and to have made progress on a second by the end of Summer Quarter, year four. (The Department requires a minimum of one fully-approved chapter by year five in order to qualify for continued funding, but that is a floor, not a ceiling.)

TGS strongly encourages PhD students to apply for external funding in year four. Often the best sources of funding at this early stage are research libraries whose archives will assist your dissertation research. Major research libraries such as The Folger Library, The Huntington Library, the Harry Ransom Center, the William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, the Beinecke Library, and many others offer one- and two-month short-term travel funding. The Newberry Library in Chicago offers a one-quarter Lawrence Lipking Fellowship targeted at PhD students in Northwestern’s English Department. Many smaller collections like Haverford College Library’s Quaker and Special Collections also offer specific short-term fellowships. Consult your dissertation director and the Northwestern Office of Fellowships before Fall Quarter of year four to compile a list of potential short-term funding sources and deadlines, draft your application materials, and solicit letters of recommendation from your committee. You should also consider whether you are ready to apply for long-term funding at the start of year four. (For further discussion, see 4.3. Fellowships.)

6.1. Composition of the Dissertation Committee

As the Admission to Candidacy page of the TGS website states, “The [Dissertation] Examination Committee must include no fewer than three full-time members of the Northwestern University faculty, two of whom, including the chair, must be members of the Graduate Faculty.” As long as the composition of the core committee accords with TGS guidelines, a specialist from another university may be asked to serve as a fourth reader. A faculty member who leaves Northwestern may still serve as one of your dissertation committee members, subject to approval by the DGS and TGS. In other cases, you should work with the remaining members of your committee and the DGS to identify an appropriate replacement.

6.2. Rewriting the Prospectus

In the truly exceptional event of radical changes to the dissertation topic, your dissertation director may require you to draft a new prospectus. This requirement is imposed at your director’s discretion. The DGS is not required to approve the new prospectus and your status in candidacy is not affected.

6.3. Dissertation Writing & Committee Feedback

Even though you research and draft chapters on your own, you are strongly encouraged to remain in ongoing contact with your director and committee. You should consult your committee members not only for guidance about your research and analysis, but also to draw up a tentative schedule for the completion of your chapter drafts. With a schedule in hand, your committee will be better able to check in with you, offer assistance, and plan in advance to read your work. With regular communication about your progress during year four, you and your committee will be best able to anticipate your readiness to undertake external long-term fellowship, external short-term research fellowship, and Northwestern fellowship applications at the start of year five.

It is optimal, but not required, for your director to take the lead in providing commentary on your drafts. You are advised to use your director's advice in conjunction with your own judgment to determine when to share drafts with other committee members. While you should inform your director when you circulate work to other committee members or faculty, you are encouraged to share work with any committee member or faculty reader who can best assist you at a particular juncture. In addition, graduate writing groups inside and outside of English can be crucial enablers of productivity and community.

Ideally, your committee members should read individual dissertation chapters within one month, but you are required to give them advance warning so they can plan to respect this schedule. If you aim to submit an entire dissertation, you must provide a month's notice to receive feedback within one month. Committee members also have an obligation to read your dissertation while they are on leave. During faculty leave and summer, anticipate potential delays in communication and a longer timeframe for the turnaround of your work. To ensure that you are able to maintain your dissertation work schedule, be sure to work out turnaround times before your advisors leave town for research or summer travel.

If you experience a serious impediment to your ability to advance with the dissertation in year four, *you should consult the DGS sooner rather than later*. Whether the source of the block is advisory, structural, intellectual, or personal, the DGS will work constructively with you to attempt to resolve it. It is crucial to your progress in the program that you seek this assistance when needed. The DGS will keep all communications confidential with the important exception of complaints of discrimination and harassment, which faculty are obliged to report to the Office of Equity.

7. THE FIFTH YEAR OF THE PhD

The fifth year in the program is devoted to concentrated work on the dissertation. The department will provide you with four quarters of fellowship support, relieving you of all teaching and assistantship responsibilities during this period. As a result, you are expected to make substantial writing progress. Students must complete at least one committee-approved chapter by the end of the second quarter of year five in order to be eligible for department funding during year six. This is an absolute minimum, however, and most students should aim to complete three chapters by the end of the fourth quarter of the fifth year. This writing schedule will put you in a good position to enter the academic job market in early fall of your sixth year (if that is your goal) and to defend your dissertation the following spring or summer.

Please contact the DGS sooner rather than later if you encounter any significant impediments to your progress. Departmental deadlines are automatically extended for students who take an approved leave of absence, but it is still recommended that you check in with your committee members, with the DGS, and with Nathan to make sure that everyone understands your revised timetable.

7.1. Fifth-year chapter completion requirement

Eligibility for continued funding is contingent upon the minimum completion of one committee-approved chapter by the end of the second quarter of the fifth year. By no later than Friday of Exam Week, Winter Quarter, one full dissertation chapter draft must have been approved by the dissertation committee. Please note that this constitutes a *minimum* standard: in the majority of cases, students complete their first approved chapter draft significantly earlier. Please contact the DGS sooner rather than later if you encounter any significant impediment in meeting this requirement. Extensions to this requirement are automatically granted to students who take an approved leave of absence.

8. THE SIXTH YEAR OF THE PhD AND BEYOND

Sixth-year funding through and including the summer of year six has historically been provided to all students in good standing in the PhD program in English. Please note, though, that the new graduate union contract has changed the financial landscape for the University. It is likely that 6th- and 7th- year funding will become increasingly elusive as the University tries to offset the cost of the more generous graduate funding package for students in years 1–5. If and when we learn of any changes that might affect this funding, we will share that information with all graduate students. Your union representative may also be able to offer insights into funding strategies for after the fifth year. See section 10.2 below for further details.

In the current professional environment, you are unlikely to get a job in your first try on the academic job market, especially if you are ABD at the time of your application. Keep in mind that you will compete with unemployed PhDs as well as assistant professors who wish to move laterally. However, you will be a stronger applicant if you have defended your dissertation before the start of Fall Quarter of the seventh year. For this reason, as well as for eligibility for positions like the Visiting Assistant Professorship in English, you should aim to defend by the end of year six unless you have received fellowship support through your seventh year.

8.1. Preparation of the Dissertation

In preparing your dissertation, the department and TGS require you to follow the latest edition of an approved model of scholarly citation, preferably the *Chicago Manual of Style* or *MLA Handbook*. It is to your advantage to choose an approved format for footnotes and bibliography early on and to follow it meticulously throughout the stages of preparing your dissertation. Zotero and EndNote software can format notes and bibliographies for you. The former is freely available online, and as of Fall 2022, the latter can be downloaded from Northwestern IT for free with your NetID and password.

TGS has further formatting requirements, which can be found on its website along with instructions for submitting your dissertation electronically. You are responsible for consulting the TGS website for the latest information on submission requirements and guidelines.

8.2. Dissertation Defense and Assessment

Your last examination as a degree candidate will be the oral defense of your dissertation. After this examination, your committee will comment on your doctoral thesis, assessing in reasonable detail its strengths and weaknesses, making recommendations concerning possible publication, and, of most immediate concern, recommending whatever final editing needs to be done prior to submission of the dissertation to TGS.

In either case, submission of the fully edited dissertation to TGS is the final requirement that must be fulfilled before you are eligible to graduate. While specific dates will vary from year to year, you should be prepared to submit the finalized dissertation

to TGS at least six weeks prior to your anticipated graduation date. Spring graduation, including the Hooding Ceremony, takes place in mid-June, while Fall Quarter degrees are awarded at the end of December. Students earning a Fall Quarter degree may participate in the Hooding Ceremony the following spring.

8.3. Time Limits

Beyond the optimal timeframe of six or seven years to the PhD, TGS defines a maximum time-to-degree of nine years: “The Graduate School Policy states that *all requirements for the doctoral degree must be met within nine years of initial registration in a doctoral program, which falls on the last day of the 36th quarter*. For students on an approved leave of absence or approved childbirth accommodations, milestones will be extended accordingly.” In the absence of approved leaves or accommodations, TGS firmly administers this cutoff. Be assured that last-minute extensions are extremely difficult to procure.

As an absolute outer limit in the absence of an approved leave, you have until the end of your ninth year in the program (usually the Summer Quarter, mid-September) to file your completed, defended, approved and edited dissertation. *If you enter your eighth year in the doctoral program without having earned the PhD*, you are required to consult with your committee and the DGS to plan a defense date well in advance of TGS’s terminal limit.

9. COMPARATIVE LITERARY STUDIES/ENGLISH PHD REQUIREMENTS

PhD students in the Comparative Literary Studies Program (CLS) whose home department is English must meet the following requirements:

CLS/English PhD students must take six graduate seminars in English, which may include Independent Studies. Courses must carry an English course number or be taught by English department faculty or English-affiliated faculty. All Independent Study requests must be approved in advance by the English DGS (see Section 1.1. “English 499” above). Exceptions may be granted in advance by the English DGS in consultation with the DGS of CLS.

CLS/English PhD students do not undergo the first-year review.

For the Qualifying Exam and dissertation committee, at least one committee member must be English or English-affiliated faculty. Exceptions may be granted in advance by the English DGS in consultation with the DGS of CLS.

CLS/English students submit Qualifying Exam reading lists and take the Qualifying Exam on the same schedule as English graduate students. For crucial information about committee formation, reading lists, and the exam, see Sections 4.4 and 5.1. above:

The final Qualifying Exam Reading Lists and accompanying rationale(s) must be submitted to the committee and DGS no later than May 15 of the second year;

The Qualifying Exam will ordinarily be administered during Fall Quarter of year three.

Upon successful completion of the Qualifying Exam, CLS/English PhD students are subject to no further requirements in English, with the exception of the requirement that one dissertation committee member belong to the English or English-affiliated faculty. All subsequent requirements through the award of the PhD are administered by the Comparative Literary Studies Program.

10. FUNDING & ASSISTANTSHIPS

10.1. Funding in Years Two, Three, Four, & Five

University Fellowships and Graduate Assistantships are provided to students in the doctoral program. The Department provides support through (and including) the summer of the fifth year for all PhD students who have been continued into the second year and remain in good standing in subsequent years. Note that one quarter of funding is used early if the student elects to enroll in a language intensive class during Summer Quarter before year one.

By accepting graduate funding, students contractually agree not to undertake significant additional remunerative work without TGS approval. Please see the TGS website for details of this policy.

Funding between years two and four takes the form of Graduate Assistantships (mostly not exclusively teaching positions), which may include up to one quarter per academic year of fellowship. The Department makes every effort to provide fellowship funding in Fall Quarter of year three, with the goal of providing additional time to prepare for the Qualifying Exam. As in year one, all four quarters of year five are covered by a University Fellowship. The purpose of this fellowship year is to enable significant progress on the dissertation.

Departmental recommendation of continuation into year two is prerequisite to the award of Graduate Assistantships and all other forms of fellowship that involve Northwestern University funds. In addition, TGS requires that you be in good academic standing to be a Graduate Assistant. Good academic standing requires at least a B average and no more than one incomplete grade.

Other circumstances that may jeopardize or otherwise negatively impact university funding include:

Failing to make up incompletes by two weeks before the beginning of the Fall Quarter;

Not achieving candidacy before the beginning of the fourth year due to outstanding incompletes, an outstanding language requirement, or an unapproved dissertation prospectus.

10.2. Internal Support Beyond Year Five

Although the Department is not able to guarantee funding beyond the fifth year, it is committed to supporting sixth- and seventh-year students to the extent that it is able to do so. In order to be eligible for advanced graduate student funding, students must demonstrate good progress on their dissertations. In no circumstances will students be funded unless they have, at a minimum, one chapter completed and approved by the full dissertation committee by the end of Winter Quarter of the fifth year. Priority will be given to students who have at least two chapters completed and approved by that time. For seventh-year funding, priority will be given to students who are on a path to defend the dissertation by the end of the year. Sixth- and seventh-year students are expected to teach a winter or spring First-Year Seminar as a condition of receiving departmental funding. Since AY 24–25 is the first full academic year in which (many) GA-ships are covered by the collective

bargaining agreement, we anticipate that there may be changes to the availability of 6th- and 7th-year funding. Department leadership will strive to communicate any new information we learn in a transparent and timely fashion. Your union representative will also be in regular touch about any new developments in graduate funding that are negotiated by the union.

10.3. TGS External Award Policy

Because TGS considers “graduate funding to be a collaborative effort between students and Northwestern University,” TGS strongly recommends that you begin to apply for external fellowship in year four. TGS expects all students to apply for external fellowship awards in year five and beyond. In addition to the obvious benefits of time free from teaching duties and the visibility of an external or internal fellowship on your CV, fellowship support during year five also earns additional support from TGS. Consult the “TGS External Award Policy” on the TGS website to stay abreast of current provisions, as the policy is subject to change.

You should consult your director, the DGS, the GPA, and the Northwestern Office of Fellowships to identify short- and long-term external funding opportunities specific to your field, topic, and/or methodology. Be aware that a significant number of year-long fellowships, such as the Mellon/ACLS Dissertation Completion Fellowship and the Charlotte W. Newcombe Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship, are designated dissertation completion fellowships, which means that you, your director, and the DGS must attest that you will be ready to defend the dissertation by August 31st of the fellowship period. *You should investigate application criteria well in advance of year five so that you can coordinate your projected fellowship application and dissertation completion schedule.*

10.4. Departmental/TGS Conference Travel Support

PhD students may apply for a total of four conference travel grants, each totaling up to \$1,200. The first two are funded primarily by TGS (\$800 contribution from TGS, \$400 from English). After these two TGS conference grants have been used, students are eligible for two additional conference grants, funded by the Department of English. Students must be currently enrolled in the PhD program and currently receiving University funding to be eligible for conference grant support. The Department cannot provide conference travel funds to recent PhDs or students past the period of University funding.

The Department will not approve or fund conference travel until you have completed three quarters of graduate work at Northwestern. Only in cases of extreme professional urgency will the Department support conference travel in the first year, in which case you will apply to TGS for a TGS Conference Travel Grant.

The Department will only approve conference travel funding if you are a “principal presenter” (listed in the program as presenter of your own work on a panel or roundtable). Co-authored and co-presented work is acceptable. Conference attendance without any presentation of academic work is not eligible for funding.

You are strongly discouraged from conference participation in Spring Quarter, year two. It is recommended that you conserve most of your allocated conference travel until you have started your dissertation work. Circulating dissertation work in progress may help generate interest in you and your project before you enter the job market.

Conference travel grants must be approved by both your dissertation (or field) advisor and the DGS to ensure that the planned travel does not conflict with Graduate Assistantship responsibilities. You must consult with your field advisor, (if you are in year two), Qualifying Exam chair, or dissertation director before you apply. Upon approval by your field advisor, Exam chair, or director, you must submit a Conference Travel Request Form for the DGS’s approval and signature. Faculty endorsement of travel requests signals professional confirmation of the legitimacy of the conference and the merit of the commitment of student time. Faculty are expected to weigh this endorsement seriously; approval is not assured.

10.5. Extra-Departmental Travel/ Research Support

Fellowships and grants from Northwestern University’s Roberta Buffett Institute for Global Studies support graduate work in globalization studies, research in the Middle East, and travel related to international and comparative studies. The Program in African Studies (PAS) offers Hans E. Panofsky Pre-Dissertation Awards, Morris Goodman Awards to support language study, Foreign Language and Area Studies awards, PAS Travel Awards, and other grants. TGS also offers a range of competitive short-term graduate grants, including Summer Language Grants and Graduate Research Grants (up to \$3,000). You are encouraged to consult the websites of relevant institutes, programs, and departments, as well as TGS and the Office of Fellowships for further information about short-term grant opportunities at Northwestern.

10.6. Major Internal Fellowships & Assistantships

Please note that TGS fellowship and assistantship application criteria reflect TGS’s vision of the optimum time to degree, and *year four is the last year that you are eligible to apply for fellowship funding provided in full or in part by TGS*. Receiving TGS support in year five will make you eligible to bank quarters of your initial funding offer for use no later than Summer Quarter of year six.

The TGS website maintains lists of internal fellowships and grants, as well as interdisciplinary assistantships available from other units in the University. Some of the opportunities most frequently pursued by English graduate students are listed below:

TGS’s Presidential Fellowship, the most prestigious graduate award at Northwestern, is a competitive university-wide award that provides two years of funding. The department is allowed to nominate one student each year, and will select its nominee from students in the fourth year of the program. Students who are interested in being nominated for the Presidential Fellowship should discuss this possibility with their dissertation directors no later than the summer of year four. See the TGS website for up-to-date information and application requirements.

The Franke Graduate Fellowship is offered by The Alice Kaplan Institute for the Humanities, in partnership with TGS, to “the most accomplished doctoral students in the humanities during their fourth or fifth year of study.” The Franke Graduate Fellowship provides two fellowship quarters and \$2,000 in research funds; in Spring Quarter, Franke Fellows design and teach a course in their home department or program. Franke Graduate Fellowship awards are eligible for two quarters of TGS matching support, which can be “banked” for use through the Summer Quarter of year six. See the Humanities Institute website for up-to-date information and application requirements.

The Gender & Sexuality Studies Program offers three competitively awarded quarters of funding, typically comprising two quarters of teaching assistantship for large introductory lecture classes in GSS plus one quarter of solo teaching of a 300-level seminar on a topic of the recipient’s own design (necessarily related to gender or sexuality). GSS fellowship applications are usually due in late March or early April of the preceding year. Only fourth-year doctoral students may apply; occasional exceptions may be made for third-year students. GSS fellowship awards are eligible for TGS matching support, which can be “banked” for use through Summer Quarter of year six. Consult GSS for further details.

The Sexualities Project at Northwestern (SPAN) offers dissertation fellowships to Northwestern graduate students working on topics related to sexual orientation and sexuality. SPAN dissertation fellowships provide up to three quarters of funding (including stipend, tuition, and benefits); SPAN summer grants are also available. SPAN fellowship awards are eligible for TGS matching support, which can be “banked” for use through Summer Quarter of year six. The deadline falls in early May of the preceding year. Consult the SPAN website for more details.

The Buffett Center offers dissertation fellowships to Northwestern graduate students pursuing global research projects in any discipline. Buffett fellowships provide up to three quarters of enhanced funding (including stipend, tuition, and benefits). Buffett fellowship awards are eligible for TGS matching support, which can be “banked” for use through Summer Quarter of year six. The deadline falls in March of the preceding year. Consult the Buffett website for more details.

11. OTHER MATTERS

11.1. Department Organization

The Graduate Program of the Department of English operates under the authority and rules of TGS. Responsibility for curricular matters, admissions, fellowships, and other academic and financial matters rests with the graduate faculty of the Department, but much of the programmatic business is delegated to the DGS and GPPC. The DGS is the executive officer of the Graduate Program.

11.2. English Graduate Student Organization

The English Graduate Student Organization (EGSO) is headed by two co-chairs, who are elected for one-year terms, as well as elected representatives of the MFA+MA program, PhD students in coursework, and those in candidacy, respectively. As the graduate body that organizes and advocates for the social, intellectual, and professional well-being of PhD, MA, and MFA+MA students, EGSO assists in recruiting prospective entrants to the PhD program during their campus visit; offers peer support to graduate students in their first year and in coursework; helps assess job candidates in the Department of English; organizes graduate student colloquia and the faculty-graduate Salon reading group; and convenes less formal opportunities for collegiality and community. Most critically, EGSO brings the graduate community’s needs and concerns to the attention of the Chair and DGS. The Department offers funds to support EGSO programming. EGSO also elects or appoints two graduate representatives to the GPPC (Graduate Program and Policy Committee); these graduate students will participate in all meetings and business of the GPPC except for those that entail FERPA-protected information about fellow students.

11.3. Placement Services

The Department of English provides all possible assistance to PhD candidates and recent PhDs who enter the job market, academic or otherwise. Your dissertation committee will remain your primary source of advice and support during this phase. Additionally, each academic year, one or two designated members of the English Department faculty serve as Placement Directors to schedule feedback, support, and targeted advice for the duration of the job-search process. On the Virgil Database, you can access the Placement Handbook, which includes information about both the traditional academic job market and opportunities in secondary education, public humanities, and “alt-ac” careers.

Traditionally, the academic job market followed a fairly predictable schedule, although many institutions have departed from longstanding practices in recent years (with the rise of Zoom interviews in place of MLA). The traditional academic job market begins roughly in July, when you prepare application materials for feedback from your committee and the Placement Directors, followed by multiple cycles of revision. In August, you secure letters of recommendation from your committee

members and set up an electronic dossier with Interfolio. In September, you workshop your materials with additional members of the graduate faculty. Sample syllabi, reflecting courses you have taught as well as courses you would like to teach in your field, are also recommended. Over the course of Fall Quarter, depending on the deadlines announced in the Job Information List (released by the Modern Language Association in early September, but updated regularly thereafter), you submit individualized application letters and materials. In October and November, you transmit further letters of reference and/or writing samples as requested by search committees; you may also be invited to participate in Zoom interviews at this time and beyond. Between November and January, you are likely to hear from search committees who wish to schedule first-round interviews. You may subsequently be contacted by search committees inviting you for an on-campus visit, at which point you must prepare a job talk and/or prepare to teach a class in front of the search committee and host faculty. After the campus visit, you must prepare to negotiate the most advantageous terms should you receive an offer of academic employment.

The demands of the job market are grueling and can distract from the work of completing the dissertation. If you are ABD, you and your advisors should carefully weigh the potential benefits and costs of going on the market. As a rule of thumb, you should not go on the academic job market with more than one dissertation chapter left to write. You should also be aware that a “restricted search” will demand just as much time as a full-scale search. In addition to talking with members of their committee, many students also find it helpful to consult with the Placement Director(s), who offer a valuable outside perspective and can provide a confidential sounding board to students who have doubts about pursuing academic jobs.

The English Department’s Placement Directors are available to assist students in English; Comparative Literary Studies with a home department in English; and, when appropriate, affiliated programs such as the Interdisciplinary PhD in Theatre and Drama. The Placement Directors arrange a collaborative student-faculty workshop in early Fall Quarter to review application materials; organize mock interviews later in fall quarter to prepare students for interviews via Skype or at the MLA Convention; and set up mock job talks in early Winter Quarter for those invited for campus visits. In addition, the Placement Directors work individually with each job applicant over the course of the application, from Summer Quarter of the prior year through the job offer negotiation process and beyond.

If you wish to explore career opportunities in alternative academic employment, public humanities, secondary education, or other venues off the academic tenure track, the Placement Directors may also be able to direct you to resources that will assist you in your search. Note that TGS funding gives graduate students access to skills-based courses in the School for Professional Studies, some of which might enhance students’ training for academic and “alt-ac” jobs alike (for example, courses in “Web Development,” “Museum Studies,” and “Publishing and Professional Development”). The Kaplan Humanities Institute is also a member of the consortium Humanities Without Walls, which offers predoctoral workshops

to help prepare graduate students for careers inside and outside of the academy. Northwestern Career Advancement offers some programming designed specifically for graduate students. Chicago’s Newberry Library is offering a new graduate course on the archive that will teach participants how to process an unprocessed collection at an independent research archive. Online resources that offer support for PhDs aiming to build skills, networks, and career opportunities outside of academia include ImaginePhD; VersatilePhD (to which Northwestern is a subscribing institution); HASTAC Scholars; and the MLA Humanities Commons, including the MLA Connected Academics Initiative.