

Department of English  
Graduate Student Handbook  
2019-20 Edition

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## I. MA Program

NOTE: PLEASE SEE SECTIONS III-VII BELOW FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION RELEVANT TO ALL GRADUATE STUDENTS IN ENGLISH. THE CURRENT SECTION ADDRESSES INFORMATION PERTAINING TO MA STUDENTS EXCLUSIVELY.

Students enrolled in the MA Program in English may come with different kinds of preparation and with different objectives going forward, and the program is designed to cater to individual students' needs and goals. Students may obtain a strong grounding in the study of literature and/or film, which will allow them to go on to work in teaching, publishing, or other fields in which critical reading and writing are prized. Students may also choose to focus on creative writing (poetry or fiction), and for these students the program offers a broader-based alternative to an MFA. Others are looking to use the MA as a starting-point for an eventual PhD: we are proud to report that our MA alumni are currently enrolled in PhD programs at institutions such as the University of Nebraska, SUNY Buffalo, and the University of Indiana. Our own PhD program also includes a handful of former MAs, though our MA program should by no means be considered a “feeder” or “pipeline” to the PhD program.

### A. Overview of the Program: Typical Timeline

The MA program is designed to be completed within one calendar year. A typical timeline for the degree appears below. Please check with the Graduate Coordinator to confirm exact dates and deadlines each year.

#### Fall Semester

- Three 4-credit courses at either the 400 or 500 level. See Section III below for more information on these designations and what they mean.
- Begin to contemplate whether your summertime completion of the MA will consist of writing an MA essay—either scholarly or creative—or preparing for an MA exam. (See below for details on these various options.)
  - \*Essay: Start looking for faculty advisors and thinking about possible essay topics.
  - \*Exam: Review the exam lists (for your exam, you will need to select four lists, representing four fields) and consult with the MA advisor.

#### Spring Semester

- Three 4-credit courses at either the 400 or 500 level.
- Make the final decision as to whether you're going to complete the program with an MA essay or MA exam.

\*Essay: Consult with possible faculty advisors, and consider seminar essays that might serve as the start of the MA essay. **By April 15:** submit a form to the Department listing your proposed topics and faculty advisor(s).

\*Exam: Discuss the exam process with the MA advisor, select your four exam lists, and choose your exam committee. **By April 15:** finalize exam details with the MA advisor.

## Summer

- Register for 6 credits of ENG 491, Master's Reading Course, plus ENG 897 (this does not carry credits, but needs to be added for full time status in the summer).
- Essay: Work on your MA essay in consultation with your faculty advisor(s). **The submission deadline for the MA Essay is August 1.**
- Exam: Complete the MA exam by **August 1.**
- Arrange a deadline with your instructors to finish any Incompletes so that your final grade to the dean's office can be submitted no later than the end of the first week of August.

Those students unable to finish their degree by the first week of August may remain enrolled through the fall semester at no additional cost (on condition that they remain in residence in Rochester). Provided that these students submit their finished work by the first week of December, they may receive a December degree.

## B. Capstone Project

### 1. MA Exam

The MA exam is designed to reflect a broad training in literary study, and may be appropriate for those students wanting their capstone project to pick up more directly on the work they have done in their courses. *Either the exam or the essay can provide an excellent basis for continuing on to a PhD.* Students opting to take the exam will choose four fields to be examined in (e.g., Early Modern, Eighteenth Century, Nineteenth Century British or American, Twentieth Century British or American, Film and Media, etc.). See the Department website for complete lists.

The exam is written and evaluated by an exam committee, consisting of one faculty member per field. Students may assemble the committee themselves or ask the MA advisor to do so. It is recommended that students consult with each member of the committee at least once prior to the exam in order to get a sense of the kinds of questions he/she might put on the exam, and to talk through sample answers.

The exam consists of two parts, to be taken on two consecutive business days; each part covers two fields. Students will respond to one question from among a selection of two or three per field. For each question, the student is given 30 minutes to read and plan out an answer, plus 90 minutes for writing. (*Note: a presumed one-hour break is calculated into the exam timing, thus bringing each day's total to five hours—two 2-hour sessions with the break in between.*)

Students taking the exam should communicate with the Graduate Coordinator prior to the exam date in order to arrange all necessary logistics. Unless otherwise specified, the Graduate Coordinator will e-mail the exam to the student as an attachment, and will expect to receive the completed exam from the student in electronic form as well. Exams will typically run either from 10am to 3pm or from 11am to 4pm; again, this should be worked out with the Graduate Coordinator ahead of time.

\*\*\*NOTE that all MA Exams are closed-book.\*\*\*

## **2. MA Essay**

### **a. Scholarly**

The Scholarly MA Essay allows students the opportunity to explore one particular scholarly, critical, or aesthetic question in some depth (~50 pages). The topic for the essay may be inspired by work that a student did in a course, though it should not simply be an expansion of a seminar paper. The essay is expected to show the student's critical and analytical skills at their most developed, and should demonstrate a real mastery of a body of literature and criticism. Essays should include a bibliography or a list of works cited, and must demonstrate thorough and up-to-date knowledge of appropriate scholarship in the field.

Below is a sampling of recent MA Essay titles:

“The Confession of Theatre: Faithful Theatricality in *The Virgin Martyr*”

“Female Subjectivity, Identification, and Horror in Contemporary Psychological Thrillers”

“The Modernisms of Nella Larsen’s *Quicksand* and *Passing*”

“Oral/Aural: The Evolution of Storytelling in Podcasts”

“American Transcendentalism in the Age of Green Capitalism”

“Charlotte Dacre, Mary Shelley, and Women’s Education”

“A Trial of Affective Piety in the Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle”

### **b. Creative**

Students may opt to produce a Creative Writing portfolio as their MA Essay. The finished project may constitute a collection of poems, a one-act play, a novella, or the rough equivalent of these. Particulars should obviously be worked out in concert with the faculty advisor. Note that a student considering writing a Creative Essay would most likely have taken at least one creative writing workshop during their course-taking phase of the program, so as to develop a working relationship with a potential advisor.

## **D. Good Standing for MA Students**

MA students should maintain at least a 3.0 GPA, and should not be in receipt of more than one Incomplete at any one time. In addition, it is expected that all incomplete work be submitted within six weeks of the end of the semester in which it was originally due. Students not meeting these standards may no longer be considered to be in good standing. Exceptions to this rule may be made at the discretion of the DGS and the MA Advisor; however, in such cases a written agreement must be filed articulating the reasons for the exception and outlining a concrete plan for bringing the student back into accordance with program requirements.

## **II. PhD Program**

Due to its small size, the English PhD program at the University of Rochester offers students a rare combination of opportunities: on the one hand, students may avail themselves of a wide array of intellectual, scholarly, and cultural resources of the kind that define a major research institution such as ours; on the other hand, students receive more individualized attention from faculty and are able to pursue more highly personalized programs of study than they would in a larger program.

### **A. Overview of the Program and Timeline**

#### **Year One\***

- Fall Semester
  - Three 4-credit courses (12 credits)
  - ENG 500 Graduate Colloquium (1 credit)
- Spring Semester
  - Three 4-credit courses (12 credits)
  - Apply for next year's Departmental Teaching Apprenticeship (indicating preferences)
  - Either take, or prepare to take, the Language Exam (1 credit ENG 595\*\*)

*\*Students who arrive with an MA degree may petition the DGS to transfer up to 24 credit-hours toward their programs of study, thus essentially reducing the required period of coursework from two years to one. Talk with the DGS early on if you are interested in pursuing this path.*

*\*\*Students who are native speakers of a language other than English should talk with the DGS about an alternative one-credit option here.*

#### **Year Two**

- Fall Semester
  - Coursework (8 credits)

- Departmental Teaching Apprenticeship, ENG 580 Pedagogical Training (4 credits)
- PhD Research, working toward preparation for Qualifying Exam, ENG 595 (4 credits)
- Spring Semester
  - Coursework (8 credits)
  - Departmental Teaching Apprenticeship, ENG 580 Pedagogical Training (4 credits)
  - Complete Language Exam no later than the end of this academic year.
  - Begin preliminary preparation for Qualifying Exam, ENG 595 Research (4 credits).
  - For those intending to teach for the WSAP in the third year (strongly encouraged\*\*\*), now is the time to apply; deadlines (usually the very beginning of the spring semester) and details are set by the WSAP.  
(\*\*\*If, for some reason, you are already certain you will not be entering a profession that involves teaching of any kind, talk with the DGS about alternative options.)
- Summer
  - Pedagogy Training through WSAP
  - Note that your Scheduling Form for the Qualifying Exam (to which a preliminary draft of both reading lists must be appended) is due in September of the third year.

### Year Three

- Fall Semester
  - PhD Research for exam preparation, ENG 595 (11 credits)
  - Writing Pedagogy, ENG 571 (5 credits)
  - Teach one course through the WSAP
  - Ideally, students will take the Qualifying Exam this fall.
    - Note that the Dissertation Prospectus is due within three months of completing the exam.
- Spring Semester
  - PhD Research for exam preparation, if needed, ENG 595 (14 credits): *note that Qualifying Exams must be taken absolutely no later than the end of this academic year.* The Dissertation Prospectus is then due within three months from exam completion-date.
  - Practicum in Teaching Writing, ENG 572 (2 credits)
  - Teach one course through the WSAP

### Year Four

- Fall Semester
  - Dissertation Writing: Students generally register for ENG 997, receiving 0 credits but retaining their full-time status.
  - Teach one course through the WSAP.

- The Dissertation Prospectus **must be filed absolutely no later than** the end of the fall semester of the fourth year.
- Consider inviting your advisor to observe your teaching at some point this year, so that he/she may comment on it when recommending you for jobs.
- Spring Semester
  - Dissertation Writing: Students generally register for ENG 997, receiving 0 credits but retaining their full-time status.
  - Teach one course through the WSAP.
  - At the end of this year your two-year contract with the WSAP will expire. You will now need to decide whether to re-apply to the WSAP (and continue to receive the WSAP's supplemental stipend). Students opting not to do so will still need to engage in some alternative form of professional development in order to continue receiving their base-level stipends. In some cases these options could carry their own supplemental stipend; see the DGS for more information.
    - Possible options include:
      - Interning in Rare Books and Special Collections
      - Interning off-site (at a press, an archive, or a museum)
      - Teaching for the Susan B. Anthony Institute or adjuncting within the Department (e.g., for a faculty-member on leave)
      - Assisting a faculty-member with a research project or course
      - *(Note that such alternatives are also available to students in their third and fourth years, but would be recommended only to those who are absolutely certain that they will not be entering jobs that incorporate teaching of some kind. Talk with the DGS if you are considering any of these routes.)*
  - If appropriate, begin assembling job-application materials for next fall, in preparation for placement workshops. (See your advisor, the DGS, and/or this year's faculty placement officer for more details.)
  - Begin researching external funding sources: in order to apply (in Fall of Year 5) for a Dean's Dissertation Fellowship to cover Year 6, you will need to have applied for external funding first. See DGS for more information.

## Year Five

- Fall Semester
  - Apply for a Dean's Dissertation Fellowship for next year (NOTE: requires that you also apply for external funding: see DGS for information).
  - Dissertation Writing: Students generally register for ENG 999, receiving 0 credits but retaining their full-time status.
  - In addition, students may teach or engage in some other form of professionalization.
  - Students on the job market will participate in faculty-led placement workshops.
  - Apply to teach for the WSAP in your sixth year as a Dudley Doust Fellow; deadlines and details set by the WSAP. Note that the Doust is fairly competitive; fifth-years who anticipate needing a sixth year of funding, then, should also apply

for external fellowships and other support (see the Department website for more details; talk also with the DGS, your advisor, etc.).

- Spring Semester
  - Dissertation Writing: Students generally register for ENG 999, receiving 0 credits but retaining their full-time status.
  - In addition, students may teach or engage in some other form of professionalization.

## **Year Six**

- Fall Semester
  - Same as Year Five
- Spring Semester
  - Same as Year Five

## **B. Language Exam**

The English Department requires that all PhD students possess an advanced reading ability in the literature and scholarship of at least one foreign language, as assessed by the language exam.

The language exam must be completed prior to the scheduling of the Qualifying Exams. The Department thus recommends that it be taken some time in the first or second year of study.

Students who feel they are ready to begin studying for the exam must first consult with a member of the English Department who has been designated as an examiner for a particular language. (Please consult the website for this list.) If no one in the Department has been so designated for a particular language, candidates should consult with the DGS in order to identify an approved examiner outside the Department.

The next step is to select two texts on which to be examined: one of these texts should be a “primary” text (a work of poetry, fiction, drama, etc.) and the other should be a “secondary” text of some kind (critical, literary-historical, theoretical, etc.). Both texts must be selected in consultation with the examiner.

Once the texts have been set, the candidate and the examiner should agree upon fifty pages in each of the two texts from which the examiner will choose one-page excerpts for translation at the time of the exam. The student is responsible for providing the examiner with a copy of each fifty-page selection.

The exam consists of two parts: oral and written. In the oral portion, the student translates aloud (and without the assistance of a dictionary) a passage of approximately one page from one of the texts (either primary or secondary). In the written portion, the student produces a typed translation of approximately one page from the remaining text (for which a dictionary is permitted).



The oral section takes about 20 minutes, and the student is given two hours for the written section. The language exam form must be submitted to the Department after the exam has been completed.

### **C. Qualifying Exams**

Students typically take their qualifying exams during their third year of study. At the beginning of the third year, students must submit a Preliminary Scheduling Form. The form requires that *drafts* of the exam lists be appended, but it is understood that these lists may of course be subject to change. Please note that the Qualifying Exam cannot be scheduled unless the Language Exam has been passed.

The Qualifying Exams are intended to evaluate a student's mastery of a certain group of texts, but also, more importantly, his or her ability to discuss those texts within the kinds of larger critical frameworks that define our discipline. The exams assess a student's ability to read and think independently, to formulate relevant arguments based on literary evidence and in dialogue with recent scholarship, and eventually (therefore) to write a compelling dissertation.

Students must take exams in two fields—one historical field and one conceptual field.

The lists for both fields will be constructed by the candidate in close consultation with a committee consisting of at least three faculty members from the Department of English, and one faculty member from outside the Department. Historical fields generally include those traditionally recognized within the discipline. Sample Historical lists are available on the Department's website, but are meant to be customized to some degree according to a student's interests. Conceptual fields may center around form- or genre-related questions (e.g., tragicomedy, documentary, the lyric, etc.), literary-historical issues (e.g., the "rise" of the novel), or thematic concerns; they may focus on a particular school of critical theory or intellectual history. Regardless of focus, conceptual fields should be designed to cover ground well beyond the student's area of historical specialization.

The exam process itself comprises two parts: a written component and an oral component.

The written exam will take place over two consecutive business days, approximately one to two weeks prior to the oral exam. Students will be presented with a handful of questions in each of the two (conceptual and historical) fields. (The questions are usually formulated by the English-Department committee members only, though outside members may contribute if they like. It is the responsibility of the exam chair to collect and assemble the final line-up of questions.) The student will then respond to TWO questions for each field. Students are given four hours to complete each set of questions, with a presumed one-hour break in the middle (for a total of five hours). *Exams are closed book.*

Students should communicate with the Graduate Coordinator prior to the exam date in order to arrange all necessary logistics. Unless otherwise specified, the Graduate Coordinator will e-mail the exam to the student as an attachment, and will expect to receive the completed exam from the

student in electronic form as well. Exams will typically run either from 10am to 3pm or from 11am to 4pm; again, this should be worked out with the Graduate Coordinator ahead of time.

The Department does not, as a rule, provide students with practice exam questions beforehand. However, a properly prepared student should not be surprised by the type of questions posed: a sense of the sorts of questions that appear on these kinds of exams should become clear as the student consults with the committee members and discusses the readings with them.

The oral exam often begins by providing students with the opportunity to expand on their written responses. It then tends to move in additional directions—ideally, it takes the form of a lively dialogue rather than an interrogation—and often ends by inviting the student to talk about his/her ideas toward a possible dissertation. Students should be prepared to discuss any and all of the works on their lists and to explain their rationale for defining their fields in the way that they have. The oral portion of the exam typically lasts about two hours.

The Qualifying Exams may result in one of several outcomes:

- 1) The student passes both the historical and conceptual fields, and is deemed to be qualified to continue on to the prospectus and dissertation.
- 2) The student *fails the written portion of the exam* (whether in the historical or conceptual field or both), and, accordingly, the committee does not feel it is appropriate to hold the oral exam. In such cases the student will be invited to retake the written exam (with new questions) in hopes that a satisfactory result will enable the student to move on to the oral portion of the exam. The written exam may be retaken only once.
- 3) The student *fails one of his or her fields in the oral portion of the exam* (either historical or conceptual), and is asked to retake the other half. An appropriate timeline will be determined for this to take place in. This retake can occur only once.
- 4) The student *fails both fields in the oral portion of the exam*, and is invited to retake both. Again, the student is given only one opportunity to retake.

*Note that in scenarios #3 and #4 above, the student may opt to switch one or both of his/her fields prior to the retake, depending on the nature of the failure. This should be done only in consultation with the student's committee and in conversation with the DGS.*

5) The student *fails the exam and fails the retake*, and is thus deemed *not* to be qualified to continue on to the prospectus and dissertation. In this situation there are two possible paths forward.

- (a) Although the student has been judged unqualified to continue on to the PhD, the student's performance on the exam demonstrates a level of competency deemed by the committee to be generally equivalent to that required of a successful MA Exam. In this case the committee can opt to award the student a terminal MA degree.

- (b) The student's performance on the exam does not merit receipt of an MA degree, in which case the committee will discuss with the student what alternative steps he/she may pursue in order to earn an MA (whether by writing an MA Essay or completing some other, equivalent project).

#### **D. Choosing an Advisor**

The DGS serves as the default advisor to all PhD students still in their course-taking years. The dissertation advisor is then selected via an often somewhat organic process once the student reaches the exam preparation stages: as a student begins to put together the reading lists for his or her historical and conceptual fields, he/she will do this in fairly regular consultation with his/her committee. This process, in addition to the exam itself, usually gives (or confirms for) the student a sense of which faculty member(s) he/she can work best with. In the days and weeks following the exam, then, student may choose to follow up with one or more of the committee members to discuss dissertation directions; it is during this period that the student may ask one particular faculty member if he/she would be willing to direct the emergent dissertation.

Many dissertations will also have a second reader; the role of the second reader may vary from project to project and from student to student. The second reader may be involved in reading all of the chapter drafts as they are written; he/she may be available for consultation on one or two chapters only (as relevant); or he/she may simply offer broader-stroke comments once the dissertation is nearly finished.

There may come a time when a student feels that, for one reason or another, he/she would work better with a different advisor. In these cases the student should speak with the DGS about possible resolutions.

#### **E. The Dissertation Prospectus**

The dissertation prospectus should be submitted to the Department within three months of a student's passing his/her qualifying exams, and no later than December of the fourth year. The prospectus should be approximately 10-15 pages long, and should discuss in general terms what the central claims of the dissertation will be, as well as what the focus of each chapter will be. It should include a bibliography of ~30 works, as a starting point for research and writing. Note that the final dissertation may depart substantially from the prospectus' forecast, but the prospectus provides a general roadmap for student and advisor alike.

#### **F. The Dissertation**

After submitting the dissertation prospectus, students begin writing the dissertation itself; in general, a reasonable rate of progress might be considered to be one chapter-draft (approximately 40-50 pages) per semester, but this rate will of course depend on a number of factors; indeed, not

every student will write the dissertation as a series of discrete chapter drafts but may complete the work in segments that will eventually be grouped together as chapters. Dissertations differ in their organization and structure: one very typical structure is to devote each chapter to a different author; alternatively, the chapters could be centered around a particular genre or formal question; and so on. Chapters may be ordered chronologically or according to some other schema, but together, the chapters ought to trace an argumentative arc, so that the chapters build on one another, rather than providing isolated case studies of one static idea. Students should take the initiative to communicate directly and clearly with their dissertation directors about questions of progress and process.

### **G. The Dissertation Defense**

As the student reaches completion of his/her dissertation, he/she should assemble a dissertation defense committee. This committee consists of two faculty members from within English, a third faculty member from outside of English, and a fourth faculty member (also from outside of English) who serves as chair (and whose role is simply to ensure a fair and unbiased process in accordance with University guidelines: the chair may or may not engage substantively with the dissertation itself). The defense committee may or may not be comprised of the same people who served on the exam committee (though presumably at least one faculty member, the advisor, will end up having served on both). Defenses typically last two hours or a bit less; they provide the student with an opportunity to receive feedback on the finished dissertation and to discuss possible avenues for revision/expansion in the future.

### **H. Good Standing for PhD Students**

PhD Students must meet a number of requirements and deadlines in order to remain in good standing.

During their years in coursework, students must not be in receipt of more than one Incomplete at any one time, and all outstanding assignments should be submitted no later than six weeks after the end of the semester in which the assignment was originally due. (In cases in which a student needs longer than six weeks, a rationale should be noted on the student's Incomplete Contract.) Additionally, it is expected that students not receive more than one "B"-range grade within a single academic year.

Students should plan to have completed their Qualifying Exams by the spring of the third year, or, barring this, to have set a date for the Exams to take place at the beginning of the fourth year.

The dissertation prospectus (~2500-4000 words, plus bibliography) must be filed within three months of having passed the Qualifying Exams, and no later than December of the student's fourth year in the program.

Students writing their dissertations should then be able to demonstrate measurable progress on a semesterly basis, to be documented in detail on the self-evaluation portions of their Annual Assessment forms (see below).

Students not meeting these standards may no longer be considered in good standing. This could result in the forfeiture of a student's stipend and/or eligibility to teach within the University. Exceptions may be made to these expectations at the discretion of the DGS, the student's exam committee, and/or the student's dissertation director; however, in such cases a written agreement must be filed articulating the reasons for the exception and outlining a concrete plan for bringing the student back into accordance with program requirements.

## **I. Annual Assessment Process**

In accordance with College policy, the English Department conducts an annual assessment of each PhD student's progress through the program. The assessment process offers a regular opportunity for students, the faculty with whom they're working, and the DGS all to check in with one another and reaffirm goals/timelines. Note that this process is not meant to substitute for students' ongoing conversations, throughout the year, with their instructors, mentors, advisors, or other faculty. Note, too, that the specific results of the assessment will not be reviewed by the Graduate Dean: rather, the DGS simply indicates to the Dean each year that an assessment process has been completed for all students.

The annual assessment is intended, above all, to ensure that all students are receiving direction, feedback, advice, support, and other resources in an equitable and timely fashion. It also provides students with a chance to reflect back and look ahead.

The process runs as follows:

- 1) Each student fills out a self-evaluation reflecting on progress-to-date and goals.
- 2) The DGS reviews these evaluations and, in a dedicated faculty meeting at the end of the academic year, presents a summary of each to the assembled group. Faculty may then volunteer additional information that might be helpful to the DGS in assessing each student's work overall. Depending on any given student's year in the program, the volunteered information may relate to the student's coursework, Teaching Apprenticeship, performance on exams, work with the Blake Archive or Lazarus Project, research assistantship, and so on. For many students, of course, the primary feedback of relevance will be from the student's advisor, and need not be discussed at length with the entire faculty.
- 3) The DGS, having taken notes for his/her own use during the faculty evaluation-review meeting (these notes will remain confidential), will then meet with each student in the pre-dissertation years to convey any helpful feedback from the meeting. Students in their post-exam years should meet with their advisors directly to receive their feedback. In some cases the DGS may opt to convene a meeting with the student and his/her advisor together, if it seems like this would be useful.

4) Students in their post-coursework years may choose, while meeting with their advisors, to fill out an Academic Planning Worksheet for the coming year. This optional worksheet may help students and their advisors (or exam committees) to articulate specific tasks and deadlines for the months to come.

## **J. Conditions for Receiving the PhD Stipend**

PhD students are guaranteed a stipend for the first five years of the program, provided that certain conditions are met. The student (1) must remain in good standing; (2) must remain in residence; (3) and must be engaged in providing some form of professionalizing service to the University community after they have completed their coursework.

Most students meet this third condition (“professionalizing service”) by teaching for the Writing, Speaking, and Argument Program; those who do not teach for the WSAP must arrange to contribute to the University in some other way, whether through working in Rare Books and Special Collections, holding an internship at the Memorial Art Gallery, assisting in the William Blake Archive, becoming involved at Open Letter Press, or etc. It is expected that the student spend fifteen hours per week on these activities.

## **III. Course-Taking**

Students should consider a variety of elements in selecting their courses each semester, including the course topic, the course number, and the faculty member teaching the course. Thus, even in cases in which a course’s particular intellectual focus may not fit exactly with a student’s interests, other factors—such as whether the course is an all-graduate seminar, or whether it is being taught by a professor the student may wish to work with in the future—may ultimately weigh in the course’s favor.

The Department’s graduate-level courses are designated by two different sets of numbers.

**400-level courses** enable the Department to offer additional curricular variety to our graduate students. While the **500 number** indicates a traditional graduate seminar (open exclusively to graduate students, and convening for three hours once per week), the **400 number** indicates an upper-level course that may enroll both advanced undergraduates and any interested graduate students (with the balance usually, but not always, tipping toward the former). Graduate students enrolled in a 400 are expected to complete supplementary readings; to write a longer, graduate-level paper; and, accordingly, to meet with the instructor for some amount of time outside of the usual class sessions.

**The 500s** offer several distinct advantages: a group of fellow graduate-student discussants, an intense seminar-style format, a strategic mix of primary and secondary readings, and an explicit focus on methodology. *It is in the 500s that students are practicing the kinds of thinking, analysis, and discourse that define graduate-level work in the humanities.* The 400s offer a

different set of benefits: because they tend to differ in scope from 500s—focusing on topics as specific as, say, Jane Austen; Arthurian Traditions; Studies in Literary Translation; or African-American Drama—these courses allow students to customize more fully their program of study.

PhD students must petition the DGS in order to take more than one 400-level course per semester. MA students may take two 400-level courses in one semester, but should, like the PhD students, aim to be taking two thirds of their coursework overall at the 500-level. Any MA student seeking to take more than two 400-levels total must petition the MA Advisor in order to do so.

Both MA and PhD students may take courses outside the Department (whether in History, Art History, Philosophy, and so on), but should limit these to one per semester. (A handful of such courses will be cross-listed with English each term, and these do not count toward the one-course-per-semester maximum.) Note that students should communicate clearly with instructors outside the Department prior to enrolling in any course that is not specifically a graduate seminar; in non-English-Department courses that are open to advanced undergraduates, it is the responsibility of the student to work with the instructor to adjust assignments appropriately.

Both MA and PhD students are welcome to set up Independent Study courses with willing faculty. Again, these should be limited to one per semester.

#### **IV. Graduate Certificates**

Both MA and PhD students may choose to pursue Graduate Certificates in the following areas:

- a) Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies (through the Susan B. Anthony Institute)
- b) African and African-American Studies (through the Frederick Douglass Institute)
- c) Literary Translation Studies

Please see the SBAI, FDI, and LTS websites for more information. All three require a combination of course-taking and a final portfolio of assembled work.

#### **V. The Role of the DGS and MA Advisor**

The DGS, sometimes in consultation with the faculty-comprised Graduate Studies Committee, oversees the Department's graduate programs. He or she serves as an advisor to all incoming PhD students up until they take their qualifying exams. In addition, the DGS is available to mediate any miscommunications between students and their instructors, exam committees, or dissertation advisors. Moreover, even after a student has selected a dissertation advisor, the DGS continues to help students navigate the broader worlds of the Department, graduate school, and profession (assisting in applying for fellowships, coordinating workshops on publication and other topics, and generally offering advice as needed). Students unsure about aspects of studying for the qualifying exam, writing a dissertation prospectus, preparing for the job market, or other

matters should always feel free to consult with the DGS. Likewise, any questions regarding the guidelines outlined in this handbook should be referred to the DGS.

The MA Advisor helps the DGS to oversee the MA program, and serves as the primary advisor to all MA students prior to their beginning work on the capstone. He/she assists students in choosing courses, choosing a capstone, and (in the case of the MA Essay) finding a capstone advisor. The MA Advisor is also the person to whom an MA student may turn with questions regarding Department or University policies, deadlines, and other matters. MA students should always feel free to consult with the DGS as well.

Please note that students are always welcome to consult with *any* member of the faculty, not just the DGS or MA Advisor, to discuss academic, intellectual, and professional questions of any kind.

## **VI. Professionalization**

The Department provides numerous opportunities, both formal and informal, for students to acquire the skills necessary for presenting themselves and their work to potential colleagues, employers, and the public, and for thereby contributing to wider critical discussions surrounding literature and media. A primary way for students to gain these tools is to attend regularly the talks, symposia, works-in-progress seminars, and other events taking place at the University. These events serve as models of academic discourse and culture, and help prepare students to position their own work within a larger intellectual context.

The Department also holds workshops each year on topics such as academic publishing, applying for fellowships, conference-going, and alt-ac careers. In addition, the MA Advisor will hold sessions specifically tailored to the MA students regarding applications to PhD programs and related questions.

The Greene Career Center is an excellent resource for students seeking employment both within and outside of academia, and provides both a series of scheduled events and drop-in hours during which students may meet with advisors.

Each September and October, the Department holds weekly job-market workshops for those students actively applying for academic positions: these workshops offer intensive feedback on each of the key documents that will constitute a job applicant's dossier.

Students can take a number of concrete steps, as they make their way through the program, to help themselves prepare for the job market:

*Letters of Recommendation*: Fellowships and academic jobs will often require 3-4 letters, including at least one that can speak to the applicant's teaching abilities. Accordingly, students should stay in close touch with former seminar instructors, exam-committee members, and other faculty in addition to their dissertation directors. Let faculty know early on if you are considering asking them for a letter at some point in the future, and ask what materials it would be helpful for them to see. Also in the spirit of planning ahead, it would be prudent to ask for a letter of recommendation from one's teaching-apprenticeship mentors at the end of the apprenticeship



semesters, and likewise to invite one's dissertation director to observe a class-session or two during the WSAP teaching years.

*Conferences and Publication:* Once the dissertation is underway (and occasionally earlier than this), a student may consider applying to conferences, and seeking to publish work in journals. A publication in a top journal in one's field is perhaps the most significant item that one could add to one's CV in graduate school. Students should consult with their dissertation directors and/or the DGS about where/what/when to submit. Conference-going can be a good way to make connections with others working in one's area of focus, and to learn about recent developments in one's subspecialty. Sometimes, presenting at a conference can provide a student with useful feedback. However, conferences should be chosen judiciously and attended sparingly lest they become a distraction from a graduate student's true work of writing and publishing. A job candidate with six conference papers on his or her CV is no more competitive (all other things being equal) than a job candidate with one conference paper.

*Job-Application Materials:* Academic positions tend to be advertised in the fall. Students considering applying for jobs should therefore begin preparing their materials during the previous spring. These will include a cover letter (ask the DGS and/or Placement Advisor for specific guidelines), a CV, a writing sample (usually about 20 pages), often a dissertation abstract, and sometimes a teaching statement or teaching portfolio (including sample syllabi or other documents). The Job Placement Advisor (usually a faculty member who has recent experience of the job market) will convene a meeting in the spring for all students entering the job market in the fall, and may circulate sample materials at this time. Intensive workshops on all aspects of the application process are held weekly (and overseen by the Placement Advisor) starting in September each year.

## **VII. Conflict Resolution**

Students should feel free to come directly to their instructors, committee members, advisors, dissertation directors, DGS, MA Advisor, or Department Chair with any concerns or problems at any time. The University also provides resources for conflict resolution, in those cases where a student feels that an outside mediator would be more appropriate or effective. These include Graduate School Ombudspersons and University Ombudspersons.

[www.rochester.edu/college/gradstudies/current/ombuds.html](http://www.rochester.edu/college/gradstudies/current/ombuds.html)

[www.rochester.edu/intercessor/index.html](http://www.rochester.edu/intercessor/index.html)

## **VIII. University Resources:**

See the links below for policies regarding academic and nonacademic misconduct, family leave, academic probation, and related topics:

[www.rochester.edu/GradBulletin/](http://www.rochester.edu/GradBulletin/)

[www.rochester.edu/college/gradstudies/policies](http://www.rochester.edu/college/gradstudies/policies)

Disabilities

[www.rochester.edu/ada/](http://www.rochester.edu/ada/)

Equal Opportunity Policy

[www.rochester.edu/eoc](http://www.rochester.edu/eoc)

Nondiscrimination Policy

[www.rochester.edu/diversity/reports/policies-2/nondiscrimination-policy-statement/ct](http://www.rochester.edu/diversity/reports/policies-2/nondiscrimination-policy-statement/ct)

Harassment

[www.rochester.edu/working/hr/policies/pdfpolicies/106.pdf](http://www.rochester.edu/working/hr/policies/pdfpolicies/106.pdf)

Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning

[www.rochester.edu/college/cetl/](http://www.rochester.edu/college/cetl/)

Gwen M. Greene Career Center

[www.rochester.edu/careercenter/graduates/index.html](http://www.rochester.edu/careercenter/graduates/index.html)

Writing, Speaking, and Argument Program

[www.rochester.edu/college/wsap/](http://www.rochester.edu/college/wsap/)

CARE Network (for “students in, or heading toward, distress”)

[www.rochester.edu/care/](http://www.rochester.edu/care/)

University Health Services (includes counseling services)

[www.rochester.edu/uhs/](http://www.rochester.edu/uhs/)

Taxes

<http://www.rochester.edu/gsa/administrative-services/graduate-student-tax-information/>

International Services Office

<https://www.iso.rochester.edu/>

