

Designing the Strongest English Major

As you pick your courses within the guidelines of the English major, you are designing your study of literature; although the major is set up to encourage you to develop breadth of knowledge and skills, your personal choices are crucial in building a strong major and pursuing your study of literature as fully as possible.

If you are actively planning or even just considering teaching at the secondary level as a possible career choice, you need to design your English major with particular care to develop your literary range and your awareness of the traditional canon, current challenges to those structures, and those areas of study most important to high school curricula.

Our requirements beyond the English seminar (EN172) include 200-level courses (surveys of literature and theory), 300-level courses (genre and period courses) and 400-level courses (single authors or special topics). **Unlike other majors, 200, 300 and 400 level course designations in the English major indicate the KIND of study, not the level of difficulty in the course.** We expect students at all levels in these courses, although those who have taken EN172 and developed their strategies for literary analysis and their critical writing skills will have an advantage.

Only the senior seminars (EN493) require advanced standing in the major; the senior seminar is an intense, small class with increased student responsibility and involvement where the students and professor engage in research, presentation and advanced study of a special topic.

1) At the 200-level, take the surveys to establish your sense of literary history: EN255-256 (Survey of American Literature) and/or EN265-266 (The Western Tradition). The American literature survey will give you valuable context for the American literature. **An added benefit to the surveys is the preparation they offer for the GRE subject tests. High school teachers often return to graduate school for their Masters, and all applicants to graduate programs in English or American literature MUST take GRE subject tests.**

2) Choose courses at the 300-level, genres and periods carefully. When you pick your courses, work to MAXIMIZE your historical range. Whether you plan on going into teaching or attending graduate school in English, law, etc., you will benefit if you have experienced several different teaching styles. You will also be better prepared if you take courses in an array of genres and periods:

Medieval	Poetry
Renaissance (including Shakespeare)	Long Fiction
Seventeenth Century	Short Fiction
Eighteenth Century	Drama
Romanticism	Writing (poetry, fiction, nonfiction)
Victorian	
Modern	
Post-Colonial Literature	
Early American literature	
19th century American literature	
20 th century American and British literature	

3) Sign up for at least ONE, preferably two, intensive courses in poetic literature. Consult your advisor or the department co-chairs about which courses would work best. As noted above, courses at the 300-level are genre and period courses, so that is where many of our poetry offerings appear. Creative Writing in poetry will also provide useful tools for future potential teachers.

4) Balance American and British literature in your courses. Given the prominence of American literature in most high school curricula, future teachers will benefit from courses in American literature. Courses in short fiction and poetry also will be especially useful.