



MERCY COLLEGE MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

School of Liberal Arts, Department of Literature & Language



Graduate Student Handbook

Program Information for Current and Prospective Students

Mercy College Master of Arts in English Literature Program
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About the Program

The Master of Arts in English Literature program at Mercy College offers a rigorous and accessible learning opportunity for students aspiring to a variety of academic, professional, and personal goals. The program is offered entirely online making the MA degree available to anyone with a computer and an internet connection, anywhere in the world. The Mercy MA program is one of the first literary programs offered entirely online by a fully accredited college, and continues to be a pioneer in online literary studies. When the program's student population in the New York City metropolitan area reaches an adequate threshold, course sections mirroring online offerings run in traditional campus classrooms as well. The program, however, is designed to serve the needs of online students around the region, country, and globe through the virtual Blackboard environment. The full spectrum of our curriculum will always be offered online.

Students in the program learn theory and advanced methodologies of literary criticism, while engaging with British, American, and some World literature. Attention is paid both to traditional authors, genres, and eras, as well as to literature of diverse cultural and historic traditions.



Students in the Program

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

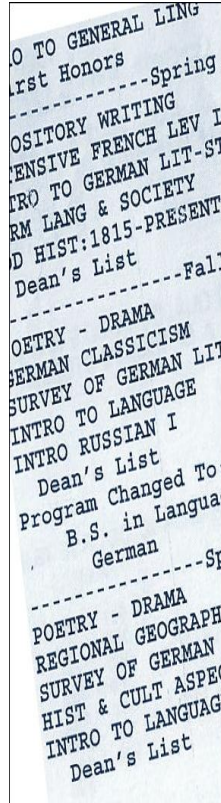
All such students who meet our application criteria are welcome here. Anyone interested in studying literature at an advanced level, in courses taught by PhDs who are published experts in their fields, is welcome here.

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

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

Admissions Requirements

Students applying to the program should meet one of the following three criteria:



- Applicant should possess a BA or BS in English or another humanities discipline with an average GPA of 3.00 or better in the major field. It is preferred that students with non-English humanities degrees have 15 credits of literature or relevant writing coursework on their transcript. **OR**
- Applicant should possess a BA or BS with a minor in English or another humanities discipline with an average GPA of 3.00 in the courses meeting the minor. **OR**
- If the applicant does not meet either of the first two conditions—for example if the applicant has a degree in Psychology, or Sociology—the applicant will still be considered for admission provided that the student’s supporting application materials demonstrate the potential to succeed in a graduate literature program. Such applicants should make good use of the required personal essay to express their impetus for applying to graduate study, and should consider submitting a second writing sample (see “Application Procedures” on page 4). We encourage such applicants, as we believe that a diversity of backgrounds and preparations adds to the learning experience of all students.

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

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

Application Procedures

Students applying to the program must first complete the standard Mercy College graduate application. The [online application](#) should be completed and submitted online at Mercy.edu. Admissions advisors in our Student Services Support Center (SSSC) will reach out to students to secure any required application materials not attached to the online application (the application allows you to upload up to three

 **Admissions Dept.:**
1-877-637-2946

documents to it before submitting it). Students can contact the SSSC or the Program Director at any time for help with this process.

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

- Two letters of recommendation. These should be from professors or, in situations where the applicant has been out of school for some time, from supervisors or professional peers who can speak to the qualifications of the applicant.
- A writing sample. This can take the form of a personal essay speaking to the applicant's reasons for pursuing graduate literary study. Or this can be an essay or research paper written for an earlier college course. Applicants who fall into the third criteria grouping under "Admissions Requirements" on page 3 should consider submitting both the personal essay and the academic essay.
- Transcripts. Because official transcripts can take a long time to process by your undergraduate degree-granting institution, unofficial transcripts can be submitted with the application in order to expedite its review. Official transcripts are required, though, and should be ordered when submitting the application.

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

Transfer Credits:

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

The Structure of the Program

Requirements for the Degree

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

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

Full Time / Part Time:

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

Maintenance of Matriculation:

If a student wishes to take a semester off from coursework during a fall or spring semester, the student may do so twice during the course of earning the degree. To do this the student must enroll in ENGL 899 *Maintenance of Matriculation* (for a \$100 fee) to remain active in the program and so eligible for the degree upon returning to the program. Students who do not enroll in courses during a semester and who do not enroll in ENGL 899 during that semester will be required to pay the \$100 maintenance of matriculation fee for each missed semester before enrolling in future courses. Students who do not maintain matriculation may also be deactivated by the Registrar in the college's system. Activated U.S. Military Reservists are not required to pay the maintenance of matriculation fee. Students do not need to enroll in ENGL 899 or do anything else to maintain matriculation over the summer.

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

Maintenance of Good Academic Standing:

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

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

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

Academic Probation:

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

Final Requirements for the Degree

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

The Comprehensive Examination:

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

Upon completion of the exam the student emails the essay responses back to the Program Director, who evaluates and determines whether or not the exam passes or fails. Students must successfully complete the exam before beginning their final semester. A student who does not pass on the first attempt will be given feedback and a second attempt; a student who does not pass on the second attempt will be dismissed from the program.

The Master's Thesis:

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

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

2. Once a mentor is established, the student must put together a formal thesis topic proposal using the guidelines listed below in "Guidelines for the Thesis Proposal" section. A mentor may have additional requirements for the proposal, which must be respected by the student. Once the student has submitted the formal proposal the mentor will assess the suitability and viability of it; revisions to the proposal may be required. When the mentor determines that the proposal is ready, he or she will send the proposal to the Program Director, who will then enroll the student in ENGL 599 *Master's Thesis* with the mentor as tutorial professor.
3. Throughout the tutorial course, the mentor will guide the student's research and writing, and oversee the student's progress. By the end of the course the student must produce a polished thesis paper that meets the approval of the mentor and a second reader, as described below.
4. When the mentor determines that the final draft is ready, the mentor sends the draft to a second reader. The second reader is selected by the mentor, though the student may request that the mentor seek out a specific faculty member to be the second reader. The second reader may (A) approve the draft *without revision*; may (B) approve the draft with *suggested revisions* for the mentor to enforce as he or she deems appropriate; or, (C) may *require revisions* which the student must then address. In the last instance the second reader may require to re-read the revised draft, or may waive this right. Ultimately the thesis must receive the approval of the mentor and the second reader in order for the student to pass ENGL 599. In extreme cases where the mentor and second reader cannot agree on an outcome, the Program Director will intervene as a third reader and deliver a decision on the thesis.

Guidelines for the Thesis Proposal:

The formal thesis proposal must include:

1. A brief description of the project (250-500 words). Be sure to clearly state the thesis topic, the majors texts you will engage, and the critical approaches to these texts you intend to employ.
2. A timeline for the completion of the project. Your mentor may adjust these dates, but you should propose your best estimates for the following:
 - a. The date you expect to complete preliminary research
 - b. The date you expect to complete your rough draft
 - c. The date you expect to complete your final draft
3. A preliminary bibliography. Whether or not this is to be an annotated bibliography will be determined by your mentor.

Degree Conferral Procedures:

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

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

Student Learning Goals (SLGs):

The program seeks to develop in all students a knowledge and comprehension of important British and American literature, as well as of any other literature that our students choose to explore during their time in the program (e.g., students can elect to study courses that include Latin American literature, African literature, and other literature). The program as well seeks to develop each student's knowledge and comprehension of relevant theory. And the program works to increase each student's understanding of the literary traditions, cultural situations, and historical eras from which such literature and theory emerged. Ultimately, the program seeks to develop in its students a professional level of critical thinking, researching, and writing skills.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

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

1. Demonstrate critical thinking and interpretive skills reflecting knowledge and comprehension of important British literary texts.
2. Demonstrate critical thinking and interpretive skills reflecting knowledge and comprehension of important American literary texts.

3. Demonstrate critical thinking and interpretive skills reflecting an awareness of theoretical trends and criticism.
4. Demonstrate knowledge of some of the literary traditions, and/or cultural situations, and/or historical eras from which the literature referenced in SLO1, SLO2, and SLO3 emerged.
5. Create original research topics, research primary and secondary sources on those topics using digital databases, and produce writings on those topics which demonstrate clear grammatical prose and accurate style.

Methods by which the SLOs will be assessed:

1. Aspects of all outcomes will be assessed in each course (as relevant, and save for ENGL 517 *Advanced Creative Writing* which only emphasizes creative writing) through the creation of one or more research papers which task the students to display written analysis evidencing: comprehension of the literature or theory under consideration [SLO1-3]; some of the traditions, and/or cultural situations, and/or historical eras from which such literature emerged [SLO4]; and proper and appropriate research, documentation, grammar, and style [SLO5].
2. By evaluations of the quality and comprehensiveness of each student's contributions in the semester's classroom discussions (whether online or in a physical room) [SLO1-4].
3. By other evaluations which professors might employ at their discretion; e.g. final exams, quizzes, and other forms of testing [SLO1-5].
4. Through a comprehensive examination which all students must take between their penultimate and ultimate semesters in the program [SLO1-4].
5. By way of a final thesis paper written under the guidance of a faculty mentor during the final course in the program (ENGL 599 *Master's Thesis Tutorial*). The thesis paper is ultimately assessed, to varying degrees,* against the five Student Learning Outcomes by both the mentor and a second reader, either of whom can send the draft back for further development and revision should it not sufficiently demonstrate proficiency in the relevant SLOs.

*Note that the degree to which the paper must demonstrate any of SLO1-4 will vary depending on the focus of each student's self-designed thesis topic. So for example a thesis topic that involves only American literature will be measured heavily against SLO2, and not against SLO1.

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Curriculum Offerings

The program typically runs between five and six courses each fall/spring semester and two courses each summer. The required ENGL 500 theory course runs once a year during the fall. Fall and Spring semester schedules always include at least one course that meets each of the Writing and Literary Forms, Literature Group 1, and Literature Group 2 degree requirements. Below are *some* of the courses we run and that cycle into the schedule at different periodicities over time (no particular course is guaranteed to enter the schedule during any particular student's stint in the program, other than 500 and 599). We regularly introduce new and experimental courses into our schedule as well.

ENGL 500 Theory And Practice Of Literary Criticism^(CC)

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

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

ENGL 505 Transformations of The Epic

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

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

ENGL 506 History of Poetic Forms

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

ENGL 507 Narrative Strategies in the Novel:

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

ENGL 508 History of Drama in English

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

ENGL 509 Perspectives on The Essay

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

ENGL 510 Theory and Practice of Expository Writing

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

writing, but focus their work in their individual fields of interest. These interests may include feminist approaches, deconstructive approaches, research in culture, education, etc. The course will specifically address techniques of analytic organization, and will consider the pedagogy and andragogy of writing. 3 credits.

ENGL 514 Major Authors

ENGL 514 is not itself a specific course but is rather a course code under which runs a variety of new curriculum focusing on various major authors of British, American, and World literature. And so students will not see ENGL 514 *Major Authors* listed in a semester schedule but might instead see ENGL 514 *Ernest Hemingway*, or ENGL 514 *Toni Morrison*, or ENGL 514 *James and Lawrence*, etc. Typically this course will seek to provide a sense of the central themes, stylistic techniques, and temperament and sensibility that distinguish the author or authors, as well as of the evolution of his or her art from a biographical perspective. Authors studied will vary and will be selected by consultation between individual instructors and the Program Director. ENGL 514 courses by default fulfill one of the four open electives, but can fulfill literature category requirements as appropriate, and with the permission of the Program Director. 3 credits.

ENGL 515 Special Topics in Literature

ENGL 515 is not itself a specific course but is rather a course code under which runs a variety of new curriculum focusing on various literary topics. Recent ENGL 515 course have included *The Graphic Novel*, *Mythologies*, *African and Caribbean Lit.*, *Sport Literature*, *Modern Irish Drama*, *Alchemy and Literature*, *Animals in Myth and Literature*, and *Working Women in the U.S.: 1865 – Present*. ENGL 515 courses by default fulfill one of the four open electives, but can fulfill literature category requirements as appropriate, and with the permission of the Program Director. 3 credits.

ENGL 517 Advanced Creative Writing

This course is intended for writers with some background or preparation, whether personal or formal, in creative writing. The course continues to develop each student’s creative writing ability through a close study of various writing styles and

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

techniques, matched with assignments and workshops which encourage the students to further develop their own creative writing informed by such literary study. The emphasis of the course will shift depending on the expertise of the professor running it, and could involve poetry, narrative, or other forms. 3 credits.

ENGL 521 Themes and Genres of Medieval Literature

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

ENGL 522 Humanism in Renaissance Texts

This course will focus on humanism and the concepts arising from it in relation to the production and appreciation of literature during the Renaissance. The revival of interest in the arts and ideas of Greco-Roman antiquity and the dependence of Renaissance thought on classical themes will be among the issues discussed. 3 credits.

ENGL 523 Tragedy

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

ENGL 524 Reason and Imagination

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

ENGL 525 The Victorian Age in Literature

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

ENGL 526 Modernism

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

ENGL 540 Topics in British Literature

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

ENGL 541 Search for Identity in American Literature

The course will examine manifestations of personal identity and human community in American culture and literature. In broadest terms, the course will trace the formation of nineteenth-century liberal ideals of personal identity and “freedom” as they emerged from the theological and republican values of the colonial and early national periods. 3 credits.

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

ENGL 542 Classics of African American Literature

Toni Morrison states in an interview with Paul Gilroy [*Small Acts*, 1993] that “My parallel is always the music because all of the strategies of the art are there.” It is no accident that her reference to music is echoed by other African American artists, for the music is the trope that best illuminates contemporary African American writing. Richard Powell in *The Blues Aesthetic: Black Culture and Modernism* specifies the blues as providing “much contemporary literature, theater, dance, and visual arts with the necessary element for defining these various art forms as intrinsically African-American.” It is from this perspective that this course analyzes authors and texts. Readings might include, but are not limited to, Jean Toomer *Cane*, Zora Neale Hurston *Spunk*, James Baldwin *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, Ralph Ellison *Invisible Man*, Langston Hughes *Ask Your Mama: 12 Moods for Jazz*, John Wideman *My Brother’s Keeper*, Toni Morrison *Jazz*, August Wilson *Joe Turner’s Come and Gone*, and Maya Angelou *Selected Poetry*. 3 credits.

ENGL 543 The American Renaissance

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

ENGL 544 Frontiers of American Literature

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

ENGL 545 Literature of the Left Bank, Paris

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

ENGL 560 Topics in American Literature

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

ENGL 599 Master's Thesis

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

ENGL 899 Maintenance of Matriculation

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

Useful Links for MA English Students

[The Mercy MA Program blog \(check here often\)](#)

[Upenn's call for conference papers](#)

[Mercy College's online library resources](#)

[Mercy College's MA in English Literature main webpage](#)

[Mercy College's online learning orientation](#)

[The Modern Language Association](#)

[An MLA style guide from Purdue's Online Writing Lab](#)

Advising Sheet

Which courses should you take to earn your MA degree? From the list below, locate which option best describes your primary reason for being in the program. Follow your selection to the appropriate track on the next page to see any recommended coursework.

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

FOLLOW TRACK 1

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

FOLLOW TRACK 1

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

TRACK 1:

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

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

TRACK 2:

Track 2 is recommended for students who want to ensure a solid foundation of knowledge across many of the standard literary eras and genres. This can include those who feel underprepared by previous literary study, or who simply for any reason want to ensure a foundation in multiple genres and eras. This track is also recommended for students who aspire to apply to PhD literature programs. These students should consider selecting from ENGL 505 – 509 for the Writing and Literary Forms requirement. This track is also recommended for those who aspire to teach community college or adjunct at senior colleges. Those students should take *Theory and Practice of Expository Writing*.

- 1. ENGL 500 (required course)**
- 2. Writing & Literary Forms: 505 – 509 or *Theory/Practice of Expository Writing***
- 3. Literature Group 1: 521, 522 or 523**
- 4. Literature Group 2: 541, 542, 543 or 544**
- 5. Literature Group 1 or 2: 524, 525, 526, or 545**
- 6. Elective: Another from 505 – 509**
- 7. Elective: Another from 521 – 540**
- 8. Elective: Another from 541 – 560**
- 9. Elective: Another from 505 – 509 or 521 – 560**
- 10. ENGL 599 *Master's Thesis* (required course)**

Program Faculty

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

Sean Dugan, EdD

SDugan@mercy.edu

Areas of expertise: linguistics; language and writing; Irish and European lit

David Fritz, PhD

dfritz@mercy.edu

Areas of expertise: early American literature, medieval and Renaissance lit

Miriam Gogol, PhD

mgogol@mercy.edu

Areas of expertise: American Realism, Dreiser, gender studies, working-women's lit

Dana Horton, PhD

dhorton1@mercy.edu

Areas of expertise: African-American lit, black women writers, multi-ethnic lit, postcolonial studies, neo-slave narratives

Kristen Keckler, PhD

Chair, Department of Literature & Language

kkeckler1@mercy.edu

Areas of expertise: creative writing (fiction, poetry, creative nonfiction), American lit, literary journalism

David Kilpatrick, PhD

dkilpatrick@mercy.edu

Areas of expertise: modernism, history of drama, theory of criticism, comparative lit, sports studies

Christopher Loots, PhD

Program Director, MA in English Literature

cloots@mercy.edu

Areas of expertise: nineteenth- and twentieth-century American lit, modernism, literature of science, science fiction, Hemingway, Joyce

Richard Medoff, PhD

rmedoff@mercy.edu

Areas of expertise: contemporary American and European theatre, Spanish and Catalan theatre, history of drama

Donald Morales, PhD

dmorales6@mercy.edu

Areas of expertise: African lit, African-American lit, Caribbean lit, Toni Morrison

Laura Proszak, PhD

lproszak@mercy.edu

Areas of expertise: rhetorical education, cultural and ethnic rhetorics, writing and composition, historiography, archival studies

Celia Reissig-Vasile, PhD

cvasile@mercy.edu

Areas of expertise: Latino/Hispanic literature, Cervantes, creative writing

Boria Sax, PhD

bsax@mercy.edu

Areas of expertise: animals in literature, lyric poetry, mythology, esoteric literature, Continental literature, creative writing

Jessica Ward, PhD

jward16@mercy.edu

Areas of expertise: medieval studies, early modern drama, gender studies, moral philosophy, digital humanities

A Few Student Testimonials:

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

- Cheryl Kennedy, M.A. in English 2017

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

- Jamie Wright, MA in English, 2020

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

- Angie Still, MA in English. 2014

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

- Bernard Sell, MA in English. 2015

"This is an amazing online program."

- Jevon Bolden, MA in English 2018

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

- David Mannino, MA in English, 2017

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

- Raissa Fitzgerald, MA in English, 2015

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

- Sarah Nanan, MA in English 2015

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

- Jennifer Fiore, MA in English 2018

"I appreciate all of your help and consider the two years I spent with Mercy College easily the best experience I've had with a college."

- Christina Covey, MA in English, 2017