



Graduate Handbook

(Literature Option)

**English Department
Western Connecticut State University**

Fall 2011-Spring 2013

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I. M. A. IN ENGLISH OVERVIEW (Literature Option)

Program Mission, Goals, and Objectives

The MA in English offers courses of study that students can apply toward advanced degrees or toward careers as writers or as teachers at the primary and secondary levels. All students graduating with the MA in English are expected to have developed advanced knowledge of authors, literary genres, and literary periods, and advanced ability to analyze texts, contexts, and important literary issues using current critical approaches. Research, critical thinking, and writing skills are integral components of all course work.

Admission Requirements

Applicants for the MA in English must hold a baccalaureate degree from an accredited institution of higher education. In general, students who have completed a substantial number of credits in English at the undergraduate level will receive preference for admission to the program. However, the MA program welcomes applicants from diverse educational backgrounds. Applicants with other undergraduate concentrations or majors will be considered. In all cases, a record of strong undergraduate academic achievement will merit preference over any other criterion for admission.

Prospective students for the Literature Option must include the following in their application:

1. a 500-word statement of purpose explaining why they want to pursue graduate studies in English
2. a writing sample, i.e., a substantial research essay on a literary topic (approximately 10 pages, typed, double spaced, printed on 8 1/2" by 11" white bond)

All applicants must have an entrance interview with the appropriate graduate coordinator. After the entrance interview, the graduate coordinator recommends whether or not to accept the applicant, or whether to accept the applicant conditionally (i.e., students may be asked to make up academic deficiencies), and forwards this recommendation to the graduate office.

Degree Requirements

Students have two paths to fulfill the degree requirements: Thesis or Comprehensive Examination.

Students electing to take the comprehensive examination to complete their graduate studies in English will be tested on a reading list prepared by the English department. The three-hour comprehensive is a closed-book exam administered in November and April of each year. Students should indicate in writing to the graduate coordinator of the English Department their intention to take the comprehensive at least one full month in advance of either the November

or April examination. The graduate coordinator will announce the specific time and place for each examination. (See “Comprehensive Examination Guidelines” below).

Students electing to write a thesis must register for ENG 592, Independent Thesis Research in English. A student electing to write a thesis must do so under the guidance of an English Department faculty member who agrees to direct the student's work. The English department's Graduate Committee must approve all thesis proposals and final drafts. Students choosing the thesis path should therefore consult with the graduate coordinator as well as the thesis director and follow the department's “Thesis Guidelines” closely (see below).

Path A: Thesis

Students electing to write a thesis should register for ENG 592, Independent Thesis Research in English. A student electing to write a thesis must do so under the guidance of an English Department faculty member who agrees to direct the student's work. The deadline for submitting the thesis proposal for approval is the first week of November (to register for ENG 592 in spring) and the first week of April (to register for ENG 592 for fall) each year. The English Department's Graduate Committee must approve all theses. Students choosing to write a thesis should therefore consult with the Graduate Coordinator as well as the thesis director. (see “Thesis Guidelines” below)

Path B: Comprehensive Exam

The comprehensive examination approach is highly recommended for those who are not planning on applying for Ph.D. in English or other doctoral programs.

Students electing to take the comprehensive examination to complete their graduate studies in English will be tested on a reading list prepared by the English Department. The three-hour comprehensive is a closed-book exam administered in the first week of November and the first week of April of each year. Students should indicate in writing to the Graduate Coordinator of the English Department their intention to take the comprehensive at least one full month in advance of either the November or April examination. The Graduate Coordinator will announce the specific time and place for each examination. (Note: A student with an "Incomplete" grade in any graduate course at Western Connecticut State University is ineligible to take the comprehensive examination until such time as the course has been completed and a grade assigned. See “Comprehensive Exam Guidelines” below)

Master of Arts in English - Literature Option (30 SH)

Completion of the Following

- ENG 502 Critical Theory (3 SH)
- ENG 506 History of the Language and Linguistics (3 SH)
- One course in English literature (ENG 509, 513, 532, 534, or 541) (3 SH)
- One Course in American Literature (ENG 552, 567, or 568) (3 SH)
- One Course in Topic/Genre Studies (ENG 544, 570, 572, or 574) (3 SH)

Path A: Thesis

- One more literature course in the MA program (3 SH)
- ENG 592: Independent Thesis Research in English (6 SH)

Path B: Comprehensive Exam

Three more literature courses in the MA program (9 SH)
Completion of the Comprehensive Exam

Electives

Any other two courses in the MA program (6 SH)

[Note: Courses designated as “post-colon” can be taken again if the subject matter is verifiably different, as indicated by course syllabi.]

II. PROVISIONAL EARLY ADMISSION FOR ADVANCED UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

Undergraduate students of advanced standing are eligible to apply for provisional early admission so that they can obtain the master’s degree in an expedited fashion. Through this provisional early admission, an advanced student can design a plan of study to accelerate the progress toward achieving his or her career and educational goals.

Eligibility:

Undergraduates of advanced standing in their third or fourth year of studies in programs offered by the Department of English or the Department of Writing, Linguistics, and Creative Process.

Application Process:

1. Submit the “MA in English Application for Provisional Early Admission.”
2. Submit a personal statement, and/or a writing sample as required by the Literature Option and the Writing Option respectively.
3. Schedule an entrance interview with the appropriate graduate coordinator who recommends to the Office of Graduate Studies whether or not to accept the applicant for provisional admission.

Submit the “Graduate Studies Application for Admission” form required of all applicants for graduate studies at WCSU at the end of the senior year so the provisional admission becomes official admission. (See the Graduate Catalog for admissions details)

Curriculum:

Students whose applications have been accepted must satisfy all requirements for their bachelor’s degrees before being formally admitted into the master’s program. Students will need to complete the required 30 credits in order to be granted a master’s degree. Credits taken can only count once (towards one degree); there is no double counting of credits.

Students who have received provisional early admission into the MA in English program are eligible to take graduate courses during their senior year when they have completed most, if not all, of the required upper-level courses in their majors.

Adopted March 14, 2011

III. COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

ENG 502 Critical Theory

3 SH

This course is an in-depth examination of major schools of contemporary critical theory, from Structuralism to Post-Colonialism. The goal of the course is to provide students a varied repertoire of current approaches to texts and to facilitate their understanding of the ideological stances inherent in each scholarly perspective. Students are encouraged to examine the strengths and weaknesses of each approach and to develop their own critical scholarly voice by applying aspects of theories to their own readings of texts

ENG 506 Studies in the History of the Language and Linguistics

3 SH

ENG 509 Medieval Literature (post-colon)

3 SH

This course will be an intensive, in-depth study of medieval literary authors and topics including Chaucer. This literature will be examined in the context of its historical, cultural, philosophic and literary setting, specifically, in the ways in which linguistics and rhetorical traditions have shaped individual authors and works and how scholars and literary critics have sought to explain this body of literature. This course may be repeated for credit provided the post-colon subject matter is different.

ENG 513 English Renaissance Literature (post-colon)

3 SH

This course will focus on major writers of the English Renaissance, usually emphasizing either the poetry or prose of writers such as Sidney, Bacon, Spenser, Donne, and Browne, and/or the drama of writers such as Marlowe, Jonson, Webster, Chapman, and Middleton. This course may be repeated for credit provided the post-colon subject matter is verifiably different.

ENG 532 Restoration and Eighteenth-Century British Literature (post-colon)

3 SH

Intensive and in-depth study of selected authors and/or topics from Restoration and Eighteenth-Century British Literature. This course may be repeated for credit provided the post-colon subject matter is different.

ENG 534 Nineteenth Century British Literature (post-colon)

3 SH

Intensive and in-depth study of selected authors and/or topics from Nineteenth Century British Literature such as Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, Keats, Tennyson, Browning, the Brontës, Dickens, George Eliot, Carlyle, Mill, Arnold, and Hardy. This course may be repeated for credit provided the post-colon subject matter is different.

ENG 541 Twentieth Century British and Irish Literature (post-colon)

3 SH

Intensive examination of prominent authors of ex-colonies as well a thorough study of Britain and Ireland's most visionary authors. This course may be repeated for credit provided the post-colon subject matter is different.

ENG 544 Topics in Literature (post-colon)**3 SH**

A critical study of topics in literature, e.g., satire, gender roles, representation of "Other(s)," which typically cut across periods, genres, and cultures. This course may be repeated for credit provided the post-colon subject matter is verifiably different.

ENG 552 American Literature to 1860 (post-colon)**3 SH**

Intensive and in-depth study of selected authors and/ or topics from American Literature prior to 1865, such as Puritanism, Transcendentalism, Sentimentalism, Romanticism, Winthrop, Bradstreet, Taylor, Byrd, Edwards, Mather, Franklin, Irving, Fuller, Melville, Hawthorne, Stowe, Emerson, Thoreau, Southworth and Poe. This course may be repeated for credit provided the post-colon subject matter is verifiably different.

ENG 567 American Literature: 1860-1920 (post-colon)**3 SH**

Intensive and in-depth study of the most significant literary movements (realism, naturalism, local color, early modernism, psychological realism, etc.) in appropriate literary, critical and cultural contexts. This course may be repeated for credit provided the post-colon subject matter is verifiably different.

ENG 568 American Literature: 1920-present (post-colon)**3 SH**

Intensive and in-depth study of the most significant literary developments (modernism, agitprop, Harlem Renaissance, Beat, etc.) in appropriate literary, critical and cultural contexts. This course may be repeated for credit provided the post-colon subject matter is verifiably different.

ENG 570 Fiction Studies (post-colon)**3 SH**

Intensive and in-depth study of important works of fiction and fiction writers in pertinent literary, critical, and cultural contexts. This course may be repeated for credit provided the post-colon subject matter is verifiably different.

ENG 572 Drama Studies (post-colon)**3 SH**

Intensive and in-depth study of important plays and playwrights in pertinent literary, critical, and cultural contexts. This course may be repeated for credit provided the post-colon subject matter is verifiably different.

ENG 574 Poetry Studies (post-colon)**3 SH**

Intensive, in-depth study of significant poet(s), movements, or genre of poetry in relationship to their literary, critical and cultural contexts. This course may be repeated for credit provided the post-colon subject matter is verifiably different.

ENG/WRT 585 An Apprenticeship in Teaching College Writing**1-3 SH**

Restricted to graduate students in English, this course focuses on the theory and practice of teaching freshman composition. Students will be responsible for attending seminars in rhetorical theory with a workshop component in the practicalities of teaching composition, conducting writing and discussion sessions with students in freshman composition, and

commenting on and evaluating essays. Written assignments based on the reading for the course will be required. This variable credit course may be taken for up to three credits.

ENG/WRT 586 Practicum in Teaching College Writing**1-3 SH**

Restricted to graduate assistants in English, this course is a workshop for discussion of problems encountered in teaching freshman composition. This course may be taken for one-to-three credits per semester for as long as the student is a graduate assistant. Prerequisite: ENG 585. Students may take a total of three credits towards the degree, three credits in ENG 585 or three credits in ENG 586, or a combination of three credits from the two courses (ENG 585 & ENG 586).

ENG 592 Independent Thesis Research in English**3-6 SH**

Designed for students fulfilling the thesis requirements for the Master of Arts in English. Students must follow the thesis guidelines and work independently on thesis research and writing. Individual conferences with the thesis advisor are scheduled as needed. Credit will be granted upon submission of the approved final draft of the thesis and thesis abstract. Permission of both the thesis advisor and the Graduate Coordinator.

ENG 598 Faculty Developed Course

An experimental course offered by the English department as a means of determining its value to the total department program or in response to a particular request from a group of students.

ENG 599 Student Independent Study**1-3 SH**

A vehicle designed to provide the student with an opportunity to develop his or her own learning experience that lies outside the existing graduate course offerings of the English department. The student will design a project and secure a faculty sponsor who has the pertinent expertise. May be taken for a maximum of three credits toward the degree. Prerequisite: Written permission of the faculty sponsor and the English department. Registration through the Division of Graduate Studies office is required.

IV. THESIS GUIDELINES

If you elect the thesis approach for your graduate studies in English, writing the thesis will be the last step toward the completion of your program. A master's thesis is an original scholarly work that deals with a topic chosen from your studies. A typical master's thesis in English is about 50-80 pages long (double-spaced) although quality is more important than quantity. Ideally you should complete the thesis in one semester although some students take longer to write them (Note: WCSU and the English Department allow you six years to complete your Master's program, which includes the time allotted for writing the thesis).

Below is detailed information which guides you from selection of the thesis topic to final submission of the thesis.

SELECTING A THESIS TOPIC

A master's thesis must focus on material that goes beyond the standard working knowledge of a given author(s), text(s) and literary period. While it does not have to focus on the proverbial completely original thought, your thesis project should contribute something distinct and original to the ongoing study of a given author(s), text(s) and literary period. In the best cases, you will discover territory that has been previously unexplored by other critics and you will contribute something wholly original to literary scholarship. However, even those theses that begin as offshoot ideas should contribute significantly to a given area of literary study. Therefore, choosing the right topic is crucial for the successful completion of the thesis. In general, the more carefully limited and defined a topic is, the more successful the finished thesis will be. You should seek a topic that can be treated thoroughly in the space of 50-80 pages.

As you develop the idea for the thesis, do some preliminary research:

- ___ Investigate the topic in the library
- ___ Find out if anyone has already written the thesis you envision writing
- ___ Discover what others have said about your topic
- ___ Keep notes of pertinent sources/references to build a working bibliography (which will eventually become a part of your thesis proposal)

SELECTING A THESIS ADVISOR AND SECOND READER

While formulating ideas and searching for topics, approach a professor in the department who you believe is qualified to direct your thesis (consult the list of faculty and their areas of specialty at the end of this document). It is not necessary to write out a formal proposal for your professor to review before the first meeting, but you should have a good idea about the direction and focus of your thesis. Be professional. Organize yourself before asking for the meeting and be prepared to articulate your thoughts about the thesis at some length. If the professor agrees to become your thesis advisor, he/she will help you refine your topic and offer advice on how to approach it.

It is important to note that the initiative for finding a thesis advisor lies with you the student although you are encouraged to discuss possibilities with the Graduate Coordinator and with other professors of the department.

SECOND READER

Your thesis project requires a second reader. Your principal advisor may suggest a colleague to serve in that capacity. This second reader should have working knowledge in the field you have chosen to explore for your thesis. Should your principal advisor not be able to complete the direction of your thesis, the second reader must be qualified enough in your area of study to take over as principal advisor of your thesis.

Since the Thesis Proposal Approval Form requires the signature of the second reader in order to proceed, a recommended point of entrance for the second reader would be when, with the guidance of the primary advisor, your thesis proposal is already in shape and you are getting ready to submit it to the Graduate Committee for review and approval. Afterwards, when your thesis project is nearing completion and both your primary advisor and you are satisfied that the

text is approaching (or has approached) a final draft stage, the second reader takes a close look at the entire thesis, reading it for content and accuracy as well as for surface glitches that may have seeped through the drafting process.

You should notify the Graduate Coordinator in writing as soon as you have chosen both the primary advisor and the second reader and keep them informed of the progression of your thesis project.

In principle you should feel free to consult any faculty member about the thesis at any stage of its writing. If, under compelling circumstances, you request a change in the advisement of your thesis, the Graduate Coordinator will attempt to resolve the matter. If this is not possible, the Graduate Coordinator, with the approval of the majority of the Graduate Committee, will make the requested change.

WRITING THE THESIS PROPOSAL

The proposal is a brief but thorough overview of your thesis project. A typical thesis proposal is 10-15 pages long. It serves to explain the subject of your thesis project, the core ideas you wish to expound upon, and the project's literary and critical background. The proposal has three core components:

1. A prose section that describes your project
2. A preliminary topical outline of your study
3. A selected/working bibliography

A successful thesis proposal

1. Defines the subject to be explored in the thesis study
2. Explains the significant literary and critical context of the thesis subject
3. Identifies the key issues involved in the study
4. Explains the idea, hypothesis or research question to be explored
5. Identifies the main sources that will be consulted (e.g., books, articles, special libraries or collections)
6. Gives a chapter-by-chapter summary or a formal outline of your thesis project
7. Has a title that clearly and concisely identifies the subject of the thesis study

[NOTE: Approval of the thesis proposal must be secured the semester *prior to* the one during which you plan to write the thesis.]

SUBMITTING THE THESIS PROPOSAL FOR APPROVAL

Once you have written a draft of your thesis proposal, you will submit it to your advisors. Quite often they will make suggestions for improving the document and return it to you during a conference. This process may be repeated a number of times. When the advisors feel the document is finished, make three (3) copies of the document and submit it to the Graduate Coordinator, indicating that you wish the proposal to be presented at the next Graduate Committee meeting. The Graduate Coordinator will inform you of the results as soon as the committee has evaluated and voted on your proposal.

The deadline for submitting the thesis proposal for approval is the first week of November (to register for ENG 592 in spring) and the first week of April (to register for ENG 592 for fall) each year.

Typically, the Graduate Committee will not reject a thesis idea completely (although it reserves the right to do so). At times, however, the committee will ask for clarification and/or further development of various aspects of your project. In such cases, proposals are awarded a “Conditional Approval,” pending the student’s completion of the requested revisions and resubmission of the proposal to the Graduate Committee for final approval.

[NOTE: You file a Thesis Proposal Approval Form, available from the Graduate Coordinator, with the Graduate School office prior to registering for ENG 592 Independent Thesis Research in English. See below]

[NOTE: Given the tight deadlines for filing for graduation, you are urged to have had a substantial amount of research and drafting completed *prior to* the semester in which you register to write the thesis so that much of the work of that semester is revising and preparing the thesis for final submission.]

THESIS PROPOSAL APPROVAL FORM AND FACULTY WORKLOAD CREDIT FORM

Once your thesis proposal has been approved by the Graduate Committee, it is your responsibility to turn in the following to the Graduate Coordinator:

- ___ a clean copy of the approved thesis proposal,
- ___ the Thesis Proposal Approval Form signed by 1) both faculty advisors and 2) the Graduate Coordinator,
- ___ the Faculty Workload Credit Form signed by 1) the primary faculty advisor and 2) the department chairperson.

The Graduate Coordinator will submit the three documents to the Arts & Sciences dean’s office.

WRITING THE THESIS

You and your advisor will work out the logistics regarding the writing of your thesis, submission of drafts and revisions. The goal is to produce a final draft that satisfies your expectations and those of your advisor. How the final version is produced, however, varies from person to person. Some professors ask that you submit drafts one chapter at a time. As the advisor reviews your draft, you are asked to continue to work on a forthcoming chapter. Another meeting is held, the chapter is discussed, the advisor returns the critiqued chapter to you, and you, in turn, supply the advisor with the draft of a new chapter. Other advisors recommend larger sections of the draft to be submitted to them for review rather than one chapter at a time. Either way, the purpose is to seek timely guidance and feedback from the advisor so that your thesis project progresses satisfactorily.

[NOTE: You must register for ENG 592 Independent Thesis Research in English in order to write the thesis.]

WRITING THE ABSTRACT

When your advisor and second reader have signed off approval of the final draft of the thesis, you will need to write an abstract of your work. The abstract should summarize the work in approximately 100-150 words. Typically it begins with a statement of your thesis and traces the development of your argument through its key points and conclusions. Think of the abstract as a succinct condensation of your thesis. Do not make it a mere listing of the major points of your thesis. Avoid both series of short, choppy sentences and overlong complex sentences in which phrases and clauses are piled up in an attempt to include as much as possible in one sentence. Avoid excessive use of adjectives and adverbs. And do not use such expressions as "in this essay, I . . .," "The author concludes...," or "it is shown that"

The abstract will be included in your completed thesis.

[NOTE: You will need to file five (5) copies of the abstract with the Office of Graduate Studies. For this purpose, the abstract should include the content of the Title Page.]

PREPARING THE FINAL DRAFT OF THE THESIS

Prepare the final copy of the thesis as approved by your advisor and second reader. In all matters of style and format (e.g., mechanics, format, use and documentation of sources), your thesis should follow the MLA Handbook and the requirements of form as detailed in the latest *WCSU Graduate Catalog*.

The following items are *required* for the final draft of the master's thesis in English:

1. Title page
2. Abstract
3. Works Cited

See the appendix for the format for the Title Page.

The following items are *optional* for the final draft of the master's thesis in English:

1. Copyright Registration
2. Acknowledgments
3. Table of Contents
4. List of Tables, Figures, or Graphics
5. Footnotes or endnotes
6. Appendices
7. Index

DEFENDING THE THESIS

Thesis defense is a public event. Its purpose is to give you an opportunity to explain the subject of your thesis project, research, and findings to the Graduate Committee, other faculty members of the department and graduate students, and to receive constructive feedback from them. It should prove to be a positive experience not only for you, but also for all the participants through sharing thesis-specific experience, insights, and scholarship in general.

Typically the thesis defense lasts for 30 to 40 minutes. During the session, your primary advisor will ask you to make a 10 to 15-minute summary of the thesis. The presentation is followed by Q & A.

Be sure to arrange for the thesis defense with your primary thesis advisor and the Graduate Coordinator once your advisors have approved the final draft.

Thesis advisors can recommend a thesis project for the “Outstanding Thesis” award.

SUBMITTING THE COMPLETED THESIS AND ABSTRACT

Once you have successfully defended your thesis (you may be required to do a few additions or minor modifications after the defense), you are ready to start the process of submitting the completed thesis and abstract.

THE SIGN-OFF FORM

Obtaining signatures from the following and in the order listed below (bringing with you a copy of your completed thesis and sign-off form, which is available from the Graduate Coordinator):

- Thesis advisor
- Second reader
- Graduate Coordinator
- Department Chair
- Dean of School of Arts & Sciences
- Office of Graduate Studies

PRINTING AND BINDING

Once you have obtained all the necessary signatures, you are ready to print the thesis and have it bound:

- Print one (1) copy of the thesis and five (5) copies of the abstract (see [Writing the Abstract](#) above).

The paper must be twenty (20) pound weight and at least twenty-five (25) percent rag/cotton content (Black print with a sharp, dark image; 12 or 14 point type; double-space the body of the thesis).

- Have the final printed copy of the thesis bound in an officially approved thesis spring binder (which can be purchased in the WestConn Bookstore).

The bound thesis should include the following:

- ___ The signed sign-off form
- ___ The completed thesis (e.g., title page, abstract, body of thesis, works cited)

FILING THE THESIS AND ABSTRACT

- ___ Department of English (via the Graduate Coordinator): An e-copy of the thesis for the department to be stored via the university library's Digital Thesis Archive for Thesis, and a copy of the signed sign-off form
- ___ Dean of Arts & Science: The bound thesis
- ___ Office of Graduate Studies: Five (5) copies of the abstract (as prepared above)

STEPS IN WRITING THE MASTER'S THESIS: A RECAP/CHECKLIST

Prior to the semester in which you plan to write the thesis:

1. Select a Thesis Topic
2. Select a Thesis Advisor and Second Reader
Notify the Graduate Coordinator in writing when you have chosen the advisors
3. Write the Thesis Proposal
4. Submit the Thesis Proposal for Approval
Once your thesis proposal has been approved by the Graduate Committee, it is your responsibility to turn in the following to the Graduate Coordinator:
 - ___ A clean copy of the approved thesis proposal,
 - ___ The Thesis Proposal Approval Form signed by 1) both faculty advisors and 2) the Graduate Coordinator,
 - ___ The Faculty Workload Credit Form signed by 1) the primary faculty advisor and 2) the department chairperson.
5. Complete substantial research and drafting
6. Register for ENG 592 Independent Thesis Research in English

During the semester in which you write the thesis:

1. Write the Thesis
2. Write the Abstract
3. Prepare the Final Draft of the Thesis
4. Defend the Thesis

5. Submit the Completed Thesis and Abstract (along with the Thesis Fulfillment Form signed by
 - Thesis advisors
 - Graduate Coordinator
 - Department Chairperson
 - Arts & Sciences Dean
 - Graduate Dean/Office

Time Limit and Deadlines (adapted from *WCSU Graduate Catalog*)

Time Limit

A student has a maximum of two (2) years to satisfactorily complete and file the necessary copies of the thesis and the abstract with the dean of the School of Arts & Sciences (and the Department of English) so that the student may receive the appropriate approval or credit for the thesis, providing it is completed within the six year time limit for fulfilling degree requirements

Deadlines

The approved thesis and required number of copies of the abstract must be filed with the dean of the School of Arts & Sciences (and the Department of English) by March 1, June 1, or November 1 for graduation in May, August, or January, respectively.

Given the tight deadlines for filing for graduation, you are urged to have had a substantial amount of research and drafting done *prior to* the semester in which you register to write the thesis so that much of the work of that semester is revising and preparing the thesis for final submission.

Adopted December 5, 2007

Revised February 4, 2009

Revised November 4, 2009

Revised April 7, 2010

Revised March 03, 2011

V. COMPREHENSIVE EXAM GUIDELINES

Students electing to take the comprehensive examination to complete their graduate studies in English will be tested on a reading list prepared by the English department. The three-hour comprehensive is a closed-book exam administered in November and April of each year. Students should indicate in writing to the Graduate Coordinator of the English Department their intention to take the comprehensive at least one full month in advance of either the November or April examination. The Graduate Coordinator will announce the specific time and place for each examination. (Note: A student with an "Incomplete" grade in any graduate course at Western Connecticut State University is ineligible to take the comprehensive examination until such time as the course has been completed and a grade assigned.)

Below is more detailed information concerning the mechanics of the M. A. Comprehensive Exam.

Reading List

The “Comprehensive Exam Reading List” is prepared by the faculty of the English Department. It includes 10-15 author/text units from the following three course clusters:

A. English Literature

1. ENG 509 Medieval Literature
2. ENG 513 English Renaissance Literature
3. ENG 532 English Literature: 1660-1800
4. ENG 534 Nineteenth Century British Literature
5. ENG 541 Twentieth Century British and Irish Literature

B. American Literature

1. ENG 552 American Literature to 1860
2. ENG 567 American Literature: 1860-1920
3. ENG 568 American Literature: 1920-present

C. Topic/Genre Studies

1. ENG 502 Critical Theory
2. ENG 544 Topics in Literature
3. ENG 570 Fiction Studies
4. ENG 572 Drama Studies
5. ENG 574 Poetry Studies

The list is published via the department’s website and is revised every two years (to a maximum of 25% change).

Exam Questions

The three-hour comprehensive consists of three essay questions, one from each of the three course clusters covered by the “Reading List” (Usually two to three essay questions from each course cluster are provided for the candidates to choose from). Typically the essay questions ask candidates to address thematic issues concerning authors/texts, as shown in the examples below:

1. In *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), Mary Wollstonecraft argues forcefully for the education of women by discussing the consequences of NOT educating them, by calling into question Rousseau’s view of women, and by substituting her own view. Using Alexander Pope’s *The Rape of the Lock* and “To a Lady,” and at least one other work published prior to 1792, evaluate the validity of Wollstonecraft’s argument.
2. Imagine Walt Whitman and Frederick Douglass reading “On Civil Disobedience” by Henry Thoreau. To what extent would they agree with Thoreau? In what ways would

their responses be similar? In what ways would they be different? Your discussion should be grounded in specific reference to the work of all three authors.

3. Jean-Paul Sartre once stated that reading William Faulkner is like looking at the world while sitting backwards in a fast-moving car. 1) Explain Sartre's assertion; 2) Use Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* to support your position; and 3) discuss the connection between Sartre's observation and Faulkner's assessment and interpretation of history.

Evaluation

The Comprehensive evaluates not only candidates' knowledge of specific authors/texts, but also their knowledge of literary history, the history of ideas, and important critical perspectives on authors/texts. In addressing each of the three essay questions, candidates are expected to develop a cogent argument/analysis drawing from relevant primary and secondary sources, thus demonstrating fluency with not only specific authors/texts, but also relevant literary contexts and critical perspectives. The essays will be evaluated in terms of rigor, depth, thoroughness as well as facility in language.

Each of the three essays will be read first by the faculty member who designed it and be rated as "Pass with Distinction," "Pass," or "Fail." A candidate earns a "Pass with Distinction" for the M. A. Comprehensive when two or all three of the essays are rated as "Pass with Distinction."

Retakes

If the faculty member who designed the question recommends "Fail," the essay will be read by a second faculty member with expertise in the field. If he or she also recommends "Fail," the failure will stand. If the second reader recommends "Pass," then the essay will be given to a third reader, usually either the Department Chair or the Graduate Coordinator for final determination. If the failure stands after the second reader or the final determination, a retake will be arranged in a timely fashion. The retake will cover only the section (or sections) that the student has failed.

Appeals

Normally, a second failure on any section of the exam will result failure of the comprehensive exam. However, if a candidate's course work has been of exceptionally high quality, he or she, after a second failure, may petition the Graduate Committee for permission to take the exam a third and final time. In order to petition, the candidate must have a grade point average of 3.50 or higher in graduate courses taken at Western Connecticut State.

Adopted February 6, 2008

VI. COMPREHENSIVE EXAM READING LIST (Fall 2011-Spring 2013)

A. English literature

1. Chaucer, Geoffrey: *Troilus and Criseyde*, *The Canterbury Tales*
2. Shakespeare, William: *Macbeth*, *The Tempest*

3. Milton, John: *Paradise Lost*
4. Brontë, Charlotte: *Jane Eyre*
5. Woolf, Virginia: *Between the Acts, Mrs. Dalloway*

B. American literature

1. Melville, Herman: *Moby-Dick*
2. James, Henry: *Portrait of a Lady*, "The Beast in the Jungle"
3. Faulkner, William: *Absalom, Absalom!*
4. Douglass, Frederick: *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*
5. O'Neill, Eugene: *Long Day's Journey into Night*

D. Topic/Genre studies

1. Conrad, Joseph: *Heart of Darkness*
2. Lamming, George: *In the Castle of My Skin*
3. Elizabeth Bowen: *Eva Trout, The Collected Stories*
4. Hardy, Thomas: *Jude the Obscure*
5. Shaw, George Bernard: *Major Barbara*
6. Pope, Alexander: *The Rape of the Lock, Essay on Man*

VII. GRADUATE AWARDS

The English Department has established the following awards for the graduate students:

Best Research Paper of the Year

Recognizes the best research paper by a graduate student submitted to the English Department during the academic year. Eligibility: recommendation of the professor teaching the course for which the research paper was written.

Award: Certificate

Criteria: Academic excellence

Most Promising Scholar

Recognizes the most promising graduate student in the M. A. in English program. Eligibility: the student having taken at least six courses in the graduate program at the time of nomination.

Award: Certificate

Criteria: Academic excellence

Outstanding Thesis

Recognizes the best master's thesis submitted to the English Department during the academic year. Eligibility: the thesis project having been accepted; recommendation of the thesis advisors.

Award: Certificate

Criteria: Academic excellence

Outstanding Graduate Teaching Assistant of the Year

Recognizes the best graduate teaching assistant of the academic year. Eligibility: recommendation of the professor teaching the Megasection and supervising the graduate teaching assistants.

Award: Certificate

Criteria: Teaching excellence

VIII. CONTACT

Dr. Shouhua Qi,
Graduate Coordinator
English Department
Western Connecticut State University
Danbury, CT 06810
Email: gis@wcsu.edu (*preferred*)
Office: 203-837-9048

Appendixes

WESTERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY
DANBURY, CONNECTICUT
MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH—LITERATURE OPTION *

NAME: _____ DATE: _____
ADDRESS: _____
Email Address: _____ TEL. NO. () _____

COMPLETION OF THE FOLLOWING (15 Sem. Hrs.):

- ENG 502 Critical Theory 3 S.H. _____
ENG 506 History of the Language and Linguistics 3 S.H. _____
One course in English literature (ENG 509, 513, 532, 534, or 541):
ENG _____ 3 S.H. _____
One Course in American Literature (ENG 552, 567, or 568):
ENG _____ 3 S.H. _____
One Course in Topic/Genre Studies (ENG 544, 570, 572, or 574):
ENG _____ 3 S.H. _____

PATH A: THESIS

COMPLETION OF THE FOLLOWING (9 Sem. Hrs.):

- One more literature course in the MA program.
ENG _____ 3 S.H. _____
ENG 592: Independent Thesis Research in English (6 Sem. Hrs.) 6 S.H. _____

Thesis Topic: _____
Date of Completion: _____

PATH B: COMPREHENSIVE EXAM

COMPLETION OF THE FOLLOWING (9 Sem. Hrs.):

- Three more literature courses in the MA program
ENG _____ 3 S.H. _____
ENG _____ 3 S.H. _____
ENG _____ 3 S.H. _____

COMPLETION OF THE COMPREHENSIVE EXAM

Date of Completion _____

ELECTIVES (6 Sem. Hrs):

- Any other two courses in the MA in English program.
1. _____ 3 S.H. _____
2. _____ 3 S.H. _____

TOTAL SEMESTER HOURS 30

Admission requirements have been explained to me and I understand my obligation to read the graduate catalog and follow the Thesis or Comprehensive Exam Guidelines and other program requirements.

STUDENT'S SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____
GRADUATE COORDINATOR'S SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

* Courses designated as "post-colon" can be taken again if the subject matter is verifiably different, as indicated by course syllabi.

**MA in English Application for Provisional Early Admission
Western Connecticut State University**

Name of Applicant _____ (print) Date _____

Student ID # _____ Current Major _____

Status (check one) 1st sem./junior year 2nd sem./junior year 1st sem./senior year

GPA of major courses _____

Anticipated completion date for the bachelor’s degree _____ (semester) _____ (year)

Proposed Graduate Studies (check one) The Literature Option The Writing Option

Mailing Address

School Email _____ Alternate Email _____

Telephone _____

Applicant _____ (signature) _____ (date)

Academic Advisor _____ (name) _____ (signature) _____ (date)

Graduate Coordinator _____ (name) _____ (signature) _____ (date)

Important Notes:

This form is used for application for provisional early admission into the MA in English program. If your application is accepted, you must then separately submit the “Graduate Studies Application for Admission” form at the end of the senior year to change your status from provisional to official admission. (See the Graduate Catalog for admissions details)

1. A copy of this form will be made available to you as well as the Office of Graduate Studies and the appropriate graduate coordinator for records.
2. You must satisfy all requirements for the bachelor’s degree before being formally admitted into the master’s program.
3. If accepted, you are eligible to take graduate courses during your senior year when you have completed most, if not all, of the required upper level courses in your major.

Thesis Title Page:

Title of the Thesis

Author's Name

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of English

WESTERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY

Month Year

FACULTY AREAS OF EXPERTISE

Michael J. Chappell Ph. D., Fordham University (Phone: 203-837-9366 Email: chappellm@wcsu.edu) 18th-century British literature, especially the Age of Johnson; literature of the Beat period; critical theory; poetry

Donald P. Gagnon Ph.D., University of South Florida (Phone: 203-837-9062 Email: gagnond@wcsu.edu) American literature and drama; ethnic literature; g/l/b/t literature

Anam K. Govardhan Ph.D., Northern Illinois University, Ph.D., University of Madras Professor of English (Phone: 203-837-9247 E-Mail: govardhana@wcsu.edu) 18th-century British Literature, Indian Writing in English, Short Story, and Applied Linguistics.

Heather Levy Ph.D., Binghamton University (Phone: 203-837-3272 Email: levyh@wcsu.edu) 20th-century British literature, esp. Woolf; Modernist Women's Literature; Narratives of the Sea: Melville and Conrad.

Margaret P. Murray Ph. D., New York University (Phone: 203-837-9120 Email: murraym@wcsu.edu) 19th-century American literature; American regional literature; American women writers; Wharton and Freeman; colonial American literature; American Studies; Women Studies

Ingrid Pruss Ph. D., Vanderbilt University (Phone: 203-837-9071 Email: prussi@wcsu.edu) 16th- and 17th-century British literature; Women Studies; critical theory; Old Testament Studies

Shouhua Qi Ph. D., Illinois State University (Phone: 203-837-9048 Email: qis@wcsu.edu) Victorian literature; Hardy; the English novel; American short fiction; genre studies; literary translation; creative writing (fiction and nonfiction)

Margaret Judith (Judy) Sullivan M.A., St. John's University (Phone: 203-837-9073 Email: sullivanm@wcsu.edu) Medieval literature; Chaucer; Shakespeare; children's literature; drama; African American literature; African literature

Çiğdem Üsekes Ph. D., University of North Dakota (Phone: 203-837-9329 Email: usekesc@wcsu.edu) Drama, especially modern drama; American drama; African American drama, fiction, and non-fiction; race studies; Woolf; 20th-century American literature.

