

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT



English Major Handbook

a.k.a. ***"The ALPHABET BOOK"***

2023 - 2024

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English Majors and Correlates may not take English Courses NRO.

**The English Department
2023 to 2024**

English Department Faculty Academic Year 2023 - 2024

Biographies and faculty interests can be found under the English Department section of the Vassar College website.

Mark C. Amodio, Professor of English

Heesok Chang, Associate Professor of English

Ryan Chapman, Adjunct Instructor

Robert DeMaria, Professor of English

Eve Dunbar, Professor of English

Leslie C. Dunn, Professor of English

Katie Gemmill, Assistant Professor of English

Wendy Graham, Professor of English and Chair

Joshua Harmon, Visiting Associate Professor of English

Thomas Hill, Adjunct Assistant Professor of English

Jean M. Kane, Professor of English

** **Amitava Kumar**, Professor of English

Timothy Liu, Adjunct Assistant Professor of English

Zoltán Márkus, Associate Professor of English

Molly S. McGlennen, Professor of English

* **David Means**, Visiting Associate Professor of English

Tracy O'Neill, Assistant Professor of English

Hiram Perez, Associate Professor of English

Matthew Schultz, Adjunct Associate Professor of English

Blevin Shelnut, Assistant Professor of English

Nina Shengold, Adjunct Assistant Professor of English

Tyrone R. Simpson, II, Associate Professor of English

Mark Taylor, Visiting Assistant Professor of English

Christine Vines, Adjunct Assistant Professor of English

Susan Zlotnick, Professor of English

* *On leave in Spring '24*

** *On leave for full year.*

Course Offerings in the English Department

Courses in bold are scheduled for the 2023 - 2024 year.

Courses That Fulfill English Major Requirements, **pre-1800**, **pre-1900**,
Race, Ethnicity, Gender and Sexuality (**REGS**), **INT**, are noted as such.

<u>Course Title</u>	<u>Requirement Fulfilled</u>
101 The Art of Reading and Writing	
105 Literature X	
170 Approaches to Literary Study	
178 Improvisational Writing	INT
203 These American Lives: New Journalisms	
205 Introductory Creative Writing	
207 Intermediate Creative Writing: Literary Non-Fiction	
209 Advanced Creative Writing: Narrative	
211 Advanced Creative Writing: Verse	
213 The English Language	
214 Process, Prose, Pedagogy	
215 Pre-Modern Drama Before 1800	pre-1800
216 Modern Drama: Text and Performance after 1800	
217 Literary Theory and Interpretation	
218 Literature, Gender, and Sexuality	REGS
219 Queer of Color Critique	REGS
222 Early British Literature	pre-1800
223 Surrealism Across the African Diaspora	REGS
225 American Literature, Origins to 1865	pre-1800 or pre-1900
226 American Literature, 1865-1925	REGS or pre-1900
227 Harlem Renaissance and its Precursors	REGS or pre-1900
228 African American Literature	REGS
229 Asian-American Literature, 1946-present	REGS
230 Latina and Latino Literature	REGS
231 Native American Literature	REGS
233 Carceral Literature of the Caribbean	
235 Old English	pre-1800
236 Beowulf	pre-1800
237 Medieval Literature	pre-1800
240 Shakespeare	REGS or pre-1800
241 Shakespeare	pre1800
245 The Enlightenment	pre-1800
247 Eighteenth-Century British Novels	REGS or pre-1800
248 The Age of Romanticism	pre-1900
249 Victorian Literature	pre-1900
251 Topics in Black Literatures	REGS
253 Topics in American Literature	REGS
255 Nineteenth Cent British Novels	pre-1900
256 Modern British and Irish Literatures	
257 The Novel in English after 1945	
262 Postcolonial Literatures	REGS
265 Selected Author	pre-1900
270 New York Stories	INT
271 Reviewing Shakespeare	INT

272 What Makes a Collection?	INT
273 Slow and Close: Toni Morrison	INT
274 Reading and Writing American Memoir	INT
275 Vassar Critical Journal Intensive	INT
276 How to Write a Black Memoir	INT
277 Reading and Writing Outdoors	INT
278 Reading Middlemarch	INT
290 Community Engaged Learning	INT
298 Independent Study	OTH
300 Senior Tutorial	INT
304 Creative Writing Seminar	
305/306 Senior Creative Writing Seminar	
315 Studies in Performance	pre-1800
319 Race and its Metaphors	REGS
320 Studies in Literary Traditions	REGS
325 Studies in Genre	
326 Challenging Ethnicity	REGS
328 Literature/Amer Renaissance	pre-1900
329 American Literary Realism	pre-1900
330 American Modernism	REGS
340 Studies in Medieval Literature	pre-1800
341 Studies in the Renaissance	pre-1800
342 Studies in Shakespeare	pre-1800
345 Milton	pre-1800
350 Studies in Eighteenth-century British Literature	pre1800
351 Studies in Nineteenth-Century British Literature	pre-1900
352 Studies in Romanticism	REGS or pre-1900
355 Twentieth and Twenty-First Century Poetry	REGS
357 Studies in Twentieth-Century Literature	
365 Selected Author	Pre-1900
370 Transnational Literature	REGS
374 Experimental Fiction Laboratory	INT
375 Seminar in Women's Studies	REGS
376 Vassar Poetry Review	INT
378 Brief Encounters: The Reading and Writing of Flash Fiction	INT
379 The Research Intensive	INT
380 Then Whose Negro Are You?: On the Art and Politics of James Baldwin	REGS
381 English Seminar	
399 Senior Independent Work	OTH

Requirements for English Major

Total Units Required for the major: 11 units, comprising 10 graded units of coursework and 1 ungraded intensive unit.

Distribution Requirements for the Major:

- One unit of literature written before 1800 at the 200- or 300-level.
- One unit of literature written before 1900 at the 200- or 300-level.
- Alternatively, students may take 2 units of coursework in literature written before 1800.
- One unit that focuses on race, gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, or disability.
- 1 intensive unit at any level.

The distribution requirements must be taken at the 200- or 300-level. (Intensives do not qualify.)
300-level seminars: 3 units, at least one taken in the senior year. (Intensives do not qualify.)

Further information

Applicants for English 305-306 (Senior Creative Writing Seminar), must submit samples of their writing *before* pre-registration; please check with the Department office for the exact date of the deadline, or go to the English Department webpage, <https://www.vassar.edu/english>, and scroll down to the bottom to “SP Creative Writing Course Application.”

Pathways

Pathways are designed to articulate coherent plans of study that build on a foundation in introductory and intermediate courses to greater depth and complexity in advanced courses. Students are advised to take the courses in sequence, beginning with ENGL 101 and/or ENGL 105 or 170 (limit 2 courses at the 100-level), moving on to 200-level courses, and concluding with 300-level seminars.

Pathways and Correlate Sequences in English

The curriculum in English presents a broad array of courses representing a variety of subjects—literatures from different periods of history and geographical locations, genres, approaches or methods of study. Given the scope of the discipline, the English department has decided to offer alternate pathways through the English major for students who wish to tailor their programs to individual interests within the discipline. These pathways are modeled on the correlate sequences, which have been revised to achieve a broader understanding of the historical contexts underpinning each area of focus. Defined, in part, to suggest intellectual compatibilities among literature and other disciplines, the correlate in “Race, Ethnicity, and Indigeneity,” for example, will supplement and extend students' work in AFRS, AMST, URBS, and WFQS.

Students may elect a pathway when declaring the English major as sophomores or by the end of their junior year.

Pathways:

1. Race, Ethnicity, and Indigeneity
2. Gender, Sexuality, and the Body
3. Literary Geographies
4. British and American Literary History
5. Creative Writing and Literary Forms

Please refer to the department website for full descriptions and required courses for each Pathway.

1. Race, Ethnicity, and Indigeneity

This pathway explores literatures that interrogate identity, explore its social function and value, and contemplate its undoing and re-making. Courses examine common tropes like noble savages, tragic mulattoes, transracial adoptees, and terrorist threats and particularly track debates about ethnic traditions in English writing.

2. Gender, Sexuality, and the Body

The Gender, Sexuality, and the Body pathway challenges gender and sexual norms often upheld as "natural," introducing students to the crucial insights of feminist, queer, and transgender studies, and asking students to reflect upon the way that gender, sexuality, and the body intersect with categories of power such as race, class, nation, religion, and ability.

3. Literary Geographies

This track invites various scales and vectors of geographic organization: environmental, global, transnational, settler-colonial, post-colonial, territorial, archipelagic, regional, and urban, including spaces of myth and allegory, quest and pilgrimage, voyage and travel, diaspora and migration, utopia and dystopia.

4. British and American Literary History offers a historicist rather than great books approach to two national literatures. Organized chronologically and presented comparatively, this concentration facilitates an understanding of the process of canonization, the gradual assimilation of extraterritorial traditions, and how culture contributes to the formation of national identity.

5. Creative Writing and Literary Forms

This track supplements required creative writing classes with a selection of non-creative writing courses that foreground considerations of craft and form.

Opportunities in the English Department

Opportunities for students in the English Department extend beyond the classroom.

The **English Majors Committee** organizes events for majors, fosters a sense of community among students, interacts with department faculty, and acts as a resource for students with questions about the major. The Majors Committee represents a great opportunity for students to become more involved in the department.

English majors and correlates are informed about calls for submissions and **other writing and publishing opportunities** both on campus and at other universities. These opportunities are also posted on the Department's Instagram page, [Vassar English Instagram](#).

The Elizabeth Bishop and William Gifford lectures are hosted each fall by the department. Students engaged in related courses are invited to attend the post-lecture dinner at Alumnae House with the guest lecturer. These intimate gatherings provide an opportunity to meet and engage with notable writers and authors, as well as department professors in an informal setting.

The spring semester brings the **Writer-in-Residence** lecture and residency, which offers students in the Senior Creative Writing Seminar (English 305-306) the opportunity to have a one-on-one meeting with the invited guest to review and enhance their current work. The Writer-in-Residence will also visit creative writing classes and First-Year Writing Seminars (FYWS) when asked by the instructor.

Each spring, the English Department sponsors **several prize competitions**. These include The Academy of American Poets Prize, The Beatrice Daw Brown Prize, the Deanne Beach Stoneham Prize for Poetry, the Sister Arts Poetry Prize, The Helen Kate Furness Prize and the Elizabeth Dana Reading Prize. Information is posted on the webpage, Instagram, and on the English Department bulletin board in the spring semester.

Frequently Asked Questions

Area Requirements

Does English 226 (American Literature, 1865-1925) count as a pre-1900 course?

Students may elect either pre-1900 or REGS credit for English 226, which covers material from the latter half of the nineteenth century and deals substantively with literary modernism. Students may elect either pre-1800 or pre-1900 credit for English 225 (American Literature, Origins to pre-1900).

Can area requirements be covered by courses taken JYA or during summer session?

Yes, with approval from the associate chair. In order to receive approval, make an appointment with the associate chair; bring with you a course description from the university catalogue and a copy of the syllabus.

Credit Questions

I received IB or AP credit in English. Does this count toward my English major?

No, your AP English credit does not count as 1 of the 11 credits you need to complete the English major. However, it does count towards your total college credits (1 of 32 needed to graduate).

My English JYA credits appear on my transcript as ungraded work. Will they count towards the major, even though the departmental requirements state that 10 of the 11 required units must be graded units?

Yes, as long as your JYA credits are approved English credits, they will count toward your English major.

What about English credits taken over the summer at another institution? Do they also transfer as ungraded work; do they count toward my major?

These credits must be taken for a grade, though they appear on the transcript as ungraded work. We suggest asking the associate chair of the department to review the course description and syllabus (if available) ahead of time, to give you a sense of whether the course will be accepted for credit. Once you've finished the course, send a transcript to the registrar and an electronic copy of the syllabus and your written work to the associate chair. Note: courses that give exams and ask you to produce fewer than 20 pages of written work (we are looking for essays not posts) may not qualify for credit.

Can any of the English credits I have earned at other schools, either JYA or during summer session, count as a 300-level credit?

Generally speaking, no. However, Oxford and Cambridge University offer coursework that is comparable to that undertaken in a 300-level English class at Vassar. If you attend one of these universities, you may ask the associate chair to consider one course for seminar credit (300-level work). Only one unit of 300-level work may be taken at another institution. You will need to share a syllabus and all written work to qualify for credit, once you return to Vassar. There is no pre-approval process.

Can a Vassar course I have taken outside of the English department count towards my major?

Yes, but only under the following circumstances: You can count any course that has been cross-listed with the English department. You may petition to count a course taught by an English professor that is not cross-listed; however, you must obtain the approval of the instructor and associate chair in such a case.

If you have a correlate in a related discipline, you are entitled to count one course towards your English major with the approval of the associate chair; however, no breadth, historical, or 300-level seminar credit will be granted. We will count intensives towards your English major in lieu of a course.

If you have a double major in a related discipline, you may count two courses towards your English major with the approval of the associate chair. Once again, no breadth, historical, or 300-level seminar credit will be granted. We will count intensives towards your English major in lieu of a course.

Before declaring my English major, I NRO'd an English course. I did well in the class and received a letter grade for it on my transcript. Can this course count towards the major?

Unfortunately, no. Even if you received an "A" for the course, the non-recording option counts towards the quota of your allowable nongraded units. Your transcript may show a letter grade for the course, but our records will indicate it was elected as NRO. During the pandemic, spring 2020-fall 2020, the cap on NROs was lifted by the college. We will count courses NRO'd during that period.

Rumors and Queries

Do professors in the department keep secret grade books?

Some do and some don't. But even if a professor keeps a private entry of grades for papers, exams, oral reports, participation, and so forth, it functions more as a memory aid than an official record. Since your final grade will be determined by your performance over the course of the semester—taking into account factors like effort and improvement—the professor's written comments on papers will provide an index of how you are doing.

Why don't professors in the English department put grades on papers?

This long-standing practice in the English department is based on the theory that an English course is a conversation. The conversation takes place in class among students and teachers; it takes place in conferences and e-mail; and it takes place in the dialogue between a student's paper and a teacher's response. The placement of a grade on the paper puts an end to this part of the conversation. A student paper is not an exam but is rather an opportunity for the student to speak on a particular subject. The instructor's response is not a grade, but it is an informed response to what the student has said.

Whom should one ask about graduate study in English?

The chair of the department and the associate chair are available by appointment to discuss graduate school plans and applications for post-graduate grants. It also makes sense to talk to junior faculty about their more recent experiences of graduate school.

Is there a Creative Writing Program at Vassar?

While there is no separate program for creative writing within the Vassar English Department, we offer a pathway for English majors and a correlate for non-majors in Creative Writing and Literary Forms. We also offer an array of creative writing courses. Students usually begin with English 205: Introductory Creative Writing, which may be taken in either "a" or "b" semesters. This course serves as an introduction to the writing of fiction, literary nonfiction, experimental writing, and poetry. English 205 is open to first-years only in "b" term of their first year.

The department also offers English 207, Literary Nonfiction, English 209, Advanced Creative Writing: Narrative, and English 211, Advanced Creative Writing: Verse, which are open to both majors and non-majors.

English 205 (or 206 when offered) is a prerequisite for admission to both English 207 and English 209. These courses are not available to first-year students. English 207, 209, and/or 211 are prerequisites for English 304, a one-semester Creative Writing Seminar open to Juniors and Seniors. To enroll in 209, 211, or 304, which are Special Permission courses (SP), you must submit a form (available on the department website or in the office) early in pre-registration. Do not contact the instructor or attempt to pre-register. We are enrolling students ourselves to prioritize the admission of English majors and correlates.

A writing portfolio, due before preregistration, is required for students wishing to take English 305–306, the year-long Senior Creative Writing Seminar. **As of January 2023, you must be an English major or have a correlate to apply.**

Creative Writing Seminar

What exactly is the Creative Writing Seminar (English 305–306)?

Senior Composition is a year-long creative writing course aimed at refining craft repertoire, developing a practice of rigorous revision, and producing a written project of style and substance, which may range from a collection of poetry, or a sequence of stories, to a short novel.

This course is open to English majors and Creative Writing correlates.

If you wish to be considered for admission to this yearlong course, English 305-306, you must submit an application. Your application will consist of:

- 15 pages of double-spaced creative prose or poetry max.
- A list of 5 books you love.
- A written critique completed for another workshop or a short craft essay (1-2 pages) on a published work.

The class is limited to twelve students.

Who can take Creative Writing Seminar and how can I apply?

This course is open only to senior English majors and correlates. To be considered for admission to English 305–306 (Creative Writing Seminar), you need to submit two copies of samples of your writing to the English Department office before spring break (see the bulletin board outside the department office for the exact date). Try to submit samples of the kind of writing that you think you may want to concentrate on in your senior project. However, it is more important that you submit writing that you feel best shows your abilities than to predict what you will write in the Creative Writing Seminar. If you are interested in writing fiction, you should submit one or two completed stories; if poetry, a number of poems; if literary nonfiction, an extended prose piece, and so on. You may also wish to submit a variety of pieces (poetry and prose). You should not submit traditional critical essays (papers), although papers that veer toward literary nonfiction are a possibility. Feel free to use samples of writing you have done for other courses; that is, you need not write something new for this process. A committee of at least three faculty members reads the submissions and selects the members of this course. The course instructor is not necessarily a member of the committee. The names of students selected for English 305–306 will be posted outside the English Office. Enrollment is limited to twelve students.

Independent study in creative writing is also available for sophomores, juniors and seniors, subject to the ordinary rules for independent study in the English department, and English majors may elect to undertake a creative thesis.

Independent Study and Community Engaged Learning (Fieldwork)

How do I apply for English 298 (Independent Study), 399 (Senior Independent Work), or 290 (Community Engaged Learning)?

Permission to elect Independent Study is granted by the associate chair, but you first must find a faculty sponsor. If you wish to undertake 298, 399, or 290 and you don't know who would be an appropriate sponsor, consult the department website under the heading "faculty," which will give you a sense of the faculty's range of interests. Please note, Independent Study does NOT qualify as an Intensive.

A request to undertake Fieldwork or Community Engaged Learning also requires a sponsor and the permission of the associate chair. OCEL qualifies as a .5 or 1 unit intensive.

What kinds of Community Engaged Learning will the department sponsor or oversee?

The first step is to consult the Office of Community Engaged Learning (OCEL). There is a formal process for undertaking fieldwork or an internship for English credit (as an intensive, usually .5 units), but this work must be pre-authorized by OCEL. The project must fall clearly within the scope of our concerns as an English Department; however, we will countenance projects involving a student's work in television, theater, radio, or advertising, for example, if they involve reading, evaluating, and writing. You are required to submit a written proposal. The proposal should address the relevance of the project to your work as an English major (or work in English courses) as well as outline clearly and specifically your duties on the job. You need a supervisor from the English Department.

Planning Your Senior Year

Students should begin planning their senior year well in advance. As a part of this process, there are a number of questions you should ask yourself. For example: How do my various courses connect with each other? What is my trajectory through the major and how might the senior year serve as a capstone for it? While the department hopes that students will sample the rich diversity of its offerings, the department also strongly encourages students to work up from the 200-level to the 300-level in at least one field.

Do I want to take *English 304*, the one-semester Creative Writing Seminar, or do I want to apply for *English 305-306*, the year-long Senior Creative Writing Seminar? Students wishing to take either of these courses should note the prerequisites and prepare themselves by taking more than one of the writing courses offered at the 200-level.

Do I want to write a thesis? If so, what kind of preparation do I need?

If you decide to enroll in English 300 and write a critical (or creative thesis), you should make sure that you have adequately prepared yourself for undertaking the project. Take coursework in your chosen field before you write the thesis. Consider how your JYA experience or courses taken in other departments might support/anticipate the work you want to do on your thesis.

In the semester before you write the thesis, talk to both your major and thesis advisor about the kind of work you might be able to undertake independently over the summer or during winter break.

Whenever feasible, the department will offer *English 379: The Research Intensive: Sources, Methods, Processes* for .5 units, which will prepare you to write a thesis.

The senior thesis is ungraded and counts as a full unit Intensive. As a department, we want to encourage students to undertake a demanding and fulfilling research/writing project as seniors.

Remember: *English 300* is an Intensive not graded coursework. You must enroll in a 300-level seminar during your senior year and complete three seminars (300-level classes) in all.

The department encourages English majors to think imaginatively about these and similar questions and to seek advice from their major advisers as well as their course instructors.

English 300: The Thesis

A-term deadlines:

Within the first three weeks of the term in which you are writing the thesis, but no later than the third week of **September 2023**, you must submit to the department office the following information: your name, your email, your thesis advisor, and the working title of your thesis.

Students and their individual advisors are responsible for determining interim deadlines for the drafting and revising of the thesis. Some advisors ask that you submit a few pages each week; others may request that you submit completed chapters or sections over the course of the semester. Whatever you do, be sure to have a discussion with your advisor early in the thesis process about interim deadlines so that you know what your thesis advisor expects.

Remember the thesis Intensive is a tutorial, a conversation between you and your advisor.

All students writing a senior thesis during a-term must submit the final draft of the thesis on the final day of classes, **December 6, 2023**.

B-term deadlines:

Within the first three weeks of the term in which you are writing the thesis, but no later than the first week of **February 2024**, you must submit to the department office the following information: your name, your email, your thesis advisor, and the working title of your thesis.

Students and their individual advisors are responsible for determining interim deadlines for the drafting and revising of the thesis. Some advisors ask that you submit a few pages each week; others may request that you submit completed chapters or sections during the semester. Whatever you do, be sure to have a discussion with your advisor early in the thesis process about interim deadlines so that you know what your thesis advisor expects.

Remember the thesis Intensive is a tutorial, a conversation between you and your advisor.

All students writing a senior thesis during b-term must submit the final draft of the thesis on the final day of classes, **April 30, 2024**.

Creative Work in the Senior Year

Creative Writing Seminar (English 304)

This course examines creative writing through focus on style, structure, emotional effect, character, genre, or convention. Throughout the semester, we will consider works of poetry, fiction, and narrative nonfiction. Students will present pieces in workshop and engage with the possibilities of the page in rigorous discussion. Short exercises, such as experimenting with voice, will expand the writer's range.

Prerequisites: 207, 209, or 211.

Open to juniors and seniors.

Senior Creative Writing Seminar (English 305-06)

Senior Composition is a year-long creative writing course aimed at refining craft repertoire, developing a practice of rigorous revision, and producing a written project of style and substance, which may range from a collection of poetry, a sequence of stories, to a short novel. This class will begin with the notion that revision and the revising *mind* are fundamental engines of literary composition. We will read a number of texts, considering the question of how a writer "revises" a notion and/or tradition to create a centripetal force holding together a lengthier work or sequence. How might a constraint both generate diffuse work and adhere as a collection? How might a voice cinch together stories or a collection of verse? How can the fragment insinuate a coherent narrator, sensibility, or concept? Class will operate both as a workshop and a laboratory for critical-creative practice. We will aim to articulate the *raison d'être* of our work, and our intentions for how it will converse with the larger world of literary texts.

Please see page 10 for information on applying for this course.

Guidelines for Requesting Letters of Recommendation

Every academic year, members of the English department write hundreds of letters of recommendation for students and former students. This is, of course, a part of their work as teachers and mentors, and students should not be shy about asking for recommendations. However, faculty members take considerable time on the task; write in detail, and make every effort to present a candidate in the best possible light. They write different letters, of course, for each individual, and they write letters designed for a variety of applications, including graduate school, law school, medical school, summer fellowships, traveling fellowships, study abroad programs, prizes, employment prospects, and internships. Students, therefore, should do what they can to give faculty the time and information needed to write successfully on their behalf. Here are some guidelines, adapted from those issued to undergraduates at Harvard:

- * Give at least three, preferably four or more, weeks' notice for any request. Even if you know that the instructor has a letter already on file, do not assume that it can be changed and quickly printed. Letters may need significant revision to fit a particular purpose.
- * Include a written statement of the due date and whether it is a postmark or a receipt date.
- * Provide a written description of the purpose of the letter and/or a copy of instructions intended for the person writing. If there are multiple letters for different purposes, provide a description for each (e.g., graduate school, law school, traveling fellowship).
- * Make sure to provide the instructor with your statement of purpose or letter of intent for each application. This statement is crucial to the success of your application, and it is essential for your instructor to read it when writing on your behalf. If your instructor is willing to work with you on the statement, you should certainly take advantage of the opportunity.
- * Offer to provide copies of class papers and of any other papers directly relevant.
- * Fill out any forms as completely as you can. Do not expect the person writing for you to fill out any information that you yourself know.
- * Offer to provide a copy of your transcript (an unofficial one is fine) and a CV.
- * Offer to have an individual conference about the reasons for your application(s). At the very least, explain these reasons either by including a written statement or by including a draft of your project or statement of purpose submitted with your application.
- * Make certain to fill out any waiver request, either yes or no. This is easily missed.
- * Never assume that a letter can be e-mailed at the last minute. This puts unacceptable constraints on the person writing on your behalf.