



DEPARTMENT

**The English Major  
Handbook**

**2024-2025**

## Contents

Professors of the English Department	page 2
Courses that Fulfill English Major Requirements	pages 3-4
Requirements for English Major	page 4-5
Pathways and Correlate Sequences in English	pages 5-6
Opportunities in the English Department	page 6-7
Frequently Asked Questions	pages 7-9
Independent Study and Community Engaged Learning	page 9
Planning Your Senior Year	page 10
Thesis	page 11
Creative Work in Your Senior Year	page 11-12
Guidelines for Requesting Letters of Recommendation	page 13

English Majors and Correlates may not take English Courses NRO.

**The English Department  
2024 to 2025**

**English Department Faculty Academic Year 2024- 2025**

*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 Assistant Professor of English

**Robert DeMaria**, Professor of English

**Eve Dunbar**, Professor of English

<sup>a</sup> **Leslie C. Dunn**, Professor of English

**Katie Gemmill**, Assistant Professor of English

**Eli Gottlieb** Adjunct Assistant Professor of English

**Wendy Graham**, Professor of English and Chair

**Joshua Harmon**, Visiting Associate Professor of English

<sup>b</sup> **Thomas Hill**, Adjunct Assistant Professor of English

**Jean M. Kane**, Professor of English

**Amitava Kumar**, Professor of English

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<sup>b</sup> **Timothy Liu**, Adjunct Assistant Professor of English

<sup>a</sup> **Zoltán Márkus**, Associate Professor of English

**Molly S. McGlennen**, Associate 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

**Nina Shengold**, Adjunct Assistant Professor of English

<sup>a</sup> **Tyrone R. Simpson, II**, Associate Professor of English

**Mark Taylor**, Visiting Assistant Professor of English

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**Christine Vines**, Adjunct Assistant Professor of English

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<sup>a</sup> *On leave 2024/25, second semester*    <sup>b</sup> *On leave 2024/25, second semester*

<sup>ab</sup> *On leave 2024/25*

## Course offerings in the English Department

Courses in **bold** are scheduled for the 2024- 2025 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>
<b>101 The Art of Reading and Writing</b>	
<b>105 Literature X</b>	
<b>170 Approaches to Literary Study</b>	
<b>178 Improvisational Writing</b>	INT
<b>203 These American Lives: New Journalisms</b>	
<b>205 Introductory Creative Writing</b>	
<b>206 Intermediate Creative Writing</b>	
<b>207 Intermediate Creative Writing: Literary Non-Fiction</b>	
<b>209 Advanced Creative Writing: Narrative</b>	
<b>211 Advanced Creative Writing: Verse</b>	
<b>217 Literary Criticism &amp; Theory</b>	
<b>218 Literature, Gender, and Sexual</b>	REGS
<b>222 Early British Literature</b>	pre-1800
<b>223 Surrealism Across the African Diaspora</b>	REGS
<b>225 American Literature, Origins to 1865</b>	pre-1800 or pre-1900
<b>226 American Literature, 1865-1925</b>	REGS or pre-1900
<b>227 Harlem Renaissance/Precursors</b>	REGS or pre-1900
<b>228 African American Literature</b>	REGS
<b>229 Asian-American Literature, 1946-present</b>	REGS
<b>233 Carceral Literature of the Caribbean</b>	
<b>235 Old English</b>	pre-1800
<b>236 Beowulf</b>	pre-1800
237 Medieval Literature	pre-1800
<b>240 Shakespeare</b>	pre-1800
<b>241 Shakespeare</b>	pre1800
<b>243 Twentieth Century Black Writers Against the Surveillance State</b>	REGS
<b>245 The Enlightenment</b>	pre-1800
<b>247 Eighteenth Century British Novels</b>	pre-1800
248 The Age of Romanticism	pre-1900
<b>249 Victorian Literature</b>	pre-1900
<b>255 Nineteenth Cent British Literature</b>	pre-1900
<b>256 Modern British and Irish Literatures</b>	
<b>257 The Novel/English after 1945</b>	
<b>262 Postcolonial Literatures</b>	REGS
265 Selected Author: <i>The Brontës</i>	
<b>266 Yellowbacks: The Exhibition</b>	INT
<b>270 New York Stories</b>	INT
<b>271 Shakespeare on Screen</b>	INT
<b>273 Slow and Close: Toni Morrison</b>	INT
<b>275 Vassar Critical Journal Intensive</b>	INT
277 Reading and Writing Outdoors	INT
279 American Literature in Archives	INT

290 Community Engaged Learning	INT
298 Independent Study	OTH
300 Senior Tutorial	INT
<b>304 Creative Writing Seminar</b>	
<b>305/306 Senior Creative Writing Seminar</b>	
<b>315 Studies in Performance</b>	<b>pre-1800</b>
<b>319 Race and its Metaphors</b>	<b>REGS</b>
<b>320 Studies in Literary Traditions</b>	<b>REGS</b>
<b>328 Literature/Amer Renaissance</b>	<b>pre-1900</b>
<b>329 American Literary Realism</b>	<b>pre-1900</b>
<b>341 Studies in the Renaissance</b>	<b>pre-1800</b>
342 Studies in Shakespeare	pre-1800
<b>345 Milton</b>	<b>pre-1800</b>
<b>351 Studies in Nineteenth-Century British Literature</b>	<b>pre-1900</b>
352 Studies in Romanticism	REGS or pre-1900
355 Twentieth and Twenty-First Century Poetry	REGS
357 Studies in Twentieth-Century Literature	
370 Transnational Literature	REGS
374 Experimental Fiction Laboratory	INT
<b>375 Seminar in Women's Studies</b>	<b>REGS</b>
<b>380 Then Whose Negro Are You?: On the Art and Politics of James Baldwin</b>	<b>REGS</b>
<b>381 Visions and Revisions of the Fall</b>	

Students may receive credit toward the major for other courses offered in the programs (when taught or team-taught by members of the department) upon approval of the Chair or the Associate Chair. If you have questions about a particular course, please contact the Chair or Associate Chair.

## **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.

## **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, and approaches or methods of study. Given the scope of the discipline, the correlate sequences we offer allow students to tailor their programs to individual interests within the discipline while maintaining a broad understanding of the contexts surrounding their 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 Africana, American, Urban, and Women’s, Feminist, and Queer Studies.

The correlates 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, then, to take the courses in sequence, beginning with ENGL 101 and either ENGL 105 or ENGL 170, moving on to 200-level courses, and concluding with 300-level seminars.

Since many of the courses in the English Department are topics courses that change from year to year, we cannot list all the courses that, in any given year, may be applied to correlate sequences. If you wish a special topics course to count towards one of the correlate sequences, you should check with the associate chair to make sure that course is appropriate for the correlate sequence you are pursuing. Students may count intensives towards the total units of English coursework required for the correlate; however, intensives do not fulfill the 300-level seminar requirement in your area of specialization.

The department offers five correlates in English with a minimum of six units required to complete each correlate sequence.

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

#### **Pathways:**

- British and American Literary History
- Creative Writing and Literary Forms
- Gender, Sexuality, and the Body
- Literary Geographies
- Race, Ethnicity, and Indigeneity

*Please refer to the website for a full description of the required courses for each Pathway and a guide to our Correlates.*

**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.

### **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.

### **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.

### **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.

### **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.

## **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 and between students and 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 notified 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 Instagram page. (@vassar\_english)

**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. These intimate gatherings offer the 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 FWSs, when asked by the instructor.

The **Vassar Critical Journal** provides students with publishing experience at every stage of the process. Students may begin as writers, submitting their own work to the journal. They then act as literary agents, reading all submissions and deciding which essays they enjoy and which will proceed to the editing level. They each offer editorial comments and advice on each accepted submission, sending the essays back to the writers for revision and doing final copy edits for publication. They also are expected to promote the journal throughout the course and be responsible for the layout and look of the issue on the whole. Collectively, students compose an editors' note to be placed at the head of the publication.

The **Vassar Review** is an international, multidisciplinary literary arts journal that fosters working relationships between faculty, students, and published artists in order to engage its annual theme with care and reflective insight. The journal is a revival of the former literary arts magazine published by the faculty and students of Vassar College. VR entered the literary scene in 1927 shaped by a small circle of students, including Elizabeth Bishop. Today, the journal is international in scope and multidisciplinary in nature, across both a print and digital interface. Each academic year culminates with a printed publication and a digital supplement.

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 page and on the English Department bulletin board early in the spring semester. (Instagram: *@vassar\_english*)

## **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 during an international education experience 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 towards 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 international education 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, if your international education credits are approved English credits, they will count towards your English major. 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.

**What about English credits taken over the summer at another institution? Do they also transfer as ungraded work; do they count towards 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 abroad during my junior year or during summer session, count as a 300-level credit?**

Generally speaking, the answer is "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 consider counting a full unit intensive (or two .5 unit 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 consider counting a full unit intensive (or a two .5 unit 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 postgraduate 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 not a separate program for creative writing within the Vassar English Department, there is a pathway in Creative Writing and Literary Forms. We 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" semester by sophomores, juniors, and seniors. **However, the course is only open to first-years in the spring or b-term.** This course serves as an introduction to the writing of both fiction and poetry.

The department also offers *English 207, Intermediate Creative Writing: Literary Non-fiction*; *English 209, Advanced Creative Writing: Narrative*; *English 211, Advanced Creative Writing: Verse*; and *English 304: Creative Writing Seminar*. We accept AMST/*English 203, These American Lives: New Journalisms*, when an English professor helms the course. Please note, **these courses are not available to first-year students.**

There is no prerequisite for *English 207, Intermediate Creative Writing: Literary Non-fiction*.

English 205 or 207 are prerequisites for both *English 209, Advanced Creative Writing: Narrative & English 211, Advanced Creative Writing: Verse*.

English 207, 209, or 211 are prerequisites for *English 304: Creative Writing Seminar*, which is only open to juniors and seniors.

A writing portfolio is also required for students wishing to take *English 305-306*, the year-long *Senior Creative Writing Seminar*. This course is limited to seniors, and you must be an English major or correlate to apply. Permission of the instructor is required.

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.

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

The project must fall clearly within the scope of our concerns as an English Department. Projects involving a student's work in literacy: volunteer teaching and tutoring; creative writing workshops; writing activities of all kinds; and publishing, such as reading manuscripts for TV, Film, Theater, podcasts are acceptable.

You are required to submit a written proposal to the Office of Community Engaged Learning during pre-registration. 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.

Community Engaged Learning can count as an Intensive, but you must consult the associate chair to get it approved.

### **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 international education 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.

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 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 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,

#### **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 2025**, 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,

### **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 experiment 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.

#### **Who can take the Senior Creative Writing Seminar?**

This course **admits only Creative Writing correlates and English majors.** By Special Permission.

Try to submit samples of the kind of writing that you think you may want to concentrate on in the Senior Creative Writing Seminar. However, it is more important that you submit writing that you feel best shows your abilities. 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). Feel free to use samples of writing you have done for other courses; that is, you need not write something new for this process. The names of students selected for English 305-306 will be posted outside the English Office. Enrollment is limited to twelve students.

### **Guidelines for Requesting Letters of Recommendation**

Every academic year, members of the English department write dozens 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.
- \* 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 faxed or emailed at the last minute. This puts unacceptable constraints on the person writing on your behalf.