ENGLISH MAJOR

MAJOR DESCRIPTION

The English Department offers courses that foster critical thinking about the relationships among literature, culture, and history. Students of English become adept critics of poetry, novels, essays, and plays. They develop knowledge of the history of literary culture and about the evolving genres, forms, and ideologies of literary expression. They study the relation of literary texts to their historical contexts, and they learn to read both literary and nonliterary texts critically. As they develop their knowledge, students of English hone their skills as critical writers and explore their potential as creative voices.

ADMISSION TO THE MAJOR

Students considering majoring in English should consult the department website (wesleyan.edu/english). Potential majors must take ENGL201: Ways of Reading in their first or second year. Students who have taken the course and received a grade of B- or better will be admitted as majors during the spring term of their sophomore year. Students who take the course during that term will be admitted provisionally, pending the receipt of a grade of B- or better. In exceptional circumstances, and with the approval of the department chair, students who have not taken ENGL201 by the end of the sophomore year may be admitted to the major contingent on completion of ENGL201 in the junior year.

MAJOR REQUIREMENTS

The English major at Wesleyan consists of 10 full-credit courses at the 200-level or higher, or the equivalent of partial credit courses. All but three of these credits, and all courses taken to meet the core requirements, must be taken at Wesleyan or in the department’s Sussex Program. With approval of a major advisor, one upper-level course from outside the department that bears on the study of literature may also be counted toward the minimum 10 credits. Appropriate credits transferred from other institutions may also be counted toward the 10-credit requirement.

The Current Major Program: Classes of 2021 and 2022

This program will end with the Class of 2022 and consists of the gateway course, ENGL201: Ways of Reading, and three overlapping sets of courses: requirements, concentration, and electives. One course can count for up to two core requirements and a concentration if applicable.

Core Requirements: In addition to ENGL201: Ways of Reading, one course of each must be taken in the following areas:

- Literary History I
- Literary History II
- Literatures of Difference
- Theory

Descriptions are available on the department website (http://www.wesleyan.edu/english/).

Concentrations: Four courses in any one of these specialized areas of study, one of which must be a 300-level course:

- American Literature
- British Literature
- Creative Writing
- Race and Ethnicity
- Theory and Literary Forms

Descriptions are available on the department website (http://www.wesleyan.edu/english/).

Electives. Other courses numbered 200 or higher. One FYS in English may be counted as a major elective.

The Major Program: Class of 2023 and Beyond

As before, the English major requires 10 total credits. The revised program eliminates the concentrations but expands the core requirements needed to complete the major. It also allows a choice of two pathways to completion in either Literature or Creative Writing.

Core Requirements: In addition to the gateway course ENGL201: Ways of Reading, eight additional core requirements must be fulfilled for completion of the major. An individual course may fulfill up to two core requirements—thus core requirements may be completed with as few as 4 or as many as 8 courses. These courses must be taken within the English department or through the department’s Wesleyan-Sussex Exchange Program.

- Literary History: 3 courses
  --Literary History 1: to 1660
  --Literary History 2: 1660-1870
  --Literary History 3: 1870-present
- Literary Geography: 3 courses
  --World Literature
  --British Literature
  --American Literature
- Theory
- Creative Writing

Paths Through The Major (10 total credits required)

- Literature: Core Requirements (see above), electives numbered above 201, and at least one 300 level course.
- Creative Writing: Core Requirements (see above), electives numbered above 201, and 4 creative writing courses that meet the following criteria: 1.) One Creative Writing course at any level. (Completion of the Creative Writing core requirement noted above fulfills this requirement.) 2.) Two 300-level Creative Writing courses (Workshops and Special Topics) with minimum grade of B+.
  3.) One Upper-Level Creative Writing Workshop with minimum grade of B+.

Electives: One FYS in English may be counted as a major elective.

GENERAL EDUCATION

English majors do not need to fulfill the GenEd requirements to complete the major or write an Honors thesis. However, GenEd fulfillment is required to declare more than a combined total of two majors, certificates, and minors and to be eligible for Phi Beta Kappa and University Honors.
COURSES FOR NON-MAJORS

The department offers several FYS courses especially designed for first-year students. First-year students may also be admitted to many other department courses; please check individual listings for details.

STUDENT LEARNING GOALS

- Develop skills in reading, interpreting, discussing, and writing about literature. English majors learn to be adept critics of poetry, novels, essays, and plays.
- Experiment with or develop the ability to produce new works of literature.
- Build knowledge of the history of literature and develop critical thinking about the relationships among literature, culture, and history.
- Become conversant with literary theory.

STUDY ABROAD

The English Department encourages its majors to consider the valuable experience of study abroad. Since 1990 the English Department has sponsored a Spring Semester Study Abroad program at the University of Sussex in Brighton, England. The program is limited to a select group of English majors who study with regular Sussex students for two full British terms, earning five Wesleyan credits. Sussex courses may be counted toward major requirements. Students pay Wesleyan tuition and receive Wesleyan financial aid. Study abroad policies are described in detail on the departmental website. (http://www.wesleyan.edu/english/students/studyabroad.html)

ADVANCED PLACEMENT

Students with AP scores of 4 or 5 in either English Literature or English Composition, or with scores of 5–7 on an English A1 or English A2 International Baccalaureate exam, will receive one course credit. No extra credit is given for taking more than one exam. This credit does not count toward the major.

LANGUAGE REQUIREMENT

There is no language requirement for the English major.

PRIZES

The Department of English annually gives out an array of academic awards, fellowships, and prizes. Fellowships and writing prizes may require applications and submission of writing samples. Full explanations are available at the department website (http://www.wesleyan.edu/english/).

TRANSFER CREDIT

Students may obtain transfer credit in English for courses taken at other universities in the United States in the summer or during a leave of absence. Courses must be approved by the Department of English faculty member responsible for transfer of credit. Students should expect to provide documentation from a course catalog to receive advance permission. In most cases, on completion of courses taken at other universities, students will need to show additional documentation (e.g., syllabi and assignments) demonstrating their coursework to receive transfer credit. No more than two credits may be earned during a summer. More detailed information can be found on the department website (http://www.wesleyan.edu/english/students/credit.html).

HONORS

The bachelor’s degree with honors in English is awarded on the basis of an outstanding academic record and an honors thesis written during the senior year. Students are eligible to write a critical thesis if they have an average of 91.7 in the courses counting toward the major (at least six courses by the end of the junior year) and have completed a substantial research paper in a departmental course designated research or research option. Students wishing to write a creative thesis need not fulfill the research requirement, but they must have a 91.7 average in courses counting toward the major and have received an A- or better in at least two creative writing courses that count toward the major, one of which must be an intermediate or advanced workshop taken at Wesleyan. English majors do not need to fulfill the GenEd requirements to write an honors thesis. However, GenEd fulfillment is required to declare more than a combined total of two majors, certificates, and minors and to be eligible for Phi Beta Kappa and University Honors. A detailed description of the process for earning honors can be found on the department website (http://www.wesleyan.edu/english/students/honors.html).

CAPSTONE EXPERIENCE

English majors may undertake capstone experiences in several ways. Students who are eligible and who qualify to be candidates for honors may enroll in a two-semester honors tutorial that culminates in the submission of an honors thesis. Students may also propose a one- or two-semester senior essay project. In addition, in each of the major concentrations/pathways, students are required to complete a 300-level seminar. This seminar may be taken before the senior year.