

## Graduate Studies in English at Rochester

**T**he MA and PhD programs at the University of Rochester offer students the scholarly resources and intellectual energy of a major research institution in an environment that permits close personal attention and open exchange. Graduate students interact with a faculty of active scholars and teachers whose publications and professional engagements continue to earn the English Department national and international recognition. The current English department faculty includes six Guggenheim Fellows, a MacArthur Foundation Fellow and Pulitzer Prize finalist, as well as recipients of numerous fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the American Council of Learned Societies, the Fulbright Foundation, the National Humanities Center, the Folger Shakespeare Library, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the Mellon Foundation. *Lingua Franca* identified the University of Rochester as one of the country's leading programs in cultural studies and in film theory; these areas of research strength function as part of a department centrally committed to historically based literary study across the full range of British and American literatures, and they complement the department's history of strength in medieval studies, modern literature, text editing and theory, and creative writing. A number of important scholarly journals are based in the English Department at Rochester, including *Blake: An Illustrated Quarterly* and the *Blake Archive* online hypertext project (in cooperation with the University of Virginia, the Getty Foundation, and the Library of Congress). The *Chaucer Bibliographies* series (published by the University of Toronto Press) is located in the department, as is the *Medieval English Text Series*, published by the Consortium for the Teaching of the Middle Ages (TEAMS). Graduate course offerings reflect the diversity of intellectual interests in the department—interests which include not only the traditional areas of literary study, but also such fields as African American studies, cultural studies, gender studies, film and media studies, rhetoric and literacy. Among the more distinctive features of the department is its sustained commitment to interdisciplinary research and **teaching**. Drawing on the particular convergences of research and teaching strength in the department and on distinctive resources and research opportunities for graduate study, the department encourages graduate students to design their programs in relation to one or more of three broadly-based areas of scholarship: **Literature and History**, **Contemporary Writing**, and **Text and Medium**. These are not designed to replace traditional areas of training and expertise (such as Medieval, Renaissance, Romantic, Victorian, American, African American, Film) but rather to complement them by providing additional contexts through which field-specific literary studies can be pursued.

## Graduate Programs

The English Department offers both an MA and PhD in English; each program has its own separate admissions process. The PhD program is designed to be completed in five years; students who enter the program with an MA can sometimes complete their degree requirements in four years. We have an excellent placement record for our graduates, and Rochester PhDs hold academic positions in some of the nation's best colleges and universities. Applicants who wish to pursue the PhD should apply directly to the PhD program. The MA Program requires one year of course work, followed by an MA thesis or exam. Although some students in the MA program have subsequently been admitted into the PhD program, the MA program has its own integrity and is not designed to lead into our PhD program. Rochester MAs have pursued careers in publishing, higher education, and business, and they have also been successful in gaining admission to other PhD programs.

Policies and regulations for graduate study in English are established by the department's Graduate Studies Committee, chaired by the Director of Graduate Study (DGS). The makeup of the committee (which includes one graduate student) is determined each year by the department, with graduate students electing their own representative. The committee acts on matters such as general requirements and standards, and procedures for qualifying and language examinations and for recommending candidates for scholarships and fellowships. It also consults with the DGS on requests for exceptions to standard procedures. Requests for committee action on any matter should be made in writing to the DGS. All changes in policy must be approved by the full faculty.

The DGS is responsible for overseeing the program of all students in the MA and PhD programs. PhD students should begin forming their own committees as early as possible; the DGS will advise new graduate students in their first semesters in the program, assist in the formation of individual committees, and ensure that students are aware of the policies and regulations of the program. The DGS will help set up course schedules in the first two semesters of study, will act on all applications for transfer of credit or changes in schedules or on transcripts, will approve the makeup of individual committees and candidates' lists for their fields, and will sign off on thesis and dissertation proposals. All questions about these matters should be brought to the DGS.

All students in the MA and PhD programs must sustain a satisfactory level of performance in all their work. For record-keeping purposes, each course employs one of two systems of grading: S (Satisfactory) or U (Unsatisfactory); or letter grades (A, A-, and so on). One course grade lower than B does not automatically mean withdrawal, though not more than ten hours of credit toward the MA degree may be below B. PhD students are expected to maintain grades at the B+ or A level. A succession of B's or an absence of A's constitutes grounds for the DGS and the Graduate Studies Committee to advise probation or withdrawal from the program.

Graduate students are responsible for conscientious participation in course work, and for completing assigned reading, reports, and papers on time. (The DGS may make

exceptions for unexpected illness or other unforeseen interruptions.) Degrees will not be awarded until all work is completed. PhD students must have completed work for all courses, and had grades recorded by the Registrar, before they take the Qualifying Exams. PhD students must also have completed the Language Exam before setting up Qualifying Examinations.

## **The Doctoral Program in English**

The course of study for the PhD degree begins with two years (sixty credits) of course work for students entering with a BA in English or related fields, and a further year (thirty credits) of research and preparation for exams. These courses may include independent readings courses designed by the student in consultation with a member of faculty and approved by the DGS. Students entering the program with an MA in English may, subject to approval by the DGS, transfer up to thirty graduate credits and thereby shorten their course work. Students take their Qualifying Exams before the end of their third year (see “QUALIFYING EXAMS,” below). Students must finish all incompletes and pass the Language Exam before scheduling their qualifying exams. A thesis proposal should be filed with the Department as soon as possible after the Qualifying Exams but in no case later than the end of the first semester of the student’s fourth year in the program.

In the summer after their first year, all PhD students enroll in a graduate seminar in writing pedagogy (subject to the approval of the Director of the College Writing Programs); in the first semester of their second years students teach their own sections of a freshman course in “Reasoning and Writing” while enrolled in a Practicum on the teaching of writing. For the rest of years two through five, again subject to the approval of the Director of College Writing, students continue to teach, while completing their own course work (Year Two), preparing for and taking exams (Year Three), and writing the dissertation (Years Four and Five). Students in good standing are guaranteed teaching through their fifth year, generally teaching in the College Writing Programs for three years and in the English Department for one year. An oral defense of the dissertation is required by the University. Students should plan to complete their dissertations and undertake a successful job search by no later than the beginning of their sixth year.

### **Fields for the Ph.D.**

Students must take exams in two fields—one historical field and one conceptual field. Exceptions to this policy may be proposed to the DGS in particular cases by a student and his or her committee.

The lists for both fields will be constructed by the candidate in close consultation with a committee consisting of at least three faculty members from the Department of English, and one faculty member from outside the Department. “Historical” fields will include those traditionally recognized within the discipline (Old English, Middle English, 16<sup>th</sup>-

Century British, 17<sup>th</sup>-Century British, Restoration and 18<sup>th</sup> Century, 19<sup>th</sup>-Century British, 20<sup>th</sup>-Century British, American Literature to 1900, 20<sup>th</sup>-Century American). Students may choose to combine fields or structure them in somewhat different ways (e.g., British and American Modernism, or Late Medieval and Renaissance Literature); they may also substitute new historical fields of comparable scope for areas of study not included in the above list. A historical field in Film, for example, might be American Sound Cinema. Conceptual fields may be critical theory fields, literary history fields, genre fields, history of ideas fields, or thematic fields. Conceptual fields should be designed to cover ground well beyond the student's area of historical specialization (in other words they should not be narrow, self-contained subsets of the historical field.) Sample lists are available in the Koller-Collins Library and from the Secretary for Graduate Study.

The Qualifying Examinations are an occasion for students to display their expertise in their chosen historical and conceptual fields; their main function is to help students develop the intellectual and scholarly credentials necessary for success in the profession.

## **Committees**

Exam committees for Ph.D. Qualifying Exams, as mandated by the University, must include four faculty members, three from the student's home department and one from outside the Department. In some cases—for example, for dissertations in film studies or other interdisciplinary projects—more than one committee member may be appointed from outside the Department, subject to the approval of the Graduate Studies Committee.

In selecting faculty members to serve on their committees, students should choose those who can provide the most expertise in their chosen fields of study. Students should aim to create a committee that reflects a reasonable balance between the two fields represented. Since in most cases committee members will also serve as dissertation readers, students should also think about which faculty members they feel they can work well with over time. (It is not required, however, that dissertation readers be members of the Qualifying Exams committee.) Both faculty advisors and the DGS should be able to help students choose appropriate faculty for their committees.

## **Assessment**

Committee members, in working with students to prepare lists, will in effect be assessing the student's progress at each stage. Committee members are responsible for judging the substance, comprehensiveness, and appropriateness of the lists, and for certifying the student's preparedness. In the examination itself, the committee may decide that the written exams are strong, marginal, or failing; in the latter two cases, the committee must decide whether to continue with the oral exam. At the conclusion of the examination, the committee must determine whether the student has passed the entire exam, failed one part of the exam (written or oral) that must be re-taken, or failed the entire examination. In the latter case, the committee must judge whether the student will be permitted to take the

entire examination a second time. A student who fails part or all of an exam cannot change committee members or form a new committee without the permission of the DGS. The examination (or any part of it) may only be attempted twice; a second failure will result in removal from the program.

## **Time Frame**

To remain in good standing in the program, students must take their Foreign Language Exam (see below, “Foreign Language Requirement”) by the end of their second year, and their Qualifying Exams by the end of their third year; exceptions need to be approved by the Graduate Studies committee. Students who enter the program with an MA may choose to take their qualifying exams as early as Spring of their second year. Students who do not complete their exams before the beginning of their fourth year will not be eligible for further teaching (including summer courses) through the Department; when they have completed the exams, their eligibility will be reconsidered.

## **Scheduling Ph.D. Qualifying Exams**

When a student wishes to schedule an exam, he or she must make a request to the DGS in writing at least one month before the first day of the written exams. Final copies of the reading lists for each field must be approved and on file at this time. The student’s request should be made on forms available from the Secretary for Graduate Study. The following information will be required: requested dates for written exams (generally, two consecutive days); requested date for oral exam (generally, about a week after the written); the names of the fields in which the student will be examined; the names of the four committee members; and the signatures of at least three of these.

## **The Exam: Writtens**

Students will take separate exams in each of the fields on which they are being examined. They will be given a choice of questions, from which they will be expected to answer two for each of their fields. Students will be given four hours to complete each exam. Exams are closed book. If they choose, students may write the exam at a location away from the Department. (Extra time will be allowed for travel.) Most students choose to produce their responses on a computer.

The Chair of the committee is responsible for collecting questions for the written exams from the committee members. The committee may want to meet as a group to discuss the make-up of the exam, or the Chair may take on the responsibility for compiling and correlating questions. Exams should contain questions from each of the departmental members of the committee. All questions collected from members of the committee for the two field exams must be submitted to the DGS at least one week before the date of

the first written exam. The Secretary for Graduate Study will type final copies of the exams and see that they are available to the students on the day of their exams.

## **The Exam: Orals**

Oral exams should be scheduled within a week of the written exams, and last two hours. The exam will cover both fields, generally with equal time being given to each. Frequently, examiners begin their line of questioning by following up on responses from the written exams, but the exam is by no means limited to such follow-up. Students should be prepared to discuss any and all of the works on their lists and to explain their rationale for defining their fields in the way they have.

## **Incompletes**

If a student requests an Incomplete grade for a course, this must be approved by the course instructor and formalized by a "Memo of Understanding" signed by both and filed with the DGS. This memo should outline the course work that remains to be done and set a time limit for completion of this work. Any student who receives an incomplete in a graduate course must complete the work for that course by the beginning of the semester two semesters from the time of the original course. This means, for example, that for an incomplete taken in Fall 2005, all work must be submitted by the beginning of Fall semester 2006; for an incomplete taken in Spring 2006, all work must be submitted by the beginning of Spring semester 2007. Students will not be allowed to convert retroactively any courses for which they have officially registered from credit to "audit" status. Ph.D. candidates will not be permitted to schedule their Qualifying Exams until they have completed the required sixty hours of credit and completed all outstanding incompletes. Students entering with a Master's degree in English from another institution may transfer up to thirty hours of credit towards the Ph.D., but they may not use transferred credits as a substitute for any course enrolled in but not completed at the University of Rochester.

## **Foreign Language Requirement**

The Department requires that all Ph.D. students possess an advanced level of fluency for reading the literature and scholarship of at least one foreign language. By concentrating on a single language, students have the opportunity not only to develop proficiency in translating books and articles of literary criticism and literary history, but also to secure their ability to read works of literature in another language. In order to affirm the importance of this proficiency, and to ensure its achievement, the Department requires that the foreign language requirement be met by the end of the student's second year in the program. Occasionally an individual's Committee, or a thesis director, may decide

that a second or even a third language is necessary for work on a particular topic or in a particular area.

Each student will take responsibility for setting up his or her own exam. The first step is to consult with a member of the English Department who has been designated as an examiner for a particular language. If no one in the department has been so designated for a particular language, candidates should consult with the DGS in order to identify an approved examiner outside the department. Students should provide the DGS with a rationale demonstrating the appropriateness of their choice of a particular language to their field of research and expertise. Then, in consultation with the examiner, students should choose two books that correspond to their rationale; one of these should be a literary text, and one, generally, a work of criticism or scholarship. The student should set the chosen texts at least six weeks in advance of the examination date.

Once the texts have been set, the candidate and the examiner should agree upon fifty pages in each of the two texts from which the examiner will choose one-page excerpts for translation at the time of the exam. Agreement on the 50-page section should take place at least two weeks before the exam date, and at this time the student should make available to the examiner copies of both texts. Finally, on a date settled at the convenience of the candidate and the examiner, the exam will be given in two parts: the student will translate aloud at sight (and without the assistance of a dictionary) a passage of approximately one page from one of the texts, and will produce a written translation of approximately one page from the second. The student and the examiner will jointly determine which text to use for which part of the exam. A dictionary may be used for the written part.

If the candidate does not pass the examination, she or he may determine in consultation with the examiner when it may be taken again. If a student wishes to change languages or examiners, she or he must consult with the DGS. When the exam has been completed successfully, it is the candidate's responsibility to see that the form, certifying a pass and signed by the examiner, is filed with the Secretary for Graduate Studies.

## **The Master's Program in English**

Students enter the MA program from a variety of backgrounds and with a range of educational and career objectives. The program attempts to answer the needs of these different constituencies. Students may obtain a strong preparation in the traditional study of literature, in preparation for teaching or for work in other fields; they may concentrate on writing, rhetoric, and creative writing (poetry or fiction); or they may use the MA program as a preparation for advanced study in a PhD program. The MA program remains separate from the PhD program in English, and admission to the MA does not insure any advantage to candidates who apply to Rochester's PhD program, though a number of MA students have successfully moved from that program to doctoral study in recent years. In addition to the regular MA degree in English, the department cosponsors (with the George Eastman House) an MA degree in Film Preservation and History.

Information on this two-year program can be found on the George Eastman House web site.

The MA program has been set up so that students may finish within a calendar year. MA candidates work out with the DGS a program of thirty credit hours; courses must be at the four-hundred level or above. After finishing course work, MA students may choose to write a thesis, or to take a set of comprehensive field examinations; this work is undertaken in consultation with a faculty advisor, whom students generally ask to work with them during the Spring semester. The advisor can be any full-time member of faculty; it is usually someone with whom the student has taken courses, but may be any faculty member whose fields are connected to the student's.

The Department can provide no financial assistance for students in the MA program, although there are limited resources for partial tuition waivers as determined by the admissions committee.

## **MA Thesis**

The MA thesis should be approximately fifty pages in length, and should explore a scholarly, critical, or aesthetic question in some depth. The topic for the essay should be worked out in detail between the student and his or her advisor. The essay may analyze a single text or group of texts, compare works by different authors, engage a set of disciplinary or interdisciplinary questions, and so on. The essay should show the student's critical and analytical skills at their most developed, as well as showing real mastery of a body of literature and criticism. Essays should include a list of works cited, and they must demonstrate thorough and up-to-date knowledge of appropriate scholarship in the field.

It is possible to do a Creative Writing portfolio as an MA thesis. Specific requirements for such an option have to be worked out with the guidance of an appropriate member of the Creative Writing faculty.

## **Thesis Proposal**

Any MA student who wishes to complete the degree through the MA thesis option must submit a 1-2 page proposal to the Director of Graduate Studies by mid-April. Proposals should include a description of the intended project, and must be accompanied by a brief statement, signed by the student's chosen faculty advisor, endorsing the worth of the project and a willingness to serve as advisor. The proposal and statement should include a time-frame for the completion of the essay. Advisors should be aware of all appropriate deadlines before agreeing to supervise such work.

## **Deadlines**

For MA students wishing to receive an October degree, two copies of the essay/thesis must be submitted—one to the student's advisor and the other to the Graduate Secretary—by August 1. (Essays will be read by the advisor and one additional faculty member.) All incomplete course work must also be submitted by this same date to ensure that grade reports reach the registrar in time. Arrangements for fulfilling incompletes must, of course, be worked out with individual faculty members, and students need to bear in mind that faculty may not be in residence for all or part of the summer and may have additional deadline requirements. It is the student's responsibility to make appropriate arrangements with relevant faculty.

If the student is unable to complete all requirements for the MA degree by August 1, the next degree date is February of the following year. Even if there is no need for additional course work, the student will need to enroll for Continuation status for the Fall semester of their second year. (Continuation fees are currently around \$800 per semester, but are subject to increase.) To receive a February degree, students must submit two copies of their MA essay/thesis to their advisor by December 1; all incomplete work must also be submitted by this time. Students choosing the exam option need to take the exam by this date as well.

## **MA Examination**

The MA Exam is given during the first week of August. Students are expected to answer four questions on the examination (one from each of four designated fields). Questions are set by members of the department who specialize in the appropriate fields, and are reviewed by the DGS; students are not responsible for selecting a committee, although they may wish to prepare for the exam in consultation with a faculty member with whom they have worked. The exam will fall into two parts, one to be taken in the morning and one in the afternoon. Students are expected to spend one hour on each question. This means that students will pick up Part I of the exam at 9:00 a.m. and return it by noon. In the afternoon, students will pick up exams at 1:00 p.m. and return them by 4:00 p.m. This allows for sufficient time to read questions and plan answers before beginning the actual writing. The exams are evaluated by two members of faculty selected by the DGS.

Students may take their exams in a place of their own choosing, and generally compose their responses on a computer. If students choose to take the exam off campus, an additional time allowance will be made for transportation.

Exams are closed-book, and students are expected to observe an honor code in the taking of these exams. If you would like the department to provide space—e.g. in the Robbins Library—for you to take the exam on campus, please inform the DGS, who will try to make appropriate arrangements. Copies of exams given in recent years are available from the Secretary for Graduate Studies and at Robbins Library.

# Areas of Concentration

## I. Literature and History

Literature, though unarguably a part of history, is always renegotiating its relationships with the past and the present, and in that process raising powerful questions about the nature of memory and experience, and the nature of writing itself. The English department remains committed to the study of speech, performance, and writing in English, in all the forms these take across time and space. This broad engagement has led, however, to a cluster of distinctive concerns centered on the intersections that define Literature and History. These concerns include the study of how forms of imaginative writing evolve through history; how imaginative writing reflects and helps to shape larger changes in thought, religion, politics, science, economics; how literature shapes our narratives about the past, as heroic, transgressive, sacred and profane. Work in this field probes the shifting definition of what literature is and does, especially as this is defined by the creation of specific canons and traditions of literature, by the establishment of aesthetic categories, and by broad changes in the nature of our reading practices.

Literature and History examines the ways in which writing and other kinds of language performance articulate what we call a culture (in all its diverse aspects, from subculture to nation to global community). Far from dissolving literature into other areas of study (history, anthropology, sociology), it seeks to make sense of how literature comes into being, of how it engages with broader currents of debate within various cultural registers, and of how, through all these interactions, it sustains for itself a distinctive value and function.

The rubric Literature and History reflects the continuing interests and current work of many of the faculty and graduate students within the Department (please refer to individual faculty and graduate student pages for further particulars). It points to such undertakings as the study of the capacity of individual texts and authors to “transcend” history or to resist it overtly; the history of literary forms and styles (lyric, epic, romance, novel, short story); the history of specific traditions (theatrical, narrative, performative; science fiction, narrative poetry, outlaw texts); the history of readers and the process of reading and interpretation (allegory, orality and literacy, the impact of the visual); the history that marks out specific communities of readers (gender, high and low culture, ethnic and racial identities); and the historical circumstances and legacies of literary texts.

Distinctive resources that support work in Literature and History include the University's association with the [Folger Shakespeare Library](#) in Washington, D. C., where graduate students regularly participate in seminars; access to the special archives of the [George Eastman House](#) and the [International Museum of Photography](#) and the collections of Strong Museum, the [Memorial Art Gallery](#), [Rare Books and Special Collections in Rush Rhees Library](#); on-going projects such as the [TEAMS Middle English Texts Series](#), the [Chaucer Bibliographies](#), and the [Camelot Project](#) (and their long history of national grant support); the [Robin Hood Project](#); international conferences such as *Reconceiving*

*Chaucer, The Cultural Transformations of Robin Hood, and Camelot 2000*; the unparalleled collections for medieval literary and cultural study at the Rossell Hope Robbins Library; the annual Helen Ann Robbins Lecture, and the Robbins Pre-Doctoral Fellowship; the Cornell-Rochester graduate symposium in medieval studies; the Cluster on Pre-Modern Studies; the several medieval publication series associated with **Boydell & Brewer (UR Press)**; and links with faculty and initiatives in other departments and programs (History, Film Studies, Art and Art History, Modern Languages and Cultures, Visual and Cultural Studies, Philosophy, Religion and Classics, Eastman School of Music Humanities, the Susan B. Anthony Institute for Gender and Women's Studies, and the Frederick Douglass Institute for African and African American Studies). Advanced students are eligible for dissertation research fellowships offered through Rush Rhees Library's Department of Rare Books and Special Collections.

## **II. Contemporary Writing**

This rubric brings together a wide range of work centered on the literary practices of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The department has attracted graduate students and faculty with highly developed interests in modern and contemporary literature, culture, theater, and film, and its faculty includes scholars of both modernism and later twentieth century literature, some of whom are also distinguished creative writers. Fiction writers Joanna Scott (MacArthur Foundation Fellow, Lannan Literary Award, Pulitzer Prize finalist) and Dimitri Anastasopoulos, and poets Barbara Jordan (Barnard New Women Poets Prize), and James Longenbach ("Discovery" Award from *The Nation*) continue the department's long history of including acclaimed literary authors on its faculty. The newly opened Hyam Plutzik Library of Contemporary Writing, which houses the William and Hannelore Heyen collection of manuscripts, broadsides and first editions of twentieth century poetry, a remarkable collection containing thousands of items, provides unique research opportunities for the advanced study of contemporary writing. The department's Plutzik Memorial Reading Series is coordinated with courses in contemporary literature, and in recent years, students have had the opportunity to interact with such notable writers as Louise Glück, Robert Pinsky, Salman Rushdie, Jorie Graham, John Ashbery, William Kennedy, Michael Ondaatje, Grace Paley, and Mark Strand. The ongoing project of contemporary writing is thus an integral part of the research and teaching of the department.

Faculty in the department offer courses in contemporary African American and Asian American literature as well as postcolonial literatures and gender studies; as well as in film, media, and contemporary popular culture. The department also draws on the resources of faculty in allied departments (such as Modern Languages and Cultures and Visual and Cultural Studies), who contribute significantly to the study of critical theory and contemporary culture. Graduate seminars and teaching assistantships for creative writing offer special opportunities for students to combine literary scholarship with the development of their own writing. With a strong research profile in twentieth-century literature and culture and contemporary critical theory, and with unique resources for advanced study, Contemporary Writing has proved to be one of the department's leading

fields for graduate study. Advanced students who wish to work with the Heyen collection are eligible for dissertation research fellowships offered through Rush Rhees Library's Department of Rare Books and Special Collections.

### III. Text and Medium

Editorial theory and practice have been areas of significant strength in the department for at least 50 years. Once looked upon as largely practical, editing acquired major status and visibility during the past decades as scholars began to draw on the vast untapped potential of its fundamental questions: Under what precise circumstances and in what precise forms has information been embodied and transmitted in the past? And how should it be transmitted in the future? English Department faculty at the University of Rochester have been at the forefront of these developments, helping to illuminate the way editorial decisions involve basic issues in the nature, shape, transmission, and preservation of information—nothing less than the organization of knowledge. Departmental research and teaching in this area contribute to our understanding of how different media—oral, visual, aural, dramatic, cinematic, electronic—distinctively shape the "messages" that English delivers to its audiences. The astounding literary achievements of the last 500 years in printed stories, poems, plays, and novels have sometimes obscured the role of other media of communication and preservation: oral song; scripted and improvised performance; drawn, engraved, and digitized images; and recorded, filmed, videotaped, and digitized composites. Current approaches combine new technologies with broad aesthetic, cultural, and historical interests. Crossover work of this kind opens new engagements with, for example, African American and Native American narrative traditions and their place within living communities; the effect of etched, hand-colored amalgams of text and image produced by multimedia artists such as William Blake; the narrative and technical elements that contribute to the appeal of genre films such as science fiction; or the function of visual materials in medieval and early modern literature.

The English department boasts considerable resources in this area. The *Medieval English Text Series* edited by Russell Peck, the *Chaucer Bibliographies* edited by Thomas Hahn, and two electronic thematic research collections, the *Camelot Project* edited by Alan Lupack and the *William Blake Archive* edited by Morris Eaves, are major scholarly enterprises that involve profound editorial issues across a range of media and historical conditions. These are all well-established, highly collaborative projects that have attracted participation and recognition from international scholarly communities as well as substantial grant support; they have also provided both research opportunities and financial support for graduate students. They are usefully complemented by a long history of faculty involvement in other kinds of editorial projects (see individual faculty pages).

English department faculty have major research interests in media studies, media history, and the history of technology (orality and literacy, the history of the book, film history, digital media, etc.); stage performance; film studies; authorship, copyright, and intellectual property; and experimental hypermedia.

This array of endeavors is supported by significant local resources: within the university, by the [University of Rochester Press](#), the [Memorial Art Gallery](#), the Multimedia Center, the [Film and Media Studies program](#), [Rare Books and Special Collections](#), the Koller Collins Library, and the [Educational Technology Center](#); off campus by Writers and Books, the Visual Studies Workshop, and the film and photography archives of [George Eastman House and the International Museum of Photography](#). Graduate students working in this area have unique opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration through the university's graduate programs in Visual and Cultural Studies, which has close ties to English, and through the considerable resources of the Eastman School of Music.

## Research Facilities

Our primary research facility is RUSH RHEES LIBRARY, which holds several million volumes in an open-stack environment. In 1997, the Library installed a state-of-the-art electronic catalogue, Voyager, which provides a union listing of all the University's libraries, together with direct links to various on-line resources and archives and to other web sites. Remote access (from on campus and off) and high powered, versatile search capabilities make it well suited to the sophisticated research requirements of graduate students. Graduate students in the Department of English may make use of a variety of specialized collections and several research opportunities unique to the University of Rochester; these enable students, at beginning and advanced levels, to pursue topics in depth, explore new territory, develop interdisciplinary expertise, or work with non-traditional materials.

The KOLLER-COLLINS GRADUATE CENTER—an attractive space within Rush Rhees Library dedicated to research and lectures in literary studies—contains non-circulating collections of particular value to graduate students and faculty in English. The ROSSELL HOPE ROBBINS LIBRARY, a group of more than 20,000 books and periodicals devoted to Medieval Studies, with its own reading rooms and stacks, provides one of the best research facilities in North America for advanced work in Old and Middle English, medieval history and art, and the continental literature of the High Middle Ages. The KOLLER-COLLINS COLLECTION, housed in the main reading rooms of the Center, consists of 7,000 primary texts and reference works in all areas of British and American literature and critical theory; the Collection also includes special holdings in the works of several authors, including Tennyson, Matthew Arnold, Graham Greene, and the Elizabethan dramatists. These collections, together with an adjacent seminar room, reading lounges, and the offices of the Middle English Texts series and the Chaucer Bibliographies, insure that graduate students have unfettered access to essential materials in a space that fosters independent work and enables students to share their professional interests.

The DEPARTMENT OF RARE BOOKS AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS, also located in Rush Rhees Library, houses unique research materials, including books, manuscripts, maps, prints, broadsides, and other printed ephemera, many associates with particular

collections. This corpus of some 75,000 volumes ranges from holographs and incunabula to modern first editions; areas of outstanding strength include earlier English drama, a grouping of nineteenth-century authors (Robert Southey, Benjamin Disraeli, John Ruskin, and others), early American children's books, filmed books, and modern poetry. The University owns unpublished materials associated with a number of Rochester luminaries (Frederick Douglass, Susan B. Anthony, and William Henry Seward), with playwrights and performers of nineteenth-century British and American theater, and with a number of twentieth-century novelists and poets (among them, Adelaide Crapsey, John MacInnes, Hyam Plutzik, John Gardner, and John Williams). Special Collections also possesses an exceptional assortment of Dime Novels published in late nineteenth-century America, encompassing Westerns, science fiction, detective and adventure stories, sports books, and inspirational reading of the Horatio Alger type. The Hyam Plutzik Library of Contemporary Writing, which houses the William and Hannelore Heyen collection of manuscripts, broadsides and first editions of twentieth century poetry, a remarkable collection containing thousands of items, provides unique research opportunities for the advanced study of contemporary writing.

The **SUSAN B. ANTHONY INSTITUTE FOR GENDER AND WOMEN'S STUDIES** provides an interdisciplinary forum for intellectual and pedagogical discussions concerning feminist theory and practice and the academic disciplines of gender and women's studies. The Institute regularly features lectures, conferences, and research seminars, including an annual graduate student conference. The Institute also offers a Graduate Certificate in Women's Studies and supports graduate student teaching and research through travel grants, research grants, teaching fellowships, and an annual award for best dissertation in gender studies.

The **MULTIMEDIA CENTER** provides, among other things, sophisticated computer and video equipment and software for student projects, knowledgeable help in designing and executing such projects, and classrooms outfitted for multimedia instruction. The Center offers a program of brief presentations to introduce novice users to its equipment and facilities. The Multimedia Center also houses the collection of films, videos, and DVDs belonging to the Film Studies Collection (see below).

The **FREDERICK DOUGLASS INSTITUTE FOR AFRICAN AND AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES** has a broad mandate that includes graduate education. The Institute offers interdisciplinary courses through several departments.

The **GEORGE EASTMAN HOUSE**, located several miles from the main campus, possesses an unparalleled collection of photographs, film, and related materials. An international center for film scholars, it has one of the two or three richest film archives in the world. The University's association with the Eastman House provides a channel for students interested in serious study of the history, criticism, and art of film. Eastman House each year sponsors internships especially suited for Rochester Ph.D. students, and

it offers various employment opportunities that have strengthened the credentials of Film Studies students.

The FILM STUDIES PROGRAM on the River Campus has a core collection of more than 900 films of all kinds from many countries and periods, as well as some 3,000 videotapes. These materials are used in teaching the many popular film courses at the University and are also available for private viewing. In addition, the Program provides resources for students interested in pursuing graduate study in film as part of their advanced work in English; Film Studies students also have opportunities to teach, or to assist with instruction in, courses connected to film, video, and cultural studies. The Film Studies Program has had a strong impact not only on students working directly in these areas, but on other graduate students who have applied film criticism and theory to more traditional projects in literary studies.

Finally, FACULTY RESEARCH PROJECTS—*Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly*, the online *Blake Archive*, the Middle English Texts series, the Chaucer Bibliographies, and the Camelot Project among them—have provided students with opportunities to enhance their professional expertise, including research, editorial, and technical skills, and to earn supplemental income. These undertakings have been supported chiefly by outside grants—from NEH, the Getty Foundation, and other sources—and their continuing vitality (and funding) therefore depends largely on the productivity of graduate assistance. The medley of demands, from long-term planning to painstaking formatting or editorial adjustments, from the accommodation of sudden changes in the publishing cycle to the scramble for financial backing, has contributed notably to the credentials Ph.D.s bring to the job market.

## Teaching Opportunities

The English Ph.D. program puts a great deal of emphasis on graduate student teaching as an integral part of a Ph.D. candidate's training and professional identity. Unlike many other programs, we do not ask graduate students to teach in their first year, preferring instead to allow entering students to immerse themselves in their courses and to adjust to the demands of full-time graduate study. Beginning in their second year, Ph.D. students in English are supported through teaching assistantships. The training our students receive in teaching and the variety of teaching experiences we offer have served our students very well when they have come to look for their first faculty positions.

Ph.D. students in English generally do the bulk of their teaching in the **College Writing Program**. Students must apply to teach in the College Writing Program in the Spring of their first year; the program emphasizes discipline-based writing across a wide variety of disciplines. Once accepted into the program, students participate in an intensive summer training program, for which they receive a stipend of \$2,000, and beginning in their second year, they teach one course a semester for the Writing Program. Graduate students who teach in the College Writing Program, receive an additional stipend of \$3,000 per

year, bringing their total stipend to \$15,000. Enrollment in writing courses is limited to 15 students. Each graduate instructor designs his or her own syllabus, and these reflect the student's own passions, interests, and emerging expertise. English Ph.D. students have designed and offered writing courses based on a wide variety of topics including *The Individual and Social Responsibility*, *Representations of School*, *Utopias*, *Visions of America*, and *the Evolution of the Written Word*. Graduate instructors benefit from a strong mentoring program involving faculty in the English Department and the College Writing Program. In addition, graduate instructors have often formed formal and informal mentoring groups, and they have organized department-wide discussions and symposia on pedagogy. Graduate instructors in English are regularly recognized by the University in its awards for excellence in teaching by graduate students.

In addition to their work in the College Writing Program, advanced graduate students have opportunities to assist in large survey courses for the English major and to teach introductory expository and creative writing courses in the English Department. Some students have offered upper-level courses in their fields of specialization, usually through summer teaching. English graduate instructors have regularly taught in the Humanities Program at the [Eastman School of Music](#), and business writing courses at the [William E. Simon Graduate School of Business Administration](#). Ph.D. students in English have served as TAs for Film Studies courses, and they have consistently won teaching fellowships to offer introductory courses for the [Susan B. Anthony Institute for Gender and Women's Studies](#). Other colleges and universities in Rochester that have employed advanced graduate students as teachers of composition, literature, or film include the [Rochester Institute of Technology](#), [Nazareth College](#), [St. John Fisher College](#), [SUNY Brockport](#), [SUNY Geneseo](#), [Empire State College](#), and [Hobart and William Smith College](#). In addition, the Department has established a postdoctoral exchange program with [Cornell University](#).

## **Fellowships and Financial Support**

Students admitted into the Ph.D. program receive full tuition waivers, and stipends of \$12,000 per year. First-year students receive this stipend as outright fellowship support, and receive a further \$2,000 for taking part in a pedagogy workshop during the summer after their first year. Support for students in years two through five is tied to their work as teaching assistants and instructors. English Department Ph.D. students usually teach for three years in the College Writing Program, for which they receive a stipend of \$3,000, bringing stipend levels to \$15,000 per year; the fourth year of teaching is generally within the department, where students may serve as teaching assistants for large courses or as instructors of smaller courses. Assuming satisfactory performance in the Ph.D. program, students can count on five years of support at these levels.

The University sponsors a number of competitive fellowships, at significantly higher stipend levels, for students with exceptional qualifications. These include the Sproull Graduate Fellowships, the Dean's Fellowships, and the Provost's Fellowships. The

Department nominates candidates for appropriate University fellowships during the admissions process.

For advanced Ph.D. students, dissertation fellowships are available through the College and University, and English Ph.D. candidates have had a good track record in winning these.

## Requirements for Admission

Normally, applicants to the Ph.D. program have the equivalent of an undergraduate major or an M.A. in English, although the Department welcomes qualified students who have previously specialized in other related disciplines and who show clear promise for success in English. Applicants to the M.A. program should also have strong undergraduate records in English or a related field.

In assessing an application for admission, the Department pays close attention to the candidate's personal statement, writing sample, and letters of recommendation. At least two letters are required, preferably from faculty in English; most candidates submit three letters. Additional letters from appropriate judges are welcome, though not necessary. The University requires that the applicant submit GRE scores (verbal, quantitative, analytical). Scores for the exam in English Literature are optional. The Department requires applicants to submit a writing sample; this often takes the form of a paper revised from an undergraduate or graduate class. This should offer a demonstration of the candidate's analytical skills and writing ability that is both representative and striking. Essays should comprise a substantial piece of work (10-20 pages, or a comparable excerpt from a longer effort, such as an Honors Thesis) that reflects the candidate's potential for successful graduate study.

## Deadlines

The deadline for applications is **January 15**; students who are admitted will enter the program in the Fall semester. Application forms are included in the brochure on Graduate and Professional Studies which is enclosed with the departmental brochure, both of which can be obtained by contacting the [English department](#). Written inquiries should be directed to: The Director of Graduate Study, the Department of English, The University of Rochester, Rochester, NY, 14627-0451 (phone: 585-275-4092). You may also [e-mail the Department](#) to request an application and brochure, or [download](#) the necessary forms.

[Last updated October 2005]