

User's Handbook The Master of Arts Program in English Department of English Belmont University 2007-2008

Welcome to the Department of English at Belmont University and to the Master of Arts Program in English. This Handbook, along with the Graduate Bulletin, provides information you will need as a student in the program. The Bulletin states university policies governing academic programs and campus life; this handbook duplicates some of that information, but is focused on the M.A. in particular, serving as a guide to the procedures and resources of our curriculum. If you have questions about any of the information in this Handbook or the Bulletin, please contact Dr. Andrea Stover, the Director of Graduate Studies in English at WHB 214; stovera@mail.belmont.edu; (615) 460-6246 in the Fall 2007 semester and Dr. James Wells the upcoming Director of Graduate Studies in WHB 200-I; wellsj@mail.belmont.edu; (615) 460-6239 in the Spring 2008 semester.

I. Description of Program

The Master of Arts in English at Belmont University is a community-based program which seeks to expand students' knowledge and understanding of literature and writing by enhancing their abilities in critical reading, in practical literary analysis, and in effective written and oral communication.

Belmont's Master of Arts in English is a 30-hour program in each of its three tracks. Rather than focusing on a few eras, the course offerings encourage the study of a diversity of literatures and topics. In the Literature and Writing Emphases within the M.A., this breadth in coursework is balanced by 6 hours of thesis research and writing, which enable you to examine a specific topic in depth under the guidance of a faculty mentor. You will emerge from the program with a breadth of knowledge about literature, with diverse ways to approach it, and with experience in scholarly research on a specific topic. To complete the Non-Thesis track, you submit a portfolio of representative course work and a synthesis essay, as well as pass the departmental written comprehensive examination.

This degree is designed to serve as a means to improve your opportunities in fields that require skills of textual analysis, effective written and oral communication, understanding of literature (especially for teaching), and advanced study in English.

II. Admissions Requirements and Application Procedure

Applications for admission to the M.A. program are available on-line at the www.belmont.edu/gradenglish website or from the graduate office in the Department of English. In addition to the completed application form, the prospective student must submit the following application portfolio:

1. Official transcripts from **all** previous college(s) you have attended;
2. A writing sample from a recent academic or professional setting;
3. An application essay of not more than 500 words;
4. Graduate Record Exam scores (general test only, taken within the last five years);
5. Two letters of recommendation;
6. A \$50 non-refundable application fee.

The admissions form provides complete instructions for submitting each of the above items. In addition to the portfolio, you will interview with the Director of Graduate Studies. (If your undergraduate transcript is already on file in the Department of Education, the Director of Graduate Studies in English can, at your request, arrange to have the document transferred to your file in the Department of English.)

Each application portfolio will be reviewed to assess your overall abilities and your potential for success in this program. Applicants are accepted on a rolling admissions pattern; thus, you will be notified of the admissions committee’s decision shortly after the admissions portfolio is completed.

III. Financial Aid

A limited number of academic scholarships—usually \$250 of tuition per course—are available through the graduate program in English, and are based on your progress in the program and GPA. Application forms for these scholarships are available in the Graduate English office, and you must re-apply for these scholarships each semester. Students who do not receive scholarships initially are encouraged to reapply, especially if their work strengthens during the program.

The Student Financial Services will assist you in applying for loans, grants, and scholarships from sources outside the department. For more information, please contact that office at 460-6403.

IV. Course Requirements, Course Load, and Timetable for Degree

The Master of Arts in English, Literature Emphasis:

ENG 5000: Practical Literary Criticism	3 hours
Two Readings courses, selected from the following: 5810, 5820, 5830, 5840*	6 hours
Four literature courses	12 hours
One literature or writing elective	3 hours
ENG 6700 & 6800 – Thesis Research and Writing	<u>6 hours</u>
Total	30 hours

The Master of Arts in English, Writing Emphasis:

ENG 5000: Practical Literary Criticism.....	3 hours
Two Readings courses, selected from the following: 5810, 5820, 5830, 5840*.....	6 hours
Four writing courses.....	12 hours
One writing or literature elective.....	3 hours
ENG 6700 & 6800 – Thesis Research and Writing.....	<u>6 hours</u>
Total.....	30 hours

The Master of Arts in English, Non-Thesis Track

ENG 5000: Practical Literary Criticism.....	3 hours
Three Readings courses, selected from the Following: 5810, 5820, 5830, 5840*.....	9 hours
Six elective courses.....	18 hours
ENG 6600 – Portfolio and Comprehensive Exam†.....	<u>0 hours</u>
Total.....	30 hours

* - students with 9 or more hours of undergraduate survey courses may petition to replace 3 hours of the Readings requirement with 3 hours of electives

† - see explanation of the Portfolio and Exam in section X below

The Master of Arts program is designed for working students; since two seminars per semester is the optimum load for the working student, 6 hours constitute a full-time load. Most students will take at least five semesters to complete the program.

Our graduate courses, with descriptions, are listed in the graduate bulletin and offered on a three-year rotation designed to provide you with a broad background in literary study. After making arrangements with a member of the graduate faculty and gaining the approval of the Director of Graduate Studies in English, you may take up to 6 hours of independent or directed study during your program. Independent or Directed studies should be limited to material not offered in our regular rotation that will better prepare you for your exams and/or thesis.

V. Candidacy

All students must achieve a 3.0 GPA to establish and maintain candidacy in the program. Those students who are accepted with stipulations are required to meet with the Graduate Director after 2 courses (6 hours) have been completed to discuss whether or not candidacy has been established.

Students who do not have a 3.0 GPA are on academic probation, according to the Progress toward Graduation policies that apply to all Belmont graduate programs. Please see the pages on this policy in the Graduate Catalogue under “Academic Policies.” M.A. students who are on probation may be admitted to candidacy the first semester their GPA reaches 3.0 or above.

VI. Second Language Requirement

All M.A. students must have proficiency in a second language at the intermediate undergraduate level. You may demonstrate this proficiency in any of the following ways:

- Undergraduate course credit for second semester, 200-level language. This must be on the undergraduate transcript.
- Completion of second-semester 200-level language course while enrolled in M.A. program.
- Completion of a certificate of intermediate proficiency from a reputable language institute (e.g., Goethe Institute).
- Completion of a reading exam in a language administered by the English Department at Belmont. We administer exams in Latin, French, Spanish, German, Italian, Chinese, and Russian.

Computer languages are not acceptable as second languages, because, as yet, no significant body of literature has been created in them.

(Non-native speakers of English satisfy this requirement by scoring well enough on the TOEFL exam to gain entrance to the graduate program.)

VII. Transfer Credit

The M.A. in English follows the campus policy for acceptance of transfer credit in graduate programs. You may transfer up to six hours of graduate credit with a grade of B from an accredited institution. You must submit the university transcript and the appropriate substitution forms to the Graduate Admissions Committee for approval.

VIII. Grades, Academic Standing, and Limit on Completion of Degree

The M.A. in English follows the campus policies regarding grades, withdrawal from courses, and academic progress in graduate programs. These policies are found in the Graduate Catalogue under “academic policies.” The department allows a 6-year time period from the date of matriculation to the completion of the degree. In extreme circumstances, you may be granted an extension. The petition for extension is made to the Graduate Admissions Committee.

A student in good standing who has completed at least one full term of enrollment and who has a need to be absent from the University for a period of time, but fully expects to return to complete requirements for the degree, may request permission for a leave of absence. The leave of absence request form is to be completed by the student and a letter of request attached. This should be submitted to the Registrar through Belmont Central. A leave of absence is for one term. Requests for an additional term must be requested in writing to Registrar prior to the end of the first leave and will be granted only upon presentation of exceptional circumstances. Students planning to study elsewhere while on leave must have prior approval if credits are to be transferable. While the student is on leave, registration, housing, financial and other administrative information will be e-mailed to the student's Belmont e-mail address and mailed to addresses currently listed in the Belmont administrative system; therefore it is mandatory that the student maintain current information.

If you are not enrolled in courses for any Fall or Spring semester, you must file an application to be re-admitted to the program. This entails filling out the standard application form, but does not require resubmitting any of the supplemental application materials.

The grade of Incomplete may be granted when circumstances beyond your control, such as serious illness or family emergency, prevent you from completing coursework. The instructor of each course determines whether the circumstances warrant the “I,” and whether the “I” to one student is fair to others in the class. If you do not complete requirements for graduation during the semester you register for ENG 6700 or 6800 (Thesis Research and Writing), a grade of “IP” (in progress) will be given.

You have the right to appeal grades. The first level is with the Director of Graduate Studies in English. Before becoming involved in the issue, the Graduate Director will always consult both student and professor to determine whether any agreement can be reached between the two of them before hearing further details of the concern. If no agreement can be reached, the Director may elect to review the concern, or designate a graduate faculty committee to hear the concern. If the director and/or committee can propose a resolution acceptable to faculty and student, then the matter will be resolved here. If either party wishes to pursue the matter further, the line of appeal is to the Department Chair, the Associate Dean of the School of Humanities, the Dean of Arts and Sciences, and the Provost, in that order.

IX. The Faculty Mentor (Literature and Writing Emphases)

You will work with a faculty Mentor on your thesis. A Mentor should have expertise in the area in which you plan to write. A student who identifies a thesis area (and a Mentor) in the middle of the program may make better progress than one who faces 'thesis shock' after completing 24 hours of coursework.

The Mentor relationship often (but not always) commences in a seminar. All graduate faculty are urged to help students recognize good ideas for thesis projects and to direct students towards faculty who can help develop these ideas. Notify the Director of Graduate Studies when you have determined your Mentor, and please consult the Director if you are beginning to define a thesis and have not yet identified a Mentor.

Once you and your Mentor have agreed to work together, the Mentor helps you develop a prospectus and preliminary bibliography for the thesis during ENG 6700 and helps select the other readers of the thesis. These readers may be English graduate faculty members or, alternatively, a member of another department whose perspective would be valuable for your project. The Mentor then directs the writing of your thesis (ENG 6800), and assumes responsibility for guiding you through graduation requirements.

X. The Faculty Mentor (Non-Thesis Track)

By your final advising session, if not sooner, you need to have arranged for a faculty member to be your official Mentor. You will work with your Mentor on assembling your portfolio and writing your reflective synthesis essay, and the Mentor may also be consulted in preparing for your comprehensive examination. Your Mentor should be someone who knows you and your work well, and with whom you have had a productive relationship.

You need to register for ENG 6600 (Portfolio and Comprehensive Examination) as you enter the final semester of your M.A. program. This zero credit-hour course represents the final requirement in the non-thesis track.

The Portfolio

Your portfolio should be a reflection of what you accomplished in writing, both inside and outside of your graduate courses. At a minimum, it should contain

- your final paper project from ENG 5000
- one exam response from 5810, 5820, 5830, OR 5840
- at least 2 longer pieces of formal academic writing
- at least 2 other pieces of writing you did for graduate courses (papers, journals,

writing logs, web pages, reports, creative pieces, etc.)

- any other writing you did during your graduate program you feel is important enough to be included—creative or professional writing, work you did for an internship, etc.
- a reflective piece of no less than 2,000 words, in which you synthesize the work you have done in your M.A. program; you will work with your Mentor on the specific shape of this piece of writing
- syllabi from all of the classes in the M.A. program (for your exam)

The portfolio must be submitted to the Director no less than 6 weeks before graduation (see current Graduate Calendar for specific deadlines). After being scanned onto CDROM, the originals will be returned to you.

The Comprehensive Exam

The Comprehensive exam will be taken 4 weeks before graduation (see current Graduate Calendar for specific deadlines). The exam questions will be created by the Graduate Exam Committee. While the questions will be customized to your individual course of study as reflected in your portfolio, successful examinees should be able

- to answer a series of questions about a poem or passage of prose from a writer prominent in your course work, including questions about authorial, historical, and cultural contexts and which critical approaches might best be used to read the text
- using 3-5 texts designated by the committee, to construct an cohesive essay discussing of one of the following:
 - themes
 - genres/style
 - definitions of literature or literacy
 - critical/pedagogical approaches

Sample exam questions will be available from the Director, and you will be encouraged to prepare for all of the above-mentioned possibilities, though only one of the four types of essay questions will be asked. The exam will be 3 hours in duration, and must be taken on the date scheduled. The Graduate Exam Committee will grade the exam and report the results to the Director, who will communicate them to you within 7 days. The exam may receive a grade of Honors Pass, Pass, or Fail.

In the unlikely event of failure, the Director will explain the decision of the committee, which may be appealed in writing. Barring a successful appeal, you must sign up for ENG 6600 in the following semester to retake the exam.

XI. The Thesis

Perhaps the most important element of your master's work is your thesis. This is the work in which you show your ability to be original in either discerning a problem or issue in literature, analytical in presenting the topic and your argument, thorough in your research, clear and concise in your writing, and—most important—imaginative in your engagement with the larger conversation about literature; OR producing an original work or works of researched creative writing, an ethnography, a report, or some collage of all of these modes. This is the work you will use as primary evidence of your abilities and your achievement in the program. It is also a work that should be intrinsically rewarding. A thesis takes time, attention to detail, mastery of the current state of discussion of your topic, and lots of patience to get MLA form and the thesis format right. You will live and breathe your thesis for a period of months. Yet, when you finish, you should be pleased with your achievement.

Most theses fall between 45-90 pages, although the topic and scope of the research will determine the appropriate length for each individual thesis. We encourage students to excerpt material suitable for publication from the thesis.

The best way to begin a thesis is to write. Thus, you will be asked to submit a prospectus on the thesis **NO LATER THAN** three weeks before the end of the semester in which you are enrolled in 6700. This prospectus should be from 5-10 pages, should present your project, problem, or issue and/or your argument, should give some overview of the content of the thesis, and should have a virtually complete bibliography. The prospectus will be submitted to your Mentor first; when the Mentor approves, he/she will convene your thesis committee, who will discuss your prospectus. We envision this review as one of the highlights of your graduate work, as you discuss with others your idea for your thesis, and think with them how to make the thesis as effective as possible. The Director of Graduate Studies will, when possible, attend this meeting.

There is no thesis defense, but theses will be presented before a gathering of faculty and students during the final semester of your program.

XII. The Thesis Format

The thesis must be prepared and documented according to the latest MLA Handbook. The department specifies margins and a title page appropriate for binding and for placement in the Bunch Library. For assistance with thesis form, please consult Ms. Julie White, who serves as thesis editor. You may call her at 791-8658, on her cell phone at 414-4720, or email her at JulieBWhite@comcast.net to set up an appointment. Please contact her early in the semester in which you sign up for 6800 so that she can get to know you, guide you, and help you as questions arise. **To allow Ms. White time to evaluate your thesis, submit a hard copy of your thesis to her four weeks before graduation.** She will need to see your paper twice: first to make initial corrections and a

second time to review your paper, along with the original marked copy, for final approval. She will be checking for formatting errors; remember that she is not your proofreader.

The final copy of your thesis must be printed on a laser printer. The font may be New York or a standard font using a 10-or 12-point size. The three final copies must be printed on archivable, 20 pound, 8 1/2 by 11", white, 25% (minimum) cotton fiber content paper, available at the Belmont bookstore, or any comparable high-quality thesis paper. If the student secures the services of a typist, the student, not the typist, is responsible for the correct format, spacing, punctuation, spelling, and grammar.

The order of presentation of the thesis should be as follows:

- Title page (signatures of committee members should be written in black ink)
- Acknowledgements (optional)
- Table of Contents
- List of Tables (if applicable)
- List of Illustrations (if applicable)
- Text
- Appendix (if applicable)
- Works Cited (which should consist of works directly cited in your paper) and/or Works Consulted

Guidelines for margins:

- 1" top margin on all pages
- 1 1/2" left
- 1" right
- 1" bottom

Pagination begins with the title page, though the numeral 1 should not appear on that page. The numeral 2 should appear on the following page. Page numbers should be on the right, above the 1" top margin, following the 1 1/2" right margin. The Belmont thesis does not require a running head.

Consult the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers (6th ed.) or the MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing (2nd ed) in preparing your thesis. Please pay particular attention to the rules on ellipses, dashes, and block quotations. The following is a model title page and table of contents page for a literature thesis:

“LET THE OTHER YOUNG LADIES HAVE
TIME TO EXHIBIT”:
FEMALE “ACCOMPLISHMENTS” IN
JANE AUSTEN’S FICTION

NAME OF STUDENT

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

in partial fulfillment

of the

Requirements of the Degree

Master of Arts in English

Belmont University

2001

Approved:

Mentor

Date _____

Reader

Date _____

Reader

Date _____

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XIII. Graduation Procedures and Timetable

A series of important procedures must be followed during the semester you graduate. Specific dates will be published in the current semester’s graduate newsletter and in the academic calendar on Belmont University’s homepage.

1. You must apply for graduation (at Belmont Central) by the posted deadline in the semester **before** you intend to graduate. Please consult the current Graduate Bulletin for the specific date and cost. You will be billed a graduation fee which covers the cap, gown, hood, and 3 bound copies of the thesis.
2. You and your mentor must submit your thesis to your thesis committee at least 7 weeks before graduation.
3. You must submit your thesis to the thesis editor at least 4 weeks before graduation.
4. Three signed and approved copies of your thesis need to be in the hands of the Acquisitions Section in the Technical Services Department of the Bunch Library no later than one week before graduation. Two copies are catalogued and placed in the library, and one is sent to the department.

You may have additional copies bound for \$9.37 (or current price). Present your request, payment, and unbound copies of the thesis to the Technical Services Department of the Bunch Library. Contact Library Acquisitions @460-5529 for current shipping and handling fees.

XIV. Campus Resources

Belmont offers a number of resources to help you develop and complete your program of study, including the library and the writing center. Belmont's Lila D. Bunch Library offers a good basic collection of literary and critical items, in addition to almost a thousand periodical subscriptions. Through Belmont's participation in the Athena virtual library, you have access to the holdings of all the major University and public libraries in the Nashville area through electronic interlibrary loan. You also have free access to the internet and other web-based resources (including the MLA Bibliography, Infotrac, JSTOR, and ProQuest Direct) from nearly any computer on campus, including those in the Massey Center and Bunch Library computer labs. You can also access these resources from off campus using assigned passwords. Ms. Paige Carter (carterp@belmont.edu; 460-5597) is in charge of Interlibrary Loan Services in the Bunch Library.

In addition to the library and computer resources, the Department of English maintains its own video and slide collection. The Department also houses a Writing Center, a free tutorial service open to all students on campus. The Department is also home to a journal edited by graduate faculty: *The Journal of the Short Story in English*, co-published with the University of Angers, France, an international journal of criticism devoted to the short story in English.

XV. Graduate Writing Award

The Graduate Faculty annually presents an award for the best piece of writing produced in a graduate class for the previous calendar year. Nominations are solicited by the graduate director from the graduate faculty in January, and the director receives the nominated papers and selects a panel of graduate faculty which will determine the winner. The award, which is accompanied by a small cash prize, is presented at the Spring Thesis Celebration.

XVI. Assessment

To improve and develop our programs, we are committed to constant reflection and assessment. You will be involved in the assessment procedures for the M.A. throughout your program of study.

The primary reason to assess is to improve student learning. Assessment of the M.A. will be an on-going process, although some dimensions of the assessment program cannot be put into place until our first graduates have completed several years in situations in which they use the skills and knowledge gained from the program. The unit of assessment will be the program as a whole, not individual students or faculty. As

recommended by the Association of Departments of English of the Modern Language Association, the assessment data will be qualitative and will concentrate on student progress, student achievement, and student perception. While achievements by individual students will be data used to assess the program, those achievements will be examined in the context of the program as a whole.

You will assist our assessment process in three ways:

1. Through your admission portfolios: As a part of the application for admission, each student will submit a portfolio of materials selected to provide an overview of the student's potential to complete graduate study in English. The items most relevant to the assessment task in this portfolio include undergraduate transcript; GRE scores (general exam); writing sample from undergraduate English major course (in cases of students not able to provide this sample, a professional piece of writing will be accepted); and a writing sample composed specifically for admission to the M.A. program. These allow us to create measures of student records.
2. Through your theses: The theses will be examined in terms of academic and creative achievement, in order to create one measure of student achievement.
3. Through individual program portfolios: See section X, above.
4. Through interviews: At the beginning, middle, and end of your time at Belmont, you will speak to the Director of Graduate Studies about your expectations for and experiences in the program. This helps us create measures of student perception about the program.