

# ENGLISH

## *Mission and Structure*

The Monmouth College English major emphasizes close reading, critical thinking, and analytical writing. In literary study, the major focuses on genre distinctions, metaphor, aesthetic appreciation, social and cultural histories, literary critical analysis of texts and some introduction to literary theory. Work of the department is ongoing in re-estimating and reformulating the “canonical,” negotiating competing claims for traditional subject coverage and diverse representation. In recent years upper division major course listings have included “Russian Literature,” “African Literature,” “African American Autobiography and Fiction,” “The Literature of Feminism,” “Early Modern Women.” The “New Criticism” retains a seat-- no longer the throne -- among other interpretive theories guiding course and program design, and pedagogy.

The department has long been committed to and a leading service provider for a distinctive approach to the liberal arts at Monmouth College: the General Education program. The department annually undertakes heavy loads in two rubric areas (“Introduction to the Liberal Arts,” “Beauty and Meaning in Works of Art,” and the “Language Rubric”), and makes regular contributions in two others. Several department offerings attract substantial numbers of non-majors. Faculty of the department are academic advisors for a large group of non-majors and undecided students. In addition the department regularly offers three courses required of all English education majors for Illinois Certification.

The Monmouth College English major is structured as follows:

1. Introduction to Literary Studies (English 200)
1. Four required survey course (two each in English and American literatures);
2. A required Shakespeare course;
3. Advanced course work in literature and/or writing (at least four courses);
4. A required senior capstone seminar involving a long research-analysis paper.

## The English Department and Monmouth College's Statement of Purposes

As an undergraduate liberal arts institution Monmouth College exists to:

1. Prepare students for rich personal and professional lives.

Through instruction in critical thinking, rhetorical strategies, writing and speaking skills, the English department prepares students for "rich professional lives." Through course work in literature the department provides opportunities for appreciation of figurative language and literary structures--appreciation of the beauty and meaning in works of art which may contribute to a student's rich personal life.

2. Prepare students for positions of leadership, service, and citizenship in a global context.

Insofar as leadership requires critical thinking skills, good communications skills, the capacity to understand figurative language and literary structures, the department provides students with ample preparation for positions of leadership. Our literature offerings provide several opportunities for study of different cultural traditions pertinent to citizenship in a global context.

3. Promote awareness and exploration of the sometimes contradictory principles which exist in democracy, pluralism, equality, and freedom.

Course work in American literature surveys and in several upper division special topics courses serves this purpose.

4. Create and maintain a learning environment which is value centered, intellectually challenging, aesthetically inspiring, and culturally diverse. This includes:

- (A) Providing students with a a four year general education program, in-depth study in the major, and a rich array of co-curricular activities.
- (B) Fostering the discovery of connections among disciplines and of larger patterns of meaning.
- (C) Promoting an understanding of a value system that is shaped by individual and collective experiences.

Pertinent to A and B: The department continues to offer approximately 2/3 of its courses in General Education, staffing multiple sections of "Introduction to the Liberal Arts" and "English 110," courses in "Women's Studies," "Issues and Ideas" and "Honors." Within the major, the department economizes through rigorous, required survey offerings, and by rotating over a two-three year schedule a substantial number of genre-specific and special topic, upper division courses. In virtually all of these offerings we place emphasis on cultural history and the relationship of cultural values to literature.

Pertinent to C: Recent waves of literary critical revisionism have increasingly emphasized "communities of interpreters," "community based knowledge," the importance of race, gender and ethnicity in the study of literature and the primacy of social issues and social ideologies in the formation of the literary canon and the valuation of old and new literary work. These new

emphases are evident in varying degrees in all of the department's literature courses.

5. Explore the spiritual dimension of human existence and the relationship between faith and knowledge.

Such exploration is thematic in the study of much literature, amply represented in departmental offerings.

6. Introduce students to multiple perspectives on the human condition and promote self-awareness of global perspectives both through the curriculum and through campus life.

See response to #4

7. Foster and promote intellectual inquiry and critical analysis through mentoring relationships characterized by individual attention.

The department's "Writing Fellows" course has been particularly successful in establishing this relationship.

8. Develop creativity and skills in written and oral communication and artistic expression.

Virtually every course offering provides requirements and instruction in written and oral communication. Creativity is encouraged in these courses and in those devoted explicitly to "Creative Writing" (poetry, fiction, drama).

9. Understand the methods of inquiry and expression in the arts, humanities, sciences, and social sciences.

Instruction in English 110 (Composition and Literature) highlights comparatively the links between classical rhetorical strategies and methodological approaches in the sciences and social sciences. The department's staffing contributions to "Introduction to the Liberal Arts" give further evidence of devotion to comparative methodology (and different "ways of knowing"). Within the major "Introduction to English Studies" introduces library research strategies, source evaluation, research methods and critical thinking for the major. In literature classes students are asked to consider several classic and contemporary critical approaches to literary texts. English 400 (Senior Seminar) involves concentrated research for a senior thesis.

*Assessment of Major Goals*

***Program Objectives / Outcomes***

***Most Relevant Courses***

***Means of Assessment***

<p>Objectives of the curriculum in English are to enable students to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Demonstrate skills enumerated in the General Education “Language Rubric Communications Skills Goals,” with special reference to rhetorical development and organization strategies.</li> <li>2. Understand and use process writing strategies in composing thesis-focused essays</li> <li>3. Understand and use library resources for research papers.</li> <li>4. Appreciate the special uses of language in literature; understand and appreciate figurative language and literary structures.</li> <li>5. Read, explicate, analyze and interpret works of literature.</li> </ol>	<p>ILA, Eng. 110, 301</p> <p>ILA. Eng. 110, 200, surveys</p> <p>All lit., ILA, 110, 200, 400</p> <p>All lit., 110, 210, 310</p> <p>All lit., Eng. 200, 400</p>	<p>Portfolios; discussion, exams, papers</p> <p>Portfolios; discussion, exams, papers</p> <p>Portfolios: disc., exams, papers</p> <p>Portfolios: disc., exams, papers</p> <p>Portfolios: disc., exams, papers</p>
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***Program Objectives / Outcomes******Most Relevant Courses******Means of Assessment***

6. Recognize and appreciate literary genre and sub-genre distinctions, literary movements, critical approaches to texts, diverse cultural and historical literary traditions.	All lit., 200, 400	Portfolios: disc., exams, papers
7. Understand and appreciate cultural, historical contexts in the study of English and American literatures.	Eng.200, all surveys, 361, 362	Portfolios: disc., exams, papers
8. Acquire a basic knowledge of the history of English, of traditional grammar and modern grammar theories	Eng. 201, 314	Portfolios: disc., exams, papers

## *Assessment of Student Learning in the Major*

The department now reviews the objectives, structure and pedagogy of English 110 (Composition and Literature) each semester. Students write a diagnostic essay at the beginning and end of the term and the department assesses student learning using a shared rubric as an instrument of measurement.

The department's achievements of objectives listed on the previous page are assessed by the English staff through classroom discussion in lecture/discussion and seminar size classes; through examinations, paper and journal writing, portfolio review, peer editing and routine conferences. The department identifies a few numbered objectives pertinent to particular course offerings, and evaluates essays and examinations for evidence of achievement. Research skills are assessed through assignments in English 200 (research librarians offer instruction in traditional and computer-driven strategies including MLA on-line searches), selectively through upper level course work and again centrally in the Senior Seminar (English 400). Student performance on the Graduate Record Examination and English Education tests are informally reviewed annually. Alumni are surveyed through a new alumni webpage about the quality and value of the major.

### ***Change through Assessment***

Over the last four years the department has made the following changes derived from regular departmental assessment meetings and two late spring workshops (2001, 2004):

1. Development of two new courses: English 200, "Introduction to English Studies" and English 180, Introduction to Literature, Special Topics." The first course provides majors with a foundational introduction to the major, including career opportunities, research and citation methods, close reading strategies, vocabularies of analysis, and an introduction to literary criticism;
2. Development through the Curriculum Review Task Force and in conjunction with the CATA department of a Communication Across the Curriculum initiative; job description and successful search for a CAC Coordinator (Fall 2004);
3. Development (with CATA) of a coordinated plan for CAC based upon the Language Rubric's shared goals;
4. Development of a new course design for English 110, based upon CAC objectives;
5. Development of an "evaluation rubric" pertinent to evaluation and assessment of ILA writing assignments and diagnostic/final essays for English 110;

6. Development of shared departmental “minimal standards” for writing assignments in courses at the 200 level and above;
7. Completion of “Teacher Education Accreditation Update” (2004);
8. Re-dedication of English 490: “Directed Studies” for two purposes: a) staffing of the “Printing Press” (in-house departmental newsletter) and b) writing internships with local newspapers;
9. Catalogue course title revisions to introduce symmetry of design into upper division English and American course offerings;
10. Full implementation of Portfolio requirement and review for senior graduation.