

QUICK GUIDELINES FOR HOW TO APPROACH YOUR MA DEGREE IN ENGLISH:

- **Be sure you read the enclosed advising sheet carefully.** Different concentrations have different requirements: some are more flexible, some have comparatively little room for substitution. Courses that work for one concentration will not necessarily fit for another, and not every course with the prefix ENGL is acceptable for every concentration. MA students in Literature (LIT) and Cultural Studies (CULT), for instance, ordinarily **do not** take any rhetoric, professional writing or creative writing courses, such as ENGL 611, ENGL 565, or ENGL 503. If you're in doubt about whether a particular course will work for your concentration, please check with the graduate director or the graduate programs manager before you register.
- **Plan on beginning your degree by registering for the courses that operate as introductions to the concentration or otherwise should be taken early.** Students in the MA in Professional Writing and Rhetoric (PWR) should take ENGL 501 (Introduction to Professional Writing and Rhetoric) during their first semester. Students in the MA in the Teaching of Writing and Literature (TWL), the MA in Literature (LIT), and the MA in Cultural Studies (CULT) should plan on enrolling for ENGL 701 (Research in English Studies) in their first semester and before taking any literature courses, since later coursework presumes students are familiar with the research techniques taught in that course. For related reasons, LIT students should, if possible, take their theory course either in their first semester or their second, and in any case before they enroll for most of their literature courses: a familiarity with critical methods is important for approaching the study of literature at the graduate level. LIT students are strongly urged to take ENGL 551 as their theory course unless they have already had an undergraduate introduction to literary criticism and theory.
- **Bear in mind that most creative-writing workshops are only open to MAs in the spring.** While these courses are offered in the fall, they are reserved for MFA students only. Courses like ENGL 564, 565, and 566 are "forms" courses that are reserved for MFA students in the fall and then open to all graduate students in the spring.
- **ENGL 615 is open to non-TAs only in the fall.** Students in TWL and PWR need to remember such restrictions in mind as they plan their course of study.
- **ENGL 608 should not be taken by MA LIT students.** ENGL 608 does not count as a workshop, and unless it is used to meet an elective requirement (TWL, PWR, or LING), 608 may not be presented by MA students for their degree.
- **Remember that very few courses are offered every semester; many are not even offered every year. Plan accordingly. Summer course offerings are, in general, extremely limited.** At the same time the English Department has a wealth of offerings and its faculty pursue a wide range of interests. If you see a literature or media course (for instance) whose topic particularly interests you, odds are it won't be offered again next year. Snap it up while you can—as long as you are on track to finish your requirements in a timely manner. Future semester course offerings are not available for any MA in English concentrations other than linguistics—even more reason to take classes that interest you when you see them on the schedule.
- **Cross-level courses.** In addition to 500- and 600-level courses offered primarily to graduate students and 700-level courses offered exclusively to graduate students, the English department offers a number of cross-level courses, making available a wider array of graduate course offerings than otherwise possible by cross-listing graduate with undergraduate sections. Graduate-level course work in these classes will entail additional reading assignments, generally in scholarship appropriate to advanced study of the field, and some different, usually longer and more sophisticated, graded assignments than those required of undergraduates. Some instructors may ask graduate students to make presentations or lead discussions. In some classes, opportunities to discuss materials among graduate students only will be provided either online or in face-to-face meetings.
- **When selecting courses and for more extensive advice,** please consult the graduate student handbook (<http://english.gmu.edu/forgraduates/documents/08-09GraduateHandbook.pdf>), speak to your faculty adviser (assigned to you upon admission) or the graduate programs manager.