
New York University

Department of English

M.A. Handbook

2023-2024

Contains information on:

Program Requirements
Registration
Special Project
Graduation

A Welcome from **Julia Morgenstern, Julia Rojo, and Kristen Whang, 2023-24** Graduate Student Representatives for MA Students

Welcome to the Master's program at NYU's Department of English! We are excited for you to join our community at 244 Greene Street.

Graduate school can be a tough transition, especially getting used to the increased level of expectation and rigor, but the faculty and students in the English department are incredibly supportive of you, as well as your academic and professional goals. There are many opportunities for you to research, discuss, learn, and grow. We encourage you to put yourself out there!

As the GEO representatives for the MA program, we are interested in understanding your needs. We hope we can share resources with each other to make the most of our experiences inside and outside the classroom. Don't hesitate to reach out to us if you have any questions, concerns, or just want to chat. Good luck with the coming semester!

Some Advice

1. Before you start your MA, think about your personal goals for yourself, as they may differ significantly from the goals of others in your program. That said, be sure to remain open-minded because your goals may change and you may gain things from this program that you never expected. Talk to professors whom you trust and remember that the more honest you are about how you're feeling, the more professors can tailor their advice to your actual situation.
2. Go to every library resource session available—you'll be thoroughly grateful once you're in the midst of final papers!
3. Read the MA Handbook!

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We are very glad to welcome you to the NYU English Department, and to our graduate program. Please take the time to read this booklet carefully, as it will help you get the most out of your time with us. Should you have any questions, concerns, or problems you should not hesitate to seek advice.

Jini Kim Watson

Professor Jini Kim Watson is the Director of the Master's program. She can help you plan the best route through the program, help find an appropriate advisor for your thesis, and deal with any academic issues that arise. You should be sure to consult with her at least once during the course of your first semester.

jkw1@nyu.edu
Greene St., Room 714

Elizabeth McHenry

Professor McHenry, the Chair of our Department, is always pleased to hear from MA students.

elizabeth.mchenry@nyu.edu
Greene St., Room 214

Lisette Florez

Lisette Florez is the Administrator of the Graduate Program in English and your first port of call in any storm. She will guide you through registration and all other administrative puzzles, and has rarely met a problem she can't solve!

lf42@nyu.edu
Greene St., Room 207

For some of the best advice about classes, professors, and graduate life in general you should consult your fellow students.

Please read the rest of this booklet through as it will tell you all kinds of things you will want to know!

Your MA Studies

A Brief Overview

The MA Degree in English is 32 credits total. Most graduate courses carry four credits so you should plan to take eight courses during your time with us. However, 'Introduction to Advanced Literary Study for MA Students' (also known as the MA Proseminar, and which you must take in your first semester) carries only 3 credits: the missing credit is made up by your special project, i.e., the MA thesis. This is usually completed in your final semester, and represents the culmination of your degree: you should plan to spend at least as much time on it as you would spend on a regular course, but it carries only one credit point. We offer some summer classes, and since you can graduate in May, September or December you have a great deal of flexibility to plan your own schedule—**just be sure you know and have met our distribution and other requirements—please see the next page.**

As you sign up for classes you should bear in mind that our distribution requirements mandate that you take at least one class where the focus is predominantly in the literature of each of the following three time periods: Medieval and/or Renaissance; the 18th and/or 19th centuries; and the 20th and/or 21st centuries (see p.10). The same classes are not offered every year, so you should take them as soon as you can: an early start on meeting these requirements has the added benefit that MANY students find their interest awakened in areas that they had not previously considered for future work.

A full load is 2-3 classes per semester. If you are working on your degree full-time, and planning to take two years to graduation, your pattern of work might look something like this:

Fall Semester I

Introduction to Advanced Literary Study, and one or two other graduate classes

Spring Semester I

Two or three graduate classes

Fall Semester II

One or two graduate classes and the beginning of work towards your special project

Spring Semester II

One or two graduate classes and the completion of your special project

If you chose to complete your degree in 18 months it might go like this:

Fall Semester I

Introduction to Advanced Literary Study for MA Students, and two other graduate classes

Spring Semester I

Three graduate classes

Summer Semester

One or two graduate classes

Fall Semester II

One or two graduate classes and the completion of your special project.

Registration

Registration for the Fall semester begins in mid- April; for the Spring and Summer semesters it begins in mid-November. Registration and course information is sent out via email. Course information and descriptions are available on the English department website a few weeks before registration opens. Many of our classes fill quickly: **it is always a good idea to plan and register early.**

As you advance through the program you are encouraged to consult with the Director of the MA Program to choose your classes. You may register yourself online using Albert (albert.nyu.edu). You may also drop/add classes through the first two weeks of classes using the drop/add menu on Albert.

Continuous Enrollment

All students must maintain continuous enrollment until their degree is conferred. This can be done either through coursework or by registering for maintenance of matriculation—Lisette can always make this work for you.

A Checklist of Dates

2023 - 2024

Fall Semester 2023

Registration begins	Monday, April 24, 2023
First day of classes	Tuesday, September 5, 2023
Drop/add period ends	Monday, September 18, 2023
MA Thesis Presentation	Friday, December 8, 2023
Last day of classes	Friday, December 15, 2023
MA Special Projects due	Monday, December 18, 2023
Final grades are due	Friday, December 22, 2023

Spring Semester 2024

First day of classes	Monday, January 22, 2024
Drop/add period ends	Monday, February 5, 2024
MA Thesis Presentation	Friday, May 3, 2024
Last day of classes	Monday, May 6, 2024
MA Special Projects due	Friday, May 10, 2024
Final grades are due	Tuesday, May 14, 2024
Commencement (tentative).....	Wednesday, May 15, 2024

Summer Semester 2024

First day of classes	Summer Session I	Monday, May 20, 2024
Last day of classes	Summer Session I	Monday, July 1, 2024
First day of classes	Summer Session II.....	Monday, July 8, 2024
Last day of classes.....	Summer Session II	Monday, August 12, 2024

MA Requirements

1. Completion of 32 credits. Twenty-four of these 32 credits must be earned through course work within the department, but the other eight credits (the equivalent of two graduate courses) may be taken in other relevant departments. Registration for courses that originate outside the department and are not cross-listed with English must be approved by the Director of the Master's program.
2. A mandatory three-credit seminar, "Introduction to Advanced Literary Study for MA Students," to be taken in the first term of the program.
3. One four-credit literature course focused in each of the following historical periods: Medieval and Renaissance Literature (roughly, literature before 1700); Eighteenth and/or Nineteenth centuries (1700-1900); and the Twentieth and/or Twenty-first centuries (1900-present)
4. Submission of a thesis totaling 9,000-11,000 words (30-35 pages), written under the supervision of a department faculty member, within the context of a required one-credit Guided Research course.
5. Completion of all MA program requirements within five years from matriculation.

To qualify for the degree, a student must have a GPA of at least 3.0, must complete a minimum of 24 points with a grade of B or better, and may take no more than 8 points with a grade of C. A student may take no more than 36 points toward the degree.

A Note on Distribution Requirements

You are required to take one four-credit literature course focused in each of the following historical periods: Medieval and/or Renaissance (roughly, literature before 1700); Eighteenth and/or Nineteenth; Twentieth and/or Twenty-first centuries. These classes do not have to be taken in the English department, but they do have to have their primary focus and reading in literature of the required period. (You could, for example, take a Dante class in the Italian department, or a class on Mallarmé in the French department, to meet your Medieval and Renaissance or your 18th/19thC requirements, respectively.) We take these requirements seriously: if you are in doubt as to whether a class meet a certain period requirement please consult the Director of the MA program.

Courses in Other Departments

You may take 8 of your 32 credit points, or two classes, in other departments at NYU. If you are tailoring your studies towards a particular period or issue you might, for example, take classes in History, Art History, Comparative Literature, East Asian Studies, French, Spanish & Portuguese, Italian, Russian & Slavic Studies, Irish Studies, or Middle Eastern & Islamic Studies. Note that many of the classes in the foreign languages departments are taught in English.

Transfer Credit

MA students may transfer up to 8 credits from a previous institution on condition that these have not already been used towards a degree at another institution. If you would like to do so, please make an appointment to see the Director of the Master's program. Credits are transferred point for point.

Incompletes

The English Department does not permit instructors to assign “Incomplete” as the grade for a graduate course. This is because earning Incompletes may result in a student being put on academic probation. If extenuating circumstances prevent a student from completing his or her coursework for a grade in a timely manner, the student should contact the Director of Graduate Studies [or the Director of the MA Program] to make arrangements. Only requests having to do with exceptional conditions (e.g., prolonged illness, etc.) will be considered.

Leave of Absence

To request a leave of absence, please make an appointment to see the Director of the MA Program.

The MA Thesis in Brief

The MA Thesis constitutes the capstone to the student's academic work in the English MA program, and it should therefore represent the degree candidate's strongest scholarly and critical effort to date.

1. It must be written under the supervision of a faculty member within the context of the required one-credit Guided Research course, to be taken in an appropriate semester during the student's period of matriculation. The request form for this course may be found on our departmental website: [https://as.nyu.edu/content/dam/nyu-as/english/documents/GuidedResearchRequestForm%20\(1\).pdf](https://as.nyu.edu/content/dam/nyu-as/english/documents/GuidedResearchRequestForm%20(1).pdf). **You must submit this form to the Director of the MA by the end of the semester prior to the one in which you plan to write your thesis.** In addition, students should also enroll in the thesis-writing workshop for the semester they are writing up their work. This workshop meets approximately every two weeks; it carries no credit, but attendance is mandatory.

2. The thesis should consist of an essay totaling between 9,000 and 11,000 words, or 30-35 pages.

3. The thesis will be evaluated by two examiners, your advisor and another faculty member. It must be of at least B quality to be acceptable for the degree.

4. The thesis must be submitted by email by 5pm on the due date to both Lissette Florez and the Director of the MA.

5. The advisor-advisee relationship comes under the GSAS guidelines for mentoring. See <https://gsas.nyu.edu/about-gsas/policies-and-procedures/gsas-guidelines-on-mentoring-doctoral-students.html>

Thesis Guidelines

Theses must conform to the following guidelines:

1. The cover page must include the thesis title, your name, and your student ID number; your advisor's name and a space for their approval signature; the month and year the degree will be conferred (not the month in which the thesis is submitted); and the statement: "A thesis in the Master's Program in English in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts at New York University".

2. A 200-250 word abstract must follow the title page.

3. All sources for quotations and paraphrases must be documented. You may use any of the standard citation styles (MLA, Chicago, social science, etc.), subject to your advisor's approval, provided you consistently follow a single style throughout the thesis.

4. The thesis should be formatted on standard letter-sized paper, and double-spaced.

Here is some advice from three former students about writing a thesis:

“Do your homework before you put even a single word to page. If this leads you far afield, that’s good; my initial proposal concerned not *Gravity’s Rainbow*, but detective fiction tropes in *V.* and *The Crying of Lot 49*. Find the established scholarly line on your subject, and don’t be afraid to challenge it. And when it comes time to write, just write. Throw words across the page if you’re ever stuck—they could very well take you where you need to go.”

“The biggest difficulty I encountered in writing my thesis was wading through the vast amount of scholarship on Virginia Woolf. For weeks, I read avidly; and for weeks, my page count remained low. If I could impart a single piece of advice, it would be: quit reading and start writing! The “hunting and gathering phase” (as my adviser called it) of reading and research is vital, of course. But ultimately it is the writing process—and the writing process only—that will make ideas clear and truer interests evident. When in doubt, write your way through, as tough as it may be.”

“Find a Call For Papers that interests you and submit an abstract. If you do get the chance to attend a conference, the paper topics are likely to be so diverse that you are bound to find something that sparks your interest. It will also give you a good sense of the state of the conversation in your area.”

Guidelines for Students (and their Supervisors) of the MA Thesis

TIMING & THE WRITING WORKSHOP

Your thesis is undertaken within the context of the required Guided Research course, ENGL-GA 3900. You must be registered for this one-credit course during the semester you are writing the thesis, typically your last or second-to-last semester. If you are aiming to complete the program in two years and are hoping to continue your studies in a PhD program, you may choose to undertake the special project in the Fall semester of your second year, since it can help develop your specialization and, if the writing is finished early enough, may be used as a writing sample for your PhD applications. (These applications are usually due at the beginning of December, so you might want to identify a topic and supervisor at the end of your first year so that you can start reading towards the project over the summer.) We offer a thesis writing workshop each semester in which there is demand. The workshop meets approximately every two weeks; it carries no credit, but attendance is mandatory. The aim is to help students keep to an effective writing schedule, and to experience the benefits of exchanging and discussing writing drafts with each other.

EXPECTATIONS OF THE THESIS

You should expect to receive close supervision from a faculty advisor, who will meet with you several times to help in the planning and research of the thesis. Each project is different, and your supervision needs are hard to predict, but your supervisor is typically expected to help you in the early stages with the identification of a focused topic, the development of a bibliography, and the writing up of a prospectus or abstract. They should meet with you several times and read and comment on at least one draft. The project should total between 9,000 and 11,000 words (i.e., 30-35 pages). It may build on a paper written for an earlier class, or be an entirely new undertaking, but it should be a piece of independent research on a topic with potential to advance scholarship in the field. It should be of a nature that allows you to demonstrate mastery of the protocols of critical, scholarly, or theoretical writing. Special projects that do not fit the rubric of a traditional thesis may also be approved at the discretion of the Director of the MA program.

FINDING AN ADVISOR

Identifying a thesis advisor and a topic will be different for everyone. By the end of your first year you may know exactly what you want to work on, and with whom. If so, you may approach the professor in their office hours to discuss your ideas and the possibility of working with them. You will need to find an advisor well before the end of the semester prior to the one in which you plan to write your thesis. If you are unsure of the viability of your topic, or do not know who to work with, you should consult the Director of the MA program, who will be able to advise you on the process. Typically, professors in the English department work with one or possibly two students each year on their MA theses: if they have no room to take you on they may be able to suggest an alternative advisor. The Director of the MA makes every effort to assist and give advice but does not directly assign advisors to students.

SECOND READERS

Each thesis will be read and commented upon by a second reader—usually from the English department, but occasionally from another department. If you have ideas about who you'd like to have as a second reader, let the Director of the MA program know. She will otherwise be happy to find a second reader for you.

Finally, it is important to note that you must complete the thesis in the semester in which you begin it. If you sign up for a Fall thesis, for instance, it is not possible to complete the thesis in the Spring.

Thesis Presentations

At the end of each semester we hold a lively Thesis Presentation Event in which thesis-writers present their research publicly. Thesis-writers discuss their work on panels of three to four students, speaking for around 7 minutes each and answering questions. Faculty members, colleagues, friends and family are warmly invited to attend.

Graduation

Students may officially graduate in May, September, or December. The commencement ceremony for all schools is held in May. You must apply for graduation via Albert. Please check the academic calendar for graduation application deadlines.

Students will receive an official check sheet one month prior to graduation from the office of Graduation Services. If you have any questions once you receive the check sheet, please see Lissette, or consult the Director of the MA Program.

Travel Grants

GSAS awards travel grants of up to \$500 to defray the cost of travel to conferences: application details may be found at <http://as.nyu.edu/content/dam/nyu-as/english/documents/DepartmentEnglishGraduateTravelGrant.pdf>.

The department has established its own fund to support graduate student travel for conferences, research, and other opportunities for professional development. MA and PhD students currently enrolled in the Department are eligible to apply after they have exhausted other sources of travel support available from the Graduate School. MA students are entitled to make one request to the fund during the course of their enrollment in the program; additional requests will be considered as a secondary priority.

Applicants for conference support should submit documentation of accepted papers or other forms of active participation, a budget of travel expenses, and an endorsement by a faculty advisor confirming the student's progress towards the degree.

Applicants for research support should submit a detailed research plan, identifying materials/collections and explaining their importance to the MA thesis project, budget of travel expenses, and an endorsement of application by faculty adviser.

Funds will be paid through partial or full reimbursement of receipts for travel expenses. Applications are due December 1 and April 1 of each academic year. Applications and supporting letters should be submitted to Lissette Florez in the Graduate Program Office.

Prizes

The Millicent Bell Thesis prize is our departmental prize for the best thesis submitted each semester; its value is currently \$500.

Mailboxes, Lockers, and Email

Most communication in the English Department is done through email. Please make sure to check and read your NYU email, especially messages from Lissette and the Director of the MA.

All students have a mailbox in the department on the second floor of 244 Greene St. Notices, events, and calendars are usually distributed to your mailbox. Faculty may also use mailboxes to return graded papers.

Lockers can be rented in the library by the semester. Please check the Bobst Library website for further details.

Coffee

There are tea and coffee making facilities on the 4th and 8th floors of Greene St., which are free to graduate students.

Building Access and Room 805

MA students have building access to 244 Greene St., Monday-Friday from 7:30am-9:30pm. If not otherwise booked, room 805 is available for graduate student study: it is near the kitchen on the eighth floor and is a nice place to work.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

Plagiarism occurs when the student presents the words, ideas or research of others as their own work. Even if you cite the source from which you have taken material at some point, both word-for-word copying without quotation marks and the reproduction of whole sequences of ideas or sources without clear and immediate attribution are considered to be plagiarism. The submission of assignments purchased or otherwise derived from another person or a company is expressly forbidden. Be particularly careful in using Internet sources and tools such as ChapGPT. We expect your written work to be your own.

Please note that the submission of the same written work, in whole or in part, for two or more classes without the express permission of all the instructors involved is also a violation of Academic Integrity. While your thesis may build on a previous seminar paper, it should not include an exact reproduction of it.

Students in our graduate programs are expected to maintain the highest level of Academic Integrity. Any instance of plagiarism will result in the student's receiving a failing grade for the course or, where relevant, Special Project. The student will be subject to further sanction—including dismissal from the University— at the discretion of the Department Chair.

