

Guidelines for

# the PhD in English at Boston College



fall 2023 edition

## *from the director*



Welcome to the fall 2023 edition of the guidelines for the doctoral program in English. By offering these guidelines, we mean to collect together materials—much of which have existed in the program for years—that will assist doctoral candidates in planning their degree programs. These are not literally the rules governing our work together; rather, we have tried to assemble descriptive materials that cover what candidates have customarily done, what past PhD directors and dissertation committee chairs have expected, how to find resources here at BC and beyond, and, in a few places, descriptions of the community we try to build here. As you know, we pride ourselves on offering a program that allows individual candidates the flexibility to shape many dimensions of their intellectual and professional work. At the same time, we believe that the structures described here will assist you in crafting a program of study that will serve you well on the path to your doctorate and beyond.

My particular focus as PhD director has been on gathering some practical kinds of information previously not included in the guide, such as internal and external funding opportunities, information about how the stipend is paid out, clarity on the history and rationale of the exam structure, advice for dissertators, particulars of dissertation fellowship application processes, and detailed academic *and* non-academic placement information for the past ten (now twelve) years for our graduates. It is my hope that by making the mechanics and recent history of the program as transparent as possible, I can help you avoid some common difficulties and misunderstandings. If something is not clear to you, it may not be clear to me, either: just ask! I love learning new things about the institution in order to advocate better for you.

I know that I speak for all members of the English Department faculty when I welcome you aboard, for the first time or for another productive and exciting year. We look forward to working with you!

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August 2023

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## Aims of the program

Boston College's PhD in English offers the opportunity to study with nationally recognized faculty in many periods, authors, and critical and theoretical traditions. Candidates select from a wide range of courses, and proceed thru a streamlined series of exams culminating in a dissertation prospectus exam and the writing of the dissertation. Our candidates are prepared to teach, and to continue to do research, full-time in a college or university setting.

Increasingly of late, we are simultaneously thinking of how best to equip graduates for careers in adjacent fields, such as secondary education, journalism, publishing, editing, technical writing, library science, and higher education administration.

Upon completion of the PhD graduates will be able to:

1. **Design a course of secondary research in chosen fields of literary study of varying scales.**
2. **Attain ability to communicate research findings and offer concrete contributions to scholarly discussions in highly informed, intelligible ways, such as in the writing of academic monographs, articles, and reviews and in public oral presentations.**
3. **Teach courses in English effectively, at introductory and advanced levels, in the community college, four-year college, or university setting.**
4. **Demonstrate expertise in an individual chronological, theoretical, and/or national chosen literary field qualifying the candidate for an academic or teaching position.**

Our program encourages candidates to tailor the course of study to their interests and needs. Candidates design their own field exams in consultation with their advisers. Though we offer a full range of graduate electives each year, the only courses candidates are required to take are four designated "PhD seminars," a course in composition theory and pedagogy, and one research colloquium. Candidates also have the opportunity to work with accomplished faculty in literature courses, gain hands-on experience teaching literature, administer complex assignments, and design specific lessons. Each candidate begins by being a Teaching Assistant (TA) the second year, goes on to teach First-Year Writing Seminar (FWS) and Literature Core ("Lit Core"), and finally designs and teaches an advanced undergraduate seminar in her or his field.

## Web resources

To get acquainted with some of the resources we've created for PhD candidates in English, you might want to start by looking at the different online dimensions of what we do here.

1. The program's **official website**, linked to the English Department's site. This is what most prospective candidates (and anyone else who's surfing around) will see. It's under occasional revision; please feel free to make suggestions. <https://www.bc.edu/bc-web/schools/mcas/departments/english/graduate/doctoral-program.html>

2. List of English Department “People” page. As of 2020 you count as people and are included on this page, because I spoke up about it. Yay!  
<https://www.bc.edu/content/bc-web/schools/mcas/departments/english/people.html>
3. The PhD “Student News” page. Please send any updates (publications, conferences, other significant activity and achievements) to our department’s other administrative assistant, Olivia Baker <bakerol@bc.edu>.  
<https://www.bc.edu/content/bc-web/schools/mcas/departments/english/graduate/doctoral-program/student-news.html>
4. The Graduate School of the Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences (MCAS) website states the official policies and procedures for graduate study and the resources (financial, instructional, benefits, and otherwise) that are available to you.  
<https://www.bc.edu/content/bc-web/schools/mcas/graduate/current-graduate-students/policies-and-procedures.html>

## Email and file storage

You have been assigned an email address @bc.edu, administered via Google Mail. You will have two email addresses, one a variation on the form [firstname.lastname]@bc.edu and the other a variation on the form [lastnamefirstletters]@bc.edu. Although both addresses are valid to send and receive, your account will be operated thru one of the two, I think usually the [lastnamefirstletters] variant. The password for this account is the one Boston College refers to as “Primary” in Agora.

It is important to **check your Boston College email account regularly**. All official communication from the graduate school, your professors, and me will be directed there.

You have unlimited storage on Google Drive via your Boston College email account. This is a great way to backup your work in progress and stockpile PDFs.

## Graduate student life

The Office of Graduate Student Life runs programming throughout the year geared toward grads, such as a doctoral writing group. You will receive their weekly newsletter. Murray House, located across Beacon Street from Stokes Hall, is open to you every day. It has tea and coffee, a pingpong table, meeting spaces, study spaces, and more.

## Funding, health insurance, and time to degree

We guarantee full funding and health insurance for five years. There are a variety of other internal and external funding sources available to you on a competitive basis at various stages of your degree. An extension of funding and benefits to the sixth year is often possible.

The point-person for all money matters in our department is English Department administrative assistant Chelsea Parsons <@bc.edu>.

More often than we'd like, due to a missed keystroke or mysterious cashflow processes at the graduate-school level, it happens that you may find an erroneous charge on your student account, such as a charge for tuition for coursework already noted on your spring credit request form, or for the placeholder course ENGL9999 in years 1–8. In these cases, please don't pay the charge; inform me and Chelsea, and Chelsea will work with the graduate school and HR to settle the account.

### Stipend and health insurance

The standard, minimum English PhD stipend for academic year 2023–24 is \$30,000. Over the past decade, the administration has raised the stipend between \$500 and \$2,000 each year. We don't have direct control over the budget for stipends, but I argue strenuously for a greater increase than that in our annual one-on-one meetings with the graduate deans, in recognition of your valuable research, teaching, and service work, the high cost of living in the Boston area, inflation, and the stipends offered by our peer English PhD programs. In 2021, I put together a researched statistical report on US English PhD stipends in a successful effort to argue for a substantial raise in pay. And in 2023 the Provost raised the minimum stipend to \$30,000, which translated into another substantial raise for us.

The stipend is paid out semesterly in the first and second years without tax withholding and **then it is paid out monthly with tax withholding once you begin teaching**. This is because the university bureaucracy categorizes you differently when you make the transition from a student (or “non-service”) role to an instructor (or “service”) role. Direct deposit is possible for service pay. Checks arrive on or near the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month. The first semesterly payment arrives in mid-September: you pick up your check at 129 Lake St., room 200, on the Brighton campus. The monthly payments are distributed such that **there is no check or deposit in June, July, or August**. Fall payments are split into four installments (September to December), and spring payments are split into five installments (January to May: this is a change from past years, when there was no January check). The total gross annual amount remains the same. **Note that both non-service and service stipends are taxable at the state and national level**. When on non-service stipend, it is your responsibility to set aside money for taxes.

Health insurance is guaranteed to you at no cost for five years. You are automatically enrolled and may opt out. Registering for courses or for the doctoral continuation placeholder course (ENGL9999) triggers a given semester's health coverage. **In the sixth year and beyond, you are automatically enrolled and pay a rather substantial semesterly fee** to keep health insurance coverage thru BC, or you may opt out. It costs roughly \$3,500 per year for a single subscriber, payable semesterly. See <https://www.bc.edu/content/bc-web/offices/student-services/billing-student-accounts/tuition-fees.html>, under “University Fees,” and <https://www.bc.edu/bc-web/offices/student-services/billing-student-accounts/medical-insurance.html>. Massachusetts law requires that you have health insurance coverage.

In 2021, there was an issue with coverage for **basic behavioral health services** when the Boston College student health plan changed payers from Harvard Pilgrim to United Healthcare. Graduate candidates who were seeing off-campus therapists who accepted Harvard Pilgrim but not United suddenly found themselves on the hook for large payments. University Counseling is supposed to serve graduate candidates, but in practice they were being turned away. Please note that you can submit claims for behavioral health services yourself; past a certain deductible amount, you should be able to be reimbursed for most or all of the cost. You also have access to **HealthiestYou**, an independent telehealth platform, at no cost. You can switch therapists whenever you'd like. Sign up at [www.telehealth4students.com](http://www.telehealth4students.com).

### Dissertation fellowships

**MCAS Dissertation Fellowships** provide one year of funding and health insurance over and above the five-year stipend provided to all doctoral candidates. No teaching is required. The graduate school funds them, and they are awarded on a competitive basis. The process takes place in the spring.

Applications are judged on the originality and quality of the work and the likelihood of the applicant finishing the dissertation within the fellowship year. **In recent memory, the graduate school has given English 1–2 MCAS fellowships per year.** Fellowships have occasionally been split between two people, or two fellowships between three people. Applicants entering their sixth year are not favored over applicants in other years; historically, the graduate school has tended to favor applicants entering years six thru eight. **The graduate school requires that you have advanced to candidacy (all but dissertation or ABD status) by the time of application.**

There is also the **Dalsimer Fellowship** administered thru Irish Studies. Applications are restricted to the English and History departments. It alternates between the two departments unless there are no eligible candidates in a given year's "on" department. We had the Dalsimer this year, so History has it for the spring 2024 cycle. Your dissertation project need not be all-Irish to qualify. However, **only rising sixth-years are eligible.** This is evidently stipulated in the endowment of the fellowship. The required materials are a letter of interest, a CV, and a letter of recommendation. Please send these to the Director of Irish Studies, Rob Savage <[robert.savage@bc.edu](mailto:robert.savage@bc.edu)>. The process takes place in February.

The MCAS Dissertation Fellowship and Dalsimer Fellowship match the English PhD standard stipend, **\$28,500** for 2023–24. As non-teaching fellowships, they are paid out in two installments, semesterly, with the first installment arriving in mid-September.

The graduate school disallows the holding of more than one fellowship, whether both internal or internal and external, without special approval of the dean. Therefore applying for external support is a delicate matter depending on the timing of award announcements. What you want to avoid is having the gaining of a partial external fellowship interfere with your chances for the MCAS Dissertation Fellowship. Please consult me if you are applying for outside funding or are finding yourself in a situation of juggling multiple offers.



## Clough Center Fellowships

In the past, BC's Clough Center for the Study of Constitutional Democracy offered year-long graduate fellowships (\$6,000 in 2021–22). In 2022, they reorganized how they disburse fellowships, making them both more lucrative and a larger time commitment. Now they favor a 2- to 3-year cohort model for **Doctoral Fellowships**. Fellows are expected to attend weekly seminars, provide feedback on peers' work across disciplines, and present once from their own work. The pay is **\$7,500 in year 1 and \$5,000 in year 2**, with the possibility of summer funding of \$1,500–\$3,000 in later years. Each year I nominate from among the rising first-years for this.

Current grads are eligible to apply each spring for “a small number of **one-year doctoral fellowships**,” which pay between **\$6,000 and \$7,500**. My impression is that there are fewer of these to go around than before Clough switched to a cohort model for incoming grads. Current grads are also eligible to apply for **Research and Public Service Fellowships**, which provide up to \$4,000 in summer funding for independent work.

If your research concerns the United States, politics, constitutions, and/or democracy, it is worth applying, and reapplying. There is rather wide latitude for connecting your research interests to the Center's mission. Many of our PhDs over the years were Clough fellows under the old model, and already we have two second-years, Justin Brown-Ramsey and Ophelia Wang, under the new model. The process for both streams of funding takes place in the spring. Requirements are a CV, a writing sample, and two letters of reference. Apply directly to Clough, but confer with me first. The current director is Jonathan Laurence <laurenjo@bc.edu>.

## Summer teaching at the Woods College

This is the opportunity formerly known as the “Dean of Summer Session Teaching Fellowships (DSSTF).” It's been devolved from its “fellowship” status. The Woods College of Advancing Studies seeks volunteers to teach online asynchronous courses in one or both of two summer sessions. In the past, when it was a fellowship, the English Department nominated one or two candidates and was typically awarded one DSSTF. So we prefer to put forward just a few names for this. NB: we decide in the prior November, much earlier than the other opportunities on this list. Pay is **\$8,005 per course**, plus **\$2,500** for a mandatory course development process with the Center for Digital Innovation in Learning (CDIL) in the spring prior to the summer teaching. In all, then, the fellowship at present amounts to **up to \$18,500** assuming you have never completed the training before and teach two courses, plus health insurance coverage from August to mid-January. Note that the Woods College reserves the right to dock the stipend based on low enrollment, and in the past they've done this quite aggressively, for example paying only \$2,500 as a “kill fee” (not my preferred term) for a course that underenrolled. Be forewarned. The world of night school seems, shall we say, a teeny bit more mercenary than how we like to approach teaching and learning in MCAS. The PhD program director, Chair, and Assistant Chair do endeavor to schedule the classes in such a way as to minimize shortfalls.

## Graduate assistantships

Graduate assistantships are part-time on-campus positions filled on a rolling basis as needed. Here is an incomplete list of recurring positions in which English MAs and PhDs have worked or would be suited to work (there may be other, *ad hoc* assistantships in any given year—the best policy is to ask around):

1. ArtsFest (spring)
2. Boston College Libraries / English / History, Collaborative Digital Projects Lab (new)
3. Burns Library
4. Center for Digital Innovation in Learning (CDIL)
5. Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE)
6. Connors Family Learning Center (CFLC)
7. *Éire-Ireland* journal
8. English Department Writing Prizes (does not pay very much)
9. English/History group for first-generation/low-income graduate candidates (the pay comes out of the grant money, so it does not pay much)
10. Graduate Student Association (GSA)
11. Institute for the Liberal Arts (ILA)
12. Irish Studies program
13. Learning To Learn McNair Scholars Program
14. Literature Core program / *Fresh Ink* magazine
15. Lowell Humanities Series
16. McMullen Museum
17. Medical Humanities
18. Office of Graduate Student Life
19. O'Neill Library
20. Outdoor Adventures
21. Park Street Corporation Speaker Series
22. *Religion and the Arts* journal book reviews editor
23. Schiller Institute makerspace (“The Hatchery”)
24. Schiller Institute micro printing press (new)
25. Winston Center for Leadership and Ethics (said to pay very well)
26. Women’s Studies program
27. writing center (pays very well)

Stipended graduate candidates are not permitted to work more than **nine hours per week** during the academic year in on-campus roles on top of full-time study, which is counted as 20 hours per week for administrative purposes. (The 29-hour total limit, which is quite strict, comes from the graduate school and is intended to avoid obliging the University to pay you overtime. See: <https://www.bc.edu/bc-web/schools/mcas/graduate/current-graduate-students/policies-and-procedures.html>.) By policy Boston College does not pay overtime wages; therefore, the university makes an effort to stay within the bounds of federal laws governing overtime pay.

For these and other opportunities, see this page: <https://www.bc.edu/content/bc-web/offices/student-affairs/sites/graduate-student-life/campus-life/assistantships.html>.

### Summer internships

In summer 2021, the Institute for the Liberal Arts, the provost's office, and the graduate school cosponsored a full-time graduate internships pilot program to enable PhD candidates to explore alternative careers. There were nine internships, each paying a stipend of \$4,000 (\$2,000 in June + \$2,000 in July):

1. Boston College Libraries, Digital Scholarship Group
2. Boston College Libraries, Educational Initiative and Research Services
3. Burns Library, Boston College
  - Catholic Charities of Boston
  - Cotting School for Disabled Children (Lexington, MA) - fundraising and outreach
  - Cotting School for Disabled Children (Lexington, MA) - teacher evaluation and human resources
  - Mass Humanities (Northampton, MA)
4. McMullen Museum, Boston College
5. Schiller Institute, Boston College

The external opportunities at Catholic Charities, the Cotting School, and Mass Humanities unfortunately fell thru and won't be renewed. The pilot program was renewed for summer 2022, with the same internal internships plus a new one:

6. Student Affairs, Boston College

In 2023, the Educational Initiative opportunity was replaced by:

7. Academic Advising Center

Academic Advising Center. Mary Crane <cranem@bc.edu>, director of the ILA, coordinates the program. There are weekly reflection sessions across the internships and an August reception. Applications are due to Mary in March. A call goes out each year.

### École Normale Supérieure (ENS) exchange program

Thanks to a formal partnership that began in 1989, each year a Boston College graduate candidate is granted the position of *pensionnaire étranger* for one academic year at the École Normale Supérieure in Paris (and in turn, one ENS student comes to BC as Instructor of French). Founded in 1794, and located in the heart of the Latin Quarter (on the Rue d'Ulm), the ENS is one of the most prestigious institutions of higher learning in France. The position comes with free lodging, a government-subsidized meal plan, library privileges, access to classes, and advising, but **no stipend**.

This opportunity merits your attention if your research connects with France and the French language, because BC's Romance Languages and Literatures department no longer grants the PhD, attenuating the competition. Our own Nell Wasserstrom held the ENS position in 2018–19, and Catherine Enwright holds it this year (2023–24).

There is no application form. All that is required is a statement of interest and a CV by **November 15**. Make an appointment to meet with Prof. Liesl Yamaguchi before submitting.

### Time to degree

The graduate school has set a nominal eight-year limit on doctoral study. Beyond the eighth year, you must submit an extension form in the spring for the following year. The chair of your dissertation committee, one of the graduate deans, and I all must sign the form. In practice, petitions for a degree extension are granted without incident provided the candidate can be said to be in good standing in the department.

In any semester in which you do not take any courses, even before year 8, you must register for the placeholder course ENGL9999 "Doctoral Continuation." It costs one credit (\$1,988 in 2023–24); the department covers this cost in the first eight years. **After that, you are responsible for the fee (I know!)** except in the semester in which you expect to submit your dissertation, when the fee is covered.

### External funding

Scholarly societies, libraries, and government agencies offer various (typically highly competitive) grants, prizes, and fellowships supporting dissertation research. Sometimes they are earmarked to areas of interest to the society or agency. For those of you are manuscript-y or book-historical, the library grants and fellowships tend to be less fiercely competitive though less lucrative. Check the scholarly societies that put on conferences in your field.

The time to apply for these is **the fall before the academic year in which you intend to apply for jobs and defend your dissertation**. That would normally be fall of the fifth year, or failing that, fall of the sixth year. Because most external funding opportunities have fall deadlines, you would apply for them before applying for the internal funding opportunities described above.

An incomplete list:

1. Alpha Lambda Delta Honors Society (up to \$7,000)  
<https://www.nationalald.org/fellowships>
2. American Academy in Rome (ancient, medieval, early modern, or modern Italian studies) (\$16,000/semester or \$28,000/year)  
<https://www.aarome.org/apply/rome-prize/application>
3. American Antiquarian Society – long-term (Worcester, MA) (\$35,000)  
<https://www.americanantiquarian.org/long-term-fellowships>
4. American Antiquarian Society – short-term (Worcester, MA) (\$1,850/month)  
<https://www.americanantiquarian.org/short-term-fellowships>
5. American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education  
<https://www.aahhe.org/graduate-fellows-program>
6. American Association of University Women (AAUW) (general) (up to \$30,000)  
<https://www.aauw.org/resources/programs/fellowships-grants/current-opportunities/american/>
7. AAUW (international candidates) (up to \$30,000)  
<https://www.aauw.org/resources/programs/fellowships-grants/current-opportunities/international/>
8. American Council of Learned Societies (Buddhist studies) (\$30,000)  
<https://www.acls.org/programs/robert-h-n-ho-family-foundation-in-buddhist-studies/>
9. American Council of Learned Societies (general) (\$35,000)  
<https://www.acls.org/Competitions-and-Deadlines/Mellon-ACLS-Dissertation-Completion-Fellowships>
10. American Educational Research Association (AERA) (\$25,000)  
<https://www.aera.net/Professional-Opportunities-Funding/AERA-Funding-Opportunities/Grants-Program/Dissertation-Grants>
11. American Heraldry Society (\$1,500)  
<https://www.americanheraldry.org/education-resources/william-barton-graduate-scholarship>
12. American-Scandinavian Foundation (up to \$23,000)  
<http://www.amscan.org/fellowships-and-grants/fellowshipsgrants-to-study-in-scandinavia/>
13. The Americas Research Network (US/Mexico transnationalism) (\$4,000)  
<https://arenet.org/fellowship.php>
14. Association for Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies (ASEEES) (fellowship) (\$25,000)  
<https://www.aseees.org/programs/ctdrf>
15. ASEEES – at-large grant (\$6,000)  
<https://www.aseees.org/programs/dissertation-grant>
16. ASEEES – summer grant (\$6,000)  
<https://www.aseees.org/programs/aseees-summer-dissertation>
17. Center for Jewish History (\$22,500)  
<https://www.cjh.org/research/fellowships-at-the-center>

18. Children's Literature Association (up to \$1,500)  
<https://www.childlitassn.org/hannah-beiter-graduate-student-research-grant>
19. Consortium for Faculty Diversity  
<https://www.gettysburg.edu/offices/provost/consortium-for-faculty-diversity/fellowships/>
20. Council for European Studies (\$27,500)  
<https://councilforeuropeanstudies.org/grants-awards-fellowships/dissertation-completion/>
21. Council of American Overseas Research Centers (CAORC) (transregional research) (\$11,500)  
<https://www.caorc.org/multi-fellowship-guidelines>
22. Council on Library Information and Resources (CLIR) (research in original sources)  
<https://www.clir.org/fellowships/mellon/>
23. Department of Education – foreign language and area studies  
<https://www2.ed.gov/programs/iegpsflasf/eligibility.html>
24. Department of Education – research abroad  
<https://www2.ed.gov/programs/iegpsddrap/index.html>
25. Department of State (language study abroad)  
<https://clscholarship.org/>
26. Dolores Zohrab Liebmann Fund (\$18,000)  
<https://fdnweb.org/liebmann/>
27. Editing Press (editorial assistance for neglected topics of study) (\$2,500)  
<https://editing.press/bassi>
28. Ford Foundation (diversity)  
[https://sites.nationalacademies.org/PGA/FordFellowships/PGA\\_171962](https://sites.nationalacademies.org/PGA/FordFellowships/PGA_171962)
29. Fulbright (for US citizens)  
<https://us.fulbrightonline.org/applicants/types-of-awards/study-research>
30. German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) (many available)  
<https://www2.daad.de/deutschland/stipendium/datenbank/en/21148-scholarship-database/>
31. Getty Museum (Los Angeles, CA) – at-large  
<https://www.getty.edu/foundation/initiatives/residential/index.html>
32. Getty Museum (Los Angeles, CA) – predoctoral (\$30,000)  
[http://www.getty.edu/foundation/initiatives/residential/getty\\_pre\\_postdoctoral\\_fellowships.html](http://www.getty.edu/foundation/initiatives/residential/getty_pre_postdoctoral_fellowships.html)
33. Goizueta Foundation (Miami, FL) (Cuban heritage) (\$3,000/month)  
<https://www.library.miami.edu/chc/fellows.html>
34. Guggenheim Foundation (\$25,000)  
<https://www.hfg.org/emerging-scholars>
35. Hagley Museum and Library (Wilmington, DE) – dissertation fellowships (\$6,500)  
<https://www.hagley.org/henry-belin-du-pont-dissertation-fellowships>
36. Hagley Museum and Library (Wilmington, DE) – research grants  
<http://www.hagley.org/library-researchgrants>
37. Harry Ransom Center (Austin, TX)  
<https://www.hrc.utexas.edu/fellowships/>

38. Hispanic Scholarly Fund  
<https://www.hsf.net/scholarship>
39. Houghton Library (Cambridge, MA) (\$3,600)  
<https://library.harvard.edu/grants-fellowships/houghton-library-visiting-fellowships>
40. Huntington Library (San Marino, CA)  
<https://www.huntington.org/fellowships>
41. Institute for Citizens and Scholars – ethical and religious values (\$27,500)  
<https://citizensandscholars.org/fellowships/for-scholars-education-leaders/charlotte-w-newcombe-fellowship/>
42. Institute for Citizens and Scholars – women’s studies (\$5,000)  
<https://citizensandscholars.org/fellowships/for-scholars-education-leaders/dissertation-fellowship-in-womens-studies/>
43. Institute for Humane Studies (classical liberalism) (up to \$15,000 renewable)  
<https://theihs.org/funding-career-resources/humane-studies-fellowship/>
44. Institute of Historical Research (United Kingdom)  
<https://www.history.ac.uk/join-ihr/fellowships/junior-fellowships/ihr-doctoral>
45. Josephine de Karman Fellowship Trust  
<http://www.dekarman.org/>
46. Keats–Shelley Association  
<https://k-saa.org/awards/carl-h-pforzheimer-jr-research-grants/>
47. Kenyon College (Gambier, OH) (candidates from underrepresented groups) (\$36,000)  
<http://www.kenyon.edu/directories/offices-services/office-of-the-provost/awards-and-recognition/marilyn-yarbrough-dissertation-teaching-fellowship/>
48. Lewis Walpole Library (New Haven, CT)  
<https://walpole.library.yale.edu/fellowships/visiting-fellowships-and-travel-grants>
49. Library Company of Philadelphia  
<https://librarycompany.org/academic-programs/fellowships/>
50. Lilly Library (Bloomington, IN) – general (\$1,500)  
<https://libraries.indiana.edu/lilly-library/fellowships>
51. Lilly Library (Bloomington, IN) – study of Bernardo Mendel (\$1,500)  
<https://libraries.indiana.edu/lilly-library/fellowships>
52. Louisville Institute (North American Christianity) (\$25,000)  
<https://louisville-institute.org/programs-grants-and-fellowships/fellowships/dissertation-fellowship/>
53. Marquette University (Milwaukee, WI) (candidates from underrepresented groups)  
<https://www.marquette.edu/provost/mitchem-dissertation-program.php>
54. McNeil Center for Early American Studies (\$25,000)  
<https://www.mceas.org/fellowships/dissertation-fellowship-program>
55. Medieval Academy of America (late medieval Britain) (\$30,000)  
<https://www.medievalacademy.org/general/custom.asp?page=Schallek>
56. National Gallery of Art (Washington, DC) (several available)  
<https://www.nga.gov/research/casva/fellowships/predoctoral-dissertation-fellowships.html>
57. National Institute of Justice  
<https://nij.ojp.gov/funding/fellowships/graduate-research-fellowship-program>

58. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA) (marine policy)  
<https://www.seagrant.noaa.gov/Knauss-Fellowship-Program>
59. Native Forward Scholars Fund  
<https://www.aigcs.org/scholarships-fellowships/#grad-schol>
60. Newberry Library (Chicago, IL)  
<http://www.newberry.org/fellowships>
61. Paul and Daisy Soros Fellowships for New Americans  
<https://www.pdsoros.org/apply/eligibility>
62. P.E.O. (for women candidates) (\$20,000)  
<http://www.peointernational.org/about-peo-scholar-awards>
63. Princeton Library (up to \$4,000)  
<https://library.princeton.edu/special-collections/friends-princeton-university-library-research-grants>
64. Rockefeller Archive Center (up to \$5,000)  
<https://rockarch.org/collections/research-stipends/>
65. Rossell Hope Robbins Library (Rochester, NY) (for women candidates) (medieval studies) (\$24,000)  
<https://www.library.rochester.edu/spaces/robbins/fellowship>
66. School of Advanced Research  
<https://sarweb.org/scholars/resident/>
67. Smithsonian  
<https://www.si.edu/ofi>
68. Social Science Research Council (SSRC) – non-US or US indigenous cultures and societies (\$23,000 on average)  
<https://www.ssrc.org/fellowships/view/idrf-fellowship/>
69. SSRC – religion, spirituality, and democracy in the United States (up to \$15,000)  
<https://www.ssrc.org/fellowships/view/religion-spirituality-and-democratic-renewal-fellowship/>
70. Soroptimist International Founder Region (for women candidates)  
<https://founderregionfellowship.org/>
71. Spencer Foundation (\$27,500)  
[https://www.spencer.org/grant\\_types/dissertation-fellowship](https://www.spencer.org/grant_types/dissertation-fellowship)
72. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (Washington, DC) (\$4,000/month)  
<https://www.ushmm.org/research/opportunities-for-academics/fellowships/annual>
73. United States Institute of Peace (conflict, peacebuilding, security studies) (up to \$20,000)  
<https://www.usip.org/grants-fellowships/fellowships/peace-scholar-fellowship-program>
74. University of Notre Dame (South Bend, IN) (for African-American candidates)  
<https://africana.nd.edu/about/peters-fellows-network/>
75. University of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia, PA) (diversity) (\$37,000)  
<https://provost.upenn.edu/predoctoral-fellowships>
76. University of Virginia (African/African diaspora studies) – pre-doc (\$24,000)  
<https://woodson.as.virginia.edu/predoc>
77. University of Virginia (African/African diaspora studies) – post-doc (\$47,500)  
<https://woodson.as.virginia.edu/postdoc>



78. Williams College (diversity) (\$50,000)  
<https://faculty.williams.edu/graduate-fellowships-2/graduate-fellowships/>
79. Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library (Winterthur, DE) (\$1,750/month)  
<https://www.winterthur.org/fellowships-available/>
80. Yale Center for British Art (New Haven, CT)  
<http://britishart.yale.edu/research/residential-scholar-awards>
81. Yale University (New Haven, CT) (American Indian and indigenous studies)  
<https://ygsna.sites.yale.edu/henry-roe-cloud-fellowship/henry-roe-cloud-dissertation-fellowship-announced-202122>

## Careers

It's never too early to consider how your PhD will equip you for academic and non-academic career paths. (See pt. IV, "Program outcomes," for examples.) I recommend frequent reflection on all the kinds of work and thinking you are doing—in the classroom as a student or instructor; in your research; in any on- or off-campus employment—to discern what your career goals are and what resources exist at Boston College to support them.

An important resource is **the Career Center**, where Joe DuPont <dupontjo@bc.edu> and Rachel Greenberg <r.greenberg@bc.edu> have responsibility for graduate career advising. In addition to one-on-one meetings, something that would cost a pretty penny outside the structure of a degree program, the Career Center has various apps and programs available to you, such as Handshake (app.joinhandshake.com/auth?auth=1207), Eagle Exchange (eagleexchange.bc.edu), and ImaginePhD (imaginephd.com). The Career Center will soon launch a one-credit career design thinking course tailored to doctoral candidates.

## I. Advising, coursework, and program requirements

## Coursework

PhD candidates in English are **required to take a PhD seminar in each of their first four semesters**. The seminar is on a different topic and taught by a different faculty member each semester. We do our best not to have the PhD seminar conflict with other English graduate courses or with your teaching schedules, but in the nature of things no guarantee is possible. Those who enter the program without an M.A. degree are encouraged to take **a methods course** (“Introduction to Advanced Research,” “Issues and Methods in American Studies,” or “Issues and Methods in English Studies”).

Candidates may take electives, including regular graduate seminars, independent study courses (called Readings and Research or “R&Rs”), and courses at partner institutions (see subsection below). Note that faculty are not compensated for R&Rs. Candidates participate in the pedagogy seminar in their second and third year. **In their third or fourth year, they enroll in the Advanced Research Colloquium, a required professionalization seminar** covering the making of a CV, writing a job letter and a dissertation prospectus, and placing an article in an academic journal. ARC is a full three-credit course with workload to match. **To teach FWS, which is required of all candidates in the third year, you must take ENGL8825 Composition Theory and the Teaching of Writing**, offered each spring. (Or you may supply documentation that you’ve completed a comparable course before within the last 3 years and make arrangements to check your FWS syllabus with the ENGL8825 instructor the summer before your third year.)

Because some candidates arrive with MAs and thus an extensive graduate course background already, the number of additional courses a candidate may take varies widely. A common sequence among many of our current graduate candidates is to take four to six courses, overall, in their first year, and three or four in their second (see the year-by-year overview below). Candidates sometimes return to take courses in their third and fourth years, or even audit one in their fifth. While we have had success negotiating for free tuition for sixth-years, seventh-years and beyond who wish to enroll in a course will be charged one credit (\$1,988 in 2023–24) per semester.

Chelsea is the departmental point-person for credits and enrollment in the financial and bureaucratic dimension, while Marla DeRosa <derosam@bc.edu>, Assistant to the Chair, is the point-person in the academic dimension. **Student Services** is the external office that has ultimate authority over matters concerning enrollment, credits, and tuition.

In any semester in which you do not take any courses, you must register for the placeholder course ENGL9999 “Doctoral Continuation.”

### Options for coursework beyond BC

Boston College is a member of three Boston-area consortiums:

1. **Boston-Area Graduate Consortium.** Candidates are eligible to cross-register for one course per semester at Boston University, Brandeis University, or Tufts University. There is no cross-registration during the summer.
2. The **Graduate Consortium in Women's Studies (GCWS)** describes itself as “a pioneering effort by faculty at nine degree-granting institutions in the Boston area and MIT to advance women's studies scholarship.” Faculty and candidates are drawn from BC, BU, Brandeis, Harvard University, MIT, Northeastern University, Simmons College, Tufts, and the University of Massachusetts at Boston. Several of our faculty members (notably Frances Restuccia and Kalpana Seshadri) have taught in the consortium. I subscribe to the listserv and will forward all communications to you. **There is an application process** for enrolling, so keep your eye on this page if you're interested: <http://mit.edu/gcws/>.
3. **Boston Theological Interreligious Consortium.** Member institutions are the BC Theology Department, the BC School of Theology and Ministry, the BU Graduate Program in Religion, the BU School of Theology, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Hartford Seminary, Harvard Divinity School, Hebrew College, Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, and Saint John's Seminary and Theological Institute.  
<https://www.bostontheological.org/>

## Graduate colloquium, pedagogy seminar, working groups, and seminar series

Five recurring events and activities in the program aim to build community among graduate candidates at all levels and between candidates and the faculty.

1. The **graduate colloquium** is a joint MA-PhD, candidate-run program that sponsors lectures and gatherings throughout the academic year. In alternate years, the colloquium consists of two evening events at BC featuring a roundtable discussion, papers by BC and area graduate candidates, and a keynote speaker drawn from BC's faculty. In the other years, we host a full-blown one-day graduate conference featuring graduate papers from across the country and a keynote speaker from outside BC. One first-year and two second-year PhD candidates organize these events, and in general, the more volunteers participate, the easier it is for everyone. This is a great way to gain experience with higher education administration, event planning, and academic networking. The colloquium lay dormant during the pandemic, but we restarted it last year. This year's lead co-organizers are Emily Beckler <becklere@bc.edu>, Fari Cannon <cannonfa@bc.edu>, and Rebecca Radillo <radillo@bc.edu>.
2. **All PhD candidates are required to participate in a candidate-run pedagogy seminar in their second and third years.** Naturally, candidates in all years are always welcome and are encouraged to attend. The group meets two or three times a semester for two hours or so. Topics are generated by the whole group. Past topics have included “Creating syllabi and designing courses,” “Dealing with troubled and troubling students,” “Work/life balance,” and “Teaching outside BC.” Traditionally, the first hour is candidate-only, in which candidates share their experiences, challenges, and questions. In the second hour, the

seminar customarily invites a faculty member or two to join the discussion and share their experiences. Workshop coordinators set the date/time of meetings, select the topic, invite faculty, reserve a room (with the help of Olivia), and purchase snacks (save receipts and turn them in to Chelsea for reimbursement, or have Olivia order ahead of time thru BC catering). The pedagogy seminar for the 2023-2024 academic year is a hybrid learning experience that combines asynchronous learning in the form of micro-courses on Canvas and in-person, synchronous discussions that occur approximately once a month.

Participants are eligible to earn digital badges for their completion of various learning activities online. At the end of the academic year, participants may also earn a digital badge representing their successful completion of the requirements of the pedagogy seminar for the year, including both asynchronous and synchronous components. The directors for 2023–24 are Noël Ingram <ingramno@bc.edu> and Kelly Gray <grayko@bc.edu>.

3. In prior years, candidates and faculty had an opportunity to participate in a series of Research Collaboratives organized and run jointly by candidates and graduate faculty. This was funded by the graduate school under the rubric of “Preparing Future Faculty,” as part of a large teaching development grant to the university, and they were a great success for us. Most of the graduate **working groups** (<https://www.bc.edu/content/bc-web/schools/mcas/departments/english/graduate/working-groups.html>) originated as Research Collaboratives. The Research Collaboratives program ended some time in the 2010s, but there is still some money available from the graduate school on a competitive basis for working groups or other collaborative extracurricular events. Midway thru the fall semester you will get a call for proposals. Working groups are get-togethers that combine socializing and coordinated discussion, sharing of common research interests and resources, and/or common reading in specific research areas. In years past, groups met to work on drafts of essays together; attended a film in their professional field; or had dinner together following a series of common readings. Other formats are possible as well. For instance, candidates and faculty might form a panel to try out paper presentations for an upcoming conference. The graduate school’s primary concern is that these events combine socializing and mentoring functions, and that these events prepare candidates to become the well-rounded faculty members we know they can be. In other words, these meetings are intended as professional training.
4. The **first-generation graduate group** is a new (2019–) initiative in English and History, founded by Megan Crotty and sponsored by the Institute for the Liberal Arts. The group provides a confidential space for first-generation graduate candidates, low-income candidates, and those from underrepresented communities to share experiences and resources. The director for 2022–23 is Cassidy Allen <allenhg@bc.edu>.
5. New as of spring 2022 is the **English Graduate Speaker Series (EGSS)** run by Rob Lehman <robert.lehman@bc.edu> and Kalpana Seshadri <kalpana.rahita.seshadri@bc.edu>. Outside speakers precirculate an unpublished article-length essay and then come to campus to chat about it. Your attendance is expected. You’ll get the most out of these events if you read the essay beforehand. For the first 30 minutes, graduate candidates hold the floor; after that, BC faculty in attendance can chime in, too. This is a great way to participate in some friendly peer review and see an established scholar thinking on their feet, as opposed

to seeing them present highly polished work forthcoming or long since published. The event is all q&a, without any reading from a script.

In addition to these, it is a good idea to get hooked into **the Harvard Mahindra Center seminar series** related to your interests. Some fields are also represented by a Harvard English Department colloquium series. These are fantastic ways to meet PhDs in your field from the Boston area, hear new work from faculty around the country (and world), and network a bit. Often it is possible to attend dinners with speakers afterwards. Ask your adviser whether there are other Boston-area colloquia or seminar series you should know about.

## Year-by-year overview of goals

It isn't possible to describe a single template for every candidate's experience. We pride ourselves on our flexibility. But here is an overview of a typical (or at least not atypical!) progression.

	<b>coursework</b>	<b>teaching</b>	<b>exams</b>	<b>etc.</b>
<b>year 1</b>	2 PhD seminars [optional: 3-4 electives] [optional: tutoring]		first language exam; prepare for minor field exam	[optional: pedagogy seminar, RSI workshops]
<b>year 2</b>	2 PhD seminars; ENGL8825 [optional: 1-2 electives] [optional: tutoring]	TA (1 semester)	second language exam; minor field exam ( <u>required</u> by end of year)	[optional: RSI workshops] pedagogy seminar
<b>year 3</b>	Advanced Research Colloquium (if offered) [optional: 1 elective]	FWS + Lit Core	major field exam ( <u>required</u> by following summer)	pedagogy seminar
<b>year 4</b>	Advanced Research Colloquium (if not in year 3) [optional: 1 elective]	elective + FWS, Lit Core, Studies in Narrative, or Studies in Poetry	dissertation prospectus; dissertation prospectus exam	[optional: pedagogy seminar, RSI workshops]
<b>year 5</b>				dissertation; seek jobs if ready [optional: pedagogy seminar]
<b>years 6+</b>				dissertation; seek jobs [optional: pedagogy seminar]

## Teaching

Doctoral candidates divide their teaching opportunities over three or four years in the program. Always keep in mind that the range of teaching opportunities available to you here is highly unusual: English PhD programs at the Ivies and other tippy-top private universities ‘protect’ grads from almost all teaching obligations, while programs at big public universities put PhDs to work immediately as glorified adjuncts teaching multiple sections of composition over and over. The range of teaching experiences throughout your time here, and the flexibility to strike a productive balance between teaching, research, and coursework, is a distinctive strength in your CV. When the time comes, flaunt it!

**In your first year, there are no teaching obligations.** This is a time for getting acclimated to your studies at BC. However, the department provides part-time paid teaching opportunities that may be especially helpful to consider if you do not have a background in teaching already, or on the contrary if you bring much teaching experience and want to stay in touch with teaching and learn more about BC’s undergraduate culture.

1. **Writing Fellows** are paired with a non-ENGL undergraduate course and hold one-on-one writing conferences with students in the course. The Writing Fellows do not attend class, but meet several times with the instructor. The stipend is \$1,400 per semester for 10 hours of work per week.
2. **Writing Tutors** work at the CFLC and earn \$14.25/hr.
3. **English Language Learners (ELL) Intensive Tutoring** are paired with students in ELL sections of our department’s Core courses, FWS and Lit Core. The pay is \$15/hr.

The Writing Fellows and Writing Tutors programs are currently administered by Vincent Portillo <[portilvi@bc.edu](mailto:portilvi@bc.edu)>. The ELL Tutors program is administered by Lynne Anderson <[lynne.anderson@bc.edu](mailto:lynne.anderson@bc.edu)>. Applications for each are due in the summers before and after your first year.

**In your second year, you serve as a TA** for one semester in an undergraduate course, normally an elective or Lit Core, taught by one of the faculty. The CTE runs a **one-day “TA/TF Orientation” in August** for all new TAs (and TFs). TAs attend all meetings of the class and may be asked to assist in grading, and they also lead one or more class sessions, hold office hours, and meet frequently with the instructor to discuss the readings, background materials, and pedagogical strategies. The exact nature of the position is open to the interpretation of the TA and the instructor. We generally arrange these in the spring of the previous academic year, when I will ask you about your preferences. At that point it is appropriate to meet with the instructor to set expectations for fall TAships; for spring TAships, that meeting could happen in December. In the spring of your second year you take ENGL8825 in preparation for third-year sole instructorship.

**In your third year, you teach one semester of FWS** and participate in the FWS workshops, peer groups, and evaluations. The CTE runs a **one-day “TA/TF Orientation” in August** for all new TFs (and TAs), and the writing program puts on a **one-day “Comp Camp” in August** for all new

FWS instructors followed by **weekly meetings** during the semester. You will find our department has an elaborate and effective administrative structure supporting sections of this course. Then, **in the other semester, you commonly teach either Lit Core or an introductory course for sophomore and junior English majors:** Studies in Narrative (SIN) or Studies in Poetry (SIP). For the non-FWS course, you will be assigned a faculty teaching mentor (see the next page). In both courses you will work closely with the directors of these programs, currently Paula Mathieu <mathiepa@bc.edu> (FWS) and Tina Klein <kleinc@bc.edu> (Lit Core).

**In your fourth year, you teach an undergraduate elective of your own design** in consultation with me and the Chair and either Lit Core, FWS, SIN, or SIP in the other. During this year, you will again have a teaching mentor. In addition, you may want to invite your adviser or another faculty mentor to visit your classes. Many professors have noticed that opportunities for true intellectual exchange about teaching are shockingly few and far between in the academic life, outside of high-stakes hiring and firing discussions. I know it's scary, but seize the opportunity to get constructive, lower-stakes feedback!

Note that your sections of Core classes in years 3 and 4 come with lower-than-normal enrollment caps in recognition that you are at the beginning of your pedagogical career.

There are teaching opportunities, of course, beyond the fourth year. **Instructors past the stipend or fellowship years** make the adjunct rate per course (\$7,340 in AY 2023–24) and **teach Core courses with faculty-level enrollment caps (currently, 34 for Lit Core and 15 for FWS)**. We also think it is very worthwhile to expand your teaching experience to include teaching in the summer (for example in the Opportunities Through Education program) or adjuncting at other local institutions in the fifth year and beyond.

## Advisers

Every candidate in the program, at every stage, will have a designated faculty adviser, drawn from among our tenure-track faculty (Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, or Professor, but not professors “of the Practice,” who are full-time non-tenure-track). If you don't know who your adviser is or if you would like to change your adviser (no questions asked), let me know. In some cases, your work may be jointly overseen by two advisers. The roles and functions of these advisers naturally evolve during the course of your years at BC.

In your first year, you will be assigned an adviser. Normally, it will be someone with tenure in your field(s) of expressed interest, but in any event someone who may serve as a sounding board and consultant for your first steps in our program. The number of times you meet with your adviser can vary widely. **At a minimum, check in with your adviser twice per semester.** Your adviser can review your course choices, discuss plans for your first exams, and provide feedback as your program develops. This adviser may, but is not obligated to, serve as your teaching mentor. The adviser follows your progress and reports to me at the end of the academic year.



After that, you yourself discover the faculty member who will ultimately chair your dissertation, if it is not going to be your initial adviser. It might well happen when you begin your major field exam; certainly it will be settled as you compose your dissertation prospectus and prepare for the dissertation prospectus exam. Please notify me if and when there is a change in adviser. Your adviser has the same responsibilities as before, but much of her or his work is aimed towards (i) guiding you to complete your exam program, (ii) keeping tabs on your teaching, (iii) supervising work toward the dissertation, and (iv) supporting you as you seek academic or non-academic jobs.

## Teaching mentors

Teaching mentor assignments are made each spring for rising second-, third-, and fourth-years.

In your second year, when you serve as a TA, your faculty instructor for that course will serve as your teaching mentor.

In your third year, you will work one semester with the FWS mentoring system. In the other semester, you will have an assigned teaching mentor. In the spring, I will ask you to volunteer names for possible teaching mentors. We recommend two classroom visits, as well as at least one meeting afterwards to discuss the classroom experience.

In your fourth year, you and I will work together to select a teaching mentor for the year. The main idea, by the time you complete your teaching at BC, is to have someone (and more than just one person, certainly) who can say, in a future job letter, that they have seen you excel in the classroom. Teaching experience at multiple levels is valuable for all academic jobs, but teaching letters are particularly essential for applications to work at community colleges and small colleges.

## Language requirement

You must demonstrate either

- i. **a reading knowledge of two languages** other than English, including Old English and classical languages, or
- ii. **a working knowledge of one such language and its literature.**

“Working knowledge” is a higher bar than “reading knowledge.” The ideal outcome, of course, is that you acquire language skills that will aid you in your teaching and research. Strategize with your adviser about what language(s) you’ll need.

If you’re following path (i), there are two common ways to fulfill the requirement:

1. You demonstrate reading ability thru successful performance on two **translation exams** in which one or two short texts must be translated adequately, with use of a dictionary, in two

hours. We offer these exams at the end of each semester for both MA and PhD candidates. Typical languages are Ancient Greek, French, German, Italian, Latin, and Spanish, but we have in the past offered a very wide range of languages and can accommodate pretty much any language you might know how to read. I haven't been stumped yet. If you don't pass this exam, you can take it again in a future semester.

2. Or you can take reading-intensive summer language courses with BC's Classics, German, or Romance Languages and Literatures departments. If you earn a "B" or better in those courses, you fulfill the requirement. Check ahead of time, as course offerings vary each summer. The department covers the tuition. "**Intensive Reading in. . .**" courses meet twice weekly all summer; introductory language courses offered in a single summer session don't count. Languages regularly offered in the "intensive" format are French, German, Greek, and Latin. For whatever reason, Spanish and Italian are not offered in this format at BC but may be at other universities (Harvard is known to offer an equivalent course in Spanish, though because Harvard is not part of our consortium, you have to make a special case to Candace Hetzner for funding to cover tuition.)

You can of course mix and match, taking one language exam and one intensive course.

There are also two ways to fulfill the requirement following path (ii). They are each sufficient on their own:

1. Demonstrate more extensive knowledge of one language and its literature by either writing a **graduate-level critical paper in that language** using original texts or producing a **formal translation** of a literary text or essay previously unavailable in English. In either case, you arrange with a BC faculty member to write the paper or translate the work. This faculty member can be from outside the English Department, as long as the arrangement is approved by me ahead of time. I keep a running list of English Department faculty languages. Your fellow candidates are also good resources for discovering arrangements that have been made in the past.
2. Pass Maxim Shraye's graduate seminar **RLRL8899 The Art and Craft of Literary Translation**. In this course you will do intensive work between English and another language of which you already have some knowledge. The final project, a polished English translation of 200–250 lines of poetry or 20+ pages of prose in your chosen language, meets or exceeds the standard of option #1.

We will accept a language exam from an external MA program if the candidate furnishes a letter or transcript sent from that program attesting to the fact that he or she passed the exam. And we accept, of course, a language exam passed during our own MA degree. It's the same exam.

BC does not guarantee payment for summer courses here or elsewhere, but we have often had success in getting your tuition waived for courses offered during the regular year, and sometimes during the summer. This is arranged on a case-by-case basis, so plan ahead and be sure to alert me and Chelsea to requested credits for proposed classes well in advance. Sometimes the graduate

school charges you for tuition up front and then removes the charge later, which is annoying, but we don't have direct control over it.

## Research and Scholarship Integrity (RSI) requirement

The university organizes a series of panels for PhD candidates on ethical issues that arise over the course of a professional career. These are mainly geared toward the STEM fields, but some may be of interest to you. (We used to require you to complete the sequence, but as of 2022 we were given the opportunity to opt out, and we took it.) There are two formats:

1. There are two three-hour **general sessions**. Part I is offered three times in the fall, part II three times in the spring. They discuss issues related to the mentor-mentee relationship, responsible authorship and publication practices, research misconduct, and professional collaborations.
2. Then there is a **seminar series** that covers a wide variety of topics. Seminars focus on topics specific to particular divisions in the university (natural sciences, social sciences, or humanities), although there will likely be overlap. Topics have included: conflict of interest, data acquisition and tools, data management, data access and stewardship, academic peer review, grants, book publishers, researchers' social responsibilities, and human and animal subjects protections. The final schedule will be announced and posted to the RSI website.

Traditionally you would attend these especially **within your first two years**. For all of the sessions, you must register ahead of time. Direct questions to the RSI director, Erin Sibley <erin.sibley@bc.edu>. And see <https://bc.edu/content/bc-web/research/sites/vice-provost-for-research/research-protections/research-scholarship-integrity-program.html>.

## Graduate certificate in digital humanities

As of spring 2020, the Boston College Libraries Digital Scholarship Group and the English and History departments co-host a graduate certificate in digital humanities. This is a way to add a little something extra to your CV and a new skillset in your research and/or teaching. The certificate comprises three courses: an **introductory course**, "Graduate Colloquium: Introduction to Digital Humanities"; an **elective** in English or another department; and a **capstone**, project-based course taught thru Boston College Libraries. The intro course is offered each fall; electives are designated from among graduate offerings within English, History, and other humanities departments; and the capstone is offered each spring. The intro course is a prerequisite for the capstone, of course, but you may take the elective at any time, in English or in another department. It is far easier and wiser to complete the certificate concurrently with your other coursework than to try to return to the classroom later in your degree. The current director of the certificate program is Joe Nugent <nugentjf@bc.edu>. I also sit on the board. I plan to teach the introductory course next fall (2023).

## Teaching and writing prizes

Doctoral candidates are eligible for the **Donald J. White Teaching Excellence Awards**, which are given each spring. Award winners are nominated by me and the writing program director, in consultation with each candidate's adviser and past or present teaching mentors, and chosen by a three-person faculty committee, normally identical to the PhD admissions committee (the personnel changes every year). The award is **\$600 for a TF or \$350 for a TA**.

Doctoral candidates also compete for the **Von Hendy Award** for an article-length piece of critical writing (published or unpublished). One award goes to a PhD candidate, another to an MA candidate. The MA director announces and administers the Von Hendy Award. There is a special faculty selection committee for this award, unconnected to the PhD admissions committee. The award is **\$250**.

## Academic conferences

During your time as a graduate candidate, it's a good idea to present a paper at a scholarly conference or two. Although graduate conferences offer opportunities to practice paper delivery skills and connect with other candidates, it's generally unwise to invest a great deal of time or money attending multiple graduate conferences outside Boston. There is outlay involved in travel, or even for virtual conferences in working up a paper. Instead, target conferences open to faculty in your field like Shakespeare Association (#ShakeAss) or the Victorian Studies Association, or apply to present at a regional or national MLA conference. Talk to your adviser about upcoming opportunities, and think of your seminar papers as possible topics for conference papers.

Each year, graduate candidates can obtain up to **\$350 of reimbursement** from the university for presenting a paper at one scholarly conference (or \$150 for attending but not presenting). See <https://www.bc.edu/content/bc-web/schools/mcas/graduate/current-graduate-students/forms/graduate-student-reimbursement-guidelines.html> for details.

The GSA has a program offering up to **\$300 of reimbursement** by application. See <https://www.bc.edu/bc-web/offices/student-affairs/sites/graduate-student-life/grad-student-association.html> for details. The GSA does not fund summer conferences.

The English Department offers an additional **\$150 of reimbursement** to candidates in English who are presenting papers at professional conferences **excluding graduate conferences**. Submit the English Department conference approval form to Chelsea before the conference. The form is online at the English Department Canvas page: <https://bostoncollege.instructure.com/courses/1578572>.

In order to receive reimbursement, candidates must **request approval for funding before attending** the conference and submit the appropriate receipts within thirty days after attending the conference.

In years past, it has been possible, at the PhD director's discretion, to **put the graduate school and departmental conference funding toward an event that is not an academic conference** but is analogous, such as a professionalization seminar or a non-academic conference. Please ask me!

## Publishing scholarship

In and out of class, you may begin contemplating publishing your scholarship. This is a very good idea if your goal is a full-time academic position (research/teaching or research/administrative). Scholarship is the coin of the realm. You may have heard the advice to wait to publish until you are more confident in your ideas or further along in your career. Personally, I have never understood that advice, even in the past when jobs were less scarce. Publishing is, in part, *how* you gain confidence and get further along in your career in the first place. Don't worry about publishing something you'll later disagree with: that's just an opening to publish again! There's no censor checking your self-consistency over the years. Think of your career of publications less as a bunch of isolated attempts at perfection and more as the arc of your evolving thought: what you are reading, whose ideas interest you, how you understand the relationship between literature and the world. It's entirely understood that these are always changing.

Prior to the scholarly monograph, which will normally grow out of your dissertation, there are four main genres of scholarly writing (in ascending order of length and prestige):

1. book review,
2. note,
3. book chapter, and
4. article.

A book review is a commissioned (invited) review of a recent title. Some journals accept unsolicited offers to review, but most don't. A scholarly note is a short (1–6 pp.) and focused discussion of a small point that could have big ramifications. (It's one of my favorite forms; if you write it the right way, it can have as much heft as an article without all the extra hoopla. See <https://ericweiskott.com/2020/02/12/consider-the-note/>. Four journals that consider notes are *ANQ*, *English Studies*, *The Explicator*, and *Notes and Queries*.) An article is a longer statement. A book chapter has a little more flexibility in length and focus, depending on the book. Usually you must be invited to contribute, which means it will probably be someone you know who first invites you. However, some books grow out of conferences that had calls for papers. This is another reason to attend conferences—particularly one-off conferences on topics closely related to your research, as these tend to be the ones that become books.

A word on picking a journal. All journals are not created equal. Just as there is a pecking order of universities, there is a pecking order of journals. In modern language fields the top generalist journals are *ELH* and *PMLA*, with *Modern Philology*, *New Literary History*, and *Representations* close behind. Then come the top field journals, like *Speculum* for medieval and *Victorian Studies* for

Victorian studies, as well as well-regarded generalist journals not quite on the top shelf, like *Review of English Studies*. **Aim for the most prestigious appropriate journal and work your way down from there if necessary.** Resist the impulse to protect yourself from rejection by aiming low; on the academic job market, one article placed in *Modern Philology* is worth three (or more) in *Kansas Studies in [subtopic]*. See <https://ericweiskott.com/2018/03/29/how-to-get-your-research-published/>.

## The MA option

At any time after reaching ABD status, you are permitted to put in to formally receive a non-terminal MA degree retroactive to coursework and exams already completed. The form must be signed by the PhD director and by the graduate dean in charge of enrollment, currently Candace Hetzner.

Visit <https://www.bc.edu/content/bc-web/schools/mcas/graduate/current-graduate-students/forms.html> and navigate to “Master’s Degree Option.” You can select December or May graduation timing.

Or you may receive the retroactive MA as the terminal degree in the event that you are withdrawing from the program at that stage.

## II. The exams

## General guidelines

Here is the general philosophy of the sequence minor–major–prospectus–dissertation. Because it is meant to be a culmination of the PhD degree, a dissertation should be understood as part of a deliberately teleological course of study. Qualifying exams in particular should be planned with examiners to work together, the minor identifying a specific area of interest, the major expanding out from this area of interest to demonstrate expertise in a well-defined and capacious field, and the prospectus turning attention to the primary and secondary material explicitly relevant to the dissertation. Together, the exams should build momentum so that the writing of the dissertation will start quickly after the last exam and in conversation with all the works in these exams.

The exams are the heart of our program, separating coursework from dissertation work. On the one hand, don't underestimate how long it will take to assemble lists and committees and do the reading. On the other hand, please, please, don't belabor this stage. **We expect you to complete the minor field exam by the end of the second year, the major field exam by the summer after the third year, and the prospectus exam in the fourth year, preferably early in that year.** Many other English PhD programs have somewhat less intensive exam requirements than this, and while a lighter exam schedule has its own drawbacks, this means some of your peers are starting in on dissertation work quite a bit earlier. Therefore, in my (Eric's) opinion, you should see the exams for the interstitial hurdle they are and not accord them undue power over your time in the program.

**It is your responsibility to choose a topic, assemble a committee, pick a date, and schedule a room.** The committee chair reports back to me after the exam and, separately, e-signs a ballot circulated to the committee by Chelsea.

Reading lists for past major and minor field exams, as well as standardized reading lists, are on file in a black notebook in Stokes S476. I have several digital examples, too, available upon request. (Thanks to Noël Ingram for gathering these in 2021.) Examples are often helpful in imagining the length of the reading list.

After consultation with her or his adviser and me, the candidate selects a topic and a potential chair for the exam committee. **By longstanding convention, all exam committees have three members.** In consultation with the committee chair, the candidate first develops a tentative reading list for the exam and discusses appropriate committee members with her or him. The committee chair then helps the candidate recruit the other two members of the committee.

Assembling a committee is a lesson in people management. The requirement that committees have three members can be a stumbling block. There are only a few fields of study in which we can support an all-in-field committee of three. Depending on your field and the topic of your exam, you may need to put in some work to convince a third person, whose interests might be furthest from the focus of your list. Sometimes, that might mean having one of the other two committee members call in a favor. It might involve tweaking your list. Think of it from the faculty member's perspective: they could be concerned about being called on to examine you on texts or concepts



they themselves don't work with often. By enabling them to recognize themselves in your list to some extent, you give them permission to enter the conversation as an expert.

Candidates meet with the committee, individually or all together, to flesh out the list. (We used to refer to this as a "prelim," short for "preliminary examination," but that makes it sound much more formal than it has become in practice.) The candidate invites all the members of the committee to add or delete works on the list and to agree on the general scope of the exam. At this stage, the candidate is not expected to know the material or to have a developed approach to it. The candidate meets with all the members of the committee during exam preparation, though the emphasis of preparation falls upon the committee chair. Some candidates in the past have also registered for a formal readings and research course in order to prepare for an exam. Another format is for the candidate to circulate brief response papers to the committee at predetermined intervals during the reading months.

A reasonable projected date for the exam should be set. **A minor field exam or dissertation prospectus exam tends to be a four- to six-month project.** The minor field exam must be completed by the end of the second year. **A major field exam is no more than a ten-month project.** The major field exam must be completed by the summer after the third year. It is up to you and your committee chair to decide how often to meet during this time.

About a month or so before the projected exam date, the candidate schedules the time and place for the exam and confirms the date with all committee members. Contact Chelsea and Olivia and let them know the date, the length, and the names of the committee members. Olivia will reserve a room, and Chelsea will record a note on your progress. Summer dates should be set before the end of the spring semester. Please notify me or have the committee chair notify me of the result after the exam. Exams are graded "pass with distinction," "pass," or (never in my years here!) "fail."

## The minor field examination

Because it is the first exam, and paradoxically because it is "minor," the minor field exam often feels like the biggest lift. As English literary studies has changed, the definition of a minor field exam, its scope and its purposes, has often varied among individual faculty and PhD candidates themselves. This is why it is vital that the faculty member chairing the exam committee take a central role in delineating the exam's parameters. The following guidelines have been developed in an attempt to set out the range of possibilities. (These guidelines originated with Chris Wilson's overhaul of the exam structure in 2006.)

### Goals and purpose

The minor field exam is akin to a self-designed reading course that allows the candidate to survey a certain kind or period of writing and to develop some approaches and topics that will give her or him a command of the material. It is useful to think of the minor field exam as (i) the development of an area outside of or perpendicular to the major field in which the candidate will

be prepared to teach undergraduate courses and (ii) an opportunity to do intensive work with a limited and well-defined period and/or genre.

### Scope

The reading list should be determined both by the interests of the candidate and by the direct advice of the committee chair: once a candidate has defined an interest, the chair contributes those titles that are essential to work in the designated field. **The candidate is not responsible for having a single approach or definite idea before the reading list is established.** Shaping ideas and topics is the work of the study period and a subject of discussion during the exam itself.

Once the candidate and the committee chair have worked out a tentative reading list, the candidate meets with the rest of the committee individually or all together. In these meetings the list is shaped to its final form: some works are added, others deleted, *etc.*, until there is general agreement on the list. The length of the list depends, of course, on the kind of material to be studied, so it is difficult to specify in general terms. Some rough estimates: about twenty prose narratives, about thirty dramas, or about fifty poems of varying lengths, for example.

Critical and theoretical works may figure in different ways on different exams. Generally, it's a good idea for the exam committee and the candidate to agree about whether secondary works (and which ones) are in-bounds for the oral exam. Of course, if secondary works are principal texts on the list, as for example a minor field exam in critical theory, then they count and are subject to direct questioning and analysis during the exam. If they are set aside as suggested supplementary texts, the candidate is expected to use them in preparation, and perhaps to bring them up as they are relevant to the discussion of primary texts, but s/he is not expected to address those texts themselves. Again, the key thing here is to establish clarity before the exam itself.

Shortly before the exam, many candidates submit to their exam committees a statement that outlines the main interests or topics or approaches that they have developed in studying for the exam. Questioning will be shaped, but not necessarily determined, by these outlines. An alternative and equally acceptable format is for the candidate to read this statement for the first time at the beginning of the exam.

### Kinds of minor field exam undertaken in the past

The candidate may wish to shape the exam for one of the following purposes:

1. **The field exam** surveys the material in a particular field of writing. Emphasis on primary texts, with a few central secondary works.
2. **The teaching exam** considers a group of primary texts from the point of view of teaching them to undergraduates. This usually includes the design of a course syllabus, which serves as a center of discussion during the exam.
3. **The theory exam** is used to survey and criticize central works of one or more theoretical approaches and to discuss these approaches in relation to a body of relevant primary texts.

### Possible modes of organization

1. By period and form:
  - (a) A collection of important works in a certain genre during a certain, relatively brief period of literary history (Renaissance Lyric; American Realism and Naturalism; The Novel, 1900–1930; Victorian Prose)
  - (b) A literary movement, group, or culture (Twentieth-Century African-American Fiction; Eighteenth-Century Women’s Writing; The Harlem Renaissance; British Social-Problem Novels; Anglo-Irish Fiction)
  - (c) The development of a genre or subgenre over a longer period of time (The Self-Reflexive Novel; Epic Poetry; American Family Drama)
  
2. By writer:
  - (a) Single-author exams. One would normally be expected to read the complete works, along with major critical writings.
  - (b) Focus on two to four major writing careers and the formal, historical, biographical, or other connections among them.
  
3. By theoretical approach (Postcolonial Theory; Narratology; American and French Feminisms; Queer Theory).

### The exam

**Minor field exams last for ninety minutes**, including faculty consultation at the end. It is traditional, though not required, for the candidate to give a brief (5–10 minute) oral presentation at the beginning of the exam. This gives you some measure of control over the ensuing questions. The questions during the exam itself are up to the committee, and they can share them ahead of time, or not, as they see fit.

## The major field examination

The major field exam covers a broad list of the major texts and secondary works in the candidate’s principal field of study.

### Goals and purpose

Candidates should define an area for this exam that will be recognizable to others as a coherent field. It will include the/an area of your anticipated dissertation topic and will also in many cases provide a basis for defining your field of expertise when you apply for jobs. Although some fields seem standard and easily defined, others are constantly changing. Candidates might consult the MLA Job List (<https://joblist.mla.org/jobs/english/>) to see how such fields tend to be defined there. Faculty are an especially important resource in helping you define a field that makes sense in

relation both to your own interests and also to the wider disciplinary structures of literary study today. As with other exams, you should identify a committee chair who can help you formulate a preliminary reading list and advise you on selection of the other two members of the committee. The goal is to identify or craft a field that is both coherent and manageable.

### Scope

The major field exam covers the central primary and secondary works in the field. Fields should not be defined so broadly that this coverage becomes impossible. What constitutes such coverage will be determined by the three members of the exam committee in consultation with the candidate. Again, it is difficult to specify a number of works to be covered in a major field exam, since fields vary in shape, scope, and balance of primary and secondary materials. However, reading lists usually exceed the twenty to thirty works included in a minor field exam. **In the major field exam, secondary works count as part of the material prepared for the exam and candidates may be directly questioned about them.**

The dissertation prospectus and dissertation prospectus exam (see below) free up the major field exam from the burden of laying out a dissertation topic. We encourage you to forestall your dissertation focus, to a certain extent, while constructing and reading for your major field exam. The major field exam does not articulate a dissertation-sized field but rather a career-sized field.

### The exam

**Major field exams last for two hours.** As with the minor field exam, candidates often prepare an opening statement, generally including a brief description of the place of a potential dissertation topic in relation to the field.

## The dissertation prospectus

The dissertation prospectus consists of a brief essay (10–12 double-spaced pp., inclusive of bibliography) with the following elements:

1. A statement of purpose: a description of the dissertation topic, the materials to be covered (such as the relevant authors), and any provisional hypotheses.
2. A chapter-by-chapter overview of the intended project.
3. Mention of any unusual primary materials or research collections to be consulted, and/or any special methodological considerations.
4. A summary of the relevant scholarship presently existing on this subject, summing up the 'state of the discussion,' if any, and what the contribution of the proposed dissertation might be.
5. A bibliography that can be referred to in carrying out the above. Annotation is helpful but not required.

The candidate drafts the prospectus in consultation with her or his adviser and the intended dissertation committee. Committee members are chosen from among BC's faculty in English or related fields, or one or two (but usually not the committee chair) may be affiliated with other institutions.

(Re: "outside readers." There is a long tradition of this here at BC and in other programs. Reasons to consider including a faculty member from beyond BC would be: to add a specialization to your committee relevant to your project but which no one on our faculty has; to impress someone in the field and get them in your corner; to cross disciplines. A downside would be that you will likely get less hands-on writing help from this person. That is because they aren't expecting to be the person returning drafts with extensive comments week in and week out, though there may be exceptions. The process for inviting in a so-called outside reader is as follows: (1) check with me that there are departmental funds for the modest honorarium we pay; (2) if we have the funds, then simply invite them! In practice, most dissertation committees are all-BC, though this is changing as our coverage of individual fields thins out a bit given our tenure-track hiring is not keeping pace with graduate faculty retirements.)

A prospectus offers a prospect, not conclusions. Think of it as a hunting license. The prospectus creates an agreement with faculty members to sign on for a plan, the best professional sense of where one is headed. It is a placeholder. There is no need to delay completing the prospectus in order to further polish a document that will certainly change and adapt as the dissertation is written.

## The dissertation prospectus examination

There used to be a separate "dissertation field exam," independent of the prospectus. James Najarian folded that into a prospectus exam in 2017, in an effort to streamline progress from coursework to dissertation. The exam examines the prospectus, rather than an abstract field of knowledge. While this last exam retains the name of "exam," there's a growing sense in our department (at least among some advisers!) that, in effect, the candidate passes it prior to its taking place, thru the future dissertation committee's implicit approval of the prospectus as a document. Although the exam culminates in a formal 'pass' vote that initiates the all-but-dissertation (ABD) year(s), **the purpose of the exam is not so much to examine the prospectus in the abstract, as a finished document, as it is to guide and encourage the candidate at the outset of dissertation research.** It is (and here I speak for myself) an exam that shades into a collegial meeting.

The committee assembled for this exam, *ipso facto*, becomes the dissertation committee, barring any last-minute personnel adjustments due to unforeseen circumstances or at the candidate's discretion. The chair of the dissertation prospectus exam is expected to chair the dissertation committee. The prospectus exam serves as the official approval process for the dissertation prospectus. Approval of the prospectus, in turn, constitutes formal acceptance of the chosen dissertation topic as well as ratification of the dissertation committee. **After completion of the exam, the candidate is officially ABD and is eligible for dissertation fellowship support.**

At the exam, the committee discusses and inquires about the prospectus with an eye toward the intended dissertation project it represents. During the exam, the committee might choose to explore the basic ideas of both the primary and secondary texts in your prospectus; to explore theoretical concerns related to the topic; and/or to consult other disciplinary perspectives on it.

**Dissertation prospectus exams last for ninety minutes.** The exam's objectives are limited to the prospectus and its dissertation project. It is understood that the prospectus is provisional and will necessarily be reformulated as the dissertation is written. Often the prospectus generates language that will eventually find its way into the introduction to the dissertation and, after that, the book.

### III. The dissertation

## General advice

A dissertation is a book-length, researched writing project. In the past, BC English dissertations have ranged in length from 31 pages (Steven Abrams, 1976) to 1,063 pages (Jorg Feodor Drewitz, 1994!). My current recommendation for length, keeping in mind that the dissertation is often the template or first draft of an academic monograph, is **150–350 pages (50,000–120,000 words)**.

Many BC English dissertations are available to read in hard copy in Stokes S494. Others are available to download on ProQuest  
<<https://www.proquest.com/pqdtglobal/advanced?accountid=9673>>.

The dissertation is an academic rite of passage. In most cases it is the largest, longest intellectual project you will have ever undertaken—and ever will, as subsequent book projects may tend to feel less metaphysically consequential. Every candidate, every dissertation, and every committee is different, and there are many paths to success. However, I can recommend the following points as generally applicable:

1. **Quantity vs. quality.** When it comes to the ideas, it's quality that counts, of course. Your dissertation will be boiled down to a paragraph in a job application, a sentence in an MLA interview, a phrase at a cocktail party, or a blurb on the back cover of the book. Make it a good one. But when it comes to writing time, it's quantity that counts. Instead of waiting until inspiration strikes and then attempting to draft a chapter in two days, set aside regular time to write. Some days, all you do is reorganize the footnotes and change *illustrates* to *demonstrates* (and back). Other days, paragraphs flow easily. On the worst days, it feels like you are moving backwards, unthinking thoughts that you thought were thought thru. But before you know it, the project will be done. Sitting down to write regularly keeps the contours of your evolving thinking clear and fresh in your mind. I find that this helps the mind be receptive to related ideas as you read, chat with colleagues, or exercise.
2. **Exercise.**
3. **Listen to your committee.** It's rare, in postdoctoral life, to have three alert readers who are essentially being paid to tend to your words and ideas. Make the most of it. Your committee knows the field and has experience writing and advising dissertations. They can help you avoid minefields, assert yourself, and connect ideas. Resist the temptation to protect what you've written, at all costs, from their constructive criticism.
4. **Surrender to the journey.** Part of what makes the dissertation feel weightier than any subsequent book-length project is that you are probably simultaneously learning how to write a (any) book-length project and learning how to write this particular one. Depending on your topic and work habits, that creates the potential for dissonance that can be hard to tease apart, especially in the beginning. Don't stress if the shape of the whole project eludes you when you are writing the first chapter or beginning the second. It will all come clear, more or less, once the second chapter is done. That's a major turning point, as you will now have two examples of your main idea to compare and extrapolate from. Every successful dissertation reflects one or more un-anticipatable "aha!" moments. Be open to them.



The graduate school of MCAS runs a weekly dissertation working group on Friday afternoons on Zoom for all disciplines. It started during the pandemic, and candidates across fields found it more useful than the in-person event for which it substituted (a once-every-six-months writing retreat). It makes sense: to make headway on a dissertation, train your mind on it week after week, not twice a year. This work, in my experience, is about repetition and consistency, not a sudden burst of all-consuming inspiration.

## Form and focus

[NB: This section is new in the guide as of 2022, and may be news to your adviser, although I have been in conversation with all graduate faculty about this. This section, like many sections of this guide, is to some extent a communally written document. If contemplating embarking on a dissertation of non-traditional form or focus, know that it is only recently that the department has begun to standardize expectations for these experimental projects. It behooves you to have a frank discussion with your committee to set terms.]

The dissertation is the culmination and summation of the PhD degree. We expect dissertations to do all of the following:

- combine close attention to form with a comprehensive understanding of an archive, a field of study, a critical method, and/or a place (town, city, region, nation, continent, hemisphere);
- constitute a substantial, original contribution to knowledge in a field of study and distinguish itself from any closely comparable prior works on the subject;
- reflect an expansive and intensive engagement with primary and/or secondary sources; and
- demonstrate expertise, acquired thru research, of some substantial and recognizable body of work.

Most PhD dissertations in our department take the form of an interdependent sequence of essays in criticism of Anglophone literary works and/or a literary history. These can range widely in form, organization, scope, and aspiration. They often involve a theoretical and/or methodological discussion near the start and then several case studies of specific, relevant texts. Other dissertations could be bi-disciplinary, with a second discipline represented on the committee and integrated with literary studies in the dissertation's methodology, texts, and readings.

We think these tried-and-true forms of dissertation serve the candidate, the committee, and the field very well in most instances. Arrangement of research into chapters on different authors, decades, or works is immediately legible to the discipline and is flexible enough to accommodate a range of traditional and innovative approaches and ideas. Some dissertations, especially in the framework of writing studies, may include or center on issues of pedagogy, conceived not only as practice and instruction but as a research topic and intellectual pursuit in its own right.

## Dissertations of non-traditional form or focus

However, we can imagine—and in the past, some of our graduates have written—other forms of dissertation that could not be classified as primarily critical, literary-historical, or pedagogical-theoretical in nature. We recommend that dissertators interested in these forms of dissertation solicit input from all members of their prospective dissertation committees at the prospectus examination stage, or later as the project evolves. **Candidates should be advised that some forms of dissertation carry greater risk on the tenure-track job market depending on how they are couched and executed.**

Dissertations of non-traditional form or focus are bound by the same rigorous standards and general guidelines as traditional, literary-critical dissertations, with allowance made for the different ways that research might be expressed and the different archives in which it might be pursued, as well as the variety of conversations in which the dissertation might take part. We are aware of four types of dissertations of non-traditional form or focus, although we do not mean to suggest that these exhaust the possibilities or are mutually exclusive:

1. **Dissertations focusing on cultural products other than literary works.** For example, dissertations about film, photography, music, or bookmaking. Such a dissertation will find its home in our department on the basis of its methodology, which must combine close attention to form with a comprehensive understanding of an archive, a field of study, a critical method, and/or a place (town, city, region, nation, continent, hemisphere), just as a traditional dissertation must.
  - a. Examples: Timothy Lindgren, “Place Blogging: Local Economies of Attention in the Network” (2009); Nirmal Trivedi, “Witnessing Empire: U.S. Imperialism and the Emergence of the War Correspondent” (2009); Matthew Bolinder, “Solid Forests and Fluid Utterances: Reading the Maine Woods” (2008); Susana Martins, “Santos Unnatural Futures: Imagining the High-tech in Contemporary American Culture” (2003); Catherine Eagan, “‘I did imagine. . .we had ceased to be whitewashed Negroes’: The Racial Formation of Irish Identity in Nineteenth-Century Ireland and America” (2000)
2. **Dissertations discussing and classifying a substantial primary-source archive.** For example, a critical edition, where *critical* denotes textual criticism rather than literary criticism. Dissertations of this form must constitute a substantial, original contribution to knowledge in a field of study and would normally be expected to supersede any closely comparable prior works on the subject, just as a traditional dissertation should.
  - a. Example: Timothy Lindgren, “Place Blogging: Local Economies of Attention in the Network” (2009)
3. **Dissertations primarily expressing research in a form other than analysis or criticism.** For example, a dissertation whose voice primarily embodies rather than criticizes a place, text, perspective, or archive. Or again, a substantial translation of a significant work, with critical introduction and notes. In these cases, we require the dissertation to reflect an engagement

with primary and/or secondary sources as expansive and intensive as for a traditional dissertation; whatever its chosen voice or imagined audience, the dissertation must still demonstrate expertise, acquired thru research, of some substantial and recognizable body of work. Where the nature or extent of expertise is not immediately obvious, the dissertation should include a detailed, rigorously researched, and appropriately footnoted critical introduction.

- a. Example: Jorg Feodor Drewitz, “A New German Translation of *Daniel Deronda* with German Notes, a German Afterword, and an English Preface” (1994)

4. **Dissertations combining techniques characteristic of critical and creative writing.** A dissertation might combine critical and creative impulses continuously throughout, as for example by employing techniques used in fiction or poetry for the crafting of an expository, analytical voice in prose. Such a dissertation might draw on personal experience or make use of journalistic accounts, oral histories, or other material gathered and reported by the writer. Such a dissertation must still demonstrate expertise, acquired thru research, of some substantial and recognizable body of work. Alternatively, a dissertation might include examples, composed by the candidate, of the literary genres it discusses, in ways that illuminate and layer the project’s central concerns. If it uses examples of this kind, then we require the critical portions of the dissertation to preponderate. In that case, the creative examples should reflect the same research and literary or other focus as the critical portions and should achieve the same exactitude of thought in their chosen literary forms. We expect the critical portions or other appended statement of intent to contextualize comprehensively the creative portions.

- a. Examples: Claudia Rankine, *Just Us: An American Conversation* (Graywolf, 2020); Matthew Desmond, *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City* (Crown, 2016)

Dissertations of non-traditional form or focus might contribute to career paths within and adjacent to academic literary studies such as the professoriate, library work, digital scholarship (see next subheading), and journalism.

### Digital humanities dissertations

Traditional dissertations and dissertations of non-traditional form or focus may both employ techniques from the emerging and diverse collection of transdisciplinary methods known as digital humanities. In these cases, the arguments of the dissertation may be prosecuted in part thru statistics and graphs; or they may be realized in the creation of an archive, a computer program, a website, a digital tool, or a digital book. Here again, we require the dissertation to reflect an engagement with primary and/or secondary sources as expansive and intensive as for a dissertation that does not employ digital humanities techniques. Regardless of any concomitant non-textual output, dissertations employing digital humanities techniques should adhere to the same length guidelines and the same high standard for scholarly writing as other dissertations.

## The dissertation defense

After the dissertation is complete and has been approved by all the dissertation committee members, it is time to schedule a dissertation defense. The defense

1. brings to a close the intellectual conversation between the candidate and her or his dissertation committee;
2. allows the candidate to share the results of her or his research with interested faculty members, candidates, friends, and community members;
3. suggests how the dissertation might be revised in the future, most usually as a published book; and
4. allows the department to recognize and celebrate the candidate's achievement over the course of her or his doctoral degree.

The format for the defense varies but should begin with the candidate giving a brief (10-15 min.) presentation summarizing the main points of the dissertation and discussing its contribution to the field. The dissertation committee may then ask questions, make suggestions, and otherwise contribute to the conversation, followed by the audience at large. All committee members attend, and the defense will be announced in the Monday departmental bulletin and will be open to the public. The audience might include other English Department faculty, faculty from other departments in related fields, and the candidate's friends, colleagues, and family. The candidate and PhD director may wish to encourage particular people to come. The defense is followed by a reception to celebrate the successful completion of the dissertation and the degree.

## IV. Program outcomes

## Placement officer

The job placement officer works closely with me to advise, guide, and track all jobseekers each fall. The primary focus is on academic employment, but the placement officer can also collaborate with the Career Center to advise on non-academic job opportunities. The most important tasks are close reading of all job materials, strategic advice on where to apply and how to present oneself to best advantage, and **mock interviews** later in the fall semester in preparation for MLA (or other) interviews in the winter. Conventionally, the Associate Director for the PhD program serves as the placement officer. My Associate Director for 2022–23 is once again James Najarian <najariaj@bc.edu>.

## Time to degree

Excluding a non-traditional candidate who entered the program in 1989 and returned to complete her dissertation in 2020 after three decades away from academia (see below), the average time-to-degree in our program since 2011 is **7.4 years**. This is typical for a humanities PhD program. See <https://www.amacad.org/humanities-indicators/higher-education/years-attainment-humanities-doctorate> (Indicator II–27b).

## Graduation

There are a few considerations particular to the semester of graduation worth recording here. After graduation, you will lose your Boston College email address, your library privileges, and your “Student Profiles” page on the website by the end of the calendar year unless you continue to work part-time at BC. Anticipating this, if you don’t have another university affiliation incoming in the near term, it is a good idea to send a large, bcc’d email blast to your professional acquaintances before graduation offering a non-BC professional email address so everyone can stay in touch. If you don’t already have one, think in terms of some variation on `firstname.lastname@gmail.com` not `art1chokeh34rtz@hotmail.com`.

A savvy way to sustain your email address and library access after graduation is to pursue **Visiting Scholar status** for the year after graduation. I can serve as your faculty sponsor. The application is very straightforward. See <https://www.bc.edu/content/bc-web/academics/sites/faculty-handbook/Policies.html>. You gain, precisely, email and library access. Visiting Scholar status **doesn’t come with funding** or office space, alas. (Not even cubicles.) However, we have had success with the process so far.

Loss of your student profile page is consequential, and not addressed by Visiting Scholar status. Your dissertation and publications will remain listed on our “Student News” and “Ph.D. Dissertations” page for the gap months/years between graduation and a first full-time job, but you are advised to create and maintain a professional web presence not tied to BC, such as thru Wordpress, Squarespace, Academia.edu, Humanities Commons, LinkedIn, or Twitter. You do not need to put a lot of information on this page. Even a photo and one paragraph about your

research interests and your book project will create a landing pad for anyone searching for you online. Especially as the years pass, the idea is to have an online presence that represents your scholarly and teaching selves as current and live, rather than an archival fact (“at one time, she was a PhD candidate at Boston College”).

## Full-time academic placements, 2011–<sup>1</sup>

1. Assistant Professor, Milligan University (TN) (tenure-track)
2. Assistant Professor, Seoul National University, Korea (tenure-track)
3. Liberal Arts faculty, New England Conservatory, MA (NEC does not have tenure)
4. Postdoctoral Teaching Fellow, Honors Program, Merrimack College; Visiting Assistant Professor (VAP), Boston College (declined); Postdoctoral Teaching Associate, Northeastern University (declined)
5. Visiting Lecturer, Mount Holyoke College<sup>2</sup>; VAP, Gettysburg College, PA (declined)
6. Assistant Professor, Boston College (tenure-track); was Yeats Postdoctoral Fellow in Irish Literature and Keough-Naughton Institute National Endowment for the Humanities Fellow, University of Notre Dame, and Government of Ireland Postdoctoral Fellow, University College Cork
7. special collections reference librarian, University of Utah (tenure-track); was VAP, Wake Forest University
8. Assistant Director of Digital Fundraising, Penn State University at University Park
9. Assistant Professor, State University of New York at Plattsburgh (tenure-track); Assistant Professor, University of Dallas (tenure-track, declined)
10. Assistant Professor of the Practice, Boston College (non-tenure-track)<sup>3</sup>
11. Assistant Professor, Saint Mary’s College, CA (tenure-track)
12. Associate Professor, University of Montevallo, AL (tenured)
13. Chair, Department of Professional Studies, Purdue University Global (non-tenure-track); was Lecturer on English, Allston Burr Resident Dean of Harvard College, Leverett House,

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<sup>1</sup> The total number of graduates from our department since 2011 is 38: the 37 named here, and Kiara Kharpertian ’16, who tragically passed away soon after graduation. From 2005 to the present, another 14 candidates withdrew prior to completing a dissertation, so that—in the interest of transparency, and to the best of my knowledge based on existing records—these 26 full-time academic placements represent **70% of all candidates** who completed the program since 2011, excluding Kharpertian, or **51%** of those who completed the program since 2011 or could have in that timeframe, excluding Kharpertian and current candidates. Please note that this list does not represent the number of years, if any, between graduation and commencement of the position(s) listed. In certain cases candidates spent a number of years employed as adjunct instructors, or employed outside academia. Our **attrition rate of 27%** (this does not include one candidate on a leave of absence as of 2023) is just over half the national median for English PhD programs during the period 1996–2006. See <https://www.amacad.org/humanities-indicators/higher-education/attrition-humanities-doctorate-programs> (Indicator II–32b).

<sup>2</sup> Previously held a part-time position at Emerson College that unofficially resembled a full-time non-tenure-track appointment in that the alumna/us qualified for health and retirement benefits and could be relatively assured of a full teaching load from one year to the next.

<sup>3</sup> Previously held a part-time position at Tufts University that unofficially resembled a full-time non-tenure-track appointment in that the alumna/us qualified for health and retirement benefits and could be relatively assured of a full teaching load from one year to the next.

and Assistant Dean of Students, Harvard College, Harvard University (non-tenure-track) and Associate Dean and Assistant Professor (tenure-track), United States Military Academy aka West Point

14. Assistant Professor, Molloy University, NY (tenure-track); Assistant Professor, Hostos Community College, NY (tenure-track, declined)
15. teacher, One Schoolhouse, Washington, DC; was Irish Research Council Postdoctoral Fellow, University College Dublin (two-year)
16. Writing Services Specialist, Harvard University Graduate School of Design
17. Assistant Professor of the Practice, Boston College (non-tenure-track)
18. Clinical Associate Professor, New York University (non-tenure-track); was VAP there
19. Assistant Professor in Residence, Writing Program and Writing Center Liaison, University of Connecticut at Avery Point (non-tenure-track); was Academic Center Manager there
20. teacher, Upper Division of The Bryn Mawr School, MD
21. Assistant Professor, Quincy University, IL (tenure-track); was VAP there
22. Chair, English Department, Arcadia University, PA (tenured)
23. VAP, Skidmore College (three-year)
24. Advisor, Academic Standards Board, University of Michigan; was Assistant Professor, Marygrove College, MI (tenure-track)
25. Associate Professor, Brigham Young University (tenured); was VAP and then Assistant Professor there
26. teacher, Lusher Charter School, LA; was faculty at New Orleans Center for the Creative Arts and Postdoctoral Fellow, Tulane University

## Part-time academic placements, 2011–<sup>4</sup>

27. adjunct, University of Lausanne, Switzerland

## Full-time non-academic placements, 2011–

28. Deputy Managing Editor, *Ledger* (cryptocurrency journal); published novelist
29. Library Assistant, St. Louis County Library
30. Instructional Designer, Sargent & Lundy (energy); was Content Development Manager, NIIT (corporate training)
20. Communications Manager, SEAF (private equity); was Senior Writer, AllianceBernstein (private equity)

## Other, 2011–

31. [no data], New Hampshire

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<sup>4</sup> Thanks to Noël Ingram for conducting independent research in June 2021 underlying this list and the next two.



32. legal intern, ACLU Racial Justice Project; was co-director, New York University Prison Teaching Project; earned a J.D. from New York University
33. glass-blowing teacher; was a part-time instructor at Boston College
34. homemaker, New York
35. podcast host; was candidate for Massachusetts State Representative, researcher for Boston Mayor Marty Walsh's transition team
36. published poet, Maine; was editor, *Hunger Mountain* (literary journal)
37. homemaker and homeschool teacher, Massachusetts

## Full-time, permanent academic placements, 1990–2010<sup>5</sup>

1. Assistant Professor, Framingham State University (tenure-track); was Assistant Professor, Penn State University at Altoona (tenure-track)
2. Lecturer in Writing, Dartmouth College (non-tenure-track)
3. Director of Academic Services, Salem State College
4. Assistant Professor, Diablo Valley College, CA (community college) (tenure-track)
5. Assistant Director for Design Innovation, Center for Digital Innovation in Learning, Boston College
6. Lecturer, Writing Seminar Program, Princeton University (non-tenure-track)
7. Digital Marketing Officer, University of Manchester
8. Vice Provost of Academic Initiatives, Southern Wesleyan University, SC; was Associate Professor, Gordon College, MA (tenured); previously Assistant Professor, University of Mobile (tenure-track)
9. Assistant Director of Teaching, Learning, and Technology, Center for Teaching Excellence, Boston College; was Director of First-Year Seminars and Assistant Professor, Kennesaw State University, GA (tenure-track), Assistant Director of Academic Success, Georgia Institute of Technology
10. Assistant Professor, University of Arkansas (tenure-track)
11. Associate Professor, Wayne State University (tenured)
12. Associate Professor, Brigham Young University (tenured)
13. Associate Professor, University of Akron (tenured); was Assistant Professor, Macon State College (tenure-track)
14. Associate Professor, Hood College, MD (tenured)
15. Professor of Law, Oklahoma City University (tenured)
16. Associate Professor, University of South Carolina Upstate (tenured)
17. Associate Professor, Idaho State University (tenured)

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<sup>5</sup> The total number of graduates from our department between 1990 and 2010 was 62. At least 25 more candidates withdrew prior to completing a dissertation between 1985 and 2004 (records are admittedly spotty), so that these 44 full-time, permanent academic placements represent 71% of all candidates who completed the program between 1990 and 2010 or 51% of those who completed or would have completed the program in the same period. Offers declined are not included in the list. Nor are VAPs or other temporary full-time positions. However, I'd like to take the opportunity to note that we have had remarkable success placing graduates in VAP positions in the English department at Wake Forest University. Alumni from '04, '07, '08, '09, and '18 have successively taken up that position! All five went on to full-time research and teaching jobs, including four of five in tenure-track positions.

18. Associate Professor, University of Nebraska at Omaha (tenured)
19. Associate Professor, Simmons College (tenured)
20. Associate Professor, Western Michigan University (tenured)
21. Professor, LeMoyne College, NY (tenured)
22. Associate Professor, Monroe Community College, NY (tenured)
23. Assistant Professor, College of the Holy Cross (tenure-track); was Assistant Professor, Bryant College, RI (tenure-track)
24. Associate Professor, University of Mount Union, OH (tenured)
25. teacher, Indian Hill High School, OH; was teacher, Weston High School
26. Associate Professor, University of Massachusetts at Amherst (tenured); was Assistant Professor, Long Island University (tenure-track)
27. Instructor, Las Positas College, CA (non-tenure-track)
28. Associate Professor, Reed College (tenured); was Assistant Professor, University of Vermont (tenure-track)
29. Associate Professor, Boise State University (tenured); was Assistant Professor, Howard University (tenure-track)
30. Assistant Professor, William Patterson University, NJ (tenure-track)
31. Associate Professor, Boston College (tenured); was Assistant Professor, Penn State University at University Park (tenure-track)
32. Associate Professor, Metropolitan College of New York (tenured); was Assistant Professor, Austin Peay State University, TN (tenure-track)
33. Assistant Professor, Christendom College, VA (tenure-track)
34. Associate Professor, Mount Holyoke College (tenured); was Assistant Professor, Cornell University (tenure-track)
35. Associate Professor, University of Michigan at Flint (tenured)
36. Associate Professor of the Practice, Boston College (non-tenure-track)
37. Chair of English, University of Toledo (tenured)
38. Master Lecturer (rhetoric), Boston University (non-tenure-track)
39. Chair of Anglo-Irish Literature and Drama, University College Dublin (tenured); was Associate Professor, Maynooth University, Ireland (tenured)
40. Professor, University of Illinois at Springfield (tenured)
41. Associate Professor, Sarah Lawrence College (tenured); was Assistant Professor, Barnard College (tenure-track)
42. Chair of Rhetoric, Boston University (tenured)
43. Professor, Fairmont State University, WV (tenured)
44. Assistant Dean, Columbia University