

REVIEW OF THE PH.D. IN ENGLISH STUDIES

Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) Code: 23.0101
English Language and Literature, General

OVERVIEW

The Ph.D. in English Studies program at Illinois State University is housed in the Department of English within the College of Arts and Sciences. The department also offers undergraduate minors in English, Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, and Writing; a B.A. in English; an M.A., M.S. in English; and graduate certificate programs in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages and Teaching of Writing in High School/Middle School. The last review of the Ph.D. in English Studies program occurred in 2010-2011.

The Ph.D. in English Studies program is one of 10 doctoral programs offered by Illinois State University and one of five doctoral English programs offered by Illinois public universities. The program is unique in its adherence to the English studies model, which provides for exposure of students to the numerous subfields in the English discipline; comparator programs in Illinois tend to focus on just one or a few subfields. Also notable is emphasis throughout the curriculum and in graduate assistantships on pedagogy. Through broad exposure to the discipline and mentoring in pedagogy, program graduates are well prepared for faculty positions at post-secondary institutions.

Students in the Ph.D. in English Studies program serve the university community through their work as graduate assistants. Graduate teaching assistants instruct students in the English course required of all first-time-in-college students at the University regardless of major. Depending on their experiences and expertise, doctoral teaching assistants may also teach more advanced English courses on the undergraduate level. Graduate editorial assistants work in the Publications Unit sponsored by the department.

Enrollment and Degrees Conferred, 2011-2018 Ph.D. in English, Illinois State University

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Enrollment, fall census day	101	95	88	78	74	71	70	75
Degrees conferred, graduating fiscal year	6	10	13	15	11	12	13	10

Table note:

Graduating Fiscal Year consists of summer, fall, and spring terms, in that order. For example, Graduating Fiscal Year 2018 consists of the following terms: summer 2017, fall 2017, and spring 2018.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY PROGRAM REVIEW SELF-STUDY REPORT

Program goals

- The program seeks to develop students' ability to conduct original research commensurate with faculty in college and university English departments worldwide in one or more of the fields of English studies.
- The program seeks to develop students' pedagogical skills commensurate with faculty in college and university English departments worldwide through exposure to theories of pedagogy in special classes and throughout the curriculum, and through supervised teaching in a variety of educational settings (primarily college-level classrooms) appropriate to each student's career goals.
- The program seeks to assist students in integrating the knowledge from the various disciplines and subdisciplines contributing to English studies and applying that integrated knowledge in their research and teaching.

Students learning outcomes

Linked to the program goals are the following specific objectives or desired abilities for students in the program.

- An integrative and self-reflexive pedagogical awareness.
- Engagement with cultural, global, and economic contexts.
- Writing, reading, technological, and oral communication skills that prepare students to participate in their chosen fields.
- Theoretical and content information appropriate to the area of the student's specialization and the ability to articulate the importance of those ideas.
- The ability to historicize and contextualize areas of study.
- Research and bibliographic methods commensurate with the student's field.
- The ability to integrate theory and practice in scholarship, pedagogy, and service to the academic community.
- An appreciation of the public role of the academy and the ability to participate in the public arena professionally and ethically.

Program curriculum (2018-2019)

Graduation requirements:

65 credit hours including 16 credit hours of core courses covering the subfields of English studies pedagogy, linguistics and language study, literature and culture, and rhetoric and composition; 6 credit hours of pedagogy courses; 15 credit hours of specialization courses; a 3-credit hour course in teaching composition required of teaching assistants; a 4-credit hour internship in teaching; 6-9 credit hours of electives; and 15 (or more) credit hours of dissertation work. Students must successfully complete at least two academic terms of full-time residency and a comprehensive examination.

Program delivery

The program is offered on the Normal campus.

The program is delivered primarily through face-to-face or blended face-to-face/online instruction.

Department faculty (Fall 2018)

33 tenure track faculty members (18 Professors, 12 Associate Professors, and 3 Assistant Professors)

20 non-tenure track faculty members (8 full-time and 12 part-time, totaling 10.9 FTE)

Undergraduate student to faculty ratio: 8.6 to 1

Undergraduate student to tenure-line faculty ratio: 11.1 to 1

Specialized accreditation

The Ph.D. in English Studies program is not affiliated with a specialized accreditation association.

Changes in the academic discipline, field, societal need, and program demand

The Department of English notes a nationwide trend over the past decade of declining doctoral program applications and enrollments, exacerbated by the economic crisis of 2008. However, the department is encouraged by positive trends in national news venues touting the need for broad training in the humanities for numerous professions. Indeed, career opportunities for those who hold a doctorate in English studies are more varied than ever before. Graduates of the Ph.D. in English Studies program go on to successful careers as tenure track professors and work beyond the classroom as technical writers and communicators, creative writers, bloggers and social media experts, lawyers, educators and administrators, translators, programmers, usability specialists, project managers, copy editors, librarians, information architects, public relations experts, and trainers and consultants. While the difficult economic climate in Illinois may have negatively impacted the number of applications for admission to the program, enrollment continues to be healthy and the program continues to attract highly-qualified researchers and teachers. Replacement in fall 2018 of the graduate admissions portal that had garnered numerous user complaints should help with student recruitment.

Responses to previous program review recommendations

In response to the previous program review recommendation that the department continue to recruit highly-qualified students from underrepresented groups, the department has continued to pursue initiatives intended to communicate its commitment to diversity and inclusion. Those initiatives have included instructional support for identity studies programs offered by other academic units, faculty participation in university-sponsored events such as the Culturally Responsive Campus Community Conference and the Women and Gender Studies Retreat, visiting professor collaborations with the Office of International Studies and Programs, and co-curricular opportunities that engage graduate students in issues of diversity and inclusion. In response to the recommendation that the department work with Milner Library to better integrate library resources into the doctoral program, the department has broadened the range of collaborations with Milner Library faculty, has played a larger role in reviewing library collections, and has increased instructional use of Milner facilities. English graduate students work closely with the Milner Library subject specialist to orient new graduate students to the resources and services available through the library and to provide graduate student feedback to library faculty and staff.

Major findings

The Ph.D. in English Studies program continues to model an innovative approach to English studies that is unique in its ability to offer a diverse yet integrative plan of study that prepares and supports teachers, scholars, and professionals. Since the prior self-study was conducted, the program has benefitted from an assessment plan that effectively guides programmatic change; research productivity from doctoral students and graduate faculty; successful transition from the pedagogy examination to the teaching internship; productive conversations about doctoral seminar curricula; enhanced relations with alumni; measures taken to improve the climate of inclusivity in the department; student recruitment campaigns that have involved department faculty; and the creation of the English Studies Commons, a physical space near the department office intended to foster community-building and intellectual connections among students and faculty. Alumni survey results suggest broad satisfaction with the program. Although application numbers have decreased, enrollment in the program has rebounded in recent years. The program continues to pursue numerous initiatives intended to enhance recruitment and increase enrollment. Program faculty continues to demonstrate the department commitment to diversity and inclusion. However, the ability of the department to recruit international students and students from traditionally underrepresented racial/ethnic groups has been negatively impacted by the lack of summer assistantship funding, which has placed the program at a competitive disadvantage with respect to similar doctoral programs.

Initiatives and plans

- Continue to publicize, revise, and sustain the program.
- Connect with more program alumni.
- Expand professional development and career preparation opportunities for students, especially those seeking non-academic jobs.
- Further develop the student learning outcomes assessment plan, particularly with respect to digital, cultural, and global literacies and critical socio-cultural approaches to reading and composing.
- Revisit the goals and evaluate the consistency of doctoral seminars.
- Revisit the English studies comprehensive examination.
- Strive for more equitable student mentoring loads among faculty.
- Increase the visibility of social justice approaches to teaching in the curriculum design.

PROGRAM REVIEW OUTCOME AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE ACADEMIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Review outcome. The Academic Planning Committee, as a result of this review process, finds the Ph.D. in English Studies program to be in Good Standing.

The committee thanks the program for a thorough, critical, and forward looking self-study report. The report describes a doctoral program unique in Illinois in its diverse yet integrative plan of study covering multiple subdisciplines of English Studies rather than focusing on one or two. Among comparator programs in the state, the Ph.D. in English Studies program is consistently among the largest with respect to enrollments and degrees

conferred. The committee commends the program for its successes in preparing future English Studies teachers and researchers at the post-secondary level and for the high levels of satisfaction with that preparation among alumni. Since the last program review in 2010-2011 through 2017-2018, the program has conferred 90 doctorates. Approximately 80 of those graduates have been hired into tenure track positions at colleges or universities, many of them research-intensive institutions.

Contributing to the success graduates have had obtaining positions in academia is the emphasis in the curriculum on pedagogy. In many disciplines nationally, pedagogy instruction is not part of doctoral-level curricula even though most program graduates expect to teach at the post-secondary level. The committee commends faculty for its foresight in teaching pedagogy in addition to content. Every student in the program is required to complete a pedagogy seminar (ENG 510: Seminar in English Studies Pedagogy) through which the student designs a college course in an area of professional interest and expertise and then teaches that course in the third year of the program. That experience is in addition to the experiences students in the program selected as teaching assistants have during their time in the program.

The committee commends those English Studies students who serve as teaching assistants for their contributions to quality undergraduate education at the University. Doctoral students selected to serve as teaching assistants typically teach two courses in both the fall and spring semesters, most often the General Education writing course taken by nearly all first-time-in-college students enrolling at the University. Depending on their experience and expertise, some doctoral students are permitted to teach other lower-division undergraduate courses in addition to the course they design and teach in the third year of the program. The committee recognizes the efforts of doctoral students to balance their work to prepare and teach courses to undergraduate students with their own doctoral program coursework, research, and dissertation preparation. The committee also recognizes the Department of English for its exemplary support of those teaching efforts. That support includes a week-long orientation in August to acquaint new teaching assistants with best practices in writing pedagogy, peer and faculty support for students designing their own English course, and a semester-long pedagogy course taken by all teaching assistants (ENG 402: Teaching Composition). The quality of instruction and mentoring by teaching assistants in the program is evidenced by the multiple teaching and mentoring awards earned by them.

The committee recognizes the program for the numerous other professional development opportunities it provides its students, including opportunities to participate in and present at professional conferences. The program offers presentations and workshops through its long-standing Graduate Forum and opportunities for students to experience shared governance through service on department committees. For students interested in publishing careers, the department offers editorial assistantships in its Publications Unit, which manages and edits several journals in the field (among them *Obsidian*, *Rhetoric Review*, and *The Spoon River Poetry Review*). The department offers travel stipends for students attending, assisting with, or presenting at regional, national, and international conferences. Among them are the Central Illinois Interdisciplinary Graduate Conference, the English Studies Symposium, the David Foster Wallace Conference, the Computers and Writing Conference, and English Education conferences sponsored by the Illinois Association for Teachers of English and the National Council of Teachers of English.

The committee commends the actions taken by faculty to recruit for diversity and the exemplary efforts by faculty to infuse diversity and inclusion throughout the curriculum, in an effort to foster a welcoming and inclusive environment for a more diverse student population. Between fall 2014 and fall 2017 the percentage of students in the program who self-identify with racial/ethnic groups traditionally underrepresented in the discipline and the University increased from 10.8 percent to 21.0 percent. Faculty has re-designed courses to incorporate varied and non-traditional perspectives; provided instructional support for numerous culturally-focused programs, minors, and certificates offered by the University; supported diversity-themed co-curricular activities such as the African-American Read-In and the Diverse Writers Project; and provided opportunities for students and faculty to share their perspectives, experiences, and concerns related to diversity and inclusion. The committee notes program efforts to incorporate multiple elements of diversity and inclusion beyond gender and racial/ethnic concerns despite the difficulty finding statistics to assess those efforts. Through its Equity and Diversity Committee, the department has infrastructure in place to continue assessing needs and making recommendations regarding diversity and inclusion in the coming years.

Recommendations. The Academic Planning Committee makes the following recommendations to be addressed within the next regularly scheduled review cycle. In the next program review self-study report, tentatively due October 1, 2026, the committee asks the program to describe actions taken and results achieved for each recommendation.

Develop and implement a systematic approach for recruiting students to the program. Since the last review of the English Studies program, its enrollment peaked at 101 students in fall 2011 and then steadily declined to 70 students by fall 2017. Expanded recruitment efforts by faculty in the last few years have contributed to an enrollment rebound, to 75 students in fall 2018. In light of declining interest nationwide in post-secondary humanities programs and the resulting increase in competition for applicants to those programs, continued attention to recruitment will be needed to stabilize and increase enrollment in the English Studies doctoral program in the coming years or to balance enrollment decline in the Ph.D. program with enrollment increases in the master's program. The self-study report sets forth numerous strategies for student recruitment. Given the limited resources available to the program, the committee suggests that faculty organize and prioritize those strategies in a recruitment plan to guide those efforts during the next program review cycle. The committee suggests that the plan might identify the types of students faculty wants to recruit to the program with respect to their backgrounds and professional interests. The self-study report identifies at least two such groups: international students enrolling in the program through collaborative arrangements with universities in other countries and students interested in publishing-related work after graduation rather than work in academia. In addition to focusing and coordinating recruitment efforts, development of a recruitment plan could provide a venue for further faculty discussions regarding program admissions requirements, including whether the program should continue requiring applicants to submit Graduate Record Examinations scores.

Continue to recruit for diversity and to foster diversity and inclusion in the pedagogy. Faculty and staff of the Department of English have done extensive work since the last program review to foster and maintain an environment of diversity and inclusivity. In connection with those efforts the department has worked to recruit students from racial/ethnic groups traditionally underrepresented in the discipline and University. The committee supports faculty plans to continue those efforts through development of an action plan for recruiting students of color and (as noted in the self-study report) through development of action plans for "(re)addressing issues of diversity and inclusion in the pedagogy." A particularly promising recruitment strategy set forth in the report is focusing recruitment efforts on students enrolled at historically Black colleges and universities, tribal institutions, and Latinx serving institutions.

Continue the faculty dialogue regarding student mentoring loads. According to the self-study report, respondents to a 2018 English Studies alumni survey favorably rated the mentoring they received from faculty while in the program. However, some respondents expressed concern that their faculty mentors were overworked. English studies faculty followed up that feedback by studying the types of mentoring in the program and their distribution among faculty members individually and by sub-discipline. The report resulting from that study concluded that a need exists to address mentoring workload. The committee encourages faculty to continue its discussions regarding mentoring assignments and to explore options for their distribution.

Update the student learning outcomes assessment plan for the program and use assessment findings to inform program planning. The summary resulting from the 2010-2011 review of the English Studies program recommended that faculty update and revise the student learning outcomes assessment plan for the program and then utilize the plan for program improvement. The 2018-2019 Academic Planning Committee reiterates that recommendation. Many elements of an effective assessment plan are already in place, including values, goals, objectives (learning outcomes), and numerous assessment methods. Yet to be added to the plan is a process and timeline for gathering assessment results, analyzing them, and systematically reviewing them for guidance with program planning. The plan should identify the committee(s) or faculty position(s) responsible for implementing the process at its various stages. A related committee concern is a possible disconnect between student learning outcomes assessment and program planning. While the self-study report identifies numerous changes made by faculty to the program in recent years intended to improve the program, the assessment section of the self-study report states that no changes have been made to the program based on assessment findings. While that statement may be in error, the committee encourages faculty to ensure that processes are in place for assessment findings to systematically inform program planning. The committee encourages faculty to regularly document discussions

regarding assessment findings, changes made to the program based on those findings, and the rationale for those changes.

Use the comparator and aspirational programs analyses to help guide program planning. The committee recognizes efforts described in the self-study report to identify and analyze comparator and aspirational programs. The report sets forth quality indicators, identifies other universities whose comparable program excels relative to each quality indicator, and briefly describes how those programs excel. The report suggests that English Studies faculty may consider further infusing community engagement and involvement in the curriculum, work to make the program commitment to mentoring and professional development more visible, or place more emphasis on industry work opportunities when mentoring students. However, the report does not indicate if any of those issues are priorities to be further explored by faculty in the coming years, nor are the issues included in the list of initiatives for the next review cycle. Accordingly, the committee encourages faculty to revisit its analyses of comparator and aspirational programs by further contextualizing findings and prioritizing program changes faculty intends to pursue based on those findings.

Expand efforts to track and involve program alumni. The committee recognizes the numerous efforts underway in the department to track alumni of the English Studies program. Among those efforts are sending an annual department newsletter to alumni, inviting alumni to campus to participate in department events and student mentoring, and involving alumni in program planning through participation in the department advisory board. The committee supports plans articulated in the self-study report to expand alumni tracking efforts, such as upgrading the alumni database, documenting information about alumni gleaned from social media channels, developing a low-maintenance mechanism for capturing alumni information obtained through informal faculty-alumni contacts, and more systematically administering student surveys and exit interviews.

Continue collaboration with Milner Library and assess effectiveness of graduate students serving as department liaisons. The committee recognizes faculty efforts since the last program review in working with Milner Library to develop greater degree-specific integration of library resources with Department of English programs. Among the outcomes of those efforts are expanded use of Milner Library Special Collections in English courses and in co-curricular programming such as Shakespearience (workshops held in 2017 and 2018 in conjunction with the Illinois Shakespeare Festival). The committee commends and encourages continuation of such collaboration. The committee notes mention in the self-study report of English graduate students serving as department liaisons to Milner Library to provide input regarding library collections and instruction that support the master's and doctoral English programs. Recognizing the unique nature of that liaison model, the committee encourages faculty to collaborate with the Milner Library subject specialist to assess its effectiveness in furthering department-library collaboration.