The English program at Bowdoin has several objectives: to give a rigorous training in clear writing, complex and convincing argumentation, and close reading; to teach how literature has shaped and been shaped by many different historical and cultural experiences; to provide a sense of the long sweep of the history of writing in English from medieval to contemporary times; and to introduce students to a variety of current critical and theoretical approaches to literature, enabling them to challenge or rethink cherished assumptions.

The department as a whole strives to balance classic and emergent literary traditions and to blend literary pleasure with rigorous interpretation. The curriculum includes courses on Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Milton alongside courses on modern Irish literature, African American poetry and fiction, and Asian American literature. Faculty teach literature from a number of perspectives, including those of historical scholarship; contemporary creative writing; psychoanalysis; theories of race, gender, and sexuality; and the legacies of colonialism. While techniques vary, all courses presuppose that interpretation is in itself a creative act.

The department has a significant place in the College’s life, offering many courses in conjunction with interdisciplinary programs (such as gender and women's studies, Africana studies, gay and lesbian studies, and environmental studies) and sustaining strong ties to cinema studies and theater. The department conceives of its teaching not in isolation but in the context of its connection to many related disciplines, taking full advantage of the idea of a liberal arts education.

### The English and American Literature Curriculum

The major requires a minimum of ten courses, including one first-year seminar or introductory course, either of which serves as a prerequisite to further study in the major. At least three of the ten courses must be chosen from offerings in British and Irish literature before 1800 (only one of which may be a Shakespeare drama course and only one of which may be a Chaucer course). Each student must also take at least one intermediate 2000-level seminar and one advanced 3000-level seminar. The department strongly recommends that majors take an intermediate level (2000-level) seminar before taking an advanced level (3000-level) seminar. When appropriate, students may count these seminars toward requirements described above.

Remaining courses may be chosen from first-year seminars, creative writing courses, independent study/honors courses, and other mid/level and advanced courses offered by the department. Of two courses outside the department that may be counted toward the major, one may be an upper-level course in film studies. No more than three courses may come from the roster of first-year seminars and other introductory courses, and not more than one creative writing course may be counted toward the major or minor. Courses in expository writing and communication are not eligible for major or minor credit.

The department also strongly encourages its majors to study a foreign language. The minor in English and American literature requires five courses, including one first-year seminar or introductory course, and at least three courses at the 2000-level or above.

### Facilities and Resources

The Department of English is located in the College's first building, Massachusetts Hall, which was built in 1802 and is now a Registered Historic Landmark. Students in the department take full advantage of current technologies, especially the MLA International Bibliography online database, for critical materials on modern language, literature, linguistics, and folklore. Historical resources at Bowdoin include the library's special collections department, which houses among others the original papers of Bowdoin alumni Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and Nathaniel Hawthorne.

### Major/Minor Grade Policies

Courses that will count toward the major and minor must be taken for a grade (not Credit/D/Fail), and students must earn grades of C- or better in these courses.

### The English and Theater Curriculum

The interdisciplinary major in English and theater focuses on the dramatic arts, broadly construed, with a significant emphasis on the critical study of drama and literature. In the past, students undertaking self-designed majors have explored the works of a specific playwright or pursued performance studies while researching the literature of a specific culture. This major allows interested students of English and theater to blend introductory and advanced course work in both fields, while maintaining some degree of flexibility in the focus of their work. For more information and departmental requirements, see the College Catalogue online.

### Course Offerings

More than fifty courses are offered in English each year, including first-year seminars, introductions to literary methods, upper-division courses, and advanced seminars. Class sizes in upper-division courses average twenty-eight students.
English

English first-year seminars, which emphasize analytical skills in reading and writing, provide an excellent way to begin literary studies at Bowdoin. Each year, the department offers a variety of seminars, each of which is limited to sixteen students. Some courses offered have included Shakespeare’s Aftelives; Hawthorne; Fictions of Freedom; Arab and Jew in Literature and Film; Transfigurations of Song; Fact and Fiction; After Kafka; Early European Representations of Islam; and Contemporary Short Fiction in English.

Intermediate and advanced seminars give experienced students an opportunity to do more rigorous work in the discipline. Such courses are typically offered in areas closely associated with an instructor’s current research interests. Four or five seminars are offered each year, and each is limited to fifteen students. Examples include Victorian Urban Narratives; Trolls, Frogs, and Princesses: Fairy Tales and Retellings; Getting Real: The Development of Literary Realism; The Monstrosity of Revolution: Radicalism and Reaction in British Literature, 1789–1834; Chaucer’s Dreams; African American Film; The Arts of Science in the English Renaissance; The End of Blackness?; and Jane Austen and Company.

Independent Research and Honors

Independent study in the department provides qualified students with the opportunity to work closely with a member of the faculty. In this context, students may pursue topics of greater depth and detail than is possible in a course setting, or may focus upon a writer, text, or group of texts not specifically covered in the existing curriculum. A student who is a candidate for honors must write an honors essay and take an oral examination in the second semester of his or her senior year.

Bowdoin

For more information about Bowdoin, please write or call: Dean of Admissions
Bowdoin College, 5000 College Station Brunswick, ME 04011-8441
207-725-3100
bowdoin.edu
admissions@bowdoin.edu

Bowdoin complies with applicable provisions of federal and state laws that prohibit discrimination in employment, admission or access to its educational or extracurricular programs, activities, or facilities based on race, color, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or expression, age, marital status, place of birth, veteran status or against qualified individuals with disabilities on the basis of disability.

The information in this publication was accurate at the time of publication. However, Bowdoin College reserves the right to make changes at any time without prior notice of any of the information, including but not limited to course offerings, degree requirements, regulations, policies, procedures, and charges. The College provides the information herein solely for the convenience of the reader; and to the extent permissible by law, expressly disclaims any liability that may otherwise be incurred.

Honors Projects

Recent critical and creative honors projects completed by majors in the department have included:

- Writing Ground Zero
- Sleep of Reason
- De-Composing London: Urban Gothic at the Fin de Siècle
- Projections at Midnight
- Ada/m
- The Gift: A Collection of Short Stories
- The Anxiety of Common Life: Tracing the Gothic in Northanger Abbey, Sense and Sensibility, and Pride and Prejudice

Faculty


Tess Chakkalakal, associate professor of Africana studies and English, B.A. (Boston), M.A., Ph.D. (York), specializes in African American literature.

Brock Clarke, professor of English, B.A. (Dickinson), M.A., Ph.D. (Rochester), specializes in fiction writing and contemporary literature.


Guy Mark Foster, associate professor of English, B.A. (Wheaton), M.A., Ph.D. (Brown), specializes in modern and contemporary American poetry.

Celeste Goodridge, professor of English, A.B. (George Washington), A.M. (William and Mary), Ph.D. (Rutgers), specializes in modern and contemporary American poetry and American fiction.

Ann L. Kibbie, associate professor of English, B.A. (Boston), Ph.D. (California–Berkeley), specializes in Restoration and eighteenth-century literature.

Aaron W. Kitch, associate professor of English, B.A. (Yale), M.A. (Colorado–Boulder), Ph.D. (Chicago), specializes in Renaissance literature and Tudor and Stuart drama.

Belinda Kong, associate professor of Asian studies and English, B.A. (William and Mary), M.A., Ph.D. (Michigan), specializes in Asian American literature.

Elizabeth Muther, associate professor of English, B.A. (Wellesley), Ph.D. (California–Berkeley), specializes in African American literature.

Marilyn Reizbaum, professor of English, A.B. (Queens College), M.Litt. (University of Edinburgh), Ph.D. (Wisconsin–Madison), specializes in twentieth-century British literature, British and American modernism, Joyce, and contemporary Scottish and Irish poetry.

Maggie Solberg, assistant professor, B.A. (Oxford), Ph.D. (University of Virginia), specializes in British medieval literature and culture, from Beowulf to Skelton.

Hilary Thompson, assistant professor, B.A. (Toronto), Ph.D. (Michigan), specializes in twentieth-century, postcolonial, contemporary global, postmodernist, and modernist literature.

Anthony E. Walton, writer in residence, B.A. (Notre Dame), M.F.A. (Brown), teaches in the areas of creative writing, American poetry, film, Irish literature, and suburban literature.

William C. Watters, Edward Little Professor of the English Language and Literature, A.B. (Kenyon), Ph.D. (Brown), specializes in Shakespeare studies, Renaissance pastoral poetry, and contemporary poetry.

After Bowdoin

Rather than being a “preprofessional” program, the English major at Bowdoin represents the very essence of a liberal education, preparing its graduates for a wide range and variety of careers. The department encourages its best majors to undertake graduate work in English, but recommends taking some time to consider this choice, given the difficult academic market in the field. Over the last ten years, majors have chosen graduate programs at Harvard, Yale, Columbia, Duke, Cornell, Virginia, Brown, Iowa, Chicago, and California–Berkeley, among others. Many of Bowdoin’s English majors pursue graduate training and professions in fields including medicine, law, public administration, landscape architecture, zoology, history, and education. Others have moved directly into careers in publishing, banking, teaching, business administration, and journalism.

For more information, go to: bowdoin.edu/english/

Revised September 2014