Housed in the Department of Literature and Languages, the English major offers students courses in creative writing and literatures from a wide variety of cultural and historical contexts. Our courses engage diverse genres, historical periods, forms and methodologies, and provide opportunities for students to experiment with a variety of interpretative and creative techniques.

Reading, talking and listening—and writing about what we read—are acts of attention, and our program celebrates the value of such concentrated attention, both individually and in the community. English majors develop habits of mind and skills including critical reasoning, creative thinking, effective speaking and writing, rhetorical analysis and interpretive deftness. Along with serving our students well in daily life, these skills prepare them for graduate school in a variety of fields, and are in demand by business and industry; according to Payscale.com, those who major in English have career earnings that are well above the median for all majors.

All majors choose an emphasis in creative writing or literature. Both emphases are grounded in the same set of foundational courses that develop literary skills and enhance awareness of the ways history and literature intersect. In close consultation with their major advisors, students then design a flexible program that meets their individual goals and interests as writers and scholars, and prepares them to complete an exemplary senior thesis in creative writing or literature. Creative writing theses range from a collection of poems exploring family history alongside gentrification to the first chapters of a Young Adult novel; a literature thesis might explore queer temporality in the medieval romance, a close reading of an Afrofuturist novel, or a digital mapping project of British war poetry.

The English program offers creative writing workshops in poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, and writing for young adults, as well as a wide range of courses from all periods in British, American, and Anglophone literatures. In addition to our regular course offerings, we offer specialized study through our Special Topic courses which have recently included, Queer Comics, Monster Theory; the 18th-century Novel, Then and Now; Contemporary African American Poetry; Science Fiction; The Gender of Modernism; Queer Kinship; Race, Class, Wizardry; Harry Potter; and Reconfiguring Narrative. Literature courses offered by other programs in the Division of Humanities and Social Sciences may also be taken for degree credit.

Our literature and creative writing classes are rigorous and lively sparking discussions in and outside the classroom. We offer many ways to get involved in the exciting literary communities on and off-campus—and the Bay Area possesses one of the most vibrant art scenes in the nation. At Mills, The Place for Writers (https://www.mills.edu/academics/graduate-programs/creative-writing-literature/the-place-for-writers.php) and the Contemporary Writers Series (https://www.mills.edu/academics/graduate-programs/creative-writing-literature/contemporary-writers-series.php) sponsor readings by nationally acclaimed writers—recently including, Solmaz Sharif, Tananarive Due, Tommy Pico, and Morgan Parker—along with panels on publishing and careers for writers. Our students are encouraged to serve as editors and to submit creative work to our annual undergraduate journal The Walrus and to the student newspaper, The Campanil.

Our faculty are renowned writers and scholars working in diverse aesthetic traditions and critical frameworks. Visiting faculty add to the vitality of our community; recent visiting faculty include: Ari Banias, Tongo Eisen-Martin, Marisa Handler, Susan Ito, Nayomi Munaweera, and Arisa White.

The department also offers graduate work leading to a master of arts in English language and literatures or a master of fine arts in creative writing.

Program Goals:

• Students will read critically with attention to the nuances of language and their effects.
• Students will write clearly and effectively.
• Students will effectively position their original ideas within an ongoing aesthetic, cultural, or critical conversation.
• Students will speak effectively about texts and literary studies.

Majors & Minors

Major

English Major—BA (https://catalog.mills.edu/undergraduate/majors-minors/english/english-ba)

Minor

Creative Writing Minor (https://catalog.mills.edu/undergraduate/majors-minors/english/creative-writing-minor)

Resources

• Contemporary Writers Series (https://www.mills.edu/academics/graduate-programs/creative-writing-literature/contemporary-writers-series)
• The Campanil (http://www.thecampanil.com)
• The Place for Writers (https://www.mills.edu/academics/graduate-programs/creative-writing-literature/the-place-for-writers.php)
• FIVE80SPLIT (http://www.five80split.org)