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 interpretive 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.

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 offers 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 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, Nayomi Munaweera, Arisa White, Shanthi Sekaran, and Aria Aber.

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.

Learning Outcomes

• Analyze a variety of literary works.
• Write clearly and effectively in critical and/or creative modes.
• Speak constructively about literature in classroom discussions.
• Position their ideas within broader scholarly conversations.

Majors & Minors

Major

English Major—BA

Minor

English Minor in Literature

Creative Writing Minor