

ENGLISH: MEDIEVAL/RENAISSANCE, BA

Students choosing this concentration follow English literature – Chaucer, Margery Kempe, Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton – through the most volatile and dramatic phases of its development. Much of this literature was composed to be recited or performed in public, not read in lonely silence. Germanic, Scandinavian, and French invasions of Britain (culminating in the Conquest of 1066) drove Celtic culture to the margins while creating vocabularies of unmatched complexity (and poetic potential): in English, you can choose between the Holy Ghost (Germanic root) or the Holy Spirit (Latin), dark (Germanic) or obscure (Latin), pig and pork, etc. In the fourteenth century, the English countryside formed the powerhouse of the economy and poets wrote about millers, weavers (such as the Wife of Bath), and agricultural workers (Piers Plowman). Pilgrims, such as Margery Kempe, traveled freely within a European-wide Catholic culture to Rome, Gdansk, and Jerusalem. Following decades of civil war, which inspired Sir Thomas Malory to lament the passing of chivalry (Morte D'Arthur), a powerful new dynasty arose: the Tudors. Then, in the earlier sixteenth century, Henry VIII effected a revolutionary break with Roman Catholicism. Poets and playwrights took leading roles in refashioning England as a Protestant nation: Spenser adapted medieval genres of allegory and romance to celebrate not the Virgin Mary, but the Virgin Queen (Elizabeth I); medieval “mystery” or drama cycles took on Protestant themes; the great commercial theater of Marlowe and Shakespeare drew crowds and made money. Puritan activism subsequently closed the theaters; Puritans and royalists eventually divided in a second civil war that led to the beheading of the King, the foundation of a Commonwealth, and the epical visions of Milton. English colonization, which had begun with invasions of Wales and Ireland, spread westward to the Americas and later became global in scope. The New World was greeted with wonder and exploited through settlement and slavery. All of this runs through the vibrant literature of this extraordinary period: a time that provides much food for thought as we proceed in this new millennium, with the United States and its corporate cultures in a position of unparalleled (and yet increasingly challenged) global dominance.

The minimum total course units (<https://www.college.upenn.edu/credits-needed-major/>) for graduation in this major is 33. Double majors may entail more course units.

For more information: <http://www.english.upenn.edu/Undergrad/>

For information about the General Education requirements, please visit the College of Arts & Sciences Curriculum (<https://www.college.upenn.edu/curriculum/>) page.

Code	Title	Course Units
College General Education Requirements and Free Electives		
Foundational Approaches + Sectors + Free Electives		20
Major Requirements		
<i>Core Requirement</i> ¹		
Select one course in each sector from ENGL 0010-ENGL 5999, except 3000-3999:		6
Sector 1 - Theory & Poetics (Attribute: AETP)		
Sector 2 - Difference and Diaspora (Attribute: AEDD)		
Sector 3 - Medieval/Renaissance (Attribute: AEMR)		

Sector 4 - Literature of the Long 18th Century (Attribute: AE18)

Sector 5 - 19th Century Literature (Attribute: AE19)

Sector 6 - 20th-21st Century Literature (Attribute: AE20)

*The One Series (TOS)*²

ENGL 4500-4998 1

*Early-Period Seminars*³

ENGL 0300-0399; 0500-0599; 0700-0799; 2000-2999; 4500-4998; 5000-5999 2

Seminar 1: Literature Before 1700 (Attribute: AEB7)

Seminar 2: Literature Before 1900 (Attribute AEB7, AEB9)

*Literature Seminar Electives*⁴

ENGL 0051; 0300-0399; 0500-0599; 0700-0799; 2000-2999; 3000-3999; 4000-4998; 5000-5999 2

Seminar 3: Any Literature Seminar

Seminar 4: Any Literature Seminar

*Electives*⁵

ENGL 0010-ENGL 5999 2-4

*Concentration Requirements*⁶

Four courses ENGL 0010-5999 with attribute AEMR and/or AEMC.

Total Course Units 33

1

You will need to take one course to fulfill each sector of the Major Core, six in total. Two of these courses may double-count with your Literature Seminar Electives. Creative Writing Seminars cannot count in the Major Core.

2

The One Series seminar (TOS) cannot double-count in the Major Core. However, if you take a second TOS course, your additional TOS may count as a Literature Seminar or an Elective.

3

These Early-Period Seminars may NOT double-count in the Core.

4

These Seminar Electives may be double-counted in the Core.

5

The rest of your 13 c.u. for the English Major will be met with Electives. If none of your seminars are being double-counted in the Core, you will only need two Electives. For each double-counting course, you will need to add an Elective, for a maximum of four, to reach 13 c.u. With the approval of your Major Advisor, you may count up to two courses outside of English toward the Major. Courses in Linguistics (LING) and in Literatures not in English may count; in the case of Non-English Literatures, the courses should ideally be crosslisted (“Also offered As”) with ENGL, or you may obtain the permission from your Major advisor.

6

Concentration may be comprised from the 13 c.u. of the Major, or other courses.

Honors

Applicants must have a 3.6 GPA in the Major. Thesis required.

The degree and major requirements displayed are intended as a guide for students entering in the Fall of 2023 and later. Students should consult with their academic program regarding final certifications and requirements for graduation.
