

American University of Beirut
Department of English

The Masters Program in English Literature (updated 2022)

This document is intended as a guide to the MA program in Literature offered by the Department of English at AUB. It offers additional details on the academic and administrative aspects of the degree. The below should be read in conjunction with the edition of the graduate catalogue matching your year of admission to the MA.

Program Overview

The MA in English Literature provides students with opportunities to pursue advanced and research work in literary studies, literary criticism and theory, and cultural studies. The program is a strong foundation for doctoral study and for careers in writing and communication, publishing and editing, teaching, the arts and cultural policy, and other fields. Students attain experience and abilities in textual analysis, critical thought and reflection, research, academic writing, and aesthetic appreciation that will contribute to their personal and professional futures.

The MA comprises 21 credits in courses numbered 300 or above, a qualifying examination (fulfilled by the oral defense of a written thesis proposal), and an original research thesis. Students admitted on a prospective basis may be assigned further undergraduate-level prerequisite courses to be completed before undertaking 300-level courses.

Students working for an MA degree in English Literature must complete English 301A and, in addition, fulfill a distribution requirement by taking at least one course from within three separate categories (Literary History, Comparative Literature, and Literary and Cultural Studies). Up to two courses may be taken outside the Literature program, subject to the chairperson's approval.

Faculty

Chairperson: Doyle Avant

Professors: Lina Choueiri, Syrine Hout, Sonja Mejcher-Atassi, Robert Myers, Kassim Shaaban

Associate Professors: Doyle Avant, Joshua Gonsalves, Tariq Mehmood Ali, Yasmine Khayyat

Assistant Professors: Devan Ard-Keyser, Halle Neiderman, Maya Sfeir, Sreemoyee Dasgupta, Emma Moughabghab (visiting)

Admission

Admission to MA programs in English is competitive. In addition to GPA and recommendations, major emphasis is placed upon applicants' personal statements and writing samples. The statement should describe your undergraduate work and research experience, explain clearly your motivation to undertake Masters-level studies, and give an initial indication of the kind of work you hope to pursue with AUB faculty. The writing sample should be a strong example of undergraduate writing, ideally demonstrating readiness to undertake research projects. *The sample should not be a work of creative writing.* It is useful to give a brief indication of the context in which you wrote the submitted sample in your personal statement.

General requirements for admission to MA programs at AUB can be found in the catalogue and on the Graduate Council website: <https://www.aub.edu.lb/graduatecouncil/Pages/default.aspx>

Advising

Each graduate student has an *academic adviser* who approves the student's schedule each semester and is the first point of contact for academic issues. Advisers are assigned at admission and your adviser's name is also available through the Student Information System (SIS).

This role is distinct from a student's *thesis adviser*, who supervises the research thesis and chairs the defense meetings. Students select their own thesis advisers, usually during or before their last semester of coursework, based on research interest and availability.

Literature Courses

ENGL 301 Introduction to Bibliography and Research Methods

An introduction to bibliography and research methodologies in the study of language or in literary studies. *Annually.*

Literary History

ENGL 302 Literatures of the Middle Ages

A course that covers major works of medieval literature, with attention to both form and cultural context. Some attention to original languages of texts may be given. Readings may vary from term to term.

ENGL 303 Early Modern Literatures

A course that covers major works of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century literature, including theater, with attention to both form and cultural context. Readings may vary from term to term.

ENGL 304 British Literatures

A course that covers major works of British literature, including theater, from the eighteenth-century to the contemporary period. Themes and readings may vary from term to term. (Formerly ENGL 302/303)

ENGL 305 American Literatures

A course that covers major literary works of American literature, including theater and film, with some emphasis given to relations among the wide array of American literary traditions. Themes and readings may vary from term to term. (Formerly ENGL 304)

Comparative Literature

ENGL 306 Transnational Literatures

A course exploring relationships among texts—including theater, film, and other narrative and visual forms—emerging from a range of different locales, with an emphasis on historical contexts of migration, diaspora, and crisis.

ENGL 307 Colonial and Postcolonial Literatures

A course exploring relationships among texts circulating between the colonized and formerly colonized world, and sites of imperial and neo-imperial power.

ENGL 308 Literatures of the Global South

A course exploring relationships among texts that circulate through networks that link different sites of the colonized and formerly colonized world.

ENGL 309 World Literature

A course exploring relationships among significant texts from different origins, time periods, and genres, as well as their resonance in global contexts via translation, adaptation, and rewriting.

*Literary and Cultural Studies***ENGL 310 Literature, Technology, and Media**

A course exploring relationships between established—e.g., theater, print, film and visual media—and emergent media, and the changing conventions of genre, period, and form. Themes and readings may vary, but might include interrogations of the history of cinema, theatrical, and literary culture, the representation of science in transnational modernisms, or alterations in reading and reception in relation to digital media.

ENGL 311 Literature and Material Culture

A course exploring relationships between literary culture and the physical manifestations of culture in made objects. Themes and readings may vary, but might include examinations of capitalism and consumer culture as manifest in the representation of the domestic interior; relations between the visual arts and literary representation; theatrical or cinematic representation, or the representation of waste in literary modernism.

ENGL 312 Literature, Gender, and Sexuality

A course exploring literary cultures from the perspective of gender and sexuality as interpretive frameworks and representational strategies. Themes and readings may vary, but might include considerations of third world feminisms, gender and performance theory, queer and post-queer theory, affect theory, rhetorics of the body, and new materialist approaches to the study of gender and sexuality.

ENGL 313 Literature and Translation

A course exploring translation as a technology of literary production and meaning making. Works in translation will be considered through the lens of theories of translation and their practical applications.

*Elective Courses***ENGL 314 Special Topics in Literature**

A course that addresses aspects literature—including theater, cinema, and digital media—or literary and cultural theory that are not typically addressed in other courses offered by the department. Topics vary from semester to semester.

ENGL 315 Tutorial in Literature

A course offered to students on an individual basis. The topic can include any aspect of literary study.

ENGL 395 Comprehensive Exam 0 cr.

Prerequisite: Consent of adviser.

ENGL 399 MA Thesis 9 cr.

Course Loads

Students have typically progressed through the program by taking two courses per semester for three semesters, and one course plus ENGL 395 (the thesis proposal) in a fourth semester. If you wish to pursue a different program load than this 2-2-2-1 norm, consult your academic adviser.

Grades

- The minimum passing grade for an MA course is C+.
- Tutorials, courses taken on exchange abroad, and theses are reported as Pass (P) or Fail (F).

Incomplete, Leave of Absence, Transfer of Credits

Please consult the graduate catalogue for university policies on these matters. If you are facing difficulties that will make it hard to complete a course on time or that risk interrupting your progress altogether during a semester, please raise this with your instructor(s) and academic adviser to discuss your options as soon as possible.

Academic Standing of Student Working for a Master's Degree

Good Standing

Good standing is required to receive the degree and retain a GA. It requires a GPA of 3.2. (For GPA conversions, see: <https://www.aub.edu.lb/Registrar/Pages/academic-information.aspx>)

Probation

Students may be admitted on probation. To reach good standing, a student must pass all courses and have a GPA of 3.2 after completing 9 credits within the first two terms after admission. If any of these conditions are not met, the student is dropped from the program.

A regularly admitted student may be placed on probation in any term after completing 9 credits if the GPA falls to between 2.2 and 3.2 or after receiving an F for any course. Probationary status due to GPA is removed once a GPA of 3.2 is attained; this must be achieved after the next term. Probationary status due to an F requires retaking the course or, if the course is not running again, a petition to the FAS Graduate Studies Committee after consulting the academic adviser.

Dismissal (Avoiding It)

Unsatisfactory progress in the program may ultimately lead to dismissal. Specific conditions are listed in the catalogue. But if you feel your academic performance or ability to progress is suffering, please let your adviser know: this is a supportive department that puts every effort into helping students achieve their academic goals and can help make accommodations for your particular circumstances.

Residence Requirements

To meet the minimum residence requirements for the Master's degree, a student must register and be in residence as a graduate student for at least two semesters.

All requirements for the Master's degree must be completed within a period of four years after admission to graduate study. Extension beyond the maximum allowed period of study requires FAS approval, which you can obtain by petition (<https://epetitions.aub.edu.lb/ords/f?p=101>).

MA courses in English are not offered during Summer terms, and thesis proposal and thesis defenses are generally held according to the Spring or Fall timetable. Exceptionally, it is possible to hold a defense (not a course) in summer with your thesis adviser's approval.

Critical Reflection

At the end of their second semester, students working for an MA degree in English Literature will submit a piece of reflective writing (about 2 double-spaced pages) on their academic development during their first year in the graduate program. This document should include a discussion of how your expectations were formed and challenged, and how your studies have contributed to their overall intellectual development. The statement should be submitted to your academic adviser by the end of the teaching term; it will be read by all faculty so that those with whom students have not studied can begin to become familiar with their interests and goals.

Comprehensive Examination/Thesis Proposal Defense (ENGL 395)

All MA programs require that students register and pass a 0 cr. "comprehensive examination." The relevant English course, ENGL 395, this takes the form of a thesis proposal defense, and is ideally completed during the final semester of coursework.

Inform the chairperson of your intention to register in ENGL 395 no later than the drop-add period. After permission is entered, you will add the course in the usual manner on AUBsis.

To complete the proposal, the student should approach a professor who will become their thesis adviser and, in consultation with the adviser, form a thesis committee in accordance with the graduate catalogue regulations. In general, this means 3 professors including the adviser, at least two in English and all of professorial rank (i.e. with the title Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, or Professor). Exceptions are permitted to some of these conditions: consult with your adviser and the departmental chairperson.

Over the course of the semester, the student will write a thesis proposal. Your first guidance and practice in this process will be in ENGL 301A. In general, the proposal will explain a planned course of research, explaining the topic and aims, motivation and context, scope and originality of the work in relation to existing scholarship and methods of literary study. Including chapter outlines and a working bibliography. You should write with a general academic audience in mind and prioritize clarity and concision. There is no set template or length, most proposals are between 5000 and 7000 words.

The thesis proposal defense is a meeting chaired by the thesis adviser and attended by the student and committee. The written proposal, after as many rounds of editing as the thesis adviser deems

appropriate, must be circulated to the committee well in advance of the defense date, which should be set not later than the first week of the semester's exam period.

If the thesis proposal defense results in the committee's approval, the student should immediately submit a Proposal petition via OFPS (<https://epetitions.aub.edu.lb/ords/f?p=101>). In the comment section, briefly summarize the proposed thesis and note the date of the thesis proposal defense. Attach your proposal and list your thesis adviser and committee members. The thesis adviser should report the successful defense to the chairperson, who enters a grade of P for ENGL 395.

A student whose thesis proposal is not yet approved may defend a reconceived and rewritten version in the following semester. The thesis adviser should report the ongoing proposal to the chairperson, who enters a grade of PR for ENGL 395. If the second defense does not result in approval, the student is dropped from the program.

Thesis

The thesis is a significant and original contribution to research in literary studies.

A student beginning their thesis should register in ENGL 399, choosing the section associated with the name of their thesis adviser. If the thesis work continues into subsequent semesters, registration will be successively in ENGL 399A, 399B, 399C, etc.

AUB libraries offers, and you should consult as early as convenient, a manual and other resources relevant to theses across all faculties: <https://aub.edu.lb/libguides.com/Thesis>

Thesis Defense and Submission

The thesis defense must be carried out no later than the dates specified by the Graduate Council: <https://www.aub.edu.lb/graduatecouncil/Pages/thesisdeadlines.aspx>

Please notify the department's Administrative Officer of the date of your scheduled defense, whether you would like a room reservation, and any audio-visual assistance: me120@aub.edu.lb. Please also let us know whether you agree to have your defense publicized: thesis defenses are also public occasions at which you share your scholarly findings with the AUB community.

Submit your final draft to each member of the thesis committee well in advance of the scheduled defense date. The total time allocated for the thesis defense should allow for answering all questions and does not normally exceed 120 minutes.

The thesis defense is chaired by the thesis adviser. Immediately after the defense, the committee will privately deliberate before informing the student of the result and, in the case of a passed thesis, what further revisions are required for the version to be submitted to the library.

If the defense does not result in a passed thesis, the student may resubmit and defend again after a period of at least three months. A second failed defense results in dismissal from the program.

Deposit of the Project/Thesis in the Library

After passing the project/thesis defense examination, the student is required to deposit copies of the thesis in the library. This is done online, following the steps detailed here:

<https://aub.edu.lb/libguides.com/Thesis/Submission>

Checklist of Graduation Requirements

- à GPA 3.2 or higher
- à Complete ENGL 301A
- à Complete minimum one course in range ENGL 302-305
- à Complete minimum one course in range ENGL 306-309
- à Complete minimum one course in range ENGL 310-313
- à Complete total of 21 credits of coursework
- à Pass ENGL 395 by defending thesis proposal
- à Defend thesis and submit to library

Graduate Assistantships

Graduate Assistantships (GAs) are awarded competitively at admission. A GA covers tuition expenses and obliges a student to provide 8 hours of work. Work assignments are shared in the first week of each new semester and typically include appointments as a tutor in the Writing Center, as a research assistant to a professor, or administrative duties in the department.

Continuing students wishing to obtain a GA should inform the department chair early in the semester preceding the semester for which they hope to benefit from a GA.

For the complete policy on GAs, see:

<https://aub.policytech.eu/dotNet/documents/?docid=1541&public=true>

Contact

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