Why English and American Literature at Brandeis?

In addition to being inherently pleasurable and intellectually exciting, a major or minor in English and American literature will help you develop important skills. English students learn how to read carefully and closely, write skillfully and stylishly, and argue analytically and critically. These communication skills are in high demand. Studying English can help you perfect your understanding of a language you already use and enhance your appreciation for cultures you inhabit and/or encounter.

Curriculum Overview

Students can major or minor in English and American literature.

The major requires nine courses:

- Introduction to Literary Method (ENG 11a)
- Three courses dealing primarily with literature written in English before 1850
- One course in world literature
- Four electives

Students wishing to pursue honors must earn a GPA of 3.50 or higher in courses counting towards the major and complete a senior honors essay (one semester), which counts as a tenth course. In rare cases, students may elect instead to complete the senior honors thesis (two semesters).

The minor requires five courses:

- Introduction to Literary Method (ENG 11a)
- Four other courses offered by the department

Creative Writing Major

The creative writing major falls under the auspices of the English and American literature department. Students may double major in English and American literature and creative writing or major in one while minoring in the other.

Areas of Special Interest

Our faculty have special interest in a number of areas: women’s studies, gender and sexuality, American literature, Anglophone literature and postcolonial theory, early modern (especially Renaissance) English literature, literature and science, literary theory and philosophy, and contemporary poetry. Recent courses include: American Literature in the Age of Lincoln; Sex and Culture; Literature and Empire; Film Noir; and Major English Writers.
Career and Education Opportunities

Studying English prepares students for careers in teaching, law, business, publishing, writing, and administration. Understanding the history and conflicts that have shaped English-speaking cultures is also enormously valuable for anyone interested in human services, politics, travel, cross-cultural exchanges, or creative and artistic projects. English graduates help to ensure society’s cultural inheritance even as they contribute to that culture—as creators, as intelligent consumers, or both. Among our graduates are scientists, businessmen and women, professors, lawyers, filmmakers, television producers, psychologists, fiction writers and poets, literary agents, and social activists.

Faculty

Following is a list of department faculty members and their areas of specialization:

- **Michael Gilmore, chair**
  Puritanism, literature of the American Revolution, American Renaissance, film studies

- **Aliyyah Abdur-Rahman**
  Nineteenth- and twentieth-century African American literature and culture; gender, queer theory, and sexual politics; critical race theory; multiethnic feminisms

- **Olga Broumas, director of creative writing**
  Poetry

- **John Burt**
  American literature, romanticism, composition, philosophy of education, literature of the American South, poetry

- **Mary Baine Campbell**
  Medieval literature, poetry, Renaissance literature

- **Patricia Chu**
  Modernism, American literature, Asian-American literature

- **William Flesch, undergraduate advising head**
  Poetry, Renaissance, theory

- **Caren Irr**
  Twentieth-century American literature, theory, cultural studies

- **Thomas King**
  Performance studies, gender studies, gay studies, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century drama

- **Susan S. Lanser**
  Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British and French studies, women writers, the novel, women’s studies and lesbian/gay studies, comparative literature

- **Paul Morrison**
  Modernism; literary criticism and theory

- **John Plotz**
  Victorian literature; the novel; politics and aesthetics

- **Laura Quinney**
  Romanticism, literature and philosophy, eighteenth-century literature

- **Dawn Skorczewski, director of university writing**
  Twentieth-century poetry; psychoanalysis and pedagogy; composition studies

- **Faith Smith**
  African and Afro-American literature, Caribbean literature

- **Ramie Targoff, graduate advising head**
  Renaissance literature, Shakespeare, religion and literature

- **Michaele Whelan**
  Contemporary Anglophone literature, American literature, theory