



DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

# **The Graduate Handbook**

**Department of English  
Mississippi State University**

**2015-16**

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# Welcome to the English Department

We are delighted that you have chosen to pursue advanced study in English at Mississippi State University. Graduate students are an essential part of a vibrant English department and we welcome your contributions as students, scholars, and teachers.

This document describes the specific policies and requirements of the English Department and is a supplement to the *Bulletin* of the Mississippi State Graduate School.

**Read the *Bulletin* and this Handbook thoroughly and retain both for future reference.**

Students must follow the policies laid out in the *Bulletin* and this Handbook. The Graduate Coordinator and English Department Faculty will do our best to make sure that students are informed of requirements, deadlines, and other policies; however, it is ultimately each student's responsibility to become familiar with and follow the policies of the Graduate School and the Department.

## Professional Standards for Graduate Students:

MSU has high standards for its Graduate Programs. Graduate students must maintain a 3.00 GPA and, further, are expected to maintain certain professional standards in meeting the requirements of their programs. Graduate students will grow as independent scholars and teachers during the pursuit of the MA. To facilitate this development, the English Department Faculty has the following expectations of its graduate students.

- Attend class regularly. Graduate students should **never** miss a seminar class, as graduate seminars require the full participation of all of their members. In the case of a **true** emergency, contact your professor promptly.
- Complete all assigned work promptly and carefully. All written assignments must be accurate and correct, with few or no stylistic or grammatical errors. Include appropriate documentation for all written work.
- Remember that your performance reflects on you as a new professional in the field, but also on your advisors, department, and university. You may seek out, or your professors offer, opportunities for professional development such as attending or presenting at a conference. On these occasions conduct yourself with professionalism, integrity, and discretion. Bear in mind that your interactions with professors in class, in correspondence, and in professional venues influences what they will have to say in the future if asked to serve as a reference.

An important part of the graduate school experience is cultivating relationships that will enrich your intellectual pursuits and enhance your professional development. Fulfilling the expectations stated above will help you to form enduring professional relationships during your time at MSU and beyond

# Contacts in the English Department

## **Graduate Coordinator**

Dr. Lara Dodds  
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325-2354

## **Department Head**

Dr. Richard Raymond  
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325-3644

## **Director of Composition**

Ms. Ann Spurlock  
spurlock@english.msstate.edu  
325-2359

## **TESOL**

Dr. Wendy Herd  
wherd@english.msstate.edu  
(662)-325-2388

## **Creative Writing**

Dr. Mike Kardos  
mpk36@msstate.edu

## Professorial Faculty Currently Teaching in the Department

- Thomas Anderson [tpa14@msstate.edu](mailto:tpa14@msstate.edu)  
Ph.D. Vanderbilt University  
Renaissance literature, particularly Shakespeare; critical theory.
- Ted Atkinson [tatkinson@english.msstate.edu](mailto:tatkinson@english.msstate.edu)  
Ph.D. Louisiana State University  
American literature, Southern literature, particularly Faulkner.
- Greg Bentley [gwb@english.msstate.edu](mailto:gwb@english.msstate.edu)  
Ph.D. University of California at Davis  
Renaissance literature, especially Shakespeare; modern and contemporary drama; critical theory.
- Shalyn Claggett [src173@msstate.edu](mailto:src173@msstate.edu)  
Ph.D. Vanderbilt University  
Nineteenth-century British literature.
- Peter DeGabriele [pdegab@english.msstate.edu](mailto:pdegab@english.msstate.edu)  
Ph.D. University at Buffalo-SUNY  
Eighteenth-century British literature; the novel; literary and cultural theory.
- Lara Dodds [ld214@msstate.edu](mailto:ld214@msstate.edu)  
Ph.D. Brown University  
Renaissance literature; Milton; early modern prose; early modern women's writing, especially Margaret Cavendish; science and literature.
- Becky Hagenston [bh133@ra.msstate.edu](mailto:bh133@ra.msstate.edu)  
M.F.A. University of Arizona  
Creative writing: fiction.
- Shirley Hanshaw [sh449@msstate.edu](mailto:sh449@msstate.edu)  
Ph.D. University of Mississippi  
Nineteenth- and twentieth-century American literature; African-American literature; technical writing
- Wendy Herd [weherd@english.msstate.edu](mailto:weherd@english.msstate.edu)  
Ph.D. University of Kansas  
Linguistics, Phonetics, Psycholinguistics, and Second Language Acquisition  
Linguistics Research Laboratory
- Holly Johnson [hjohnson@english.msstate.edu](mailto:hjohnson@english.msstate.edu)  
Ph.D. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill  
Old English and Middle English literature.
- Michael Kardos [mpk36@msstate.edu](mailto:mpk36@msstate.edu)  
Ph.D. University of Missouri  
Creative writing: fiction
- Stacy Kastner [smk318@msstate.edu](mailto:smk318@msstate.edu)  
Ph.D. Bowling Green State University  
Rhetoric and Writing; Writing Pedagogy and Theory; Cyber/Techno Feminism; Feminist Historiography

- Matt Little [littmatt@ra.msstate.edu](mailto:littmatt@ra.msstate.edu)  
 Ph.D. University of Chicago  
 American literature, including works by Henry James, William James, Ezra Pound, F. Scott Fitzgerald; legal writing.
- Rich Lyons [rjl@ra.msstate.edu](mailto:rjl@ra.msstate.edu)  
 Ph.D. University of Houston  
 Creative writing: poetry. Nineteenth- and twentieth-century poetry, including works by Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Dickinson, Whitman, Yeats, Stevens, Warren, et al.
- Amy Mallory-Kani [am3466@msstate.edu](mailto:am3466@msstate.edu)  
 PhD. University at Albany-SUNY  
 Romanticism, including Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, Jane Austen; medicine and literature.
- Kelly Marsh [kmarsh@english.msstate.edu](mailto:kmarsh@english.msstate.edu)  
 Ph.D. Pennsylvania State University  
 Twentieth-century British and Irish literature, including works by James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Roddy Doyle, Jeanette Winterson, Salman Rushdie, Zadie Smith.
- Bonnie O'Neill [boneill@english.msstate.edu](mailto:boneill@english.msstate.edu)  
 Ph.D. Washington University  
 Early American literature, Nineteenth-century American literature, including works by Walt Whitman, Mark Twain, and Ralph Waldo Emerson.
- Mostafa Papi [mp1928@msstate.edu](mailto:mp1928@msstate.edu)  
 Ph.D. Michigan State University  
 Linguistics: TESOL
- Catherine Pierce [CPierce@english.msstate.edu](mailto:CPierce@english.msstate.edu)  
 Ph.D. University of Missouri  
 Creative writing: poetry.
- Ginger Pizer [GPizer@english.msstate.edu](mailto:GPizer@english.msstate.edu)  
 Ph.D. University of Texas, Austin  
 Linguistics; American Sign Language.
- Rich Raymond [rreymond@english.msstate.edu](mailto:rreymond@english.msstate.edu)  
 Ph.D. Miami University  
 Eighteenth-century literature, focusing on Swift and Johnson; rhetoric and composition theory.
- Donald Shaffer [ds649@msstate.edu](mailto:ds649@msstate.edu)  
 Ph.D. University of Chicago  
 American literature, African-American literature and history, especially Charles Chesnut
- Andrea Spain [ads506@msstate.edu](mailto:ads506@msstate.edu)  
 Ph.D. University at Buffalo-SUNY  
 Twentieth-century and contemporary postcolonial literatures, particularly South African Literature; Critical Theory and Gender Studies; Film.
- Eric Vivier [edv34@msstate.edu](mailto:edv34@msstate.edu)  
 Ph.D. University of Wisconsin-Madison  
 Renaissance literature, especially satire. Honors College
- Robert West [rmw107@ra.msstate.edu](mailto:rmw107@ra.msstate.edu)  
 Ph.D. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill  
 Twentieth- and twenty-first-century American, British, and Irish poetry; Southern and Appalachian literature.



# Admission Requirements

## **Regular Admission**

Admission criteria for the graduate program in English include all the general requirements of the Graduate School. Additionally, the English Department requires an undergraduate degree in English **or** 18 hours of undergraduate English courses beyond composition, with a B average or higher. GRE scores are strongly encouraged but not required. International applicants must obtain a TOEFL score of 625 PBT (263 CBT or 106 iBT) or an IELTS score of 8 or better. An applicant must submit all application materials by March 15th to be considered for a teaching assistantship.

## **Provisional Admission**

If a student does not fully meet the admission requirements of the program, it may be possible for that student to be admitted provisionally. If provisionally admitted, the student must attain at least a 3.00 GPA on the first 9 hours of graduate courses at MSU (courses with an S grade, transfer credits, or credits earned while in Unclassified status cannot be used to satisfy this requirement). If a 3.00 GPA is not attained, the student may be dismissed from the graduate program. **While in provisional status, a student is not eligible to hold a graduate assistantship.**

# Program Requirements

The English department offers thesis and non-thesis options for the MA degree. The specific requirements for each option are detailed below. All graduate students must complete EN 8103 (Graduate Research Methods in English), demonstrate reading knowledge of a foreign language, and successfully complete a comprehensive exam during their final semester of graduate study.

## Thesis option

The thesis option requires 24 hours of course work and six hours of thesis research under the direction of a thesis advisor. At least one half of the graduate coursework must be completed at the 8000 level.

### Required Course work:

- EN 8103 Graduate Research Methods in English (to be taken in the Fall semester of the first year of study).
- 9 hours EN 8xxx\*
- 12 hours EN 6xxx or 8xxx\*
- 6 hours EN 8000 Thesis/ Research

\* Students must select appropriate courses in consultation with the Graduate Coordinator and/ or the Thesis Advisor.

## Non-thesis option

The non-thesis option requires 33 hours of course work. At least 15 hours of graduate course work must be completed at the 8000 level.

### Required Coursework:

- EN 8103 Graduate Research Methods in English (to be taken in the Fall semester of the first year of study).
- 12 hours EN 8xxx\*
- 18 hours EN 6xxx or 8xxx\*

\*Students must select appropriate courses in consultation with the Graduate Coordinator.

## Foreign Language Competency

All students must demonstrate reading knowledge of one foreign language.

Foreign language competency may be fulfilled by completion of 4 semesters of undergraduate foreign language courses with a 3.00 average or higher or through the successful completion of a foreign language translation test. See the Graduate Coordinator for more information.

## **Unsatisfactory Performance**

To remain enrolled in the MA Program in English, students must maintain a satisfactory level of performance. Unsatisfactory performance may be defined as any one of the following:

- Failure to maintain a B average (3.00) in attempted graduate courses after admission to the program.
- A grade of U or F in any one course
- Failure of the comprehensive examination
- Unsatisfactory evaluation of a thesis
- Failure of a required component of the program of study.

Any one of these or a combination of these may constitute the basis for review for possible dismissal. The graduate coordinator will review the record along with the student's graduate committee and take a final course of action which will be immediate dismissal or the establishment of a probationary period in which corrective action must take place.

Appeal of dismissal can be made by submitting a written appeal statement to the department head. If the dismissal is upheld by the department head upon the student's appeal, the student can then submit a written appeal to the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

# MA Exam

All students must successfully complete a comprehensive examination of English and American literature. The exam must be taken at the beginning of the final full semester (typically the 4<sup>th</sup> semester) of a student's graduate program. The exam is offered once during each Fall and Spring semester, usually during September and January. The time and location of the exam will be announced well ahead of time. In past semesters the exam has been held on a Saturday morning in a computer lab at the Mitchell Memorial Library. Exams are graded anonymously by a committee made up of three members of the Graduate Faculty of the English Department.

## Exam Format

The MA exam is a four-hour timed exam consisting of 4 one-hour essay questions. The first essay is an explication of a set text, which will not be announced ahead of time. The three remaining essays will be written in response to questions about one or more works on a list of 16 representative works of literature written in English (**MA Exam List**). For each essay, students may choose between one of two questions, which will not be announced ahead of time. The MA Exam List will be revised each calendar year and will be announced two years ahead of time. Each student should consult with the Graduate Coordinator at the time of enrollment to determine the appropriate MA Exam List for his or her projected examination date.

**N.B.** Each MA Exam List will be the basis for only two examinations (Spring and Fall of each calendar year); should your plans for graduation change due to a change from full time to part time status, leave of absence or any other reason, contact the Graduate Coordinator for advice.

## Retake Policy

Students who fail the exam have the opportunity to retake it one time. Typically this retake will be scheduled for the semester following the failed exam. Students can expect a letter from the MA Exam Committee that explains the reasons for failure and provides guidance for further study and preparation. This policy is in accordance with Graduate School policy on comprehensive examinations. See Graduate *Bulletin* pp. 60-61. **A student must be enrolled for at least one credit hour in the semester in which the exam is taken.**

## Exam Preparation Advice

Successful completion of the comprehensive exam requires substantial and sustained preparation. You will receive the MA Exam List at the beginning of your first semester of graduate study, and it is in your interests to develop a plan for reading and studying all of the works on the MA Exam List soon after you start the program. You may study some works on the MA Exam List as part of your coursework;

however, you should expect to read and study some or even most of the works on the MA Exam List independently. The best preparation for the exam is to read each work carefully and strategically with attention to the literary and formal qualities of the work as well as its most significant critical and cultural contexts. You may consult the Graduate Coordinator or relevant Faculty for recommendations about relevant introductory and critical works. Sample questions from past exams are available on the Departmental website. The MA Exam Committee typically holds a review and strategy session early in the Fall semester of each year.

## The MA Thesis

The MA Thesis is a substantial and original scholarly or creative work. Students working on the emphasis in Creative Writing will prepare a creative thesis, which consists of significant work in poetry or fiction, such as a collection of poems or stories or a draft of a novel, that is accompanied by a critical introduction. Other students may write a critical thesis, which is a substantial work of original research or scholarship in any of the fields of English or Linguistics represented by the English Department Faculty.

### Thesis Committee

The Thesis Committee consists of three members of the Faculty, your Thesis Advisor, and two Committee Members. It is your responsibility to find a faculty member who is willing to work with you as your Thesis Advisor. You will select the members of your Committee in consultation with your Thesis Advisor.

### Thesis Proposal

The Thesis Proposal is an overview of your thesis topic, argument, and methodology. It should be prepared in consultation with your Thesis Advisor. The Thesis Proposal must be approved by your Thesis Advisor, the Thesis Committee, and the Graduate Coordinator and must be submitted using the Thesis Proposal Form, which can be obtained from the English Department Office.

### Thesis Defense

The Thesis Defense is an oral examination of your thesis by your Thesis Committee. The final draft of your thesis manuscript should generally be provided to the committee members two weeks before the Defense; however, the Defense may be scheduled **no sooner than seven days after delivery of the manuscript to the committee**. See the Graduate *Bulletin* p. 61.

### Submission Requirements and Deadlines

It is your responsibility to follow all submission requirements and deadlines as laid out by the Graduate School (see the Graduate *Bulletin* p. 61). Familiarize yourself with the requirements well ahead of the deadlines and give yourself ample time to acquire all the required signatures. **A student must be enrolled in at least one credit hour at MSU during the semester that the thesis is to be submitted to the library**

### Recommended Timeline

All thesis-writers must fulfill the expectations and deadlines set by their Thesis Advisors. Each student's project will vary due to faculty and student schedules and the type of research required; however, most students who write a successful thesis will follow this schedule:

**First Semester:** Consult with the Graduate Coordinator about your plans; introduce yourself to faculty who work in your areas of interest, share your preliminary ideas and ask for suggestions about topics and research problems.

**Second Semester:** Identify your Thesis Advisor and get his/her approval. Further narrow your topic and select the members of your thesis committee. Some faculty may require you to prepare a preliminary proposal and bibliography before agreeing to advise your thesis.

**Third Semester:** Register for 3 Thesis/ Research Hours and complete the Thesis Proposal Form. Prepare a preliminary outline of the thesis and establish a regular schedule of meetings with your Advisor. In consultation with your advisor set preliminary deadlines for completing drafts of your thesis.

**Fourth Semester:** Register for 3 Thesis/ Research Hours. Finish writing your thesis and prepare for your defense. Graduate School deadlines for the thesis defense are in late March (Spring Graduation) and early November (Fall Graduation), so a complete draft of your thesis must be ready for your committee by approximately midterm.

### **Deciding between the Thesis and Non-Thesis Option**

As you decide whether or not to write a thesis, consider how the thesis fits into your personal, professional, and intellectual goals. Some questions to ask yourself:

- **What are your career goals?** The thesis can be good experience for those who plan to pursue a PhD after completing the MA. Students who plan to teach in secondary schools or two-year colleges may find that additional coursework is more useful because it provides for a broader and more comprehensive grounding in the field.
- **Do you want to develop your writing to a professional level?** Even more than a seminar paper, the thesis requires extensive engagement with the conventions and norms of writing within your field. This may mean an extensive review of the scholarly literature or repeated revisions of your own drafts. Writing a thesis may be a way to develop a writing sample for your applications to graduate school, a conference paper, or even the basis for your first published article.
- **Do you have an idea that requires or will benefit from sustained investigation?** Perhaps the first thing to consider is whether you have a research problem or question that you truly need or want to pursue. The thesis is an original scholarly or creative project that is ambitious in scope and that makes a significant contribution to its field. Theses are often 50 pages or longer, will usually be the longest and most complicated scholarly or creative work you have attempted to date, and will require sustained commitment and effort. The thesis requires an interesting and original idea that can be developed in a sustained manner. The reward for this effort can be great—the discovery of new knowledge or the creation of art—but writing a thesis can also be a long, difficult, and isolating process. Spend time developing your research problem thoroughly and consider carefully whether a thesis is the best way to answer that problem.

## **Creative Writing Emphasis**

The Creative Writing Emphasis is available to students who wish to gain extensive experience in the writing of fiction and poetry. Students who wish to pursue the Creative Writing emphasis should submit a writing sample with the application for admission (10-12 pages poetry or 15-30 pages fiction; 30 pages combined) and consult with the Director of Creative Writing upon admission to the program. Creative Writing students will complete a creative thesis consisting of a collection of poems, a collection of short stories, or a novel, preceded by a critical introduction. All students must complete a comprehensive exam in English and American literature.

### **Course Requirements for the Creative Writing Emphasis**

EN 8103 Graduate Research Methods in English  
9 hours EN 8xxx\*  
12 hours EN 6xxx or 8xxx\*  
6 hours EN 8000 Thesis/ Research  
9 hours must be workshops in Creative Writing

# Linguistics Emphasis

The English Department at the Mississippi State University offers an emphasis in Linguistics under the department's Master of Art Degree in English. The Linguistics emphasis allows for students to specialize in Linguistics while pursuing a traditional MA in English literature. Thesis and non-thesis options are available with the Linguistics Emphasis. All students must complete the comprehensive exam in English and American literature. Students who wish to pursue a Linguistics Emphasis should consult with the Graduate Coordinator and Dr. Ginger Pizer upon admission to the program.

## Requirements for the Non-Thesis Option (33 hours)

EN 8103 Graduate Research Methods in English  
12 hours EN 8xxx (Literature electives)  
3 hours EN 8xxx or 6xxx (Literature elective)  
EN 6403: Introduction to Linguistics  
EN 6413: History of the English Language  
EN 6443: English Syntax  
EN 6623: Language and Culture  
EN 6633: Language and Society

- All students must pass the M.A. comprehensive exam prior to graduation.
- All students must also demonstrate fluency in a second language. This can be accomplished by the completion of 12 lower level credit hours in a foreign language (with a 3.0 average in all classes) or through the successful completion of a language ability translation test. Mississippi State utilizes the WebCAPE foreign language placement exam, which is administered by the Language Media Center of the Foreign Languages Department.

## Requirements for the Thesis Option (24 hours + 6 hours Research/Thesis)

EN 8103: Graduate Research Methods in English  
9 hours EN 8xxx (Literature electives)  
EN 6403: Introduction to Linguistics  
EN 6443: English Syntax  
**Two of the following:**  
EN 6413: History of the English Language  
EN 6623: Language and Culture  
EN 6633: Language and Society

6 hours EN 8000: Thesis/ Research

- It is also important to note that students who opt for the thesis route must still pass the M.A. comprehensive exam which focuses solely on literature. It is

therefore highly recommended that students who opt for the thesis route consider enrolling in additional literature courses.

- All students must also demonstrate fluency in a second language. This can be accomplished by the completion of 12 lower level credit hours in a foreign language (with a 3.0 average in all classes) or through the successful completion of a language ability translation test. Mississippi State utilizes the WebCAPE foreign language placement exam, which is administered by the Language Media Center of the Foreign Languages Department.

# TESOL Emphasis

The English Department at the Mississippi State University is proud to offer an emphasis in TESOL under the department's Master of Art Degree in English. The TESOL Emphasis allows students to specialize in TESOL while still pursuing a traditional MA in literature. Thesis and non-thesis options are available. Students interested in the MA with TESOL Emphasis should consult with the Graduate Coordinator and Dr. Lyn Fogle upon admission to the program.

## Requirements for the Non-Thesis Option (33 hours)

EN 8103: Graduate Research Methods in English  
12 hours EN 8xxx (Literature Electives)  
3 hours EN 8xxx or 6xxx (Literature Elective)  
EN 6403: Introduction to Linguistics  
EN 6433: Approaches to TESOL  
EN 6443: English Syntax  
EN 6453: Methods of TESOL  
EN 6463: Studies in Second Language Acquisition

- **All students must pass the M.A. comprehensive exam** prior to graduation.
- **All students must also demonstrate fluency in a second language.** This can be accomplished by the completion of 12 lower level credit hours in a foreign language (with a 3.0 average in all classes) or through the successful completion of a language ability translation test. Mississippi State utilizes the [WebCAPE](#) foreign language placement exam, which is administered by the Language Media Center of the [Foreign Languages Department](#).

## Requirements for Thesis Option (24 hours + 6 hours Thesis/Research)

EN 8103: Graduate Research in English  
9 Hours EN 8xxx (Literature Electives)  
EN 6403: Introduction to Linguistics  
EN 6443: English Syntax  
EN 6463: Studies in Second Language Acquisition  
EN 6433: Approaches to TESOL **or** EN 6453: Methods of TESOL  
6 Hours EN 8000: Thesis/ Research

- It is highly suggested that TESOL emphasis students take five split level TESOL courses (EN 6403, 6433, 6443, 6453, and 6463) in order to complete their TESOL Certificate.

- It is also important to note that students who opt for the thesis option must still pass the MA comprehensive exam in literature. Thesis students should consider enrolling in additional literature electives.
- All students must demonstrate fluency in a second language. This can be accomplished through the completion of 12 lower level credit hours in foreign language (average of 3.00 or higher) or through the successful completion of a language ability translation test.

# Student Organizations

**Sigma Tau Delta** is the International English Honor Society. Mississippi State hosts the Xi Kappa Chapter. This active local chapter holds an annual induction ceremony and participates in community projects that promote literacy. The faculty advisor is Dr. Peter DeGabriele ([pdegab@english.msstate.edu](mailto:pdegab@english.msstate.edu))

**The Graduate Student Association (GSA)** is a University-wide organization that provides programs and services for graduate students at MSU. The GSA meets monthly and also hosts two events yearly to showcase graduate student achievements: the Graduate Student Research Symposium and the Graduate Student Awards Banquet. The GSA hosts a travel award competition in support of graduate student travel to conferences or to conduct research. For more information see <http://www.grad.msstate.edu/current/orgs/gsa/>

**Black Graduate Student Association (BGSA)** provides outreach and programming for graduate students with a particular focus on the needs and interests of Black graduate students at Mississippi State University. The BGSA offers fellowships and assistance to undergraduate students of color interested in graduate study. The faculty advisor is Dr. Chiquita Briley ([Cbriley@fsnhp.msstate.edu](mailto:Cbriley@fsnhp.msstate.edu)).

# Funding and Scholarship Opportunities

## Teaching Assistantships

A limited number of teaching assistantships are available for highly qualified students on a competitive basis. An assistantship is a financial award to a graduate student in exchange for part-time work (20 hours/ week) in teaching, research, or administration. Students interested in being considered for an assistantship in the department should submit a separate application at the time of admission and/or no later than March 15<sup>th</sup> for Fall enrollment. Application forms are available on the Graduate School website (<http://www.grad.msstate.edu/forms/#assist>).

- **Course Load:** Graduate assistants must be registered in 9 graduate credit hours for the Fall and Spring semester in order to maintain full-time status. TAs may register for no more than 13 hours per semester.
- **Academic Achievement:** To retain an assistantship, students must demonstrate satisfactory progress in the program. Failure to do so may result in termination of the assistantship.
- **Orientation:** All new TAs must attend the Graduate Teaching Assistant Orientation held by the Graduate School. The GTA Orientation is held semi-annually before the beginning of the Fall and Spring semesters. TAs must also attend the English Department TA workshop, which is held during the week before the beginning of the Fall Semester. Contact the Director of Composition or the Graduate Coordinator for more information about the dates and times of these required Workshops.
- **Workload and Teaching Assignments:** Assistantships are a 20 hour/ week commitment and should be treated as a professional responsibility. The standard load is two courses per semester, which may be assigned in several ways. Students with fewer than 18 graduate hours may be assigned to teach Basic Composition (EN 0103) and/or to work in the Writing Center. After student have earned 18 graduate hours they may be assigned to teach Composition I (EN 1103), Composition II (EN 1113) and/or to work in the Writing Center. Occasionally, TAs may have the equivalent of one course (10 hours/ week) reassigned to serve as a research assistant for faculty (see below).
- **Training and Professional Development:** All TAs must register for and attend a teaching practicum, Teaching College Writing (EN 6013), during each semester of the assistantship. Students assigned to the Writing Center must also take Writing Center Tutoring (EN 6243), which is offered each Fall semester. These courses will appear on the transcript, but are not included in the hours required for completion of the program. EN 6013 and EN 6243 will not appear on your Program of Study.

## Research Assistantships

Occasionally TAs may be reassigned to serve as research assistants on faculty projects. Research assistants will have their teaching load reduced by the equivalent of one course and in exchange will work for 10 hours per week assisting a faculty member with his or her research. Research Assistantships are not always available and will **only** be assigned if 1) a faculty member's need can be matched with a TA's interest; and 2) the research assistant award does not compromise the department's ability to put teachers in the classroom. Instructional needs take priority over the assignment of research assistants.

- **Expectations and responsibilities:** Faculty should ensure that research assistants perform academic work that contributes to the RA's professional development as well as the faculty member's research agenda. RAs may perform bibliographic tasks, editing, indexing, searching for sources, data analysis, or other appropriate tasks. RAs will work no more than 10 hours/week and should not perform primarily clerical tasks. Faculty may require research assistants to document and report their hours worked.
- **Procedure:** TAs who are interested in serving as research assistants should notify Ann Spurlock, the Director of Composition. In consultation with the Department Head, she will match TAs with faculty who have requested assistance for their research projects. TAs will only be reassigned as RAs after all classroom needs have been met.
- **Research assistantships are only available to students who already hold a Teaching Assistantship in the department.**

## Travel and Professional Development

The Freshman English Enhancement Fund provides a limited amount of money each year for use by graduate students, lecturers, and instructors to support scholarship and professional development. Money may be available to support presentation of a paper at academic conferences or other relevant activities. To be considered for an award, fill out an application form and submit it to the Graduate Coordinator. You must also submit a copy of your letter of acceptance to the conference or an endorsement from a faculty member explaining how this activity contributes to your academic or professional development. Pick up application forms from the Graduate Coordinator.

Students are strongly encouraged to apply for additional funding from the College of Arts and Science and the Graduate School. Please contact the Graduate Coordinator for further information.

Proposals will be evaluated on a competitive basis by a committee consisting of the Director of Graduate Studies, the Director of Composition, and the Department Head. Proposals will be considered on the following deadlines:

**September 15:** for travel between Nov. 1 and Feb. 28/29

**February 1:** for travel between March 1 and June 30  
**May 15:** for travel between July 1 and October 31.

## **Departmental Scholarships**

Several scholarships are available to graduate students. See the Departmental Website for further information and application forms.

- **Eugene Butler Creative Writing Award (\$2500):** Awarded to creative writers at the upper-division undergraduate or graduate level. Application deadline May 1<sup>st</sup>.
- **Howell H. Gwin Scholarship (\$1000 or \$500):** Undergraduate and graduate awards. Graduate students are eligible in their first year. Application deadline May 1<sup>st</sup>.
- **William H. Magruder Memorial Scholarship (\$1000):** Awarded to upper-division undergraduate or graduate students. Application deadline March 1<sup>st</sup>.
- **Richard Patteson Memorial Scholarship (TBA):** Awarded to a first-year graduate student who intends to focus on literature. Application deadline March 1<sup>st</sup>.

## Recommended Reading and Other Resources

For news and opinion about higher education, consult *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and *Inside Higher Ed* (<http://www.insidehighered.com/>)

Gregory Colon Semenza's *Graduate Study for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) is a useful and practical guide to the challenges of graduate school. This book is particularly useful if you plan to pursue a PhD after MSU.

Susan Basalla and Maggie Debelius "*So What Are You Going to Do With That?*": *Finding Careers Outside Academia* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. University of Chicago Press, 2007) provides an overview of career options for students with advanced degrees.

For information about the history of English as an academic discipline, try Robert Scholes *The Rise and Fall of English* (Yale UP, 1999) or Gerald Graff, *Professing Literature: An Institutional History* (University of Chicago Press, 2007). Useful collections of essays about the present and future of the field include Bruce McComiskey's *English Studies: An Introduction to the Discipline* (NCTE 2006) and David Nicholls's *Introduction to Scholarship in Modern Languages and Literatures* (MLA 2007).