

# Graduate Studies in English

*The University of Akron*  
BUCHTEL COLLEGE  
OF ARTS & SCIENCES

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## Introduction

The university offers a wide range of graduate programs at both the master's and doctoral level, and provides substantial resources for graduate study. Bierce Library, for example, contains over 2 million books, audio-visual materials, and archival resources, and subscribes to more than 4,500 periodicals. Because of the university's extensive support services, graduate students can participate in or use such department and student organizations as Graduate Student Government, Career Lab, and the Office of International Programs.

The material contained in this handbook focuses on the English Department specifically. It is assumed that graduate students will familiarize themselves with The University of Akron Bulletin: Graduate Edition, the Graduate Assistant Program Handbook, and the International Student Handbook. Copies of these manuals can be obtained online (at <https://www.uakron.edu/graduate/>) or from the Graduate School Office (Leigh Hall 515). They provide current, detailed information about fee schedules, admission and registration procedures, and other university policies relevant to graduate students.

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# THE GRADUATE PROGRAM in English

The English Department offers a **master's program in English** and an **MFA in Creative Writing**, offered jointly with Cleveland State University, Kent State University, and Youngstown State University.

Our programs enroll approximately **80-90 students**, many of whom are nontraditional in their academic, social, and cultural backgrounds. Most graduate courses in English meet once or twice weekly in the **late afternoon or evening**, and on Saturday, for scheduling convenience and efficiency. **Online options are also available.**

Since UA offers no degree in English beyond the master's level, more attention is devoted to it than in some universities where the doctorate is the terminal degree. Faculty are accessible, and **graduate assistants** participate in the governance of the English Department by electing a representative to attend faculty meetings.

Students can submit written work for **literary and creative writing prizes** every spring and apply for various **English scholarships**. The Department hosts the student group Society of Akron Graduate English Scholars (SAGES), runs a journal of creative writing for students, and sponsors an open mic night featuring poetry and fiction readings by students.



Akron's graduate journal of creative writing is called *Rubbertop Review*.

Find out more about the NEOMFA program at its official website, <https://neomfa.org/>.

## M.A. Admissions Requirements

To be accepted into the **M.A. program**, the English Department requires that applicants have a B.A. in English, a minor in English, or other suitable course preparation. To qualify for full admission, a student must meet the Graduate School requirement of a minimum overall GPA of 2.75 for four years or 3.0 over the last two years.

Complete [the online application](#) through the Graduate School. Applicants must request that official transcripts of undergraduate and, if applicable, graduate work, be sent to the Graduate School. A nonrefundable application fee is also required. Applications should be received at least six weeks prior to registration, which may occur in the fall, spring, or summer terms.

To qualify for provisional admission, the Graduate School requires a minimum overall GPA of 2.5 over four years or 2.75 over the last two years. A student whose GPA falls below 2.75 or who lacks the B.A. in English may be granted deferred admission and given post-baccalaureate status, which is a probationary category.

## NEOMFA Admission Requirements

Applicants to the **NEOMFA in Creative Writing** must be accepted by the Graduate School at The University of Akron or one of the other three participating universities. They must also submit three letters of recommendation, transcripts, and a writing portfolio. The portfolio will be reviewed by an admissions committee of members from all four universities. Applicants using The University of Akron as a “gateway” school for the MFA must additionally satisfy the requirements for the M.A. program listed above.

For those students admitted to the NEOMFA program, up to nine credits from previously uncompleted graduate degrees may be accepted for transfer credit. Of the nine elective credits, up to six may be from Advisor-approved courses not solely restricted to graduates.

# International Student Admissions

In addition to the requirements for admission stated above, students whose native language is not English must meet the following requirements:

- 1) Take the TOEFL exam (Test of English as a Foreign Language), score at least 580 on it, and have the score sent directly to the English Department by the Educational Testing Service (photocopies of scores are not acceptable).
- 2) Take the TSE exam (Test of Spoken English), score at least 240 on it, and have the score reported to the English Department as explained in step 1).
- 3) Submit a 250- to 500-word description of English courses taken at the college level, making certain that the description refers to the authors covered in the courses and to the subject matter of those courses.
- 4) Submit an additional writing sample, if requested.



# FINANCIAL AID

## assistantships & scholarships

### Graduate Assistantships

Graduate assistantships in the Department of English are currently available only to students applying for the MFA and are awarded on a competitive basis. Applications for fall appointments will be accepted until February 1. MFA students may renew twice, for a total of three years of support.

Along with [the application form](#) and letter of application, applicants for assistantships must submit a clean copy of a writing sample in the form of a typed essay completed in a college course (5-10 pages) and [two letters of recommendation](#). Scores from the Graduate Record Examination are not required. Please email all materials directly to the Graduate Coordinator, Dr. Hillary Nunn, at [nunn@uakron.edu](mailto:nunn@uakron.edu).

The letter of application should address:

- 1) **why** you are interested in the position
- 2) **what** prepares you for the position given your work history and academic preparation, and
- 3) **how** your experiences and interests would contribute to the program's academic atmosphere.

Graduate assistants must enroll as full time graduate students (9 credit hours per semester). They may not be employed outside the university for more than 8 hours per week. Assistantships pay for tuition and most fees as well as a nine-month stipend of **\$8755**.

Most of our graduate assistants are teaching assistants and are required to attend a one-week pre-term orientation, take a teaching practicum, and teach one section of composition per semester.

### Scholarships

First-year tuition scholarships may also be available. Also, the Bauer Scholarship Fund provides financial aid in the form of a substantial, renewable yearly grant to one or more outstanding graduate students. For more information, contact the Graduate Coordinator, Dr. Hillary Nunn at [nunn@uakron.edu](mailto:nunn@uakron.edu).

### Other Financial Aid Issues

All such questions can be answered by the Financial Aid Office at (800) 621-3847 or (330) 972-7032. The Financial Aid office email is [finaid@uakron.edu](mailto:finaid@uakron.edu).

# TRANSFER CREDIT

Students transferring to The University of Akron from accredited colleges or universities may receive graduate credit for courses in which an A or a B was awarded (a grade of B- is not transferable), provided that the credits were earned within the six-year limit of studies for the M.A. and the M.F.A. in English.

No more than one-third of the credits required for the M.A. in English may be transferred to The University of Akron. A maximum of 9 credits from a previously uncompleted degree can be applied to the NEOMFA. Students will have six years from the date of their earliest transferred credit to complete all coursework for both the M.A. and NEOMFA.

Transfer credits will not be posted on the student's academic record until at least 12 credits have been earned at The University of Akron and a grade point average of 3.0 or better has been attained. Students must have prior approval from the Graduate Coordinator in order to transfer credits from another institution or another department within the university.

# DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

## M.A. in English (330000MAT)

The MA in English provides students with a strong practical and theoretical grounding as they prepare to move forward into careers, professional schools, or further graduate study at the Ph.D. level. Students will learn advanced methods for deeper study of literatures written in English, the fundamentals of Composition as a discipline, and practical writing skills through courses in professional and rhetorical writing.

Courses will place texts within wider cultural and multicultural debates. Through assigned writings, students will articulate informed viewpoints on real-world issues and practice various forms of professional and critical writing, learning to interpret texts in contexts ranging from academic debate to the contemporary classroom to a variety of professional settings.

In addition to the graduate application and official transcripts, applicants to the M.A. must submit a statement of purpose to The Department of English by email to the graduate coordinator, Hillary Nunn, at [nunn@uakron.edu](mailto:nunn@uakron.edu).

A minimum of **30 credits** is required.

**Core classes** for all MA Students consist of the following 18 credits at the 600 level:

- 3300:611 Argumentation and Research Writing
- 3300:673 Theories of Composition
- 3300:665 Literary Criticism

**OR**

3300:690 Critical Approaches to Literature

- One additional 600-level literature course
- 3300:689 Grant Writing

**OR**

3300:689: Professional Writing Theory and Practice

- Capstone (3 credit hours):  
3300:699 Thesis

**OR**

3300:698 Individual Reading in English/Portfolio

*In this option, students complete a Portfolio based on the revision and presentation of 3-6 course artifacts, at least one of which is an academic paper.*

Students must take 12 additional credit hours in English, selecting from classes listed in the Course Bulletin that are offered at either the 500 or 600-level.

**Graduation Requirement:** Candidates for graduation must see the Department of English Graduate Coordinator to complete the departmental Graduate Student Survey.

# Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing (NEOMFA) (330007MFA)

The University of Akron, Cleveland State University, Kent State University, and Youngstown State University offer jointly the MFA in Creative Writing. This degree provides students with opportunities to develop their skills in writing fiction, poetry, drama, and creative nonfiction. The MFA is the terminal degree. Through extensive practice in workshops and craft and theory courses, students will develop their creative writing abilities while also studying literature and completing a relevant internship.

Students must be accepted by the Graduate School at The University of Akron or one of the other three participating universities. Applicants must also submit three letters of recommendation, transcripts, and a writing portfolio. The portfolio will be reviewed by an admissions committee of members from all four universities. Applications must be submitted by **January 15**.

The deadline for all assistantships in the Department of English is **February 1**.

A total of **48 credit hours** is required for the MFA in Creative Writing.

Students must complete the following courses among the participating universities:

Writing Workshops	15 credits
Craft and Theory Courses	9 credits
Literature Courses	6 credits
Internship	3 credits
Thesis	6 credits
Electives	9 credits

Up to nine credits from previously uncompleted graduate degrees may be accepted for transfer credit in the NEOMFA program.

Questions should be directed to Professor David Giffels, Olin 349, [dg36@uakron.edu](mailto:dg36@uakron.edu).

More information is available at [www.uakron.edu/neomfa](http://www.uakron.edu/neomfa).

## ▶ GRADE REQUIREMENTS FOR GRADUATE DEGREES

Students are expected to maintain a **3.0 average**, which is the minimum average required for graduation. Failure to maintain a 3.0 will cause the student to be placed on probation and may result in dismissal from the program.

# GRADUATE CERTIFICATES

## Teaching English as a Second Language (330003GC)

Dr. Wei Zhang, Coordinator - [wz23@uakron.edu](mailto:wz23@uakron.edu)

This program is intended for both native and non-native speakers of English who seek training in the teaching of English as a second language (ESL) and wish to obtain an initial qualification to teach ESL/EFL (English as a foreign language) in educational settings other than public schools in Ohio and other states or in countries outside the United States. For Ohio qualification in teaching ESL in the Ohio public school system, see the TESOL Endorsement requirements in the School of Education.

The program is designed to introduce students to the central issues in the theory and practice of teaching English to non-native speakers through courses in modern and applied linguistics, in second language pedagogy and in related disciplines. Students who do not have English as a native language must demonstrate adequate proficiency in English with a valid TOEFL score of at least 550 (paper-based), 213 (computer-based), or 79 (internet-based) or a valid IELTS score of 6.5 or higher.

The awarding of this certificate is not contingent upon completion of a degree program. A minimum grade point average of 3.0 is required. Graduate students must apply for the certificate program through the Graduate School. All students who wish to pursue the TESL certificate should meet with the program coordinator to discuss the program and availability of courses. The certificate requires the completion of a minimum of 15 credit hours of course work, including 4 core courses and 1 elective course.

### Core Requirements (Min. Credits: 12)

- 3300:566 Linguistics and Language Arts
- 3300:573 Theoretical Foundations and Principles of ESL\*
- 3300:578 Grammatical Structures of English
- 3300:577 Sociolinguistics **OR**
- 3300:570 History of the English Language

### Electives\*\* (Min. Credits: 3)

- 3300:570 History of English Language
- 3300:577 Sociolinguistics
- 3300:587 Field Experience: Teaching Second Language Learners
- 5500:541 Teaching Language Literacy to Second Language Learners
- 5500:543 Techniques of Teaching English as a Second Language
- 5500:566 Scaffolding Language and Content for English Learners
- 7700:530 Aspects of Normal Language Development

\*Students should have successfully completed 3300:371 or 3300:566 prior to taking this course.

\*\*Choice to be decided in consultation with the program coordinator.

# Composition (330002GC)

Dr. Lance Svehla, Coordinator - [lms3@uakron.edu](mailto:lms3@uakron.edu)

To be eligible for the certificate in composition, a person must be admitted to the University as a graduate student (with either full or provisional status). An eligible person interested in the program should contact the certificate coordinator.

## Required Courses

3300:673 Theories of Composition

3300:674 Research Methodologies in Composition

### **OR**

3300:676 Theory and Teaching of Basic Composition

## Electives\* (9 credits from the following list chosen with the certificate director)

3300:600 Teaching Coll Comp Practicum

3300:625 Autobiographical Writing

3300:650 New Rhetorics

3300:651 The Pragmatists

3300:660 Cultural Studies

3300:670 Modern Linguistics

3300:679 Scholarly Writing

3300:574 African American English

3300:577 Sociolinguistics

3300:578 Grammatical Structures of English

\*Other courses may be considered in consultation with the director.

All students who wish to pursue a certificate program must apply for admission to the certificate program through Graduate School regardless of whether they are current graduate students. More information can be found at the [Graduate School Website certificate page](#).

Once the coursework for the certificate has been completed, students should apply for graduation in MyAkron.

# Literature (330010GC)

Dr. Hillary Nunn, Coordinator - [nunn@uakron.edu](mailto:nunn@uakron.edu)

To be eligible for the graduate certificate in literature, a person must be admitted to the University as a graduate student (with either full or provisional status). An eligible person interested in the program should contact the Certificate Coordinator.

Of the five required courses (15 credits), two must be core courses, Chaucer and Shakespearean Drama; four of the five courses must be at the 600-level; and one must be in American literature.

## Core Courses

3300:506 Chaucer\*

3300:615 Shakespearean Drama

\*unless the student has passed a comparable course with a grade of B or better.

All students who wish to pursue a certificate program must apply for admission to the certificate program through the Graduate School regardless of whether they are current graduate students.

More information can be found at the [Graduate School Website](#).

# ADVISING

Students are assigned an academic advisor, normally the Graduate Coordinator, and students are expected to consult with the advisor before registration for each semester. The department, in cooperation with the Buchtel College of Arts and Sciences Career Lab, also offers career and job-search advising and information.

# THE GRADUATE FACULTY

The graduate faculty has a strong commitment to both research and teaching.

The members of the graduate faculty have published many books (critical studies, textbooks, short story and poetry collections, and bibliographies) in addition to scholarly articles and reviews. Faculty routinely present papers at scholarly and professional meetings.

Our department is involved in professional journals: graduate faculty members serve as editors and consultants for The University of Akron Press, and for a variety of publications. Faculty members have also won numerous grants.

Three times the Alumni Association's Outstanding Teacher award has gone to a member of our department.

# Graduate Faculty Members

**Alan Ambrisco**, professor (Ph.D., Indiana): Chaucer, old and middle English literature, early English drama, travel literature.

**Philathia Bolton**, associate professor (Ph.D., Purdue University): African-American Literature, 20th Century American Literature, black women writers, Toni Morrison, critical race theory, civil rights and black power discourses.

**Heather Braun**, associate professor (Ph.D., Boston College): Victorian literature, British romanticism, the gothic, gender studies, women writers, adolescent literature.

**Mary Biddinger**, professor (MFA, Bowling Green State University; Ph.D., The University of Illinois at Chicago): poetry and hybrid prose writing, modern and contemporary poetry, multicultural and world literature, contemporary poetics, the novel.

**Patrick Chura**, professor (Ph.D., St. Louis University): the American novel, African-American literature, Hawthorne, new historicist criticism, leftist literature and strike fiction.

**Julie Drew**, professor (Ph.D., South Florida): composition theory and practice, cultural studies, especially intersections with rhetoric and composition, literacy theory, film studies/criticism.

**David Giffels**, professor (M.A., Akron): creative nonfiction, journalism as literature, modern American nonfiction, pop criticism (music, book, and film reviews), modern memoir.

**Jon Miller**, professor (Ph.D., University of Iowa): American literature 1774-1931, literary history, alcohol/temperance history, American political history and literature, Whitman.

**Hillary Nunn**, professor (Ph.D., Michigan State): Shakespeare, Renaissance dramatists, early modern theater, Renaissance scientific discourse, early modern poetry.

**Lance Svehla**, associate professor (Ph.D., New Hampshire): composition and rhetorical theory, history and pedagogy, postmodern theory/cultural studies, literary studies, especially politics of literacy, modern drama, especially American.

**William Thelin**, professor (Ph.D., Indiana University of Pennsylvania): composition studies.

**Wei Zhang**, associate professor (Ph.D., Purdue): second language phonological acquisition, speech perception, and acoustic phonetics.

# Contact Us

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