THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
BOSTON UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE HANDBOOK
2011-2012

WILLIAM C. CARROLL, CHAIR
ROB CHODAT, ASSOCIATE CHAIR
LAURA KOROBKIN, DIRECTOR OF GRADUATE STUDIES
MAURICE LEE, DIRECTOR OF GRADUATE ADMISSIONS
THE GRADUATE PROGRAM IN ENGLISH

The Graduate Program in English and American Literature at Boston University provides comprehensive training in all areas of English studies. The English Department offers programs leading to the Master of Arts and the Doctor of Philosophy degrees. Course work is offered in historical periods, individual authors, important literary movements, literary theory and the history of criticism, and philology and linguistics. All students develop a broad competence in all literary periods while moving to a more specialized knowledge of a single area or topic.

The faculty in the Department of English is large and diverse in its teaching and research interests, but the Graduate Program is nonetheless relatively small and intimate. About twelve students enter the M.A. program each year, and about six students enter the Ph.D. program. Graduate seminars usually have seven to fifteen students. Individually designed tutorials are frequently offered for doctoral students.

MASTER OF ARTS PROGRAM

The M.A. degree is ordinarily completed in one academic year. The requirements include:

- Eight graduate-level courses (full time load = four courses per semester). Of these eight semester-courses, at least six must be 700-level graduate seminars, and up to two may be 500- or 600-level courses primarily offered to undergraduates.

- Demonstration of a reading knowledge of one foreign language at an intermediate level. This can be done in one of the following ways: 1) scoring a minimum 530 on the SAT II test; 2) passing a translation test for a language not offered by the SAT II (the language must be approved by the Director of Graduate Studies); 3) passing a noncredit graduate reading course in an appropriate foreign language (such courses are currently numbered 621); or 4) receiving a B or better in a graduate level literature course taught in a foreign language (4 credits, numbered 500 or higher; one of these courses can count toward the eight courses required for the degree). Note that courses taken for credit cannot be taken as a fifth course in any semester. The foreign language requirement may also be satisfied by receiving at least a B in a graduate-level course in Old English (Old English courses count toward the eight courses required for the degree).

Selection of Courses

Eight semester-courses are required for the degree, of which not more than four may be taken in one semester. Of the eight semester courses, at least six are elected from courses
numbered 700 or higher. Candidates for the degree in English and American Literature are required to take at least one course that focuses primarily on critical theory, critical method, or the history of criticism (courses that fulfill this requirement are so identified in their course descriptions). All courses are chosen in consultation with the candidate's adviser. Candidates must demonstrate by their proposed program of courses, together with their completed undergraduate degree program of courses, a reasonably comprehensive coverage of English literature from the Middle Ages through the nineteenth century and of American literature. Candidates are not permitted to take Directed Study courses as part of their M.A. program.

Course Credit in Related Fields

As part of the total program of eight semester-courses required for the degree, candidates may, with the adviser's written approval, elect a single one-semester course at the graduate level outside the English Department in a related area.

Academic Standards

To be awarded the M.A. degree, the candidate must maintain a grade point average of 3.0 in both semesters. The Department reserves the right to discontinue at any time the registration of students whose work or progress is judged unsatisfactory.

Financial Aid/Fellowships

For M.A. students who secure funding, financial aid is generally of two types: a departmental fellowship providing full tuition plus duty-free stipend, or in very rare cases, a departmental teaching fellowship. There are also some highly competitive Graduate School fellowships; students may be nominated for them by the Department, and cannot apply directly.

Residence Requirement

M.A. students must be in residence during the academic year.

Further Information

For more information pertaining to M.A. students, see “General Policies for All Graduate Students” (below).

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY PROGRAM

In the Ph.D. program, students move toward specialization in a particular area of English studies. Students ordinarily complete the Ph.D. in five years past the M.A., combining their study with Teaching Fellowships and a possible duty-free dissertation fellowship. The requirements include:
- A successful review by the Graduate Committee upon completion of the M.A. (This only applies to students receiving their M.A. from the Boston University English department after January, 2012)

- Eight graduate-level courses beyond the M.A.

- Demonstration of a reading knowledge of one foreign language at an advanced level (may be the same language used for the M.A.) or two foreign languages at an intermediate level (one of which may have been completed as part of the M.A. degree). Advanced knowledge is demonstrated by scoring a minimum of 650 on the SAT II test. Intermediate knowledge can be demonstrated in one of the following ways: 1) scoring a minimum 530 on the SAT II test; 2) passing a translation test for a language not offered by the SAT II (the language must be approved by the Director of Graduate Studies); 3) passing a noncredit graduate reading course in an appropriate foreign language (such courses are currently numbered 621); or 4) receiving a B or better in a graduate level literature course taught in a foreign language (4 credits, numbered 500 or higher; one of these courses can count toward the eight courses required for the degree). Note that courses taken for credit cannot be taken as a fifth course in any semester. The foreign language requirement may also be satisfied by receiving at least a B in a graduate-level course in Old English (Old English courses count toward the eight courses required for the degree).

- Two 2-credit pedagogy courses (these do not count toward the degree)

- Completion of a Qualifying Oral Examination, usually within a year of the completion of course work

- Submission and approval of a Dissertation Prospectus

- Completion and defense of a Ph.D. dissertation

**Ideal Progress to Degree**

An ideal calendar of the Ph.D. program might look like this:

**Year 0:** M.A. year.

**Year 1:** Course work and study toward the completion of the language requirement.

**Year 2:** Completion of course work and language requirement. In the spring of Year 2, an examination area is defined, the Comprehensive Examination committee formed, and a reading list drawn up.
Year 3:  Fall: Qualifying Oral Examination.  
        Spring: Prospectus submitted.  

Years 4-5:  Dissertation.  

Financial Aid/Fellowships  

All students officially entering the Ph.D. program after January, 2012 will receive  
Teaching Fellowships that cover the full cost of tuition and basic health insurance, and  
also pay a living stipend ($18,800 for 2010/11; expected to increase modestly each year).  
Teaching Fellows are required to teach one course each semester, under faculty  
supervision.  We expect that advanced Ph.D. students making good progress to degree  
will also qualify for one semester of stipend aid without teaching responsibilities while  
writing the dissertation; however, such support is not guaranteed.  Teaching Fellowships  
are renewed for five total years if the student is making good progress to degree, and may  
be renewed for a sixth year if desired.  In special cases, advanced Ph.D. students may  
receive duty-free fellowships to cover the cost of tuition (also known as a Continuing  
Student Fee).  For more information on fellowships and prizes, see the “Financial Aid”  
section of the departmental website (under the “Graduate” menu).  

Teaching  

Boston University graduates entering the job market benefit from having substantial  
teaching experience, including self-designed courses in both literature and composition  
for which they have served as the official instructor.  New Teaching Fellows sometimes  
assist faculty in large lecture courses by leading discussion sections, grading, and giving  
guest lectures.  Over the course of a five-year Teaching Fellowship, Ph.D. students  
design and teach their own introductory literature courses for non-majors and design and  
teach topic-based courses in the Boston University Writing Program.  Advanced doctoral  
students may occasionally teach other courses as well.  Each semester, every Teaching  
Fellow is assigned a faculty supervisor who meets with the student and visits the class,  
offering feedback and advice on such matters as syllabus design, course materials,  
teaching techniques, and grading.  In preparation for teaching in the Writing Program,  
students take two one-semester preparatory courses with the Program’s Director; these  
courses are 2-credits each and do not count toward the degree.  Students teaching in the  
Writing Program also receive supervision while teaching.  

First-Year Review  

M.A. students provisionally accepted into the Ph.D. program officially enter the Ph.D.  
program after completing the requirements for the M.A. and being successfully reviewed  
and recommended by the Graduate Committee.  Reviews typically take place within a  
month of the student’s completion of the M.A. and are meant to ensure that students have  
performed well enough to enter into the Ph.D. program.  The department expects that  
students provisionally accepted into the Ph.D. program will be successfully reviewed, but  
reserves the right to deny entrance to the Ph.D. if in the committee’s judgment the student
should not continue. Assuming all M.A. requirements are fulfilled, students who do not pass the First-Year Review will leave the program with an M.A.

**Selection of Courses**

Eight semester-courses beyond the M.A. degree are required for the Ph.D. degree, of which not more than four may be taken in one semester. Of the eight semester-courses, at least six must be elected from courses numbered 700 or higher. Doctoral students must take at least one course that focuses primarily on critical theory, critical method, or the history of criticism (courses that fulfill this requirement are so identified in the course description). This requirement is considered satisfied if such a course was included in the student's M.A. degree program. Course work for the doctoral program (taking into consideration courses taken for the M.A.) must include at least one course in each of the following periods or areas (since specific courses do not always fit neatly into these categories, consultation with the faculty adviser is essential):

1. Medieval literature or history of the language/linguistics
2. British literature 1485-1660
3. British literature 1660-1832
4. British literature 1832-1900
5. American literature to 1900
6. Literature in English 1900 to the present

All doctoral students are expected to take EN 698 and EN 699 (supervised teaching of English language and literature) if they hold a Teaching Fellowship.

**Directed Study**

Ph.D. candidates may elect to take one Directed Study course as part of the degree program; a rationale and a reading list signed by both the student and the faculty member who agrees to direct the project should be submitted to the Director of Graduate Studies for approval.

**Course Credit in Related Fields**

As part of their total program of eight semester-courses required for the Ph.D. degree, doctoral students may, with their adviser's approval, elect two semester-courses at the graduate level in related areas. A literature course elected to fulfill the Foreign Language Requirement (see above) may be counted as a related course.

**Transfer of Credit**

No transfer of credit for graduate work completed prior to admission to the Ph.D. degree program in English and American Literature is granted toward the eight semester-courses required for the Ph.D.
Qualifying Oral Examination

To be admitted to doctoral candidacy, the student must pass a Qualifying Oral Examination in a major area of literary study defined by the student in consultation with the adviser. The area chosen for examination is normally related to the student's anticipated dissertation topic.

Guidelines for Qualifying Oral Examinations:

1) Timing. The examination may not be taken if any other program requirement remains to be fulfilled—e.g., course requirements, an incomplete grade, or the foreign language requirement. The examination should be taken in the semester following completion of Ph.D. course work.

2) Committee. To form an examination committee, the following steps are suggested: The faculty adviser should be consulted about the nature of the examination and possible faculty examiners. The student should then identify two faculty members who will agree to serve as primary examiners (there is no requirement that these faculty be prospective dissertation advisers; the faculty adviser can serve as a primary examiner). A preliminary reading list should be drawn up in consultation with the primary examiners. The student should then file the Qualifying Oral Examination form (available from the Department office) with the Director of Graduate Studies. This form, bearing the signatures of the primary examiners, asks the student to suggest other faculty appropriate to serve on the committee. The remaining two members of the examination committee will be selected by the Director of Graduate Studies. The two secondary examiners may at this time make further suggestions to the proposed reading list. When all have agreed on the final reading list, it will be submitted to the Director of Graduate Studies for approval. Please note that the two secondary advisers need not be specialists in the particular area under examination; for some areas it will not be possible to gather four specialists because of the pattern of leaves and sabbaticals. Diversity of fields among the examining faculty is both normal and desirable.

3) Reading List. The examination should be an intense exploration of a concentrated area of study. The examination should therefore demonstrate thorough mastery of the texts and criticism of the area, subject, and/or question under examination. The definition of "coverage" will be the responsibility of the two primary examiners. Several issues can be thought of as elements in the formation of the reading list: What should one know if the area of interest is defined as problem or question X? What should one know before writing a dissertation on X? More pragmatically, what should one know before embarking on a professional career as a scholar and teacher of X? Students need not have clearly defined dissertation topics in mind at the point of the examination. Students are not required to write a dissertation in the area of the examination, although the examination often bears directly on the dissertation.

Dissertation and Final Oral Examination
Students are encouraged to identify a dissertation subject while studying for the qualifying oral examination. The dissertation itself must be written under the supervision of two readers (listed as “first” and “second” readers). Shortly after the successful completion of the qualifying examination, a prospectus for the dissertation should be submitted to the Director of Graduate Studies for evaluation by the Graduate Committee and the Chair (forms will be available from the Department office). The prospectus should be developed in consultation with the first and second readers, and may not exceed twenty double-spaced pages (excluding bibliography). Prospectuses that exceed this limit will be returned without review for condensing. Before giving its approval to the prospectus and forwarding it to the Chair, the Graduate Committee often asks for revisions of the version initially submitted to it. Please note that the readers or the Graduate Committee may determine during the prospectus stage that the student is not ready to write a dissertation and should proceed no further. Failure to gain departmental approval for the prospectus by the end of the fourth year of the Ph.D. program can result in loss of departmental financial support. As part of completing and submitting the dissertation, the candidate provides an abstract approved by the readers for review and approval by the Director of Graduate Studies and the Chair.

After the abstract is approved and the dissertation written, the candidate participates in the final oral examination, which is based principally on the dissertation and related problems in the area of the candidate's specialization. The final oral examination provides candidates an opportunity to demonstrate their ability to discuss clearly, objectively, and critically the methods and conclusions of the dissertation, as well as their knowledge of related materials. It can also be an occasion that explores directions the candidate could pursue in refining or extending the dissertation's argument. The final oral examination committee includes the first reader, the second reader, and three additional members selected in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies.

**Graduate Placement**

The Department of English assumes responsibility for assisting its graduates in finding suitable academic employment. One member of the faculty serves each year as Director of Graduate Placement to advise all students seeking employment, including holding workshops on how to conduct a successful job search, reviewing all sample letters, abstracts, and c.v.’s, and setting up mock interviews. The University’s Placement Service assembles dossiers of letters for a nominal fee. The Department of English normally provides some travel support to the MLA convention for students who are interviewing. Since the Graduate Program in English at Boston University is relatively small in size, close personal attention can be given to each job applicant. Recent graduates have been very successful in securing tenure-track jobs, post-doctoral fellowships, and short-term positions. A list of recent graduate placements be found on the Department’s website under the “Graduate” menu.

**Departmental Support**
The Committee on Graduate Studies believes that the Ph.D. degree—including courses, the qualifying oral examination, and the dissertation—should be completed in five years of study beyond the M.A., if the candidate is serving as a Teaching Fellow. The normal period of Departmental support is five years of financial aid, but aid may be available to sixth-year students as well.

**Academic Standards**

The academic standing of each graduate student is reviewed regularly. The Department reserves the right to discontinue at any time the registration of students whose work or progress is judged unsatisfactory.

**Leave of Absence**

A doctoral student may take up to two one-semester Leaves of Absence (LOA's) at any time during his/her doctoral program; they may be taken either separately or consecutively. A LOA is taken by filling out a single-page form available in the Graduate School. Although the form asks that a reason for the LOA be specified, this request is purely for informational purposes. LOA's are never turned down by the Graduate School. If a doctoral student needs to take more than a total of two semesters off, then the only recourse is officially to withdraw from the program; after a period of two years (or more), the student may apply for re-admission to the program. The re-application process consists only of filing the cover sheet of the GRS application. Any of these actions should, of course, be thoroughly discussed with your adviser and the Director of Graduate Studies.

There are potential drawbacks in taking a LOA: (1) you may lose medical coverage; always check with GRS. (2) You may have to start repaying student loans; check the details of your loans. (3) You will have reduced library privileges—borrowing time of 3 weeks; however, students have been able to retain their study carrels. (4) You will not be able officially to fulfill any degree requirement, such as orals, language, and so forth. For instance, if the Department submits the GRS form saying you have passed a language exam, the Graduate School will not register it, since you would not be an enrolled student; as a way around this, we simply hold such forms until you are re-registered, and then send them in. (5) You cannot take a LOA when you are very close to finishing and defending your dissertation, because the Graduate School requires that a student be officially registered in the two consecutive semesters prior to receiving the degree. So, for a May degree, you must be registered fall and spring of that year. (6) Your TF (if you are still eligible) may not be guaranteed upon your return; check with the Director of Graduate Studies.

The main reason for taking a LOA: You do not have to pay the Continuing Student Fee for that semester. (When you have a Teaching Fellowship, of course, your Continuing Student Fee is covered.)
Further Information

For more information pertaining to Ph.D. students, see “General Policies for All Graduate Students” (below).

GENERAL POLICIES FOR ALL GRADUATE STUDENTS

Advising

All incoming graduate students are assigned a faculty adviser who meets with them during the registration period just before classes begin, as part of the department’s Orientation Program. As their specific interests develop, students may choose a faculty adviser who works in their specific field.

Transfer of Credit

Normally, no transfer of credit for graduate work completed prior to admission to the M.A. degree program is granted toward fulfillment of the eight courses required for the degree.

Cross Registration

Boston University is part of a cross-registration consortium of local graduate programs, along with Boston College, Brandeis University, and Tufts University. Students may cross-register for graduate-level courses at any of these institutions as part of their Boston University program. See the Director of Graduate Studies for more details.

Petitions

Because individual situations vary, students should understand that petitions for exemption or alteration of a particular requirement can be submitted for consideration. The Department cannot overrule Graduate School requirements, however. A letter to the Director of Graduate Studies is sufficient for a petition.

Evaluation of Graduate Students

In the Graduate School, passing grades for graduate students range from A to B minus. Grades below B minus are considered failing grades. A graduate student who earns less than a B minus in two semester-courses of a degree program is automatically placed on probation; the student may be removed from probation by earning a minimum of a straight B average in the following semester. The student who remains on probation more than one semester may be asked to withdraw from the degree program. Financial aid depends on continuing superior performance in courses and in the student's teaching responsibilities.
Within the department, grading standards of course differ from professor to professor, though generally speaking A’s are awarded for excellent work, A-’s indicate good or adequate work, and grades below that are reserved for subpar work.

**Incomplete**

Students are advised to avoid Incomplete grades if at all possible; completing work in a timely manner is not only a sign of professional competence, but students often find that trying to finish an Incomplete from one semester during the next term is impossible. Also note:

1. No Incomplete will be given unless the student has made prior arrangements with the instructor, including the setting of a definite time by which the Incomplete grade will be made up. The student must also notify the adviser and the Director of Graduate Studies about the Incomplete and must specify the arrangements for its removal from the record. Under no circumstances can an Incomplete remain on the record for over one year.

2. M.A. candidates may receive no more than two Incompletes in all. Ph.D. candidates may receive no more than two Incompletes during their doctoral program.

3. Teaching fellows or holders of other Graduate School awards will not be reappointed if they have outstanding Incompletes.

**Student Mailboxes**

All graduate students have mailboxes in the fourth floor mailroom. Notices of all departmental functions and policies are distributed through these mailboxes or by email. Students should check their department mailboxes and email regularly.

**Computer Accounts**

All graduate students have student accounts (without charge) for word processing on the University’s mainframe computer; additional memory space is available upon request. Graduate students may also use the word processing facilities available in the English Department. All graduate students may open (without charge) an email/internet account. Access is available from home or from various points around the campus (including computers throughout the English Department). Students should check their university email regularly.