



RICE
Unconventional Wisdom

Department of English

Graduate Program in English
2017-2018 Graduate Handbook

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1. General Information

The **Graduate Program in English at Rice University** is supervised by the Department of English Graduate Committee, which consists of at least five faculty members appointed by the departmental chair, as well as two student representatives elected by the graduate students.

Graduate study at Rice University consists of course work, a Preliminary Examination, advanced research, the writing of a thesis, and practical training in teaching at the university level. The program is a doctoral program only. Students receive an automatic Master's degree after they have achieved Ph.D. candidacy. Students withdrawing from the program before that point may qualify for a terminal Master's degree.

All students entering the program begin with the first-year curriculum, regardless of degrees they have earned outside Rice.

2. Program Outline

Students entering the program will generally have before them two full years of coursework, will take their preliminary exams and selected courses in their third year, and will spend the fourth and fifth years writing their dissertations.

In addition, students are required to provide service to the department as part of their program: in their first year, entering students will serve twice as research assistants to departmental faculty; in their second year, they will serve twice as teaching assistants for departmental courses; in their fourth year, students will teach a section of an introductory departmental course. Teaching requirements are subject to change in the case of university-wide teaching and funding initiatives.

Year of Study	Program Requirements
Year 1	Three courses and a research assistantship per semester
Year 2	Three courses and a teaching assistantship per semester
Year 3	ENGL 605 (Professional Writing), ENGL 510 (Pedagogy), and preliminary exams
Year 4	Dissertation prospectus and candidacy (by December) and independent teaching (one semester)
Year 5+	Dissertation work

3. Advising

The graduate program is administered by the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) who chairs the departmental Graduate Committee. Program support is the responsibilities of the School of Humanities Graduate Program Administrator (englgrad@rice.edu). Student governance is operated through the Graduate Student Representatives, who are annually elected by the graduate students.

At the beginning of the first year, each student is assigned a Program Advisory Committee (PAC) by the Graduate Committee. The student and the PAC are responsible for preparing an initial individualized plan of study based on the student's needs and training. In most cases this plan will specify courses to be taken and establish a schedule for meeting requirements and deadlines within the university and the department (see "The Preliminary Examination" and "The Dissertation Prospectus," below). Both the PAC and student should keep records of the student's progress toward completion of the plan by using a tracking sheet to be kept in the student's file. After the first year and before preparation for the Preliminary Exam in the third year, the student must find a faculty advisor with whom s/he plans to work on the Preliminary Exam and dissertation. Until the student has submitted a form with the names of Preliminary Committee members, the PAC will serve as the advisory body. The student may make changes to the PAC membership at any time by filling out a new PAC form that requires the signature of new PAC members.

Students are responsible for completing the various phases of the graduate program within the prescribed time limitations.

4. Coursework

Students should always consult with their PAC before enrolling in courses each semester. Ph.D. candidates must successfully complete a minimum of 13 graduate courses of which at least 10 must be graduate seminars. With the approval of their PAC, students may enroll in ENGL 621, Directed Reading, either as a traditional directed reading course or as a 400 -level English course to which a graduate component has been added. Enrollment in ENGL 621 may count toward the 13 required graduate courses but not toward the 10 graduate seminars.

The 13 required courses must include ENGL 600 and ENGL 610, "Introduction to Literary Study," ENGL 605, "Third-Year Writing Workshop," and ENGL 510, "Pedagogy." Of the remaining nine, two must focus on literature before 1800, and two after 1800. Ordinarily, students will take 3 courses each semester of the first year, and a reduced course load for the second. Students should begin to study for the Preliminary Exam in the third year, when they will also take ENGL 605, "Third-Year Writing Workshop," designed to help transform seminar papers into works of publishable quality. Students are also encouraged to take graduate courses in other departments related to their areas of interest. These will count toward the thirteen-course requirement but not usually for distribution.

5. Evaluation Procedures

At the end of each semester, all faculty will write an evaluation for each first- and second-year student whom they have taught or supervised as a TA or RA. These evaluations will become part of the student's permanent file and will be available to the student about whom they are written.

At the beginning of year two and year three in the program, all second- and third-year students will meet with a small subcommittee from the Graduate Committee, including the DGS, to discuss their progress in the program. This discussion will include a review of all end-of-semester evaluations by faculty teachers and supervisors from the previous year.

Students in their third and fourth years are evaluated through the preliminary exam and the achievement of candidacy respectively.

Students who have achieved candidacy receive a written evaluation from their dissertation advisors each semester.

6. Grading & Academic Standing

The grade of (A+) indicates truly distinguished work; (A) indicates outstanding work; (A-) consistently very good work; (B+) good work; (B), work that, however competent, lacks originality or promise; and (B-), unsatisfactory work which falls short of acceptable graduate standards. At all times students are expected to make reasonable progress toward the completion of their degree. Students must maintain an overall grade average of B+ in order to graduate. A student will not receive course credit for a grade below a B-.

A graduate student will be placed on “academic probation” and a warning letter will be sent to the student if, during any semester, the student (1) fails to earn a grade of B+ in courses taken to satisfy requirements for the Ph.D., or (2) fails to maintain a B+ overall GPA. A second semester of probationary status will lead to dismissal by the Office of Graduate Studies unless a plea for exception is presented by the student's department and approved by the Dean of Graduate Studies. A student may be dismissed by departmental action after only one semester of performance at the probationary level.

Students who have achieved candidacy receive a grade of “S” or “U” from their dissertation advisors each semester. Effective Spring 2012, a grade of “U” will result in the student being placed on probation. A grade of “U” for a second, successive, semester will result in dismissal from the program.

7. Mentored Teaching Program

The Mentored Teaching Program is designed to provide support and resources for graduate student teaching at all stages of the program. Students move from teaching under direct faculty supervision to designing and teaching independent classes. Discussions on pedagogy are integrated into the curriculum at key moments.

While the department requires that students teach only one independent course, students can take advantage of competitive teaching opportunities inside and outside the department (extradepartmental opportunities are described highlighted in the chart that follows). By the time of graduation, most students will have served as the instructor of record for 3-4 courses.

Year 1

Students serve as Research Assistants (RAs) to faculty both semesters. Research assistantships are governed by the department's RA Rights and Responsibilities policy (see Appendices). Issues on the place of pedagogy in the university are addressed in English 600 and 610.

Students are eligible to serve as tutors in the Program in Writing and Communication (PWC). This is independent of the English department, although they employ many of our students. The PWC trains all of its tutors, TAs, and instructors (see below).

Year 2

Students serve as Teaching Assistants (TAs) for undergrad courses (one each semester). Teaching assistantships are governed by the department's TA Rights and Responsibilities policy (see Appendices), which frames the TA experience as a learning experience for the student, and not, primarily as a grader for the faculty. TA supervisors are required to fill out an evaluation at the end of the semester; this goes into the student file and becomes part of the decision-making process about future competitive teaching opportunities. We also ask for special TA evaluations from the students. After a review of the evaluations, the graduate committee can require more supervised (TA) experience before the student can move on to independent teaching.

Students are eligible to TA for the PWC first-year seminar (FWIS) courses. Students, regardless of field of interest, may also apply to serve as Diana Hobby Editorial Fellows for the SEL (Studies in English Literature 1500-1900).

Year 3

In preparation for independent teaching, students enroll in the department's three credit-hour course, ENGL 510, "Pedagogy."

Students are eligible to TA for the PWC first-year seminar (FWIS) courses. Students, regardless of field of interest, may also apply to serve as Diana Hobby Editorial Fellows for the SEL (Studies in English Literature 1500-1900).

Year 4

Students teach an independent departmental course, usually ENGL 175, "Global Literatures in English." Students have also taught "Literature and Medicine" and "Introduction to American Literature," for example. A Faculty Teaching Mentor visits classes, provides feedback, and takes notes for a possible future teaching letter.

Students are eligible to TA for the PWC first-year seminar (FWIS) courses. Students, regardless of field of interest, may also apply to serve as Diana Hobby Editorial Fellows for the SEL (Studies in English Literature 1500-1900).

Year 5

No department teaching or research obligations. Depending on availability, the department may offer competitive co-teaching or replacement teaching opportunities.

Students are eligible to teach independent first-year seminar (FWIS) courses for the PWC. These are topical communication-intensive seminars; students and faculty propose courses in the spring for the following year. The PWC provides required training for graduate students in the form of a week-long late summer workshop.

Students can also apply for teaching opportunities through the Humanities Research Center (HRC).

Students may be invited to compete for replacement teaching opportunities, should the occasion arise.

Students/faculty pairs might also be able to propose (usually unpaid) co-teaching opportunities. Both the replacement and co-teaching selection is the responsibility of the Graduate Committee.

Year 6 (Beyond Departmental Funding Package)

No department teaching or research obligations. Depending on availability, the department may offer competitive co-teaching or replacement teaching opportunities.

Students are eligible to teach independent first-year seminar (FWIS) courses for the PWC. These are topical communication-intensive seminars; students and faculty propose courses in the spring for the following year. The PWC provides required training for graduate students in the form of a week-long late summer workshop.

Students can also apply for teaching opportunities through the Humanities Research Center (HRC).

The PWC also offers competitive postdoctoral fellowships for those who their degrees by the end of the spring semester.

TEACHING ASSISTANT SELECTION

Teaching assistants are assigned by the DGS through a process of matching student and faculty requests. While every effort will be made to match students and teachers according to their preferences, teaching assistants will be assigned to specific courses according to the following guidelines:

- 200-level courses will be privileged over 300-level courses.
- 300-level courses will be privileged over 400-level courses.
- Large (40-person) courses will be privileged over smaller ones, and, if possible, one TA will be assigned per 20 students over the minimum of 40.

While it can be valuable for a student to assist in a course in his/her field of specialization this cannot always be arranged, and students are encouraged to apply for assistantships outside their fields. Teaching assistants must register for six hours of ENGL 601 or ENGL 602, "Teaching Practicum." These experiences are assigned course numbers so they can appear on students' transcripts; ENGL 601 and ENGL 602 do not count towards the 13-course requirement.

8. Prizes & Awards

Every year the department is asked to nominate one or more students for university-wide prizes or awards. It is the responsibility of the Graduate Committee to solicit nominations from the department faculty as a whole, to decide among the various nominees, and to provide for the timely presentation of application materials. Students should be prepared to respond to requests for materials by maintaining an up-to-date vita at all times, and (for advanced students) by having ready a one-page description of the thesis topic. The vita will also be useful in helping the department in compiling its annual list of Honors and Awards for graduation.

9. The Preliminary Examination

All students will devote the Spring semester of Year 3 to the qualifying examination process, which must be completed by the final day of the Rice examination period for that semester. Students will compile two reading lists—one devoted to a field/period, and one devoted to a critical or theoretical approach that will frame the specific mode of critical intervention in the field. Each list will be accompanied by a “qualifying paper” of about 15-20 pages that responds to questions or prompts from the committee.

Once the reading lists and the qualifying papers are approved by the committee, the student may proceed to the final stage of the examination process—an oral examination of 2-3 hours on material covered in the readings lists and qualifying papers. The student successfully completes the qualifying examination requirement when the committee deems that all elements of the examination process—reading lists, qualifying papers, and oral examination—have been completed satisfactorily. The committee may decide to award a student either a “Pass” or “Pass with Distinction”.

Students who are unable to complete the examination process successfully by the end of Spring semester of Year 3 are required to repeat the process and complete it successfully by the end of Fall semester of Year 4.

10. The Dissertation Prospectus

By the end of the first week of the Fall semester of Year 4, students are required to submit a brief dissertation prospectus of 5-10 pages (1250-1500 words, excluding bibliography and footnotes) for approval by their committee. The prospectus succinctly defines the topic of the dissertation, the particular thesis that the dissertation hopes to develop about that topic, the relevance and importance of the dissertation's thesis to debates and discussions in the student's chosen field, and the methods and approaches to be pursued in the dissertation. The prospectus should also include a one-page bibliography.

The prospectus and a satisfactory draft of a chapter (which need not be the dissertation's first chapter) must be approved by the student's committee by the end of Fall semester of Year 4 (regardless of when the student completes the examination process) for the student to advance to candidacy.

When the prospectus and chapter are completed, the department thesis director(s) and second reader should signify approval by signing copies of the prospectus and signing a form indicating that the chapter has been approved. The student will send the signed copies of the prospectus (but not the chapter) to the Graduate Administrator for circulation among the Graduate Committee members. The Graduate Committee may approve the initial submission or ask that the prospectus be revised and resubmitted. Candidacy is achieved when the prospectus is approved and appropriate forms are filed with the Office of Graduate Studies. Students must be admitted to candidacy by the end of their fourth year or they will not be eligible for fifth-year funding.

11. The Dissertation

The dissertation should demonstrate a capacity for independent work of high quality in either scholarship, critical interpretation, or critical theory. Although it may be a monograph rather than a full-length book, it should be the beginning of a major work of criticism or scholarship. The student should be able to complete the research and writing of a dissertation within twelve months. The dissertation must essentially be finished by mid-March of the year in which the student intends to graduate, so that revision, the oral exam, and final proofing can be finished in time to award the degree. The dissertation will be written in consultation with a dissertation committee consisting of the director, and second reader from within the department, and at least one outside reader from another department at Rice.

12. Procedures for Problem Resolution

Problems or conflicts may arise during a student's graduate education. Students should take responsibility for informing the appropriate faculty of any such problem. All parties involved should work together amicably with the goal of resolving the problem informally if possible. If appropriate, a student may petition to replace the thesis advisor or a member of the dissertation committee. When attempts to resolve a problem informally do not meet with success, the following grievance procedure should be adopted.

- a) The student should submit the grievance in writing to the departmental chair, who will then attempt to resolve the problem.
- b) If the student remains unsatisfied, the problem should be presented to a departmental committee for resolution. This committee should be a standing committee and not the student's own review or dissertation committee. In the English Department, the Graduate Committee is the appropriate standing committee. Both the student and the Chair should submit a written record of their views to this committee.
- c) If the student remains unsatisfied, the problem should be referred to a standing subcommittee designated by Graduate Council and composed of three faculty members (representing diverse disciplines within the University), and one graduate student. A written report of proceedings should be presented to the Chair of Graduate Council, for forwarding to the sub-committee, together with all other written materials generated during the investigation. The decision of this sub-committee will be considered final.

In situations where a faculty member who is actively involved in a student problem has a designated role in this grievance procedure, that role will be transferred to a suitable senior faculty member. This substitute should be chosen by the department chair, if appropriate, or by the divisional dean if the chair must recuse him/herself. The substitute should be acceptable to all parties immediately involved in the dispute. Additional information may be found at http://ga.rice.edu/GR_disputes/.

13. Department Contacts and Student Resources

Department Contacts	
Dina Galley, Graduate Program Administrator Tel: 713-348-2078 / dina.galley@rice.edu / Rayzor 110 / Herring 116	
Helena Michie, Director of Graduate Studies Tel: 713-348-2823 / michie@rice.edu / Herring 316	
Linda Evans, Department Administrator Tel: 713-348-4846 / lre1@rice.edu / Herring 227	
Rosemary Hennessy, Department Chair Tel: 713-348-2666 / rh4@rice.edu / Herring 331 (Chair's Office: Herring 226)	
Rice University English Department Tel: 713-348-4840 / Fax: 713-348-5991 / Herring 225 / www.english.rice.edu	
Student Resources	
Rice University General Announcements – Graduate Students	https://ga.rice.edu/GR_students/
Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies – Current Students	https://gps.rice.edu/current-students
Student Health Services	https://health.rice.edu/
Rice Wellbeing & Counseling Center	https://wellbeing.rice.edu/rice-counseling-center
Office of Sexual Violence Prevention & Title IX Support	https://safe.rice.edu

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14. Appendices

A) RESEARCH ASSISTANTS: RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The purpose of the guidelines is to ensure that Research Assistants (RAs) are neither overworked nor underutilized and that the RA experience will be productive for both the faculty member and the student. As the first component of the department's Mentored Teaching Program, the first-year research assistantship is designed to familiarize students with research skills that will be useful for their further work. While RAs are assigned, in part, to help the faculty member with ongoing projects, faculty should also actively mentor students, sharing with them wherever possible the methods and assumptions behind the task they are asked to do. RA hours are limited (see below); if a faculty member requires more assistance, s/he can use research or personal funds to hire an advanced student for the purpose. All logistical inquiries about graduate student payment should be addressed to the Graduate Administrator (GA).

SELECTION

During the summer preceding matriculation, incoming students will be matched with faculty. The Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) or GA will send an email asking faculty if they need an RA for the Fall semester. They will be asked to indicate the nature of the project(s) they have in mind for the RA, as well as the timeframe for the advancement or completion of the work. The DGS and GA will then match students with faculty for that semester. The process will be repeated for the Spring semester. While faculty can ask that they continue with the same RA for two semesters, normally students will be assigned to another faculty member.

WORKLOAD

RAs should be asked to devote, on the average, no more than five hours per week, and they should only work up to the end of the 10th week of the semester. Faculty members should try to distribute the work evenly over the the-week period. RAs should under no circumstances be underutilized for weeks and then suddenly asked to do several weeks' worth of work at once. RAs may be asked to do library research, copy editing, fact-checking, or bibliographic work. Although it is appropriate to ask an RA to do some photocopying, this and other clerical tasks should be kept to a minimum.

EVALUATION

The faculty supervisor is required to send a written report (evaluation letter) on the RA's work to the Graduate Committee at the end of each semester. This report forms part of the material the Graduate Committee reviews to evaluate each student's progress in the program.

B) TEACHING ASSISTANTS: RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The purpose of this document is to ensure that teaching assistants (TAs) are neither overworked nor underutilized. Teaching assistantships are required of all second-year students during the second year of the department's Mentored Teaching Program through which students become exposed in a structured way to the pedagogical skills they will need to succeed as scholar/teachers. In some cases, the teaching assistantship will be the student's first exposure to classroom teaching. Because assistantships are primarily a learning experience for the student, TAs cannot be used as substitute teachers. If the faculty supervisor will be absent for more than one class session in a given semester (see below), s/he can use research or personal funds to hire an advanced student as a replacement. All logistical inquiries about paid substitutes should be addressed to the Graduate Administrator.

SELECTION

TAs and faculty supervisors are matched through a two-step process. First, faculty are asked by the Graduate Administrator (GA) whether they would like to make their course(s) available to potential assistants. The GA then sends a list of those courses to all eligible graduate students, who rank their preferences. The GA and the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) match students to courses based on these preferences. Students who do not get their first or second choice in the first semester of their TA year will be given preference in the second. TAs will not always get --or ask for-- assistantships directly in their field of study.

PREPARATION

Supervisors should meet with TAs before the semester begins to go over the syllabus and articulate their expectations for the semester. TAs should also be invited to talk about their teaching experiences (if any) and their goals for the teaching assistantship. When possible, TAs should be exposed to the process of syllabus construction. Supervisors should be aware (see above) that they can be matched with a TA who has little or no experience with the field/materials for a given class and to take this into account when assigning teaching responsibilities.

ATTENDANCE/CLASSROOM DYNAMICS

TAs are expected to attend all class meetings and should be formally introduced during the first class session. It is helpful to include the TA's name and office hours on the syllabus. Supervisors should have already discussed with their TAs their expectations regarding participation in class discussion.

CLASSROOM TEACHING

TAs should teach no fewer than one week's worth of classes and no more than two weeks' worth of classes in a given semester. The classes do not have to be sequential. The faculty supervisor should offer specific feedback on all aspects of the teaching experience from the lesson plan forward. The supervisor can be absent during only ONE of the classes taught by the TA and should give at least two weeks of warning of the intended absence (see above).

PAPERS, EXAMS, ETC.

Class enrollments vary, so it is hard to create strict guidelines for the number of papers a teaching assistant should be asked to grade. Under no circumstances should the TA be asked to grade more than half the papers and/or exams for a specific course. We suggest that, when possible, the TA be asked to grade at least some of the papers from two different sets so that s/he will have experience with different kinds of assignments at different times in the semester.

Supervisors should discuss their grading standards and procedures with the TA before the grading begins, and provide feedback afterwards.

Faculty supervisors are ultimately responsible for the grades given in the course, although they should be careful not to undermine the authority of the TA. If a student challenges a grade, that student should be encouraged to meet with the TA before meeting with the supervisor.

The teaching assistant may participate in the construction of exams, paper assignments, etc. Under no circumstances should a TA be used as a clerical assistant.

EVALUATION

At the end of the semester, the supervisor must ensure that departmental TA evaluations, typically given to the TA by the GA, are passed out to the students in the class.

The supervisor must submit a detailed evaluation of the TA's performance to the Graduate Committee for inclusion in the student's dossier. This evaluation will be part of the student's third-year review.