

Studying English at Oxford

Oxford's English Faculty is the largest in Britain, and one of the most illustrious Schools of English in the world. Established in 1894, it has numbered among its members some of the most important critics and scholars in the field, including Julia Briggs, Terry Eagleton, Barbara Everett, Helen Gardner, Hermione Lee, C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, and many others.

Students are taught by an active scholar in their field, many of whom also give lectures to all students in the English Faculty. You will therefore have the opportunity to learn from a wide range of specialist academics.

Studying English at St Anne's

The English school at St Anne's is one of the largest in Oxford. As a visiting student in English at St Anne's, you will have the opportunity to take part in our regular teaching programme for full-time undergraduates, but you will also have the freedom to define and explore your own specific academic interests in collaboration with your tutors.

Our English tutors teach different papers (the rough Oxford equivalent of a course) each term, on a schedule designed to expose full-time undergraduates to all periods of English literature. As a visiting student you will select your Major papers from this schedule. A table of Major topics to choose from is given below. We do not limit access to papers based on seniority – visiting students may take papers regardless of whether they are designed for our first, second, or third-year students.

Teaching takes the form of tutorials and classes. Tutorials are meetings between tutors and students which take place one-to-one or in pairs, and for which you are required to write an essay in advance. Classes are larger group meetings, for which you will usually be required to produce written work such as a position paper or presentation.

Study durations

You can apply to study English as a single or joint subject for any study duration.

| | Ext AY | AY | Fall Term | Hilary and Trinity terms | Studied with other subjects |
|----------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| English | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Classical Archaeology and Ancient History; Asian and Middle Eastern Studies; Classics; History; History of Art; Medical Humanities; Modern Languages; Music; Philosophy; Economics; Law; Politics; Computer Science; Experimental Psychology; Maths |

Read more about the [September course in English Literature](#).

Courses

When you attend St Anne's as a visiting student studying English, your course is divided into **Major** and **Minor** papers. Major papers run the full length of term for eight weeks and consist of eight weekly meetings which may be tutorials or classes. Minor papers run parallel to the Major papers, but usually consist of only four tutorials. In your application you should choose your preferred Major courses from the options below.

MAJOR PAPERS

Each term, your Major will be one of the papers being taught to either our first, second or third-year Honours students. The choice is listed below.

These period papers enable you to examine major figures in English literature within their cultural, literary and political contexts. These papers have no set texts or authors, so there is always flexibility of choice over which authors and texts you work on in any given period. Your tutor will often encourage you to study certain writers or groups of authors who are central to the period in question, but you will also be encouraged to select writers who are of particular interest to you. Period papers can also be used to accommodate a given student's interest in specific generic or theoretical topics. So, for example, a student interested in women's writing or genre theory might well explore this topic within the parameters of a specific period.

In Michaelmas Term the first few weeks of your Major will consist of a general introductory course alongside the first-year undergraduates, after which you will proceed to your chosen Major course.

Michaelmas Term (October–December):

Option A: English Literature 1830-1910

Victorian literature, exploring the work of authors including Charles Dickens, the Brontës. Henry James, George Eliot, Elizabeth Gaskell, Thomas Hardy, Robert Browning, Alfred Tennyson, Oscar Wilde, Gerald Manley Hopkins, Christina Rossetti.

Option B: English Literature 1550-1660

The literature of the English Renaissance through the reigns of Henry VIII, Elizabeth I, James I and Charles I into the English Civil War. Topics for study include the drama of Christopher Marlowe, Thomas Kyd, Ben Jonson, Thomas Middleton, and John Webster, the poetry of Thomas Wyatt, Edmund Spenser, John Donne, George Herbert, John Milton, and the prose of Philip Sidney, Francis Bacon, Michel De Montaigne and Thomas Nashe. Authors studied also include Anne Locke, Elizabeth Carey, Hester Pulter, Elizabeth Brackley and Jane Cavendish, Mary Wroth, Aemilia Lanyer, Jane Anger, Isabella Whitney, and Anna Trapnel. Shakespeare is not covered in this course: an option is devoted to Shakespeare in Trinity Term.

Option C: English Literature 1350-1550

Medieval literature: texts for study in this option include Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and *Troilus and Criseyde*, the poems of the anonymous author of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and the work of William Langland and Thomas Malory, as well as medieval romance, medieval theatre and medieval women's writing. Texts will be studied in the original Middle English, but no prior experience of medieval literature will be necessary.

Option D: Special Author

This option allows you to undertake a detailed study of the work of one author chosen from the entire range of periods covered by the English syllabus. Special Authors must be approved in advance: if you select this option in your application, you must propose the name of the author you would like to study.

Hilary Term (January–March):

Option A: English literature 1660–1760

The literature of the English Restoration, covering the work of authors including John Milton, Andrew Marvell, Jonathan Swift, John Dryden, Daniel Defoe, Aphra Behn, William Wycherley, George Etherege, William Congreve, John Gay, John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester and Alexander Pope.

Option B: English Literature 1350-1550

Medieval literature: texts for study in this option include Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and *Troilus and Criseyde*, the poems of the anonymous author of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and the work of William Langland and Thomas Malory, as well as medieval romance, medieval theatre and medieval women's writing. Texts will be studied in the original Middle English, but no prior experience of medieval

literature will be necessary.

Option C: Special Topic

This option allows you to define your own Major topic in order to undertake detailed and sustained study of a particular area of interest. You will work towards writing an extended essay on your chosen topic, which should involve the study of a range of texts and authors, and should situate your area of investigation in a wider cultural, historical and critical context. As with the Special Author option in Michaelmas Term, if you choose this option you must propose a provisional topic for approval when you submit your application.

Trinity Term (April–June):

Option A: Shakespeare

This option offers the chance to study the full range of Shakespeare's drama and poetry, as well as exploring its historical and cultural contexts, the reception of Shakespeare from his time to the present day, and the continuing life of the plays in performance. There is also the option for students to work on comparing Shakespeare to an author contemporary to him.

Option B: English Literature 1910-present day (Modern Literature)

Modern literature from the beginnings of modernism in the early 20th century to the present, offering the chance to focus on authors including Henry James, D. H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, Ezra Pound, W. B. Yeats, Joseph Conrad, James Joyce, Katherine Mansfield, Henry Green, T. S. Eliot and Samuel Beckett.

Option C: English literature 1760–1830

The literature of the Romantic period. Authors available for study include William Collins, Thomas Gray, Oliver Goldsmith, Henry Fielding, Horace Walpole, Mary Shelley, Laurence Sterne, Henry Mackenzie, William Wordsworth. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Jane Austen, Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley and John Keats.

MINOR PAPERS

Minor papers allow for more flexibility. You may list any topic of your choice as a Minor, providing it can reasonably be covered in four tutorials. Single authors or very well-defined theoretical and comparative themes are the ideal topic choice for Minor papers, and you may wish to use your Minors to supplement your Major period papers with more specialised work on individual authors and/or themes. You may also study creative writing as a Minor. If the topic requested cannot be accommodated by one of our college tutors, the college may source out teaching for Minor papers to specialised tutors in other colleges. Where tutors are not available you may be asked to change some of your Minor options.

Creative Writing as a Minor Paper

St Anne's offers Visiting Students in English the option to pursue creative writing alongside the study of literature. This option gives the opportunity to develop your abilities as a writer through tutorials and workshops emphasizing in-depth focus on each student's work, supported by discussion of craft and technique, the aims of writing, its theoretical frameworks and its practical contexts. Students are encouraged to explore their individual voices, interests and projects, while also expanding their skills in analytical reading and critique and participating in the range of literary activities available at St Anne's and throughout Oxford.

Creative writing can be studied for your Minor paper over one, two or three terms: in other words, you may choose to devote some or all of your Minor options to it. You may choose to work on writing within a particular form such as fiction, poetry or drama: please specify this in your application.

Prospective students for this option need not have studied creative writing before, nor have had any work published, but they should be able to show some evidence of prior activity as a creative writer. If you wish to include creative writing in your study at St Anne's, please include a short sample of work in any genre (e.g. one poem or short story) with your application.

Literature in other languages

Our English school does not offer any courses in non-English literature in translation, whether European or otherwise. Such literature is covered in the original languages by Oxford's Modern Languages schools, and students wishing to take such courses should also apply to study Modern Languages – Comparative Literature, not English. You can also apply to study English and Modern Languages – Comparative Literature jointly.

For a detailed description of the courses offered in the Faculty, please also review the Undergraduate Course Handbooks: <https://oess.web.ox.ac.uk/handbooks>

Pre-requisites

You will need to already be studying English Literature at your home institution and probably have, or are intending to, declare a major or concentration in English Literature. We would expect to see both introductory and intermediate level literature courses on your transcript. You need to have already developed sophisticated reading and writing skills and be prepared to absorb a lot of reading in relatively few weeks.

Studying literature at Oxford involves the development of sophisticated reading skills and of an ability to place literary texts in their wider intellectual and historical contexts. It also requires you to:

- consider the critical processes by which you analyse and judge
- learn about literary form and technique
- evaluate various approaches to literary criticism and theory
- study the development of the English language.

Additional information

Faculty website: <https://www.english.ox.ac.uk/>