

The English M.A. at Rutgers-Newark

THE DEGREE PROGRAM: Rutgers University offers a 30-credit general Master's Degree in English on the Newark campus, an urban yet intimate and leafy environment near downtown easily accessible by public transportation. Our students take six electives in addition to four required courses: Introduction to Graduate Literary Study, two in pre-1800 literatures, and one in American literatures. Those choosing to concentrate in *Women's and Gender Studies* take two interdisciplinary core courses in feminist theory and methods and two designated literature electives in the English Program. (Women in Medieval Literature, Jane Austen, Autobiography and Gender, and Race, Gender, and the Holocaust are three such recent offerings by our strong women's studies faculty.)

COURSE OFFERINGS: We mount a variety of 18-20 courses a year in the literatures of the Americas, Britain, and the English-speaking world as well as literature in translation, including transnational Muslim fiction; postcolonial, feminist, marxist, narrative, and other critical theories; rhetoric and the teaching of writing; editing and publishing; and film studies. Creative writing and literature courses are frequently offered in Summer Session. Generic course descriptions, more information about Program requirements, and the faculty list can be found in the Rutgers-Newark *Graduate School Catalogue*. <<http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~gradnwk/>>. At Pre-Registration time each semester (early November for the upcoming Spring term, early April for Fall), professors' detailed descriptions are available in paper form (along with other Program materials) in a rack outside the English Department office in Hill Hall 504 and electronically on our web site <<http://english-newark.rutgers.edu>>.

Degree students may arrange with a professor for independent study or a course of "advanced readings" tailored to their interests, or choose to do a two-semester Master's Thesis. *Seminars* are small (8-15), allowing for personal attention from professors and lively exchange. Three classes constitute full-time status; given their busy lives and jobs, most students are part-time, registering for one or two courses per term. Each class is held once a week, 5:30 to 8:10, Monday through Thursday, allowing people to attend school after work. Occasionally we schedule a Saturday class.

The front section of the Graduate School-Newark catalogue, which also can be found on the comprehensive University graduate programs site <<http://gradstudy.rutgers.edu>>, answers a myriad of general questions about graduate study here.

WHO WE ARE: Even though most students are part-time and commuters, we form a surprisingly close-knit community of 18 graduate English faculty, with other colleagues who support our work in various ways, and around 60 students, diverse in age, ethnicities, and nationalities, nearly all in the degree program. *Our faculty* are distinguished research scholars and writers who publish regularly, receive national recognition for their work, and love to teach. Two of our Full Professors hold University Chairs; other colleagues both teach and provide administrative direction for other campus units—the M.F.A. Program in Creative Writing, African American Studies, the American Studies M.A. and Ph.D Programs, and the Institute for Ethnicity, Culture, and the Modern Experience. Dr. Jack Lynch, our eighteenth-century specialist, manages a guide to literature web sites

<http://newark.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/Lit>.

The writing and publishing electives are taught by faculty from the Metropolitan area. A distinct advantage of studying here is the prospect of being helped along with recommendation letters, introductions, and publication advice from well-connected professionals.

Our students' statistical profile: In case you're wondering, in a typical semester our degree students are 65% female; about evenly divided between the age groups of 21-34 and 35-44, with six to eight older students. In 2004, 50 identified themselves on their applications as Caucasian, 10 as Black, 3 as "Other Hispanic," 4 as Asian, the rest unidentified. The 17 self-identifying as members of ethnic minorities accounted for 19.8% of total enrollment in 03-04. 90% of our degree students were living in New Jersey, with some having recently moved here; nine were from out of state. Every year we are pleased to welcome several international students—at present, from Turkey and France. The Rutgers-Newark campus is the most diverse in the nation.

Students' vocational plans and interests: The fact that our students come here with a variety of agendas makes for an interesting mix in the classroom, and for reasons we can't claim to understand completely, diversity really 'works' in our Program. Those planning on *doctoral study* choose courses that ground them in literary theory and find Rutgers–Newark a superior place for conducting serious research, given the resources of the University's many libraries, including the Dana and Rutgers Law Libraries on our campus, networked with hundreds of others nationwide.

Some of our graduates find *college teaching* work without the Ph.D.; a few find it even before they receive the M.A. A strong presence among us are seasoned, beginning, or aspiring *high school teachers*, who come to deepen literary learning, to enhance their options in the school system, or to enjoy intellectual exchange among peers. People with a general English M.A. like ours can take the NTE test and on graduation qualify for public school positions. National demographic trends and rising educational needs in New Jersey are giving the English Master's Program at Newark a critical role in professional training for the state.

We also have students who are pivoting for career changes; working journalists and professionals in other media fields who are hungry for literary study; late bloomers ready for something new; and the recently unemployed who've decided to return to school. Students who take our occasional writing electives enjoy advancing their creative talents while studying literature on the graduate level. We do admit people who weren't college English majors or are working in fields such as business, computer science, public relations, or law, but have been reading literature extensively on their own. Introduction to Graduate Literary Study helps all students make the transition with instruction and practice in the latest scholarly research methods and literary theories.

Applicants continually surprise us by the diversity of their *outside interests and experiences*. Among us are people who have traveled the world and studied abroad, teachers, editors, and journalists, seasoned corporate managers, music-makers from classical to jazz and blues guitar, athletes, mountaineers, and surfers, community volunteers and political activists, First Responders, craftspeople, actors and directors, working moms, stay-at-home dads, grandparents, photographers, serious film buffs, and devotees of Soho.

EXPANDED OPTIONS: Some students start out on a *non-matriculated study* basis and may take up to 12 credits this way. Many love it so much they apply to the degree program, with fresh academic writing samples and recommendation letters from our faculty, and upon acceptance find

their completed course work transformed into degree credits. Although most students do their whole course of study here, the R-N Graduate School allows up to 40% of one's degree credits to be transferred on the Director's approval from other graduate institutions—for our Program, that's four courses.

Admission to any Rutgers graduate program allows one to take courses in *other graduate programs* at the University, including New Brunswick's English doctoral program. Rutgers–Camden offers the English M.A. and hosts an exciting writing conference every summer with for-credit workshop options. Complementary graduate courses in such fields as Women's Studies, History, Political Science, Global Affairs, and Music Criticism (in the Master's in Jazz Studies Program) can be approved by the Director to count toward the M.A. in English here.

WORK AND NETWORKS: Although the Graduate School–Newark offers no Teaching Assistantships for academic M.A. programs, some of our students gain excellent experience teaching freshman composition in the college *Writing Program* and at nearby institutions. Many tutor at the *Writing Center*, which serves the Newark day and evening undergraduate colleges as well as other graduate programs. The Center is a great place to meet other grad students, pays well, and offers superb mentoring. One of the many advantages of studying on our campus is that you're in the loop as other *opportunities* for paid work, internships, graduate student conferences, competitions, and publication come along—as they regularly do.

HOW TO APPLY: Fill out the *application form* on the <<http://gradstudy.rutgers.edu>> web site, checking either degree/non-degree and specifying the semester in which you want to begin, Fall/Spring. You may input your *Personal Statement* at that time or later. We also require your *transcripts; GRE scores; three recommendation letters* (sent electronically or on paper), which can come from employers and supervisors, although it's smart to have at least one professor commenting on your preparation for graduate-level study in English and your performance as a student; and a 7-10 page *academic writing sample* showing your abilities in literary criticism and research. Some applicants returning to school after a lapse produce their writing sample in a course taken here for non-degree credit and ask the professor to supply a recommendation. The Graduate School requires the *GRE scores*; how they are considered in the application is largely up to the individual program. Instead of applying a cut-off number, we weigh the candidate's materials holistically. "Old" scores are often acceptable so long as an original report is submitted. All paper items should be mailed to Graduate Admissions, Blumenthal Hall Rm.100, 249 University Ave., Rutgers University, Newark, NJ 07102.

Tips on the Personal Statement: We suggest you write it in a natural manner that tells us something of who you are, what you'd like to study in our program and why, and what experiences you have had that make you a good candidate for admission. (Besides academic research and writing, these might include internships, paid positions, extra-curricular activities, volunteer or community work, travel, and study abroad.) Tell us too where you think your studies might take you after graduation. You may want to communicate your personal flavor by commenting on writers, kinds of literature, or literary theories you value (or don't) and the fields of study under the generous umbrella of "English" that interest you. If there's anything in your academic record that needs explaining, you can do that in the Statement or ask your recommenders to address it. **Send** a resume, too, if you like

HOPE AND A PRAYER DEPT.: The Financial Aid Office supports many of our students with loans and grants (973-353-5151, 5152). Every year several win tuition awards from the Graduate School, on the Program Director's recommendation. Applicants should make clear their need for such an award in the Personal Statement (even if they checked the financial aid box on the application). English M.A. students have also repeatedly won the University's two prestigious stipended fellowships for minority students in the humanities, as well as four-figure awards from Executive Women of New Jersey, an independent organization that encourages M.A. study by women in all fields. Some international students come with Fulbrights.

WHERE WE ARE: The Graduate English Program is located in Hill Hall 529--on the same floor with the English Department, Rutgers University, 360 Martin Luther King Blvd., Newark NJ 07102. The Director, Dr. Janet Larson, can be reached by telephone (973-353-5193), post, or e-mail <engma@andromeda.rutgers.edu> and can set up a personal appointment to discuss your plans.

The Graduate School--Newark, in Hill Hall 401, one floor below the English Department, can be reached at 973-353-5834.

A *campus map*, with public transport, driving, and parking information, is posted at <www.rutgers.edu> (click on Newark). Call Admissions (973-353-5205 x 20, 25) if you'd like to arrange a *campus tour*; do ask to see the whole of Dana Library, with its unparalleled Jazz Institute collection on the fourth floor.