

UMBC ENGLISH DEPARTMENT HONORS PROGRAM

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

ELIGIBILITY AND ENTRANCE

Candidates for admission to the English Honors Program will normally apply during the fall or spring semester of their Junior year. Candidates for admission in the **Literature or Communication and Technology Track** must submit to the Director of the Honors Program **two essays, along with a current transcript** (which need not be official) and an **Honors Program Application** (attached to this program description). The essays must be college-level work, written on subjects appropriate to the candidate's Track, preferably involving a research component. Candidates who wish to concentrate in **creative writing** must submit **one critical essay and a significant amount of creative work**. Consult with your advisor or instructor before you submit your work.

Honors Program applications are accepted in either semester of the junior year (although consideration will be given to earlier applications under special circumstances and after consultation with the Director). They will be evaluated by the Honors Program Committee, which consists of the Honors Program Director and two members of the faculty.

The admissions essay(s) **must meet a standard of "A" work**. This means that written work of Honors Program quality will be accurate and thorough, well and gracefully written, and free from serious mechanical or grammatical errors. It must rise above mere correctness or completeness to achieve unusual perceptiveness or insight and maturity of thought and expression. Creative work of Honors Program quality must show exceptional promise as measured against the best Honors Program work to date.

NOTE: The Honors Program Committee reserves the right to modify the above policy so as to accommodate the late-bloomer, the student changing to English from another major, and other promising students whose academic circumstances are in some way outstanding. For example, students who have met the Department's eligibility standards by the beginning of their Senior year may petition for admission to the Departmental Honors Program. This petition will be adjudicated by the Honors Program Committee. Students so admitted will be allowed to graduate with Honors in English upon satisfactory completion of all senior year Honors requirements.

In general, however, we will insist on the requirements described above, considering that the English Honors Program is designed for students whose serious interest in literature will normally have been demonstrated in written work by the time they come to apply. **A GPA of 3.5 in the major and 3.0 in non-major courses** will normally be required, though students deficient here may be accepted into the program on strong faculty recommendation. Normally, students will receive written notification of their acceptance into the Program late in the spring semester.

Honors candidates and regular majors alike will fulfill the same English Major requirements. No extra Honors work will be required in the standard English Major courses.

Students are encouraged to discuss their research interests with the Honors Program Director before being admitted to the Program, so that the Director, in consultation with the Honors Committee, can recommend appropriate faculty advisors. Even at this early stage students should be prepared to discuss a list of topics, authors, works, genres, or periods from which a suitable Senior Honors Project might be developed.

STAGES OF THE PROGRAM

Requirements

1. ENGL 399: During fall semester of the Senior year, Honors candidates will work closely with their advisors and produce a prospectus and annotated bibliography. Registration for ENGL 399 requires permission from the Director of the English Honors Program. The course will receive two Honors credits. It can be added to the student's courses during early registration at the end of the spring semester or in the fall. Enrollment in this course constitutes formal admission into the English Honors Program.

ENGL 399 requires the writing of a prospectus and an annotated bibliography under the direction of a thesis advisor whom the student will choose in consultation with the Honors Program Director. Students will meet at least five times each semester with advisors; each meeting will be accounted for on a sign-off sheet which the adviser will sign and date. At the end of the semester students will receive a grade for the course only if the Honors Director receives a graded prospectus and bibliography *accompanied by the completed sign-off sheet*. All Honors students will also be required to attend three seminars in which English department faculty will discuss aspects of their research and methodology. These seminars are mandatory.

2. ENGL 499: In the spring semester of the Senior year, each candidate will enroll in ENGL 499, the Senior Honors Project (worth four Honors credits) in order to carry out and complete the Senior Honors Project. This project is a continuation of the work begun in 399. The completion of the Honors thesis will enable students to pursue an inquiry of special interest, and to gain valuable experience in planning and executing a major project, historical, critical, or creative in nature. With the exception of creative writing projects (see supplementary information on creative writing below), all matters pertaining to the subject, scope, purpose, methodology, and length of the Senior Honors Project will be determined by the individual candidate and his or her Honors Thesis Advisor.

ENGL 499 requires the writing of a 25-50 page research paper, or, if students are working in creative writing, a creative work accompanied by a critical essay. In addition to the research paper, students are required to participate in an oral examination (lasting approximately one hour). During the oral exam, a three-person committee, composed by the student in consultation with his or her Thesis Advisor, pose questions first on the research paper and then on a list of 20-25 works.

Sample orals' lists are available from the Honors Director. The Advisor will determine the final grade for 499 based on the research paper and the oral examination, in consultation with the two faculty members. All three committee members will have an equal vote. As in 399, students will receive a grade for the course only if the Honors Director receives the Advisor's final grade accompanied by a completed sign-off sheet demonstrating that the student and the Thesis Advisor have met *at least five times* during the semester. A grade on the Honors Project of B-minus or higher is required for successful completion of the Honors Program.

Note: a) The Senior Honors Project (ENGL 499) may be counted only as an English elective.

b) A record of English Honors appears only on the student's transcript, not on the UMBC diploma.

REQUIREMENTS FOR GRADUATION IN ENGLISH WITH HONORS

1. Satisfactory performance (with a cumulative GPA of 3.5 or above) in English courses totaling not less than 39 credits, of which six will be Honors credits;
2. satisfactory completion of **ENGL 399**, Introduction to Honors Project (two Honors credits);
3. satisfactory completion of **ENGL 499**, Senior Honors Project (four Honors credits);
4. finally, the passing of an **Honors Oral Examination**. The Honors Oral Examination will normally take place during the first two weeks of May for those graduating in spring semester. Three copies of the finished Honors Project must be submitted to the student's Honors Thesis Advisor by May 1. At this time, the candidate must also submit a list of 20-25 titles on which he or she wishes to be examined; these works should represent a balanced selection of both literary genres and historical periods. The Honors Oral Examination will normally consist of two parts: (1) questions regarding the content and methodology of the Honors Project, and (2) questions testing the candidate's ability to analyze and interpret the works on the oral exam list. To pass the Oral Examination, the candidate must demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the Honors Project and a detailed knowledge of the literary works on the oral exam list.

THE HONORS PROGRAM IN CREATIVE WRITING

1. English Honors candidates specializing in creative writing must complete **ENGL 399** and **499** as described above. But for creative writing students both ENGL 399 and ENGL 499 take special forms. The creative writing student will use ENGL 399 to begin creative work or continue creative work already under way, to choose an Honors Thesis Advisor from among those members of the Literature and Writing faculty who teach creative writing, and to choose an author on whom to write the critical and interpretive essay for ENGL 499.
2. For **creative writing students** ENGL 499 has a tripartite structure consisting of: (1) a critical essay, (2) a body of creative work, and (3) a self-analysis or self-evaluation. The critical essay is designed to give the creative writing student an opportunity to come to terms with the work of an author whom the student finds important as a model or influence on his or her own work; it will

normally be between 15 and 25 pages. The amount or length of the student's creative work will vary according to genre: 15 to 25 pages of poetry, 40-60 or more pages of prose fiction, one or two one-act plays, or a substantial portion of a full-length play—these estimates give a rough indication of minimum standards. The self-evaluation is of no prescribed length and should focus on the creative work done for the Senior Honors Project.

NOTE: The three tasks collected under the rubric of ENGL 499 (the Creative Writing Project) will normally take more than one semester to complete. A typical calendar for a creative writing project would have the critical essay due late in the fall semester of the senior year, with the body of creative work and the self-analysis due by May 1 of the following semester. Creative writing thesis advisors will work out individual calendars for each advisee, but students are strongly encouraged to get to work early on the critical essay so as to have time enough for their creative work and self-evaluation.

NB: If students plan on December graduation, they must complete 399 in the previous spring semester and 499 in the fall.