

# FAQ's for Prospective English Majors

- **WHAT IS ENGLISH?**

English is the study of imaginative texts in English (but not necessarily of English origin) and the history of their production. The study of English is devoted to appreciating and critiquing thought and art, but equally to developing important skills, such as close reading, critical analysis, and cogent, forceful writing. Through reading novels, plays, poems, watching films, and discussing these texts in their classes, English majors deepen their attentiveness to language, culture, and history.

- **WHAT IS LITERATURE AND THE LAW, AND HOW DOES THE CONCENTRATION WORK?**

At John Jay, Literature and the Law is a unique set of courses designed to help students think about law from a literary viewpoint. All students in the English major will take the course LIT 305, *Foundations of Literature and Law*, which introduces them to the basic questions that Literature and Law can ask of each other, such as “How does a story become fact?” or “What should we do when the law conflicts with morality?” Once a student has taken this course, s/he can decide either to concentrate in Literature and the Law, or to concentrate in Literature. The Literature and the Law concentration requires a student to take (A) four electives, three of which are designated as Literature and Law electives, and (B) the senior seminar in Literature and the Law. The Literature concentration requires a student take (A) any four electives, and (B) the senior seminar in Literature.

- **WHAT CAN I DO WITH A B.A. IN ENGLISH?**

The short answer: anything. A degree in English is universally applicable to virtually any profession because it helps you develop as a writer, a thinker, a communicator; these skills, as any recruiter will tell you, are highly desirable in any job. Our own research shows us that English majors thrive in many of the professions seen as desirable by John Jay students: lawyers, judges, police officers, public policy specialists, crime reporters, FBI agents, etc. While an English degree may open doors to these professions, it won't limit you to them. English majors run their own businesses, are communications experts, work in the publishing industry, write technical manuals... you name it, an English major has done it.

- **HOW DO I BECOME AN ENGLISH MAJOR?**

You need to declare yourself an English major by completing the Declaration of Major form provided by the Registrar and One Stop. If you are a sophomore with 45-60 credits completed, you will automatically be asked to declare or re-declare your major before registering again. This form is available on the One Stop website here:

<http://johnjay.jjay.cuny.edu/os/formsapplications.asp>.

If you are not a sophomore, you can fill out the Declaration of Major form found on the Registrar's website here: <http://johnjay.jjay.cuny.edu/registrar/registrar/forms.htm>.

- **HOW DO I BECOME AN ENGLISH MAJOR?** (continued)

Once you have decided you want to become an English major, you must let the Major Advisor, Professor Allison Pease, know ([apease@jjay.cuny.edu](mailto:apease@jjay.cuny.edu) / (212) 237-8565). She can help you get started with the major, and, importantly, she will assign you to your own English Faculty advisor, who can help assure your progress through the major.

- **CAN ANYONE BE AN ENGLISH MAJOR?**

The first thing to know is that there are 36 credits in the major (that means 12 courses) and these courses should ideally be spread out over 5-6 semesters. If you are further along in your studies, this does not mean you can't make the switch, but you need to be prepared to take many English courses at the same time, something that will require a lot of reading. In addition, all English majors, like the rest of John Jay undergraduates, must maintain a 2.0 GPA.

- **I AM A TRANSFER STUDENT: CAN I STILL BE A MAJOR?**

Yes you can, but this will require working closely with your English Faculty advisor to be sure you can complete the major requirements in a condensed period of time.

- **WHAT ARE THE PREREQUISITES TO THE MAJOR?**

Before taking LIT 260, *Introduction to Literary Studies*, the major's gateway course, you need to have completed ENG 201 and one of the General Education Literature courses (i.e. LIT 230, 231, 232, or 233).

- **IS THERE AN ORDER IN WHICH I HAVE TO TAKE COURSES IN THE MAJOR?**

If you look at the major checklist, you will see that we have listed the courses in the order we think it is best for students to take. Some courses have prerequisites that ensure you have completed certain courses before moving on to the next. However, we want to be sure students have the opportunity to take all the courses they need, when they can. Therefore, if you need to take an elective before completing LIT 300 *Text and Context* and LIT 305 *Foundations of Literature and Law* because it fits your schedule or you find the topic of particular interest, you can.

- **I DON'T THINK I WANT TO MAJOR IN ENGLISH, BUT I LIKE YOUR COURSES. CAN I MINOR IN ENGLISH?**

Absolutely. To receive a minor in English a student must complete 18 credits in English or Literature with at least 3 credits at or above the 300-level. Students may apply the 6 credits earned in the General Education Literature requirement (LIT 230, LIT 231, LIT 232, LIT 233) toward their 200-level course requirement. Every student must take LIT 260 *Introduction to Literary Study* to earn the minor in English. For advisement about minoring in English, contact the English Minor Advisor, Professor Baz Dreisinger, [bdreisinger@jjay.cuny.edu](mailto:bdreisinger@jjay.cuny.edu).