

**Central Connecticut State University
English Department**



**English
Master of Arts Program
Student Handbook**

Revised June 2022

Master of Arts in English Central Connecticut State University

The Master of Arts Program in English offers students the opportunity to refine and expand both their knowledge of literature written in English and their facility with its criticism. The program offers an introduction to the theory and practice of literary criticism and research as well as coursework that allows students to work with faculty in small classes to investigate the discipline of literary studies and the scope of British and American literature from their beginnings to the present day. In this way, the MA program supports students' pursuit of careers in teaching at the elementary, middle, or secondary school level (or enhances the skills and qualifications of those already teaching); helps prepare students for further advanced study in a doctoral program; and gives them the tools necessary for other careers involving the reading, writing, and analysis of texts.

Students entering the program will choose one of two tracks: our traditional Literary Studies Track and our Online-Hybrid Track for Teachers. Entering students are also assigned an adviser with whom they should meet regularly, and in consultation with whom they develop an individual plan of study that allows them to pursue their interests while assuring that they take courses covering a range of literatures. Students in each track take thirty credits of coursework, including an introduction to literary research, criticism, and theory and at least one seminar in British literature and one in American literature. Students pursuing a degree in our Literary Studies Track will also take a seminar in a literary period and another in poetry and poetics. Students in the Literary Studies Track choose, with departmental approval, one of two capstone options: either to take a five-question comprehensive examination based on an assigned reading list or to write a thesis on a topic of particular interest to the student, developed in consultation with the thesis director. Students in the Hybrid Online Track for Teachers conclude with a special project focused on a text of their choice, developed in consultation with their capstone adviser.

The MA Program offers an average of seven designated graduate classes each year, in addition to several other classes at the 400-level open to graduate students as well. Course topics range broadly, from Middle English to contemporary global literature, Shakespeare to Adichie, romance to cyberpunk, reflecting the diverse interests of the English Department's faculty. Typical approaches include in-depth examinations of individual authors, explorations of established or emergent literary forms, historical treatments of particular periods, and investigations of important critical or theoretical methods. Independent studies and guided readings are also available to allow students to pursue interests not addressed in scheduled courses.

With its diverse, engaged faculty and structured but flexible program, the English Department's two MA tracks offer both full-time and part-time students a thorough, rigorous training in British and American literary studies that allows students to tailor their experience to meet their professional and intellectual needs and interests.

Admission

To qualify for the Master of Arts degree program in English, an applicant must have a baccalaureate degree in English or American literature or a closely related field from an accredited college or university, or 30 hours of appropriate undergraduate course work in the discipline (as approved by departmental review). Additional undergraduate credits will be required of students who lack sufficient preparation in literature. Applicants must have a GPA of at least 3.00 on a four-point scale (i.e., a “B” average) both in English courses and in overall undergraduate and (if applicable) graduate course work. Conditional admission may be offered to students who do not meet all of these requirements. Applicants must also submit the following:

- Graduate Application Form
- Official undergraduate and (if applicable) graduate transcripts from every institution attended except CCSU
- Application fee
- Letter of application detailing reasons for wishing to pursue graduate study in English
- Names and contact information of two academic references
- A writing sample of 10-15 pages showcasing your strongest analytical or critical writing about literature or the teaching of literature. Work written for previous courses is acceptable (indeed encouraged), but “creative” pieces (poetry, fiction, or memoir) and pedagogical essays are not appropriate.

Further information on completing the online application for admission can be found at <https://www.ccsu.edu/englishMA/admissions.html>

No applications will be considered until all materials have been received. The English Graduate Committee reviews applications on an ongoing basis.

Graduate Assistantships

A limited number of Graduate Assistantships are available in the MA program each year. Writing assistantships are typically divided between two students whose duties involve tutoring in the Writing Center. A research assistantship allows students the opportunity to work with researching professors in the department. A teaching assistantship allows students to serve as a tutor for an undergraduate English course. All other Graduate Assistantship and Internship positions are listed on the [Career Development Office Website](#).

Advising

Upon admission to the program, a student is assigned an adviser by the department and is provided with the adviser’s name and contact information in the letter of acceptance. *Students should meet with their advisers as soon as possible, and must do so before registering for courses.* (If the adviser is unavailable to discuss initial course choices over

the summer, the student may meet with the Department Chair or the Director of Graduate Studies in English.) The student-adviser relationship is an important one: advisers will, among other things, help students select an appropriate range of courses to suit the student's capstone and career plans; offer guidance on choosing a capstone experience; and discuss the choice and pursuit of career options.

The Planned Program

Developed in consultation with the adviser, the Planned Program outlines the individualized path that a student will take to complete the MA program by indicating the courses to be taken, the timeline for their completion, and the student's capstone choice. A good Planned Program will allow students to pursue their literary and critical interests while assuring that they also select courses that will familiarize them with a variety of authors, genres, periods, and critical methodologies. The Planned Program must be approved by the adviser and filed with the School of Graduate Studies before the student completes 15 semester-hours of graduate course work. Failure to submit an approved Planned Program may result in additional coursework and delayed graduation, as without one a student may mistakenly take inappropriate or insufficient coursework. Once submitted, a Planned Program may be changed with the approval of the adviser and the Chair of the department.

Courses

Overview: The English Department allows a maximum load of 12 credit hours of course work in a semester but strongly recommends no more than nine hours. In consultation with the adviser, students should undertake a broad range of study in British and American literature, avoiding duplication of previous coursework. All courses counted towards the MA degree must be at the 400 or 500 level, though graduate students may enroll in lower-level courses to satisfy other requirements or their own interest. Most 500-level courses are variable topic courses; topics for the next semester's courses are described online prior to the advising and registration period. Information on course offerings may be available earlier informally through the student's adviser. *The Graduate Faculty strongly recommends that students take as many graduate-only classes as possible (ENG 500, 501, 522, 530, 540, 598) in order to maximize instruction in the skills and topics most appropriate to master's-level study, and that other 400 and 500-level courses be taken to satisfy particular interests rather than for convenience of schedule.*

The MA degree in English is a 30-credit program that may be completed in any of three ways, each of which offers a distinctive capstone choice. Students must have a 3.00 GPA in order to begin the capstone project.

Plan A (Thesis, Literary Studies Track)

ENG 598 Research in English 3 credits
ENG 500 Seminar in American Literature 3 credits
ENG 501 Seminar in British Literature 3 credits

ENG 522 Topics in Literary Prosody 3 credits

ENG 530 Topics in Literary Periods 3 credits

ENG 540 Topics in Literature and Theory 3 credits

ENG 599 Thesis 3 credits

9 credits of electives at the 400 and 500 levels, with no more than 6 credits at the 400 level, as approved by the faculty adviser.

Plan B (Comprehensive Examination, Literary Studies Track)

ENG 598 Research in English 3 credits

ENG 500 Seminar in American Literature 3 credits

ENG 501 Seminar in British Literature 3 credits

ENG 522 Topics in Literary Prosody 3 credits

ENG 530 Topics in Literary Periods 3 credits

ENG 540 Topics in Literature and Theory 3 credits

12 credits of electives at the 400 and 500 levels, with no more than 6 credits at the 400 level, as approved by the faculty adviser.

Plan C (Special Project, Hybrid Program for Teachers)

ENG 509 American Canons and Cultures 3 credits

ENG 510 British Canons and Cultures 3 credits

ENG 511 World Canons and Cultures 3 credits

ENG 598 Research in English 3 credits

ENG 595 Special Project: Critical Case Study 3 credits

15 credits of electives at the 400 and 500 levels, with no more than 6 credits at the 400 level, as approved by the faculty adviser.

Seminars:

English 500 (Seminar in American Literature) and **English 501** (Seminar in British Literature) are **both** required courses for the Literary Studies Track. English 500 is usually offered in the fall, and English 501 in the spring; students should plan their schedules accordingly. Each seminar course may be taken twice, on different topics.

ENG 509 American Canons and Cultures: English 509 is a required course for the Online-Hybrid Track for Teachers, and is offered online during the summer. This course may only be taken once.

ENG 510 British Canons and Cultures: English 510 is a required course for the Online-Hybrid Track for Teachers, and is offered online during the summer. This course may only be taken once.

ENG 511 World Canons and Cultures: English 511 is a required course for the Online-Hybrid Track for Teachers, and is offered online during the summer. This course may only be taken once.

ENG 522 Topics in Literary Prosody: English 522 is a required course for the Literary Studies Track. It is designed to train students to read carefully and to become expert in a poet or poetic tradition. English 522 may be taken twice, on different topics.

ENG 530 Topics in Literary Periods: English 530 is a required course for the Literary Studies Track. It is designed to familiarize students with a particular literary period, and with the concept of literary periodization. English 530 may be taken twice, on different topics.

ENG 540 Topics in Literature and Theory: English 540 is a required course for the Literary Studies Track. To be taken after ENG 598, it offers students in-depth exposure to a particular school or method of literary theory or criticism and teaches them to apply it to a given set of literary texts. English 540 may be taken twice, on different topics.

ENG 548 and ENG 558: English 548 (Advanced Studies in American Literature) and English 558 (Advanced Studies in British Literature) are linked to 400-level Studies in American and British Literature courses; the typical class will thus contain a mixture of undergraduate and graduate students, with graduate students expected to do additional work. Each Advanced Studies course may be taken twice, on different topics, but graduate students who have taken the linked course at the 400-level may not take the course on the same topic at the graduate level.

ENG 598 Research in English: English 598, typically taught every fall, is an intensive introduction to the principles and practice of literary theory and criticism. It is required of all English MA students, and *should be taken as early as possible in the program—in the student's first semester whenever possible*—because of its emphasis on the research procedures and critical approaches expected in all other graduate work.

400-Level Courses: Graduate students may take a maximum of two 400-level courses. Not all 400-level courses in English may be counted towards the MA degree; students should consult this Handbook, the Graduate Catalogue, and/or their adviser to be sure that a course is appropriate. Graduate students enrolled in 400-level courses should identify themselves to the instructor on or before the first day of classes, and will be expected to do additional work.

Independent Studies: Students wishing to pursue an interest not covered in regularly available course work may do so through English 590 (Graduate Tutorial: Individual Guided Reading). Interested students should consult with their advisers and then must seek out a faculty member qualified and willing to direct the tutorial. Independent Study proposals must be approved by the supervising faculty member, the Department Chair, the Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences, and the Dean of Graduate Studies, and that approval will not be given for a project that duplicates the scope of an existing course offered by the English Department. English 590 may be taken twice, on different topics.

Other upper-level undergraduate literature courses that graduate students may take for elective credit include: English 440: Topics in Theory and Literary Study; English 445: American Drama; English 449: Major American Authors; English 450: Chaucer; English 451: Milton; English 452: Medieval English Literature; English 461: Shakespeare: Major Comedies; English 462: Shakespeare: Major Tragedies; English 463: Elizabethan and Jacobean drama; English 464: Restoration And Eighteenth-Century Drama; English 470: The Victorian Novel; English 474: Contemporary American Literature; English 488: Contemporary Literature; English 475: The British Novel To 1832; English 476: The Modern British Novel; English 477: Modern British Poetry; English 478: Modern American Poetry; English 480: Modern Irish Literature; English 486: World Literature and Film; English 487: Twentieth-Century British Drama; English 488 Advanced Studies in World Literature; English 489 Studies in Film Adaptation.

Grades: *Graduate students must maintain a B (3.00) average and may receive no more than two grades of C to remain in good academic standing. Grades of C- may not be counted towards the Planned Program, but nonetheless remain on the transcript and are included in the student's GPA. Students who fall below the standards of good academic standing risk dismissal from the program.*

Incompletes: Grades of Incomplete are allowed at the discretion of the instructor. Students have one year beyond the end of the semester in which an Incomplete is recorded to make up the necessary work, or the grade will become an F.

Transfer Credit: Students entering the English MA program may request to transfer up to nine credits from a graduate program at another university; all transfer requests must be approved by the student's adviser and the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies. Transferred credits must be for courses in which the student received a B (3.00) or higher. Once enrolled in graduate studies at CCSU, students must, with very few exceptions, take courses offered by the English Department.

Time Limit: *Students have six years to complete all requirements for the MA degree, including all coursework and the capstone. This time period includes any transferred credits. Students who due to extenuating circumstances cannot complete the degree within the six-year time limit may request an extension in writing from the student's adviser, which, if approved, will be forwarded to the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies for additional approval. Under no circumstances will a total of more than eight years be allowed for completion of the degree.*

The Comprehensive Examination (Capstone B)

The comprehensive exam is one of the English MA program's three capstone options, the others being the master's thesis and the special project. It is a five-question exam based on a short reading list of primary texts. The exam, administered twice each year, is divided over two days, typically a Friday and Saturday in late March or early April and again in late October or early November. Students answer three questions in four hours on the first day, and two questions in three hours on the second day. Students must have at least a 3.00 GPA at the time they apply to take the exam. Deadlines for applying to take the exam are typically around October 1 for the fall semester and February 15 for the spring semester, but *the decision to take the exam should be made no later than the semester prior to that in which the exam is to be taken. When students decide to take the exam, they should notify the Director of Graduate Studies in English immediately to assure that they receive all relevant communications.*

The Reading List: The texts are drawn from the full historical range of British and American literature, though each historical period may not be represented on every list; in addition, each list contains at least one work of world literature and one important critical or theoretical text. The list, which is different each year, is posted on the department website shortly after the previous exam is given.

Studying for the Exam: *The student's preparation for the exam should begin as soon as the new list is released, and it is strongly recommended that students take no more than one—and preferably no—courses in the semester that they plan to take the exam.* Adequate knowledge of the texts on the list will involve an understanding well beyond the level of plot summary. Students are encouraged to consult with their adviser, the Director of Graduate Studies in English, and faculty specialists in the texts on the reading list, and to respond to practice questions that any of these instructors can provide. In addition to reading the required primary texts, students are encouraged to consult introductions and guides to the authors and texts in question, as well as introductions to general topics useful for the exam like literary terminology, literary theory, periodization, and formal analysis; the names of such texts may be provided as an addendum to the reading list, or may be requested by the student from the instructors mentioned above. Because the exam requires knowledge of a broad historical and generic range of texts, it is strongly advised that students planning to take the exam are particularly careful to choose, in consultation with their advisers, a range of courses designed to familiarize them with a variety of literary periods and genres.

The Questions: The exam consists of five questions based on the texts on the reading list. Students taking the exam answer all five questions; because the texts to be discussed are provided in advance, there is no choice of questions on the exam itself. Questions may be of several sorts, including:

- multiple-text comparison/contrast questions
- questions that require close analysis or explication of a given passage
- historically-oriented questions

- generically or formally-oriented questions
- thematically-oriented questions
- questions that require the application of critical or theoretical concepts
- questions that are combinations of the above

Typically, each exam contains a question requiring the close formal analysis of a poem, and a question requiring the application of the list's critical or theoretical text to one or more of the other texts on the list. In addition to a thorough knowledge of the texts on the reading list, the questions assume no knowledge beyond the basic understanding of literary terminology, literary and cultural history, generic/formal classification, and critical analysis available in the course of a well-considered Planned Program supplemented as needed by consultation with the sorts of introductory texts mentioned above.

Grading: Each question is graded according to the rubric below. To pass the exam, students must *average* 16 points (a B-) on the five questions, achieving a minimum total of 80 points for the entire exam. While this makes it possible narrowly to fail one or more questions and still pass the exam with excellent answers on the other questions, a combination of mediocre and poor answers will not pass. Students who fail the exam must retake it in its entirety.

A	100%	20 Points
A-	95%	19 Points
B+	90%	18 Points
B	85%	17 Points
B-	80%	16 Points
C+	75%	15 Points
C	70%	14 Points
C-	65%	13 Points
D+	60%	12 Points
D	55%	11 Points
D-	50%	10 Points
F	45%-0%	9-0 Points

Sample Instructions: The following is a slightly adapted version of the instructions given to students taking the comprehensive examination.

Instructions: Answer **all three** of the following questions. Your answers should be written in word processing files using Microsoft Word. When you are finished with each one, please save it as a separate file and upload it to the appropriate folder in Blackboard Learn. You have **four hours** to answer the questions; be sure to apportion your time appropriately.

The following guidelines and suggestions articulate your readers' expectations and may help you to formulate your responses:

- Read each question closely, paying particular attention to its structure and its important concepts, and make sure that you understand what it is asking in order to craft an essay that answers it satisfactorily.
- Plan your essay carefully before beginning to write rather than beginning and hoping to discover your argument as you proceed; a good essay will present its thesis and then defend it, rather than offering information about a set of texts and ending with a conclusion drawn from that information.
- Your answers should be in essay form: that is, they should offer a clearly-stated thesis that is defensible but not obvious, and should support that thesis clearly and persuasively with evidence drawn directly from the texts in question.
- A good thesis will not simply repeat or restate the question, but present an original argument based on or engaging with the question's key ideas and terms.
- A good thesis will not simply compare and/or contrast the texts in question but draw conclusions based on those comparisons/contrasts.
- Evidence should be as specific as possible: reference to and analysis of specific lines, speeches, scenes and other discrete textual elements is preferable to generalization; plot summary, while occasionally useful or even necessary, is never in itself sufficient.

MA Thesis (Capstone A)

Students who have had their proposal approved and who have completed a minimum of 15 credits with a GPA of at least 3.0 in the English MA Literary Studies Track may register for 599, “MA Thesis Capstone A.”

The master’s thesis is one of the English MA program’s three capstone options, the other two being the comprehensive exam (Capstone B) and the special project (Capstone C, Online-Hybrid Track for Teachers). Whereas the exam emphasizes historical and generic breadth of knowledge, and the special project provides a literature review and detailed case study of a critical or pedagogical issue, the thesis offers the opportunity for in-depth study of a particular author, text, or idea, or small group thereof. The thesis option is therefore recommended for students who possess an established interest in pursuing such a topic as well as the research, reading, and writing skills to do so. The thesis is especially suitable for students interested in pursuing additional advanced education.

An English Master’s Thesis is typically a work of 50-75 pages, and it usually takes from one to two semesters to complete after the approval of the proposal. Thesis topics should be chosen with these general guidelines in mind and should be neither too broad to be manageable nor too narrow to support sustained research and writing. While a thesis need not be an entirely original contribution to the discipline, it should be more than a compendium of familiar ideas: a thesis should bring the student’s own interests into contact with the current state of the discipline and contribute to an ongoing scholarly discussion.

Theses will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- A thesis should have an appropriate **topic**: one that engages with texts, authors, and issues associated with (or capable of association with) the concerns of the discipline, and one that is neither too broad to be adequately addressed in, nor too narrow to sustain, a project of this scope.
- A thesis should have a clear and consistent **argument**—that is, it should be more than a collation of others’ arguments—and should make clear the relevance and value of that argument for the discipline’s understanding of the texts, authors, or ideas in question.
- A thesis should have a coherent and sufficiently scholarly **methodology**, which may but need not be indebted to or in dialogue with one or more contemporary modes of literary criticism or critical theory. A thesis should make its methodology clear explicitly in a section on method and/or implicitly through clear discussion and consistent application of the methodology and citation of appropriate critical texts in the body of the thesis.
- A thesis should have a clear and effective **structure** appropriate to its subject, usually divided into chapters and/or sections.

- A thesis should demonstrate familiarity with the **primary and secondary literature** appropriate to its subject, both through a bibliography and through engagement with that literature in the body of the thesis.
- A thesis should be **written at the appropriate level**, should be free of compositional errors and awkwardness, and should be written, formatted, and documented in accordance with MLA format.

NOTE: Because **the MA thesis proposal** must also be approved by the Graduate Committee and Director of Graduate Studies before the student can register for ENG 599, students are strongly advised to begin working with their thesis adviser during the semester before they plan to enroll in ENG 599 and to submit proposals at least **three weeks** before the upcoming semester begins. Students register in ENG 599 using the Capstone Course Registration Form during the regular registration period, i.e. before the end of the drop/add period of the semester.

Process for Capstone A Project:

1. **Identify and develop a topic and method of inquiry.** Generally, a student should have an interest he or she wishes to pursue before deciding to write a thesis rather than the reverse.
2. **Find a director and second reader** for the thesis. Generally, the director is a faculty member in the department with whom the student has worked before, who has confidence in the student's ability to write a thesis, and who has some expertise in the topic of the thesis. A faculty member is not obliged to accept a student as a thesis advisee and will generally only do so when convinced that both the thesis project and the director-student match are good ones. The second reader should also be chosen, usually in consultation with the director, for his or her knowledge of or interest in the topic of the thesis.
3. In consultation with the director, **develop a proposal** for the thesis to be approved by the director and second reader and submitted for additional approval to the department's Graduate Committee. *The proposal is designed to assure that the student's plan for the thesis is appropriate, and the student may not proceed with the thesis until the proposal is fully approved;* submitting the proposal after completing substantial work on the thesis may result in much of that work having to be discarded and re-done. See below for more details.
4. After the Graduate Committee approves the proposal, **register for ENG 599**; this step requires permission of the Department Chair.
5. **Write the thesis**, typically over a period of one to two semesters, in regular consultation with the director. Students should expect the writing process to involve considerable additional research, reading, and revision; first drafts are rarely acceptable. The thesis, including documentation, should be formatted

according to the current MLA style guidelines.

6. When the thesis is complete, **prepare an abstract** of no more than 500 words.
7. **Submit the thesis and abstract to the director and second reader for approval.** The student should submit the thesis at a date which allows adequate time—as defined by the director and second reader—for the thesis to be carefully read and, if necessary, revised or corrected before the School of Graduate Studies' final submission deadline.
8. Complete the thesis per guidelines of the CCSU School of Graduate Studies, **submit to the English Graduate Committee for signatures**, and then to Graduate College for approval and signatures.
9. The student must make a **public presentation** of the thesis, typically in the antepenultimate week of the semester in which the student plans to graduate. The presentation is in general much like a conference paper, 15-20 minutes in length, in which the student presents the argument, chief evidence, and structure of the thesis. The presentation is open to the public, and is typically attended by faculty members and students who may ask questions concerning the thesis. Typically, the presentation is made after submitting the thesis to the School of Graduate Studies at a date determined by the Graduate Committee. Alternatively, the student may choose to make the presentation before final submission of the thesis to the director and second reader in order to receive feedback from those in attendance.

A proposal is generally eight to twelve pages in length (exclusive of bibliography) and should accomplish the following:

- Clearly identify the **topic** of the thesis, which should be appropriate in the ways described above
- Set out the **argument** of the thesis, making clear its appropriateness to the topic and its relevance and value to the discipline
- Identify an appropriate **critical methodology** and describe how it will be applied to the topic in order to support the argument
- Describe the **structure** of the thesis, including its division into chapters and/or sections
- Demonstrate knowledge of the current **state of the discipline** with regard to the topic of the thesis, including familiarity and engagement with relevant primary texts and scholarship at a level appropriate to this stage of the thesis project
- Include an annotated **bibliography** of appropriate and up-to-date primary and secondary materials consulted and to be consulted, usually comprising at least 10 items at this preliminary stage

MA Thesis Organization

Please refer to the guidelines of the CCSU School of Graduate Studies and the Department of English Graduate Committee for capstone formatting requirements. Remember to number and title the sections:

Cover Page

Abstract

Table of Contents

- I. Introduction
- II. Series of chapters, usually divided into sections
- III. Conclusion
- IV. Bibliography (MLA format, 20-30 sources)

For further information concerning formatting, please see the CCSU Graduate Studies handbook:

https://www.ccsu.edu/grad/resources/files/thesis/THESIS_HANDBOOK_SEPTEMBER_2017_REVISIONS.pdf

Special Project (Capstone C)

Students who have had their proposal approved and who have completed a minimum of 18 credits with a GPA of at least 3.0 in the English MA Online-Hybrid Track for Teachers may register for 595, “Special Project Capstone C.”

In contrast to the other capstone options available to the literary studies MA tracks (Capstone A: the scholarly focused thesis and Capstone B: the broad comprehensive exam), the special project is a case study that combines intensive work on a single text with an overview of the scholarship on the primary text and applies that research and analysis to a specific literary argument or professional context (the classroom, curriculum development, etc.).

Special project capstones provide an opportunity for students to complete an academically rigorous, professional project that contributes in some meaningful way to the discipline and communities to which they belong. The project should reflect an understanding of knowledge related to the discipline or field and an ability to apply this knowledge. Students completing Capstone C receive valuable mentoring by their faculty supervisor and committee members. The special project capstone essay for the English MA is a case study of 25-35 pages focused on a primary text and a clearly defined disciplinary issue, as illustrated in a close reading of the text and an explanation of the relevant scholarship surrounding both the text and the issue addressed. Disciplinary issues may concern literary form, theoretical or historical/social concerns, pedagogical or curricular practices, other public uses of the text, or some combination of these.

While the overall length is less than a thesis, **the capstone essay should meet the following criteria:**

- The essay should clearly define the goals, argument, and context for the project in a brief **introductory section** of no more than two or three pages.
- The essay should provide a substantive **literature review** that explains the relevance to its argument and goals of existing published critical and/or pedagogical views on the primary text.
- The essay should offer a close **textual analysis** of the primary text that illustrates key issues or elements in the text and explains their relevance to the capstone project’s goals and concerns.
- The essay should provide an explanation of and argument for the **relevance** of existing scholarship and/or the need for distinct, or new, perspectives in the interpretation, public reception, and/or teaching of the primary text.
- If relevant, the essay should document and explain any pedagogical or professional **exercises, experiences, or data** used in the project.

- The essay should identify and explain its **conclusions** in relation to the research and close reading presented. The literature review, close reading, and capstone argument or goal should each work together to support an existing disciplinary perspective or to complicate existing disciplinary or scholarly perspectives in some way.
- The essay should be written in **clear, correct, and organized prose**, appropriate to the graduate level and formatted and documented in accordance with MLA style.

NOTE: Because **the special project proposal** must also be approved by the Graduate Committee and Director of Graduate Studies before the student can register for ENG 595, students are strongly advised to begin working with their special project adviser during the semester before they plan to enroll in ENG 595 and to submit proposals at least **three weeks** before the upcoming semester begins. Students register in ENG 595 using the Capstone Course Registration Form during the regular registration period, i.e. before the end of the drop/add period of the semester.

Process for the Capstone C Special Project:

1. **Identify an area or text of interest and a special project adviser.** Find a project adviser who is expert in the field of inquiry. In consultation with the adviser, choose a central text and decide on project goals. Because it requires substantive investment in planning and researching to identify and design the project, students should start working with their advisers and setting aside time for research and writing in the semester before they plan to register for ENG 595.
2. Develop and revise **the special project proposal** for the Capstone with the adviser, which is then submitted to the Director of Graduate Studies and Graduate Committee as criteria for enrollment in ENG 595: Special Project Capstone C. The proposal should detail the project's primary text, the issues and goals the project addresses, and the research and scholarship on which the student plans to draw.
3. After the Graduate Committee approves the proposal **register for ENG 595**; this step requires permission of the Department Chair.
4. Working with the special project adviser, determine a regular **schedule** of contact and review of work in progress during the semester of ENG 595.
5. Write and revise the **special project capstone essay and annotated bibliography**, revising as directed by the adviser.
6. When the special project is complete, **prepare an abstract** of no more than 500 words.

7. **Submit the special project and abstract to the director for approval.** The student should submit the project at a date which allows adequate time—as defined by the director and second reader—for the essay to be carefully read and, if necessary, revised or corrected before the School of Graduate Studies’ final submission deadline.
8. Complete the special project per guidelines of the CCSU School of Graduate Studies, **submit to the English Graduate Committee for signatures**, and then to Graduate College for approval and signatures.
9. **Present the approved special project publicly** at an event organized by either the English Department or its graduate society, typically in the antepenultimate week of the semester before graduation. The presentation is much like a conference paper, 15-20 minutes in length, in which the student presents the argument, chief evidence, and structure of the special project. The presentation is open to the public, and is typically attended by faculty members and students who may ask questions concerning the thesis. Typically, the presentation is made after submitting the thesis to the School of Graduate Studies at a date determined by the Graduate Committee. Alternatively, the student may choose to make the presentation before final submission of the thesis to the director and second reader in order to receive feedback from those in attendance.

Special Project Capstone Essay Organization

Please refer to the guidelines of the CCSU School of Graduate Studies and the Department of English Graduate Committee for capstone formatting requirements. Remember to number and title the sections, as indicated (with project-specific subtitles):

Cover Page

Abstract

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V. Introduction

II. Literature Review

III. Methodology

IV. Close Reading

V. Contributions or Issues in the Secondary Classroom or Other Relevant Material (if used)

VI. Conclusion

VIII. Annotated Bibliography (MLA format, 15-20 sources)

For further information concerning formatting, please see the general Graduate Studies Handbook:

<https://www.ccsu.edu/grad/resources/files/specialProjectHandbook.pdf>

Writing a Capstone Proposal

A capstone proposal is generally eight to twelve pages in length (exclusive of bibliography), should be divided into about seven sections, and should address all relevant questions and statements as suggested below:

1. Introduction (Capstone A and C)

What is the topic of your capstone?

What has been said about your topic, and perhaps not said, in the existing secondary literature? What is your particular argument and methodology?

What do you hope to contribute to the existing critical or pedagogical conversation, and why are these contributions important?

Try to devote a few succinct sentences to each of these questions in your introductory section, which will serve as a concise overview or précis of the sections to follow. *Keep this introductory section short (no longer than 1-2 pages).*

While your topic need not offer a completely new contribution to the discipline, it should at least add to an ongoing scholarly discussion surrounding your topic and demonstrate familiarity with these ideas.

2. Literature Review (Capstone A and C)

Which scholars within the discipline have written on your topic and/or selected texts, what have they argued, and how have they helped to define the critical conversation into which you are entering?

Try to demonstrate your familiarity with relevant primary texts and scholarship at a level appropriate to this stage of the capstone project.

3. Methodology (Capstone A and C)

What critical methodology do you intend to adopt, and how will you apply this method to your topic in order to support the argument?

What will this methodology help to reveal about your selected text(s) that would otherwise have remained obscure?

4. Argument (Capstone A only)

What do you intend to argue in your thesis? In what particular ways does your argument contribute to the critical conversation you have identified in your overview in section II?

For example: Does your argument help to resolve an existing debate or begin a new one? Does it identify and begin to fill a gap within current scholarship?

Make clear the appropriateness of the argument to your topic as well as its relevance and value to the discipline. Provide a short, sample close reading to help illustrate your approach.

5. Close Reading (Capstone C only)

Provide a detailed close reading of a particular passage, stanza, or scene that you intend to discuss as part of your special project that enables you to model how your method of approach will yield a new or significant interpretation.

6. Other Data or Issues (Capstone C only, if applicable)

What types of pedagogical or professional exercises, experiences, or data, if any, will be used in this project?

How will you make use of these materials?

7. Structure (Capstone A only)

How will your thesis be organized?

How many chapters will it contain, and what will be the objectives and/or argument of each chapter?

Devote approximately one to two paragraphs to describing each chapter.

8. Conclusion (Capstone A and C)

Provide a concise summary of your findings or conclusions and their relevance to the field.

9. Annotated Bibliography (Capstone A and C)

Include a bibliography of appropriate and up-to-date primary and secondary materials consulted and to be consulted, usually comprising at least 10 items. (Note that the bibliography for a final MA thesis will contain 20-30 items, whereas an *annotated* bibliography of 15-20 texts will be required for the final special project.)

Forms

The following forms may be useful to students during the course of their graduate studies. Unless otherwise noted, they may be found on the School of Graduate Studies' website at <https://www.ccsu.edu/grad/resources/forms.html>.

Application Form: <https://www2.ccsu.edu/apply/>
Planned Program Form: <https://www.ccsu.edu/englishMA/forms.html>
Comprehensive Examination Application
Thesis Prospectus Approval Form
Thesis Course Registration Form
Independent Study Registration Form
Graduation Application

Further Information

For further information, please see the English Department's Graduate Studies Webpage at <http://www.ccsu.edu/english/ma/>, the School of Graduate Studies' Website at www.ccsu.edu/grad/, and the current Graduate Catalogue. You may also contact the School of Graduate Studies or the English Department at:

School of Graduate Studies
Graduate Recruitment and Admissions
Davidson Hall 212
Central Connecticut State University
1615 Stanley Street
New Britain, CT 06050
(860) 832-2350

English Department,
Willard DiLoreto Hall 401
Attn. Director of Graduate Studies
Central Connecticut State University
1615 Stanley Street
New Britain, CT 06050
(860) 832-2740

Or you may contact Dr. Deborah Spillman, Director of Graduate Studies in English, at dspillman@ccsu.edu.