English and Comparative Literature at Columbia FAQs

Why should I study English at Columbia?

Ask the members of Vampire Weekend, or Barack Obama! Our graduates have used their skills as readers and writers to find careers in education and publishing, the arts, film and television, public relations, journalism, academic administration, advocacy, and law.

Why is it called "The Department of English and Comparative Literature"?

Since its inception, our department has been known for asking big, bold questions that place literature in a global context. Note that unlike Columbia's Institute for Comparative Literature and Society, our major does not require foreign language study.

What are the required courses for an English major or minor?

The major consists of **ten courses.** The only specific course requirement is the introductory course, ENGL UN2000/2001. The other nine courses need to fulfill distribution requirements designed to make sure that you have a broad knowledge of literature written in a variety of genres, times, and places, but you are free to choose exactly which courses fulfill those requirements.

Two of your other nine courses can be in related fields (creative writing, film, literature in other languages) and/or taken outside the Columbia English department. Transfer students can get credit for up to **three** courses taken outside Columbia University. All relevant courses taken in the Barnard English Department or while studying abroad count towards the major.

The minor consists of **five courses** taken in the Columbia English Department. The only requirement is that one of those five courses must be the introductory course.

Where should I start in terms of English coursework?

Anytime. *Approaches to Literary Study* is a great entry point, because it covers foundational concepts and features weekly lectures by different professors. Lecture courses are also great ways to begin, and typically they have no prerequisites.

Do English majors have to write a senior thesis?

No. For those who want to undertake an intensive capstone project, we offer a Senior Essay Program, but it is *not* a requirement for the major. Students who opt to write senior essays enroll in a year-long seminar and receive additional guidance from individual faculty advisors.

How do I find out more about English courses, events, and opportunities?

Stop by 602 Philosophy to chat, and visit our website, english.columbia.edu.The website lists names, emails, and office hours for the DUS (Director of Undergraduate Studies), and members of the CUE (Committee for Undergraduate Education), all happy to speak with you. You can sign up for the ENCL mailing list by writing to enclundergraduatecoordinator@columbia.edu.

Where can I meet other undergraduates interested in English?

Visit the English Commons, a weekly open space for solo and group study, general camaraderie, and great snacks – every Friday 12-3PM, in 324 Uris Hall.

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