

# Literature and Language at Indiana State University

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## *Introduction*

*Literature and Language at Indiana State University (LLISU)* is the official document of the Department of English concerning the literature and language program at ISU. This document contains descriptions, rationales, goals, and policies adopted by the Department of English on December 1, 2008.

The main purpose of the document is to define the general nature and scope of literature and language courses, while leaving the specific planning and teaching of the courses to faculty members.

## *The Undergraduate Curriculum Committee*

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The Undergraduate Curriculum Committee is appointed by the Chairperson of the Department. It is chaired by the Director of Undergraduate Studies and includes five regular members; in addition, the Director of Graduate Studies, the Director of Writing Programs, and the Chairperson serve as ex-officio members. The Committee is responsible for devising and revising the undergraduate curriculum, reviewing course proposals, and preparing rationales and policies for teaching the courses.

When the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee proposes curricular changes to the program, the changes are subject to review and approval by the Department faculty before being submitted for review and approval by College and University committees.

## *Objectives of the Program*

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Reading and writing are essential for successful academic work. The courses described in *LLISU* offer opportunities for ISU students to achieve the

competence in reading and writing that is essential for success in their academic work and professional lives.

Students graduating with a major in English, with either the Liberal Arts or the English Teaching concentration, should be able to

- use standard literary terminology with accuracy.
- demonstrate an awareness of literary periods and movements, including approximate dates and representative authors and works.
- articulate connections and dislocations between and among periods and movements.
- identify formal genres in poetry (e.g. sonnet, epic, ballad), fiction (short story, novella, novel, romance) and plays (e.g. tragedy, comedy, tragicomedy, farce).
- identify thematic motifs in literature (e.g. maturation).
- discuss and write about literature from a variety of critical perspectives—reader response, cultural/historical, feminist, and others—and articulate the central concerns of each.
- identify the concerns and influences of race, class, gender, and culture in literature.
- recognize the relative presence and absence of political agendas in literature.
- understand the workings of canon formation—its worth, its biases, its politics.
- recognize the interrelationship among British, American, and world literatures.
- recognize the ways in which multicultural literature is similar to and different from the literature of the dominant culture.
- distinguish gradations in literature from the classic to the popular.

- apply the principles of close reading in their discussions and in their writing.
- write essays in a variety of genres (critical, expository, personal).
- write in a variety of modes (analysis, argumentation, explication, summary, and others).
- synthesize material from a variety of sources and accurately document their use.
- express themselves clearly in both written and spoken forms.
- apply critical thinking skills when reading, writing, speaking, and listening.
- demonstrate grammatical fluency in both written and spoken forms.
- exhibit an enthusiasm for literary study.
- apply material learned in one class to material learned in others.

### *Course Requirements and Offerings*

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English majors at Indiana State University complete one of two programs: Liberal Arts or English Teaching. Each program contains 39 semester hours of courses. Three appendixes provide detailed information on both major and General Education requirements: Appendix A: English Liberal Arts Major—Degree Requirements; Appendix B: English Teaching Major—Degree Requirements; and Appendix C: General Education Requirements for English Majors. A fourth appendix lists all English courses that receive General Education credit: Appendix D: General Education Offerings in English.

### *Course Syllabi and Schedules<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Information required for arranged courses—English 492 (Internship in English) and English 495 (Individual Studies in English)—appears in Appendix D.

The Department of English adheres to the policy in the 2007 *Indiana State University Handbook*:

Faculty members are required to prepare course outlines or syllabi for their courses. [. . .] An outline of each course should be available at the beginning of the term so students may know what is to be covered during the term. (III-8)

Because syllabi provide a comprehensive description of individual courses, they need to include a wide variety of information. In addition to describing the course and providing useful information, the statements of policy also establish an implicit “contract” for the operation of the course.

The following guidelines apply to syllabi and schedules prepared for regularly scheduled classes; separate guidelines for arranged courses—English 492 (Internship in English) and English 495 (Individual Studies in English)—appear at the end of this section.

Although no two syllabi are the same, good syllabi include common elements.

***Identifying Information:*** A syllabus should contain

- the course number and official title.
- the semester and year.
- the meeting time and the room.
- the instructor’s name, office number, telephone number, e-mail address, and office hours.

***Course Information:*** A syllabus should contain

- the official course description from the *Indiana State University Undergraduate Catalog*.
- a brief rationale for the course.
- an explanation of where the course fits within the major or minor.
- an explanation, when appropriate, of where the course fits within the General Education program.
- a list of prerequisites, when applicable.
- the course goals, including but not limited to those contained in *Literature and Language at ISU*.

***Textbooks and Other Class Materials:*** A syllabus should contain

- full citations for the textbooks required for a course, including edition, when necessary, and ISBNs for texts that are available from online booksellers.
- full titles for ProfPaks and information about the vendor, including address and telephone number.
- detailed descriptions of required class materials (dictionaries, notebooks, bluebooks, folders, and other items).
- information on recommended texts and materials.

*Course Policies:* A syllabus should contain

- policies on attendance and explanations of how it affects performance in the class and the calculation of the final grade; distinctions between excused and unexcused absences—if made—should be explained.
- policies on due dates for assignments, including circumstances for extending deadlines.
- policies for paper submission (i.e., submitted in class, no e-mail submissions, no papers under the office door, etc.).
- policies on plagiarism, with a clear reference to ISU’s “Policy on Academic Integrity” (see Appendix F for the complete document).
- policies on incomplete or unsubmitted work.
- policies about the use of or ban on electronic devices: laptop computers, Blackberries, I-Pods, cell phones, and so on.
- policies of manuscript preparation (i.e., MLA style, 5th edition)

*Course Requirements:* A syllabus should contain

- a description of written work required for the course, including brief explanations of the number, type, and length of papers.
- an explanation of the number and kind of exams required for the course, with brief explanations of coverage (for example, comprehensive) and testing formats.
- an explanation of the number and type of presentations or projects.
- an explanation of other course requirements: faculty-student conferences, journals, panel discussions, portfolios, and so on.
- an explanation of participation requirements, including comments on expectations for completing in-class work.

*A Schedule of Course Activities:* A syllabus or first-day materials should contain

- identifying information (course number, semester, instructor), if the schedule is presented as a separate document.
- a day-by-day listing of activities.
- a brief description of each day's activities, including reading or writing assignments to prepare for the day.
- materials (textbooks, handouts, ProfPaks, other items) that are needed each day.
- easily identified due dates for major work: exams, papers, presentations, projects, panels.

***Information on Grade Calculation:*** A syllabus or first-day materials should contain

- a table, outline, list, or easily interpreted form that identifies all graded work for the course.
- an explanation of the proportional value of all graded work.

***Other Kinds of Information:*** A syllabus or first-day materials may contain

- a philosophy for teaching the course.
- responses to frequently asked questions about the course.

## *Textbooks*

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Tenured, tenure-track, and adjunct faculty are free to select textbooks for their courses, but they should do so in accord with the descriptions, rationales, and policies for each course, as outlined in *LLISU*.

## *Grading*

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Although instructors' individual grading systems are unique, commonalities should exist to ensure that instructors and the Department are not perceived as capricious or idiosyncratic. The following guidelines may be helpful in diminishing disparities in grading:

- Students' grades should be based primarily upon their performance on exams and written work.

- The patterns for determining students' grades should be shared at the beginning of a course, so that students know the percentage value of each exam, paper, or project. Because students' skills develop throughout a course, extra weight may be given to work toward the end of the term. Thus, while all graded work may be considered in computing grades, final grades are not necessarily flat averages of all grades.
- The Department of English adheres to the University policy that requires a class meeting during the final two-hour examination period scheduled by the Vice President for Academic Affairs:

The two-hour final examination period assigned is part of the total commitment required for completion of a course, and it is scheduled to provide a longer class period for the administration of a comprehensive examination. Exceptions may be made in courses in which individual student projects, term papers, demonstrations[,] or performances are more suitable measures of the student's achievement. [. . .] A faculty member may elect not to require a final written examination but is obligated to hold the class in session during the scheduled final examination time period. (*Indiana State University Handbook* III-8)

- There is no "curve" in our literature and language classes, i. e., no preset quota of As, Bs, etc. If an entire section, for example, should do what experience tells us is above-average work, the entire class should earn above-average grades; the contrary is also true.
- Students are expected to attend class and to participate in course activities. Instructors should describe in their syllabi how attendance and participation influence course grades.
- Students are expected to submit all work (daily work, as well as major papers and projects) on time. Instructors should specify the penalties that result when work is submitted late or not at all.
- If faculty allow for extra-credit work that can be used for grade improvement, the option must be made available to all students in a course. Since the operative term is *extra*, students must have completed all primary, graded work for the course.

- If faculty assign group projects or presentations with group grades, they should clearly describe the pattern for determining those collective grades.
- Faculty should be prepared to explain their grades. To that end, faculty should maintain clear, complete records of grades for individual exams, papers, attendance, and other matters that determine students' final grades.

### *Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty*

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The Department of English adheres to the University's plagiarism policy as presented in the *Indiana State University Code of Student Conduct* (see Appendix F for the full statement).

Beyond legalism, we recognize that plagiarism persists and that we are obliged to forestall and prevent it whenever possible. We can forestall plagiarism caused by ignorance by informing students of the nature and gravity of plagiarism, by instructing them in methods of writing summaries and paraphrases, and by teaching them how to document their sources fully and accurately. We can forestall, to some degree at least, intentional plagiarism by making our assignments so precise that it will be difficult to locate prefabricated papers and by monitoring students' work throughout the planning, drafting, and revision of papers. To further reduce the possibility of plagiarism, as well as protect students' privacy, instructors should not leave papers in unmonitored, generally accessible areas, such as in the hallways or workrooms.

Instructors should make clear to students—in syllabi or in separate handouts—their individual policies for handling instances of plagiarism.