

LENGTH OF COURSE

3 years

MINIMUM A-LEVEL GRADE REQUIREMENTS

AAA

A-LEVELS REQUIRED

Candidates are expected to have English Literature, or English Language and Literature to A-level. A language or History can be helpful to students in completing this course, although they are not required for admission.

ADMISSIONS TEST

The ELAT is designed to test candidates' ability to respond sensitively to unfamiliar literary material. Candidates are given six poems or passages from drama and/or prose (fiction or non-fiction), and are asked to write one essay comparing two or three passages.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The English Language and Literature course is one of the broadest in the country, giving you the chance to study writing in English from its origins in Anglo-Saxon England to the literature of the 20th and early 21st centuries. As well as British literature, you can study works written in English from other parts of the world. The course aims to give students an overview of the full development of writing in English, from Medieval all the way to the present day. It's very much a literature degree rather than a language one – you'll have a bit of space to do English language for half a paper in first year, but other than that, the course is very much literature-based.

STRUCTURE OF MODULES

1st year

- * Introduction to English Language and Literature
- * Early medieval literature 650–1350
- * Literature in English 1830–1910
- * Literature in English 1910–present day

2nd year: students decide between course I / course II

Course I:

- * Literature in English 1350–1550
- * Literature in English 1550–1660
- * Literature in English 1660–1760
- * Literature in English 1760–1830

Course II:

- * Literature in English 650–1100
- * Medieval English and related literatures 1066–1550
- * Literature in English 1350–1550
- * The history of the English language to c1800

3rd year: students sit their finals exams and write their thesis

Course I:

- * Shakespeare (may also be studied in the 2nd year)

Course II:

- * The material text or Shakespeare (choice of option)

Both courses:

- * Special options paper
- * Dissertation

APPROXIMATE NO. OF CONTACT HOURS PER WEEK

Tutorials: 1-2

Lectures: (varies depending on term: avg. 3-5)

Seminars/classes: (varies depending on term: 2-4)

TUTORIAL & CLASS TESTIMONIAL

Tutorials vary according to the tutor you are assigned. For English you will be given a reading list at the beginning of the vacation, and during the term you will have to complete an essay ahead of each tutorial. During the tutorial you will discuss the texts you have researched and your essay question. This often involves unpacking some of your arguments and discussing key themes and concepts with your tutor.

Classes vary depending on your tutor and the paper. They will generally involve preparatory reading - you may be asked to prepare a presentation on a specific topic. You might also have exercises to do for classes surrounding Old English and translating into plain English. There will be a group discussion of the set texts and further reading.

STUDYING & CAREERS

English has fewer contact hours than science subjects, but this time is spent reading theory and ideas that you'll need to write a good essay. The majority of the actual language learning happens in small groups during classes. It's a good idea to spend some time reading and planning for essays so you can make sure you've understood the question and the critical arguments. The rest of the time is normally spent doing presentations and translations.

An English degree provides skills that are adaptable to many different career paths, including but not limited to: law, journalism, publishing, teaching, copywriting, PR & advertising. However, the transferrable skills you gain – critical thinking, coherent and exciting writing, and close-reading can be applied to a much wider range of careers.

PERSONAL STATEMENT TIPS

- Write about a variety of different ways in which you have shown that you have a genuine interest in your subject.
- Mention books/films/podcasts but try not to make vague comments. Instead, discuss specific themes or characters – and pick ones which you genuinely find exciting/ interesting to put in your PS & to mention at interview!
- Interviewers will recognise enthusiasm when they see it, so be passionate. This way your brain isn't under extra stress trying to come up with opinions in front of academics who are already nerve-wracking enough on their own, and you can fall back into the safe ground of chatting about things you actually like.

INTERVIEW TIPS

- Make sure you have good knowledge of the books/films you have mentioned on your PS so you can give examples to back up your opinions and show that you can think critically and analyse.
- Read all the books you mention and keep a few good texts in your back pocket, in case they ask you about anything you haven't written about!
- Treat interviews as conversations, not interrogations. You don't need to know the answers to every question, but if you can answer questions candidly and ask perceptive questions in return to try and form an opinion, you'll be showing them exactly what they want in a tutorial: a willingness to engage with ideas that seem intimidating at first, and to think on your feet. The tutors are going to challenge you, so be ready to handle counter-arguments; don't panic and try to think aloud.

ELAT TIPS

- Work through the past papers online (with a teacher if possible) and make sure you practice responding to unseen passages – don't be afraid to pick into subtle details and niche ideas in those texts, as the markers will appreciate impressive close reading and a willingness to engage with themes or ideas you might not have worked on at school.

ONE THING I WISH I KNEW WHEN I WAS APPLYING

There's really nothing to worry about during interviews/the application process! It's just an opportunity to chat with some amazing academics.

Recommended reading/viewing

Here are some examples of texts/other materials you could explore to help you with your study of English during your first year.

*Emma Smith, the Shakespeare scholar, has a book called "**This Is Shakespeare**" (it's also out in audiobook format.) A brilliant read for getting your head round why Shakespeare can actually be exciting - it's unpretentious, very readable, and strips away the 'historical and cultural baggage' that couches our discussion of his work.

*If you struggle to find the time to sit down with books for hours on end, think about different ways you can read - would audiobooks help? Yeah, paid services like Audible exist, but check if your library is linked up with an app like **BorrowBox** that allows you to borrow audiobooks for free, or if there's a specific text you want, search for it on **Librivox** or even **YouTube**. There are thousands of classic audiobook recordings available on YouTube - **Orwell, Woolf, Mann, Morrison, Achebe, Forster** - you can tackle entire reading lists all while walking or washing up at the exact same time. Some books are even on Spotify!

*If you've read and enjoyed a text, look for other people's opinions on it - you don't have to agree with them! **New Yorker articles** are great for this; for instance, after reading '**the greatest American novel you're never heard of**' (John William's Stoner), this article is a great way to process the delicacy of its prose and the way it came to be so popular. This is a great novel to read at this level too - I recommend it.

*Watch authors discuss their work - for example, you can find **Chinua Achebe** discussing his landmark post-colonial text **Things Fall Apart** on Youtube. A key text in any discussion of Western colonialism, interactions between the coloniser and the colonised population, or reclamation of the black voice in writing.

These links provide helpful background on writers, texts and historical context:

- www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians

- www.bl.uk/20th-century-literature