English and Philosophy

Programs

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Department Overview

The Department of English and Philosophy offers broad curricula in two disciplines. English studies develop writing skills, explore human experience as represented in literature, and treat the nature of language. Philosophy courses examine such topics as the nature of reality, the ways that knowledge is acquired, and the basis for ethical choices.

The department offers the B.A. and M.A. in English, the Ph.D. in English and Teaching of English, and the B.A. in philosophy. English and Philosophy courses also can contribute to the general education and personal enrichment of students in all disciplines.

Equipped with an undergraduate degree in either English or philosophy, students are prepared to enter graduate degree programs, to pursue training in such professions as journalism, law, religion, or medicine, or to embark upon a great variety of careers in government, business, and industry that demand broad, liberal arts perspectives and strong observational, fact-finding, analytical, and communication skills. English students with certification are prepared for careers in elementary and secondary education.

English Program

The English undergraduate program offers majors and minors in Literature, Professional Writing, and Creative Writing.

The Department has articulated the following goals and student learning outcomes for students at the undergraduate level.

Mission and Goals

Undergraduate English programs in the Department of English and Philosophy provide students wishing to pursue a liberal arts education training in the study of language, literature, writing, and culture. Such training will provide students with strong communication skills, an ability to gather information and use it critically, an understanding of the function of language within the culture, and a historical and critical understanding of the role literature plays within the human experience.

Student Learning Outcomes

All graduates with English majors and minors will be able to:

- Produce writing that thoughtfully addresses multiple audiences, perspectives, genres, and disciplinary conventions, and makes effective use of research.
- Analyze and interpret complex texts by reading critically, with close attention to language and ideas.
- Demonstrate an understanding of common linguistic principles, and the historical, social, cultural, and dialectal backgrounds of English.

Graduates from the English Literary Option will be able to:

- Demonstrate proficiency in literary analysis by analyzing written, oral, and visual texts critically and applying the approaches of major theoretical schools.
- Analyze the historical and literary trends of specific periods and cultural identities.
- Describe multimodal forms and genres, and their origins, evolution, and aesthetic effects.

Graduates from the English Creative Writing Option will be able to:
Develop writing in multiple genres that acknowledges both traditional and innovative prosody and narrative techniques.

Productively critique their own and their classmates’ creative efforts by analyzing literary works from a craft perspective.

Characterize the literary elements of diverse genres across various historical periods and cultures.

Graduates from the English Professional Writing Option will be able to:

- Create clear, concise documents that help audiences accomplish specific tasks, solve problems, and understand complex and technical information.
- Make effective and ethical choices about style, organization, content, and design.
- Produce a variety of print and digital media using words, images, and other modes.

Placement in English Composition Courses

Regulations and procedures governing student placement in the composition-course sequence are summarized under Placement into English and Mathematics Courses (http://coursecat.isu.edu/undergraduate/academicinformation/placementintoenglishandmathematicsscoursess/). Students should consult with the Director of Composition concerning applicability toward Objective 1 requirements of writing courses taken at other institutions.

English Course Prerequisites and Standards

At least one semester of lower-division literature is prerequisite for 3000 and 4000-level literature courses. To enroll in a 4000-level course, students must have junior or senior standing. To graduate as an English major or with an English minor, a student must maintain at least a 2.25 grade point average in courses within the English curriculum. Some courses may have additional prerequisites.

Philosophy Program

The Philosophy Program offers courses on the history of philosophy, philosophical issues, and the cognitive skills required in philosophy. These offer students a deeper understanding of our past and our place in the world, as well as helping them to develop analytic and writing skills that are valuable in all disciplines. Students take either Introduction to Philosophy (PHIL 1101) or Introduction to Ethics (PHIL 1103) to partially meet Objective 4 of the General Education Requirements. The Philosophy Program offers a bachelor’s degree and a minor to our undergraduate students. After graduation, philosophy students are well prepared to enter law school or graduate degree programs, or to pursue careers that require strong analytical and writing skills.

Mission and Goals

The Philosophy Program provides students pursuing a liberal arts education training in the history of philosophy, philosophical issues, and the analytic skills required in philosophy. This training will provide students with strong analytical and writing skills, the ability to read philosophical texts critically, the ability to formulate and defend philosophical positions, and a grasp of the historical context and broader implications of philosophical positions.

Learning Outcomes for the B.A. in Philosophy (all tracks)

1. Explain in clear, well-organized prose major questions, themes, positions, and arguments in philosophy, both historical and contemporary.
2. Engage critically with philosophical texts.
3. Compare and contrast major positions and arguments in philosophy, both historical and contemporary.
4. Critically evaluate major positions and arguments in philosophy, both historical and contemporary.
5. Formulate clear and substantive views on philosophical topics.
6. Defend your views with cogent reasoning.
7. Critically evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of your own views and those opposing them.
8. Identify the broader philosophical implications of your own views, as well as their place within the larger historical and intellectual context.

Folklore Program

Folklore is the dynamic, expressive culture that we learn in informal interactions with people we meet regularly, or that we learn through informal communication. The many traditional genres of folklore include the verbal arts, such as epic, ballad, folksong, folktale, legend, myth, joke, tall tale, riddle, and proverb. Newer genres include YouTube postings, urban legends, and digital memes. Folklore also includes customary and material forms, such as games, dances, modes of dress, folk architecture, and crafts such as chair making, blacksmithing, and many forms of fabric art.

Our program at Idaho State University has two focuses: in English courses we study oral literature: the way it is learned, transmitted, and performed, and its cultural and historical contexts. In Anthropology courses we study folklore as an expression of cultural diversity and examine the social functions of folklore within cultural groups. Students minoring in folklore may take courses from both departments to obtain a well-rounded understanding of folklore.

Knowledge and skills in folklore enhance a broad range of majors. Experience in folklore benefits students interested in continuing to graduate programs in folklore, history, anthropology, English, and sociology. Knowledge of folklore is helpful, too, in public history, museum, and oral history programs. Knowledge and skills in folklore enhance the knowledge of both elementary and secondary teachers and of those planning to do social work or to work in business or in the health-related professions.

English and Philosophy Faculty (http://coursecat.isu.edu/undergraduate/artsandletters/englishandphilosophy/faculty/)

English Courses (http://coursecat.isu.edu/undergraduate/allcourses/engl/)

Philosophy Courses (http://coursecat.isu.edu/undergraduate/allcourses/phil/)

American Studies Courses (http://coursecat.isu.edu/undergraduate/allcourses/amst/)