

Graduate Student Handbook

**MA/PhD Program
Department of English
University of Texas, Austin**

**Created Summer 2007
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This handbook aims to introduce the graduate program and to provide a solid foundation of knowledge. It does not attempt to answer every single question you might have, nor does it provide a fully exhaustive account of every aspect of the program. Instead it offers a thorough combination of theoretical wisdom, practical advice, and concrete information for your English graduate career. It gives not merely an introductory overview as you consider applying to the program or spend your first week in Austin, but hard-earned info to keep reading as you develop as a graduate student.

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The Program

Introduction to Graduate Life in UT English

Graduate school, as much as it may sometimes feel like a regression to college life, is not college life. You have, presumably, entered the UT English PhD program because you want to pursue academic study categorically more advanced than your undergraduate achievements. This crucial difference, combined with the highly competitive nature of the academic job market and the humanities market in particular, demands a corresponding reorientation of your academic life. The hermitic style, a lone scholar working free of external responsibilities, commitments, or necessities, is long outdated and overcome by changing university culture, replaced with a style increasingly professionalized yet nevertheless rooted in solid scholarship and strong writing.

The University of Texas English PhD program offers ample opportunities and training for the academic (and sometimes non-academic) world. A large, complex community of graduate students resides within a large, complex English Department, within a large, complex College of Liberal Arts, within a large, complex university, within a large, complex state. Such size and complexity presents an academic, bureaucratic, and social challenge that partly determines the program's style, one that demonstrates a peculiar informality and intimacy within subgroups, one that emphasizes know-how and learned intuition in equal measure, and one that allows self-starters to flourish.

“Informality” may be the wrong word. It isn't as though all the graduate students wear sweatpants around the hallways (though some do, which is fine) or don't knock before entering someone's office (though some don't, which isn't). Rather, the knowledge of how things—broadly understood—work exists in largely oral form (this handbook excepted). It's perfectly acceptable to approach faculty or fellow students with questions or problems, and most academic rigor occurs not in colloquia or meetings but in offices or over coffee. Practically, then, the best way to participate and perpetuate graduate student life here is to do what comes naturally: make friends. Along those lines, a bit of social advice: never hesitate to introduce yourself to someone in Chez Cal or the hallway whose name you should know but don't. Chances are they've forgotten your name too. We've all witnessed (and partaken in) awkward conversations between people who don't want to admit they don't know their interlocutor. (Try: “You know, we've never properly met. My name is....” Works like a charm.)

Because of the program's size and informal style, unmotivated or easily distracted students risk languishing for years, all but unnoticed as they drain their teaching support. On the other hand, highly motivated students thrive in the easy-going environment. The professors, among the best scholars in the nation, actually want to provide the guidance and mentorship to help you progress academically and meet your goals, but they can't help unless you ask. Thus it's essential to continue self-starting, especially when you face discouraging circumstances (like aimlessness, self-doubt, burnout, rejection, or all-out misery). Those who can manage their time and intelligence as independently as possible without isolating themselves will succeed. Regularly visit your professors' office hours or otherwise keep in contact; engage in discussions that prove fruitful for your work as well as your friends' work; make a regular practice of reading and writing and discussing ideas with friends; set up summer reading groups to keep active during

the off-season; create a syllabus or reading list for yourself to keep your work on track; and most importantly, *ask for the help you need*.

Timeline

Below is a basic timeline for the PhD Program, organized by year. Not all students follow this trajectory precisely, but everyone must at least touch on the major milestones.

(Note: Students entering with an MA usually proceed one year ahead of this schedule. You'll probably spend two years in coursework instead of three, you'll only TA for one year, and you obviously won't take an MA. Below, "BAs" stands for those entering with a BA only, while "MAs" stands for those entering with an MA.)

First Year – Coursework

Your first semester will be one of the most difficult, so don't get discouraged when you find yourself feeling exhausted and underconfident. Things are better than they might seem. They'll start to look up by the time Spring rolls around. Focus this year on writing quality essays and developing relationships.

BAs:

- TA for E 316K
- Take six total seminars (eighteen total hours)

MAs:

- TA for E 316K
- Take six total seminars (eighteen credit hours)
- Summer: if required by graduate adviser, take the Qualifying Review

Second Year – More Coursework, the Qualifying Review, and an MA

In the Fall, begin to think in earnest about a topic for your MA Report, which you'll write in the Spring. You should grow increasingly confident with your work as this year passes. (Alternatively, you may find the academic life doesn't suit you. If so, after the MA is a good time to make an easy exit.)

BAs:

- TA for E 316K
- Fall: three seminars
- Spring: two seminars and write your MA Report
- Summer: Complete and submit your Qualifying Review portfolio

MAs:

- Teach RHE 306, Rhetoric and Writing; staff in the Undergraduate Writing Center (UWC)
- Fall: two seminars and E 398T, an introduction to teaching
- Spring: two seminars and conference hours to prepare for the Field Exam
- Summer: teach in the DRW and take the Field Exam (if you have not already)

Third Year – The End of Coursework, the Start of AI-level teaching, and the Field Exam

Life gets less simple this year, as you become an Assistant Instructor (AI), begin looking toward the end of coursework, take the Field Exam, and start thinking about your dissertation.

BAs:

- Teach RHE 306, Rhetoric and Writing
- Fall: two seminars and E 398T, an introduction to teaching
- Spring: two seminars and conference hours to prepare for the Field Exam
- Summer: teach in the DRW and take the Field Exam

MAs:

- Teach RHE 309K, Topics in Writing; staff in the UWC or Computer Writing and Research Lab (CWRL)
- Work on dissertation prospectus
- Take Prospectus Exam
- Summer: Teach (if teaching is available); begin dissertation work

Fourth Year – Prospectus

By this year you should be moving full-steam toward your prospectus and, in turn, to your dissertation. The fastest-working students take their Prospectus Exam by the end of this year, though many wait until the next year.

BAs:

- Teach RHE 309K, Topics in Writing
- Work on dissertation prospectus
- Take Prospectus Exam

MAs:

- Teach E 314, Sophomore Literature; staff in the UWC or CWRL
- Work on your dissertation!

Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh Years– Dissertation

By the time you reach this phase, you'll have better sources of wisdom than this handbook to direct your process. You'll likely join a dissertation reading group, perhaps audit some classes to motivate your work, and eventually go on the job market.

- Fifth year: BAs teach E 314, Sophomore Literature, MAs return to DRW; staff in UWC or CWRL
- Sixth year: BAs return to DRW; staff in UWC or CWRL
- Complete and defend dissertation
- Fall: go on the market
- Winter: interview at MLA

- Spring: conduct campus visits

See also:

<http://www.utexas.edu/cola/depts/english/graduate/placement/preparing.html>

<http://www.utexas.edu/cola/depts/english/graduate/degrees-offered/phd-program.html>

Academics

Creating a Successful Academic Career at UT

The sections included in this, the central section of the handbook, present a detailed and practical combination of wisdom and information to help you make the most of your time here.

Given the size of the UT English department and the highly competitive nature of the academic job market, you can't simply wait for knowledge or opportunities to come to you. You must work hard, not slavishly following tasks set for you but straining with purpose toward your ever-evolving goals. The set of habits characteristic of quality work and the discipline to carry it out are not easy to develop. You'll find that intellectual laziness comes more naturally than intellectual rigor. The difference, like the devil, is in the details. Quality performance in seminars and term papers, development in scholarly conversations, the structure of a dissertation inquiry: all ultimately separate the motivated from the unmotivated, the committed from the indifferent.

For the beginning graduate student, it's important to consider how you want to shape your experience. Many students find it useful to read books relevant to PhD work, such as *Writing Your Dissertation in Fifteen Minutes a Day: A Guide to Starting, Revising, and Finishing Your Doctoral Thesis* by Joan Bolker. Others prefer more traditional material: one group found Machiavelli's *The Prince* and Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier* essential for navigating the sometimes precarious rhetorical situation grad school presents. Whatever you read, try to consider the relationship between your long-term goals and the kind of graduate student you'll be in the short-term. If you're dead-set on research, you should orient yourself toward scholarly pursuits, but if you know you'll prefer teaching, a whole different set of choices presents itself.

Milestones toward a PhD in English

Coursework

You'll spend the first three years at UT completing coursework (two if you enter with an MA), and as seminars form the foundation for your future work, you should make the time as beneficial as you can. Choose courses wisely and intentionally, with an idea of how the topic, the readings, the professor, or the paper you write can help you progress intellectually. Often it's advisable to avoid specializing too early, lest you study a subject for years only to discover you have no desire to dissertate on it. On the other hand, intelligent students sometimes languish in a generalist curriculum, never to land on a topic.

The first semester is typically quite difficult, if only because of students' unfamiliarity with how semesters should go. You may never look at your first batch of seminar papers again, because they're written on survival mode and don't deserve a future. As the semesters progress, you'll become more comfortable writing papers. You'll learn how to develop a good idea and structure an inquiry, and you'll learn the most important bit of wisdom for succeeding in seminars: start early on papers. Eventually, as you specialize and look toward the next phase of the program, you'll begin to write with confidence and internal motivation. See *Academic Genres: Seminar Paper* below.

In your first two years, prior to course registration, you will meet with the graduate advisor, Dr. Wayne Lesser. In your third and fourth years you will meet with the appropriate advisor from a faculty team assembled to advise students of specific concentrations. This team consists of: Dr. Mary Blockley (Language/Linguistics, Medieval), Dr. Lance Bertelson (Renaissance, 18th c, 19th c.), Dr. Jennifer Wilkes (3rd world, Ethnic), Dr. Wayne Lesser (American), Dr. Patricia Roberts-Miller (Rhetoric).

The MA Report

In the second semester of your second year, you'll revise a seminar paper into your MA Report. A culmination of your first two years of coursework and an indication of your promise as a PhD candidate, the Report constitutes your first major scholarly project. You'll work with two faculty members to construct what should be a thorough and articulate argument. See *MA Report* below.

The Qualifying Review

This Qualifying Review focuses on the MA Report as a major transition toward doctoral-level work. Three members of the graduate faculty oversee the review, for which you will provide various documents (e.g., your MA Report, two personal statements regarding your progress in the program thus far and your future research goals, transcripts). The review, to quote the GSC's own description, "would not only consider the quality and promise of a student's master's report, but involve a stock-taking of the student's preparation and discussion of the student's direction and future work in the doctoral program." The review thus aims less to direct students out of the Ph. D. program and much more to encourage and direct their progress. It offers you a chance to

reflect on the difference between your seminar papers and your MA Report, which should represent a much more sophisticated and substantial critical inquiry. It also demands that you ask the hard questions about your strengths and weaknesses: what skills do you lack? In what area of study are you particularly weak? Are there trends (good or bad) in your writing and thinking that offer some clue to how you'll proceed?

Much of this reflection will take place as you write the personal statements required by the review, but you should also make the most of the oral review. The three professors who look over your materials will notice what you don't or can't. They may offer you hard-earned advice, or they may offer some apparently brutal assessments of your work. Don't mistake the latter for some motiveless malignity by the committee. Instead, take even the most painful advice to heart, understanding that the lower-stakes Qualifying Review is a much better place to hear such truths than at a conference or in a rejection letter.

You must submit the materials for the Qualifying Review to the Graduate Office by June 30 of your second summer. The one-hour review session will take place with your panel the week before the beginning of your fifth long semester.

Specialization

As you proceed with coursework, develop relationships with faculty, write your MA Report, and develop your methods and interests, you'll begin a process of real specialization. Some students enter the PhD program with a clear idea of which area or period they want to study. Others have interests but no definite goals. Still others enter relatively indifferent to such trivial questions. Wherever you fit on this spectrum, there's more specialization to do. It's hard to write a Dissertation about nothing, just as the overspecialized quickly becomes the pigeonholed. You may, for example, want to study Puritan diaries from 1704-06, but it wouldn't hurt to broaden your scope a bit, at the very least in the interests of your teaching.

If you find yourself struggling to articulate your specific subjects or methods of interest, look at the papers you've written, in undergrad and in graduate school. What topics compel you or stimulate your curiosity? What texts do you return to again and again? Do you cite particular critics in every essay, and if you do, is that because you disagree with them fundamentally or because they're your scholarly role model? As you think seriously about your habits, you may discover a trend.

Summers

Summers technically constitute a break from the normal rigors of semesters jam-packed with seminars and TA sections or other teaching assignments. But you should look at summer as an opportunity to meet program requirements and/or get ahead on your research. What follows suggests what you should expect from your summers as an English graduate student:

1st summer- Your first two summers typically will be unfunded, at least by the Department of English. There are TA-ships in English available occasionally for the summer, but otherwise you will need to find employment or plan to save during the Fall and Spring

semesters for the summer months. If you are able to stay in Austin during this first summer, you should begin to explore options for your MA Report. You may also consider taking a language course to work towards your language requirement. The foreign language departments at UT offer several options including courses designed specifically for “graduate students in other departments” who desire a basic reading knowledge, intensive courses designed to compress one year of language study into a summer session, and normal single term courses. Without a teaching appointment, you will not have tuition waiver in the summers. You can pay for courses yourself, but also you may consider auditing courses. Auditing is free, generally, though you should seek the permission of the professor or instructor. You will not receive grades for the courses you audit but you will gain facility with language relevant to your future research (which is the real goal anyway).

2nd summer- You should write your personal statements—regarding your progress in the program and your future research—for the Qualifying Review at the end of the summer. Gather your portfolio and submit this material to the Graduate Office by the end of June so that you’re the faculty panel for your review may have time to evaluate the material thoroughly. You should also consider, again, taking language courses and/or begin to read into your field of specialization. If you feel comfortable in your specialization already, you might begin, if you have not already, reading towards the Field Exam. At the end of your second summer, one week before the Fall semester of your third year begins, you will attend orientation for the Department of Rhetoric and Writing (DRW), where you will be trained to teach Rhetoric 306, an introductory writing course. You will also attend your Qualifying Review.

3rd summer- Your third summer will typically be funded through the Department of Rhetoric and Writing. During your third year, you will teach your own section of Rhetoric 306 or another DRW course. Typically an AI’s summer course runs during a “whole” session, a nine week class session that overlaps with the normal first and second summer sessions (from June to August). There are a few single session (either first or second session) sections of DRW courses that run for only four weeks. See Summer Teaching in the DRW for more information. You will receive your normal AI pay per month but you are not required, as during the Fall and Spring semesters, to staff in either the University Writing Center (UWC) or the Computer Writing and Research Lab (CWRL). You will also receive tuition waiver for one course through your AI appointment. You might choose to take a course to fulfill a degree requirement, a language course, or conference hours aimed at your research/dissertation prospectus. If you have not already, you should plan to take the Field Exam before the end of the summer.

4th summer and beyond- The DRW only guarantees funding for your third summer, but you still have a chance at funding through the DRW for the rest of your summers as a graduate student. This will depend on availability of summer teaching and your place on the list of eligible AIs, ranked according to the two most recent teaching evaluations. You will probably have taken the Prospectus Exam the preceding spring, so spend the summer beginning work on your dissertation.

Conference Courses

Conference courses are, generally, independent studies taken under the guidance of one faculty member. You may take a conference course at any point during your graduate career, but you should attend to your course requirements before seeking too much independent work. If you are far along with these requirements you might use a conference course to begin or further a relationship with a particular faculty member, with the intention that this could lead to substantial research, a publishable article, or Dissertation work.

The Field Examination

The Field Examination tests your general knowledge of primary and secondary texts in your chosen field of study (Medieval Studies, American Literature, Rhetoric, etc.) while advancing you towards your dissertation project. In the Field Exam you will be tested over lists composed of approximately 60-80 primary and/or secondary texts. ("Secondary text" here may mean a complete book, a very substantial article, or a set of articles.) When you enter the program, you will be provided with a general or "core" list of texts for your declared field as well as the established protocols for the exam in that field. Faculty in each concentration generate these lists and update them as they deem it necessary. Faculty in each concentration determine the specific protocols for the exam in their area. These protocols vary in specificity among fields, as the following examples demonstrate:

Example 1: Medieval Studies requires you to compose four lists totaling 60-80 texts:

List 1: 25-35 primary texts chosen from the field's core list

List 2, 3, and 4: 10-15 texts each, chosen from three of eleven possible supplemental lists in Medieval Studies (including "Medieval Rhetoric and Poetics," "Late Medieval Authors and Texts," "Manuscript Culture and History of the Book," "Devotional Cultures and Religious Writing," etc.)

You may petition the *Medieval Studies* faculty interest group to add or substitute texts for your particular exam if you feel the texts are necessary given your interests within the field.

Example 2: Renaissance Literature requires that you compose three lists totaling 60-80 texts:

List 1: 50-60 primary texts chosen from a general list divided into poetry, prose, and drama. This list includes texts (marked by an asterisk) which are required for every student)

List 2: a minimum of 5 texts chosen from the "Foundational Critical Works" list

List 3: a minimum of 5 texts chosen from the "Recent Critical Works" list

You may petition the *Renaissance Literature* faculty interest group to add or substitute texts to your particular exam if you feel they are necessary to your interests within the field.

Example 3: Digital Literacies and Literatures requires you to compose two lists totaling 60-80 texts:

List 1: a minimum of 20 texts selected from the field's general list

List 2: a number of texts (dependent on the number of texts in List 1) selected in consultation with your exam committee of faculty and pertinent to your developing interests within the field

It is a good idea to begin reading the texts on the general lists (and possibly the supplemental lists, if available) of each field from the beginning of your time in the program. Generally, as you move forward in the program, you will work with faculty in your field to create the reading lists for your particular Field Exam. In some cases (such as with Medieval Studies, as shown above) the faculty provide several supplemental lists. In other cases, you and the faculty will supplement texts on the general lists with texts that relate to your own trajectory of study within your chosen field. Your list will differ in its basic composition from your colleagues' working in concentrations other than your own (for example, the list of a student in *Renaissance Literature* will include significantly more "primary" texts than a student in *Digital Literacies and Literatures*). Your list, however, will also differ from the lists of colleagues working in your own particular field because of the distinctiveness of your final list of texts, assembled for your particular study trajectory given the areas within the field you have chosen to approach and the particular methodology by which you have chosen to work.

Should you choose to work in two fields at once (in, for example, *Women, Gender and Literature* and *19th Century British Literature*), then you will compose your final lists by drawing from the general lists of both fields. You will work under the guidance of your examining panel and will produce final individualized lists that represent both fields adequately. But you may identify yourself as working in no more than two fields for the purposes of the exam. There must be at least one faculty member on the examining panel from each of the two fields.

You will propose three members of the Graduate Studies Council to compose your Field Exam panel. Your choices are subject to approval and appointment by the Graduate Adviser. You will, further, propose one of these three faculty to serve as chair of your exam panel. You can take a 3 hour Credit/No Credit conference course to prepare for the Field Exam in the Fall or Spring prior to taking the exam. When you and your panel agree that you are prepared adequately, you should schedule a date and reserve a room for the administration of the exam. The exam is oral and will normally be one and one-half to two hours in length. You are expected generally to take and pass the Final Exam sometime during the sixth long semester of study in the program (the fourth semester for those who entered with an MA), and no later than the twelfth class day of your seventh long semester (the twelfth class day of the fifth long semester for those who entered with an MA). You may petition the Graduate Adviser for an extension of the deadline (if you, for example, switched fields). You must declare your intention to take the Field Exam by the 12th class day of the semester in which you plan to sit for the exam or, in the

rare case of exams arranged over summer or winter break, by the end of the finals period of the preceding semester. The Professional Skills committee will offer an information session (about which you will receive an e-mail) with faculty and graduate students each Fall semester to discuss the Field Exam.

Reading lists are available online at:

<http://www.utexas.edu/cola/depts/english/graduate/degrees-offered/PhD-InterestGroups.html>

Some comments about the Field Exam

The Field Exam is designed to move you *forward* towards a quality dissertation that makes strong claims inside the scholarly conversation. Thus, as you work with your faculty mentors to create supplemental lists, think about scholars whose work has radically changed your mind (and others' minds) about a text. Think too about whose style of inquiry provokes your attention or dissent. Think about what names and titles get mentioned repeatedly at conferences, what issues continue to come up in your field's best journals, and what ideas you want to build upon. Again, your goal is to gain a fully self-possessed knowledge of the current critical field.

As you work toward the exam, don't focus on how you can pass the exam. Focus on understanding the field you're entering. What are its values? What are its assumptions? What arguments are generally considered good or bad, successful or unsuccessful? Who are the dominant theoretical figures? What primary texts do the best scholars discuss? How do they discuss them? What kind of research gets done in your field, and where does it get done? What generational shifts have taken place, and to what ideas do various generations persistently return? What ideas have been questioned that were once taken for granted? What ideas do current texts take for granted that you want to question? What is the precise nature of the "transformation" of certain critical works? What presses publish the best books in your field? What authors or texts does your field ignore that they shouldn't? Which do they avoid on purpose? Where do you think the field is heading? That is, what will the *next* "transformative" book in your field be about? You get the idea.

Prospectus Exam

The Prospectus document introduces and explains your Dissertation inquiry and indicates a plan of research. You will complete the Prospectus document and the accompanying bibliography as you take prospectus conference hours. You should aim to complete the Prospectus, the accompanying bibliography, and your Prospectus Exam in your fourth year (if you came in without an MA; in your third year if you came in with an MA). The Prospectus is an important document in that it represents a substantial foray into a larger and more complex academic work. The approval of the Prospectus and completion of the Prospectus Exam, further, represent the faculty's approval of your progress into the final stage of the PhD. The Professional Skills committee will offer an information panel with faculty and graduate students each year to discuss the Prospectus.

Dissertation

The Dissertation announces your arrival into a field of scholarship, a substantial piece of research and writing that is both essential to your success on the job market and likely, in some form, your first book-length publication. It is important to remember that the university allows you a maximum of fourteen semesters of funding through teaching, though funding through the Department of English and the DRW is only guaranteed for five years (without MA) or four years (with MA). While students often receive funding one to two years past their guaranteed allotment from the Department of English, time is not something to take for granted. You should be working fully on your Dissertation by your fifth year (fourth if you came in with an MA) and you should aim to complete the Dissertation in a maximum of six or seven years. The Professional Skills committee will offer a discussion panel with faculty and graduate students each year to discuss the Dissertation.

Academic Genres

Seminar Paper

A good seminar paper fulfills two important functions. First, it reflects the author's development in the course for which it was written. It demonstrates the author's intellectual progress and meets, as closely as possible, the professor's expectations for a term paper. Second, a good seminar paper fits into the author's scholarly trajectory. However relevant to the individual's specialization, it should generate ideas, skills, research, and questions that contribute to his or her overall scholarly project. Though these functions point, as it were, in opposite directions, they arise from the necessary assumption that seminars constitute the foundation for all future academic work. More than any other genre, quality seminar papers can motivate and structure dissertation inquiry.

A Rhetorical Situation

We can't avoid the rhetorical nature of seminar papers. Like most academic activity that counts for something, these essays come with certain expectations, many of which the professor, the primary audience, determines. Thus the basic characteristic of a seminar paper is that there are no consistent characteristics but only a set of variables contingent upon each professor's understanding and agenda. Though we might bemoan having to adapt our (obviously brilliant) ideas to the demands of a particular reader or readers, it's worth remembering that academic life consists wholly of just that kind of adaptation.

It may seem silly to specify the expectations of a given professor, but doing so provides a structure within which an essay's ideas can develop. Common conceptions of seminar papers include those thought of as

- a nascent version of a future publication, complete with thorough knowledge of secondary criticism, footnotes, and bibliography;
- a highly informed and detailed exploration of a single primary text; a glorified close reading;
- an application of the skills and knowledge the seminar is intended to transmit, referring to the texts, theories, or approaches covered during the semester;
- a very specific type of paper with a pre-defined structure or purpose (e.g., an application of a particular theory to a particular text);
- an opportunity to pursue individual inquiries, however unrelated to the course's topic.

Each of these various conceptions entails necessary practical steps. If a professor expects mastery of a body of secondary criticism, for example, then it's wise to survey that criticism and keep notes, perhaps even formalized annotations, on the materials you read. That way, when you sit down to write the essay, you have already established a critical context in which to begin your own inquiry.

The funny thing about seminar papers is that although it's easy to distinguish the different sorts and to approximate which sort a professor has in mind, a truly excellent seminar paper could fit into every sort. This over-determined quality is what makes the seminar paper different from the

other academic genres. The best seminar papers, in other words, manage to do whatever their reader expects them to do, regardless of who that reader is or what s/he expects the paper to do.

For the Future

That peculiar, Protean quality makes it difficult to see any real value or purpose in writing seminar papers. A paper that does everything, it seems, does nothing. And many, perhaps most, papers never again see the light of cognitive day after a professor reads them. They quickly enter the realm of vague, barely retrievable reference, so that years later you'll find yourself saying to students, "I think I wrote a paper on *Moby Dick* once."

You can avoid this miserable middle age only by striving to make use of seminar papers, or rather, to let them do more than simply earn a grade. They must somehow contribute to your intellectual development and future work, but that contribution needn't be anything specific. Not every seminar paper will become a published article or a chapter of your dissertation, though some might. You could use a paper to

- complete research, either primary or secondary, that you will use later. You might, for example, write a paper on modern British poets in order to familiarize yourself with the HRC's resources.
- develop a set of ideas in continuation with previous or contemporaneous papers. You might write an essay on Stoicism one semester and Neostoicism the next.
- experiment with or develop new methodologies. Perhaps you only tried Marxism as a joke in college and want to see how it really works.
- get a good idea of the scholarly conversation around certain texts.
- read, think about, and write about texts you would not have otherwise attended to. Maybe you've always wanted to read Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* and just couldn't find the time.
- develop an idea for a conference paper. This is an especially useful purpose if you're confident in an idea but not confident enough to submit it for publication.
- think toward your dissertation.
- start a relationship with a professor. Visiting office hours wouldn't hurt either.
- write a draft of your MA Report, an especially advisable purpose if you don't feel confident about writing the entire Report in a single semester.

Whatever you do *in* a seminar paper, it's important to do something *with* it, to make it do something for you.

Practical Advice

Below is a series of practical tips for writing excellent seminar papers, even in difficult semesters.

Start early: If you start your essay the week before it's due, it will fulfill neither of its main functions. Though you may be an excellent writer of last-minute papers, you won't be able to craft your inquiry to satisfy the professor's requirements fully and completely, nor will the essay aid your overall progress. It will simply take up space on your hard drive.

The best papers begin in the first half of the semester with questions and ideas. In-depth primary and broad secondary reading progress together in the two months before the deadline, and outlining and drafting takes place over the last month of classes.

Occasionally, professors will ask for paper presentations in the weeks before the deadline, still another reason to begin early.

Set time goals: Accordingly, give yourself artificial deadlines. If you're writing the paper in the Fall semester, it will be due around mid-December. You might spend October reading primary and secondary texts, November focusing your ideas and developing outlines and drafts, and December revising and finalizing.

Don't let the professor be the first to read it: Graduate school is, if anything, a collaborate experience, UT especially so because of its noncompetitive funding. Make a point to discuss paper ideas with your fellow seminarians. Trade drafts and outlines as you work on them, soliciting feedback from your peers before you seek it from the professor. It makes little sense for the professor, the person who will grade it, to be the first to see a paper.

Have ONE idea with purpose: Many of us mistakenly try to take up too large a topic for a single 20-30 page essay. Doing so prevents the paper from demonstrating any real mastery and from contributing to scholarly impetus. Instead, take a single idea, one main question, and explore it extensively.

Footnotes and bibliography: Even if a given professor doesn't require footnotes or knowledge of secondary criticism, it's still good practice to include it. Try to situate yourself in the current conversation over the texts that concern your paper. That way, when you do try to turn the essay into an article or chapter, that essential component will already be built in.

Be honest: All but the least rational professors understand the pressure each semester presents, and they recognize that you are teaching and writing two other papers at the same time as you're writing one for their course. It's safe to be honest about the limits of your time. If, for example, you recognize while writing that you need to cover a certain text but don't have time to do it well, include a footnote to explain the situation, stressing what the section would do if you had time to do it. Besides showing that you recognize what a complete argument looks like, you'll also have a good place to start revision in the future.

Cite the professor: If you're in a topics course, there's a good chance the professor teaches it because s/he is an expert in that topic and has published on it. Students often feel awkward about reading and citing the professor's work, but this can only hurt a potentially good paper, even one that disagrees with the professor's position. You don't need to fawn over the prof's work: just treat it as any other piece of criticism.

Reflect the learning of the course: Even if your essay diverges widely from the course's topic, it should somehow gesture in that direction, perhaps in footnotes.

Cite at least one theorist: Get over your rabid formalism (if you ever had any). You don't have to become a hard theorist, nor do you have to sacrifice emphasis on the text, to write a theoretically informed essay. Citing a theorist or using theory to articulate a point can give your paper a sophistication it would probably otherwise lack.

The MA Report

A peculiar genre, the MA Report. It requires significant research, but it's not a thesis. It is addressed to the scholarly community, but only three people really have to read it. It makes a unified and cohesive (and presumably publishable) argument, but it's too long to be a journal article.

Most students complete their MA Report and take their MA in the second semester of their second year. Those who wish to complete the Report, which is shorter than a Thesis, should be enrolled in E 398R, Master's Report Hours. Two professors read the Report, one supervisor and one reader. Both their signatures are required, along with strict formatting specified by the Graduate School.

Where to Begin

Almost all Reports grow out of quality seminar papers, some of which simply need expansion and minor revision and some of which contain a good idea that needs thorough development. Occasionally a paper stands out as a good candidate for revision, but because so much depends on the decision, some consideration is often necessary. As you look over the essays you've written in the first three semesters, ask yourself the following questions:

- Have you written a paper that shows promise but needs more development, especially research?
- What seminar paper are you most proud of?
- Are there any professors you'd like to work with in the future, using the MA Report as a springboard for a closer relationship?
- What area do you plan to specialize in? Are there any papers that would deepen your knowledge of the field or a body of texts?
- Do any of your essays contain an idea that, with development, could be publishable?

Advisors

Often the professor who oversaw the paper in its seminar phase acts as the Report supervisor, directing the revision process. Another professor, typically one you know and who brings expertise to the topic, acts as second reader.

The kind of MA Report experience you have will probably result from the preferences of these two faculty members. They may insist on regular reports as you work, or they may want regular drafts of the essay. They might only want to meet two or three times during the semester. Typically, the second reader reads the essay twice, once at the beginning and once near the end, while the supervisor watches your progress more closely—but again, each situation will differ.

Because the Report brings you together for the first time with more than one professor, it's one of the first political situations you will encounter. No longer is the dialogue between you and a single instructor, but among a trio of scholars, all of whom bring their peculiar expectations to the Report. The best way to benefit from this politically charged moment is to strive for clear

communication. Make certain what each of the professors expects from you and the document, how you perceive the project, and the timeline for completion.

Re-vision

Once you decide which paper to revise, and after you consult with the professors who will supervise the project, you should develop a revision plan. Sometimes your supervisors will provide deadlines, and in other cases they'll take a hands-off approach. For your own good, even (*especially*) if you don't respond well to deadlines, set yourself a schedule for revision.

Begin with a thorough rereading of the essay. Make notes on problematic sections or ideas that might need better articulation; think about what kind of research would make the essay stronger; think about how the essay enters the scholarly conversation; perhaps make an outline and think about how you could restructure the argument. Your supervisors will each read it as well, and the three of you together should find plenty of potential for development and clarification. You might also ask a friend who's already written an MA Report to read it and offer the practical advice of a peer who knows your style and method.

Try to envision what the essay should look like to meet its full potential, and make a list of the differences between that Platonic essay and the current draft: that list will form a revision checklist. Especially if you need structure in your work, combine this list with the deadlines your supervisors have set, and make a timeline for revision, a syllabus of sorts. It might look like something like this:

- January, Week 2: Choose essay for revision. Read it carefully.
 - Week 3: Consult with advisors, solicit feedback. Ask friend #1 to read it.
 - Week 4: Reread and carefully study primary texts.
- February, Week 1: Read secondary criticism to get a feel for the scholarly conversation.
 - Week 2: Visit HRC to study primary materials. Develop structure of argument.
 - Week 3: Visit HRC to study primary materials. Begin writing.
 - Week 4: Consult with supervisor. Begin extensive additions based on HRC work.
- March, Week 1: Consider methodological questions. Develop bibliography. Write.
 - Week 2: Write.
 - Week 3: Write.
 - Week 4: Draft to supervisor. Ask friend #2 to read it.
- April, Week 1: Revise based on comments. Develop footnotes.
 - Week 2: Revise and refine writing itself.
 - Week 3: Near-final version to supervisor. Finalize bibliography and footnotes.
 - Week 4: Final revisions. Acquire signatures. Show to degree auditor in OGS.
- May, Week 1: DUE IN GRADUATE OFFICE ON LAST DAY OF CLASSES.
 - Week 2: Consider plan for publication.

Whether you manage to stick to this schedule matters less than the fact of its existence, at the very least because you'll have something to feel guilty and stressed about.

Research

At least rhetorically and at most actually, the MA Report should demonstrate your mastery of a body of primary and secondary texts. You are, after all, creating this document to realize your development over two years in graduate school. Make every effort to read primary texts very closely and familiarize yourself with the material and social conditions in which they appeared. Read secondary criticism widely and work hard to discern and express how your essay contributes to the scholarly conversation. Even if your essay responds primarily to one or two critics, you should still cite, if not comment on, other major or relevant voices. Fill the footnotes and bibliography with sources, even those you reference casually, and devote some space in the essay proper to an overview of the major critical trends. Such copiousness does not befit journal articles, which usually present a lean, select set of references, but it suits the MA Report perfectly.

You might benefit from thinking about the project as a chance to perform the kind of research you'll be doing your entire career. If you're writing the Report on twentieth century playwrights, for example, you'd be a fool not to utilize the HRC's archives. And if you're writing on a major author, you might consider what hitherto-ignored texts or discourses could give your project some originality. Including this kind of research will drastically increase the likelihood that you'll eventually publish the essay. Not uncommonly, students indecisive about whether to take their MA and leave or continue to the PhD find in the Report writing process that advanced academic research doesn't suit them.

Toward Completion

After close consultation, primary and secondary reading, further research, and deep consideration, the drafting process shouldn't cause too much angst or pain. Aim to complete a reader-ready draft early so you'll have enough time to revise based on feedback. Many students set themselves a daily word count, say, 1000 words a day, four days a week. The model plan above has the draft in the supervisor's hands with more than a month to spare, though you might need less time. Consider asking another friend to read it for proofreading, stylistic, and formatting problems.

At this stage, reader feedback can either help or seriously hinder the essay's completion. Some hard-to-please readers will insist on extensive revisions, while others will make only minor suggestions. If you find yourself in a position where you don't have time to make the changes your supervisor wants, *do not hesitate to communicate that fact*. State your limitations clearly so there'll be no surprises as the deadline approaches. Make final revisions quickly so that you have time to proofread, finalize footnotes and bibliography, meet the Graduate School's stringent formatting requirements, meet with a degree evaluator, obtain signatures, make bound copies, and submit the final document to OGS. In the last week of classes, the line to submit Reports is ridiculously long, so give yourself a buffer.

Depending on how grateful you are to your supervisor and reader, you might consider giving them some kind of gift. Traditionally, students present each advisor with a bound copy of the Report, often accompanied by a card and something extra, such as a bottle of wine, a gift

certificate, or some other thoughtful sign of gratitude. Recently such kindnesses are less common, owing no doubt to an increased feeling of undeserved entitlement among graduate students.

The Future

Because of the time and effort that went into writing it, the Report is a prime candidate for publication. You should talk with your advisors about how to revise (again). It might be worth spending the summer after you take your MA revising and submitting to a journal. See Journal Article below.

The Prospectus

As a document, the Prospectus can take on more than one form. For some faculty it is a thorough fleshing out of your Dissertation project, a piece of writing that must be meticulously crafted, shaped, and reshaped on its way to sixty-plus pages with a rigorous introduction and chapter descriptions. To other faculty, it is a brief document of about fifteen pages that introduces the project and does its best to forecast how your as-yet-unwritten chapters will take shape. For all faculty, however, the Prospectus is an essential document. The Dissertation project is your first foray into a book-length work and, therefore, a first step toward shaping you into tenured faculty material. In the Prospectus you present your abilities to conceive of a project on this grander scale, and your awareness of methodologies and of the critical conversations that you aspire to initiate or enter. Whether your Prospectus committee wants a fifteen or sixty-page Prospectus, the document itself must be well conceived so that they can use their talents and resources to help you shape your project. The Prospectus process is still often referred to as the “3-area” process, the “3-area exam” or your “3-area committee.” This is largely a dated misnomer, as this and other programs once held field exams or “comps” that tested a doctoral candidate on three areas usually consisting of one’s chosen period (medieval, for instance), and two other areas (one or two proximate historical periods, or critical theory, history, etc.)

The Committee

You may have an idea of whom you want to serve on your Dissertation committee, but it is not necessary in the early stages of your project to have a complete team in mind. You should, however, find at least one faculty member with whom to build a relationship regarding your project. This person may or may not become, later, the Dissertation chair, but as you wind down coursework requirements, you will want to begin taking Prospectus or conference hours with this professor and other potential committee members. Together you can begin assembling a reading list, writing the Prospectus, and filling out your Prospectus committee based on the needs of the project and the mapping of the three areas. You may already have faculty members in mind, and these faculty may, then, choose how their skills and specializations can structure the prospectus.

The Reading List

You will want to begin compiling a bibliography of the sources you read for the project. As you assemble the bibliography, consider how your sources fit into your project. You are not necessarily responsible for thoroughly knowing every source on the list, but you should have read or at least have the idea of most of the texts. Also, if you feel a prospective source will not benefit the project, it’s fine to include it in your bibliography. Clarity about what you have read, however useful, can aid your committee in leading you towards more beneficial material.

The Document

You should probably write the Prospectus under the guidance of only one faculty member, your prospective Dissertation chair or co-chair. After you work with him/her to strengthen the document and resolve its major problems, the rest of your committee will read it. While you will develop your reading list and ideas for the Dissertation concurrently, preliminary understanding

of the bibliographical materials is essential to focusing and defining the Dissertation topic for the Prospectus itself. Most prospectuses are between 20 and 30 pages, and the most important part of the Prospectus is the introduction.

In these first 7-15 pages you will introduce the project. Here you should declare the argument of the Dissertation, its research focus—the critical conversations your project begins or enters and the critical questions it seeks to answer. Explain how the work expands or revises existing scholarship on the subject. Present an account of methodology and then a specific plan of analysis. You might also provide a sample of the type of critical reading you aspire to perform in your Dissertation.

Following the introduction, one typically offers chapter descriptions. These descriptions should be as thorough as possible, but they are, of course, subject to change and revision. If you could perfectly layout the shape of your chapters, you would have already written the Dissertation. Attempting, however, to understand the details of your project's internal organization allows both you and your committee to perform more fine-tuning at an earlier stage in the process, which makes for a better and more efficiently written Dissertation.

The Prospectus Examination

You will often hear the term “conversation” to describe the Prospectus examination. Truly, the examination is much more a conversation between you and your committee than a trick-laden test to serve as a gate-keeping function for the graduate program. But the examination should not be taken lightly, as it serves as a launching of your Dissertation project. Decide on some proximate dates for your examination and run these by your committee members. Once you establish a date, e-mail the graduate coordinator so that he/she may prepare documentation and book a room for the examination.

For the exam itself, you should prepare an opening statement to give during the first 5-10 minutes. Use this statement to set the tone for the examination. Briefly explain the impetus for the project. Why do you desire to pursue the topic on which your Dissertation will focus? What led you to this topic, or what early inquiries brought you to the project at hand? What further analysis can you provide beyond your Prospectus document? How might you further articulate the ideas of the Prospectus document? Your attempt to answer these questions, or elaborate more thoroughly if you already touched on them in the Prospectus, reminds the committee of your goals and inspirations and, importantly, provides them material to further the conversation in the exam.

Most importantly, you should make clear what concerns and questions you have for your committee. How do you want them to aid your project? What reservations, fears, or worries do you have? In what ways are you confident and is this confidence justified? The questions you pose in the opening statement work to set the tone for the examination, and your committee members will frequently draw upon your statement for questions during the examination.

Be sure you have an adequate working knowledge of your bibliography, as well as a handle on the critical texts most important to the project. If you have done the preparatory work for the

bibliography and the Prospectus, then little preparation is truly necessary for the examination itself. The exam should prove extremely helpful to you as you stand at the threshold of the project. Again, the purpose of the examination is not so much to test your competence and mastery of the material, but more thoroughly to shape the project, the chapter outlook, and the plan for research and writing. Go into the examination with this in mind, with, again, your own questions for your committee. Use the experience to bolster your standing as a competent scholar with your committee and to establish a personal confidence in your project and your research and writing plan.

You must take the examination within two years of passing the Qualifying Review, and before submitting an application for doctoral candidacy to the Office of Graduate Studies. If your committee does not feel you are ready to proceed with your project, you may petition the Graduate Advisor and Graduate Studies Chair for permission to take the examination a second time, but approval is not automatic and under no condition may you take the examination more than twice. The examination will last about two hours, and the chair should report the results of the exam in writing to the Graduate English Office. The committee may require revisions to the Prospectus before the student can apply for doctoral candidacy.

Doctoral Candidacy

Doctoral Candidacy is more than simply another ambivalent graduate student title. Numerous scholarships, fellowships, and research grants, as well as practical utilities such as library study cubes (large private offices within the PCL equipped with bookshelves, climate control and three times the space of a cube in Calhoun) all require your status as doctoral candidate before you can submit applications. Following your Prospectus examination, you are eligible to apply for candidacy. In order to complete the candidacy form, however, you must have a full Dissertation committee of five professors, including three members of the Graduate Studies Committee, and one member from outside of the department or off-campus. This often complicates the application for candidacy immediately following a successful Prospectus examination. It is a good time to consider who will be on your committee, but don't haphazardly fill out your committee just to file for candidacy, as any changes to your committee following a successful candidacy application will need approval by the graduate school. You may use department professors who hold appointments in other departments as out of department committee members; you may consider revisiting a relationship with a professor from an out of department class you took sometime previously in filling requirements for your master's degree or other PhD course requirements; or you may search the university for a member of faculty whom you have not previously known but who you feel will contribute to the project. Several graduate students have also successfully sought out off-campus scholars, whom they admired and felt were relevant for the project, to participate on a Dissertation committee.

The actual application for candidacy is completed by you and approved online by several evaluators. Go to the candidacy website: <http://www.utexas.edu/ogs/pdn/candidacy.html>. The candidacy application requires you to submit a 600-word summation of your project, so you may consider how to write this or how to excerpt your Prospectus introduction. Once you submit the application, it will proceed through a queue of faculty and administrators: first your Dissertation chair, then the English Graduate Studies Program Chair and the Graduate Advisor, then to an

evaluator in the Office of Graduate Studies, and, finally, the Dean of the Graduate School. The process may take several weeks for completed approval. You can check your application's status at the following site: https://utdirect.utexas.edu/ogs/forms/candidacy/stu_appsList.WBX?

The Academic Book Review

Academic book reviews are beneficial for graduate students in several ways. First they offer an opportunity for publication. Though book reviews do not trump published articles, and graduate students should not take too much time away from their own research and potential articles to write them, they do enhance one's CV, especially a CV that lacks any other form of publication. You should try to choose a recent book from a university or major press relevant to your field, and, if possible, to your dissertation topic. In this way, you will have a knowledge base with which to assess the book, and you can move towards publication with the review while also moving towards the completion of your own dissertation project. Second, reading for review and writing the book review enhance your analytical skills. Third, you often will receive free copies of the books you offer to review. Finally, published book reviews establish your presence in your field.

Before proceeding with any reading and writing, you should have in mind a text or texts you wish to review. Journals vary in their method of soliciting and accepting reviews, but most do not accept unsolicited book reviews. Generally, reviews are solicited in two ways. First, a journal may offer, on its website or in the "Books Received" section in the printed journal, a list of books titles they want reviewed. In this case, you will need to contact the editor-in-chief or editor of book reviews and inquire about reviewing a book on the list. Once you receive their okay, you may proceed. Either they will send you a copy of the book, or you must find it in the library. Second and more typically, you will need to contact the editor or book review editor of a journal to let them know you would like to review a book for their journal. If they desire your services, they will, then, assign a text to you for review.

Reading the Book

As a critic, you are trained to read with an eye for rhetoric, structure and purpose, not only the primary literary texts you choose to study, but also the secondary books and articles about your chosen field of literature and/or linguistics. So writing a book review is merely the performance of what you have been trained to do with the addition of putting in print your opinion about the relevance and usefulness of the text in question.

You should read the text meticulously, taking many notes. Note useful quotations that demonstrate the author's main points and that may serve well in your own explanation and summary of the text. You do not want to rely too much on quotations in the review, but an occasional line from the author, specifically one stating his/her thesis adds authority to your own review. Also, keep a general sense of the organization and structure of the overall text and its chapters. You may even make an outline of the book's structure. This will allow you more easily to summarize the book's chapters when you write the review. This is not simply a book report, but rather a critical review. So be attentive not just to the argument being made, but to the method by which the argument is made, the support of the argument, the organization of the text's information, and how this organization helps or hinders understanding of the overall argument.

You may also ask, “Does the book do what it claims to do in its introduction or opening?” Take note of where you feel the argument fails and where you feel the book best proves itself. Finally, as you read, ask yourself to whom this book speaks. What specific field or collection of scholars does it most clearly address—in addition to the author’s stated purpose, the footnotes and bibliography will help you answer this question. Consider how effective the book’s argument is for this field or group. Does it relate to a current trend or argument? How does it relate to other similar books already published? Where does this book fit in the specific field to which it is speaking, and should the critics in this field, perhaps including yourself, buy it or check it out? The more thorough you are in your note-taking, the easier the review will be to write, and the quicker you will be on your way to publication.

The Document

Before you approach the document itself, first read through several published book reviews from the journal with which you are working. Get a sense of what the editors expect from book reviews in their journal: overall length (typically 1000 words), organization, level of summary, space devoted to summary, balance of positive and negative criticisms, referencing of other related works and authors. Once you have looked over several reviews and feel you have a sense of what the journal wants and expects from your review, you are ready to write.

1. Book reviews always begin with the citation of the book under review:
Full title, author, place of publication, publisher, year of publication, edition (if necessary), number of pages, any special features of the text including inserts, maps, plates, etc) price, ISBN.
2. Your opening paragraph should state the author’s overall intention in the book: the critical discussion that the book attempts to enter, the author’s thesis, and the general success or failure of the book.
3. In the following paragraphs, summarize the book, either chapter by chapter or more generally. The length of your summary will be determined by the expectations of the journal. You can base your summary length on previous reviews published in the journal with respect to varying book lengths (i.e. if your book is 500 pages, it may extend the length of summary past that of a book of 200 pages).
4. Once you have summarized the book, take one paragraph to note the book’s strengths.
5. Follow the book’s strengths with one paragraph on its weaknesses. Be sure that your criticisms are based on the intentions of the book and not on what you feel like the intentions of the book should have been. Further, be sensitive to any areas of a topic that the book does not cover. Are they essential to the book’s purpose? One 300-page book cannot cover every possible angle, sub-topic, and text.
6. Finally, conclude by suggesting whether or not the book’s strengths outweigh its weaknesses. Does the book warrant attention by relevant critics? Does the book make a statement in the field, or stride in new direction toward which the scholarship of the field might venture?

Conferences and the Conference Paper

Scholars go to academic conferences primarily to present new research. Conferences geared towards English literary studies, comparative studies, linguistics, and literary and composition pedagogy have various nuances to their formats, but typically an academic conference will focus itself under the banner of an organization (Modern Language Association, the Rhetoric Society of America, the New Chaucer Society). Each conference will consist of several panels or sessions, and each panel will consist of three to four presenters, a moderator who chairs the panel, and sometimes a respondent whose task it is to form an official response, which he/she will present when the papers have all been read. Presenters each read a 15-30 minute paper (20 minute papers are standard) to the other members of their panel and an audience of interested attendees. A question and answer period often follows the presentations, during which panelists field questions about their paper from other panelists, the moderator, the respondent, and the audience. At mega-conferences like the annual MLA convention, the vast range of panel topics includes literature, language, teaching, research funding, and more. At conferences as focused as the New Chaucer Society, most panels will still address various topics of language, literature, and teaching, but with attention to the specific author's and perhaps associated authors' works.

Selecting Conferences to Attend

Attending a conference as a presenter or just a sightseer can be incredibly valuable for a graduate student. It is important to experience the scholarly atmosphere of a conference, the conversations between practicing critics, the types of questions they ask each other, the feedback presenters receive on their papers. Conferences also offer excellent opportunities for networking, which can prove helpful for one's publishing opportunities and one's entrance into the job market as a PhD or ABD (All But Dissertation). This is all part of becoming a professional scholar, one who presents a paper and participates in the critical conversation as an audience member.

If you plan on simply attending a conference to hear papers and get a sense of the atmosphere, then it's better to attend a major conference in your field or the MLA national convention. At these conferences you will see typically the top people in your respective field—“stargaze” as some call it (“I just shared a handout with Julia Kristeva,” “I just saw Stephen Greenblatt present a paper”)—you will hear papers on new topics of research, and browse massive book sales where major presses set up booths and offer discounts. Later in your graduate career you can also network with publishers about your own potential publications.

Give some thought to selecting a conference for which to submit a proposal or abstract. As a graduate student, several factors may limit the number of conferences you can attend. Funding is perhaps the greatest obstacle. Due to sheer numbers, our graduate program can generally offer to you only 50% travel support for a conference. Our location in central Texas adds to this difficulty because most major conferences will be in US cities on the East or West coasts, and even though others will be in the Midwest, you will more than likely have to fly to the host city. These and other factors, such as time to produce a worthy paper, will limit the number of conferences you can attend. So make selections with care. Think about conferences and associations you want on your CV. Sometimes major conferences will come to Texas, such as

the Medieval Academy in 2000 or the North American James Joyce Conference in 2007, and it is certainly recommended, if appropriate for your field, for you to participate.

To give a paper at MLA should be a goal of most scholars, but several other conferences can prove beneficial. Regional MLA conferences—for our location, the South Central MLA—and other regional field conferences are excellent venues to present your work. Inquire with faculty about graduate student-friendly conferences that still maintain prestige in your field. Balancing regional conferences that are inexpensive and friendly to graduate students with some prestigious national or international conferences that may be more costly is certainly feasible. But you should always aspire to major conferences. They should not be taken lightly, as your moment in the sun can lead to embarrassment at the hands of established scholars should you come ill-prepared.

The Conference Abstract

Conferences issue calls for papers (CFP) in various forms. These may be released in society newsletters, on organization websites, through individual panel organizers, and various other forms. There are also large depository websites such as Penn's CFPs page (<http://cfp.english.upenn.edu/>) where you can find a multitude of calls for conferences big and small. Some conferences will have meta-themes to which all panels and papers are geared. Other topics of focus will be panel-specific. The length allowed for abstracts usually varies between 250 and 500 words. Due dates for panel abstracts can vary, so pay attention. One conference ten months away will have a due date only two months in advance of the conference while another will have a due date nearly one year in advance of the conference. Also pay attention to the panel organizer. This person is typically the one who submitted an abstract to a conference program committee for the panel or session itself. You might even glance at their work, if you can find it, to understand their interests and how to tap into them or at least use their language in your own abstract.

When looking over panel or session calls for papers from specific conferences, consider what work you have already completed—master's thesis, seminar papers. These can give you a solid footing on which to craft an abstract. You can then adjust the focus of your existing paper to fit a single panel. Using previous work will also mean you've completed some of the work toward the paper. If you don't have any relevant material already completed, do not be deterred from applying to a panel you want to participate in. But consider the time you will have, between classes and teaching, to complete this separate project. Don't wait until the last minute. While we often laugh at stories of our own or other faculty members writing papers on trains or in hotel rooms the night before a conference, this is not a situation you want to recreate yourself as a graduate student, even if you aspire to be the tenured faculty-type who can pull off such a feat.

Begin your abstract with the title of your proposed paper. In writing the abstract itself, be as succinct as possible. Abstracts come in various forms, but like any short yet very important document, you want to begin with a catchy opening that will interest the organizer, offer a middle section that demonstrates your competence and gestures towards interesting, new information on the topic, and close with a quick summary of what you offer with your forthcoming paper, or where the paper fits in a larger interpretive network.

For your opening, you might offer a catchy sentence on your topic and a thesis, or at least a phrase suggesting what you will offer in your paper, why the paper matters—for instance, a new reading of a literary work, a new interpretation or critique of a theory, etc. In the body or middle-part of the abstract, you will want to put together a small amount of support information that intrigues the organizer without giving away too much. *Remember that the point is for them to wonder so much about the support material and conclusions of your argument that they choose to include you on their panel.* Offering quotes from other relevant critics on your topic is not necessary, but some demonstration of your competency on the topic will go a long way. For your conclusion you may offer some notion of the relevance or importance your paper holds for the topic or relative field: why is it important for critics to take notice of your new reading? Include your name, institution affiliation, and e-mail address at the bottom of the abstract.

Whether you submit your abstract by paper mail or e-mail, include a brief cover letter or statement:

Dear Dr. Jones,

Please find attached [enclosed] the abstract for my proposed paper, “Title.” I am a doctoral candidate [M.A. student, graduate student] at the University of Texas at Austin. This paper stems from ongoing research regarding my dissertation titled “Title.” I look forward to your response. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Marcus Brody
University of Texas at Austin
m.brody@mail.utexas.edu

The Conference Paper

Required length for conference papers can vary depending on the nature of the conference or panel. Typically, a conference panel will call for a twenty-minute paper. The general formula is that it takes two minutes to read one typed page, so a twenty-minute paper will consist of eight to ten pages. You do not want to go over your allotted time. While you may see established critics do this routinely at conferences, it is generally bad conference etiquette, especially for new critics. Be aware, as you write, of the time it will take to read quotations of passages, and to pause and add commentary to a passage or important point in your paper. It’s typical to offer your audience handouts with passages, images, and other relevant material so that they have a visual guide to your topic. Be intentional about how your paper interacts with the handout material.

The paper itself will be an academic paper, not unlike what you write in your seminars, but don’t forget that this is also an oral performance. As a rhetorician, you will want to include some wit, some moments of pause, and rising and falling action. Just as you would not stand in front of your own classroom of students and recite poetry in an uninflected, monotone voice, you will not

stand in front of a room of fellow graduate students and established scholars and simply “read” your ten-page paper. The shorter format will also force you to select the best and most relevant information for your topic. It will be important, then, to narrow your focus as much as possible. A good conference paper will, indeed, have one point of focus with which to engage the audience for this limited time. As in any academic paper, you will want to briefly summarize the critical scene of your topic, but unlike the space you typically allow yourself in your extended paper, you do not want to take up precious presentation minutes on this, so it is important to be brief. Get to the heart of your topic quickly. You might consider how the paper will look structurally (2 pages for introduction and critical summary, 6-7 pages for new interpretive reading and argument support, 1-2 pages for conclusion).

The Journal Article

Like any good conference paper, seminar paper, or dissertation chapter, a journal article contains a single, well-developed idea. These other genres culminate in the article, at least in the world of graduate study. Books will come later, probably built out of several separately published essays, but journal articles are the PhD student's bread and butter. They stand out above any other component of your CV. They should, therefore, arise from your best ideas, contain your best writing, and receive your most serious attention.

The most respected journals are peer-reviewed: when the journal receives an essay for consideration, one or more scholars who specialize in the essay's subject read and assess it. They make a recommendation to the journal editors, who respond to the essay's author with one of several possible responses: accepted, accepted contingent on revisions, revise and resubmit, or rejected. The editors often include the reader's response and sometimes an editorial response. The MLA Directory of Periodicals offers the most extensive information on journals, including data on selectivity, submission guidelines, response time, peer review status, etc. You can find the Directory at <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/indexes/titles.html?id=249>.

Many—*many*—concerns factor into a published article. Besides the actual content of an article, the idea and argument the essay contains, you must consider where to publish, when in your career to publish, and when during the year to publish, and other variables that, in turn, affect the content and structure of the essay. Everyone takes his or her own course to publication, but no one can avoid four tasks: idea conception, idea development, journal selection, and submission. These won't occur contiguously but simultaneously. You'll choose the journal, for instance, as you conceive and develop the ideas, and you might submit the essay to several journals—though not all at once—as you continue to revise the argument.

Idea Conception

Few articles begin as articles. Most originate as term papers or conference papers; those forms exist, in a way, to signpost the road to publication. As you consider what essay(s) to revise toward publication, look over ideas you've explored previously. Your MA Report is a good place to start, since presumably you wrote it with intent to publish. Think also about what seminar papers or presentations you particularly enjoyed working on or what methods and ideas you've found compelling. This hidden value of seminars, the body of potential publications they create, often goes undervalued, when in fact it's their central merit.

The publishability of an idea or argument can prove difficult to discern. Originality certainly helps, though so often in the academic world the adage "there are no new ideas" holds true. Your essay could offer a new or original reading of a text, set a text in relation to other critical, historical, or aesthetic discourses, or introduce a hitherto ignored yet incontrovertibly significant fact or idea. The really important originality, especially for graduate students, is the way the essay contributes to one or more scholarly conversations. You yourself wish to enter the critical conversation about texts (even non-literary or theoretical ones), so it only makes sense that your first publications in particular enter those conversations with intellectual force and clear, rhetorically-minded style. You've got to work the scholarly room, in other words. The main

question for establishing whether an idea is publishable thus becomes not “Is this idea absolutely brilliant?” (which it obviously is) but “How does this idea contribute to ongoing discussions?”

Certain tasks and possible hindrances follow from this notion of originality. First, and rather obviously, you have to establish that no one’s yet published the same idea in the same way. Use the MLA bibliography and the footnotes of recent publications on the texts in question to lead you to a larger body of criticism. Typically, if someone has published your idea, you’ll find out about it in the early stages of writing, but don’t be surprised if at the last moment you find an argument identical to yours. (At the very worst, the readers for the journal you submit to will refer you to the person who beat you to the punch. But this is rare.)

Second, discuss the idea with others. Ask your professor mentors, who probably know the most recent trends and can gauge whether journals will take to the idea. Don’t be surprised or hurt if they tell you your idea is neither interesting nor publishable nor very good, really, at all. Talk with your grad student friends, who can help you work out the idea and articulate it clearly.

Third, call “dibbs” on the idea. Alternatively, you can “shotgun” the idea, though strict guidelines govern the shotgunning process. See www.shotgunrules.com.

Fourth, consider making yourself a timeline for research, revision, and submission. A self-imposed syllabus of this sort will motivate you and keep the project moving forward. Be sure to budget time for all necessary tasks (see below, and see the sample timeline in MA Report above).

Idea Development

Even the most widely published scholars have colleagues and friends read their work as they revise it for submission, so don’t make the arrogant, foolish mistake of sending off an essay without asking at least one other to read it. For your first attempt at publication, no fewer than three sets of eyes other than your own should read your essay before you send it out. Probably you’re already working closely with a few professors by the time you try your hand at publishing: they’ll make excellent readers, and no doubt they’ll gladly help you. You should also ask your close friends to read the essay, since they’re in the best position to comment on how your argument has developed over time.

Because every article’s final form depends wholly on the argument’s demands, your unique style, the journal, and the responses of your readers (before and after submission), it’s difficult to predict here what the document should look like. It might benefit you to think of the essay as leaner and more efficient than an MA Report, or as a thoroughly revised and developed seminar paper. The best models for a journal article, however, are other journal articles. Take time to look through your favorite journals to get a feel for what arguments you find most compelling, what structures strike you as particularly persuasive, what methodologies and stylistic habits you emulate (or derogate). Find a few articles that make the same sort of argument you’re making and use them as scholarly models as you proceed.

In the process of developing your argument, don't ignore the importance of style. Even the most brilliant ideas wind up rejected based on poor articulation. Perhaps you might ask a friend who knows your writing to read the essay for style. And, of course, see Academic Writing below.

Journal Selection

Once you feel you have written a brilliant piece of material, you must take the almost equally important step of selecting a journal to which to send your article. There are several questions to consider in the selection process:

1. How much time do I have before I “need” a publication? (i.e. How much time before I hit the job market?)

You always want to shoot for the best journal, but you must also consider the strength of the piece of writing you plan to submit. Does it have a chance to make it in the best journal in my field? Do I have the time to wait for its review, and, if rejected, to submit it to another journal for publication in time for me to have “published articles” on my CV? Even if it receives a revise and resubmit, do I have time to do this? If you have the time, always strive for the best journal for your article and work, but if you need a published work quickly, you may consider a mid-level journal with whom you will have a better statistical chance of getting your article accepted. Look at the MLA Review of Periodicals for submission and acceptance numbers.

2. What is the top journal in my field?

We always want to aim for the marquee journal whose presence on a CV screams “hire me!” You should almost always aim for such an achievement. Publication in a top journal in your field, or a top general topics journal like PMLA, is worth unparalleled academic capital for a graduate student about to enter the job market. Even after your successful job search, as you continue to publish and seek tenure, publications in major journals earn you more “tenure points” than multiple publications in lesser journals. So learn the hierarchy of journals in your field. This is often contingent on several factors beyond the obvious necessity that it be peer reviewed: dissemination of the journal (how many subscribers?), the types of scholars who publish there in a typical issue (stars of the field or unknowns?), and the number of submissions received versus the number accepted—though this can be deceiving given that many top journals prove intimidating and, therefore, often receive a smaller number of high-quality submissions.

3. Does my article fit this journal?

Take into account the type of article you plan to submit. Does it fit the top journal in your field? Is it similar in scope, sophistication of argument, length, style, specific attention to the field or author that is the subject of the journal? If the typical length of an article in your field's top journal is forty pages, then your revised fifteen-page seminar paper might not be an ideal candidate for that journal. If the focus of articles in your field's top journal depend on contemporary critical theory to explore literature, then your old philological/old historicist reading of a poem will probably not find its audience there. You should, then, consider finding a journal that fits the argument and methodology of your article. On the other hand, if you have

time, you might consider revising your article to fit the journal's style. Read most recent issues and observe what kinds of arguments, methodologies, subjects, and styles the journal publishes, and alter your essay's scope and structure to match.

4. How low is too low?

In some ways, a publication is at least...*a* publication. The key component of your publication should be that it appears in a *peer-reviewed* journal. Peer-review indicates, at least, that other scholars read your work and deemed it publishable. While an article in PMLA will mean more than an article in a lesser journal, an article in a peer-reviewed journal will always carry some weight.

5. General or Field-Specific?

One question that often goes unasked is "Who are you trying to speak to with your article?" This can be a complex question with an equally complex answer. Get ready! If you are an Early-Modern scholar who focuses on Edmund Spenser and you have written an article on some aspect of the *Amoretti* then you have several avenues of specific and broader publication. You may want to announce your presence in Spenser studies by submitting your article to *Spenser Studies*. Or you may want to announce your presence to a broader Early-Modern scholarly audience by submitting your article to *Renaissance Quarterly* or *Early Modern Literary Studies*. If your article touches upon some interesting critical conversation that goes beyond Spenser or Early Modern Literature, then you may submit your article to *PMLA* or *ELH*.

Now, if you are a scholar of D.H. Lawrence and you have a good article on Edmund Spenser, you have to reorient yourself. How much do you want to hide or promote what could be a somewhat puzzling publication to job interviewers or your future colleagues? There is nothing wrong with publishing an article on a topic or field far removed from your own. Publication testifies, if nothing else, to your ability to "do the job" of being an academic. Don't shy away from submitting such an article, but be aware of how the article will appear to job interviewers and colleagues given where it appears in print. You may still send it to a specific Spenser-related journal. This makes the most sense and will make sense to the hiring committee looking at your CV. Again, if your article makes a contribution to criticism beyond Spenser, and you publish it in a general journal, you will likely be seen as making some sort of statement towards your newfound methodology or criticism. You then appear as a good critic in general, who has the ability, though not necessarily the desire, to work in several periods of the literary canon. This too makes sense. However, if your article does not make any significant statement beyond Spenser, and you publish it in a general journal, then it perhaps does little for you or your reputation other than serve as a publication.

Submission

Most journals list submission guidelines in the printed issue, through the website, or in the MLA Directory of Periodicals available online through the library's website (under "Research Tools" then "Find Articles using Databases"). These guidelines will typically include maximum length of the article, citation style (Chicago, MLA, APA), and submission procedure. Submission

procedure will include the number of copies need for distribution to editors and readers. Rarely will you submit copies with your name on them. Peer review often calls for blind review of an article, so be sure to submit clean, nameless copies of your article to the journal. Some journals want you to use specific scholarly and/or critical editions of a particular author or work. Otherwise, this is an implicit expectation that you can glean from reading the footnotes of any article from the particular journal. For instance, *James Joyce Quarterly* provides a list of acceptable editions of Joyce's work. They will instruct you to use the Robert Scholes edited edition of *Dubliners* if you submit a related essay. *Studies in the Age of Chaucer Journal* will generally expect you to use the *Riverside Chaucer* in articles. Finally, you should submit, with copies of your article, a brief cover letter to the journal editor(s). This is simply professional courtesy, but in the letter you can place the article in context. Is it part of a larger study (your dissertation, first book)? If you have published in a related journal, you may mention this. It may look much like a conference abstract cover letter:

Dr. Jones, editor

Please find enclosed my article, "The Uncanny of Robert Browning's Presence in *The Dead*." I am a doctoral candidate [M.A. student, graduate student] at the University of Texas at Austin. This article stems from ongoing research regarding my dissertation titled, "James Joyce: Between Two Deaths." I look forward to your and your readers' responses. I have previously published an article on Finnegans Wake in *Irish Studies Review*. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Marcus Brody

Additionally, the strategic student may increase his/her chances at acceptance by timing the submission carefully and thinking rhetorically. Most tenure-level professors write and submit articles during the summer, and many journals slow or stop reading submissions during the summer months. Editors return to work in August or September with a gigantic pile of submissions, perhaps including yours. Statistically, regardless of the utter genius of your essay, you're less likely to be accepted at that time than you would if you sent it in, say, February, when the journal is churning at full speed but few essays get submitted.

What is more, it's important to remember that journal editors are human beings and thus subject to persuasion. If there's a scholar on the editorial board who will probably read the essay, it's a good idea to cite him/her favorably. You might also consider citing the last few essays the journal has published on your topic; sometimes, the most recent author of a related article in the same journal will, in fact, be a reader for your submitted article. Also, because editors like their journal's articles to get buzz, it's possible to enter into the ongoing intra-journal conversation.

The Dissertation

The Dissertation is, of course, the single most important piece of writing you will produce as a graduate student. Some professors will say that the dissertation is simply the last great exercise of graduate school, the last obstacle course a graduate student must navigate in order to become a professional. But more recently, given the competitive nature of the job market, professors view the dissertation as the first product of a trained academic. Indeed, you will probably find that most scholars generate their first book from their dissertation. There is little we might offer in regards to the document itself. Once you have reached this point in your graduate career, you will know what to do. We will, however, offer a few points to remember as you form your project and write your chapters.

1. Remember that your dissertation is more important than almost anything on your CV. Other than your teaching and a published article(s), the strength and promise of your dissertation will get you a job. Consider how your project will contribute to your field, how it will speak to current scholarship and scholars, and how it will stand as a substantial part of your profile when you enter the job market. What will your project say about you as a researcher, writer, and teacher? How will it speak to your abilities?
2. The dissertation is not simply an assemblage of several seminar papers. A book-length project demonstrates a certain connectivity in its thought as it moves from chapter to chapter. Writing the dissertation, then, constitutes more than simply editing and stringing together several past papers.
3. Make yourself a schedule for research and writing. Create deadlines and meet them. Most of us appreciate the abstract mental activity that goes on when we produce a substantial piece of writing. But remember that funding, like all good things, must end. Stay ahead of your project as best you can. The more organized and disciplined you are in your research and writing and the meeting of deadlines, the easier the job-market process—a process that itself can consume much of the Fall semester before the December MLA convention—will be for you.
4. Get yourself in a dissertation reading group. Support by colleagues is another priceless feature of graduate school. Your professors, though dedicated to helping you achieve your academic goals, are busy with their own goals, so the more efficient you can be in giving them well-crafted and polished writing, the more quickly they can get to the heart of bettering your project. You will find this efficiency through dissertation reading groups. Together you will help each other work through matters of methodology, organization, and written product. Though groups are often comprised of students in related fields, this is not a necessity. Further, these groups can also work on other writings including books reviews and articles under consideration for submission. As you approach the writing of your dissertation, organize a dissertation reading group amongst a few or several of your peers.

Publication

“Publication” is a magic, near-priceless word on your CV if you have one, a distant, seemingly-mocking noun if you don’t. There are several ways to achieve publication in your time as a graduate student.

Hierarchy of Publications

Perhaps the easiest form of publication is a book review. A book review does not carry the weight of a published article, but stands, nonetheless, as a piece of submitted writing deemed publishable by a journal’s editor(s). Further, a book review demonstrates your presence as a critic in your particular field— given that you review a book in your field—or at least as a general critic if you review a book on a topic unrelated to your field. See [Book Reviews](#).

A second form of publication may be an invited article. As you make your way through the academic conference circuit, you will make friends and acquaintances in the form of other academics. This may lead to your being invited to write an article for an essay collection to be edited by one of your newfound friends or colleagues, or you may be included in a collection of conference papers from a particular meeting that you attended. Some essay collections also send out a call for articles through various databases related to a specific field or the Penn Calls For Papers page. This process is not unlike submitting an article to a journal, though your article may be less rigorously reviewed. Because of the perceived lack of review (not completely a “lack” but, often, less rigorous) that is often the case with invited articles or essays, this form of publication is viewed, for the most part, as less prestigious than a published journal article. No doubt as you achieve new scholarly heights in your forthcoming academic career, you will participate in numerous invited essays. This is a benefit of both building your own reputation as a scholar and establishing a network of colleagues, any one of which may put together a collection in the form of a focused topic study, a festschrift (in honor of a retiring or deceased scholar), etc, for which they will solicit an essay from you. But, as a young, relatively unknown scholar, these invited essays are still less valuable than a published journal article. Nevertheless, they are a publication, and a publication of your research at that.

Finally, there is the journal article. These publications are incredibly valuable for a graduate student because they are typically reviewed by the journal editor(s) and by two or three practicing scholars, who work on the topic of interest in the essay. Their approval of your work signifies approval of your place in a field of scholarship, or in academia more generally. The process of blind review—they often won’t know who wrote the piece—removes any hints of academic nepotism and only further enhances your ability to practice independently as a scholar. You should aspire to publication in a peer-reviewed journal as a graduate student. Don’t wait!

Publication and the Job Market

Given the highly competitive nature of the job market, publication is an essential piece to your job-market profile. A COMPLETED DISSERTATION is still the first order of business! Beyond this, all the committee positions, teaching evaluations, and letters of recommendation you may stuff into your dossier, while still very meaningful in demonstrating your completeness as a

future colleague in some department, do not carry the weight of a published article in a solid, respected academic journal or in an essay collection. It cannot be stressed enough that you attempt to achieve such a publication before you enter the job market. Even a published book review testifies to your potential to interviewers.

Finding Time to Revise for Publication

Time constitutes the greatest hurdle towards publication, or really anything we do in graduate school. Be conscious of your time, where you are in the program, how far along you are on your dissertation, and how close you are to entering the job market. Don't wait until the Fall before the December MLA convention, at which you will be seeking job interviews, to try and submit an article for publication. Use your time and the time of your professors more wisely earlier in your graduate career. Listen to your professors in your seminars and regarding the quality of your seminar papers. Inquire with them about the quality of your work on a lengthy seminar paper. Tell them to be honest in their assessment of your work, especially regarding whether you should pursue the piece of writing in publishable form. Your master's report, again, is a great piece to consider for submission because of the extended time you spend on it and the careful review it receives from faculty. Use the summer after a successful seminar, or after completing your master's report to revise the work for submission. An accepted article early in your graduate career takes a serious weight off your shoulders as you move forward towards the dissertation and the job market. Even if you are not successful early in this attempt, don't give up. While you do not want to lose steam in moving towards your dissertation research and writing, you may consider taking a brief period after the completion of your Prospectus exam to work on revising a piece for publication. Taking care of this essential piece to your academic profile early, before you hit the job market, will almost certainly make for a more successful job search experience.

How many more times?

If you are successful early or late with your publication quest, you may inquire with faculty as to whether you should pursue more publications before you exit graduate school. One quality publication is exceptional, two almost unfathomable (but still possible). However, you do not want to "exhaust your stores" so to speak for the simple fact that once you begin your tenure track appointment at a college or university, your publication creed goes back to zero. What we mean by this is that you will be expected, for tenure, to produce so many publications per year, in addition to one or two books. Thus, your publications prior to your arrival at the institution mean little once you get there. The number of publications expected depends, of course, on the type of institution at which you work. If you are at a tier-one research institution (like UT-Austin) that requires you to teach a 2/2 load with some semesters off, you will be expected to produce more research and published material. If you are at a more teaching-oriented institution where you carry a 4/4 teaching load, the requirements may be less (though increasingly at many institutions the disparity of expectations for scholarship between a 2/2 job and a 4/4 job is not as great as one would expect). As a graduate student, you will want to withhold some published material (notably most of your dissertation chapters) until you begin your new job and start on your new institution's "tenure clock." Don't put out everything you have simply because you are nervous about the job market. You may get that great job, but you will already be behind several other assistant professors who don't have to start over with their research and writing. Even

worse, your prolific publishing at the graduate level creates higher expectations from your new institution. Patience and restraint regarding publications are why you will see on many new assistant professors' websites and CVs five articles labeled "forthcoming." These strategic minds have five articles, which they could have published in graduate school, but that now count towards their tenure. The Professional Skills committee will offer an information session with faculty and graduate students each year to discuss publication.

Academic Writing

“A word may be a fine-sounding word, of an unusual length, and very imposing from its learning and novelty, and yet in the connection in which it is introduced may be quite pointless and irrelevant. It is not pomp or pretension, but the adaptation of the expression to the idea, that clinches a writer's meaning.” William Hazlitt, “On Familiar Style”

We graduate students almost always focus our writerly efforts on argument and method—and quite rightly, because content makes up the soul of academic life. But we often emphasize argument at the expense of clear, strong prose, mimetic as it can be, active and exact, self-conscious and purposeful. Poststructuralism correctly taught us not to rely on the relationship between words and things, yet that relationship is still the only means for signification (or significance). Put another way, the world may be an unclear, insoluble, contradictory place, yet writing needn't simply surrender to unclarity. Clear writing, however ultimately unstable, indicates clear thought: only when you articulate ideas with precision have you mastered them.

Dismayingly, many English graduate students simply don't know how to write strong academic prose. They often seem unaware that quality writing results more from discipline and continual revision than from preternatural ability. Far too many first drafts, far too little revision. Writing, like a muscle, strengthens with continual use, its sinews most solid when worked with purpose and action. You owe your ideas the service of your best writing, and those who will judge your work—professors, fellowship and award committees, journals, university presses, tenure review boards—will perceive your ideas through the medium of your style. To be sure, the ideas cannot exist but within the medium.

Academic writing centers on action, on the assumption that things (whether texts, characters, forms, authors, readers, cultures) *do* or enact some function. Richard Lanham, author of *Revising Prose* (see below), encourages writers to ask “Who's kicking who?” to specify what action the elements of a given sentence perform. This action provides the backbone, the foundation, of a sentence or piece of prose. For example, we might reword the static sentence, “The seven books of the Harry Potter series have intriguing effects on readers emotionally” to specify the action taking place and, as a consequence, the subject and objective complement: “The Harry Potter books intrigue the reader's emotions” or “The Harry Potter books affect readers emotionally.” What seemed like one idea in the original sentence we reveal to contain two distinct ideas, and the author can choose which action s/he was trying to convey. In this way and much more generally, academic writing revolves around verbs, and thus the choice of verb, the action around which the sentence (and the argument) builds, becomes the most important a writer makes. You should, as Hamlet rightly says, “suit the action to the word, the word to the action.”

Other stylistic habits—the good to be practiced, the bad to be shunned—appear below, adapted from a list titled “Suggestions for the Writing of Acceptable Essays,” given to this handbook's authors by Professor John Rumrich:

- Eliminate weak and extraneous words, such as *very*, *quite*, *rather*, *total(ly)*, *somewhat*, and the like.

- *Never* use the passive voice if you can avoid it.
- Avoid vague and wordy approaches to sentences, such as,
 - o There are...
 - o It is...
 - o Another example of...is when...
 - o It is important to note that...
- Do not dangle modifiers; do not write such sentences as this one: “After presenting a scene of darkness, the boat sits quietly on the Thames.”
- Do not stack up great bunches of prepositional phrases; avoid such sentences as this one: An explanation of the status of mankind with respect to the overall plan is followed by a consideration of the passions.
- Do not use *for*, *as*, or *since* when you mean *because*.
- Do not use the pronouns *this*, *these*, *that*, *those*, *which*, or *it* unless they have clear and unmistakable antecedents.
- *However* should not come at the first of a sentence; place it deeper in the sentence: e.g., The irony in *The Rape of the Lock*, however, grows more complex than one might expect.
- Semi-colons should be used in sentences composed of two independent clauses that are not connected by *and*, *or*, *for*, *nor*, *yet*, *but*.
- Typed dashes are made of two hyphens and no spaces: Shelley—or rather the speaker—begins the stanza with an imperative.
- Avoid vague and static sentences built around the verb *to be*. Instead of “Hamlet is representative of a new kind of character,” write “Hamlet represents a new kind of character.”

Below is a helpful excerpt from Gerald Graff’s “Scholars and Sound Bites: The Myth of Academic Difficulty.” *PMLA* 115: 5 (October 2000), 1050-1.

Do's and Don'ts for academic writers

1. Be dialogical. Begin your text by directly identifying the prior conversation or debate that you are entering. What you are saying probably won't make sense unless readers know the conversation in which you say it.
2. Make a claim, the sooner the better, and flag it for the reader by a phrase like “My claim here is that [. . .].” You don't have to use such a phrase, but if you can't do so you're in trouble.
3. Remind readers of your claim periodically, especially the more you complicate it. If you're writing about a disputed topic (and if you aren't, why write?), you'll also have to stop and tell readers what you are not saying, what you don't want to be taken as saying. Some of them will take you as saying that anyway, but you don't have to make it easy for them.
4. Summarize the objections that you anticipate can be made (or that have been made) against your claim. Remember that objectors, even when mean and nasty, are your friends--they help you clarify your claim, and they indicate why it is of interest to others besides yourself. If the objectors weren't out there, you wouldn't need to say what you are saying.

5. Say explicitly—or at least imply—why your ideas are important, what difference it makes to the world if you are right or wrong, and so forth. Imagine a reader over your shoulder who asks, “So what?” Or, “Who cares about any of this?” Again, you don't have to write in such questions, but if you were to write them in and couldn't answer them, you're in trouble.

6. (This one is already implicit in several of the above points.) Generate a metatext that stands apart from your main text and puts it in perspective. Any essay really consists of two texts, one in which you make your argument and a second in which you tell readers how (and how not) to read it. This second text is usually signaled by reflexive phrases like “I do not mean to suggest that [. . .],” “Here you will probably object that [. . .],” “To put the point another way [. . .],” “But why am I so emphatic on this point?,” and “What I've been trying to say here, then, is [. . .].” When writing is unclear or lame (as beginning student writing often is), the reason usually has less to do with jargon or verbal obscurity than with the absence of such metacommentary, which may be needed to explain why it was necessary to write the essay.

7. Remember that readers can process only one claim at a time, so there's no use trying to squeeze in secondary and tertiary claims that are better left for another book, essay, or paragraph or at least for another part of your book or essay, where they can be clearly marked off from your main claim. If you're an academic, you are probably so eager to prove that you've left no thought unconsidered that you find it hard to resist the temptation to say everything at once, and consequently you say nothing that is understood while producing horribly overloaded paragraphs and sentences like this sentence, monster-sized discursive footnotes, and readers who fling your text aside and turn on the TV.

8. Be bilingual. It is not necessary to avoid academese—you sometimes need the stuff. But whenever you have to say something in academese, try to say it in the vernacular as well. You'll be surprised to find that when you restate an academic point in your nonacademic voice, the point is enriched (or else you see how vacuous it is), and you're led to new perceptions.

9. Don't kid yourself. If you could not explain it to your parents or your most mediocre student, the chances are you don't understand it yourself.

None of what I have said in this essay should be mistaken for the claim that all academic scholarship can or should be addressed to a nonacademic audience. The ability to do advanced research and the ability to explain that research to nonprofessional audiences do not always appear in the same person. To adapt a concept from the philosopher Hilary Putnam, there is a linguistic division of labor in which the work of research and that of popularization are divided among different people, as Friedrich Engels was rewrite man for Karl Marx. Yet even Marx's most difficult and uncompromising texts have their Engels moments—Engels could not have summarized Marx's doctrine if they did not. In short, it is time to rethink the view that the university is not in the “gist business.”

Many other books and aids have proven useful in improving academic style. Below are just a few:

Griffith, Kelley. *Writing Essays about Literature: A Guide and Style Sheet*. Boston: Thomson, 2006. Griffith's study provides a nice introduction to writing on literary texts, though the guide speaks primarily to undergraduates.

Lanham, Richard. *Revising Prose*. New York: Longman, 2000. Lanham's book is a classic guide for making prose dynamic and clear. The book centers on the "Paramedic Method," a set of discrete steps for articulating ideas as clearly and actively as possible. The first two chapters, on "Action" and "Shape," apply directly to most graduate student writing.

Williams, Joseph M. *Style: Ten Lessons in Clarity and Grace*. New York: Longman, 2003. This guide offers a counterpoint of *praxis* to Lanham's *gnosis*.

Teaching

Basic Teaching Package

Here's the basic package, according to the department's website:

As far as funding allows, students in the English graduate program will be provided support for their graduate studies by means of a teaching appointment in either of the English Department or the Division of Rhetoric and Writing (DRW).

Students entering the program with a BA degree can expect this support for a minimum of 5 years and, if funding allows, a maximum of 7 years. Students entering the program with an MA can expect this support for a minimum of 5 years.

The typical pattern of support by means of teaching appointments for students entering the English graduate program with a BA will be:

- 2 years as a Teaching Assistant (TA) in the English Department
- 2 years as an Assistant Instructor (AI) in the DRW; with staffing in the Undergraduate Writing Center (UWC) in the first year and the UWC or the Computer Writing and Research Lab (CWRL) in the second year
- 1 year as an AI in the English Department; with staffing in UWC or CWRL
- 2 years as an AI in the DRW; with staffing in UWC or CWRL

The typical pattern of support by means of teaching appointments for students entering the English graduate program with an MA will be:

- 1 year as a TA in the English Department
- 2 years as an AI in the DRW; with staffing in UWC in the first year and in the UWC or CWRL in the second year
- 1 year as an AI in the English Department; with staffing in UWC or CWRL
- 1 year as an AI in the DRW; with staffing in UWC or CWRL

If a student receives substantial support (roughly equivalent to the stipend and benefits of a teaching appointment) from a fellowship, this will reduce the number of years of support given to a student by means of teaching appointments. Similarly, the number of years of teaching support will be reduced if a student receives substantial support as an AD or research or editorial fellow.

The continuation of support depends on students (1) remaining in good academic standing, (2) making satisfactory progress in the program, and (3) performing their teaching duties in satisfactory manner. Eligibility for continued support will be established each summer for the subsequent academic year, and a student's support for that year will come entirely from the English Department and/or the DRW.

TA Duties

TAs assist a faculty member in a large lecture section, usually a sophomore-level survey of American, British or World literature, by leading weekly discussion sections, grading student papers, and holding conference hours with students to discuss their papers. In addition to attending each class, TAs meet regularly with their faculty supervisor.

AI Duties

In their first year, AIs teach one section each semester of RHE 306, Rhetoric and Writing. They also serve as consultants 7 hours per week each semester in the UWC. Students in the Computers and English Studies concentration will serve instead during their first year on the staff of the CWRL, also for 7 hours per week each semester. In their second year, AIs typically teach a writing course in the DRW centered around an approved topic of their choice while continuing to work in either the UWC or CWRL. In their third year, most AIs teach a literature course through the English Department and work in the UWC or CWRL. AIs who teach a fourth year usually return to RHE 306. AIs also have an opportunity to teach computer-assisted courses in at least two of their teaching semesters.

Money

Though the amounts will change year-to-year, here are the stipends of TA and AI appointments for the 2007-2008 academic year:

TA (with Bachelor's degree): \$6,448 per semester

TA (with Master's degree): \$7,102 per semester

AI: \$8,030 per semester

The Teaching Assistant Experience in the Department of English

Unless you find other means of support, you'll spend at least one and probably two years teaching as a TA for a large lecture E316K course. Students with MAs usually only teach one year. In your first weeks at UT, you'll attend an orientation where you'll learn the details of TAing: the three varieties of 316, American, British, and World, the professors who teach the course, and the kind of support that exists for new teachers. You should expect to lead two weekly discussion sections and grade essays. Beyond that, your TA duties will depend mostly on the professor under whom you work. Some professors give very specific instructions for how discussion sections work, while others take a hands-off approach. Some think of the sections as wholly separate from the lectures, while most see them more as support sessions for students to master lecture material.

The English Department always does an excellent job preparing new TAs for teaching 316, including the optional graduate class E 383L, Teaching Masterworks of Literature, so only a few program-minded thoughts seem pertinent here. First, don't take TAing too seriously. Of course, you should fulfill your duties as prescribed by the professor: behave professionally, attend all lectures, grade fairly and according to the professor's expectations, and give students the attention and help they need to succeed in the course. But don't go overboard. There just isn't any reason, for example, to plan for four hours for a single discussion section, to spend twice as much time grading as is necessary, or to worry overmuch about soon-forgotten conflicts like grade disputes. Do not, in other words, overestimate the value and importance of the TA experience—which is not to say it isn't valuable and important.

Second, and related, focus on helping students master the lecture material. Unless the professor explicitly states that you're to introduce new information in discussion sections (a rare occurrence), maintain an attitude of helpfulness. Besides simplifying planning and teaching, it likely will raise your standing with your students, who will view you as an ally.

Third, make the experience work for your future. If you want to work with a professor later down the road, TA for him/her now to establish a relationship. If you're uncomfortable in front of the classroom, use the low-stakes TA job to develop confidence before you enter the higher-stakes AI job. Spend your extra time (which you won't have when you're an AI) on your own work, so that when you move to the DRW, you'll have established a foundation and can transition more quickly to advanced work. Substantial aid materials for E316K exist on a password-protected database known as E-Files (<http://efiles.cwrl.utexas.edu>). You may inquire about receiving a password to this site by contacting an assistant director in the Computer Writing and Research Lab (see above).

The Assistant Instructor (AI) Experience in the Department of Rhetoric and Writing

One week before the beginning of your third year in the program, you will attend an orientation introducing you to the Department of Rhetoric and Writing (DRW) and teaching in the DRW. In your third year, you will teach Rhetoric 306, the university's primary introductory writing and argument course taken by approximately forty to fifty percent of incoming students.

Department of Rhetoric and Writing (DRW)

Rhetoric and Writing became an official department and major in the College of Liberal Arts in 2007. The Department, previously known as the Division of Rhetoric and Writing, emerged from the Department of English in 1993, in order to provide better and focused attention to the teaching of undergraduate writing at the University of Texas. The DRW's courses are designed to help students understand methods of persuasion and argumentation, read critically, and write well.

Undergraduate Writing Center (UWC) and Computer Writing and Research Lab (CWRL)

The DRW's goals are supported by the Undergraduate Writing Center (UWC) and the Computer Writing and Research Lab (CWRL). The UWC is administered by the DRW and headed by Dr. Margaret "Peg" Syverson. The UWC began, along with the Division of Rhetoric and Writing, in 1993 and now serves 11,000 students campus-wide. While students in Rhetoric courses comprise a substantial number of the UWC's customers, the UWC provides assistance on all kinds of writing ranging from freshman research papers to job resumes for graduating seniors. The UWC does not provide remedial or proofreading services, but, rather, aims to help students learn to help themselves concerning their own writing, to foster independence, and to show writers how to make good decisions about their work. The UWC also offers in-class workshops and presentations that introduce the UWC to students as well as provide instruction in conducting various writing exercises such as peer review.

UWC homepage: <http://uwc.utexas.edu>

The CWRL is headed by Dr. Diane Davis. The CWRL arose out of the efforts of the late Dr. John Slatin and Dr. Jerome Bump, among others, who worked throughout the 1980s and early 1990s to solicit funding for a Computer Research Lab. In 1993, with the lab having already established some computer integrated classrooms in Flawn Academic Center and Parlin Hall, the Division of Rhetoric and Writing took over administration and the lab was renamed the Computer Writing and Research Lab. Today the lab has several agendas. The CWRL's mission is to explore how information technologies are changing the ways we produce and consume texts, the ways we argue, and how we can flexibly address these sociotechnical changes. For its instructors and professors, the CWRL encourages innovative, sustainable, theoretically informed pedagogies and pedagogical resources for teaching sociotechnical writing. The lab, further, works to develop flexible technologies, research approaches, and theoretical and methodological frameworks for studying sociotechnical writing, and promote discussions about the impact of information technologies in the liberal arts. The CWRL provides instructors with innumerable resources with which to conduct their classes including course websites, course blogs, student web projects, various interactive media, and, of course, computer integrated classrooms in which to teach. Access to such technology, and the incorporation of such technology into one's

pedagogy and classroom instruction can greatly enhance a graduate student's profile when they enter the job market.

CWRL homepage: <http://www.cwrl.utexas.edu>

Teacher Training in the DRW

The DRW offers some of the most comprehensive teacher training in the country. Just as the DRW advances its own students through various levels of writing instruction, analytic skill and writing development, and focused discussion, so too does the department move its assistant instructors through a specific and guided development of teaching skills required to teach and adapt to these various levels of instruction. In typical graduate career, an assistant instructor in the DRW will teach at least two courses, RHE 306 and RHE 309K, but more typically, the DRW exposes an assistant instructor to three or four courses, also including RHE 309S and RHE 310.

RHE 306

RHE 306 is predominately a freshman course, though you will find older undergraduates, who have put off taking the course, in your classes. RHE 306 aims to teach students how to read and analyze particular arguments, to perform rhetorical analysis on certain written and visual pieces, and to write their own proposal arguments. Class discussion in RHE 306 centers on a First Year Forum Text (FYF). Every section of RHE 306 taught by first year AIs read this text, chosen in the Spring of each year by a DRW committee of faculty and students for the following Fall. Every Spring, the DRW attempts to bring the author of the FYF text to campus to give both a seminar to students and a general lecture to a larger audience of university students and the public. You will teach RHE 306 in the Fall and Spring of your third year, and, most likely, in the summer of your third year as well. For details on RHE 306, please visit the DRW's sites:

First Year Writing and RHE 306: <http://www.drw.utexas.edu/first-year/writing>

First Year Forum: <http://www.drw.utexas.edu/first-year/forum>

First Year Forum Lecture: <http://www.drw.utexas.edu/first-year/forum/lecture>

Current First Year Text: <http://www.drw.utexas.edu/first-year/forum/current>

RHE 309K

RHE 309K is unique in the DRW's process of teacher development. While specific prompts exist for most of the courses AIs teach, including RHE 306 and RHE 310, RHE 309K offers the instructor an opportunity to, for the first time, develop a course through which they may fully channel their own research and writing interests. Whether a graduate student pursues teaching in literary studies, comparative studies, or linguistics, he/she will always be a teacher of writing. And it is necessary to emphasize that RHE 309K is a course in Rhetoric and maintains a goal to teach students in the art of argument writing and rhetorical analysis, but these goals are achieved through an exploration, albeit a rhetorical one, of a topic chosen by you in a course that maps your own academic interests. The ability to develop such a successful course will prove invaluable as you advance into the professional academic world. This unique opportunity to, in many ways, own this course for oneself highlights the rigorous teacher development that is

generally unique to the graduate program at UT. Further, the experience of having taught such a course that craftily blends one's long-term academic interests with the instruction of Rhetoric and writing testifies to a graduate student's abilities as a future academic, as he or she presents themselves on the job market.

DRW Links and Contacts

DRW homepage: <http://www.drw.utexas.edu/>

Jeff Walker, Chair, (512) 471-7843, jswalker@mail.utexas.edu
Mark Longaker, Associate Chair, longaker@mail.utexas.edu
Jamie Duke, Executive Assistant, (512) 471-3370, jduke@mail.utexas.edu
Holly Schwadron, Administrative Associate, (512) 471-6109, hschwadron@mail.utexas.edu
Margaret Syverson, Director, UWC, (512) 471-8734, syverson@uts.cc.utexas.edu
Lisa Leit, Program Coordinator, UWC, (512) 232-2730, lisaleit@juno.com
Diane Davis, Director, CWRL, (512) 471-9293, ddd@mail.utexas.edu
Stephanie Stickney, Program Coordinator, CWRL, (512) 471-9293, sstickney@mail.utexas.edu

Graduate Student Administrators

DRW

Matt King, Assistant Director, mattking@mail.utexas.edu
Nathan Kreuter, Assistant Director, nathan-kreuter@mail.utexas.edu
Stephanie Odom-Robertson, Assistant Director, stephanie.odomrobertson@mail.utexas.edu

CWRL

Molly Hardy, Assistant Director, mollyohardy@mail.utexas.edu
Sean McCarthy, Assistant Director, seanmc@mail.utexas.edu
Justin Tremel, Assistant Director, jtremel@mail.utexas.edu

UWC

Brian Gatten, Assistant Director, gatten@mail.utexas.edu
Jamie Jesson, Assistant Director, jjesson@mail.utexas.edu
Andrea Saathof, Assistant Director, asaathof@mail.utexas.edu

The AI Experience in the Department of English

In your fifth year, you will move to the Department of English for two semesters. In English, you will teach the department's introductory courses for majors. In the Spring before your Fall English course, you will attend an orientation aimed to expose you to materials and people who can help you in the transition from Rhetoric to English. Further, the department will pair you with a faculty mentor, not a member of your dissertation committee, with whom you may meet and discuss syllabuses, calendars, assignments, etc. This mentor will also observe your teaching and may write your teaching letter of recommendation when you enter the job market. Substantial aid materials exist on a password-protected database known as E-Files (<http://efiles.cwrl.utexas.edu>). You may inquire about receiving a password to this site by

contacting an assistant director in the CWRL (see above). What follows are brief descriptions of each of the courses you may teach in English.

E314L: Introduction to Literary Studies

E314L introduces students, mostly though not always English majors, to the discipline of English studies. The course has several variations, any of which you may be assigned: Approaches to Ethnic and Minority American Literatures; Banned Books and Novel Ideas; Literary Contexts and Contexts; Reading Literary Form; Reading Poetry; Reading Women Writers, Women's Popular Genres.

E314J: Literature Across the Curriculum

E314J is, generally, an undefined course created by you as instructor that aims to link English studies with another discipline or disciplines. It offers an opportunity to introduce non-majors to the Department of English. E314J requires that you submit a course description for approval. You must then promote your course through fliers or other avenues in order to attract students from other disciplines. These courses, given their more narrow topics, sometimes have difficulty meeting enrollment, but as with RHE 309K they offer an opportunity for you to demonstrate your abilities as an independent college teacher. Recent topic examples include Literature and Business, Literature and Journalism, Literature and Geography, and Literature and Law.

E314V: Introduction to Literature and Culture

Variants of E314V introduce students to specific ethnic and minority literatures including African-American, Arab-American, Asian-American, Caribbean, Irish-American, Mexican, and Native American. E314V students include not only English majors, but students with relevant interests from other disciplines or inter-disciplinary majors. These courses will often affiliate with relevant campus centers and can be cross-listed with these center. Further, these centers will often help promote and enroll the course.

E318M: Introduction to the English Language

E318M introduces students to basic ideas of linguistics, including syntax, phonology, as well as historical linguistics, and sociolinguistics. AIs whose own work incorporates linguistic research and material usually teach this course.

Sophomore Literature

Dr. Phillip Barrish, director, (512) 471-7840, pbarrish@mail.utexas.edu

Graduate Student Administrators

E316K

Anna Stewart Kerr, Assistant Director, anna.stewartkerr@mail.utexas.edu

E314/E318

Layne Craig, Assistant Director, laynecraig@mail.utexas.edu

Living and Finances

You won't swim in any pools of money as a graduate student, but with wise financial management, you won't starve. The stipend amounts for the 2009-2010 year are as follows:

TA (with Bachelor's degree): \$6,448 per semester

TA (with Master's degree): \$7,103 per semester

AI: \$8,030 per semester, \$5,353 for summer

Depending on your insurance options, union dues, and W-2 choices, you should take home about \$1,400 as a TA and about \$1,700 as an AI. With an average one-bedroom next-to-campus apartment costing upwards of \$800 per month, the stipend might prove insufficient. Many students work around this problem in various ways: student loans, roommates, apartments farther from campus, highly inadvisable part-time jobs, spouses.

The sections below provide detail on living and finances.

Working at the University of Texas at Austin

Checklist for Employment

As a TA/AI, you are an employee of the University of Texas and will have to complete a number of administrative forms and tasks in order to be paid and receive all of your employee and TA/AI benefits. Please use this checklist to help guide you through the process.

1. Get your ID card and high-assurance EID at the ID Center [in person] on the first floor of Flawn Academic Center (FAC). Your ID and EID are essential to access campus facilities, university computer systems, library materials, and for riding the city buses. You may have an EID already through your graduate school application, but you should confirm this with the ID center. You will, further, need an EID to complete various essential forms online.

For the following forms and information, you will need to access UTDIRECT, a personalizable webspace on the UT system, on which your personal information is made available to you for updating. You must have an active EID in order to access UTDIRECT. Click on the UTDIRECT link on the University of Texas homepage or go directly to UTDirect.

2. Complete your tax and paycheck information online. Go to My Paycheck Profile on your UTDIRECT page. Scroll down and the link will be on the right-hand side of the page. Here you will complete various forms (PO-8, W-4, paycheck distribution, etc.).

3. Complete your Employment Eligibility Verification. Complete and return to your department Section 1 of an Employment Eligibility Verification Form (I-9 Form). Review the appropriate identification and work eligibility documents.

NOTE: Identification and work eligibility documents must be provided to Patricia in the English Grad Office by your third workday.

4. If you are non-resident of Texas, then complete a Request for Resident Tuition Entitlement so that your tuition rate will be reduced. This is essential as the Department of English only reimburses you for the in-state tuition amount. This request is contingent on your employment as a TA or AI (non-tenured), so be sure to have your TA/AI appointment established before you request Resident Tuition. The web address is: <https://utdirect.utexas.edu/acct/fb/waivers/>

5. Pay your tuition. See Registration and Tuition (below).

6. Acknowledge the Social Security Number Policy Statement containing the guidelines for reducing the use, display and disclosure of SSNs. The web address for the SSN Policy Statement is: <https://utdirect.utexas.edu/spa/>

7. Acknowledge the Ethics Statement. The web address for the Ethics Statement is: https://utdirect.utexas.edu/pnethc/pn_ethics.WBX

8. Selective Service. All new male employees must fill out and return to Patricia in the English Grad Office a Selective Service Eligibility and Verification Form. Go to the Selective Services webpage on the Human Resources site to access information and forms. If you are a male between 18 and 25, you must provide verification of your Selective Service registration. You can print a copy of my verification online at the Selective Services webpage: http://www.utexas.edu/hr/manager/hiring/ssr_faq.html.

9. Choose what personal information (addresses, phone numbers, etc) you want to be restricted from public view through the UT directory (and, of course, your students). Go to the Restrict My Info page in UTDirect. The web address is: <https://utdirect.utexas.edu/registrar/myinfo/>

10. You may choose to receive your paychecks though Direct Deposit. Go to the My Bank Information page in UTDirect to enter correct account deposit information. The web address is: https://utdirect.utexas.edu/acct/rec/weft/webEFT_info.WBX

Health Insurance

As an employee of UT, you are also eligible to receive full health coverage, which includes dental and vision. You may select from various plans. After you arrive, you will be directed to sign up for a Human Resources (HR) orientation session, in which you will select the type of plan you want. You can also select vision and dental plans, as well as short-term and long-term disability insurance and life insurance. You will receive more information on this from the department. You may visit the HR site for new graduate student employees: (http://www.utexas.edu/hr/student/new_student_employee_checklist.html#grad_student).

Registration and Tuition

Registration

Registration is relatively simple. In the middle of each semester, students will meet with advisors to discuss what courses to take the following term. Shortly thereafter, you'll register online through UTDirect (<https://utdirect.utexas.edu/registrar/reg/Pregistration.WBX>). Some courses, such as independent studies and prospectus hours, require online approval from the graduate coordinator.

Tuition

UT is unlike most universities in its management of graduate student finances. Most schools simply waive tuition, but UT gives two partial waivers, reimburses the remainder, and taxes the entire amount.

The **first waiver** grants in-state tuition to those employed at the university. You should apply for this waiver before registration each semester at <https://utdirect.utexas.edu/acct/fb/waivers/>.

The **second waiver** doesn't require action on your part but shows up on your tuition bill before it comes due. It should reduce the amount due by about 75%.

Here's a sample tuition bill from a previous semester (Spring 2008—future amounts will differ; see below):

TUITION - 9 HOURS	5,774.00
FEES REQ OF ALL STUDENTS	527.63
GRAD CERTIFICATION FEE	12.36
COURSE RELATED FEES	64.89
LESS EXEMPTION/WAIVER [first waiver]	-3,329.00
LESS THIRD-PARTY BILLING [second waiver]	-2,259.00
Total Tuition and Fees Billed	827.88

You must pay this amount by the due date or your registration will be canceled. The easiest way is to take out a low interest **tuition loan** electronically (https://utdirect.utexas.edu/acct/loans/tuit/tuit_home.WBX), due in 90 days.

Two weeks into the semester, you'll receive a **reimbursement** check for the amount, minus fees and taxes. For the tuition bill above, the check was for \$535.55. You are responsible for paying the remainder (usually around \$300-350 depending on what you claim on you W-2), though you might recoup that amount if you fill out FAFSA.

Resources and Services Available

The university and surrounding community offer numerous resources and services for your benefit.

The University of Texas At Austin Library System

Main Web Page (www.lib.utexas.edu)

UT has one of the five largest academic library systems in the country. There are fourteen libraries on campus, as well as the Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library. UT's main library is the Perry Casteñeda Library (PCL). In addition, some libraries of interest for English students are the Classics Library in Waggener Hall (WAG), the Fine Arts Library in Doty Fine Arts Building (DFA), the Benson Latin American Collection in Sid Richardson Hall (SRH), the Tarlton Law Library and the Harry Ransom Center (HRC).

The Harry Ransom Center is one of the outstanding research centers in the United States. It houses the university's rare books, manuscripts, art and photographs, among other artifacts. Here you may work with a variety of primary materials for your own research. In addition to full collections by artists from Norman Mailer and Tom Stoppard to Robert DeNiro, the Ransom Center owns numerous items of interest including: an eleventh-century manuscript of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, a fourteenth-century manuscript of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, a fifteenth-century manuscript of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, a substantial collection of early printed books from William Caxton in the late fifteenth century to Samuel Richardson in the eighteenth century and beyond, numerous of Oscar Wilde's letters and part of Joyce's typescript for *Ulysses*. These are just a very few of thousands of pieces available to graduate students for research at the HRC.

The library offers substantial support in the form of its librarians, who will assist your own students, when you come to teach, with your students' research projects. Of course, they will help you with your own research too. The English Department's support librarian, through the UT Library System, is Lindsey Schell (schell@mail.utexas.edu). Ms. Schell maintains a budget for book purchases for the Liberal Arts. If there is a book that you feel would be valuable for your research or for the department as a resource, you may e-mail Ms. Schell and request a purchase. You may also direct any other question you have regarding the libraries' collections to Ms. Schell.

The PCL also makes available student lockers and library study offices, which can be found at various points throughout the library stacks. In the lockers you may store your books. You may renew these lockers twice, keeping them for up to three semesters (the summer counts as one semester). Study offices are available to doctoral students in candidacy only. You may renew these offices once.

Further Academic Support through the Office of Graduate Studies

The Office of Graduate Studies offers several services to complement those offered by your department. These include:

Writing and Publishing workshops and seminars:
<http://www.utexas.edu/ogs/gradlife/academics/writing/>

Publication Pointers:
<http://www.utexas.edu/ogs/gradlife/academics/writing/publish.html>

On-Campus Writing Services and Support:
<http://www.utexas.edu/ogs/gradlife/academics/writing/oncampus.html>

Public Speaking Training and Workshops:
<http://www.utexas.edu/ogs/gradlife/academics/research/speaking.html>

Purchasing Hardware and Specialty Software

If you are on the market for a home computer or a laptop, or if you just need an upgrade to your current system, the UT Campus Computer Store offers special educational prices on new hardware (Compaq, Gateway, and Apple computers and accessories) and specialty software that you can't buy through SDS (such as Adobe and Macromedia programs). Visit their website (<https://webstore.hied.com/cgi-bin/WebObjects/CampusComputer.woa>) or call (512) 475-6550. The Campus Computer Store is located on the main Flawn Academic Center and open Mon-Fri from 8am to 6pm.

As the home of Dell, Freescale, and Samsung, Austin is also rife with discount and used computer stores. Considering this, you may want to compare used models before you buy new. You'll see some places such as Mr. Notebook (<https://webstore.hied.com/cgi-bin/WebObjects/CampusComputer.woa>) in the University area; others are spread throughout Austin. Our advice is to search the yellow pages on this one, or ask advice from other grad students on the broken-eggs listserv.

Listservs

Broken-Eggs: This is the English Graduate Group (hence, 'EGG') e-mail list. I'd recommend signing up for it now and reading it for a little while to get the feel. We talk about all sorts of things here, send out invites for English-related talks, discuss grad student issues, argue about library books, and compare dentists. You can post a message here to inquire after neighborhoods to live in, etc. The volume averages between 5-10 messages per day. Here's how to get on the list:

If you would like to subscribe to Broken-Eggs send an email with no subject line to Majordomo@lists.cwrl.utexas.edu. In the body of the text, write: "subscribe broken-eggs". For a complete list of commands on subscribing, unsubscribing, or other tasks, email Majordomo@lists.cwrl.utexas.edu with the phrase "info broken-eggs" in the body of the message.

Other Listservs: The English Department also hosts several other listservs for student-based interest groups corresponding to concentrations (such as Ethnic and Third World Lit., Poetry &

Poetics, and Creative Writing, and Computers & English listservs). Some of us also receive mail from interdisciplinary lists (such as the Women's Studies, Asian American Studies, or African American Studies listservs) or intercollegiate lists (such as UPenn's Call for Papers listserv). Each listserv has different rules of membership and conduct, and each has a different owner. How do you sign up? Ask fellow student in your concentration how to join, ask the folks on broken-eggs, or attend one of the semi-annual meetings your interest group may sponsor.

Childcare

Many graduate students have children and the rigors of maintaining a child or family coupled with graduate studies can be overwhelming. There are a number of childcare services in Austin. As a student at UT, you are also eligible to use the University Child Development Center.

Health, Counseling and Mental Health Services

As a UT student, you have access to the services provided by healthcare professionals at Student Health Services. These include doctors in general medicine, sports medicine, women's health, allergy and immunization, and a pharmacy. The university also offers counseling and other mental health-related care.

UT Student Health Services: <http://healthyhorns.utexas.edu/index.html>

UT Counseling and Mental Health Center: <http://cmhc.utexas.edu/>

Diversity

Multicultural Information Center: <http://www.utexas.edu/student/mic/>

Gender and Sexuality Center: <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/gsc/>

Disabilities

Services For Students with Disabilities: <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>

Living in Austin

We provide here several links and much information about living in Austin. Please also visit the [Office of Graduate Studies' site](#) for basics and quality of life for graduate students at the University of Texas at Austin.

Housing Information

The university owns three apartment complexes, appropriately known as the [University apartments](#): Brackenridge, Colorado and Gateway. Be aware that application for housing is separate from application to the graduate program and the university. Applicants must be admitted or enrolled by the preferred move-in date specified on the application. Applicants are placed on a waiting list according to the date the application is received.

You may also want to consider other housing opportunities throughout Austin. The following links may assist you in your search:

Apartment Guide: <http://www.apartmentguide.com/>
Around Austin- Accommodations and Housing: <http://www.utexas.edu/austin/housing.html>
Austin Chronicle classifieds: <http://classifieds.austinchronicle.com/gyrobase/index>
Austin Co-ops: <http://michaelbluejay.com/coop/>
Austin Home Search: <http://austinhomesearch.com/Static/HomeSet.aspx>
Barkley Houses: <http://www.barkleyhouses.com/>
College Houses: <http://www.collegehouses.org/>
Craigslist: <http://austin.craigslist.org/>
Homestore.com: <http://www.move.com/>
Housing Maps: <http://www.housingmaps.com/>
Inter-cooperative Council: <http://iccaustin.coop/>
Longhorn Living: <http://www.longhornliving.org/>
People with pets: <http://www.peoplewithpets.com/>
Statesman classifieds: <http://www.statesman.com/classifieds/content/classifieds/index.html>

Getting Around Austin

Austin maintains an excellent bus system through Capital Metro (<http://www.capmetro.org>). This system also includes the UT Shuttle system (<http://www.utexas.edu/parking/transportation/shuttle/index.html>), which services a large portion of the city with direct transportation to campus. If you live further northwest of the city in outlying areas such as Northeast Austin, Northwest Austin, Cedar Park, and Leander, Capital Metro offers Express routes that deliver you from outlying areas with limited stops. Capital Metro also offers airport shuttles, known as Flyers, that service the airport from around the city and campus.

Your UT student id allows you to ride Capital Metro buses for free. Please note that the UT Shuttle Service does not run on Saturdays, but Capital Metro has several routes that service UT Shuttle areas.

Austin is also currently developing a light-rail system to be run by Capital Metro. For more information please visit Capital Metro's All systems Go (<http://allsystemsgo.capmetro.org/>) site.

Eating and Drinking in Austin

Austin is home to many fine restaurants and fun eating and watering holes. We encourage you to look at Austincitysearch.com and Austin360.com for more information on Austin dining.

Several eateries are within walking distance of campus:

Miscellaneous

- Dobie Mall Food Court (21st and Guadalupe): Chinese, Subway, wraps, gyros, pizza.
 - Jester City Limits (21st and Speedway): Salad bar, grilled sandwiches, burgers, baked potatoes; also Wendy's, pizza, and coffee in Jester Hall
 - O's (22nd and Speedway in the ACES building, cart on HRC plaza): Sandwiches, salads, soups, pizza, hot entrees
 - Texas Union (between Flawn Academic Center and Guadalupe): Wendy's, Quiznos, Taco Bell, Chick-Fil-A, Cranberry Farms, Cactus Cafe, The Bistro
 - Arturo's Bakery (314 W. 17th, 469-0380): Bakery, Southwestern, Tex-Mex.
- Breakfast/lunch
- Coco's Cafe (1910 Guadalupe, 236-9398): Taiwanese food and bubble tea. Cash only.
 - JP's Java (San Jacinto and Duvall, 494-0015): Coffee and bakery. Wifi.
 - Ken's Donuts and Pastries (2820 Guadalupe, 320-8484): Fresh donuts. Cash only.
 - Kerbey Lane Cafe (2606 Guadalupe): American, breakfast foods
 - Kismet Cafe (411 W. 24th): Great fast Greek food.
 - Einstein's Bagels (2404 Guadalupe): Bagels, bagel sandwiches
 - El Mercado Restaurant (1702 Lavaca): Mexican
 - Little City Espresso Bar & Roasting Co. (2604 Guadalupe, 467-2326): Funky local coffee shop. Wifi.
 - Mojo's Daily Grind (2714 Guadalupe, 477-6656): Coffee, libations, food, art, music. Wifi.
 - Plucker's (2222 Rio Grande, 469-9464): Burgers, wings, beer. Open late. Delivery.
 - Thai Noodle Etc. (2602 Guadalupe, 494-1011): No-frills, low prices, and amazing food.

Fast Food (walking distance - on Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.)

- Wendy's: Hamburgers, sandwiches, salads, chili
- Pizza Hut: Pizza, pasta, salad
- Mr. Gatti's: Pizza, pasta, salad (buffet)
- TCBY Treats: Ice cream, yogurt
- Taco Cabana: Tacos, enchiladas, etc.
- McDonald's: Hamburgers
- Players (300 W. MLK, 478-9299): Sandwiches, hamburgers

Fast Food (walking distance - on Guadalupe)

- Chipotle: (2230 Guadalupe, 320-0238): Burritos, tacos.
- Jack in the Box (Guadalupe & 26th): Hamburgers, chicken sandwiches
- Jamba Juice (2300 Guadalupe, 275-0290): Smoothies, juice.

- Burger King: hamburgers
- Schlotzsky's: sandwiches, pizza. Wifi.

Vegetarian (walking distance - on Guadalupe)

- Veggie Heaven Restaurant (1914-A Guadalupe, 457-1013): Asian and Indian vegetarian
- Madam Mam's (2514 Guadalupe, 472-8306): Thai food, very well-priced and extremely popular.
- Magic Wok (2716 Guadalupe, 474-7770): Chinese
- Pho (1908 Guadalupe, 482-0146): Vietnamese and Chinese food, well-priced and tasty.

More Restaurants (long walk or short driving distance)

- Scholz Beer Garten (1607 San Jacinto, 474-1958): American, German food and beer.
- Clay Pit (1601 Guadalupe, 322-5131): Indian food. Wonderful lunch buffet.
- Mars Restaurant and Bar (1610 San Antonio, 472-3901): Asian and eclectic, dinner only.
- Brick Oven Restaurant (1209 Red River): Italian
- Serrano's Restaurant (1111 Red River): Mexican
- Dirty's Hamburgers (AKA Dirty Martin's) (2808 Guadalupe): Hamburgers
- Piccolo Italian Cafe (2828 Rio Grande, 476-5600): Pizza, pasta, soups, and salads.
- Ruby's BBQ (512 West 29th @ Guadalupe): Barbeque
- Conan's Pizza (603 W. 29th, 478-5712): Deep dish pizza, good-sized sandwiches.
- Milto's (2909 Guadalupe): Greek and Italian
- Burger Tex II (2912 Guadalupe, 477-8433): Burgers and sides.
- Chango's Taqueria (3023 Guadalupe, 480-TACO): Great fast place for tacos and burritos. Wifi.
- Spider House (2908 Fruth, one block east of Guadalupe): Coffee house with tons of outdoor seating. Serves beer as well. Wifi.
- Trudy's (409 W. 30th, 477-2935): Tex-Mex with bar. Large menu and good prices. VERY popular.
- Sampaio's (2809 San Jacinto, 469-9988): Brazilian and funky.
- Red River Cafe (2912 Medical Arts, 472-0385): Great breakfast and lunch diner food. Cheap.

Pubs (campus area)

- Crown & Anchor (2911 San Jacinto, 322-9168): Draft and bottled beer, burgers, nice patio. Wifi.
- Dog & Duck (406 W. 17th, 479-0598): Pub food, large selection of beer. Very close to campus.
- Hole in the Wall (2538 Guadalupe, 477-4747): Landmark bar. Cheap bar food. Live music most nights.
- Cain and Abel's Bar and Grill (2313 Rio Grande, 476-3201): American food and bar. In the heart of West Campus. Sports, large patio. Wifi..
- Scholz Beer Garten (1607 San Jacinto, 474-1958): American, German food and beer.
- Texas Showdown Saloon (AKA Showdown) (2610 Guadalupe, 472-2010): Bar, beer including Live Oak on tap. Pool, darts, foosball. Outdoor seating in back. Wifi. Stop by for happy minutes.

Parking on Campus

Parking at the University of Texas is limited and somewhat pricey. As a TA or AI you may purchase a commuter pass (“C” pass), which allows you to park in perimeter lots with undergraduates and graduate students, or you may purchase an “A” pass, which is a staff pass that allows you closer-in parking. Visit the English Department’s Parking Page for more specific information about parking near the department, or visit the university’s Parking Services site (<http://www.utexas.edu/parking/>).