**MA Exam Guidelines**

**Literature Option**

**CSUN Department of English**

**Description and Timeline**

The MA Exam is one of the options for fulfilling the culminating experience requirement of the MA degree. It is available to students in the Literature and Rhetoric & Composition options. This exam can be taken in either the fall or the spring semester. It is attached to the course **ENGL 697C**, which is not a course that students attend but simply a way of assigning students 3 credits for completing the MA Exam.

Students interested in taking the MA Exam should contact the Graduate Adviser prior to the semester in which they plan to take the exam (or at least by the end of the second week of the semester in which they plan to take the exam).

The MA Exam in Literature consists of **two fields of study** chosen by the student in consultation with the Graduate Adviser or other faculty members. These fields can be organized around issues of genre, national literature, time period, author, or theme. For example, American Westerns, early twentieth-century feminist literature, nineteenth-century transatlantic narratives of enslavement, Tennyson’s long poems, Renaissance revenge plays.

Also in consultation with two faculty members (who are ideally specialists in the chosen fields of study), students will generate a **reading list for each field**. This list will include approximately three primary texts and ten secondary texts. If a primary text is particularly long or dense (e.g. *Ulysses*, *Paradise Lost*, *Middlemarch*), the student may focus their list on this text alone. Otherwise, it is advised that students select two to four texts of moderate or short length. Faculty members will assist students in determining an appropriate number of primary texts.

The secondary sources for each field primarily should be peer-reviewed articles or book chapters. Especially with more contemporary areas of study, students may include some sources of significant depth from respected journalistic outlets such as *The Atlantic*, *LA Times*, *The New Yorker*, *The Boston Globe*, etc. Students also may use works of critical theory (ideally articles or book chapters) as secondary sources.

As part of the exam, students will submit 1) finalized reading lists for each field, 2) an annotated bibliography of the secondary sources for each field, and 3) two 6 to 8-page essays (one for each field) responding to a choice of two prompts for each field.

If you need guidance for completing your annotations, you can consult this site: <https://guides.library.cornell.edu/annotatedbibliography>

Students taking the exam should expect to submit their topics to the graduate adviser by the second week of the semester, work with their faculty mentors to create and submit finalized reading lists by the fourth week of the semester, submit an annotated bibliography of secondary sources for each field by the ninth week of the semester, receive prompts for the exam by the eleventh week of the semester, and submit their essays by the fourteenth week of the semester. All exam materials will be submitted through the ENGL 697C Canvas page.

The MA Exam Committee grades each essay either High Pass, Pass, Low Pass, or Fail. Students who fail a question will have the option to revise their essay response in order to pass the MA Exam. (See scoring rubric for details about the evaluative criteria for this exam.)

**Exam Timeline**

Week 1 Be sure you are registered for ENGL 697C, which requires a permission number from the graduate adviser.

Week 2 Submit tentative fields to graduate adviser by email.

Week 4 Submit finalized reading list to ENGL 697C Canvas page.

Week 9 Submit annotated bibliographies for both areas of study to ENGL 697C Canvas page.

Week 11 MA Exam questions released to students by email and on ENGL 697C Canvas page.

Week 14 MA Exam essays due. Submit to ENGL 697C Canvas page.