**English studies**

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*For the journal, see* [*English Studies (journal)*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_Studies_(journal))*.*

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| [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/thumb/9/99/Question_book-new.svg/50px-Question_book-new.svg.png](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Question_book-new.svg) | This article **needs additional citations for** [**verification**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Verifiability). Please help [improve this article](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=English_studies&action=edit) by [adding citations to reliable sources](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:Introduction_to_referencing_with_Wiki_Markup/1). Unsourced material may be challenged and removed. *(October 2008)* *(*[*Learn how and when to remove this template message*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:Maintenance_template_removal)*)* |

**English studies** is an academic discipline that includes the study of [literatures](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Literature) written in the [English language](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_language) (including literatures from the [United Kingdom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom), the [United States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States), [Ireland](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Republic_of_Ireland), [Canada](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canada), [Australia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australia), [New Zealand](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Zealand), [Hong Kong](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hong_Kong), [the Philippines](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philippine_literature_in_English), [India](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India), [Pakistan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pakistan), [South Africa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Africa), and the [Middle East](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle_East), among other areas), English [linguistics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Linguistics) (including English [phonetics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phonetics), [phonology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phonology), [syntax](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syntax), [morphology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Morphology_(linguistics)), [semantics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Semantics), [pragmatics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pragmatics), [corpus linguistics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corpus_linguistics), and [stylistics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stylistics_(linguistics))), and English [sociolinguistics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sociolinguistics) (including [discourse analysis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Discourse_analysis) of written and spoken texts in the English language, the [history of the English language](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_English_language), [English language learning and teaching](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_language_learning_and_teaching), and the study of [World Englishes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_English)).

More broadly, English studies explores the production of and analysis of texts created in English (or in areas of the world in which English is a common mode of communication). It is common for academic departments of "English" or "English Studies" to include scholars of the [English language](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_language), [literature](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_literature) (including [literary criticism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Literary_criticism) and [literary theory](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Literary_theory)), [linguistics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Linguistics), [law](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Law), [journalism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Journalism), [composition studies](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Composition_studies), the [philosophy of language](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy_of_language), [literacy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Literacy), [publishing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Publishing)/[history of the book](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_book), [communication studies](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communication_studies), [technical communication](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Technical_communication), [folklore](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Folklore), [cultural studies](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_studies), [creative writing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Creative_writing), [critical theory](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Critical_theory), [disability studies](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Disability_studies), [area studies](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Area_studies) (especially [American studies](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_studies)), [theater](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theater), [gender studies](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gender_studies)/[ethnic studies](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethnic_studies), [digital media](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digital_media)/[electronic publishing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Electronic_publishing), [film studies](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Film_studies)/[media studies](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Media_studies), [rhetoric](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rhetoric) and [philology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philology)/[etymology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Etymology), and various courses in the [liberal arts](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberal_arts) and [humanities](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humanities), among others.

In most English-speaking countries, the literary and cultural dimensions of English studies are typically practiced in [university](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University) [departments](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Academic_discipline) of English, while the study of texts produced in non-English languages takes place in other departments, such as departments of foreign language or [comparative literature](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparative_literature). English linguistics is often studied in separate departments of linguistics. This disciplinary divide between a dominant linguistic or a literary orientation is one motivation for the division of the North American [Modern Language Association](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modern_Language_Association) (MLA) into two subgroups. At universities in non-English-speaking countries, the same department often covers all aspects of English studies including linguistics: this is reflected, for example, in the structure and activities of the [European Society for the Study of English](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_Society_for_the_Study_of_English) (ESSE).

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**English major[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=English_studies&action=edit&section=1" \o "Edit section: English major)]**

The **English Major** (alternatively "English concentration," "B.A. in English") is a term in the United States and a few other countries for an [undergraduate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Undergraduate) [university](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University) degree focused around the consumption, analysis, and production of texts in the [English language](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_language). The term may also be used to describe a student who is pursuing such a degree.

Students who major in English reflect upon, analyse, and interpret [literature](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Literature) and [film](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Film), presenting their analyses in clear, cogent [writing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Writing). Although help-wanted postings rarely solicit English majors specifically, a degree in English hones [critical thinking](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Critical_thinking) skills essential to a number of career fields, including [writing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Writing), [editing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Editing), [publishing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Publishing), [teaching](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Teaching) and [research](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Research), [advertising](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Advertising), [public relations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_relations), [law](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Law), and [finance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Finance).

**History[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=English_studies&action=edit&section=2" \o "Edit section: History)]**

The history of English studies at the modern university in Europe and America begins in the second half of the nineteenth century. Initially, English studies comprised a motley array of content: the practice of oratory, the study of rhetoric and grammar, the composition of poetry, and the appreciation of literature (mostly by authors from England, since American literature and language study was only added in the twentieth century).[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_studies#cite_note-1) In Germany and several other European countries, English [philology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philology), a strongly positivistic and historically interested practice of reading pre-modern texts, became the preferred scholarly paradigm, but English-speaking countries distanced themselves from philological paradigms soon after World War I.[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_studies#cite_note-2) At the end of this process, English departments tended to refocus their work on various forms of writing instruction (creative, professional, critical) and the interpreting of literary texts, and teacher education in English recovered from the neglect it had suffered because of more science-oriented paradigms.[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_studies#cite_note-3) Today, English departments in native-speaking countries re-evaluate their roles as sole guardians of the discipline because English is less and less native speakers' unique 'property' and has to be shared with the millions of speakers and writers from other countries for whom English is an essential means of communication and artistic expression.[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_studies#cite_note-4)

English literature became an object of study in French universities as part of foreign (comparative) literature in the nineteenth century. A chair of foreign literature was established in Paris in 1830. English was first taught independently from other languages and literature in the University of Lille and in the University of Lyons and only afterwards in the Sorbonne. These three universities were the first major centres of English studies in France. The first lecturer and later professor of English studies would seem to have been Auguste Angellier. After spending several years teaching French in England in the 1860s and 1870s, he became a lecturer in English studies in the University of Lille in 1881 and a professor of English in 1893. In France nowadays, literature, civilisation, linguistics and the spoken and written language are all important in English studies in universities.[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_studies#cite_note-5)

The English major rose into prominence in [American](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States) colleges shortly after the introduction of the [electives](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Electives) system[*[when?](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Manual_of_Style/Dates_and_numbers" \l "Chronological_items" \o "Wikipedia:Manual of Style/Dates and numbers)*]. It provided an opportunity for students to develop skills in analytical reading with the aim of improving their writing, as well as exercises in rhetoric and persuasive expression that had been traditionally only taught in [classical studies](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Classical_studies) and available to the very few due to language barriers and a shortage of professors who could actively engage students in the humanities. Outside the United States (originating in [Scotland](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scotland) and then rippling out into the English-speaking world) the English major became popular in the latter half of the 19th century during a time when religious beliefs were shaken in the face of scientific discoveries.[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_studies#cite_note-6) [Literature](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Literature) was thought to act as a replacement for [religion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion) in the retention and advancement of culture, and the English Major thus provided students with the chance to draw [moral](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moral), [ethical](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethical), and [philosophical](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophical) qualities and meanings of older studies from a richer and broader source of literature than that of the ancient [Greek](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Greece) and [Latin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latin) classics.

Since 2000, there have been more and more questions about the specific function of English departments at the contemporary U.S. college and university. The absence of a clearly defined disciplinary identity and the increasingly utilitarian goals in U.S. society present a challenge to those academic units still mostly focusing on the printed book and the traditional division in historical periods and national literatures, and neglecting allegedly non-theoretical areas such as professional writing, composition, and multimodal communication.[[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_studies#cite_note-7)

**English studies[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=English_studies&action=edit&section=3" \o "Edit section: English studies)]**

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| --- |
| [**Literature**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Literature) |
| [Liji2.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Liji2.jpg) |
| **Major forms** |
| * [Novel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Novel) * [Poem](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poetry) * [Drama](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drama) * [Short story](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Short_story) * [Novella](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Novella) |
| [**Genres**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Literary_genre) |
| * [Comedy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comedy) * [Drama](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drama) * [Epic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epic_poetry) * [Erotic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erotic_literature) * [Nonsense](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Literary_nonsense) * [Lyric](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lyric_poetry) * [Mythopoeia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mythopoeia) * [Romance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chivalric_romance) * [Satire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Satire) * [Tragedy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tragedy) * [Tragicomedy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tragicomedy) |
| [**Media**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Media_(communication)) |
| * [Performance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Performance)   + [play](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Play_(theatre)) * [Book](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book) |
| **Techniques** |
| * [Prose](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prose) * [Poetry](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poetry) |
| **History and lists** |
| * [History](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_literature)   + [modern](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_modern_literature) * [Outline](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Outline_of_literature) * [Glossary of terms](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary_of_literary_terms) * [Books](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lists_of_books) * [Writers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lists_of_writers) * [Literary awards](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_literary_awards)   + [poetry](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_poetry_awards) |
| **Discussion** |
| * [Criticism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Literary_criticism) * [Theory](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Literary_theory) ([critical theory](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Critical_theory)) * [Sociology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sociology_of_literature) * [Magazines](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Literary_magazine) |
| **[Books-aj.svg aj ashton 01.svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Books-aj.svg_aj_ashton_01.svg)**[**Literature portal**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portal:Literature) |
| * [v](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Template:Literature) * [t](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Template_talk:Literature) * [e](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Template:Literature&action=edit) |

*See also* [Literature](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_studies#Literature_and_cultural_studies) and [linguistics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Linguistics), along with [List of academic disciplines](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_academic_disciplines)

* English [linguistics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Linguistics)
* English [sociolinguistics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sociolinguistics)
* [Discourse analysis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Discourse_analysis) in English
* English [Stylistics (linguistics)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stylistics_(linguistics))
* [World Englishes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_English)
* [History of the English language](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_English_language_(education))
* [Composition studies](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Composition_studies)
* [Rhetoric](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rhetoric)
* [Technical communication](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Technical_communication)
* [English language learning and teaching](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_language_learning_and_teaching)
* [English Literature](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_Literature)
  + [American literature](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_literature), including:
    - [African American literature](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_American_literature)
    - [Jewish American literature](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_American_literature)
    - [Southern literature](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southern_literature)
  + [Australian literature](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australian_literature)
  + [British literature](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_literature) (literature from some regions of the United Kingdom may be written in [Celtic languages](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Celtic_language))
  + [Canadian literature](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canadian_literature) (a significant amount of Canadian literature is also written in [French](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_language))
  + [Irish literature](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irish_literature)
  + [New Zealand literature](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Zealand_literature)
  + [Scottish literature](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scottish_literature)
  + [Welsh literature](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Literature_of_Wales_(English_language))
  + [South African literature](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_African_literature#English_literature) (excluding works written in other languages)

**Skills acquired[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=English_studies&action=edit&section=4" \o "Edit section: Skills acquired)]**

In the past an [academic degree](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Academic_degree) in English usually meant an intensive study of [British](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom) and [American](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States) literary masterpieces. Now, however, an English Major encompasses a much broader range of topics which stretch over multiple disciplines. While the requirements for an English Major vary from university to university, most English departments emphasize three core skills: analyzing literature, a process which requires [logic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Logic) and reflective analysis; creativity and imagination with regards to the production of good writing; and an understanding of different [cultures](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultures), [civilizations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civilizations), and literary styles from various time periods. The skills gained from studying English include acquiring tools that will never lose value, understanding the ever-changing media, to explain your own world, and more.[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_studies#cite_note-Yale-8) Prospective English Majors can expect to take college courses in [academic writing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Academic_writing), [creative writing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Creative_writing), [literary theory](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Literary_theory), [British](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_literature) and [American](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States) literature, multicultural literature, several literary genres (such as [poetry](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poetry), [drama](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drama), and [film studies](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Film_studies)), and a number of elective multidisciplinary topics such as [history](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History), courses in the [social sciences](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_sciences), and studies in a foreign language. To the end of studying these disciplines, candidates for a Major in English attain skills in [rhetoric](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rhetoric), [literary analysis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Literary_analysis), an appreciation for the diversity of cultures, and an ability to clearly and persuasively express their ideas in writing.

**Examples of courses[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=English_studies&action=edit&section=5" \o "Edit section: Examples of courses)]**

Most English courses fall into the broader categories of either Literature-based studies, which focus on classical authors and time periods, or Rhetorical studies, which concentrate on communication skills in preparation for specialization in a variety of professional fields. While specific graduation requirements vary from university to university, students can expect to study some of the following courses.

**Courses in** [**Writing**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Writing) **and** [**Composition**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Composition_(language)): such as Academic and Professional Writing, which stress analytical writing and train students to produce clear, cohesive arguments.

**Courses in** [**British Literature**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Literature): Courses may focus on time periods, authors, genres, or literary movements. Examples include [Shakespeare](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shakespeare)'s Tragedies, History and Theory of British Drama, Medieval English Literature, and the Victorian Novel.

**Courses in** [**American Literature**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Literature): Depending upon the university, these courses can either be broken down by time period, such as Nineteenth Century [Gothic Fiction](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gothic_Fiction); authors, such as classes on [Hawthorne](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nathaniel_Hawthorne), [Hemingway](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ernest_Hemingway), or [Frost](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Frost); or Literary schools and movements, such as [Naturalism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Naturalism_(literature)) or [Transcendentalism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transcendentalism).

**Courses in Multicultural Literature**: The value of bringing a range of cultural and multidisciplinary perspectives to the study of [English literature](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_literature) is being increasingly recognized in a number of universities. Examples include Multi-cultural Literatures in Medieval England, Latina Narratives, and Studies in Jewish Literature.

**Rhetorical courses**: Focus on techniques of persuasive arguing in the written form, as well as skills which involve the analysis of written texts.

**Career opportunities[**[**edit**](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=English_studies&action=edit&section=6)**]**

A major in English opens a variety of career opportunities for college graduates entering the job market. Since students who graduate with an English degree are trained to ask probing questions about large bodies of texts and then to formulate, analyze, and answer those questions in coherent, persuasive [prose](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prose)—skills vital to any number of careers—English majors have much to choose from after graduation. The most obvious career choices for English majors are writing, publishing, journalism, and teaching. However, other less intuitive job options include positions in [advertising](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Advertising), [public relations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_relations), [acting](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acting), [law](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Law), [business](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Business), [marketing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marketing), and directing.