



ENGLISH

at Ashoka



WHAT'S INSIDE?

Why English?

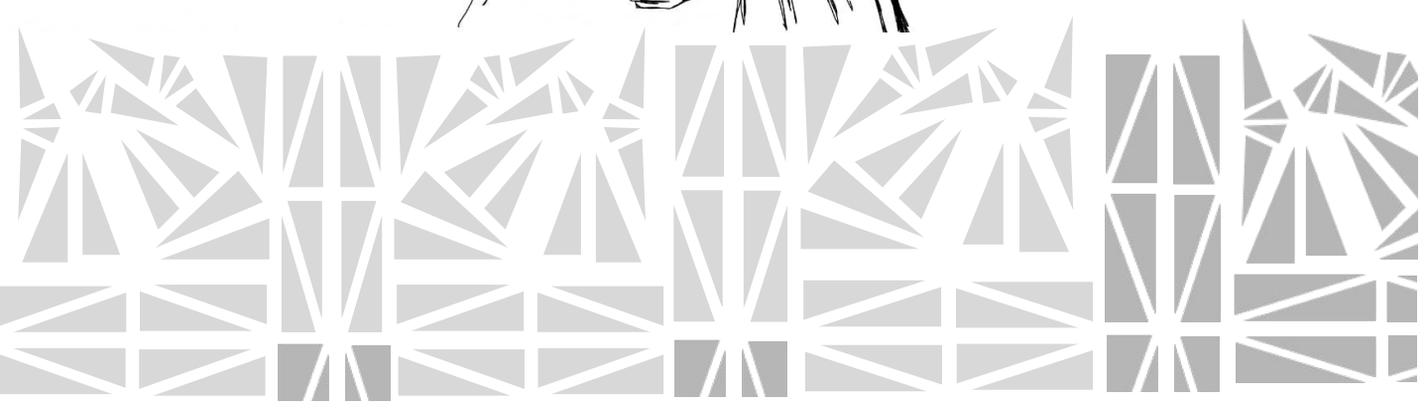
Curriculum

Requirements for
the Batch of ASP
'25

Programmes

Campus
Engagement

What Comes After
English At
Ashoka?





Why English?

The guiding assumption of the English major at Ashoka University is that we all like to travel. Even when we are beset by bad weather, dangerous beasts, visa problems, or even when travelling is impractical with a pandemic looming, we still like to travel and see new worlds. Some of these worlds might be frightening; many might involve thinking thoughts that we never have before; a few will allow us to recognise ideas that we have had all our lives.

Nothing facilitates these journeys better than literature. Whether it is by reading books written by unfamiliar authors or thinking through the intricacies of an idea, literature challenges our minds to expand, grow, travel. All literature involves an imaginative movement outside the bounds of the familiar. Our courses map such movements across genre – theory, fiction, poetry, drama, film – cultures, and languages. Literatures in translation are a vital component of our curriculum as we seek to put in conversation texts that have been divided by boundaries of various kinds.

English at Ashoka takes seriously knowledge of canonical Western texts like Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Shakespeare's plays, and Brontë's novels, Indian texts like Mahasweta Devi's short stories, Amruta Patil's graphic novels, and Bollywood films, as well as world classics like *A Thousand and One Nights*, Greek tragedies, and Audre Lorde's poetry. The English Major and Minor at Ashoka put disciplines in dynamic dialogue with each other, ensuring both specific knowledges and a more general ability to think.

Our aim is to be globally literate while also taking cognizance of our rootedness in India. We offer a wide range of courses that will prepare the Ashoka English graduate for a variety of careers in higher education, law, advertising, and any field that requires an agile mind able to traverse across borders.

“To read is to be ecstatic. As the etymology of the word – ekstasis – suggests, reading takes us out of ourselves and out of our place. Through imagination, empathy, and self-questioning, by learning to trespass into unfamiliar times and inhabit unfamiliar spaces, and via translation and theory, studying literature allows us to examine our world and ourselves – which, as ‘ecstatic’ also suggests, can be great fun.”

Mandakini Dubey, Assistant Professor of English and Critical Thinking
Ph.D. Duke University
Nineteenth-century English literature and culture; Romanticism;
Empire and Colonial Discourse; Literary Theory; Affect Theory



“Literature is about life and our ways of being human. It is a practice of freedom that opens us to the power of language. Literature is comfortable with uncertainty, border crossing, and has no fear of contradictions.”

Abir Bazaz, Assistant Professor of English
Ph.D. University of Minnesota
South Asian literatures in English; Existentialism; Comparative Mysticism;
Violence; Cinema Studies; Intellectual History of Islam in South Asia



“To make a life in literature is to live as a ‘bhasha karmi’, a language worker. An understanding of language, its behaviour and its power, its ruptured blood vessels and its intestines – that is why we come to writing, to create a language of intimacy that rejects the readymade.”

Sumana Roy, Associate Professor of Creative Writing
Ph.D. University of North Bengal
Literature on the non-human; Provincial literatures;
Cultures of close-reading; ‘Minor’ forms of writing



Curriculum



The English department offers six core courses, of which two are gateways, required for a student to begin studying literature, and four are survey courses, which track the movement of English literature from eighth-century England to postcolonial nations in the twenty-first century. We also offer an array of electives in exciting sub-fields. Additionally, our faculty teach different sections of the two Foundation courses, *Literature and the World* and *Great Books*.

Gateway Courses

ENG 1001 – Forms of Literature (Offered every Spring)

We begin with introducing literary history as articulated through different genres: drama, poetry, prose, and newer forms. Rather than fixed categories or lists of unvarying characteristics, we examine literary forms as dynamically shaped by their social and historical contexts. To understand both the changing narratives of history and the changing meanings of the genre itself, this course will thus explore how these forms have signified differently at various points.

ENG 1002 – Introduction to Literary Theory (Offered every Monsoon)

The field of English is shaped by literary theory, through its profound engagements with big questions of reality, language, identity, power, desire, history – broadly, the self and the world. When studying literature, we often seek out ways of uncovering the workings – and play – of these engagements in the texts we read. This course turns to the questions and answers posed by theory itself, rather than applications through the reading of literary texts. Theory can seem complex and intimidating, but its questions are fundamental: how do we make meaning? How do we constitute texts, and how do texts constitute us? How are we to know those parts of ourselves that refuse knowledge? How do our bodies, our given identities and the material conditions of our lives shape who we are and how we feel, think, act, desire, and read? Keeping these and other basic questions in mind, this course will survey the key approaches and texts of contemporary literary theory.



Survey Courses

ENG 2001 Early British Literature (Offered every Monsoon)

Early British Literature surveys texts and the cultural conditions of their production between, roughly, 700 and 1700 AD. Beginning with the Old English epic *Beowulf* and closing with the poetry of John Milton, this course affords a view of the many profound cultural changes and sites of intercultural contact that shape English literary history.

ENG 2002 Literature in the Age of Empire (Offered every Spring)

Literature in the Age of Empire examines eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literature's "global consciousness" by looking at the texts of British writers who act globally, and at those of colonial subjects who "write back" to empire. These texts will include novels, poems, letters, paintings, engravings, and more. While analyzing them, we will consider the extent to which British writing advances and questions the creation of empire, and determine how notions of empire change what it means to be a British subject.

ENG 2003 Indian Literatures (Offered every Spring)

What would be the origins, scope, and variety of literature produced in India? Was there always an "India"? This course begins with these baseline questions and takes students through milestone moments of literature-making in the Indian scenario, examining the cultural, historical and geographical contexts that inform textual constructions of the nation, as well as the "nation's" ideas of the life and the world.



Survey Courses

ENG 3001 Postcolonial Literatures (Offered every Monsoon)

What is the relevance of reading postcolonial literature in contemporary classrooms? Is it somewhat redundant to do so? This course begins with such questions but moves beyond, to read certain postcolonial literary texts as not only physically rooted in material spaces, but also as embodying the spirit of such locations, often untranslatable and un-exportable. Here, we will come together to see if the universal can be sought in the most sensory embodiment of the particular, including stories from “backward and provincial” spaces, or if it is to be identified more easily in the symbolism reinforced by colonial and neocolonial languages of modernity.

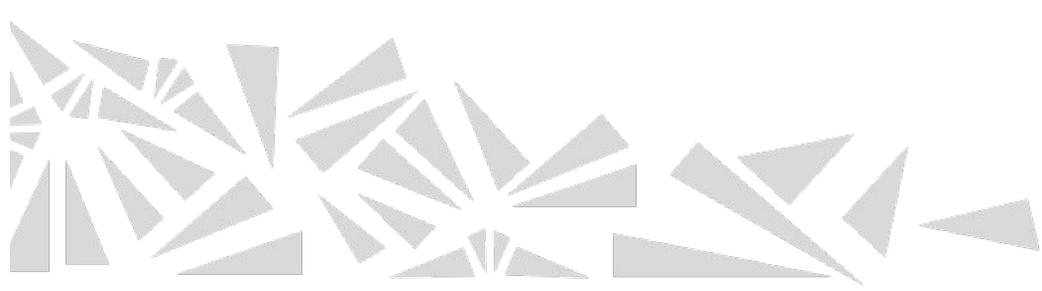


Electives

2000-level Introductory Electives are introductory courses to various fields and methodologies of literary study. Although they are aimed at English students specifically, they can be taken by all Ashoka students. Offered each semester, recent courses include *Introduction to Drama and Theatre*, *Masala Shakespeare*, and *Introduction to Rasa*. Some of these electives are offered as Critical Thinking Seminars.

3000-level Seminar Electives are specialist courses designed for English majors and minors. Only students who have taken the gateways can take these courses. Recent offerings include *Existentialism in Literature, Philosophy and Film*, *Studies in Urdu Literature*, and *The Queer Eye*.

Graduate Courses are 4000-level seminar courses reserved for the undergraduate students who pursue the Advanced Major in their 4th year. They will study these intensive courses along with MA and PhD students. Recent offerings include *Reading Feeling*, and *Translation Theories and Multilingual Contexts*.



“Once we have some sense of how fundamentally at odds we are with ourselves – the lesson brought to us by literary theory – then we can begin to appreciate that we are texts requiring to be read. And once we grasp the ungraspable slipperiness of ourselves as texts, then we can begin to fathom the politics of reading itself. This is what studying literature is about.”



Madhavi Menon, Professor of English
Director of Centre for Studies in Gender and Sexuality
Ph.D. Tufts University
Queer Theory; Literary Theory; Renaissance; Shakespeare;
Sexuality; Politics of Identity and Desire



“It is easy to imagine that environmental crises are geophysical problems belonging first and foremost to the realm of science. But that thinking ignores the complex interplay between natural systems and human culture. The very word “ecology” was coined in 1866 comes from the Greek word oikos - household - and carries with it notions of balance, harmony, and stability. These are not empirical concepts, but rather questions of language, aesthetics, and ideology. As with most any other topic that matters to humans, we can’t think about environmental questions without also considering the reality of human histories and cultures.”

Alexander Phillips, Assistant Professor of English
Ph.D. Cornell University
Ecocriticism and Environmental Humanism; Realism; Frankfurt School and
Critical Theory; Nineteenth to twenty-first century German literature

“Literature provides possibilities of lives we have not lived, but also ones we shouldn’t be living. The study of literature is also the most meaningful way to understand the daunting expanse and depth of language; for language is much too important to be left to linguists! The failure of language in its effort to keep up with experience characterises translation; which is not a gesture achieved, but forever in a state of compounding approximations.”



Rita Kothari, Professor of English
Ph.D. Gujarat University
Caste and Communalism; Bollywood; Indian literatures;
Translation Studies; Partition; Border Studies

The Advanced Major will look like this:

Monsoon	Spring
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 4000-level Elective• Teaching Practicum/4000-level Elective• Graduate Proseminar/4000-level Elective	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 4000-level Elective• Teaching Practicum/4000-level Elective• Graduate Proseminar/4000-level Elective

English and Creative Writing Major Requirements (UG '24 / ASP '25 Batch)

Students need to take **16 courses** to pursue this Interdisciplinary Major

11 English:

- 2 **Gateway** Courses: Forms of Literature
Introduction to Literary Theory
- 3 of 4 **Survey** Courses: Early British Literature
Literature in the Age of Empire
Postcolonial Literatures
Indian Literatures
- 6 **Elective** Courses: 1 x Critical Thinking Seminar
2 x 1000/2000-level electives
3 x 3000-level electives

5 Creative Writing:

- 3 **Gateway** Courses: Reading for Writing
Introduction to Creative Writing
Craft of Writing
- 1 **Workshop**: Workshops in Fiction/Nonfiction/
Poetry/Translation (3000-levels)
- 1 **Thesis OR** The Thesis and Publishing Seminar
- 1 **Additional Workshop**:

2 Interdisciplinary Major Gateways:

Introduction to Theatre and Drama
Introduction to Performance Studies

9 English:

2 Gateway Courses:	Forms of Literature Introduction to Literary Theory
2 of 4 Survey Courses:	Early British Literature Literature in the Age of Empire Postcolonial Literatures Indian Literatures
5 Elective Courses:	1 x Critical Thinking Seminar 1 x 1000/2000-level elective 2 x 3000-level electives 1 x 4000-level elective



The English Major: 3-year Programme

(For the UG '25 Batch and Onwards)

To pursue a 3-year major in English, a student must complete **13 courses**.

2 Gateway Courses:	Forms of Literature Introduction to Literary Theory
4 Survey Courses:	Early British Literature Literature in the Age of Empire Postcolonial Literatures Indian Literatures
7 Elective Courses:	1 x Critical Thinking Seminar 2 x 2000-level elective 3 x 3000-level electives 1 x 2000/3000-level elective (those students intending to do the 4-year programme must take a 3000-level elective here)

Notes on the 3-year Programme:

Postcolonial Literatures, although a 3000-level survey course, does not count towards the 3000-level elective requirement.

Once the CTS requirement has been fulfilled, any further CT courses taken will count as regular 2000-level electives.

A third-year student can take **ONE 4000-level elective** in place of a 3000-level requirement, but they need to have written permission from the professor to do so.

Students can take a maximum of **3 cross-listed courses** (courses taught by faculty of other disciplines) as electives that count towards their major. *[Note: courses originating from the English department and cross-listed with other departments count as regular courses for the English major; courses originating in other departments that are cross-listed with English count as cross-lists.]*



An ideal time-table for an English major pursuing the 3-year Programme looks like this:

Semester 1	Semester 2	Semester 3	Semester 4	Semester 5	Semester 6
	Forms of Literature	Literary Theory Early British Literature	Indian Literatures Literature in the Age of Empire	Postcolonial Literatures	
		7 electives, distributed as per the student's preference			

We recommend that students follow this time-table, but under extraordinary circumstances, a student may reorganize the order in which they take the courses. Since the **gateway courses introduce the discipline** to students, it is always wise to take them first. If you are confused about how to organise your courses, please reach out to the English Representatives.



The English Major: 4-year Programme

We consider the 4-year Programme not an add-on, but a **crucial capstone** to the English at Ashoka experience. This is the year in which the students move from being students to members of a teaching and scholarly community. They will have the opportunity to:

- **TA for courses** and be mentored by an English professor in questions of pedagogy through the Teaching Practicum
- **Take 4000-level electives** at the graduate level, alongside MA and PhD students.
- **Take Graduate Proseminars and write a research thesis** under the supervision of an advisor.

Thesis

In the 4th year, students have the option of writing a research thesis under the supervision of an advisor. This experience is a crucial preparation for any students planning to do higher studies in English or any other discipline. They are expected to reach out to their preferred advisor (professors aligned with an area the student wishes to research) as they approach 4th year.

Graduate Proseminars

The proseminars are meant for students writing theses on the English track. These courses will aid in preparing your thesis in the Monsoon, and writing your dissertation in the Spring; the thesis will be a part of these courses. The two proseminars are worth 8 credits in total, and the thesis is worth 12 credits.

TA-ships

Students pursuing the Advanced English major will have the opportunity to TA for one course per semester as a part of the credit requirement. Students can choose not to TA, but it is **strongly recommended** that they take the Teaching Practicum. The Practicum consists of working with a professor to provide **logistical and pedagogic support** for their UG courses. This entails circulating readings, running PPTs, managing Piazza pages, and meeting with students for course discussions. The professor also provides **mentorship** on classroom management, syllabus design, and other aspects of teaching. *[Note: An ASP can TA for one English course i.e. 4 credits per semester, and only for two English courses i.e. 8 credits in the entire span of their 4th year.]*

To pursue a 4-Year English Major without a thesis, a student must complete **18 courses**:

2 **Gateway** Courses: Forms of Literature
Introduction to Literary Theory

4 **Survey** Courses: Early British Literature
Literature in the Age of Empire
Postcolonial Literatures
Indian Literatures

12 **Elective** Courses: 1 x Critical Thinking Seminar
2 x 2000-level elective
3 x 3000-level electives
2 x 3000/4000-level electives
2 x Proseminars*/4000-level electives
2 x Teaching Practicums/4000-level electives

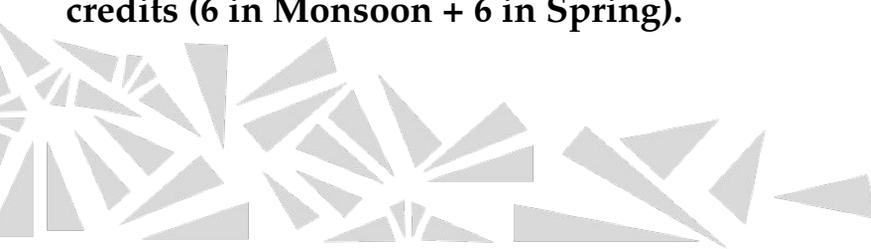
To pursue a 4-Year English Major with a thesis, a student must complete **18 courses with 12 additional research credits**:

2 **Gateway** Courses: Forms of Literature
Introduction to Literary Theory

4 **Survey** Courses: Early British Literature
Literature in the Age of Empire
Postcolonial Literatures
Indian Literatures

12 **Elective** Courses: 1 x Critical Thinking Seminar
2 x 2000-level elective
3 x 3000-level electives
1 x 3000/4000-level elective
1 x 4000-level elective
2 x Proseminars*
2 x Teaching Practicums/4000-level electives

If a student chooses to do a thesis, they will receive 12 additional research credits (6 in Monsoon + 6 in Spring).



Notes on the 4-year Programme:

* The Proseminar courses are mandatory for students pursuing a capstone thesis in English. Those not doing the thesis may replace the Proseminars with regular 4000-level electives.

Postcolonial Literatures, although a 3000-level survey course, does not count towards the 3000-level elective requirement.

Once the CTS requirement has been fulfilled, any further CT courses taken will count as regular 2000-level electives.

Students can take a maximum of **3 cross-listed courses** (courses taught by faculty of other disciplines) as electives that count towards their major. *[Note: courses originating from the English department and cross-listed with other departments count as regular courses for the English major; courses originating in other departments that are cross-listed with English count as cross-lists.]*



The English Minor

The Minor and the Concentration facilitate students of other disciplines to **pursue their interest in literary study.**

A Minor in English requires a student to complete **6 courses.**

2 Gateway Courses:	Forms of Literature Introduction to Literary Theory
2 of 4 Survey Courses:	Early British Literature Literature in the Age of Empire Postcolonial Literatures Indian Literatures
2 Elective Courses:	1 x 2000/3000-level elective 1 x 3000/4000-level elective

Notes on the Minor:

Postcolonial Literatures, although a 3000-level survey course, does not count towards the 3000-level elective requirement.

Students doing the Minor **over 3 years instead of 4** will need written permission from the professor to take a 4000-level course.

Students can take a maximum of **1 cross-listed course** (courses taught by faculty of other disciplines) as an elective that counts towards their minor. *[Note: courses originating from the English department and cross-listed with other departments count as regular courses for the English student; courses originating in other departments that are cross-listed with English count as cross-lists.]*

The English Concentration

The Minor and the Concentration facilitate students of other disciplines to pursue their interest in literary study.

A concentration in English requires a student to complete 4 courses.

1 of 2 Gateway Courses: Forms of Literature or
Introduction to Literary Theory

Any 3 English courses
(These 3 courses can include the other gateway course, any of the survey courses, and the electives*)

Notes on the Concentration:

*Concentration students will not be allowed to take 3000-level electives if they have not taken Introduction to Literary Theory, which they can either take as a part of their gateway requirement, or as one of their other 3 courses.

Students can take a maximum of 1 cross-listed course (courses taught by faculty of other disciplines) as an elective that counts towards their concentration. *[Note: courses originating from the English department and cross-listed with other departments count as regular courses for the English student; courses originating in other departments that are cross-listed with English count as cross-lists.]*

“One of the unique things we do in creative writing at Ashoka University is to forge a relationship with reading in our mother tongues. In India we have the happy advantage of usually being fluent in at least two languages, each of which has a rich literature of its own. Through our courses in translation, students not only read (and listen and imagine) closely in their mother tongue, but they also polish their own art of writing by translating these texts into English. In the process, they add more gems to the treasure trove of literatures in translation from around the world.”

Arunava Sinha, Associate Professor of Practice in Creative Writing
Translator of *Chowringhee*, *When The Time is Right*; Books Editor, Scroll.in
Translation; Literary Journalism; Graphic Narratives



“A study of the most fundamental function of language is persuasion. Persuasion and argumentation are the foundations of rhetoric, a field as ancient as it is contemporary, as humanistic as is rooted in business communication. My special interest is the nature of political discourse, and the various means of persuasion - whether shady or respectable - that inspire politicians in their quest for votes.”

Subhashree Chakravarty, Assistant Professor of English and Writing
Ph.D. The Ohio State University
Rhetoric and Critical Theory; Discourse Analysis; South Asian literatures;
Race Studies; Immigration; Religion and Secularism in South Asia



“Ancient literature reveals ways of being and thinking that are, at times, vastly different from our own, but also the human concerns that underpin all of our lives: love, loss, mourning, family, friendship, honor, social responsibility, and on and on. Bringing their own knowledge, experiences, questions, and insights to these texts, students renew these old stories, engaging in an ongoing conversation between present and past.”

Mali Skotheim, Assistant Professor of English
Ph.D. Princeton University
Greek and Roman drama and dance; Sanskrit drama; Paratheatrical forms (puppetry, trick magic, automata); Material Culture and Performance



The Interdisciplinary Major *in English and Creative Writing*

The English and Creative Writing programme combines scholarly training in literature with exposure to the practice of writing in the various literary genres: poetry, fiction, and non-fiction. Here, critical thinking and creative writing complement one another. Coursework will constitute of English courses focusing on literary history and theory, forms of literature, a selection of literature electives; as well as a multi-genre introductory course in creative writing, courses on the craft of writing, and genre-specific workshops where a community of student-writers come together to read and respond to each other's work.

The 3-year Programme

Students need to take **15 courses** to pursue this Interdisciplinary Major over 3 years.

9 English:

2 Gateway Courses:	Forms of Literature Introduction to Literary Theory
3 of 4 Survey Courses:	Early British Literature Literature in the Age of Empire Postcolonial Literatures Indian Literatures
6 Elective Courses:	1 x Critical Thinking Seminar 3 x 2000/3000-level electives (with a maximum of two 2000-level electives)

6 Creative Writing:

2 Gateway Courses:	Reading for Writing Introduction to Creative Writing
---------------------------	---



1 **Craft Course:** Craft of Writing Courses
(2000-levels)

2 **Workshops:** Workshops in
Fiction/Nonfiction/
Poetry/Translation (3000-levels)

1 **Thesis OR** The Thesis and Publishing
1 **Additional Workshop:** Seminar*

The Undergraduate Thesis

*Taking the Thesis and Publishing Seminar in the third year is a requirement for students who wish to write a thesis on the Creative Writing track in the fourth year. The thesis can be of any genre – fiction, nonfiction, poetry, or translation – with a minimum length of **8000 words**, and should include a critical component. This can either be an academic essay or a writerly reflection of the work produced. The details/proportion of this critical component can be worked out between the advisor and the advisee.

The 4-year Programme

A student pursuing a 4-Year Major in English and Creative Writing has the option of doing so with or without a thesis. (The thesis may be on the English track or on the Creative Writing track.) In either case, they must complete **20 courses:**

13 English:

2 **Gateway** Courses: Forms of Literature
Introduction to Literary Theory

3 of 4 **Survey** Courses: Early British Literature
Literature in the Age of Empire
Postcolonial Literatures
Indian Literatures

8 **Elective** Courses: 1 x Critical Thinking Seminar
2 x 2000-level electives
3 x 3000-level electives
2 x Proseminars*/4000-level electives

7 Creative Writing:



2 Gateway Courses:	Reading for Writing Introduction to Creative Writing
1 Craft Course:	Craft of Writing Courses (2000-levels)
2 Workshops:	Workshops in Fiction/Nonfiction/ Poetry/Translation (3000-levels)
1 Thesis OR 1 Additional Workshop:	The Thesis and Publishing Seminar
1 Critical Course:	Critical Courses (4000-levels)

If you choose to do a Capstone Thesis in either English or Creative Writing in your fourth year, you will receive 12 additional research credits (6 in Monsoon + 6 in spring)

Notes on the Interdisciplinary Major:

* The Proseminar courses are mandatory for students doing their theses in English/Media Studies/Performing Arts, but are optional for students doing theses in Creative Writing.

Postcolonial Literatures, although a 3000-level survey course, does not count towards the 3000-level elective requirement.

Students can take a maximum of **2 cross-listed courses** (courses taught by faculty of other disciplines) as electives that count towards their major. *[Note: courses originating from the English department and cross-listed with other departments count as regular courses for the English student; courses originating in other departments that are cross-listed with English count as cross-lists.]*

The Interdisciplinary Major *in English and Media Studies*

The rigorous reading and writing practices learnt in literary studies can influence the ways in which we analyse and make media. Simultaneously, a study of contemporary communication media and its representation of our times can provide a foundation to ground our literary study. This is the proposition behind the English and Media Studies programme. Apart from the core courses and electives in English, students will study the technical and interpretive skills required to make and analyse creative and responsible media. Be it a poem or social media story, a novel or a visual news report, the process is to learn how it reflects and influences our reading and writing of texts and the world.

The 3-year Programme

To pursue this interdisciplinary major in 3 years, a student needs to take 15 courses.

9 English:

2 Gateway Courses:	Forms of Literature Introduction to Literary Theory
3 of 4 Survey Courses:	Early British Literature Literature in the Age of Empire Postcolonial Literatures Indian Literatures
4 Elective Courses:	1 x Critical Thinking Seminar* 3 x 2000/3000-level electives (with a maximum of 2 2000 levels)

6 Media Studies:

1 Gateway 1000-level course: MS 1201 Media, Culture and Society, is mandatory.

1 **2000-level** Media Course

1 **3000-level** Media Course

1 **Media Production** Course: Lab based documentary or podcast, Craft of writing, or Journalism based)

2 **Courses** of your choice.

The 4-year Programme

A student pursuing a 4-Year Major in English and Media Studies has the option of doing so with or without a thesis. (The thesis may be on the English track or on the Media Studies track.) In either case, they must complete **20 courses**:

13 English:

2 **Gateway** Courses:

Forms of Literature

Introduction to Literary Theory

3 of 4 **Survey** Courses:

Early British Literature

Literature in the Age of Empire

Postcolonial Literatures

Indian Literatures

8 **Elective** Courses:

1 x Critical Thinking Seminar

2 x 2000-level electives

3 x 3000-level electives

2 x Teaching Practicums/4000-level electives/Proseminars*

7 Media Studies:

1 **Gateway** 1000-level course: MS 1201 Media, Culture and Society is mandatory.

1 **Research Methodologies** Course

1 **2000-level** Media Course

1 **3000-level** Media Course

3 **Courses** of your choice including 1 **Media Production** course and 1 **thesis/long form project** based practicum.

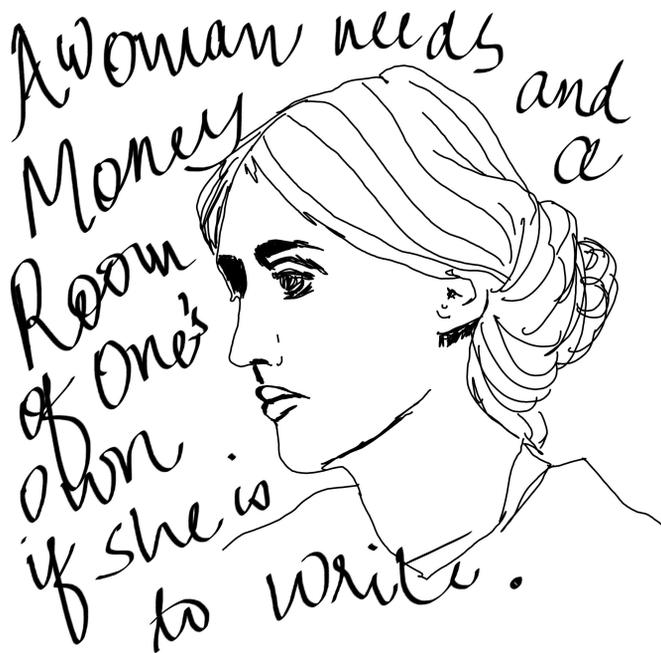
If you choose to do a Capstone Thesis in either English or Media Studies in your fourth year, you will receive 12 additional research credits (6 in Monsoon + 6 in spring)

Notes on the Interdisciplinary Major:

* The Proseminar courses are mandatory for students doing their theses in English/Media Studies

Postcolonial Literatures, although a 3000-level survey course, does not count towards the 3000-level elective requirement.

Students can take **cross-listed courses**, courses taught by faculty of other disciplines, as electives, but **they can only count 2 such electives towards their ID major**. *[Note: courses originating from the English department and cross-listed with other departments count as regular courses for the English student; courses originating in other departments that are cross-listed with English count as cross-lists.]*



“Reading pre-modern literature compels us to enter into conversation with the unfamiliar. Through such transtemporal encounters, we find common ground with a past that once seemed strange and, at the same time, locate the unfamiliar within ourselves.”



Alexandra Verini, Assistant Professor of English
Ph.D. University of California, Los Angeles
Medieval and Early Modern literature and visual culture; Women’s literature; Gender and Sexuality; Friendship; Religion; Utopia

“At first glance, performance seems antithetical to literature: it is a non-written embodied thing that disappears before it reaches the archive. But look at it differently: performance extends literature’s vast reach to the ways in which individuals and communities appear, disappear, and reappear in the ordinary moments of everyday life. By theorizing this ordinary, embodied, and ultimately irreducible aspect of human experience, performance widens the scope of literature and the humanities.”

Vivek Narayan, Assistant Professor of English, Theatre and Performance Studies
Ph.D. Stanford University
Theatre and Performance Studies; Postcolonial Theory; Dalit Studies; Transnational Solidarities; Care Ethics; Performance-Making



The Interdisciplinary Major *in English and Performing Arts*

The centrality within the English curriculum of drama (classical and modern, Western and Indian) and theories of performance and performativity (Butler, Austin, Goffman, the Natyashastra) makes the discipline an obvious fit with Performing Arts. The English and Performing Arts major will give students the curricular space in which to incorporate Performing Arts into a major programme, while sacrificing none of the rigour of either discipline.

The 3-year Programme

To pursue this interdisciplinary major in 3 years, a student needs to take 15 courses.

6 Performing Arts:

PA-1003 Developing Performance Skills

PA-1009 Performing Arts Practices

The other 4 courses may be chosen from any of the other performing arts courses on offer during a particular semester.

2 Interdisciplinary Major Gateways:

Introduction to Theatre and Drama

Introduction to Performance Studies

7 English:

2 Gateway Courses:

Forms of Literature

Introduction to Literary Theory

3 of 4 Survey Courses:

Early British Literature

Literature in the Age of Empire

Postcolonial Literatures

Indian Literatures



Notes on the Interdisciplinary Major:

* The Proseminar courses are mandatory for students doing their theses in English/Media Studies

Postcolonial Literatures, although a 3000-level survey course, does not count towards the 3000-level elective requirement.

Students can take **cross-listed courses**, courses taught by faculty of other disciplines, as electives, but **they can only count 8 such electives towards their ID major**. *[Note: courses originating from the English department and cross-listed with other departments count as regular courses for the English student; courses originating in other departments that are cross-listed with English count as cross-lists.]*

Every story is a migrant. We are conditioned to think in terms of “national literatures” and “national languages,” but the truth is that stories and words rarely if ever spring from one soil. The act of communication is always a movement across a border. Every utterance reconfigures words spoken before; every tale reimagines stories told elsewhere; every reading moves “me” toward what I am not. This is the promise of literature — to move us.

Jonathan Gil Harris, Professor of English
Chair of the Department of English
Ph. D. University of Sussex

Shakespeare; Global and Indian Shakespeares; Early Modern literature;
Migration and cultural contact; Silk Road Cultures; Global Jewish History



“Studying literature at Ashoka is not a march through the ‘canon’ but a three or four-year experience of reading both widely and closely, in all kinds of texts, in order to better imagine how literature works in the world. Studying medieval literature, in particular, may sound like a conscientious exercise in building ‘background’ for the reading of works written closer to us in time. But in fact its very remoteness – the challenge it presents of understanding its language, diction, and historical and cultural interactions – denies us the opportunity to ever read passively, compels us always to be energetic, critical, and questioning participants in a very lively textual world.”

Aparna Chaudhuri, Assistant Professor of English
Ph.D. Harvard University

Vernacular Theology; Medieval English Literature; Global Medieval Studies;
Medieval and Early Modern Religion; History of Domesticity



*“Humans = smart but slow
Computers = stupid but fast
Humans + Computers = mediocre but productive.”*

Johannes Burgers, Affiliated Faculty, James Madison University, US
Ph.D. The City University of New York (CUNY)

Qualitative Data Visualization; Narrative GIS; Aesthetics; Sexology;
Global and Transnational Modernism; Racial Theories; Jewish Studies





Campus Engagement

English Colloquiums

The English Colloquium Series is an initiative organized and run by the undergraduate and graduate students of the Department of English. It is aimed at expanding and enriching the scope of our conversations as students in the humanities and social sciences. We invite scholars, artists and intellectuals across a range of disciplinary formations and interests to support our vision towards interdisciplinary thought-practice.

Epigraph, the Literary Society

Falling directly under the English department, Epigraph, the Literary Society is founded and run by students who organise talks, lectures, workshops, and events about the literary in and out of the classroom. The activities of the society are proof that the literary is not limited to academic, and that the academic is as intoxicating as the informal. From a speaker series of disability studies and a workshop on graphic narrative to treasure hunts and book exchanges, Epigraph strives to create a space to engage with literature in more than one way.

The English Mixers and Annual Confabulation

The Annual Confabulation is an English-only event that is jointly hosted by the department and the literary society. Students of English, undergraduates and graduates, come together to meet their faculty in a new avatar outside their classroom, teaming up and playing literary games. The English Mixer, on the other hand, is open to all students interested in exploring the discipline. On these exciting days, all the headiness of literary study takes the form of fun and banter!

What comes after English at Ashoka?

The skills that are learnt in the literature classroom are much sought after in a variety of institutions and professions. While many of our students decided to further study literature at the graduate level, some of our students have also gone to work in **media organisations, publishing houses, law firms, public policy think-tanks, public relations firms, corporations, and educational institutions.**

“I work as an executive producer at Star Plus. As the custodian of the shows I work on, I am involved in helping finalize the broad story, scripting and editing episodes and marketing my shows across all platforms. This entails a lot of critical reading and discussion to decide the journeys our protagonists will take and how the story will move forward. My favourite part here is working together with different people to ideate stories. Just like the English classroom, there is no possibility of claiming an idea or working individually—we all chime in with our thoughts and feed off one another to collectively!”

Nayani Kushal Goyal, ASP 2018
Executive Producer, Star Plus India

“English at Ashoka taught me to read critically and with grace. The department’s brilliant faculty encouraged me to ask difficult questions about the world and our place in it without expecting easy answers – a skill that has proven to be invaluable at my current position as a PhD student in English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University. As mentors and pedagogues, the department has shown me what instruction, support, and even at times, tough love can look like. As a result, I feel better equipped to be a more equitable and engaging facilitator with my own students. English at Ashoka has created a vibrant community of scholars who are passionate about nuanced and exciting ways of thinking and being in the world, and for that, I’m grateful!”

Kaagni Harekal, ASP 2019
Ph.D. Candidate, Columbia University



“Prof. Harris sometimes reminds us that the Latin derivation of ‘educate’ is to ‘lead away’. This etymology is a helpful reminder that an education doesn’t have to be a hierarchical instruction-giving with a predestined lesson. The four years I spent with Ashoka’s Literature Department resonate well with this interpretation. For me, learning occurred not while marching towards a fixed destination but in deviations from the prescribed ‘path’. After graduating, in another deviation from the so-called ‘path’, I worked with the Govt. of Haryana and NITI Aayog on various skill development projects. The critical thinking, close reading, and writing skills I learned at Ashoka have helped me to grow not just in my work but also as a person. This Fall, I am heading to Oxford to begin my MPhil in Development Studies with the Department of International Development.”

Vibhuti Gour, ASP 2019,
M.Phil. Candidate, University of Oxford

“Studying English at Ashoka impacted, I would say, my entire career trajectory. While entering Ashoka I was all set to major in Economics, but I became enamoured with the warmth of the English faculty and the freshness of the subject. If not for Ashoka I’d probably have been a banker somewhere. Gives me the shivers, to even imagine it. But more than anything Ashoka gave me the space to do my own research and even do a little bit of teaching while I was an undergraduate, and that really helped me determine who I wanted to be as a scholar. I was supposed to fly out to Chicago in August 2020 for my PhD, but the Covid-19 Pandemic has compelled me to be content with online classes for at least the first quarter. Excited as I am to be in midnight zoom classes, I really can’t wait to be in a university again, learning, teaching, and researching. What after English? Quite simply, more English!”

Govind Narayan, ASP 2018
Ph.D. Candidate, Northwestern University

“The offerings of the English Department are a veritable smorgasbord. You get a variety of tastes and the chance to explore deeper and wider and make a meal of what appeals most to you. Who would have thought that you could go back to find new meanings in childhood stories or discover hidden gender messages in everyday Bollywood movies? These unique and exciting offerings are a far cry from what we are used to seeing on a traditional English Lit syllabus.”



Geetanjali Chanda, Assistant Professor of English
Ph.D. Hong Kong University
Children's Literature; Bollywood; Sikh writings and films; Women's writings;
Feminist and Transcultural pedagogy, Masculinities and Religion

“Calling literary study “knowledge on a holiday”, the critic Michael Wood argues that literature “creates a new zone between work and play.” Can the study or the practice of literature – or any of the arts – be professionalized? Or is it simply meant to enrich and deepen our amateur identity? This is the amateur as rooted not in ineptitude but in amour or love. These are some of the questions that intrigue me these days, and I hope you will find knowledge on a holiday no less rigorous than whatever it is the world gathers on its workdays.”



Saikat Majumdar, Professor of English and Creative Writing,
Chair of the Department for Creative Writing
Ph.D. Rutgers University
Modern and Contemporary World literatures; Modernism; Postcolonial
Studies; Novel and Narrative Theory; History of Criticism; Fiction writing

“Literature is a mode of thinking different from any other. I’ve spent my life as a writer trying to tease out, and argue for, this difference, and, when possible, to share my thoughts with my students.”



Amit Chaudhuri, Professor of Creative Writing
D.Phil. Oxford University
Creative and Critical Writing; Contemporary literature;
Literary Activism

Contact us

Chair, Dept. of English:

Saikat Majumdar, saikat.majumdar@ashoka.edu.in

Deputy, Dept. of English:

Alexandra Verini, alexandra.verini@ashoka.edu.in

Chair, Dept. of Creative Writing:

Arunava Sinha, arunava.sinha@ashoka.edu.in

Departmental Manager:

Harjot Malik, harjot.malik@ashoka.edu.in

English Representatives 2024-25:

Andrea Fernandez and Veda Menon,
english.rep@ashoka.edu.in

English and Creative Writing Representatives 2024-25:

Ayaan Shariq and Geetanjali Roy,
creativewriting.rep@ashoka.edu.in

Handbook content and design:

Aditya Banerjee, UG 2021

Swati Singh, UG 2021

Vighnesh Hampapura, ASP 2021

Ujjwala Shankar, ASP 2025

Vedika Mehendale, ASP 2025

Andrea Fernandez, UG 2025

Veda Menon, UG 2025

