Sample Courses

The Problems of Self in Renaissance Literature
The larger problem of individualism in Western intellectual history frames this course, but much of the work entails a close reading of these texts: Petrarch’s Letters on Familiar Matters and My Secret Book, Montaigne’s Essays, Shakespeare’s Richard II and Hamlet, and Donne’s Devotions upon Emergent Occasions.

Modern Love in Victorian Poetry and Prose
Students investigate the relationship between modernity and love in Victorian culture. They consider the forms and functions assumed by erotic attachment in the wake of political, technological, and social modernizations in poetry and prose by Browning, Tennyson, Trollope, and Gissing.

Joyce’s Ulysses
Students read one of the most challenging and rewarding books in English. Published in 1922, Ulysses is one of the classics of high modernism. It typically surprises students with its humor, crudeness, seriousness, and sensitivity.

Literature of 9/11
This course understands the category of “literature” broadly. Students analyze texts, music, films, photography, memorials, and public art projects, as well as recent studies about trauma and mourning, to develop a framework for gauging contemporary cultural and aesthetic responses to and representations of disaster.

Reading and Roadtripping
Students read road-trip narratives from the American postwar period to the present. They are encouraged to see how these narratives comprise a coherent subgenre in the American literary tradition, as well as think about the relationship between literary form and history.

The Department of English Language and Literature at the University of Chicago is, by tradition, an untraditional place. Long before “interdisciplinary” became a byword of higher education, scholars here were noted for employing a range of perspectives to probe and illuminate literature. This approach animates the department today. The 39 members of the English faculty, and the visiting faculty and lecturers, draw on a broad base of interests, ranging from historical criticism to gender theory.

Classes in the English department are normally small, most enrolling fewer than 25 students. Both serious and exhilarating, the intellectual atmosphere is one in which peers share their passion for reading and writing.

Curriculum
To enrich and prepare for the rigorous discussions that are typical of advanced English courses at UChicago, students take a course emphasizing literary theory. The English curriculum also emphasizes breadth of study by requiring students to complete course work in a number of genres and chronological periods, including pre- and post-1650 literature, American and British literature, poetry, fiction, and drama/film. Some graduate-level courses are available to undergraduate students.

Through the University of Chicago London Program, students have the opportunity to spend Autumn Quarter studying British literature and history with UChicago faculty in the cultural and political capital of England.

For more information, visit collegeadmissions.uchicago.edu
Many English majors opt to complete a senior project, creating an original work of poetry, fiction, drama, or expository prose. Or students may produce a critical or historical essay of about 25 pages. Producing, directing, and/or acting in a dramatic or cinematic production may also comprise a senior project.

Creative Writing
The creative writing program at UChicago encourages students to maintain their commitment to an academic discipline while also pursuing course work in creative writing. Students may supplement their studies with beginning and advanced workshops in poetry, fiction, playwriting, and creative nonfiction, and may pursue a minor in English and creative writing.

Unlike students in professionally oriented writing programs, undergraduates pursuing creative writing at UChicago do not concentrate exclusively on their own writing but instead develop their skills in the context of humanistic and academic study. Classes in creative writing function as workshops and allow for substantial review of student projects in classes of 10 to 12.

Extracurricular Activities
English students are active contributors to publications across campus. The University of Chicago has three student newspapers, the Chicago Weekly, the Chicago Maroon, and the Chicago Shady Dealer. Among the literary magazines and journals published by students are Sliced Bread, Euphony, and Aubade. Other magazines include Noyes Magazine and MODA, a fashion magazine on campus. Additional student organizations that may appeal to English majors include the Southside Scribblers, which works with neighborhood students in order to form a better understanding of fine arts, literature, and education; and The Dean’s Men, which provides a constant home for Shakespeare on the University of Chicago campus.

Resources for Research
The University of Chicago Library system houses more than 8.5 million volumes. Among the Library’s special collections are the life records of Geoffrey Chaucer; the personal papers of Robert Herrick and alumnus Saul Bellow; first editions of the works of Fielding, Smollett, Johnson, Thackeray, Dickens, Melville, Hawthorne, and Joyce; tens of thousands of plays, acting editions, prompt copies, playbills, and reviews; and the office files of Poetry: A Magazine of Verse. Students may also use the Film Studies Center (a state-of-the-art facility that boasts screening classrooms as well as an individual film viewing area) and the Gerald Mast Film Archive (which houses a growing collection of more than 8,000 works on film, video, and DVD that are available for study and research).

After Graduation
After students leave the University with a degree in English, they are prepared to pursue a variety of professional goals. Some seek careers in writing or journalism, joining the ranks of such notable UChicago alumni as Seymour Hersh, AB’58, Philip Roth, AM’55, and Studs Terkel, PhB’32, JD’34. Some choose the theater, such as David Auburn, AB’91, author of Proof, the Pulitzer Prize–winning Broadway play that was made into a movie; and others pursue filmmaking, such as Kimberly Peirce, AB’90, director of Boys Don’t Cry. Many continue their education in professional schools (such as law) or graduate programs (such as those in writing or English), and still others teach English in settings that range from a conversational English class in Japan to elementary school reading instruction for underserved schoolchildren through programs such as Teach for America.

Online Resources for English Majors

Chicago Maroon
chicagomaroon.com
The independent student-run biweekly, founded in 1902

Chicago Shady Dealer
chicagoshadydealer.com
The University’s longest-running, student-run, satirical newspaper

Chicago Weekly
chicagoweekly.net
The alternative student-run weekly, focusing on South Side arts and culture

Euphony
euphonyjournal.com
Poetry and prose at the University of Chicago, a biannual literary magazine

Festival of the Arts
fota.uchicago.edu
A student-run organization that funds the artistic endeavors of students, faculty, and staff

HerCampus: UChicago
hercampus.com/uchicago-blog
The collegiette’s guide to life at UChicago

MODA
modachicago.com/blog
A style blog run by students involved in promoting fashion at UChicago

Newcity
newcity.com
A weekly newspaper owned, run, and edited locally by UChicago alumni

Program in Poetry and Poetics
poetics.uchicago.edu
Offering courses, workshops, and Poem Present, which brings distinguished contemporary poets to campus

Sliced Bread
slicedbreadmag.com
A student-run literary and arts magazine

UCHiBLOGo
uchiblogo.uchicago.edu
A blog published by UChicago’s alumni magazine