



M.A. in English Composition

Overview for Graduate Faculty

Introduction

CSU San Bernardino is home to one of the very few M.A. programs in the U.S. that focuses specifically on rhetoric and composition studies. Established in the early 1980s, our M.A. in English Composition is one of only two such programs in the CSU system (the other is offered by San Diego State University). The program offers three concentrations: Composition, Literature, and Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL).

Our program is strong in its preparation of people who wish either to teach in community colleges, to prepare for doctoral programs, or to further inform their existing teaching practice. In terms of teaching, our program prepares students to teach writing in a variety of settings, including “traditional” and networked classrooms in universities, community colleges, and K-12 settings. The program also prepares students for doctoral work in composition studies, literature, and linguistics, and we enjoy a nearly 100% placement-and-fellowship rate for our Ph.D.-bound students. The program also benefits those who need expertise as writers of grants, interpreters of public policy, and editors, as well as others interested especially in non-fiction prose. Our faculty is widely published, nationally known, and committed to working closely with students.

The Program

- 48 units in each concentration: ten to eleven 4-unit courses (40-44 units); internship (2 units); thesis proposal/comprehensive exam preparation workshop (2 units); thesis/research (4 units) OR comprehensive examination (0 units).
- The Composition and Literature concentrations share a common core of five courses; the remaining courses are focused in the concentration.
- The TESL concentration shares four courses with the Composition concentration; the remaining courses are focused in the concentration.
- (Effective 2006-07) Each student elects the thesis option or comprehensive exam option as his or her “Culminating Experience” for the degree. Students must have a GPA of 3.7 or higher in program coursework in order to elect the thesis option.
- Prior to 2006/2007, all students completed the thesis option. Students admitted to the program prior to Fall 2006 and who have remained in continuous enrollment retain catalog rights to the thesis-only program without the 3.7 GPA requirement.

Student population

Students in the program are frequently (but by no means always) alumni of our undergraduate program. Many are high school teachers and many hope for a career teaching at the community college level. Most work at least part-time and in many cases full-time. An increasing number of our students intend to go on to a doctoral program, and many recent graduates have done so successfully.

Program oversight and coordination

The program is overseen by a *Graduate Coordinator* and two *Associate Graduate Coordinators*, each of whom is responsible for advising students in one of the three concentrations. The *T.A. Coordinator* mentors the T.A.s. The *Graduate Committee* (8-10 members) meets monthly to review and approve thesis proposals and has responsibility for policies generally with regard to



Professors Carlson and Pigeon get ready for a Graduate Committee meeting.

graduate education in the department. Graduate Coordinators are responsible for all administration of the program, including recruitment, admission decisions, advising,

and probation/dismissal decisions, as well as programmatic review (e.g., M.A. program assessment), curricular revision (in consultation with the Graduate Committee) and graduate course scheduling. Coordinators and committee members are elected by the vote of full-time faculty. Graduate coordinators serve two-year terms, committee members one-year terms.

Graduate course offerings

The three graduate coordinators construct a draft schedule of graduate classes yearly and submit it to the chair for final approval. A call for requests to teach graduate classes will be issued yearly, usually in January or early February. Most graduate courses are offered in late afternoon/evening time slots, so faculty interested in these courses should be prepared to teach 6

p.m. sections.

Grading in graduate courses

Graduate students systemwide are required to maintain a minimum 3.0 GPA. No grade lower than a “C” (including a “C-”) may be counted towards the degree. In our program, students whose quarterly GPA dips below 3.0 (even if their cumulative GPA remains above it) are sent a warning by the graduate coordinators. Students whose cumulative GPA drops below 3.0 are put on academic probation and given one or more quarters to raise their GPA to the required minimum. If they fail to do so, they are subject to dismissal from the program.

While grades in graduate courses may run the gamut from A-F, in general they cluster from A-B. If a student earns a grade lower than a B in your course, remember that if the grade is a C, a C+, or a B-, they will have successfully fulfilled the degree requirement for the course, so long as their GPA remains above 3.0.

Students who receive a grade of C- or lower cannot count the class towards the degree. If it is a required course, they will have one chance to repeat it and “discount” the grade (substitute a higher grade earned upon retaking the course). Only one grade can be discounted at the graduate level. However, with the coordinator’s permission, students can re-take more than one class and average their grades (again, with the requirement of maintaining a 3.0 GPA).

Because the degree’s “culminating experience” (thesis or exam) requires strong writing and research skills, the optimal design for a graduate course will weight these skills heavily in the calculation of the course grade. Students with unsatisfactory writing and research skills should not pass based upon strengths in other components (e.g., participation), and should be identified early in their graduate careers. The graduate coordinators can advise students on options to help them improve in these areas.

Grades of “Incomplete” (I)

While each faculty member has authority over grading, grades of “Incomplete” (I) should be granted with extreme caution in the M.A. program. In accord with University policy, Incompletes should only be assigned in rare, unforeseen circumstances in which a student is unable to complete some component of the work for a

class (e.g., the final paper due to a family emergency). Faculty may request that students supply documentation of their circumstances. Students should not be given an Incomplete if they were unable to come to much of the class or did not complete more than one of the class projects. Such students should be given a regular grade (A-F) or, if their circumstances warrant it, should petition to withdraw from the class before the end of the quarter through the College of Arts and Letters Dean's office. Students with exceptional circumstances can petition to withdraw from the class retroactively (after the tenth week of the quarter) but must withdraw from all classes taken in the quarter.

If a faculty member gives a student a grade of Incomplete (I), the faculty member should specify on the Incomplete form how long the student has to complete the missing work. If no time is specified, the student has one year to complete the work. By the end of the designated time allotted, if the student has completed the required work, the faculty member must grade the work and complete a "Change of Grade" form for the student. If the student has not completed the work or if the faculty member does not complete a Change of Grade form, the student's "I" grade will turn into a grade of "IC," which is the equivalent of an "F" in the student's GPA. Many students do not finish their Incomplete work in the time allotted, and thus faculty should consider this in deciding on whether to give an Incomplete.



A group of our graduate students (and Professor Haviland) at the 2003 Conference on College Composition and Communication in New York City, where they presented a workshop on tutoring.

Internship

Students in all three concentrations are required to complete a 2-unit internship, in which they observe a faculty mentor's course throughout a quarter, work with students, and teach at least one class session.

Students will contact you asking to intern in your class. They are supposed to arrange their internship no later than the eighth week of the preceding quarter, and provide you with an internship contract to sign. You may add additional requirements to the contract in the space provided. They will also give you a "letter to instructor" form with a space for a grade recommendation and your comments; this letter should be completed and returned to the student at the end of the quarter in a sealed envelope; the student will then give this letter to his or her coordinator.

Please note that interns should not:

- teach a class session when the faculty mentor is not present
- substitute for the faculty mentor (e.g., while the mentor is at a conference)
- assign grades to any student work

All of the above are significant violations of university and departmental policies and should be scrupulously avoided when working with interns.

Interns should receive experience in grading through a "ghost-grading" process: students should be asked to submit two copies of their assignments, and interns should read, comment and assign putative grades, in order to discuss student work with the faculty mentor.

In addition to their classroom work, interns are also required to participate in an online discussion forum on Blackboard during their internship and complete assigned readings. Final grades are assigned by the coordinators based upon the faculty mentor's recommendation and the student's participation in the online discussion.

Teaching assistantships

A small number of teaching assistantships are available yearly. T.A.s are mentored by the T.A. Coordinator and teach ENG 101 (Freshman Composition). T.A.s are selected through a competitive application process.

Culminating experience: thesis or comprehensive exam

In order to complete the program, students must satisfy a "Culminating Experience" requirement by either passing a comprehensive exam or writing a thesis.

THE COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

The Comprehensive Exam was added as a “Culminating Experience” option to the degree in the 2006/2007 academic year. A thorough explanation of the exam’s structure can be found in the preparation booklet supplied to students, available from the program website. The exam has three parts (two on-campus, one take-home) and differs for each concentration. A team of three readers (two faculty members and a graduate coordinator) reads each part of the exam. Graduate Committee members, coordinators, and other faculty teaching graduate courses draft the exam questions. All faculty teaching graduate courses should be familiar with the exam and the reading lists.

THE THESIS

Each thesis requires:

- *a substantially researched and revised 1000-word proposal and select annotated bibliography approved by a 2- to 3-person Thesis Committee and the full Graduate Committee (8-10 members);*
- *a thesis manuscript approved for content by (usually) a 2-person thesis committee;*
- *approval by the Graduate Studies Office of the formatted thesis manuscript; the final thesis manuscript is signed by the thesis committee and coordinator or department chair.*

Eligibility to pursue the thesis option

If a student entered the program in Fall 2006 or later, in order to pursue writing a thesis, s/he must have a minimum GPA of 3.7 overall in degree-applicable coursework or the permission of the graduate coordinator. This GPA requirement must be met prior to the student undertaking to write the thesis proposal, and the student must have completed at least 24 units of the program coursework upon which the GPA is based. Thus, students at this stage in the program who are considering pursuing the thesis option, should meet with their graduate coordinator to review their GPA and obtain permission to undertake the thesis option. Only students who have obtained this permission from the graduate coordinator will be allowed to submit a thesis proposal to the Graduate Committee.

The number of theses read and thesis students supervised by individual faculty members in the department has ranged in recent years from 0-16. No release time or workload consideration is given to thesis readers, regardless of the number of students supervised. New faculty should consult the graduate coordinators and chair with questions about their thesis advising/reading load.



Professors Henry and Ruml in full regalia at commencement.

Students contact faculty directly in their search for thesis readers. Even if you do not feel able to serve as a reader, you are encouraged to discuss with the student his/her proposed topic and offer any advice that seems appropriate.

Thesis proposal and readers

The thesis requires two faculty readers (one is considered a “primary” reader, the other the “second” reader). A thesis committee may also have three readers. In order to prepare for writing a thesis, students must complete ENG 695, a 2-unit thesis

proposal workshop taught by the graduate coordinators, and write a carefully researched 1000-word-maximum thesis proposal with an accompanying select annotated bibliography. Sample passing thesis proposals are found on the English graduate program website (under "Thesis Proposal Archive"). The proposal must receive the approval of the *Thesis Committee* (the two or three readers) prior to its submission to the 10-member *Graduate Committee*. The primary reader must write a brief letter / memo (usually one paragraph) in support of the proposal as part of the student's thesis proposal packet, and both (or all) readers must sign the thesis proposal cover sheet. Please talk to one of the graduate coordinators about the guidelines for writing the letter of support.

If the student is pursuing a dual concentration, the thesis topic must be relevant to both concentrations.

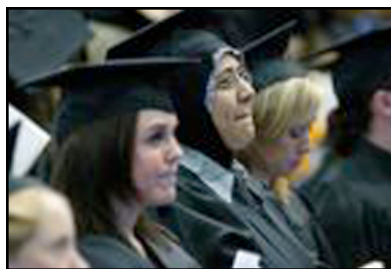
In particular, the Graduate Committee looks for the following characteristics in proposals:

- *clear statement of the purpose and nature of the student's proposed thesis project*
- *familiarity with relevant and current research and theory related to the thesis topic*
- *grounding of the project within this research and theory*
- *explanation of the project's contribution to the field (i.e., the proposal should answer the "so what?" question for the student's project)*
- *reasonable scope of a project for an M.A. thesis, which when completed usually runs 50-65 pages in 12-point Times font*
- *appropriate methodology for conducting the project*
- *clear organization and writing style*
- *appropriate use of sources and appropriate citation style (MLA style for composition and literature theses and APA style for TESL theses)*

If a student's thesis project involves research with human subjects (e.g., surveys, interviews, use of student papers, etc.), it must be reviewed and approved by CSUSB's Institutional Review Board (IRB) before the student begins his/her project. For such projects, both the student and his/her primary thesis reader must complete IRB training and submit to IRB an application for his/her project. Information and forms related to the IRB training and application submission process can be

found at <http://irb.csusb.edu>.

Students will work with their readers through multiple drafts of their proposal until the readers specify that it is ready for submission to the Graduate Committee. Thesis proposals must be submitted to members of the Committee *one week* in advance of the Graduate Committee meeting by 4 p.m. (e.g., If the Committee meets on Wednesday, proposals must be submitted by 4 p.m. Wednesday of the previous week.). Late submissions will not be considered. The Graduate Committee meeting dates are posted on the program website: <http://english.csusb.edu/grad>. Also on the website are the thesis proposal cover sheet and instructions for submitting the thesis proposal. Students should review the instructions carefully.



M.A. graduates at the December 2007 commencement ceremony.

The maximum length of 1000 words for the proposal (exclusive of title and annotated bibliography) is strictly enforced; if a proposal is more than 1000 words, it will be returned to the student unreviewed. In order to have a thesis proposal considered, students must submit

hard copies of their proposal and the signed cover sheet to the Graduate Committee members' department mailboxes *and* an electronic copy to the English Graduate Coordinator by the deadline. *Students must be enrolled during the quarter in which they submit their thesis proposal, or their proposal will be returned unreviewed.*

After the Graduate Committee has reviewed the student's proposal, the thesis readers and student will receive an email message from the Graduate Coordinator explaining what revisions, if any, the Graduate Committee requests that the student make to the proposal. If revisions are required, the Graduate Coordinator will also specify whether the student must submit a revised proposal to the entire Graduate Committee for a second review or whether the revisions need only be approved by the thesis readers. Revisions are requested for approximately two-thirds of the proposals submitted.

Thesis writing

Once the thesis proposal has the Graduate Committee's approval, the student is then permitted to enroll in ENG 699A (Thesis, 2 units) and ENG 699B (Thesis and Research, 2 units). These two courses are required of all thesis students. They may enroll in them in the same quarter or in consecutive quarters. Generally, during the thesis writing process, the thesis writer works through one or more complete drafts of the thesis with the primary reader before the draft is given to the second reader for comments. Readers should consult with one another and whenever possible, present a united front to the thesis writer with regard to revisions required to the thesis.

Many students will want faculty to read thesis drafts during the summer. This is optional, but the faculty member's policy on this should be clearly discussed with the student.

Turn-around time on thesis drafts

Many faculty thesis readers read, comment on, and return thesis drafts to students within two to three weeks. Early on in the writing process, the faculty readers and the student should discuss the time frame in which the student can expect to receive comments. Several faculty members have created their own "thesis contracts" that clarify turn-around time and other process details for readers and students. These contracts are by no means required, but should you like to see samples, please contact the Graduate Coordinators.

Thesis deadlines and submission to Graduate Studies

The deadlines for submitting a thesis to the Graduate Studies office for Fall, Winter, Spring, and Summer quarters are found on the Graduate Studies website, under the link for "Thesis/Project."

For each quarter, Graduate Studies has deadlines for "First Format Review," "Final Format Review" and "Binding Payment" (The deadline for "Thesis Defense" does not apply to our program, as we do not require an

oral defense.) *These deadlines are strictly enforced. If a student misses a deadline, s/he will not graduate that quarter and will be required to enroll the next quarter.*

For first format review

After thesis readers have fully approved the final content of a thesis, the student is allowed to submit the thesis for First Format Review to the Graduate Studies office. For this First Format Review, the student must turn in to Graduate Studies (in AD-127) the following three items:

- the Thesis/Project Certification form signed by the thesis readers; this form is available from AD-127 or can be downloaded from the Graduate Studies website;
- the completed and formatted thesis;
- an electronic copy of the formatted thesis on a disk; the Graduate Studies office uses this disk to check theses for plagiarism;
- Please note that on the thesis signature page, the student must have three reader names listed. If there are only have two thesis readers, the third signature must be of one of the English graduate coordinators or the English department chair. However, on the Thesis/Project Certification form (see item 1. above), the student only needs the signatures of the two readers.



M.A. student James Ducat toils in the computer classroom.

The student must format the thesis manuscript according to the Graduate Studies guidelines. Manuscript review is scrupulous in the extreme, and writers may wish to hire a formatter. Faculty

generally do not advise students on formatting but should be on the lookout for egregious errors in usage or documentation format, and should be sure to review the required abstract the student must include.

If the Graduate Studies office deems the thesis to have significant errors in formatting, they will return it as a

Office of Graduate Studies
gradstudies.csusb.edu

“No Review.” Please note that Graduate Studies defines “format review” broadly, referring to a review not only of margins, documentation, and editing, but also of the project’s conforming to the Title V definition of a thesis:

A thesis is the written product of a systematic study of a significant problem. It identifies the problem, states the major assumptions, explains the significance of the undertaking, sets forth the sources for and methods of gathering information, analyzes the data, and offers a conclusion or recommendation. The finished product evidences originality, critical and independent thinking, appropriate organization and format, and thorough documentation. (California State University Education Code [Title V, Section 40510, p. 473])

Thus, one reason a thesis can receive a “No Review” is if the Office of Graduate Studies determines that the thesis is “incomplete in format,” i.e., it lacks some key component. The determination of “incomplete format” is made by the Dean of Graduate Studies (not the format readers themselves).

If a thesis is returned with “No Review,” the student must resubmit the thesis by the First Format Review deadline if s/he wishes to graduate that quarter. If the

student does not submit the thesis again by the First Format Review deadline, s/he will have missed that deadline and will not be allowed to graduate that quarter. It is thus very important that the student carefully follow the formatting



Brian Bailie and Freddie Harris-Ramsby meet with Professor Rhodes at the campus Starbucks.

guidelines available from the Graduate Studies website (see the links under “Thesis/Project”).

For Final Format Review

After Graduate Studies has completed their First Format Review of the thesis, they will send the student a memo detailing the formatting corrections that need to be made. Although thesis readers will also receive a copy of this memo, it is the student’s responsibility to make the formatting corrections. Graduate Studies will

continue to send memos until all of the corrections have been made. Students typically must correct and resubmit their thesis manuscripts to Graduate Studies multiple times in order to meet all of the formatting requirements.

When Graduate Studies sends a memo saying that the thesis is ready to be printed on 100% cotton paper, the student is ready for “Final Format Check.” At this point, the student needs to obtain the signatures of the thesis readers on at least three copies of the signature page on the cotton paper. (The student must submit a minimum of three copies of the entire thesis manuscript on the cotton paper.) If there are only two thesis readers, the third signature will be one of the three English graduate coordinators or the English department chair.

The student will turn in the three signed copies of the thesis to the Graduate Studies office. When the student receives notification from that office that the thesis is ready for binding, the student will pick up from Graduate Studies a “Summary of Binding Charges,” take this notice to the Bursar’s office, and pay for the binding charges. This *must* be done by the Thesis Binding deadline.

Completing “change-of-grade” forms for thesis courses (ENG 699A/B)

Once the student has paid the binding charges for his/her thesis, s/he will receive a receipt for the binding. S/he must place this receipt in the mailbox of the graduate coordinator of his/her concentration. The graduate coordinator will then place Change-of-Grade forms in the primary reader’s mailbox. If the student was not enrolled in the thesis units (ENG 699a/b) in the quarter in which s/he filed the thesis (and most will not be), then they will have received grades of “RP” for “report in progress” for those units. *The primary reader should complete the two “Change of Grade” forms (one each for ENG 699a and ENG 699b) to change the “RP”s to a letter grade, and place these two forms in the mailbox of the student’s graduate coordinator.* A grade of “A” is customary in all but the most exceptional circumstances; if you feel you should not assign an “A” you may wish to discuss this with the graduate coordinators or the chair, and the thesis writer.

The Change-of-Grade form is the final step that will allow the student’s degree to be posted, so primary readers should take care not to neglect this final task.

Summary of forms thesis readers must sign

- Thesis proposal cover sheet and memo of support for the proposal
- Thesis/Project Certification form, which the student submits to Graduate Studies for the First Format Review
- Thesis signature pages (on cotton paper), which the student submits to Graduate Studies for the Final Format Review.
- Change-of-Grade forms for the student's ENG 699a and 699b courses. These the primary thesis reader must sign and submit to the student's graduate coordinator after the student has turned in the binding receipt to the graduate coordinator's mailbox.

Continuous enrollment requirement for graduate students

The University requires that all graduate students remain continuously enrolled in their program until they complete their degree. If a student must take a temporary leave from the program for one or more quarters for personal reasons, s/he should petition for a Leave of Absence from the program through the Graduate Studies office. If a student is not enrolled at the University and does not have an approved Leave of Absence, s/he will be automatically dropped from the University system and must reapply to continue in the program. If readmitted, s/he will be subject to the most recent Catalog requirements.

Continuous enrollment for thesis students

If a thesis student has completed all of the program coursework except for the thesis units (ENG 699A and 699B), and is still working on his thesis proposal or thesis with his/her readers, s/he should enroll in ENG 697 (Thesis and Comprehensive Examination Independent Study, 4 units) or ENG 698 (Continuous Enrollment, 0-6 units). (If a student wishes to enroll in another course to maintain continuous enrollment, s/he must receive approval from the graduate coordinator.)

For domestic students, ENG 697 and ENG 698 are on the same fee schedule (i.e., they cost the same because 0-6 units are all at the same fee rate). Students typically

enroll in ENG 697, which is graded CR/NC (Credit/No Credit). However, international students, who are on a different fee program, may prefer to enroll in ENG 698Z for 0 units. Neither ENG 697 nor ENG 698 counts toward the degree.

Thesis readers must verify with their students that they are continuously enrolled. The only quarter that thesis students are not required to be enrolled is Summer quarter; however, if the student is filing his/her thesis with the Graduate Studies office during Summer quarter, s/he must be enrolled.

Continuous enrollment for comprehensive examination students

If a comprehensive examination student has completed all of the program coursework except for ENG 999 (Comprehensive Examination), then for the quarter(s) when s/he is preparing for the examination, s/he may enroll in ENG 697 (Thesis and Comprehensive Examination Independent Study, 4 units) or ENG 698 (Continuous Enrollment, 0-6 units), or petition for a Leave of Absence through the Graduate Studies office.

At the end of each quarter that students are enrolled in ENG 697 or ENG 698, they must submit a 1/2-page summary to their graduate coordinator describing the work they completed that quarter toward their thesis proposal, thesis, or comprehensive examination preparation.



Professor Hyon (center) shows graduate students the sights in San Antonio, at the 2004 Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC)