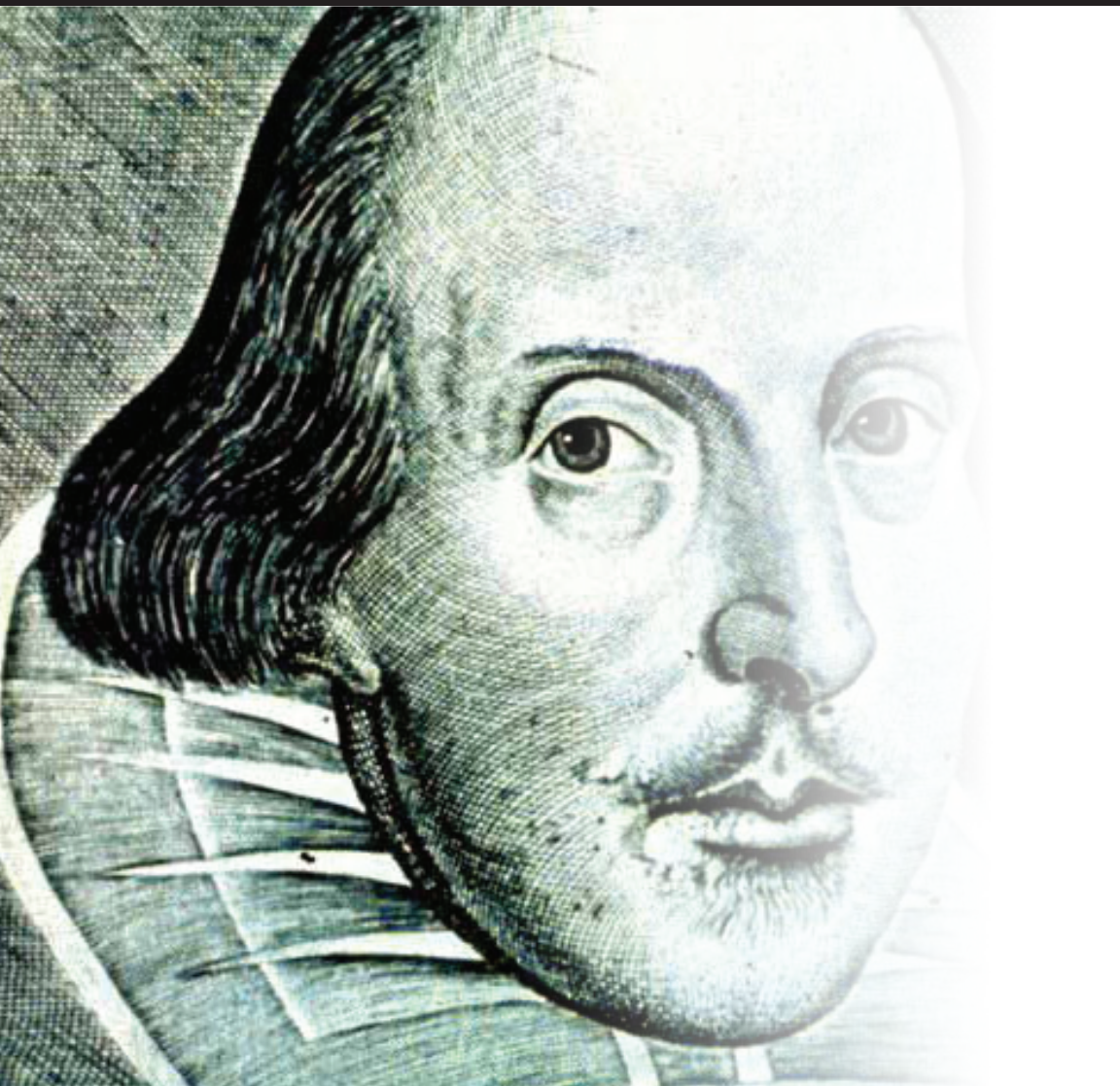


# The Vanishing **Shakespeare**

A Report by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni







## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report was prepared by the staff of the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, primarily by Anne D. Neal and Charles Mitchell. The American Council of Trustees and Alumni is a national non-profit based in Washington, DC, dedicated to academic freedom, academic quality, and accountability in higher education. For further information about ACTA and its programs, please contact:

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O! WHAT A NOBLE MIND



# IS HERE O'ERTHROWN. — HAMLET

## THE VANISHING SHAKESPEARE

**A**s this report goes to press, our nation's capital is in the midst of a six-month, city-wide celebration of William Shakespeare. With this celebration as a backdrop, the American Council of Trustees and Alumni researched how Shakespeare fits into English curricula at 70 of the nation's leading colleges and universities. What we found is, to quote the Bard, the "unkindest cut of all."

At most universities, English majors were once required to study Shakespeare as one of the preeminent representatives of English language and literature. But today—on campuses public and private, large and small, east and west—he is required no more.

At more than three-quarters of the institutions ACTA surveyed, English majors are not required to take a course on Shakespeare. The trend has been present for decades, but it has significantly worsened over the past ten years. And as schools relax requirements relating to Shakespeare and other great authors, courses that have more to do with popular culture and current events are multiplying.





THIS WAS THE MOST  
UNKINDEST CUT OF ALL.  
— JULIUS CAESAR

## 1: THE ASSAULT ON SHAKESPEARE AND GREAT AUTHORS

To determine where Shakespeare stands in today's curriculum, ACTA surveyed English departments at the *U.S. News & World Report's* top 25 national universities and top 25 liberal arts colleges, as well as the Big Ten schools and select public universities in New York and California. With the current festivities in our nation's capital in mind, we also looked at universities in or near the District of Columbia. Appendix A gives a full listing of the schools studied, together with summaries of their English major requirements.

Today, a mere 15 of these 70 colleges and universities require English majors to take a course in Shakespeare. Those institutions are:

- California Institute of Technology
- Catholic University
- Harvard University
- Middlebury College
- Smith College
- Stanford University
- State University of New York at Binghamton
- State University of New York at Buffalo
- University of California at Berkeley
- University of California at Los Angeles
- University of the District of Columbia
- University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
- University of Minnesota
- University of Wisconsin at Madison
- Wellesley College

This figure reflects a generous definition of requiring Shakespeare. ACTA credited a college or university with a Shakespeare requirement when a majority of its English majors were obliged either to take a course in Shakespeare or to take two out of three single-author courses on Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Milton.<sup>1</sup>

What do these figures mean? For starters, only one Ivy League university, Harvard, requires its English majors to take a course in Shakespeare. Only four of the top 25 national universities ranked by *U.S. News & World Report* have a Shakespeare requirement: Berkeley, Cal Tech, Harvard, and Stanford. The top 25 liberal arts colleges fare even worse, with only three—Middlebury, Smith, and Wellesley—requiring their English majors to study Shakespeare.

Turning to large public universities, only three from the Big Ten (Illinois, Minnesota, and Wisconsin) require Shakespeare. And even though Washington, DC is devoting the first half of 2007 to a celebration of Shakespeare, just two schools in the area, Catholic University and the University of the District of Columbia, require their English majors to study him.

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**Ivy League:** One school requires Shakespeare  
**Top 25 National Universities:** Four require Shakespeare  
**Top 25 Liberal Arts Colleges:** Three require Shakespeare  
**Big Ten:** Three require Shakespeare  
**Washington, DC-Area Schools:** Two require Shakespeare

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Thus, 55 of the 70 schools we surveyed allow English majors—including future English teachers—to graduate without studying the language’s greatest writer in depth.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Although numerous schools require majors to take a survey of British medieval and Renaissance literature, they often do not guarantee that surveys will include Shakespeare or will provide exposure of any significant depth. Accordingly, for the purposes of this study, we do not classify those schools as requiring Shakespeare.

<sup>2</sup>ACTA (then known as National Alumni Forum) first investigated this issue in 1996, when we issued a report called *The Shakespeare File: What English Majors Are Really Studying*. This study reviewed the top 25 universities and top 25 liberal arts colleges ranked by *U.S. News & World Report*, public universities in New York and California, as well as several institutions included for regional balance. At that time, 23 of the 70 schools surveyed required their English majors to study Shakespeare. Eight of those 23 have since dropped the requirements: Claremont McKenna College; Duke University; Hamilton College; State University of New York at Stony Brook; University of Illinois at Chicago; University of Southern California; University of Virginia; and Washington University in St. Louis. Schools surveyed in the 1996 and 2007 studies overlap but are not identical.

At most colleges and universities, Shakespeare courses can be taken as electives to fulfill broad historical distribution requirements, as outlined in Appendix A. And yet, as a quick glance at existing requirements shows, Shakespeare holds no favored place. A course on Shakespeare may count the same as the study of Renaissance food (Swarthmore College), Renaissance things (University of Chicago), and medieval writing about flogging, stabbing, and rape (University of Pennsylvania).

Increasingly, colleges and universities envision a major in “English” not as a body of important writers, genres, and works that all should know, but as a hodgepodge of courses reflecting diverse interests and approaches. (See Appendix B.) After redesigning the English major at the University of Pennsylvania, for example, the department’s undergraduate chairman told *The Daily Pennsylvanian* student newspaper that “We might not agree on what we think English is, but we could all agree that our curriculum should reflect the makeup of our faculty.”<sup>3</sup> Such a philosophy results in course offerings being driven not by the intellectual needs of students, but often by the varied interests and agendas of the faculty. As a consequence, it is possible for students to graduate with a degree in English without thoughtful or extended study of central works and figures who have shaped our literary and cultural heritage.

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<sup>3</sup>Molly Petrilla, “Proposed English major offers expanded options,” *The Daily Pennsylvanian*, January 15, 2004.



THOUGH THIS BE MADNESS,  
YET THERE IS METHOD IN'T.  
– HAMLET

## 2: THE ADVANCE OF THE NOT-SO-GREAT

Doing away with Shakespeare requirements might not be so bad if students were otherwise guaranteed a sustained and coherent exposure to the key works of the English language. But in the set of courses and requirements we now call the English curriculum, undergraduates too often have no such guarantee.

Mind you, most colleges claim otherwise. Haverford College's English department, for example, claims to "maintain a working balance between an enduring commitment to the traditional canon of English and American literature and an expanding horizon of fresh concerns." Yet while faculty offered many "fresh concerns" in 2006-07, Haverford offered not a single course on the Bard.

In their zeal to incorporate "fresh concerns," English departments appear to have thrown the baby out with the bath water. While Shakespeare and other traditionally acclaimed authors such as Chaucer and Milton are no longer required, many institutions such as Rice, Oberlin, and Vanderbilt *require* students to study "non-canonical traditions," "under-represented cultures," and "ethnic or non-Western literature."

English majors today find a mind-boggling array of courses that center on politics, sociology and popular culture—courses notable *not* because they focus on great literature, but because they focus on everything but. English classes address a multiplicity of non-literary topics such as (in their own words): adoption (Yale University); AIDS (Princeton University); animals, cannibals, and vegetables (Emory University); African cinema (University of Chicago); the conceptual black body (Mount Holy-

oke College); diasporic ecological literature (Bates College); film noir (Columbia University); globalism (University of Virginia); Hollywood in the 1970s (American University); *Baywatch* (Northwestern University); Madonna (University of Pennsylvania); migration—forced and voluntary (Vassar); policing and prisons (Cornell University); queer mobility (Penn State University); radical vegetarian manifestos (University of Pennsylvania); rock and roll (University of California at San Diego); socialist and capitalist philosophies (Macalaster College); teen identity (Purdue University); Wild West shows and vaudeville (Swarthmore College); and Vietnam and Iraq (Bowdoin College).

English departments across the country are also offering an increasing number and variety of courses on “theory,” and many require it. (See Appendix A.) In these courses, students are typically introduced to a style of thought rather than a body of knowledge; rather than studying major literary works in depth, students are taught to “theorize” about literature and culture. At Duke, where theory is required, but not Shakespeare, undergraduates studying “Cool Theory” focus on just one word: “interrogat[ing] the concept of ‘cool’ through an engagement with a variety of media, including fiction, memoir, music, television, fashion and film, as well as historical and theoretical secondary materials.” At Princeton, English majors who study “Contemporary Literary Theory” each week “take up a new critical term, examining both its history and its current usages. Terms might include: language, ideology, performativity, sexuality, ethics, media, trauma, AIDS, globalization, and war.” And at the University of Virginia, English majors can avoid reading *Othello* in favor of studying “Critical Race Theory,” which explores why race “continue[s] to have vital significance in politics, economics, education, culture, arts, and everyday social realities” including “sexuality, class, disability, multiculturalism, nationality, and globalism.”

While Shakespeare requirements are on the decline, courses on children’s literature are proliferating. For \$40,000 a year, students can now spend their precious college years at Yale, Purdue, the University of Pennsylvania, and others studying the works of Dr. Seuss, Maurice Sendak, Lemony Snicket, and J. K. Rowling.

Courses on “body studies” and “animal rights” are also multiplying. Oberlin’s English course on “Folklore and the Body,” for example, considers “reproduction, initiation, health, beauty, gesture, etiquette, hair, body

parts ... and dress.” Meanwhile, Dartmouth’s English department offers a course entitled “Of Nags, Bitches and Shrews: Women and Animals in Western Literature” in order to explore whether advances in women’s rights have been met with “corresponding advances in the treatment of animals and why women feel particularly called upon to work for those advances.”

Many courses seek to sensationalize literary study, offering provocative, even titillating, course descriptions that notably focus on sex. Columbia University offers “Promiscuity and the Novel,” where students begin with the “early modern novel of erotic intrigue, move through French courtesan fiction and the English courtship novel, and arrive at modernist explorations of the sexual demi-monde and more recent depictions of gay urban life.” Georgetown students can study “Sexing the Past,” including “how sex and sexuality may be read across time.” And in Duke’s “Creepy Kids in Fiction and Film,” students focus on “weirdoes, creeps, freaks, and geeks of the truly evil variety” with the aim of asking how films showcasing “a child’s irregularity or abnormality” make us “freak out.” In this class, students view *The Omen* and *The Sixth Sense*, and read Stephen King’s *Children of the Corn*.

Speaking of film: Modern English departments are increasingly home to courses on movies, with many departments even hiring dedicated film specialists.<sup>4</sup> At Bowdoin College, English majors can study “The Horror Film in Context,” which focuses on how horror movies “represent violence, fear, and paranoia,” placing special emphasis on “their creation of identity categories; their intersection with contemporary politics; and their participation in such major literary and cinematic genres as the gothic, parody, and family drama.” Students at Cornell can take “Fast Talking Dames and Sad Ladies: 1940s and Now,” where they examine “sassy or subdued heroines of Hollywood’s 1940s films and current films.”

These courses and more are outlined in Appendix B, which excerpts actual course descriptions from the colleges and universities studied.<sup>5</sup> The categories used are not exhaustive or scientific, but intended to be useful groupings that highlight current trends.

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<sup>4</sup>See Robert Armour, “A Survey: The Teaching of Film in English Departments,” *Journal of the University Film Association* 27 (4): 11-16.

<sup>5</sup>Some colleges provide detailed course descriptions and some only titles or brief catalogue notes. Those that provide descriptions are disproportionately represented here.





MEN AT SOME TIME ARE  
MASTERS OF THEIR FATES.

—JULIUS CAESAR

### 3: WHAT YOU CAN DO

As this report makes clear, English majors across the country can graduate today without reading Shakespeare in depth. Employers—especially newspapers, publishers, schools, and others who hire English majors—should be deeply concerned. So should parents, alumni, trustees, and interested citizens.

If reading Shakespeare is not central to a liberal education, what is? But for English majors to miss out is far worse. As we said before: A degree in English without Shakespeare is like an M.D. without a course in anatomy. It is tantamount to fraud. A high school that hires someone with a B.A. in English should rightly assume that this individual can teach Shakespeare and other great authors. However, in a world where Shakespeare is no longer required, it's easy to imagine a day when schoolteachers will not have read Shakespeare, and will not teach him.

A look at today's English departments illustrates what happens when various academic trends—and faculty interests—are allowed to push the traditional study of great literature aside. While the study of theory and culture is fine, one can rightly ask why English professors are abandoning their obligation to expose students to the enlightening and inspiring power of literature as literature, with Shakespeare as the greatest casualty. As Washington celebrates Shakespeare, why do so many American campuses dismiss him?

It used to be that our colleges and universities could be counted on to introduce students—in Matthew Arnold's words—to the best that has been thought and said. Our campuses offered a place where students

could engage the central works, events and figures that have shaped our world's common conversation.

The prevalent circular approach that allows students to select almost any combination of courses on their way to graduation results in a patchwork that poorly prepares students for lifelong educational needs.<sup>6</sup> It's no surprise that in 2004 the National Endowment for the Arts found in *Readers at Risk: A Survey of Literary Reading in America*, that less than half of the U.S. adult population had read any work of literature—of any quality, in any language—during a full year.<sup>7</sup> College students who are fed a diet of pop culture and film in the English department carry these tastes with them.

If our colleges and universities seek to retain public support of their work, they must understand that education is about informed choices, made possible by reason, professional training, and good sense. Education, if it is to be lasting and valuable, must value the transcendent over the ephemeral, the thought-provoking over the tendentious—Shakespeare over Madonna. Faculties have a right to pursue personal intellectual interests, but they also have an obligation to address what students need to learn. If trained and tenured faculty will not distinguish between the meaningful and trivial, then what are parents paying for?

Fortunately, as severe as this problem is, it is not difficult to fix. What colleges need most is to review and reform their curricula—and curricular self-examination can be done at little or not cost.

### **What Trustees and Administrators Can Do**

Since many English professors endorse the shift away from curricula centered on major authors, English departments are unlikely to change on their own.

Trustees and administrators should insist that departments articulate with far greater clarity what students should know upon graduating and ensure that major requirements are substantive.

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<sup>6</sup>In a 2004 study entitled *The Hollow Core*, ACTA shed light on the general education requirements at 50 of the top colleges and universities nationwide. Some 62 percent did not require a non-remedial mathematics course, 88 percent did not require a survey course on great works of literature, 86 percent did not require a survey course on American history or government, and not one institution required a general economics course.

<sup>7</sup>National Endowment for the Arts, *Reading at Risk: A Survey of Literary Reading in America* (2004); see <http://www.arts.gov/pub/ReadingAtRisk.pdf>.

Academic freedom, of course, is a crucially important right. Yet like any other right, it also entails responsibility—in this case, faculty members' responsibility to teach, in addition to their own specialized research interests, the subjects students need to know. If such subjects are not being taught, trustees and administrators are right to be concerned and to ask that the curriculum be reviewed.

### **What Alumni and Donors Can Do**

Alumni should take an active interest in whether their alma maters have strong requirements in English and other key subjects. They should not allow their degrees to be devalued by a decline in college standards. Alumni outcry over proposed changes to the acclaimed curricula at the University of Chicago and Brooklyn College resulted in both colleges abandoning their plans. Meanwhile, recent concerns about educational gaps voiced in alumnae surveys prompted Smith College to pursue enhanced requirements in math.

Those who give can be especially helpful, since donors can target outstanding programs and projects that introduce students to subjects that standard curricula do not adequately cover. ACTA can assist alumni and donors in identifying outstanding programs and in directing their gifts to support them. It's time for alumni to tell universities that they will not remain silent when academic standards decline.

### **What Students and Their Families Can Do**

Parents and students can also take action. Before selecting a college, students and parents should carefully read college catalogs and decide which schools prescribe courses of study that reflect a thoughtful and convincing educational philosophy. As outlined in this report, some of the most prestigious and expensive colleges have weak or nonexistent requirements. While it is always possible to identify some good courses, a quality higher education should not be left up to chance.

Students who are already attending college can make up for curricular deficiencies by selecting their courses carefully. Parents can help their sons and daughters understand that trendy, topical courses will not well serve their long-term needs.

And students should recognize that they can be effective agents of change. They are the ones being cheated—and they can compel their

schools to take notice. The example of Harvard's undergraduates, who have agitated for a stronger, more coherent core curriculum, shows what a determined group can do when it decides to fight for a better education.

In a recent essay in *The New York Review of Books*, Columbia humanities professor Andrew Delbanco made the challenge clear: "Colleges will fulfill their responsibilities only when they confront the question of what students should learn—a question that most administrators, compilers of rank lists, and authors of books on higher education prefer to avoid."<sup>8</sup>

Restoring Shakespeare to his rightful place on the required reading list is a good place to start.

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<sup>8</sup>Andrew Delbanco, "Scandals of Higher Education," *The New York Review of Books*, Vol. 54, No. 5, March 29, 2007.



## CHART 1

### ENGLISH DEPARTMENT SHAKESPEARE REQUIREMENTS All Institutions Surveyed

	Requires	Does not Require
American University		●
Amherst College		●
Barnard College		●
Bates College		●
Bowdoin College		●
Brown University		●
Bryn Mawr College		●
California Institute of Technology	●	
Carleton College		●
Carnegie Mellon University		●
Catholic University	●	
Claremont McKenna College		●
Colby College		●
Colgate University		●
Columbia University		●
Cornell University		●
Dartmouth College		●
Davidson College		●
Duke University		●
Emory University		●
George Washington University		●
Georgetown University		●
Grinnell College		●
Hamilton College		●
Harvard University	●	
Haverford College		●
Harvey Mudd College		●
Howard University		●
Indiana University		●
Johns Hopkins University		●
Macalester College		●
Massachusetts Institute of Technology*		
Michigan State University		●
Middlebury College	●	
Mount Holyoke College		●

	<b>Requires</b>	<b>Does not Require</b>
Northwestern University		●
Oberlin College		●
Ohio State University		●
Penn State University		●
Pomona College		●
Princeton University		●
Purdue University		●
Rice University		●
Smith College	●	
Stanford University	●	
SUNY Binghamton	●	
SUNY Buffalo	●	
SUNY Stony Brook		●
Swarthmore College		●
University of California at Berkeley	●	
University of California at Los Angeles	●	
University of California at San Diego		●
University of Chicago		●
University of the District of Columbia	●	
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign	●	
University of Iowa		●
University of Maryland at College Park		●
University of Michigan		●
University of Minnesota	●	
University of Notre Dame		●
University of Pennsylvania		●
University of Virginia		●
University of Wisconsin at Madison	●	
Vanderbilt University		●
Vassar College		●
Washington and Lee University		●
Washington University in St. Louis		●
Wellesley College	●	
Wesleyan University		●
Williams College		●
Yale University		●

\*MIT does not have an English major and was excluded from the study.

## CHART 2

### ENGLISH DEPARTMENT SHAKESPEARE REQUIREMENTS

Top 25 National Universities (as ranked by *U.S. News & World Report*, 2007)

	Requires	Does not Require
1 Princeton University		•
2 Harvard University	•	
3 Yale University		•
4 California Institute of Technology	•	
4 Stanford University	•	
4 Massachusetts Institute of Technology*		
7 University of Pennsylvania		•
8 Duke University		•
9 Dartmouth College		•
9 Columbia University		•
9 University of Chicago		•
12 Cornell University		•
12 Washington University in St. Louis		•
14 Northwestern University		•
15 Brown University		•
16 Johns Hopkins University		•
17 Rice University		•
18 Vanderbilt University		•
18 Emory University		•
20 University of Notre Dame		•
21 Carnegie Mellon University		•
21 University of California at Berkeley	•	
23 Georgetown University		•
24 University of Virginia		•
24 University of Michigan		•

\*MIT does not have an English major and was excluded from the study.



### CHART 3

#### ENGLISH DEPARTMENT SHAKESPEARE REQUIREMENTS

Top 25 Liberal Arts Colleges (as ranked by *U.S. News & World Report*, 2007)

	Requires	Does not Require
1 Williams College		●
2 Amherst College		●
3 Swarthmore College		●
4 Wellesley College	●	
5 Middlebury College	●	
6 Carleton College		●
7 Bowdoin College		●
7 Pomona College		●
9 Haverford College		●
10 Davidson College		●
10 Wesleyan University		●
12 Vassar College		●
12 Claremont McKenna College		●
14 Grinnell College		●
14 Harvey Mudd College		●
16 Colgate University		●
17 Hamilton College		●
18 Washington and Lee University		●
19 Smith College	●	
20 Colby College		●
20 Bryn Mawr College		●
22 Oberlin College		●
23 Bates College		●
24 Macalester College		●
24 Mount Holyoke College		●

## CHART 4

### ENGLISH DEPARTMENT SHAKESPEARE REQUIREMENTS

#### Ivy League and Seven Sisters

	Requires	Does not Require
Brown University		•
Columbia University		•
Cornell University		•
Dartmouth College		•
Harvard University	•	
Princeton University		•
University of Pennsylvania		•
Yale University		•

	Requires	Does not Require
Barnard College		•
Bryn Mawr College		•
Mount Holyoke College		•
Smith College	•	
Vassar College		•
Wellesley College	•	

## CHART 5

### ENGLISH DEPARTMENT SHAKESPEARE REQUIREMENTS

#### Big Ten

	Requires	Does not Require
Indiana University		•
Michigan State University		•
Northwestern University		•
Ohio State University		•
Penn State University		•
Purdue University		•
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign	•	
University of Iowa		•
University of Michigan		•
University of Minnesota	•	
University of Wisconsin at Madison	•	

## CHART 6

### ENGLISH DEPARTMENT SHAKESPEARE REQUIREMENTS

#### Select Public Universities in California and New York

	Requires	Does not Require
SUNY at Binghamton	•	
SUNY at Buffalo	•	
SUNY at Stony Brook		•
University of California at Berkeley	•	
University of California at Los Angeles	•	
University of California at San Diego		•

## CHART 7

### ENGLISH DEPARTMENT SHAKESPEARE REQUIREMENTS

#### Washington, DC-Area Schools

	Requires	Does not Require
American University		•
Catholic University	•	
George Washington University		•
Georgetown University		•
Howard University		•
Johns Hopkins University		•
University of the District of Columbia	•	
University of Maryland at College Park		•
University of Virginia		•



# APPENDIX A

What Is Required?

THIS IS THE SHORT AND  
THE LONG OF IT.  
—THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR

For the purposes of this study, we defined a college or university as having a Shakespeare requirement when English majors were obliged either to take a course in Shakespeare or to take two out of three single-author courses on Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Milton.

A number of schools require majors to take a survey of British medieval and Renaissance literature, but leave syllabi to individual instructors' discretion. As such, there is no guarantee that those surveys will include Shakespeare from year to year. At other schools—such as Carleton, Davidson, Ohio State, and Penn State—Shakespeare is included among the writers covered in surveys as one of many authors students will cover. For purposes of this study, we do not classify these schools as requiring Shakespeare.

Other schools have different requirements for their various programs. For instance, Princeton requires a Shakespeare course only of students majoring in its English and Theater program. SUNY Binghamton exempts from its Shakespeare requirement majors concentrating in “global culture.” In such cases, we classified such schools as having a Shakespeare requirement only when the requirement clearly applied to the majority of students.

Requirements have been culled from applicable university and English departmental websites for the 2006–2007 academic year. In some cases, electives are mentioned for purposes of clarity.

### AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

The major consists of forty-two credit hours. Students must take a course on the basic skills of literary analysis, three survey courses in regional literatures, four courses in literary history, and one course focusing on “literary process.” Majors also take a senior seminar on “the value of literature.” **Shakespeare is not required.**

### AMHERST COLLEGE

Students take ten courses, organized around a concentration of their own devising. In their senior year, majors must take an exam on a reading list issued by the department. **Shakespeare is not required.**

### BARNARD COLLEGE

The major consists of ten courses, including: a literary criticism and theory course; two pre-1900 courses; two courses—a Renaissance “colloquium” and an Enlightenment “colloquium”—studying major writers, literary works, and ideas of the periods; one additional literature course; two electives chosen from the English department; and two senior seminars. Majors may concentrate in one of the following fields: American literature, film, theater, or creative writing. **Shakespeare is not required.**

### BATES COLLEGE

The major consists of eleven courses, including three courses on literature before 1800; one course emphasizing “critical thinking”; two junior-senior seminars; and a senior thesis. **Shakespeare is not required.**

### BOWDOIN COLLEGE

The general major in English and American Literature consists of ten courses. Required are one first-year seminar or introductory course; three courses in British and Irish literature before 1800; and one course on “literature of the Americas.” The specialized major in English and Theater requires a Shakespeare course. As such, **Shakespeare is not required.**

### BROWN UNIVERSITY

English majors must take ten courses, including one in literary theory or the history of literary criticism and two in each of the following areas: medieval and early modern literatures and cultures; Enlightenment and the rise of national literatures and cultures; and modern and contemporary literatures and cultures. Majors must also choose a four-course focus from one of the following areas: historical development of literature; historical period; Anglophone, postcolonial, and multicultural studies; American, British, or another national/regional literature; gender and sexuality; genre; theory; nonfiction writing; or independent study. **Shakespeare is not required.**

### BRYN MAWR COLLEGE

In addition to two prerequisite literature courses, majors must take eleven courses, including a course on methods. Majors must also undertake a yearlong senior thesis project culminating in a 30–40 page essay. There are no other content requirements. **Shakespeare is not required.**

### CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Students majoring in English take twelve courses. Majors work out the specifics of their course of study with an advisor, and have only two specific requirements: a course on Shakespeare and a senior thesis. **Shakespeare is required.**

### CARLETON COLLEGE

The English major consists of eleven courses, including a survey of Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, and lyric poets of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; a survey of neoclassical, Romantic, and Victorian literature; a survey of American literature to 1914; a course on literary criticism; an advanced seminar on specified topics; and one course from each of the following groups: medieval and Renaissance literature; Restoration and eighteenth-century literature; nineteenth-century British and American literature; and modernist and contemporary literature. **Shakespeare is not required.**

### CARNEGIE MELLON UNIVERSITY

The major consists of eleven courses. Majors must take the introductory courses “Survey of Forms” and “Interpretive Practices,” after which they take a “core” comprised of six courses: a research class; a rhetoric class; two courses that “investigate the production and interpretation of texts and other media from a variety of periods and theoretical and methodological perspectives”; and two seminars. Two of the six courses must be “period” courses focusing on “texts that are connected in time and place or through common social concerns.” One of these two “period” courses must be in literature before 1900. **Shakespeare is not required.**

### CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY

Majors are required to take one composition course; a two-semester survey of English literature; two semesters of intensive study of genre (lyric, drama, or narrative) in the junior year; a two-semester sequence studying a significant British or American author in the senior year; one course each in Chaucer and Shakespeare; and four upper-division courses. **Shakespeare is required.**

### CLAREMONT MCKENNA COLLEGE

English majors must take nine courses, including a two-course survey of British literature (the first covering medieval and Renaissance writing, the second covering the Restoration through the early twentieth century); one single author course; a junior seminar in literary criticism; one course on pre-1700 literature; one course on literature from 1700–1900; one American literature course; and two literature electives. The college requires all students to write a senior thesis, regardless of major. **Shakespeare is not required.**

### COLBY COLLEGE

The major requires twelve courses, including a gateway course in genres and methods; a theory course; two “special subjects” courses; two additional courses chosen from advanced courses in English or American literature, creative writing, or literature in other languages or in translation; and a senior seminar. At least three courses must focus on English



literature written before 1800 and at least three on English literature after 1800. **Shakespeare is not required.**

### COLGATE UNIVERSITY

Majors concentrate on literature, theater, or creative writing. The literature track requires eight courses, one of which must be an introduction to literary study and another of which must be an introduction to literary history; two courses in literature before 1800; two in literature after 1800; and one upper-level seminar in literature. The creative writing track requires ten courses, including the same requirements above plus three workshops. The theater track requires eight courses, including two in the “literature of theater” (usually “Introduction to Drama” and “Modern Drama”); two courses in craft; an advanced directing and/or theories of theater course; and forty hours of technical or backstage theater work. **Shakespeare is not required.**

### COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

English majors must complete ten courses, and must satisfy distribution requirements with respect to period, genre, and geography. For period requirements, students must take at least three courses dealing with literature before 1800. For genre requirements, they must take one course in poetry, one in prose fiction/narrative, and one in drama or film. For geographical requirements, they must take one course in British literature, one in American literature, and one in comparative/global literature. **Shakespeare is not required.**

### CORNELL UNIVERSITY

Majors must complete ten courses, including three courses “in which 50% or more of the material consists of literature originally written in English before 1800.” Additionally, three courses must form an intellectually coherent “concentration.” Students may count up to three courses from other disciplines toward their English major. Eligible disciplines include German studies; Romance studies; Russian studies; Asian studies; classics; comparative literature; theatre; film; dance; Africana studies; the Society for the Humanities; American studies; feminist, gender, and

sexuality studies; religious studies; Asian American studies; American Indian studies; and Latino studies. **Shakespeare is not required.**

### DARTMOUTH COLLEGE

English majors must take eleven courses, including two courses in literature before the mid-seventeenth century; two in literature from the mid-seventeenth century to the end of the nineteenth century; one in literature from the start of the twentieth century to the present; and one in criticism and theory. Additionally, they must select four courses from one of ten “concentration areas”: literary theory and criticism; genre; literary history; period study; national traditions and counter-traditions; multicultural and colonial/postcolonial studies; genders and sexualities; cultural studies and popular culture; creative writing; and independent proposal. Students must take one “Special Topics” course or one “Foreign Study Program,” and one course to satisfy a “Culminating Experience” requirement. **Shakespeare is not required.**

### DAVIDSON COLLEGE

The English major consists of ten courses: a course on literary analysis; a survey of British literature through the eighteenth-century; either nineteenth- and twentieth-century British literature including colonial and postcolonial writing, or a world literatures course including selected texts outside the British and American traditions; a survey of American literature; a creative writing course; and electives chosen to create a three-course cluster. The British literature survey places special emphasis on Shakespeare, Chaucer, Donne, and Milton. **Shakespeare is not required.**

### DUKE UNIVERSITY

Majors must complete ten courses, including one of three “gateway” courses: “Readings in Genre Seminar”; “Reading Historically”; or “Reading Historically Seminar.” They must also take at least one course from each of the following concentrations: “Literary and Cultural Study pre-1500”; “Literary and Cultural Study 1500–1660”; “Literary and Cultural Study 1660–1860”; “Literary and Cultural Study 1860 to the Present”; and “Criticism, Theory, Methodology.” **Shakespeare is not required.**

### EMORY UNIVERSITY

Majors take ten courses, including one introductory course that emphasizes close reading of literary texts and four courses that form an area of concentration developed with guidance from a faculty advisor. Students must also fulfill a distribution requirement with one course in British literature before 1660; one course in British literature after 1660; one course in American literature; and one course with a theoretical or interdisciplinary emphasis. **Shakespeare is not required.**

### GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Majors must take a prerequisite survey course plus eleven department courses, including three in literature written before 1800; one in critical methods; one in literary theory and/or cultural studies; one in minority or post-colonial literature and tradition; one in nineteenth-century literature; and one in twentieth-century literature. Majors must also demonstrate intermediate-level competence in a language other than English. In 2006-2007, George Washington did offer a special Shakespeare experience for selected freshmen in conjunction with the city-wide celebration. **Shakespeare is not required.**

### GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

Majors take ten courses, including an introductory course that focuses on critical reading and writing. They take one gateway course in either medieval and/or Renaissance literatures and cultures or eighteenth- and/or nineteenth-century literatures and cultures; they take another gateway course in either modern and/or post-modern literatures or introduction to critical methods. The remaining seven courses are electives, one of which must be in medieval and/or Renaissance literatures and cultures; one in eighteenth- and/or nineteenth-century literatures and cultures; and one in either modern and/or post-modern literatures and cultures or critical, scholarly, and creative practices. **Shakespeare is not required.**

### GRINNELL COLLEGE

English majors take eight courses: one course in “early literature”; one in British or postcolonial literature; one in American literature; and

three electives in the English department. Majors must also demonstrate knowledge of a “non-native” language. Two courses satisfy the early literature requirement: One is a course on American literature up to 1830; the other is a course on English literature from Old English to the early seventeenth century. **Shakespeare is not required.**

### HAMILTON COLLEGE

The major has two tracks, English and creative writing. English requires ten courses, including a genre-based survey in either poetry, the novel, or drama; two courses in pre-1700 literature; two courses in literature from 1700–1900; two courses in post-1900 literature; and a senior seminar. There is also a language requirement that can be satisfied with a course in Old English or the history of the English language. The creative writing track requires two genre-based survey courses (poetry and the novel); one course in pre-1700 literature; one course in literature from 1700–1900; one course in post-1900 literature, one additional literature course; and four workshops. **Shakespeare is not required.**

### HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Majors can take either the elective or honors program. The first requires thirteen courses, the latter fifteen courses and a thesis. All majors must take “Major British Writers I”; “Major British Writers II”; “American Literature”; a course on Shakespeare; a sophomore seminar; and two courses in pre-1800 literature other than Shakespeare. **Shakespeare is required.**

### HVERFORD COLLEGE

The major consists of nine courses, plus two prerequisites of which one must be an “introductory emphasis” course. Majors are required to take a junior seminar, a senior seminar, plus seven courses in British, American and Anglophone literature. Two courses must be in literature before 1800; two must be in British/English literature of any period; and two must be in American literature. **Shakespeare is not required.**

### HARVEY MUDD COLLEGE

Harvey Mudd does not have an English major or an English department.

However, its Department of Humanities and Social Sciences permits majors—who take twelve courses—to “concentrate” on English to the tune of four courses. **Shakespeare is not required.**

### HOWARD UNIVERSITY

The major consists of twelve courses. Required are “Introduction to English Studies”; “Theories of Interpretation”; “British Literary Foundations”; “American Literary Foundations”; “African-American Literary Foundations”; and “Linguistic Foundations.” Students must also take one cross-cultural genre course or one period course, a single-author course, and four electives. **Shakespeare is not required.**

### INDIANA UNIVERSITY

Majors take ten courses, which must include “Literary Interpretation” and “Critical Practices.” Majors must also satisfy historical distribution requirements by taking at least one course in each of the following historical periods: English literature through the sixteenth century; literature written between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries; literature of the nineteenth century; and literature written after 1900. **Shakespeare is not required.**

### JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY

Majors take ten courses in the English department, including “Introduction to Literary Study” and two other introductory-level courses. They then take seven advanced courses, three of which must be in literature before 1800. Majors must also complete one year of a classical or modern spoken language at the intermediate level, and must take two introductory humanities or social science courses outside the English department. **Shakespeare is not required.**

### MACALESTER COLLEGE

The major consists of ten courses and a capstone experience. Required courses include an introductory course on criticism; one course on British literature before 1700; one course on British literature before 1900; one course on American literature before 1900; and one course on literature

by U.S. writers of color, or an approved course in postcolonial or diasporic literature. There are two major tracks, regular and creative writing. **Shakespeare is not required.**

### MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

MIT does not have an English major. As such, it is not counted for the purposes of this study.

### MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Majors are required to take nine courses, including “Introduction to the Study of English”; either “Literature in English to 1660” or “Literature in English 1660–1789”; and either “Literature in English 1789–1900” or “Literature in English since 1900.” Students must also demonstrate second year proficiency in a second language and take six courses in a concentration outside of the major. **Shakespeare is not required.**

### MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE

The major requires twelve courses, including an introductory course called “Reading Literature”; an introductory course on early modern literature; an introductory course on literary theory; a course on nineteenth-century American literature; a course in narrative fiction; a course in poetry; a course in drama other than Shakespeare; a course on Shakespeare; and a senior comprehensive exam. Two elective courses must involve literature prior to 1800, and at least one of these must be in British literature other than Shakespeare; one course must focus on American literature; and one must satisfy the “Literature, Culture, and History” requirement. **Shakespeare is required.**

### MOUNT HOLYOKE COLLEGE

The English major requires nine courses, including an introductory course on literary study; two courses in literature written in English before 1700; and one course in literature written in English between 1700 and 1900. **Shakespeare is not required.**

## NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

Majors must take fifteen courses: two prerequisite courses; eleven major courses; and two related courses, which can come from neighboring disciplines as long as they deal with literary texts. As prerequisites, majors take either “English Literary Traditions” or “American Literary Traditions,” followed by “Introductory Seminar in Reading and Interpretation.” Three courses must cover works written before 1798; three must cover works written after 1798; one must be in American literature; and one must cover literary criticism or theory. **Shakespeare is not required.**

## OBERLIN COLLEGE

The major offers two tracks, regular and concentration. The regular track consists of nine courses, including two introductory gateway courses and the following distribution requirements: one course in American literature; one course in British literature; one “diversity” course focusing on “traditionally under-represented cultures”; one course in pre-1700 literature; one course in literature written between 1700 and 1900; and one course in literature written after 1900. One course may be used to satisfy several requirements. All concentration majors must complete the gateway and distribution requirements above, plus specific requirements in one of the following areas: African American studies; American literature and culture; creative writing; gender and women’s studies; modern culture and media; and theater and drama. **Shakespeare is not required.**

## OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

Majors are required to take 12 courses, including “British Literature to 1800”; “British Literature after 1800”; “Pre-Civil War American Literature” or “Post-Civil War American Literature”; and “Critical Writing for Majors.” Upper-level elective coursework must include two courses in literature before 1900 (one of which must be a course in literature before 1800); a course in literature after 1900; and a course in a non-literary area of English studies such as composition, creative writing, critical theory, film, folklore, linguistics, or rhetoric. **Shakespeare is not required.**

### PENN STATE UNIVERSITY

The major consists of twelve courses, which must include an introduction to literary study course; a survey of English literature before 1798; a course in genre; a course in period-specific British and/or American literature; one course in British literature before 1800; one course in British and/or American literature after 1800; and a senior seminar. Majors can also emphasize one of the following fields: African American literature; creative writing; publishing; or rhetoric. **Shakespeare is not required.**

### POMONA COLLEGE

The English major consists of eleven courses, including one in “literary interpretation”; three in periods before 1700; two in periods between 1700 and 1900; an upper-division seminar; and a “Senior Seminar” or “Senior Thesis” option. **Shakespeare is not required.**

### PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

All majors must take the prerequisite course “Introduction to English Literature: From the 14th to the 18th Century” and one of the following: “Reading Literature: Poetry”; “Reading Literature: Fiction”; “Reading Literature: Drama”; or “Reading Literature: The Essay.” They choose one of five programs of study: “English and American Literature”; “English in Comparative Contexts”; “English and American Studies”; “English and Creative Writing”; or “English and Theater.” All majors must take a junior seminar in critical writing and must complete eight other courses, including three courses in literature before 1800; two courses in literature after 1800; and one “Approaches to Literature” course (defined as a designated major author, special topic, or theory course). Although students in the English and Theater program are required to take a Shakespeare course, majors in the other four programs are not. As such, **Shakespeare is not required.**

### PURDUE UNIVERSITY

The major consists of eleven courses. Students must take a composition course and a linguistics course as prerequisites. Required introductory



courses are “Ways of Reading”; “Survey of British Literature: From the Beginnings Through the Neoclassical Period” or “Survey of American Literature from its Beginnings to 1865”; and “Survey of British Literature: From the Rise of Romanticism to the Modern Period” or “Survey of American Literature from 1865 to the Post-World War II Period.” Students must then fulfill an “Area Studies” requirement, choosing one course in three of the following five categories: genre; race/gender/postcolonial studies; literary periods and movements; language studies; and interdisciplinary approaches to culture. Advanced coursework includes one major author course; a special topics course chosen from among “Studies in Genre,” “Studies in History and Literature,” and “Studies in Literature and Culture”; and one of the following literature/theory courses: “Studies in Women’s Literature,” “The Bible as Literature: The Old Testament,” “The Bible as Literature: The New Testament,” “Cultural Encounters,” “Problems in the History of Criticism,” “Issues in Contemporary Criticism and Theory,” and “Theories of Rhetoric and Composition.” Students must take two additional English electives. **Shakespeare is not required.**

### RICE UNIVERSITY

Majors take twelve courses, including “Seminar in Literature & Literary Analysis” and “Practices in Literary Study.” They must also take three courses in periods before 1900; two of which must be in a period before 1800. Majors are required to take at least one course on “non-canonical traditions, such as courses in women, African American, Chicano/a, Asian American, ethnic, global, and diasporic writers.” **Shakespeare is not required.**

### SMITH COLLEGE

Majors from the class of 2010 on must take twelve courses, including two courses from “Methods of Literary Study,” “The English Literary Tradition I,” “The English Literary Tradition II,” and “American Literature before 1865”; two courses on literature written before 1832; two out of three single-author courses on Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Milton; and a seminar. **Shakespeare is required.**

## STANFORD UNIVERSITY

English majors can choose from five different programs: English Literature; English with Creative Writing Emphasis; English and a Foreign Language Literature; English with an Interdisciplinary Emphasis; and English Literature and Philosophy. All English majors must take a course on poetry and poetics; two courses in British literature before 1750; two courses either in British literature from 1750–1900 or American literature before 1900; one course in Shakespeare; and one course in critical methods. English Literature majors must also take three courses in one of the following twelve concentrations: drama; film; lyric poetry; prose fiction; literature before 1750; literature 1750–1900; literature after 1900; gender and sexuality; language and rhetoric; literary theory; race and ethnicity; and single author study. **Shakespeare is required.**

## STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK AT BINGHAMTON

English majors must take eleven courses, including one course in British literature to 1660; one course in British literature 1660–1900; one course on Shakespeare; one course in American literature to 1920; one course in literary theory; one course in literature, rhetoric or creative writing at the 200-level or above; and five additional courses in literature, rhetoric, or creative writing at the 300-level or above. Majors that include a “global culture” concentration do not have to take a course in Shakespeare. Except for English majors that include a “global culture” concentration, **Shakespeare is required.**

## STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK AT BUFFALO

The major consists of thirteen courses. The department recommends that at least one of these courses be a survey of literary history such as “World Literature,” “British Writers,” or “American Writers.” Students also take one course in criticism; four courses in literature before 1830; two courses in literature after 1830; and at least two single-author courses in Chaucer, Shakespeare, or Milton. All English majors must demonstrate second year proficiency in a foreign language. **Shakespeare is required.**

## STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK AT STONY BROOK

Majors must take eighteen courses, including “Literary Analysis and Argumentation”; “The English Language”; and three survey courses from the following nine options: “Survey of British Literature I”; “Survey of British Literature II”; “American Literature I”; “American Literature II”; “20th-Century Literature in English”; “Contemporary American Literature, 1945 to the Present”; “World Literature in Translation”; “Shakespeare: The Major Works”; and “Black American Literature.” Students also take three courses in one of the following four concentrations: “British Literature”; “American Literature”; “Modern and Contemporary Literature”; and “Issues and Topics in the Study of Literature.” Majors must complete two courses in a foreign language at intermediate level or beyond; two courses in British, American, medieval, or Renaissance history; two other courses in the humanities and fine arts; and an upper-division writing requirement. **Shakespeare is not required.**

## SWARTHMORE COLLEGE

Majors must take nine courses, three of which must be in literature written before 1830, and three in literature after 1830. In their senior year, students must also write a “culminating essay.” **Shakespeare is not required.**

## UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA AT BERKELEY

Majors take twelve courses, including British and American literature surveys; a course in Shakespeare; a junior seminar in critical and methodological problems in the study of literature; a senior seminar in a special topic, major author, or critical problem; an additional pre-1800 course; and five electives. It is recommended that three of the courses fall within one of seven areas of concentration: an historical period; Anglophone and multicultural studies; genre studies; sexual identities/gender studies; literary theory; folklore, popular culture, and cultural theory; and linguistics/the English language. **Shakespeare is required.**

## UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA AT LOS ANGELES

All English majors must complete a foreign language requirement and preparatory courses in composition; critical reading and writing; literature to 1660; literature from 1660 to 1832; and literature from 1832 to the present. The English major requires twelve additional upper-level courses, including a course in Chaucer; two courses in Shakespeare; a course in Milton; a course in British literature before 1800; a course in British literature from 1800-1900; and a seminar on a specified topic. English majors concentrating in world literature must take thirteen upper-level courses, including one course in either Chaucer or Milton; two courses in Shakespeare; a course in British literature before 1800; and at least four courses in foreign literature, at least one of which must be in the original language. Students majoring in American Literature and Culture must take twelve upper-level courses, including at least six courses in American literature, two of which must be on literature prior to 1900; two courses on Shakespeare or one course on Shakespeare and one on Milton; and an “Interdisciplinary Approaches to Literature” class. **Shakespeare is required.**

## UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA AT SAN DIEGO

Majors take six survey courses: a pre-1660 British literature course; a 1660-1832 British literature course; an 1832-present British literature course; a two-course survey of American literature; and an introduction to either African American literature, Asian American literature, or Chicano literature. Students also take nine upper-level courses, including one course in each of the following areas: British literature before 1660; British literature after 1660; U.S. literature before 1860; and U.S. literature after 1860. Also required are a course in the history of criticism or literary theory and methods; a course in world Anglophone literature with focus other than British or U.S.; three courses in a “secondary literature”; and an upper-division elective from the Department of Literature. **Shakespeare is not required.**

## UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

The English major requires thirteen courses, including two quarters of second-year-level study in a foreign language; one course in art history

or the dramatic, musical, or visual arts; and ten courses in the English department. Majors must take a required course, “Critical Perspectives”; two courses in literature before 1700; two courses in literature from 1700–1950; one poetry course; one prose fiction course; one course in either drama or film; one course in British literature; and one course in American literature. **Shakespeare is not required.**

### UNIVERSITY OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

The major requires “Introduction to Critical Writing”; “Structure of English”; “History of the English Language”; “Advanced Grammar”; “British Literature I”; “British Literature II”; “American Literature I”; “American Literature II”; “African-American Literature”; “Shakespeare”; “Principles of Literary Criticism I” or “Principles of Literary Criticism II”; and four electives. **Shakespeare is required.**

### UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

The English major requires two introductory courses, either “Introduction to Literary Study” or “Introduction to Poetry,” and either “Introduction to Drama” or “Introduction to Fiction.” Also required are “Critical Approaches to Literature”; “English Literature to 1798”; “English Literature 1798 to Present”; “Survey of American Literature I”; and a course in Shakespeare. Students must take one additional course in British literature before 1800; one course in British literature after 1800; one course in American literature; an author-studies course; and a special topics course on “theme, mode, genre,” “gender and ethnic studies,” “film studies,” or “critical theory.” The major also requires two courses in Western civilization and a 300-level or above “Writing about Literature” course. **Shakespeare is required.**

### UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

The major consists of eleven courses, divided into six areas and three historical periods. Students take one course in each of six areas: literary theory and interdisciplinary studies; medieval and early modern literature and culture; modern British literature and culture; American literature and culture; transnational literature and postcolonial studies; and nonfic-

tion and creative writing. Students choose one area as a concentration and take two more courses in it. Students also take two courses from each of three historical periods: early literatures through the seventeenth century; eighteenth- and/or nineteenth-century literature; and twentieth- and/or twenty-first-century literature. **Shakespeare is not required.**

### UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND AT COLLEGE PARK

The English major consists of twelve courses, which must include a critical methods course; a course in literary and cultural history; a course in literary, linguistic, or rhetorical analysis; a course in the literature of African Americans, peoples of color, women, and/or lesbians, gays, and bisexuals; two courses focused on writing before 1800; a course in post-1800 British, Anglophone, and/or postcolonial writing; a course in American, African American, and/or U.S. ethnic writing; and four English electives. **Shakespeare is not required.**

### UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

English majors take two prerequisite courses, “What is Literature?” and “Introduction to Poetry,” and nine additional courses. These must include three courses on literature written primarily before 1830 (at least one of which must be on literature written primarily before 1600); one course in American literature; and one “New Traditions” course focusing on the cultural traditions of women, minority ethnic groups, and people of color. Although students are “urged” to elect a course in Shakespeare to fulfill one of their pre-1830 requirements, **Shakespeare is not required.**

### UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

The major requires thirty-five credits. Majors begin their course of study with “Textual Analysis, Methods”; they take Shakespeare concurrently. They also take three surveys in British and American literature, and must take a course on either the English language or literary theory. In addition, students choose three electives which generally focus on in-depth studies of particular authors, topics, periods, or genres. Majors write a thesis during their senior year. **Shakespeare is required.**

### UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME

Majors take ten courses (in addition to one literature course required by the College of Arts and Letters) including the prerequisite “Introduction to Literary Studies.” They must take three literary historical surveys: one focusing on British literature through the late seventeenth century; one focusing on American literature from the colonial period up to 1865; and one focusing on British and American literatures up to the present. They then take one research class and five electives. **Shakespeare is not required.**

### UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

Majors take twelve courses, including one course from each of the following six sectors: theory and/or poetics; language, literature, and culture; early literatures to 1660; literature from 1640–1830; literature of the nineteenth century; and literature of the twentieth century. The remaining six courses are electives. **Shakespeare is not required.**

### UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

Majors take a prerequisite literature seminar and ten upper-division English courses. They must take three classes in the history of English literature: “Beowulf to Milton”; “British and American Literature from 1649 to 1860”; and “20th-century and Postcolonial Literatures.” They must also take two additional pre-1800 courses. **Shakespeare is not required.**

### UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN AT MADISON

The general English literature major requires thirty-one credits earned in at least ten intermediate or advanced courses. Students must take surveys in: British literature before 1750; British and Anglophone literature from 1750 to present; and American literature. One of the survey courses must be taken in a “four credit format” which includes a “writing-intensive workshop.” Majors must also take a course in Shakespeare; an additional course in British or American literature before 1800 excluding Shakespeare; and five additional intermediate or advanced courses. Students can also choose to major in English with an emphasis in creative writing

or an emphasis in language and linguistics. All English majors require a course in Shakespeare. **Shakespeare is required.**

### VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY

Vanderbilt's English department offers three undergraduate programs: literary studies; specialized critical studies; and creative writing. All three programs require "Introduction to Poetry" or "Literary and Cultural Analysis." The literary studies program requires three courses in literature before 1800; one course in ethnic or non-Western literature; and five additional electives in English. Specialized critical studies require six courses concentrated in a particular period, genre, or movement; an aspect of intellectual history; or another area of special interest. This program also requires three courses in literature before 1800 and one course in ethnic or non-Western literature. The creative writing program requires three courses in literature before 1800; one course in ethnic or non-Western literature; four courses in creative writing; and one elective in English. **Shakespeare is not required.**

### VASSAR COLLEGE

The English major consists of twelve courses. To satisfy historical distribution requirements, majors must take a two-course broad survey of British and American literature from the medieval period to the modern era, and must also take two courses in literature written before 1800 and one in literature written before 1900. **Shakespeare is not required.**

### WASHINGTON AND LEE UNIVERSITY

The major requires two lower-level gateway courses, and then twelve courses. Nine of these must be distributed over three areas: earlier British literature; later British literature (including world literature written in English); and American literature. Students take at least three courses in each area. **Shakespeare is not required.**

### WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY IN ST. LOUIS

Majors must take two prerequisites, "Introduction to Literary Study" and either "Chief English Writers I" or "Art of Poetry," followed by eight oth-



er courses. Two courses must be in literature before 1700; two in literature from 1700–1900; one in American literature; and one course in a major author. **Shakespeare is not required.**

### WELLESLEY COLLEGE

The English major consists of ten courses. All majors must take “Critical Interpretation”; a Shakespeare course; and two courses on literature written before 1900, at least one of which must be centered on writing before 1800. **Shakespeare is required.**

### WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY

The major consists of ten courses. Required are a sophomore-level gateway designed to introduce close-reading skills and literary history; two courses in literature before 1800; and one theory course. **Shakespeare is not required.**

### WILLIAMS COLLEGE

Majors must take nine courses, which must include an introductory-level class; two courses on literature written before 1700; two courses on literature written between 1700 and 1900; a course on literature after 1900; a course on criticism; and a gateway course designed to prepare beginning students for more advanced work. **Shakespeare is not required.**

### YALE UNIVERSITY

Majors take fourteen courses, including prerequisites that ensure majors are exposed to English poetry. Students must take at least three other courses in English literature before 1800; one course in English literature before 1900; and two seminars. **Shakespeare is not required.**



# APPENDIX B

What Are Students Studying?

LOOK LIKE THE INNOCENT FLOWER,  
BUT BE THE SERPENT UNDER'T.  
—MACBETH

## 1: LITERATURE AS POLITICS, SOCIOLOGY AND POPULAR CULTURE

Some courses look more like sociology or political science than courses in literature. In reading the following descriptions, it is important to remember: These are classes in the English department!

Dartmouth College, “Of Nags, Bitches and Shrews: Women and Animals in Western Literature” asks “What do stories about animals tell us about the treatment of women in Western society? What do stories about women tell us about the treatment of animals in Western society? And why are the two so often linked in the first place?” The course explores whether advances in women’s rights have been met with “corresponding advances in the treatment of animals, and why women feel particularly called upon to work for those advances.”

Ohio State University, “Disability Studies” traces the “foundational concepts and issues in disability studies.”

Vassar College, “Transnational Literature” examines “literary works and cultural networks that cross the borders of the nation-state,” noting that “[s]uch border-crossings raise questions concerning vexed phenomena such as globalization, exile, diaspora, and migration—forced and voluntary.”

Penn State University, “Introduction to Queer Studies” seeks “to make alphabet soup out of sexual norms and their deviations,” by examining “how sexual nonconformists position themselves as a shared group identity,” and by studying “how sexual distinctions between gendered, raced, and classed bodies have been historically produced and culturally contested.” The course also seeks to widen “critical and historical scope by concentrating on issues of queer mobility in global climates beyond and between U.S. Borders.”

Bates College, “African and Diasporic Ecological Literature” explores “ecological influences on literature by Anglophone authors of African descent” and “examine[s] interpretations of human biodiversity that have contributed to the neglect of African and African diasporic artistic and philosophic perspectives on ecological issues.”

Yale University, “Adoption Narratives” promises that students “will read enough history and social science literature about twentieth-century U.S. adoption (especially cross-class, transethnic, and transracial adoption) in its changing historical contexts (early twentieth-century reform movements, the post-war return to domesticity, cultural nationalisms, identity politics, and multiculturalism more recently) to be able to place a series of fictional narratives in ongoing debates not only about adoption but also about citizenship, culture, ethnicity, and race.”

Cornell University, “Policing and Prisons in American Culture” appears to be much more concerned with the politics of the U.S. prison system than with literature per se: “Having attained the highest number of incarcerated persons of any nation on earth, while subjecting the populace to ordeals marked by the names Rodney King, Abner Louima, and Amadou Diallo, United States regimes of policing and imprisonment compel historical and critical attention. This course considers policing and imprisonment in United States culture, stressing prison writing, song, raps, slang, and graphic art, as well as carceral theory, activist documentation, and the history of criminal justice.”

Bowdoin College, “The United States at War: Vietnam to Iraq” examines “narratives of war from Vietnam to Iraq I and II, in order to see how they diverge in terms of political ideology, the rhetoric of mission, and personal experience.”

Macalester College, “Gender and Sociopolitical Activism in 20th Century Feminist Utopias” centers on “how women’s literary writing from different parts of the world (Bangladeshi, British, African-American, Canadian, to name a few) produce visions of the present and the future, of the real and the imagined, beliefs about masculinity and femininity, socialist and capitalist philosophies, modernity, the environment (ecotopia), and various technologies including cybergenetics.” The course description notes that the readings are meant to help students “construct as well as analyze our own fantasies of sociopolitical change.”

Emory University, “Special Topics in Literature: Contending Identities in Korean American Literature” explores how Korean American writers “relive the historical events and cultural conflicts that have shaped the Korean American’s sense of identity, citizenship, and subjectivity,” with special emphasis on how “[r]ecurring images of atrocities suffered during the Japanese occupation of Korea, the partition of 1945, and the Korean War intermingle with equally horrifying images of the Korean immigrants’ experiences in the U.S., where, denied citizenship and property rights, they were treated as ‘alien others.’”

## 2: OVERLY SPECIALIZED OR NARROW COURSES

**M**any undergraduate courses focus on extremely specialized subject matter, often with a narrow sociological emphasis on material culture.

University of Chicago, “The Graphic Novel” looks at “the recent rise of the graphic novel, a form that presents an opportunity to refresh our critical vocabularies for examining narrative and visuality.” Special attention is paid to “how the graphic novel critically engages the history of the comic.”

Emory University, “Special Topics for Advanced Study: The Inner Game—Baseball and the American Imagination” explores “the imaginative renditions of baseball in selected writings and films.”

Hamilton College, “The Hollywood Novel” looks at “novels dealing with or set in Hollywood.”

Northwestern University, “Topics in Asian American Literature” looks at “Los Angeles as a uniquely American space, figured as both emblematic of American achievements of wealth, progress and inclusion, but also as a space of (future) dystopia with fears of Third World encroachments.” Topics include the Los Angeles riots of 1992, films such as *Collateral* and *Blade Runner*, Arnold Schwarzenegger’s gubernatorial campaign, and shows such as *Baywatch*.”

University of Chicago, “Stuff and Nothing in Renaissance Literature” uses literary texts to trace “the lives of objects in Renaissance literature in order to better understand the material culture of the era.”

University of Pennsylvania, “Beast Culture: Animals, Identity, and Western Literature” focuses on “the European fascination with animals in early modern print culture,” asking how “understandings of animal difference inform what it means to be human previous to the 21st century.” Topics include pet-keeping, horse racing, hunting, zoos, “radical vegetarian manifestos,” “cases of ‘wild children’ raised by wolves,” and “cultural hoaxes such as Mary Toft, an English woman who claimed to give birth to rabbits.”

Swarthmore College, “Food and Literature” is a course that “examines the place of food and drink in Renaissance literature and culture” and covers such topics as feasts, famine, cannibalism, and “the adoption of new and exotic products such as sugar, tea, coffee, chocolate and tobacco.”

University of Pennsylvania, “Assault, Battery, and Medieval Literature” features “critical interrogations” of writing about “stabblings, rapes, floggings, and below the belt punches.”

### 3: CULTURAL STUDIES AND THEORY

**E**nglish departments across the country are offering an increasing number and variety of courses on “culture” and “theory.” Many departments allow majors to choose “cultural studies” as an area of concentration, and a growing number are actually requiring majors to take a course in theory.

Duke University, “Cool Theory” is devoted to a single word of American slang: “This class seeks to interrogate the concept of ‘cool’ through an engagement with a variety of media, including fiction, memoir, music, television, fashion and film, as well as historical and theoretical secondary materials. Our focus will not be to define what coolness is, but rather, to begin to frame a theoretical discourse that can create a critical space to examine the slippery...thing...that is ‘cool.’”

Swarthmore College, “American Attractions: Leisure, Technology, and National Identity” focuses on “the history and analysis of U.S. popular culture from the Civil War to the present,” with special emphasis on how “visual spectacles such as Barnum’s museum, minstrel, and Wild West shows and vaudeville shaped American ‘identity’ from ethnic, racial, religious, geographical, and gender differences and hierarchies, anticipating the national audiences of the Hollywood studio system and television networks.”

University of California at San Diego, “Contemporary American Literature: ‘It’s Only Rock and Roll’: 1960s Popular Music in a Cultural Context” examines “the roots of Rock ‘n’ Roll (including Blues, R&B, and Rockabilly), the musical streams of the decade (teen idols through surf music, the folk revival, the British Invasion, the San Francisco scene,



guitar heroes, etc.) ... the economics of the industry and the major role played by record producers and song-writers.”

Emory University, “Seminar in Criticism and Theory: Animals, Cannibals, Vegetables” asks, “On what grounds have humans been distinguished from other kinds of animals and what are the philosophical and political implications of marking this difference?” Topics include cannibalism, colonialism, slavery, ecology, vegetarianism, animal rights, and post-human philosophy.

University of Pennsylvania, “The Cult of Celebrity: Icons in Performance, Garbo to Madonna” focuses on pop idols and fame: “Celebrity is a common commodity in the performing arts. But some celebrities become icons. Their craft and personalities are so remarkable that they alter our perceptions of their art form, and place an indelible stamp on our culture. ... This course will consider perhaps twenty performing artists (actors, singers and dancers, some chosen by the class) in two ways. We will analyze their artistry; and we will also examine how and why they come to be regarded as legends. In other words, it is a course about celebrities, as well as the concept of celebrity itself.”

Princeton University, “Contemporary Literary Theory” advertises itself as “an intensive survey of the most important terms in contemporary theory and their role in recent cultural and political debates,” promising that “[e]ach week will take up a new critical term, examining both its history and its current usages. Terms might include: language, ideology, performativity, sexuality, ethics, media, trauma, AIDS, globalization, and war.”

University of Virginia, “Critical Race Theory” asks, “What does race mean in the late 20th and early 21st century?” Declaring that “race as a biological ‘fact’ has been discredited,” this English course explores why race “continue[s] to have vital significance in politics, economics, education, culture, arts, and everyday social realities” including “sexuality, class, disability, multiculturalism, nationality, and globalism.”

## 4: CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Children's literature is one of the hottest trends in English departments today. Parents may well wonder why their grown sons and daughters can read *Charlotte's Web*, J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter series, and *Alice in Wonderland* for college credit, but it is happening in literature departments all over the country.

Yale University, "Literature for Young People" gives "an eclectic approach to stories and storytelling for and by children." Readings include works by J. K. Rowling, Dr. Seuss, Maurice Sendak, L. Frank Baum, Roald Dahl, and Lemony Snicket, plus stories written by children themselves.

University of Pennsylvania, "150 Years of Children's Fantasy" proclaims that "The Harry Potter Books are the latest example of an important, much-loved genre, children's fantasy!" The course tracks "children's fantasy from the 1850s to the present day," focusing on such authors as Lewis Carroll, L. Frank Baum, J. M. Barrie, J. K. Rowling, and Lemony Snicket. Films are also featured, and "may include *The Wizard of Oz*, *Snow White*, and *Mary Poppins*." The University of Pennsylvania also offers "Feminist Fairy Tales," which examines "the impact of popular culture on fairy tales and fairy tales on popular culture, as well as the effects of fairy tales on the formation of a woman's self-image."

Indiana University, "Children's Literature" "is primarily a historical survey of what is widely considered the best that has been written for young readers. We will read fables, folk tales, myths, classic and contemporary children's literature, children's poetry, and illustrated books for the very

young.” Readings include *Treasure Island*, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, *Charlotte’s Web*, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*, and *Harriet the Spy*.

Purdue University, “Young Adult Literature and Teen Identity” explores “the connections between literature written for young adults and contemporary adolescent identity.”

## 5: BODY STUDIES

Courses that focus more on the body than on literature are common.

Oberlin College, “Folklore and the Body” begins with the premise that “the body may seem natural, but body lore treats it as a cultural artifact inflected by ethnicity, class, gender, so on.” The course considers “forms of bodylore concerning reproduction, initiation, health, beauty, gesture, etiquette, hair, body parts, beliefs, and dress.”

Mount Holyoke College, “The Conceptual Black Body in Twentieth-Century and Contemporary Visual Culture” theorizes about “the black body through the visual artists Ellen Gallagher, Kara Walker, William Pope, and Adrian Piper as well as pop icons Michael Jackson, Missy Elliot, and Jay Z.”

Cornell University, “Bodies of the Middle Ages: Embodiment, Incarnation, Practice” asks, “How can the sort of bodies (female, heroic, monstrous, martyred and/or divine) found in medieval works represent, or fail to represent, the ‘real’ of lived experience?”

## 6: SENSATIONALIZED CONTENT; GENDER AND SEXUALITY

A growing number of courses seek to sensationalize literary study. Most often this is done by focusing on sex. Many departments—among them

Brown, Cornell, and Berkeley—offer majors a focus on gender and sexuality as an area of concentration.

Duke University, “Creepy Kids in Fiction and Film” centers on “weirdoes, creeps, freaks, and geeks of the truly evil variety” with the aim of asking how films showcasing “a child’s irregularity or abnormality” make us “freak out’, and in a sense reveal our own freakiness, fears, or concerns.” Students screen *The Omen* and *The Sixth Sense*, and read Stephen King’s *Children of the Corn*.

Columbia University, “Promiscuity and the Novel” treats the novel as a window into the bedroom: “We’ll begin with the early modern novel of erotic intrigue, move through French courtesan fiction and the English courtship novel, and arrive at modernist explorations of the sexual demi-monde and more recent depictions of gay urban life.”

Northwestern University, “Studies in Victorian Literature: Victorian Vices” focuses on “various Victorian ‘vices’ such as miscegenation, prostitution, polygamy, and theatricality in multiple media including but not limited to: novels, paintings, photographs, newspapers, poetry, legal proceedings, medical reports, playbills, and advertisements.”

University of Virginia, “Special Topics in Literature: Literary Perversion” bills itself as “primarily an elective for non-English majors” and “dares to delve into the realm of the perverse through the careful study and discussion of a few of western culture’s most perverse literary texts.”

Bowdoin College, “The Horror Film in Context” studies how horror movies “represent violence, fear, and paranoia,” with special emphasis on “their creation of identity categories; their intersection with contemporary politics; and their participation in such major literary and cinematic genres as the gothic, parody, and family drama.”

Vanderbilt University, “Problems in Literature: Shakespearean Sexuality” centers on “the question of sexuality in Shakespeare’s plays,” noting that “[t]he issues raised by sexuality are particularly rich and complicated in Shakespearean drama, which is preoccupied with mistaken identities, connections between eroticism and violence, marriage plots, crises of political authority, and self-conscious theatricality.”

Georgetown University, “Sexing the Past” studies “how sex and sexuality may be read across time.”

Wesleyan University, “Staging Race in Early Modern England” studies the “interrelated conceptions of race, complexion, the humoral body, gender and sexuality, and their relation to religious, ethnic and cultural identity as they are staged in early modern English drama.”

Hamilton College, “Chaucer: Gender and Genre” studies how Chaucer treats “masculinity and femininity in relation to themes of sex, religion, social power and narrative authority.”

American University, “Shakesqueer” asks, “how might Shakespeare anticipate our current sexual regimes, and how might he undermine them?”

## 7: COURSES IN FILM

Film has become a major area of literary study. Many English departments are even hiring dedicated film specialists, and in some fields, notably Victorian studies and Shakespeare studies, film adaptations routinely supplement study of original texts. Such supplements, of course, naturally compete for time and space with texts, reducing the amount of attention truly given to great works.

Princeton University, “Forms of Literature: Victorian Novels into 20th Century Films” asks, “What happens when 20th century films adapt Victorian novels about orphans who must adapt themselves to new circumstances?” Students “study five novels and at least two film adaptations of each in a continuum that will take us from early Dickens to the Muppets.”

University of Pennsylvania, “Fiction and Film in a Postcolonial Frame” uses the contention that “the relationship between film and literature is confrontational, transgressive, dialogic, and ambivalent” to examine “how postcolonial fiction and film mutually frame each other.”

Columbia University, “Film Noir” places “Hollywood noir movies of the 1940s and ’50s in the context of ‘noir culture’ more broadly speaking, looking at the noir cinematic phenomenon as a marker of the founding enterprises of the modern imperial West...”

University of Chicago, “Cinema in Africa” studies “cinema in Africa as well as films produced in Africa.”

Cornell University, “Fast Talking Dames and Sad Ladies: 1940s and Now” focuses on “sassy or subdued heroines of Hollywood’s 1940s films and current films” in order “to define romantic comedy and melodrama as genres; as vehicles for female stars; as ways of viewing the world.” Students screen *Mrs. Dalloway*, *The Hours*, *First Wives’ Club*, and *Silence of the Lambs*, among others.

American University, “Hollywood in the 70s” treats “the 1970s as a transformative decade in American film, with attention to the cultural impact of the new social movements (feminism, black power, the antiwar movement) and the aesthetic concerns of a new generation of directors influenced by foreign art film (Coppola, Altman, Scorsese, Allen, Penn).”



BUT BE NOT AFRAID OF GREATNESS:  
SOME ARE BORN GREAT, SOME ACHIEVE  
GREATNESS, AND SOME HAVE GREATNESS  
THRUST UPON THEM.

—TWELFTH NIGHT







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