

**Ph.D. Handbook**  
**for**  
*The Rhetoric & Writing Program*



Department of English  
Updated Fall 2019

This handbook provides basic, useful information for the completion of the Ph.D. in English with a specialization in Rhetoric & Writing. It includes information about course work, preliminary exams, and dissertations. This document should be read in conjunction with the [Rhetoric & Writing homepage](#) as well as the [Graduate College catalog](#), and specifically its information on policies.

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## The Doctoral Program

Since 1980, the BGSU English Department has offered a doctoral degree in English with emphasis in rhetoric and writing. Candidates who achieve the required number of hours, complete their preliminary exams and graduate lecture, and defend their dissertation receive the Ph.D. in English with specialization in Rhetoric & Writing.

Ninety hours of graduate credit are required for the Ph.D. Those holding an M.A. or M.F.A. from an accredited institution receive 30 hours of graduate credit toward the required 90 hours. Thus students must take a minimum of 60 hours of credit at BGSU, including 21 hours of dissertation credit. The typical hours taken in the program are:

- 30 hours of master's degree credit
- 33 hours of courses
- 6 hours of preliminary exam credit 21 hours of dissertation credit
- 90 minimum hours of graduate credit

## Program Goals

The Rhetoric & Writing Ph.D. Program prepares its graduates for three outcomes:

- Develop knowledge through understanding past and ongoing disciplinary conversations and create interventions through their own research, theory building, and teaching.
- Practice an array of methodological, theoretical, and pedagogical approaches for engaging as scholars, teachers, and leaders who are responsive to the situated nature of rhetoric and to what campuses, cultures and society want from writing today.
- Contribute scholarship, teaching, and leadership practices rooted in the developing literacies, literacy technologies, and needs of diverse learners shaping higher education today.

## Mission

The Rhetoric & Writing program understands rhetoric as situated, participatory, action based, and responsive. The program approaches rhetoric and writing as meaning-making practices that span across cultures and develop over a lifetime. The program grows future faculty members who contribute to the scholarly discipline; engage learners as responsible and responsive citizens; develop pedagogies informed by research, best practices, and developing technologies; administer university writing programs; and shape campus and community cultures through their leadership.

## Language Requirement

There is no foreign language requirement for doctoral students.

## Assistantship Assignments

Assistantship assignments in the English Department typically involve graduate students teaching General Studies Writing courses. The teaching load is currently three classes per year, spread over two semesters, i.e., 2/1 or 1/2.

Occasionally, different work assignments are available to enhance the professional experiences doctoral students bring to academic job searches. These include serving as the assistant to the Rhetoric & Writing program director; teaching ENG 2070: Intermediate Writing; teaching other courses in English; mentoring first-year graduate students in the General Studies Writing program; working in the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) office and/or teaching ESOL courses; and assisting with publications and websites of the English Department. Such work assignments may involve a release from one, two, or three courses each academic year. Interested graduate students should speak with the program director about such options.

## Research Assistantships

The department awards three one-year research assistantships to rising fourth-year Rhetoric & Writing Ph.D. program students. Research Assistantships allow students in their final year of assistantship funding to devote full-time energies to completing their research, as well as conducting a substantial academic job search. Each spring, the Rhetoric & Writing Program Director distributes applications to all third-year Rhetoric & Writing students.

Criteria, procedures, and deadlines are outlined in the application. Applications are evaluated by the Rhetoric & Writing doctoral faculty in light of criteria outlined in the application. Awards are merit-based. For questions about deadlines and procedures, contact the Rhetoric & Writing Program Director. For questions about compensation and the assistantship period, contact English's Graduate Coordinator.

## Course Work

Full-time doctoral students complete their course work within their first two years. Rhetoric & Writing core course courses are offered every other year, with two exceptions: ENG 6210 is offered every Fall and restricted to first-year students only. ENG 7260 is offered every Fall and restricted to second-year students only.

Special topics courses include ENG 6800 or 7800 courses offered by a Rhetoric & Writing core faculty member. ENG 6200: The Teaching of Writing and ENG 6220: Teaching Grammar in the Context of Writing can be taken as special topics courses when offered by a core Rhetoric & Writing faculty member. Neither special topics

courses nor independent studies may be used to substitute for the core courses of the Rhetoric & Writing Ph.D. Program.

ENG 6020: Comp Instructors Workshop does not count toward electives or as a core R&W core course.

### **Rhetoric & Writing Core—8 Courses/24 Hours Required**

ENG 6210: Introduction to Rhetoric and Composition as a Discipline	
ENG 7220: History of Rhetoric and Written Discourse	
ENG 7230: Issues in Historical Rhetoric	
ENG 7240: Rhetoric and Written Discourse	
ENG 7260: Research in Rhetoric & Writing	
ENG 7280: Computer Mediated Writing: Theory & Practice	
ENG 7290: Publication in Rhetoric & Writing	
Special Topic R&W Seminar (ENG 6800, 7800, 6220)	

### **Electives—3 Courses/9 Hours Required**

Ph.D. students can take electives in any area relevant to research and teaching interests. Often, students take additional rhetoric and writing special topics courses. Special topics courses in rhetoric and writing are taught by core faculty on a rotating basis. Recent topics have included writing assessment, cultural rhetorics, community literacies,

teacher research, online learning for English educators, and teaching grammar in the context of writing.

Electives can include other courses in English (Literature, TESOL, Scientific & Technical Communication) or courses in other departments. Electives can be selected to develop a secondary area of research and/or teaching. Rhetoric & Writing students sometimes use electives to pursue a graduate certificate in areas such as Scientific & Technical Communication, TESOL, or Women's, Gender & Sexuality Studies. More information about certificates can be found on the [Graduate College homepage](#); scroll to the bottom of the page to find certificate programs. [English-specific graduate certificates](#) can be found on the English department website.

To pursue specialized research interests not addressed in core or special topics, students may take a 3-hour Directed Study course (e.g., ENG 7840) under the supervision of a core Rhetoric & Writing faculty member. To initiate a directed study, first talk with the Program Director. After approval, talk to Rhetoric & Writing core faculty members to identify someone able to mentor you in a given semester.

Upon approval from the faculty member, complete an independent study form, which is available from the graduate secretary in the Department of English. Students must develop a course syllabus and reading list in conjunction with the faculty mentor, and submit the documentation with the independent study form. These materials are required prior to registering for a directed study course in a given semester. No more than nine hours of directed studies may be counted toward the required number of hours for graduation.

## Online Degree Audits

The check sheet for the Rhetoric & Writing Program is a document that lists program requirements and can help you plan and track your course work. It is available in hard copy from the Graduate Office and/or the Rhetoric & Writing Program Director. For the most part, this document has been replaced by the university-wide online degree audit.

Bowling Green State University offers an electronic degree audit to assist students and advisors with tracking progress toward degree completion. The degree audit matches completed, in-progress, and registered courses with requirements of the specified degree program to determine what requirements need to be met.

You can view your electronic degree audit through MyBGSU, under the Students option. For more information, including a tutorial that will help in understanding how to request and view your electronic degree audit, visit the [Registration Records Degree Audit Information page](#).

For questions about the online degree audit, you may contact [dars@bgsu.edu](mailto:dars@bgsu.edu), call 419-372- 8223, or reach out to the Rhetoric & Writing Program Director and the English Graduate Coordinator.

## Registering for Preliminary Exam and Dissertation Hours

Following completion of course work, students continue to register for hours each semester. For the Rhetoric & Writing Ph.D. there is a six-hour requirement for ENG 7980: Readings for Preliminary Examination, and a 21-hour requirement for ENG 7990: Dissertation Research.

Those on assistantship must be registered for a minimum of 8 credit hours each semester. Typically, in Fall of their third year students take 6 hours of 7980 and 2 hours of 7990. In the following three semesters of funding, they take 8 hours of 7990 each semester. When registering each semester, you will need to provide the English Graduate Secretary with the name of your committee chair. This step is necessary because 7890 and 7990 hours are offered with different section numbers for each doctoral faculty member.

**Note:** It is your responsibility to confirm you are registered each semester. Doing so is important to ensure compliance with financial aid requirements and to ensure that you maintain your assistantship. You can keep track of your registration each semester by checking your online degree audit and by checking with the Graduate Secretary.

## Establishing a Committee

During the Fall semester of your second year, you will consult the Rhetoric & Writing Program Director to discuss your research interests, which core R&W faculty you would like to work with as your Chair, and the process of forming your committee. The Rhetoric & Writing Ph.D. Program Director is your academic advisor before you select a dissertation chair and will advise you about the process of setting up your preliminary/dissertation committee.

Rhetoric & Writing Ph.D. committees consist of a Chair who is a core R&W faculty member; two regular graduate faculty members (at least one of whom must be a core Rhetoric & Writing faculty member); and a Graduate Faculty Representative appointed by the Graduate College. Typically, one Rhetoric & Writing faculty member chairs both preliminary and dissertation committees, though a shift of chairs is possible when changes in research focus warrant doing so.

In consultation with your Chair, you will identify the appropriate faculty to complete your committee. After your Chair has approved the membership of your committee and after each member has agreed to serve on your committee, there is a form, as is the case with most steps toward degree completion. This form and others related to degree progress are online, on the homepage of the Graduate College, under the tab for [Documents and Forms](#). All such forms are initiated by the student. To set up a committee, students complete the **Preliminary Examination Application** form. Once students create the form and sign it, those who also need to sign it will receive an email notification to sign electronically. The Graduate Faculty Representative will be

appointed by the Graduate College.

Once committee has been created, your Committee Chair serves as your primary academic advisor. The Rhetoric & Writing Program Director, in conjunction with the Graduate Secretary and Graduate Coordinator, supervises registration each semester and coordinates with other offices at the University related to your registration, contracts, and meeting the requirements for degree completion.

Your Chair is your primary advisor for the processes of the preliminary exams, the prospectus and graduate lecture, the dissertation and oral defense, along with preparation for your job search. Your Chair can best serve you when you stay in regular touch, both face to face and via email.

## Preliminary Examinations

The Rhetoric & Writing PhD Program preliminary examination has three parts: a written General Preliminary Exam based on a required reading list, a Specialized Portfolio, and an Oral Exam. The student and committee meet once to confirm plans for prelims and once for the oral exam.

### General Preliminary Exam

The General Preliminary Examination is based on the General Preliminary Exam Reading List (available on the [Preliminary Exams](#) section of the program website). The core list contains 52 works; you are to add 18 more works, in consultation with your Chair and your committee. This list is approved by the Chair and committee at the prelim planning meeting.

General exams are designed as weekend take-home exams, i.e., Friday morning until Monday morning. The exam is sent via email attachment on a Friday morning, and responses are due by noon on the following Monday. Students are provided with questions in History, Theory & Research, and Pedagogy, and instructed to select one question from each area. Core exams should be double spaced and paginated with student name and page numbers in the upper-right-hand corner of each page. One bibliography should be included at the end listing all the works cited in the exam responses. Specific instructions are included on the exam itself.

### Specialized Portfolio

The specialized portfolio is developed by the student and submitted to the committee no later than one week following submission of the core exam, or earlier, at the discretion of the student. The Specialized Portfolio consists of these four sections:

- A. **Professional Revising Project.** This section will include (1) the original of a Rhetoric & Writing seminar paper, (2) a revision of that paper intended for conference delivery or for submission to a journal or book editor, and (3) an



Afterword that discusses and illustrates the nature of the revision and the reasons for changes during revision.

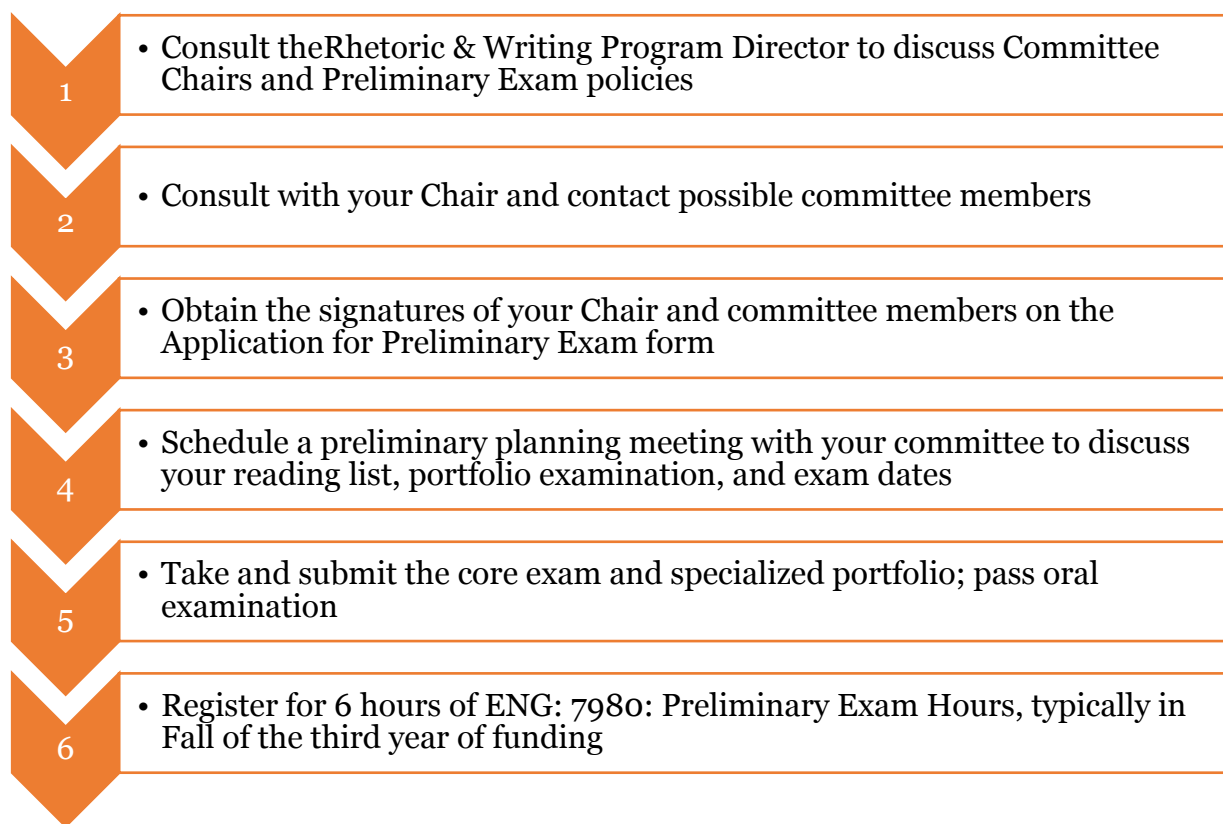
- B. **Professional Curriculum Project.** This section will include the syllabus for a writing course (whether already taught or anticipated) and a compact but specific Afterword that discusses (in light of the core readings and other sources) the principles that ground and shape the syllabus.
- C. **Initial Dissertation Reading List.** With an eye toward future dissertation research, the student will work with the Committee Chair to develop an Initial Reading List of 30-40 works, not duplicating any works on the core prelim list. The list should reflect a balance of books and articles/book chapters. This list will be approved by the committee at the prelim planning meeting.
- D. **Bibliographic Essay.** Working with the Initial Reading List, the student will develop a bibliographic essay (2000-2500 words) showing understanding of individual works, key relationships and differences among works, and important issues, questions, and necessary research in the area of the future dissertation. The essay should include a list of the works cited.

### Oral Exam and Preliminary Exam Report

The Oral Exam is typically held within two weeks of the submission of the core exam and the specialized portfolio. The oral exam lasts for 90 minutes and typically begins with the student briefly reviewing the process of taking prelims and the products submitted, followed by questions and discussion with the committee members. Prelim oral exams are private meetings of a student with their chair and committee members.

One to two days before the oral exam is held, students should create and sign the [Preliminary Exam Report](#) form. Following the oral exam, the form will be signed by the committee chair and members, the Graduate Coordinator, and the Graduate College.

### Summary of Steps



## Prospectus, Prospectus Presentation, and Topic Approval

After successful completion of preliminary examinations, you will direct your focus toward gaining approval for your proposed research project. The first step is consulting with your Chair about the research and writing needed to develop a proposal, or prospectus, for a focused, one-year dissertation project. The final step is presenting the prospectus at a formal public meeting, called the Prospectus Presentation. The presentation is typically delivered no later than the Fall or Spring semester (summer excluded) following completion of preliminary exams.

### The Prospectus

Working closely with your Chair, you will develop a prospectus for the dissertation project. Regardless of the type of research, such discussions include identifying relevant scholarship for review, formulating research questions, identifying methods and methodologies to inform the project, and identifying appropriate methods for data gathering. Examples of prospectuses for several kinds of projects can be found on the Rhetoric & Writing Canvas site for the Post-Prelim Group; the Program Director enrolls third- and fourth-year students in this group.

A prospectus typically includes:

- A description and summary of the topic and approach of the dissertation. It may also include a discussion of the evolution of your interest in the topic and/or chart academic experiences that have fed your interest
- A survey and synthesis of relevant bodies of published research that inform your proposed project
- A discussion of the research questions, methodologies, and methods to be used in the project
- A working bibliography of published scholarship
- A chapter outline of the dissertation
- A tentative schedule for your research and writing given your target date for graduation

Approval is required from BGSU's Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB) for dissertation projects involving human subjects. ENG 7260: Research in Rhetoric & Writing and discussion with your Chair will address the processes and time necessary for developing and submitting an HSRB application—and the typical step of revising per specifications from HSRB. HSRB approval is required before dissertation projects involving human subjects can be approved by a student's Chair and committee. As with all matters involving dissertation research, students should consult their Chairs regularly.

Once your Chair approves your prospectus, you will share it with the entire committee. You should query committee members about their preference for electronic and/or hard copy delivery, being sure to copy your Chair. Committee members must have a minimum of two weeks to review the prospectus before the graduate lecture is held.

Note: It is strongly recommended that you prepare your prospectus following requirements of the Graduate College's Thesis/Dissertation Handbook. Doing so will greatly alleviate time and stress involved in preparing the final version of the dissertation for the defense and for submission to the Graduate College. The handbook is available on the [Graduate College homepage](#).

### **The Prospectus Presentation**

The Prospectus Presentation is a 90-minute meeting where you present and discuss your dissertation project. You will deliver a formal 15- to 20-minute overview of the research project and engage in discussion with your committee members and, time permitting, others in attendance. These presentations are public meetings, advertised and open to your dissertation committee, the Rhetoric & Writing program, other members of the English Department and university community, and any other guests you invite. You should plan to attend several prospectus presentations in the Rhetoric & Writing program to support your colleagues and learn about their research, and to acquaint yourself with how these meetings run. An academic job search typically involves delivering a research presentation during an on-campus interview.

Consequently, the Prospectus Presentation provides an opportunity to rehearse discussing your research with a broad audience.

In preparing for the lecture itself, you should follow the same strategies as for preparing professional presentations. You may prepare a paper to read from or an outline, whichever suits your needs and abilities, as well as the nature of your research project. You may develop a PowerPoint or similar presentation, and it will be your responsibility to check technology availability in the room where your lecture will be held. Both for the benefit of your audience and as a backup in case of technology issues, prepare a brief handout for the audience. Keep in mind that some people at your lecture will not have read the prospectus.

Once your presentation is scheduled, you must provide both the Graduate Secretary and your Chair with the title of your project, as well as the date and time of the lecture, to facilitate the required Graduate College and Rhetoric & Writing program advertising.

### **The Topic Approval—Dissertation Form**

At the end of the presentation, your Chair will ask committee members to remain in the room to discuss your proposal privately. After their discussion, your Chair will invite you to rejoin the committee members for follow-up discussion. Their decision is formally reflected in the Topic Approval form.

One or two days before the Prospectus Presentation, students must create and sign the [Topic Approval—Dissertation](#) form. The form will be signed by the committee chair and members following the Prospectus Presentation.

### **Writing and Defending the Dissertation**

In the Rhetoric & Writing doctoral program, Chairs and dissertation students stay in close contact with each other throughout the processes of writing, defending, and depositing the dissertation. Chairs provide the best advice and feedback through regular discussion with their advisees and reading works in progress. Early in the process, you should meet with your Chair to discuss preferences for meeting schedules, communication preferences and constraints, and the submission of chapter drafts, as well as your Chair's timeline and policies for reading chapters.

### **Writing, Reviewing, and Revising Chapters**

While writing the dissertation, you will follow the process typical in our program. You submit a draft of a chapter—including a bibliography—to your Chair, and then revise and re-submit it until your Chair approves it for distribution to committee members. Approved chapters should be distributed via email attachment, with a request for committee members to contact you for a hard copy. Each time that you contact your committee via email, you also copy your Chair.

As you are writing the chapters, allow time for your Chair and committee members to review your work. Do not expect your Chair or committee members to read and evaluate drafts on University holidays, during planned travel for professional or personal reasons, or under pressure.

As you receive feedback from committee members on your chapters, share this feedback with your Chair. It is simply good professional manners to thank others for reading your work, so committee members and your Chair will appreciate your acknowledgement that you have received their comments on your chapters. Typically, revisions requested by committee members are incorporated into the defense manuscript.

### **The Defense Manuscript and Dissertation Defense**

When all chapters have been approved by the Chair and distributed to committee members, you prepare and distribute the defense manuscript. This is an edited version of the dissertation that incorporates revisions requested from the Chair and committee members and is formatted according to guidelines in the Graduate College's Thesis/Dissertation Handbook. The defense manuscript also includes required front matter, e.g., title page, table of contents, and abstract. It should be bound for the convenience of your readers. You will distribute a hard copy of the defense manuscript to your Chair and each member of the committee.

Once the defense manuscript is distributed, your Chair will schedule the dissertation defense. Typically lasting 90 minutes, a dissertation defense is a public meeting advertised and open to the Rhetoric & Writing program, the English Department, and the University community. You will benefit from attending several defenses as your colleagues reach this point in their doctoral programs, both to support them and learn about their research findings as well as to learn how these meetings are run. Your Chair and the Graduate Secretary will advertise the defense in the forums required by the Graduate College and Rhetoric & Writing program.

The defense opens with a 15-20 minute overview of your project. You should prepare for this presentation as you would for discussing your research at a professional conference or during an on-campus interview for an academic job. You should develop a PowerPoint or similar presentation and prepare a handout, as well as check out available technology and layout of the room where your defense is scheduled. If a projector or other technology is needed, you are responsible for ordering it. Following your presentation, committee members will engage you in further questions and discussion. If time permits, guests will do the same.

At the end of the discussion, your Chair will ask committee members to remain in the room to discuss your defense privately. After a few minutes, your Chair will invite you to rejoin the committee for a brief discussion.

One or two days before the defense, students must create and sign the form for [Defense and Manuscript Approval--Dissertation](#). The form will be signed by the committee chair and members following the defense.

## Submitting the Approved Dissertation Manuscript

Following a successful defense, students must actually submit the dissertation to the Graduate College. Doing so is a requirement for completing the Ph.D. This process involves several steps, all of which are a student's responsibility. Support is available from [CollabLab, STAC, 122 Jerome Library](#).

## Formatting the Dissertation

Beginning with the prospectus and continuing through the dissertation manuscript, follow the formatting requirements of the Graduate College for dissertations. Specific formatting requirements are found in the [Thesis/Dissertation Handbook](#).

## Converting the Dissertation to PDF

Dissertations must be submitted as a PDF document. Please see Graduate College instructions for [converting your dissertation to PDF](#).

## Graduation Deadlines

It is your responsibility to be aware of graduation deadlines for a given semester, all of which are firm and permit no exceptions. The Graduate College publishes a schedule of crucial dates for graduation, for instance, the deadline to apply to graduate, the deadline for holding a dissertation defense, the deadline to electronically upload the approved dissertation in order to graduate in a given semester. This schedule is available in the Graduate College website, under the heading [Important Dates & Deadlines](#).

## Check List for Successful Completion of Ph.D.

Once course work is complete, a number of steps still remain. Consult the check list below to help you visualize the process—you can even add in your own target dates for finishing each stage. You should also regularly consult the Graduate College homepage for dissertation deadlines and graduation applications.

