Literature Concentration Majors – English Comprehensive Exam Subject Areas

You must choose one reading list (A or B or C or D) from EACH of the three areas.

Area I
(Choose one reading list; A or B or C or D)

A. Classical Foundations: Dawn of Time - 476
These works should be read in chronological order:

- Aeschylus. *Oresteia*. Recommended translations: (1) Fagles, (2) Lattimore

B. Medieval: 650 1500
Background (especially important for this period): Norton Anthology Introduction to the Middle Ages and introductions to authors)

- Langland, *Piers Plowman*, B-text, Prologue, Passus 18. Trans. E. Talbot Donaldson. NOTE: This is the required translation—the only reliable one—in Norton.)
- Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, General Prologue, Wife of Bath’s Prologue and Tale, Merchant’s Tale, Franklin’s Tale. NOTE: You’re welcome to read modern versions first [recommended: Hieatt and Hieatt, Coghill], but you must read and know the material in Middle English. Exam questions may require you to identify and discuss in detail excerpts in the original language.
- *The York Play of the Crucifixion*.

C. Renaissance: 1500-1670
Students should be able to explain what is happening in literature of the Renaissance that makes it different from other literature, including a consideration of the milieu out of which it arose. What were these writers trying to do? What events and forces drove the new world view? What key events in other fields of human creative, social, cultural, and scientific endeavor affected the literature?

- Christopher Marlowe, “The Passionate Shepherd to his Love.”
- Sir Walter Ralegh, “The Nymph’s Reply to the Shepherd.”
- John Donne, “The Baite.”
- William Shakespeare, “Macbeth.”
D. **Restoration and 18th Century**

**Introductory Reading/Critical Commentary:**

**Texts:**
- Defoe, *Moll Flanders*
- Pope, *The Rape of the Lock*
- Wycherley, *The Country Wife*
- Goldsmith, *Vicar of Wakefield*
- Behn, *Oroonoko*

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**Area II**

(Choose one reading list; A or B)

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**A. 19th Century British**

**Poetry:**
See the following poems online at www.poetry.org or in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Vols. D and E*. Read introductory short biographies of each poet, as well as critical commentary listed. **Also read general introductions to Romanticism and Victorian periods** in the Nortons and at www.poets.org.

- Wordsworth, , “Michael” and “Tintern Abbey”
- Alfred, Lord Tennyson, short bio, “The Lady of Shalott,” “Ulysses”
- Elizabeth Barrett Browning, “Aurora Leigh,” Books 1, 2, 5. Read also critical essays:
- Robert Browning, “Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister”; “My Last Duchess”. See also www.poets.org for these poems, and for the essay, “Poetic Technique on Dramatic Monologue”. Also see www.victorianweb.org for further information on Browning.

**Novel:**

**Additional Background reading:**
- See also www.thenvictorianweb.org

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**B. 19th Century American**

Students choosing this area of American Literature should be conversant with the major themes of the 19th century; they should be able to demonstrate a knowledge of the major writers of the period, as well as show they are conversant with their works, and most importantly they should be able to analyze
the elements of a uniquely American brand of literature and show how they differed from other national literatures.

- Ralph Waldo Emerson, “The American Scholar.”
- Margaret Fuller, “Things and Thoughts in Europe,” No. 18 (In Bedford Anthology of American Lit, Vol. 1)
- James Fenimore Cooper, The Pioneers, Chapters 1 and XXII.
- Walt Whitman, from Leaves of Grass, “Song of Myself,” verses 1 through 10.
- Frederick Douglass, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglas, an American Slave, Chapters 1 and 10.

**Literary Texts:**
- Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot* (play)
- Toni Morrison, *Song of Solomon* (novel)
- Flannery O'Connor, "The Life You Save May Be Your Own" (short story)
- Salman Rushdie, "The Prophet's Hair" (short story)
- Seamus Heaney, "Digging," "The Forge," "North," "Punishment" (poems)
- Adrienne Rich, "Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law," "Diving into the Wreck" (poems)

**C. Literary Theory**
- Kenneth Burke, “Literature as Equipment for Living.” (p. 645)
- Susan Sontag, “Against Interpretation.” (p. 740)

These three essays are found in David H. Richter, *The Critical Tradition: Classic Texts and Contemporary Trends*, 3rd ed., Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007. If you do not have access to this text contact the English Department and we will make a copy available.

Additionally, scholars will choose three from the following:
- Victor Shklovsky, “Art as Technique.”
- Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author.”
- Jacques Derrida, “Differance.”
- Stanley Fish, “Is There a Text for this Class?”
- Peter Brooks, “Freud’s Masterplot.”
- Raymond Williams, “Marxism and Literature.”

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**Writing Concentration Majors – English Comprehensive Exam Subject Areas**

You must choose one reading list (A or B or C) from EACH of the two Writing areas and one category from any of the Literature areas above.

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**Area I**

(Choose one reading list; A or B or C)

**A. Classical Rhetoric**

**Background/context:**
Texts:

- From Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg’s anthology, *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present*.

Students should read the introductions to each of the pieces on the reading list below.

- From *Dissoi Logoi* (Anon)
- From *Gorgias* (Plato)
- From *Phaedrus* (Plato)
- From *Rhetoric* (Aristotle)
- From *Institutes of Oratory* (Quintilian)

**B. Women’s Literature and Rhetoric**

**Background/context:**

- Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar: “Literature of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries” and “Turn of the Century Literature.” *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: Volume I*.
- Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar: “Early Twentieth Century Literature” and “Later Twentieth-Century and Contemporary Literature.” *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: Volume II*.

**Texts:**

- Anne Bradstreet. “A Letter to Her Husband, Absent upon Public Employment”
- Virginia Woolf. “From A Room of One’s Own [Shakespeare’s Sister]” and “Professions for Women”
- Flannery O’Connor. “Good Country People”
- From Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg’s anthology, *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present*:
  - “Biography of Aspasia” (Bizzell and Herzberg)
  - From *The Treasure of the City of Ladies* (Christine de Pizan)
  - From *Women’s Speaking Justified, Proved, and Allowed by the Scriptures* (Margaret Fell)
  - From *Women in the Pulpit and Women and Temperance* (Frances Willard)
  - “The Distance Between Language and Violence” (Adrienne Rich)

**C. Literary and Rhetorical Theory**

**Background/context:**


*Students who choose this list may not select the Literary Theory list for their literature area.*

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**Area II**

(Choose one reading list; A or B or C)

**A. Theory and Teaching of Writing**

*Background/context:*


*Texts:*

- From Susan Miller’s *Norton Anthology of Composition Studies*:
  - Fulkerson, Richard. “Four Philosophies of Composition.”
  - Rose, Mike. “The Language of Exclusion at the University.”
  - Faigley, Lester. “Competing Theories of Process.”
  - Hesse, Doug. “Who Owns Writing?”

**B. Nonfiction Prose**

*Primary Readings:*

  - A Note on the Text, xv – xvi
  - Biographical Introduction, xvii – Xviii
  - Letters IV-11 – IV-16. (on reserve at the library)


- From *The Art of the Personal Essay*, Ed., Philip Lopate:
  - Chesterton, G.K., “A Piece of Chalk”
  - Montaigne, Michel. “Of Books”
  - Adrienne Rich, “Split at the Root”
• St. Augustine, *Confessions* (any edition): Chapters 1, 2, 8.

**Background Readings:**
• “Introduction” by Philip Lopate (from *The Art of the Personal Essay*)
  • Chapter 1, “Life Narratives: Definitions and Distinctions” (entire chapter)
  • Chapter 2, “Autobiographical Subjects,” p. 21-38
  • Chapter 3, “Autobiographical Acts,” p. 79-85 (Read the section entitled, “Voice in Autobiographical Writing”)

**C. Narrative Studies**
• John Barth, “Click”
  • [http://www.tnellen.com/cybereng/barth.htm](http://www.tnellen.com/cybereng/barth.htm)

• Michel Foucault, “What is an Author?”

• Margot Livesey, “How to Tell a True Story”

• Alice Notley, “The Poetics of Disobedience”
  • [http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/notley/disob.html](http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/notley/disob.html)

• Rich Orloff, *Playwriting 101: The Rooftop Lesson*
  • [www.playscripts.com](http://www.playscripts.com)