

Berea College Department of English, Theatre, and Speech Communication
Reading List and Portfolio: Guide for English Majors
2005-2006

Welcome to the English major! The faculty of the Department of English, Theatre, and Speech Communication are pleased you have decided to study in our major and looks forward to working with you throughout your college career. Two related components of our major that you should become familiar with at once are the Major Reading List and the Portfolio.

The Major Reading List is designed to stimulate reading beyond assignments for particular classes; to encourage discussion of literature among majors and faculty in various settings (not just the classroom); to insure exposure to some of the most important literary works in Western culture; to display the varieties of periods, authors and genres; and to develop your abilities to explore and analyze what you read: “for delight, for ornament and for ability.”

The list includes works from all the recognized periods of English and American literature, plus some representation of Western European (all periods) and, to a lesser extent, international literatures (20th century). In addition, the list contains a number of categories related to writing (Items 35-47) that may be especially helpful for those majors with a Writing concentration. Items from the list will certainly be taught in some courses, but many works listed will not be. Some titles are included to insure that you contact them on your own — outside of class work. If you qualify academically, you may propose an independent study or directed reading for additional guidance in particular areas.

You are responsible for choosing, reading, and responding to one selection from each of 34 categories on the Major Reading List. Most categories offer a number of options, and, in addition, any English, Theatre, and Speech Communication Department teacher may approve substitutions. Many items are brief “anthologies” of poetry or short stories; a few are large-scale reading projects, such as Homer’s *Odyssey*. To facilitate locating works, the library maintains a list of books containing the selected items.

Throughout your years in the department, you will be required to maintain a Portfolio of writing in response to the works on the Major Reading List. Each portfolio includes a checklist with the names of all required list areas; the checklist asks for (1) the names(s) of the work(s) that you read from each area; (2) the method used to fulfill the requirement; (3) the signature of the faculty member who taught the course, directed the independent study, participated in the directed conversation or read the journal entries; and (4) the date of completion. Please use the checklist to keep an accurate record of your progress.

You may fulfill the requirement of reading and responding to one selection from each of 34 categories by: (1) a regular course; (2) an independent study or directed reading; (3) a directed conversation with one or more faculty members; or (4) a journal entry.

If you satisfy the requirement by taking a course, the instructor’s signature will suffice as evidence for that particular category, but you are encouraged to include written materials from the course in the portfolio—whether or not those writings deal with items specified on the list. In some instances you may read a work from the list in a course that is not offered by the English, Theatre, and Speech Communication Department; for example, you might have the assignment in *Stories or Western Traditions*. In that case, the instructor’s signature is still sufficient and you are again urged to include in your portfolio some written work from the class.

If you meet the requirement by taking an independent study or directed reading, please include in your portfolio several written assignments demonstrating that you have read and thought about the material. In addition, the primary faculty sponsor should sign the checklist.

A “directed conversation” is one that you must take the initiative to plan and schedule; it should involve you and one or more faculty members. During this conversation, you should discuss a work (or works) on the list to demonstrate your familiarity and competence with it. You should have in your portfolio at least two directed conversations but no more than five. A faculty member with whom you have discussed the work should sign your checklist when he or she is satisfied that you have met the requirement.

Much of your portfolio material will probably take the form of journal entries, written in response to works you read for any category not satisfied some other way. Each journal entry should be legible, include a heading with the name of the work read and the date of the entry, and give clear indication that you have read the material carefully and thoughtfully. Each journal entry should be read and evaluated by a member of the English, Theatre, and Speech Communication Department faculty. When you have fulfilled the requirement, the teacher will sign your checklist. Please bear in mind that professors are frequently very busy: do not ask people to read lots of journal entries at the last moment, at the end of the semester, but try to be considerate about whom you ask and how and when. You cannot assume that faculty are free to give attention to your portfolio work at the drop of a hat — you must ask for such favors and schedule them at the convenience of the faculty person.

You are responsible for keeping the portfolio current by asking knowledgeable faculty to read journal entries, engage in directed conversations, and so on. You should work with as many teachers as possible to broaden your educational experience and deepen your insight. You should plan to present your portfolio to your academic advisor once during each semester of your sophomore, junior, and senior years. The advisor may discuss the portfolio with you and provide guidance for further work.

It is highly recommended that you complete 22 categories on your checklist by the beginning of the fall semester of your senior year. It is also highly recommended that you have 28 categories completed by the beginning of the spring semester of your senior year. At the end of your final semester at Berea College final approval of your portfolio will be determined. No one can complete the requirements of an English major unless he or she produces an acceptable portfolio. It must be approved in order for you to graduate.

GOOD LUCK & GOOD READING!