



DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, RHETORIC, AND HUMANISTIC STUDIES



Leaders in every field need to be good communicators. Rhetoric, the theory and practice of **effective communication**, is the heart of the English major at VMI. Cadets who major in English study and practice a wide variety of forms of communication, including written, spoken, visual, and digital. They learn how writers, artists, and philosophers use various techniques to move, inform, and persuade their audiences. They also learn how context and culture shape meaning. This **cultural awareness** will serve them well in today's **global society**.



Drawing on rhetorical, literary, artistic, and philosophical traditions, our majors communicate using multimedia and **21st century technologies**. Extending their education beyond the classroom, they prepare to become engaged citizens and professionals by applying what they have learned to real-world situations in both their coursework and internships.



The purpose of the English major at VMI is to prepare the citizen-soldier for civic and professional life through disciplined engagement with rhetorical **traditions** and **applications**, from the classical to the contemporary. Grounded in a common interest in the varied functions of language, the major integrates multiple disciplinary approaches, including the literary, the philosophical, and the aesthetic. Cadets' command of language is developed **critically** and **creatively** as they both study a range of humanistic works and practice effective forms of expression.

AN INTEGRATED CURRICULUM

The English major curriculum offers courses in writing, rhetoric, literature, philosophy, and the visual arts, each of which encourages cadets to engage their world through critical, cross-disciplinary inquiry. Cadets are thus able to explore rhetoric and writing as forces that shape societies and their values, and to develop creative approaches to the complex cultural phenomena that inform our traditions and shape our futures. Our commitment to the writing process as both a useful learning tool and a vital skill for personal life, professional success, and citizenship allows cadets to tie together a variety of approaches and interests.



CRITICAL THINKING

The English major is a particularly good choice for cadets interested in developing the critical thinking skills prized by the military, employers, and graduate schools. The curriculum requires that cadets both write analyses and present them orally, thus preparing them for success in careers in which the dynamic communication of thought is paramount. It also emphasizes reflective thinking, which encourages cadets not only to understand their own learning processes, but also to become thoughtful participants in society.

CREATIVITY

The English major at VMI centers on the integrated study of rhetoric, literature, philosophy, and art history, but none of these fields takes flight without the development of cadets' imaginative minds. Our majors practice creative expression in a variety of contexts, learning to apply their creativity and aesthetic sensibilities to all areas of study and future career objectives.

TRADITION AND INNOVATION

The English curriculum honors longstanding scholarly traditions while also recognizing the proliferation of new modes of communication in the 21st century. All English majors take courses in British and American literary traditions, rhetorical traditions, and ethics. These classes explore foundational texts, ideologies, and ways of considering the world that remain fundamental to contemporary citizenship and intellectual engagement. At the same time, the department prepares cadets for flexibility and adaptability within the ever-changing digital landscape of modern communication. In courses such as Digital Rhetorics and Technical Communication, cadets create and share ideas across multiple platforms, including interactive digital presentations and multimedia video essays. English majors are required to prepare an electronic portfolio of coursework throughout their cadetship, an opportunity for them to showcase traditional written work and more modern media forms.



Cadets present their research on Shakespeare at the conference of the South Atlantic Modern Language Association.

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

Cadets in many English, Rhetoric, and Humanistic Studies (ERHS) classes are encouraged to undertake original research, but additional opportunities exist for students to deepen their research skills by completing larger projects. Cadets can work with a faculty member on an independent study during the academic year, or over the summer through VMI's Summer Undergraduate Research Institute. English majors have presented their research at national conferences and at VMI's annual Undergraduate Research Symposium. Cadets with a major GPA of 3.5 or higher can pursue departmental Honors by conducting research and writing a thesis on a significant topic related to their studies in the ERHS curriculum.

FIELDWORK

All English majors take Fieldwork, a course that enables them to interact with local organizations and gain real-world job experience, both in and out of the classroom. Cadets can also complete an independent fieldwork project under the guidance of a faculty mentor.

Cadets work with residents of Kendal at Lexington, a local retirement home, in a Fieldwork course centered on memoir writing.



CAREER OPTIONS AND ALUMNI SUCCESS

Our curriculum enables cadets to learn how to articulate their own ideas effectively, build consensus, solve problems, and thus improve the human condition. These skills will serve well in any career our graduates choose to pursue. In particular, the English degree prepares alumni to enter fields such as law, civil service, public relations, marketing and promotions, communications, social media, technical writing, publishing, journalism, and education. VMI English majors have followed diverse paths after graduation, including enrolling in graduate school and commissioning in the military.

Research conducted as part of an independent Fieldwork course, a social media and communications internship at the George C. Marshall Foundation, is presented at VMI's Undergraduate Research Symposium.



Members of the Pre-Law Society and ERHS faculty mentors visit the Supreme Court in Washington, D.C.



An English major is all smiles as family members affix her shoulder boards during the spring commissioning ceremony.

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

English majors at VMI take advantage of a variety of exciting extracurricular opportunities sponsored by the ERHS department.



Cadets attend performances at the American Shakespeare Center's Blackfriars Playhouse.

Sigma Tau Delta, the International English Honors Society, recognizes outstanding English majors.



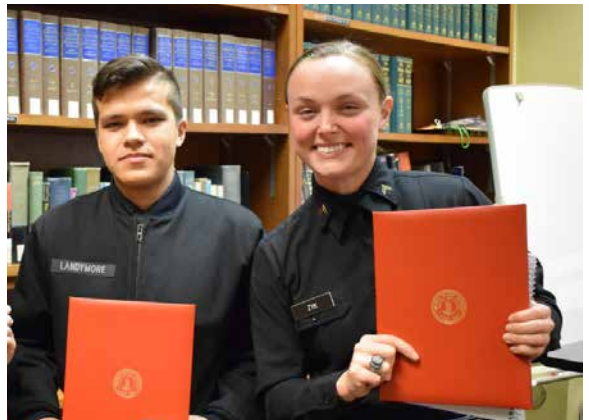
Distinguished scholars and creative writers give presentations.



English majors socialize at departmental gatherings.



VMI's cadet-led creative arts journal, Cadence, annually publishes poetry, fiction, non-fiction, visual arts, and photography. Awards are given for the best work in each genre.





English majors enjoy field trips to Washington, D.C., where they visit museums and memorials on the National Mall.

ERHS CONCENTRATIONS

In addition to the English degree, the department also grants concentrations in four areas: rhetoric and writing, literary studies, philosophy, and art history and visual culture. Each concentration is an 18-credit-hour sequence of core and elective courses. Non-majors can minor in these subjects.

On a semester abroad, an English major visits the Plaza de España in Seville, Spain.



Cadets debate controversial issues in the Ethics Discussion Forum.



Cadets enrolled in an art history course visit the Fralin Museum of Art in Charlottesville to view Renaissance drawings.

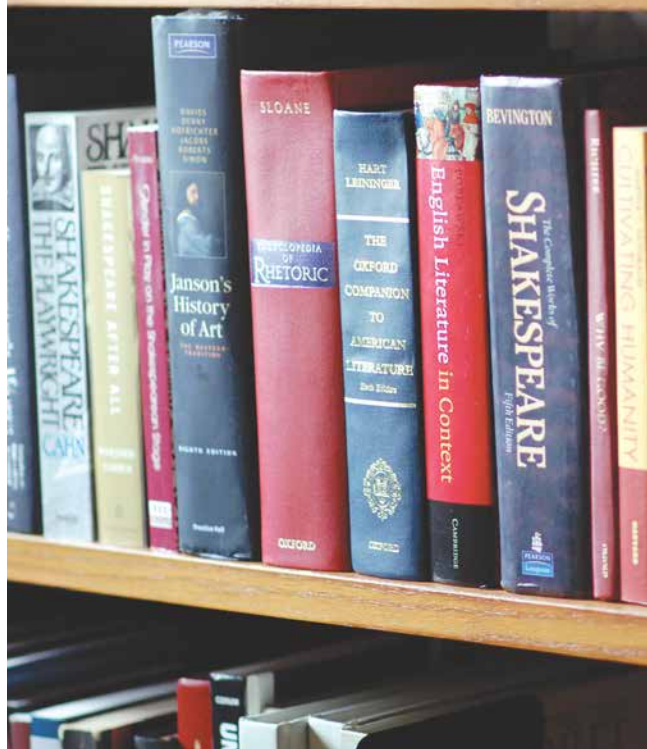
STUDYING ABROAD

The English major curriculum is flexible enough to accommodate study abroad during the academic year, ideally in the spring of the 3rd class year. English majors have enjoyed spending a semester at institutions in the United Kingdom, Spain, France, Greece, and the Czech Republic. Credits earned abroad are transferable back to VMI, and many literature, arts, and humanities classes at foreign universities can be credited towards English degree requirements.

FROM THE DEPARTMENT HEAD

As a prospective or current VMI cadet, you are clearly committed to becoming a well-educated, dynamic leader who will make a difference in your professional and civic endeavors. The English curriculum is well designed to help you achieve such goals. Centered on rhetoric, the art and skill of using language, the English major invites you to explore the many ways in which human expression and understanding occur in the 21st century. We would very much like to talk with you about your interests and career goals. Feel free to be in touch using the telephone number or email address below, and be sure to visit the department's website to learn more about the ERHS department and the English degree.—Col. Emily Miller

Scan the QR Code to learn more about a major in English, Rhetoric, and Humanistic Studies, including concentrations, minors, and course offerings.



ERHS Contact Information

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english@vmi.edu

Admissions Information

www.vmi.edu/admissions-and-aid
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The Virginia Military Institute is committed to providing an environment that emphasizes the dignity and worth of every member of its community and that is free from harassment and discrimination based on race, sex, color, national origin, religion, age, veteran status, sexual orientation, pregnancy, genetic information, against otherwise qualified persons with disabilities, or based on any other status protected by law. In pursuit of this goal, any question of impermissible discrimination on these bases will be addressed with efficiency and energy and in accordance with VMI General Order 16. General Order 90 addresses complaints or reports of retaliation against those who have opposed practices prohibited by General Order 16, those who have filed complaints or reports of prohibited practices, and those who have testified or otherwise participated in enforcement of General Order 16. Questions regarding discrimination prohibited by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, or other federal law, may be referred to the VMI Inspector General and Title IX Coordinator, 303 Letcher Avenue, VMI, Lexington, VA 24450, 540-464-7086. Any cadet or prospective cadet having questions about disability services for students should contact the Miller Academic Center, 206 Carroll Hall, Lexington, VA 24450, 540-464-7636. For employment-related disability services, contact the Americans with Disabilities Act Coordinator in the VMI Human Resources Office, Lexington, VA 24450, 540-464-7322.

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