

CHOOSING YOUR DOCTORAL PROGRAM

Teachers considering doctoral training in English should evaluate their interests, goals, and career opportunities honestly and realistically. If your primary interest is in literature, but you expect to teach composition as well, you may want to look for a program which will provide training in composition and rhetoric as well as in English and American literature. Ideally, such training would not be a single course or two, but a regular subfield, one that would bring you into contact with several faculty members, expose you to cross-disciplinary research, and offer you a practicum in teaching.

Indeed, many candidates will want to consider a doctoral program emphasizing composition and rhetoric. There are now a number of such programs, and candidates may wish to examine them with questions like the following in mind:

- Will the program expose me to developing interdisciplinary work in the human sciences broadly concerned with the transmission of literacy--work in areas such as linguistics, cognitive psychology, reading theory, cross-cultural studies?
- Will the program expose me to a number of different theories of composition, as opposed to one oriented solely toward a single theory?
- Will the program give me the research skills I need to test my ideas in the classroom, the writing lab, and in naturalistic settings?
- Is the program flexible enough in its requirements? (Can I transfer credits for courses in other departments or at other institutions? Can I substitute a computer language or a research design course for a foreign language requirement? Are residency requirements flexible enough to allow me to continue full-time teaching?)

If the answer to any any of these questions is "no," I'd recommend that you look into the possibility of designing an individualized program (many large universities allow such interdisciplinary programs), or that you look elsewhere for a graduate program that better fits your needs.

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