

## English Major with Research Intensive English (RIE) Concentration

**Revised October 2024- effective Academic Year 2024-2025**

### Course Catalog Description of the Research Intensive English Concentration

(Effective beginning **Fall 2024**)

English majors with sophomore status or above may apply for our selective Research Intensive English (RIE) concentration. This concentration within the English major, which admits a maximum cohort of 12 students per academic year, offers opportunities for pursuing literary and rhetorical studies in smaller, more rigorous settings. All Research Intensive English students must take at least 2 Research Intensive English seminars (while maintaining a 3.5 or higher GPA in English). To complete the RIE concentration successfully, students must complete either ENGL 4990: Senior Honors Project or an additional Research Intensive English seminar after achieving senior status. Students who complete these requirements will graduate with the Research Intensive English designation, and will leave our program well prepared for advanced study in English.

### General Requirements

The concentration requires that all Research Intensive English students complete at least two (2) Research Intensive English seminars (ENGL 4XXX). Research Intensive English seminars will be 4000-level English courses designated with a “Research Intensive English” attribute. The final requirement of the RIE concentration must be fulfilled with one (1) of the following options:

1. Completion of ENGL 4990: Senior Honors Project after achieving senior status. ENGL 4990 is a research and writing requirement that students enter into individually, guided by a faculty mentor. The student must submit a formal project proposal with faculty mentor approval to the Director of the Research Intensive English concentration the semester before enrolling in ENGL 4990.  
*or*
2. Completion of an additional 4000-level Research Intensive English seminar after achieving senior status.

### Admission

Admission to the Research Intensive English concentration is competitive. Application to the program is limited to majors who have completed *at least TWO* semesters at SLU (sophomores and above) who have maintained a 3.5 GPA *in English courses*. Students are considered based upon the strength of a writing sample, past performance in English courses, and involvement with English-related extracurricular activities.

### Cross-Over with University Honors

All RIE seminars automatically count as University Honors courses. Students can be dually enrolled in RIE and University Honors; however, students are not required to be University Honors students in order to be accepted into the RIE concentration.

## Senior Honors Project

The Senior Honors Project is a year-long independent study that gives RIE students an opportunity to engage in original research and which culminates, in its second semester, in the production of a thesis in the form of a paper or equivalent project. In its second semester, the independent study is officially designated as ENGL 4990 and can count as a 4000-level English elective towards the major. The RIE Senior Honors Project also counts for the University Honors thesis requirement. ~~Only students who complete the English Senior Honors Project will be considered for the English Senior Honors Project Award.~~ The RIE Senior Honors Project is strongly recommended for all students who are considering pursuing future graduate coursework in English studies; all projects are independently reviewed by a member of the English faculty and students will receive valuable feedback on their projects that will help them to develop as scholars in the field.

RIE students choosing to produce a Senior Honors Project must identify a faculty mentor and produce a title, abstract, and preliminary bibliography by week 8 of the prior semester (normally the fall). They register for ENGL 4990 in the next semester of their senior year after achieving senior status (usually the spring). When the proposal is approved by the RIE director, in consultation with the Undergraduate Committee, the student registers for the spring during the fall registration period. They will work closely and regularly with their mentor over the course of the second semester to produce the project.

There are **three options** for RIE Senior Honors Projects:

- **Critical Option:** For the critical option, students are asked to craft a critically-informed yet distinctive scholarly essay of substantial length and/or or digital equivalent (25-30 pages). Demonstrating but also building on the reading, writing, discussion, and research skills cultivated over the duration of the student's participation in the RIE concentration, critical projects must display original scholarly research beyond the immediate primary texts under study and must engage with appropriate secondary works (represented in a substantial final bibliography). Ideally, this project should grow out of work begun in RIE seminars or other English courses the student has taken. The purpose of this project is to give students an opportunity to work in an independent environment and produce a polished, dynamic piece of critical writing that may be submitted for publication or serve as part of an application for graduate school.
- **Creative Option:** For the creative option, students undertake a creative project that comprises a work of fiction or poetry (15-25 pages) as well as a craft essay (10-15 pages) that may serve as a preface or afterword. Creative projects should assemble, extend, and revise the student's own creative work; they should demonstrate an advanced awareness of craft and technique, and they should implicitly reflect a historical understanding of the mode and genre in which the student is working. The craft essay should feature argumentative prose and its focus should be the creative work's critical context—that is, the literary, historical, thematic, and/or formal milieu from which the creative work draws and with which it is in conversation. Serving as a substantial research component, the craft essay must include citations plus a full bibliography citing a dozen or more primary and secondary (scholarly) sources.

- **Rhetoric, Writing, and Technology (RWT) Option:** For the RWT option, students undertake what is in equal parts a research project and public-facing production. Students develop a plan of study and an action plan that result in a well-researched, audience aware, and professionally produced composition (e.g., a podcast series, video documentary, public relations campaign, or a set of self-advocacy materials). Research is typically a mix of primary and secondary research used both in the generation of content and in the shaping of the project's form and delivery. Students conduct research to learn about the topic they are addressing and to discern how to best address it. As part of the Senior Honors Project component, the plan of study and action plan should be re-composed as a reflective essay (10-15 pages) commenting upon the rhetorical, compositional and technological choices made by the student. This essay must include citations plus a full bibliography citing a dozen or more primary and secondary (scholarly) sources.

Students completing the Senior Honors Project in any option (Critical; Creative; or Rhetoric, Writing and Technology) must include with the final project a reflection on their thesis experience, following the guidelines below.

### Reflection Guidelines:

Please respond in writing to each question in 200-300 words. Aim for 1,000-1,200 words total. The reflection should be appended to the final thesis upon submission.

1. Identify the greatest success or successes achieved in your RIE project.
2. Identify the greatest challenge or challenges encountered in your RIE project. How did you attempt to address these challenges?
3. Describe a technique, theory, or text shared by your RIE faculty advisor that influenced your project. Did you incorporate this technique, theory, or text into your project? If so, how so?
4. If you were to further revise and expand your RIE project, what next steps would you take?

All projects will be read independently by one English faculty member, who will produce a brief report and will determine if the project is a pass, not a pass, or a pass with distinction.

### Senior Legacy Symposium

Senior RIE majors will represent the English Department at SLU's spring semester Senior Legacy Symposium, held each April.

**Senior Honors Project Award** The Department of English will designate one graduating RIE major each year as the recipient of our **Outstanding Senior Honors Project Award**. Only students who complete ENGL 4990: Senior Honors Project with distinction will be considered for this award. The Department of English will announce this award annually alongside our existing Collins and Mandeville awards for excellence in the major.

## RIE Concentration: Two Pathways to Completion

