

## English at La Trobe

### Frequently asked questions

#### **Q. What is English?**

**A.** At La Trobe we generally offer a choice of four semester long first year English subjects, followed by around twenty second and third year subjects. They vary greatly in the areas covered, but in all cases English subjects are concerned with the analysis and understanding of texts: often these are printed texts (novels, stories, plays, poems, critical and theoretical articles), though they may also include films and visual images.

#### **Q. Is English at University like English at School?**

**A.** Yes and no. Many of our subjects are more like VCE literature than VCE English though there are similarities to VCE English in terms of the approach to how we write about what we read/see. But we expect you to do much more reading and we expect you (with guidance) to use critical material in order to enhance your understanding of the syllabus. In some subjects, you might be reading a book a week for part of the semester. As you will only receive 3 contact hours per week (usually a two-hour lecture in a large group and a one-hour tutorial, which is a class in a group of around 18), we expect you to spend a reasonable amount of time reading and preparing on your own (we suggest 6 hours per week on average).

#### **Q. What kind of job does English lead to?**

**A.** Like all subjects in the BA, English is not a professional qualification on its own. However, English graduates are employed in a variety of fields, including teaching, journalism, the public service, and business. If you make the most of your time with us you will be equipped with flexible skills that test your imagination as well as your intelligence, and many employers are impressed by the versatile quality of English graduates. English graduates are not trained for a particular profession; they are trained in reading and analysis and the skills they develop fit them for lots of different jobs. In studying English you read and analyse and discuss a variety of challenging and sometimes difficult texts, and by the time you complete a major you have become good at this – an experienced researcher and writer.

#### **Q. Can I major in English?**

**A.** Yes. You usually take two English subjects in first year, two subjects in second year, and three subjects in third year.

#### **Q. Can I do Honours in English?**

**A.** Yes, if you complete a major in English and do well in it. Honours takes a year full-time or two years part-time and comprises three subjects and an essay of 14,000 words on a topic that you work out in consultation with a staff member. Honours gives you a chance to do more intensive work in the subject, build on a particular interest you have developed over the previous three years, and qualify for postgraduate work in English.

#### **Q. How will I be assessed?**

**A.** By a mixture of short assignments and longer essays. In creative writing subjects, you will be assessed by the various pieces of creative work that you produce, taking into account the drafts. There are no examinations in English.

**Q. What are the particular strengths of English at La Trobe?**

**A.** We take pride in the variety of our research interests and offerings, but among our particular areas of research are postcolonial studies, women's writing, creative writing, biography and autobiography, humour and comedy, Australian literature, literature of Shakespeare's time, and Romantic and post-Romantic literature.

**Q. If I want to be an English teacher, how much English do I have to do?**

**A.** The minimum requirement set out by the Department of Education is 2 years of English (i.e. at La Trobe this equals 2 semester-long first-year English subjects and two semester-long second-year English subjects). If you want to teach Senior English we would suggest that you should do a major in English and also consider doing honours in English.

**Q. Do you teach creative writing?**

**A.** Yes: we have a first year subject on autobiographical writing and in later years we teach writing fiction, writing autobiography, and writing poetry.

**Q. Will doing English help me get a job in publishing?**

**A.** We don't offer a professional qualification in publishing or editing, but we do offer an editing subject.

**Q. Any other reason why I should do English?**

**A.** While English should provide you with analytical skills, it deals largely with cultural texts of various kinds and accordingly nurtures your imagination as well as the logical side of your brain.

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