

## **English Department Research Assistantship Award**

English Department Research Assistantships are awarded each semester on a competitive basis. An RAship is understood as an award for both students and faculty, in recognition of a joint commitment to academic inquiry and/or pedagogical development. It is an honor for a student to receive an RAship and an honor for faculty to be awarded an RAship.

The number of RAships awarded each semester will depend upon faculty participation. Faculty will be invited to request an RA each semester, and RAship Awards will be decided by committee. Assistantships are typically limited to one student per faculty member per semester; however, exceptions may be made in special circumstances.

Research Assistantships help students hone their pedagogical and/or research skills by supporting a member of full-time faculty in the development of faculty research projects and/or existing or future courses in the English Department. Research Assistants will meet regularly with their faculty mentor and assist with essential tasks, such as the following (to be decided in consultation with their faculty mentor):

- Preparing an annotated bibliography for a work in progress (article, book, talk)
- Tracing a scholar's published work on a particular topic
- Compiling a list of journals by discipline and their publishing requirements
- Checking citations and formatting a publication at the copyediting stage
- Engaging in a directed reading with a faculty mentor
- Preparing an annotated bibliography for a course in progress
- Preparing a lesson plan and helping guide a class period
- Contributing to assignment development, including exams
- Performing data QA/QC for Digital Humanities projects

Research Assistants also have the opportunity to receive personalized guidance on the following:

- Applying to graduate school
- Locating conferences and applying to participate

**Note for students:** Research Assistantships are particularly valuable for students interested in pursuing graduate study (e.g. a Master's or Ph.D.) in English, as well as students who are interested in becoming, or who plan to become, teachers of English literature.

**Note for faculty:** Research Assistantships must be intellectually rigorous and pedagogically meaningful. To fulfill the terms of the Award, students must be asked to engage directly in the research and/or teaching process; they should not be limited to mechanical tasks (such as pulling books, scanning/copying, etc.), and they should not be asked to take over essential professorial functions (such as grading papers). Students specifically interested in course-related tasks should be given every opportunity to observe, consult, and develop their own pedagogical skills.

**Eligibility:** To apply for a Research Assistantship, **students must have:**

- Passed Critical Methods I for English Majors and Critical Methods II for English Majors, ideally with a grade of B or better.
  - *Note: Students currently enrolled in Critical Methods II may apply for an RAship for the following semester on a “pending” basis.*
- Junior or Senior standing (i.e., have earned 58+ semester credit hours [SCH]).
  - *Note: at present, only full-time faculty in the English Department (Instructors, Lecturers, Assistant Professors, Associate Professors, and Full Professors) are eligible for RAships.*
  - *Note also: Students are limited to one Research Assistantship Award during their undergraduate career, and a member of faculty may typically be awarded no more than one Research Assistantship per semester.*

**Faculty eligibility:** To be awarded a Research Assistantship, **faculty must:**

- hold a full-time appointment in the English Department (whether as an Instructor, Lecturer, Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, or Full Professor);
- undertake any RAship Award “in-load” (i.e., without the expectation of additional teaching compensation).
  - *Note, however, that—whenever possible—a modest materials budget (to support trips to local research libraries and/or the purchase of books and other necessary supplies) will be offered as part of the faculty Award. Though materials budgets are contingent upon adequate Departmental funding (funds will be assessed on a semesterly basis), RAships will be awarded regardless of the availability of materials budgets.*
  - *Note also: Students are limited to one Research Assistantship Award during their undergraduate career, and a member of faculty may typically be awarded no more than one Research Assistantship per semester.*

**Application paths:** Anecdotally, Research Assistantships work best when faculty and students have a prior relationship, although this is not required. Students interested in an RAship may either:

1. Identify a specific professor with whom they wish to work and ask that professor to sponsor their application for a Research Assistantship OR
2. Indicate their interest in an RAship by specifying a particular literary field and/or period and ask the Research Assistantship Committee to identify potential faculty matches.
  - *Note: Applicants following the first path should ask for the support of their faculty sponsor before applying for an RAship. (The RAship Awards Committee will confirm with the faculty sponsor.)*
  - *Note also: For applicants following the second path, the Research Assistantship Awards Committee will request approval from any potential faculty match.*

**Selection criteria and procedure:**

- The English Department particularly encourages applications from:
  - Students interested in graduate work in English literature;
  - Students interested in becoming teachers of English literature;
  - Students from groups who are traditionally underrepresented in K-12 and Higher Education.

- The English Department Research Assistantship Awards Committee will meet every semester to review student applications and draw up a short list of recommended RAship awards.
- As noted above (see “Application paths”), a faculty mentor’s support for any student following the second application path will be requested if the Committee’s first review results in a “match.”
- Awards will be announced shortly before registration opens for the semester in which the RAship will take place.

**RAship requirements:** Students can receive college credit for their RAship by enrolling in one of the following courses:

- INTR 20.395: Experiential Learning in the Humanities and Social Sciences (1 SCH),
- INTR 20.399: Internship in the Applied Liberal Arts (2+ SCH), or
- ENGL 02.392: English Independent Study (1-3 SCH).

To receive course and/or internship credit, all students granted an RAship will be required to:

- **Define initial goals/objectives:** In collaboration with their faculty sponsor, and in accordance with the requirements for the course through which the RAship is administered, each RA will define the essential objectives of the Research Assistantship; the hours per week the RAship will involve (in accordance with the number of SCH the student will earn for the RAship); and a schedule for regular meetings/consultations. A brief account of these objectives, signed by the student and their faculty sponsor, should be submitted to the English Department Chair and/or the Chair of the Research Assistantship Committee in the first two weeks of the semester.
  - *Note: to receive credit for their RAship, students enrolling for credit in INTR 20.395 or INTR 20.399 will be required to submit periodic reports to the faculty member in charge of those courses (as well as communicating regularly with their sponsoring faculty member in the English Department). These reports typically involve a weekly accounting of activities and time expended on the RAship and written reflections on the work conducted during the RAship. Students should make sure they understand the INTR requirements in advance and meet INTR deadlines throughout the semester.*
  - *Note also: students receiving credit for their RAship by enrolling in a section of English Independent Study will submit periodic reports to their sponsoring faculty member. These typically involve a weekly accounting of activities and time expended on the RAship and written reflections on the work conducted during the RAship.*
- **Conduct an exit interview,** at the conclusion of the RAship, with the English Department Chair and/or the Chair of the Research Assistantship Committee.

#### **Application deadlines:**

- To be considered for a Fall RAship, students should typically apply in early March (exact deadlines will be publicized each semester). Awards will be announced in advance of Fall registration (which usually begins in late March).
- To be considered for a Spring RAship, students should typically apply in early October (exact deadlines will be publicized each semester). Awards will be announced in advance of Spring registration (which usually begins in mid-October).

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Below is a preview of the application questions and examples of short essays from winning applications.

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## **English Department Research Assistantship Award Application**

### **I am applying for an RAship in:**

- Fall
- Spring

### **I wish to receive the following number of credits for an RAship:**

- 1 SCH (= 40 hours)
- 2 SCH (= 80 hours)
- 3 SCH (= 120 hours)

### **I would like to receive credit for an RAship by enrolling in**

- Experiential Learning in the Humanities and Social Sciences (INTR 20.395: Experiential Learning in the Humanities & Social Sciences [1 SCH])
- CHSS Match Internship (INTR 20.399: Internship in the Applied Liberal Arts [2+ SCH])
- Independent Study (ENGL 02.392 [1-3 SCH])

### **Application path (check one):**

1. Path 1:
  - I would like to work with the following member of full-time faculty, who has agreed to support this application: \_\_\_\_\_ (Please ask your faculty sponsor to send an email expressing support of your application to the Chair of the Research Assistantship Committee, Dr. Meadowsong.)
2. Path 2:
  - I am interested in learning more about a specific literary period and/or tradition, and would like the Research Assistantship Committee to identify a possible faculty mentor for me.

Check all that apply below. (For example, if you are interested in working with a faculty member whose research and teaching focuses on the Victorian novel, you could check “19th century,” “British,” and “narrative”; if you are interested in working with a faculty member whose research and teaching focuses on Shakespeare, you could check “early modern literature,” “drama” and then add “Shakespeare” under “other/more specifically”; etc.)

- medieval literature
- early modern literature
- 18th-century literature
- 19th-century literature
- 20th-century literature
- contemporary literature

- American literature
- Multiethnic literatures of the US
- African American literature
- Asian American literature
- Latinx literature
- Native American literature

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> British literature</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> global/Anglophone literature</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> queer literature</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> poetry</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> narrative/novel</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> drama</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> literary theory</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> other/more specifically:</li></ul> <hr/> |
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**Check the particular kinds of research-based work that you are interested in exploring with a faculty mentor:**

- Prepare an annotated bibliography for a work-in-progress (article, book, talk)
- Trace a scholar's published work on a particular topic
- Compile a list of journals by discipline and their publishing requirements
- Check citations and format publication at the copyediting stage
- Pursue a directed reading
- Prepare an annotated bibliography for a course-in-progress
- Prepare a lesson plan and help guide a class period
- Contribute to assignment development, including exams
- Perform data QA/QC for Digital Humanities projects
- Prepare graduate school applications
- Consider conferences: how to find them and how to apply
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Short Essay** (maximum 500 words): Briefly explain what you hope to gain from the Research Assistantship and your main goals/objectives for an RAship.

Below are **examples** of winning application essays.

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Nicole Tota  
Application for RAship, Path 1

At a time when the canon is expanding and becoming increasingly more inclusive, why do we still see the same works of literature taught over and over again? How do we analyze multi-ethnic works when our understanding of literary symbols is still so Westernized? How do we decolonize our understanding of language and symbolism? And how do we broaden the literary horizons of others, both English majors and casual readers? Ever since I took Dr. Hammond's Native American Literature course two years ago, I've been fascinated and haunted by these questions.

Literature has the potential to become a voice for the marginalized and a shift away from the Eurocentric culture that has so pervaded the old canon. The more scholarship begins to focus on contemporary works by diverse authors, the further we move from a restrictive canon and the closer we move to truly representing America. In my future classroom, as a high school English teacher, I dream of giving my students an introduction to the works of Toni Morrison, Amy Tan, N. Scott Momaday,

and Sandra Cisneros, among others. When Dr. Hammond reached out to tell me about the new Multi-Ethnic Literatures of the United States course that she was developing for the spring, I was immediately on board. Not only is it the perfect intersection of all my scholarly interests, it's the kind of course that I long to be able to teach myself in the future. Dr. Hammond has even promised me that we'll work on creating the syllabus together. Becoming an RA for Dr. Hammond's MELUS course is the fulfillment of a dream that I didn't even know I had!

My qualifications for the role of RA include: completion of all required coursework in my English major; my dual major in History, which has given me a strong foundation in US and global history; and my minors in American Studies, Women's and Gender Studies, and International Studies. In addition, I have been a writing center tutor for the past two years and have presented my original work at one regional (MAWCA 2019) and one international conference (IWCA 2019). Every semester I have assisted an Intensive College Composition professor as part of the writing center's studio program; during the course of this program, I frequently craft lesson plans and teaching materials for first year writing students, so I am very familiar with assisting a professor. I am so excited to work with Dr. Hammond on her new MELUS course!

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Alexis Atwood  
Application for R.Aship, Path 2

Through studying literature, we begin to understand the roots of human experience. History, politics, art—all areas of humanity—are recorded within the texts we study and continue to influence the future of our world. I've taken a great interest in how Greek and Roman mythology have had an effect on our society, and how these ideas continue to plague and inspire us today. In what ways are we consciously and unconsciously ruled by myth? How deeply rooted are these ideas and how can we uproot those influences we are blind to?

The impact mythology has had on a variety of literary genres, art forms, and our society as a whole cannot be overstated. We find an abundance of references, from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* to Homer's *The Odyssey*, in the works of William Shakespeare, in Romantic works like those of Percy Shelley and Lord Byron, and even in modern music like Cream's "Tales of Brave Ulysses." We see Alfred, Lord Tennyson's frequent use of mythology in his poems and the effects his works have on the production of art. The Painter John William Waterhouse was influenced greatly by Tennyson's poem "The Lady of Shalott," and often produced works inspired by mythology, like his paintings "Hylas and the Nymphs" and his many pieces inspired by Circe. We even see modern works wholly dedicated to the reimagining of one figure's story, like in Madeline Miller's novel *Circe* (2018). Through a Research Assistantship, I'd like to further study Greek and Roman mythology to discover more connections made across history, and art forms. My main goals and objectives are to close-read a variety of texts and assemble a timeline to show the effects Greek and Roman mythology have had on our society over time.

This opportunity would allow me to deepen my knowledge of mythology, to explore a wider range of literature, and to compare and contrast the ideas collected—to understand important patterns and the influence these texts have had on the way our world functions today. I plan to pursue graduate school

to continue my literary studies and this experience will help me to prepare for that endeavor and gain a solid foundation in the areas in which I am most interested.

My qualifications for a Research Assistantship include: My completion of Critical Methods I and current enrollment in Critical Methods II, my completion of Dr. Freind's World Mythologies course, and my personal artistic and musical studies which guide my knowledge and observation of mythology's impact on art forms. I'm also highly organized and dedicated to my studies, and while I have no professional research experience, the opportunity to do a Research Assistantship would help me to become further disciplined in my studies and to grow as a scholar.

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Kerian Vannieuwenhove  
Application for R.Aship, Path 1

During my career as an English major at Rowan, I have been able to see my professors work to craft interesting syllabi and engaging lessons. In addition to being fascinated by whatever our class was discussing, I also found myself interested in finding out more about the *process* of creating, preparing for, and teaching a class. How does one teach literature that was written decades – sometimes centuries – ago and make it relevant to the lives of young people today? How does one use the material to educate young people on modern issues, in order to help shape critical thinkers?

These questions prompted me to approach Dr. Hammond, to ask if I could assist her in preparing her Gender, Sexuality and Literature class in the fall. I had already taken this course last year, with Dr. Petra Clark, but I was interested to see how Dr. Hammond would approach this class.

In addition to being interested in learning more about the “behind the scenes” process, I also find myself drawn to the subject matter of the class. As a gay man, I have found that much of the literary canon does not feature many characters who identify as I do. There are *hints* in Forster’s works and *theories* about some protagonists in Shakespeare’s plays, but nothing concrete. Assisting Dr. Hammond will allow me to learn more about this much-ignored aspect of literary studies. It will also allow me to gain a greater understanding of how one teaches about marginalized groups. Teaching about oppression and inequality seems more important than ever, especially in the study of literature, which has so long been dominated by the white, straight, male voice.

I also believe the opportunity to become an RA would bring me closer to my goal of going to graduate school. Ideally, I would pursue a Masters in Gender/Queer Studies. I am not entirely certain yet what my plans beyond this would be, but I would love to be able to educate others and help my fellow LGBTQ+ friends.

My qualifications for the role of RA include: good grades in all classes required for my major, as well as my love of class discussions. I am able to stay organized and the assignments I hand in are consistently of high quality. While I was in community college, I also volunteered at a community center where I helped native Spanish-speakers practice their English. Because I held this position, I have some experience leading discussions, asking questions, and creating engaging lessons. I am extremely grateful and excited to be able to work with Dr. Hammond in her Gender, Sexuality and Literature class this fall.