

Making Your Concentration Plan Matter: Literary Arts

Articulate your goals and plans

The college asks that all students in declaring a concentration write a narrative description of their goals and plans. Please take careful consideration of how you intend to make use of the concentration – whether, for instance, you want to place primary emphasis on one genre, or to create other points of focus; or whether you'd prefer to create a wide-ranging synthesis of ideas and traditions. Deciding what you want to accomplish is a vital step in determining how you will complete the concentration.

Review the work you have completed to date to help you formulate your plan for future semesters.

Use the program worksheet to verify what courses have been completed and what requirements these courses meet. This will help you to decide how best to use your remaining requirements so as to best meet your goals for your concentration.

Here is a check-list to help you think through your course of study:

- Does the list of courses you plan to take (and have taken) meet the expectations of the concentration?
- How seriously have you thought through your goals and plans?
- If you are planning to have two (or more) concentrations (for instance, in English or Comp. Lit), only two courses may count toward both concentrations; and that many only if the other department also will allow for double-counting — check with the other department to verify their rules on this. The stricter limit will hold.
- Verify that at least four courses are on the 100-level.
- Verify that within the workshop area, at least two genres (or areas) are covered; and that at least two workshops (but preferably 3 or 4) were/will be taken from among the Literary Arts offerings.
- Verify that no more than four total concentration courses were taken at another institution.
- Take this seriously. Please consider the courses carefully to ensure that they meet the Literary Arts requirements as well as your own goals for your intellectual/artistic pursuits within your college experience.

Getting into four workshops

Depending upon when you start the concentration, making sure that you can complete four workshops (and no more than one a semester) may require a little bit of planning on your part. The workshops have limited enrollments and are open to all students; indeed, concentrators are not guaranteed spots in the workshops. Here's our recommendation as to how to proceed: during the pre-registration period, select an introductory workshop in a genre you have yet to take at the college level. As these courses are filled on a first-come, first-permitted basis, you can guarantee yourself a seat in three workshops (one each in fiction, playwriting and poetry) just by completing the registration process at the appropriate time. With the assurance of having a spot in an introductory workshop, you may still decide to submit writing samples to the intermediate, advanced and special topics workshops when that process happens at the beginning of the semester (and, if accepted, you may end up dropping the introductory section). You'll also increase your chances of getting into a workshop if you submit writing samples to as many intermediate, advanced and special topics sections as you can attend – pinning all your hopes on one section may well lead to disappointment, and perhaps frustration. Also – sometimes the somewhat off-beat special topics workshop may have fewer aspirants than a standard workshop, so your chances of getting in are somewhat better.

After Brown

Very few poets, fiction writers, playwrights or electronic writers pay the bills based on royalties. Publishers often need capable translators, but breaking into the field is not always easy. Similarly, a handful of screenwriters earn a pretty good living, but many others struggle to see their work ever get “the green light.” We hope that you intend to persist with the writing because it matters as art, not necessarily because you can expect fame and fortune.

What we're suggesting is that you should probably think a little bit about the practical issues of what it will take to make ends meet, and assume that you'll rely on something other than your creative writing in order to pay the bills. You need not fashion a “professional track” as part of your time at Brown, but if you have an interest in internal medicine, in teaching, in accountancy, in journalism, or in an area of the computer sciences, just to name a few, you'll be doing yourself a favor if you keep those options alive based on the non-concentration courses you select.

If you plan to go to graduate school in a field other than literary arts/writing, you should likely seek secondary advice from a Brown faculty member in the department in which you plan to do further study, who can talk about what courses you should take to increase the likelihood of getting into a graduate or professional-degree program.