

## WHY ENGLISH AT VALPO?

*What follows is only some of what makes us many students' departmental home. Browse our site to find out still more.*

Wordfest. Our annual visiting writers series draws poets, fiction writers, literary critics, nonfiction writers, and playwrights to offer presentations of their work and meet with students. Over the years, those writers have included Nobel Prize winner Derek Walcott, former Poet Laureate of the United States Mark Strand, and various authors who have been recipients of the Pulitzer Prize, the National Book Award, the National Book Critics Circle Award, or other distinguished honors including Tim O'Brien, John Balaban, James Welch, and Nikki Giovanni. See the following link for a [partial list of Wordfest speakers](#). Learned faculty committed to teaching. Our faculty members are well grounded in their fields, having published books and critically acclaimed articles and essays. Yet we are committed first and foremost to teaching. Our class sizes tend to be small and discussion-based, and several of our faculty members have received or been nominated for competitive teaching awards. In addition, the [Lilly Fellows Program](#) regularly enriches the department with competitive visiting professors at the start of their careers. Breadth of course offerings. Our course offerings are rich in classes traditional to the English major, for example, survey courses in American literature and courses in Shakespeare, the novel, and the history of the English language. Yet our offerings are rich as well in less traditional or in emerging fields, for example the New Literacies, Cultures, and Technologies of Writing course, in which students typically have edited digital video or audio podcasts, the writing course in creative nonfiction, courses in children's literature, and senior seminars in Canadian fiction and literature of the Vietnam war. The Methods of Literary Criticism and Research course introduces majors, as well, to the variety of critical approaches they will encounter in their



studies.

Communities of scholars and writers. The written word is alive and well on our campus, from the well attended Wordfest series and the award-winning student literary magazine *The Lighter* to our spring Cabaret, in which writers, artists, and musicians have shared their work in creative ways. Also lively have been student discussions on contemporary issues on Professor Buinicki's front porch, the Books and Coffee series of book reviews, which typically draws over 100 members of the Valparaiso community, and events organized by the English Honor Society, Sigma Tau Delta, including lecture and film series, and in-services on applying to graduate school and preparing for the

job market. In recent years, the Department of English has sponsored interested majors as guests at the midwest Modern Language Association convention, the Sigma Tau Delta national convention, and the Festival of Faith and Learning writers series at Calvin College. Classes taught by our writer-in-residence, Walt Wangerin, Jr. (pictured, left, at Wordfest) have also been notable for forming their own writing circles after classes have ended. Allied and study abroad programs. At 33 credits, our major is sized to be comprehensive and yet allow, with careful planning, for pairing with a second major or a [study abroad program](#), such as VU's popular semesters in Cambridge, England, Reutlingen, Germany, Puebla, Mexico, and Hangzhou, China. Plus, inside or outside of a major, English courses complement nicely the Humanities curriculum in Christ College and take important places in the American Studies Major, and the minors in Environmental Studies, Ethnic Studies, Film Studies, Gender Studies, and the Liberal Arts/Business Minor. For the love of teaching. Many of our undergraduate majors go on to be inspiring secondary and middle school teachers. In order for future teachers to fit in the education courses, hours in the classroom, and student teaching necessary for state licensure, the English and Education departments have created a course of study particularly for future teachers (The Teaching Major and Minor), which they follow closely with their academic advisors in both departments. Several graduates in English have also completed [VU's LEAPS program](#), which offers a master's degree and experience in parochial schools toward initial licensure. Finally, VU's growing [M.A. in English Studies and Communication](#) attracts a dynamic mixture of international and domestic students, many of whom are or are preparing to be teachers certified in teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL). For the drama of it. VU's program in English nicely complements the course offerings in the Department of Theatre and [well-crafted productions on VU's mainstage](#). In addition, Valparaiso is only 50 miles away from Chicago, which is home to such world-renowned theatrical venues as the Steppenwolf, the Goodman, and Chicago Shakespeare Theatre on Navy Pier, in addition to many, many more. Just ask the Department of English's Arvid Sponberg, the inaugural Kapfer Faculty Research professor, who has studied Chicago's vibrant theatre history and documented some of it in the web site for the [Chicago Theatre History Project](#).

For the love of literature. We in the Department of English believe in the centrality of the word. That is, we believe that the study of language and literature helps people understand the relation of art to life and what makes life important as well as illuminating the world in which we live. Literature, like other creative and expressive arts, enriches as it offers insight into processes of creative thinking and feeling. Moreover, its study and creation nurtures an ability to communicate that transcends boundaries dividing the human family.

For the practicality of our major. Yes, practicality. The critical insight, close reading, and precise communication that our program fosters results in excellence not only for future teachers but also for writers and communicators of all stripes in a broad range of professions.