

What Can You Do With an English Major?

The short answer is: anything you want. All English students cultivate skills that are highly prized by employers. These are perhaps most obviously communications skills: writing, public speaking, social media management. They also include research, textual and visual analysis, collaboration, and critical and creative thinking. In fields like Digital Humanities, English students also learn data analysis and computer programming. English majors have a record of success in fields like teaching, publishing, journalism, advertising, and public relations. They also have a record of success in the arts and the creative industries. The study of literature is also a traditional basis – going back centuries – for those who plan to pursue a law degree: the skills of textual analysis and both written and spoken argumentation are essential to the practice of the law. English may be the perfect Pre-Med major. Whatever the career that interests you, you will graduate from our program with a series of vital skills and with the ability to clearly demonstrate to prospective employers that you have those skills.

The English major offers many different kinds of specializations, with planned modules in subjects such as “Film and Screen Studies”; “Literature, Culture, and the Environment”; “Race, Ethnicity, and Migration”; “STEM and English”; and more. Each of these provides further openings into careers in a variety of fields. The range of careers you pursue with your English degree is not limited to fields like teaching, publishing, or law. One of the greatest benefits of an English degree is that it prepares you for a wide variety of careers: the skills we teach are transferable to a series of different jobs; that transferability can even be demonstrated quantitatively. English majors are not locked into only one possible career trajectory. This is itself a truly vital advantage in an uncertain economic world. A degree that only prepares you for one kind of job not only narrows your options at the outset, it also means that any change of your plans will entail re-training. Broad-based skills are a crucial safety net, providing you with a series of options and possibilities, no matter what happens down the road.

The job market for English majors after graduation is robust, as recent articles from [The Chronicle of Higher Education](#), the [Washington Post](#), the [Harvard Business Review](#), [The New York Times](#), and [U.S. News & World Report](#).

Stony Brook English majors get great jobs. Here’s what some recent graduates have to say about their English major and how it has contributed to their careers.

Cassandra Scanlon, B.A. 2017

Position: Program Coordinator, Office of New Student Programs, Rutgers University, Camden

There is no clear trajectory because the skills you learn with an English education are too far-reaching. You are brave for choosing your passion ... You are well spoken because you know the weight of words, but even more you know what it means to listen. You can write and communicate messages and ideas concisely, a skill you will not fully understand you have until you go out into the world and work with others who did not have these abilities fostered or encouraged. You know constructive criticism, how to give it and receive it. You understand that people are not flat surfaces, there is depth to every human being and every situation. You are ... a capital communicator, a team player, a commander of constructive criticism, a ruler of researching, and someone with the distinct gift of empathy long before you ever cross a stage to accept a piece of paper that concludes your education.

Lily Hsu, B.A. 2013

Position: Law Clerk, Office of General Counsel of the U.S. House of Representatives

My time at Stony Brook and as an English major has been helpful to me in finding jobs because they taught me how to think critically. My path has been a bit winding, but the writing and reasoning skills I learned during as an undergraduate helped me immensely as I navigated through a variety of educational and job experiences. I think being an English major is a bit of a tradeoff. You get these wonderful versatile skills but may not feel like you are trained for a specific career right out of undergrad (unless you want to go into academia or a similar pursuit). However, you are well suited for a variety of jobs, which you will learn how to do once you start. For me, I have used the skills I have learned as an English major in graduate school, as a healthcare provider, and now in the legal field as a law clerk.”

Yaseen Eldik, B.A. 2012

Position: Associate Director of Inclusion at Yale University

Stony Brook and the English department got me well prepared for my first job and all that it lead to afterwards ... Take advantage of the Humanities department in general and practice your reading and writing religiously. It goes hand in hand with effective communication.

Meghan Harlow, B.A. 2011

Position: editor, Edible Long Island and Edible East End

Studying English at Stony Brook was the second best decision I ever made ... Through studying English at Stony Brook, I also learned how to write and otherwise communicate clearly, which is a skill I use every single day. Almost more importantly, though, studying English taught me so much about what it means to be human, and I would argue that the empathy that stems from that knowledge is the greatest skill anyone can own. So, yes, I see the ability to connect things as a limitless skill—whether the connection in question is happening on the pages of a book, in a paper, or in life. And, in both my life and work, I try to use this skill daily.

Kara Thomas, B.A. 2011

Position: author, YA novels

I had professors in the English department that demanded a lot from my work, and I know I became a better writer because of them. The English department is a very supportive place, and even though I didn't pursue teaching after graduation, Professor Lindblom and Professor Dunn (of the education program) stayed in touch and connected me with opportunities that got my books into the hands of young readers.

Michael Goldense, B.A. 2007

Position: manager of organizational development

I have become the go-to person on my team for drafting communications and have been complimented on my ability to write and speak eloquently. This comes directly from the skills I learned within the program ... I am frequently communicating within my professional careers: emails, conference calls, presenting topics at meetings, facilitating workshops, drafting internal marketing message, etc. My capability to communicate well in any form can be directly tied to what I learned in SBU's English Program ... [N]o matter what it is you do, learning how to write well and express yourself eloquently will give you an edge as you look to advance your career.