LITERATURE

Undergraduate Study

The Literature curriculum is arranged in four graduated categories:

- **Introductory** subjects (21L.000[J] to 21L.024) focus on major literary texts grouped in broad historical and generic sequences; all introductory subjects carry HASS and Communication-Intensive credit.
- **Samplings** (21L.310[J] to 21L.338, 21L.345 to 21L.355) are 6-unit subjects that provide both an alternative route into literary and filmic study and a less intensive means for students to sustain a commitment to reading and textual interpretation. Their focus is on critical exploration, comprehension, and group discussion, with less sustained attention to analytic writing skills. Students can combine most 6-unit Samplings subjects to count as a HASS subject in the Humanities category and the equivalent of a subject in the Intermediate tier. However, no more than four 6-unit subjects may be combined in this manner. See the HASS Requirement website for information about samplings (https://registrar.mit.edu/registration-academics/academic-requirements/hass-requirement) or contact Literature Headquarters (lit@mit.edu) for details.
- **Intermediate** subjects (21L.400 to 21L.639[J]) explore literary and visual forms as well as critical analysis in greater depth. Some subjects center on historical periods, literary themes, or genres; others focus on media studies, comparative cultural studies, or national literatures.
- **Seminar** subjects (21L.640 to 21L.715) are usually restricted to students who have taken at least two previous subjects in Literature and encourage a greater degree of independent work, such as oral reports and other special projects. Enrollment in seminars is strictly limited to a maximum of 12 students.

The Literature Section also offers a few subjects in languages other than English (21L.607 to 21L.640[J]) for students with adequate preparation. If appropriate, they may count toward the Literature major and minor requirements after consultation with the major/minor advisor.

In addition, the Literature Section often offers 6-unit special subjects for credit during IAP. Students may also choose to take special subjects (21L.588 to 21L.597) and independent study or research supervised by a faculty member (21L.900 and 21L.901) during the fall and spring terms.

Concentrations in Literature are available in particular genres (e.g., poetry, drama, fiction) and in historical periods (e.g., ancient studies, 19th-century literature, modern and contemporary literature), as well as in media and film studies, world literatures and cultures, popular culture, minority and ethnic studies, literary theory, and a range of national literatures.

Bachelor of Science in Literature (Course 21L)

The program in Literature leading to the Bachelor of Science in Literature (http://catalog.mit.edu/degree-chart/literature-course-21l) is equivalent to the curricula in English (or literary studies) at major liberal arts institutions. The Literature curriculum is notable also for its integration of materials drawn from film and media, popular culture, and minority and ethnic cultures.

Majors are required to take a minimum of 10 subjects, three of which must be seminars and no more than three of which may be introductory subjects. Students develop an appropriate course of study in consultation with a faculty advisor; majors choose from one of two areas in organizing four of their restricted electives (three for joint majors): historical periods or thematic complexes.

Joint Degree Programs

Joint degree programs are offered in Literature in combination with a field in engineering or science (21E, 21S). See the joint degree programs (http://catalog.mit.edu/schools/humanities-arts-social-sciences/humanities/#undergraduate) listed under Humanities.

Minor in Literature

The minor aims to lay a foundation for advanced study and to enhance a student’s appreciation of major narrative, poetic, and dramatic texts in relation to the cultures that produced them. Students may opt either to pursue a minor centered on literary texts or one focused on film.

Literature Focus

A minor centered on literary texts consists of six subjects arranged into three levels of study as described below; at least two subjects (chosen in consultation with the minor advisor) must focus primarily on material prior to 1900.

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**Tier II: Intermediate Level**

Select two or three subjects from the following:  
21L.011 Introduction to Film Studies
21L.012 Forms of Western Narrative
21L.013 The Supernatural in Music, Literature and Culture
21L.014 Introduction to Ancient and Medieval Studies
21L.015 Children’s Literature
21L.017 The Art of the Probable
21L.018 Introduction to English Literature
21L.019 Introduction to European and Latin American Fiction
21L.020 Globalization: The Good, the Bad and the In-Between
21L.021 Comedy
21L.022 Darwin and Design
21L.023 Folk Music of the British Isles and North America

**Tier III: Seminar Level**

Select at least two of the following:  
21L.640 The New Spain: 1977-Present
21L.701 Literary Methods
21L.702 Studies in Fiction
21L.703 Studies in Drama
21L.704 Studies in Poetry
21L.705 Major Authors
21L.706 Studies in Film
21L.707 Problems in Cultural Interpretation
21L.709 Studies in Literary History
21L.715 Media in Cultural Context

Total Units 66-72

*In most cases, two 6-unit Samplings subjects ([https://lit.mit.edu/curriculum/samplings](https://lit.mit.edu/curriculum/samplings)), or two 6-unit Literature subjects taught in Greek or Latin ([https://lit.mit.edu/curriculum/subjects-taught-in-a-foreign-language](https://lit.mit.edu/curriculum/subjects-taught-in-a-foreign-language)), may be combined to substitute for an intermediate-level subject. In addition, 6-unit Greek or Latin Reading subjects may be repeated once to substitute for an intermediate-level subject.*

**Film Focus**

A film-centered minor in Literature consists of three required subjects arranged into three levels of study, and three restricted electives.

**Tier I: Introductory Level**
21L.011 Introduction to Film Studies 12

**Tier II: Intermediate Level**

Select one of the following:  
21L.431 Shakespeare on Film and Media
21L.433 Film Styles and Genres
21L.435 Literature and Film

**Tier III: Seminar Level**
21L.706 Studies in Film 12

**Restricted Electives**

In consultation with the minor advisor, select three subjects from the Literature curriculum, including at least one complementary subject that does not focus on film but ties into the student’s interests with regard to film.  

Total Units 63-72
At most, two subjects in which film analysis is the primary focus may be taken in a section outside of Literature or transferred in from a program outside MIT.

Inquiries
For further information on subjects and programs, contact Literature Headquarters (lit@mit.edu), Room 14N-407, 617-253-3581.