Undergraduate Study

The Literature curriculum is arranged in four graduated categories:

- **Introductory subjects** (21L.000 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 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) 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) 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/degreeCharts/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/#undergraduatetext) 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.

### Tier I: Introductory Level

Select at least one and no more than two subjects from the following:

| 21L.000 | Writing About Literature |
| 21L.001 | Foundations of Western Literature: Homer to Dante |
| 21L.002 | Foundations of Western Literature: From Shakespeare to the Present |
| 21L.003 | Reading Fiction |
| 21L.004 | Reading Poetry |
| 21L.005 | Introduction to Drama |
| 21L.006 | American Literature |
| 21L.007 | World Literatures |
| 21L.008 | Black Matters: Introduction to Black Studies |
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.024 Literature and Existentialism
- 21L.025 A History of the Book from Papyrus to Pixel
- 21L.040 Foundations of East Asian Literature and Culture: From Confucius to the Beats

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

1 In most cases, two 6-unit Samplings subjects (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), 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

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

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

\(^2\) 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.