English and Culture Studies

As more and more priests and religious in the United States are foreign-born, and as English functions as a common language for international communication, there is a growing need for English instruction. Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology is meeting this growing need through its unique English and Culture Studies (ECS) Program.

Sacred Heart's program not only helps students become proficient in English, it also familiarizes them with American customs and culture. This program attracts people from many different backgrounds and includes seminarians, priests, brothers, sisters, and lay ministers. They seek to achieve English proficiency for advanced studies at universities, priestly formation in the seminary, pastoral work, professional advancement, or personal improvement.

Admission and Application Procedure

No prior knowledge of English is necessary for enrollment. Applicants must:

- Complete the online application form. There may be additional requirements if seeking housing and/or financial aid.
- Secure the necessary forms for non-residency status in the United States. Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology can issue I-20s upon request.
- Take a preliminary assessment for placement into appropriate levels (beginning, intermediate, advanced) of reading, writing, grammar, and communication classes. Placements are not always at the same level for each area (e.g., a student may be intermediate for reading, but a beginner for writing).

Sessions

The English and Culture Studies Program (ECS) offers several time frame options for enrollment. These sessions can be combined for longer stays. In certain cases, enrollment dates can be adjusted to allow for specialized study programs that fit the needs of the student.

Option 1: Fall and Spring

The fall and spring semesters parallel the seminary's academic calendar. During these sessions, classes are held four days per week. Wednesdays are dedicated to Mass, spiritual/formational activities, and outside activities.

Option 2: Summer Session

For students learning the English language, courses in reading, writing, grammar, and oral communication on three levels (beginner, intermediate, advanced) are offered.

This is typically the program's busiest time of year, with the largest enrollment and the widest variety of countries represented. Some students extend their stay and continue studies during the fall semester.

See the calendar on page 59 for dates.

English Courses

English Placement Testing

The Michigan EPT is administered to all students prior to the start of classes. Students are then placed into course levels according to their proficiency in each of the four skill areas: reading, writing, grammar, and oral communication (listening/speaking).

Core Courses

A. English Beginner (100 Level)
For students learning the English language for the first time or with minimal proficiency, beginner courses are provided in reading, writing, grammar, and oral communication.

B. English Intermediate (200 Level)
For students who are at an intermediate level of English, intermediate courses are provided in reading, writing, grammar, and oral communication.

C. English Advanced (300 Level)
For students who are at an advanced level of English, advanced courses are provided in reading, writing, grammar, and oral communication.

ECS Graduate Program Preparation Courses

Sacred Heart offers English courses for students preparing for a graduate program in Theology (Master of Divinity, Master of Arts, etc.).

D. Seminary Bridge Program (300 Level) with Intensive Reading & Writing
Offered in a one-on-one environment with a dedicated faculty member, the Bridge Seminar is intended as a preparatory course prior to beginning seminary studies, and introduces philosophical/theological reading with a focus on St. Augustine's Confessions, as well as academic writing through the use of critical essays. A critical essay and public presentation are part of the capstone project completed by each student. Additionally, for students who need resources after beginning their graduate degree program, a Bridge Tutorial is also available.

E. Clear Pronunciation (400 Level) 100% online or in person
For students who are at an advanced level of English, an Accent Modification course is provided. Participants learn proven pronunciation skills to help them become clearly understood. At the start of the course, the instructors will create a recording and phonetic transcription of the student's individual accent. Accent Modification lessons are then tailored to each individual's unique needs. A typical student experiences up to 70% reduction in mispronounced phonemes and has lifetime access to online resources for continuing improvement after the course is finished.

F. Book Talks (400 Level)
This course focuses on reading selected short stories of Flannery O'Connor, a Catholic Southern author, along with a selection of other short stories and supplementary literary criticism. Development of deep reading skills and vocabulary development as well as speaking fluency are the primary aims of this course. Each class will have an assigned story or stories and often a related critical essay to read. Students are expected to devote significant outside class time to reading and looking up each vocabulary word in preparation for class. A short writing assignment may occasionally be given.

See ECS course descriptions beginning on page 82. See Financial Information beginning on page 86.

Components

Spiritual Life and Formational Opportunities

ECS students participate in Sacred Heart's spiritual life and formational opportunities:

- Daily Mass and Adoration, with ECS students fulfilling many roles during Mass, depending on the level of English proficiency and clerical status
- Confessions in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese

Seminarians enrolled in the ECS program are incorporated into the human and spiritual formation program of the seminary. In addition to participating fully in the sacramental and prayer life of the seminary, ECS seminarians meet with bilingual formation advisors and spiritual directors, as well as participate in daily Mass, Liturgy of the Hours, Days of Recollection, and retreats.

Cultural Orientation

In addition to becoming familiar with the Roman Catholic Church in the United States, ECS students develop an awareness of American social customs. Learning the culture and the language helps students understand American society, and it prepares them to move into parish settings to minister effectively. Some of the opportunities are:

- Regular field trips that enable students to experience typical aspects of Catholic and public life in America (e.g., State Fair, church festivals, historic sites, pilgrimage shrines)
- Ministerial celebration of the sacraments in English (if the ECS student is an ordained priest) with the Priests of the Sacred Heart community
- Integration into the daily seminary activities alongside native English-speakers, such as daily Mass, prayer, dining room conversation, social interactions, sports, and extra-curricular activities

Pastoral Communications Workshop

A special communication workshop taught by Sacred Heart's Director of Homiletics, Deacon Steve Kramer, provides valuable knowledge and insights to help improve a priest's ability to deliver the Gospel and interact with parishioners effectively. Topics include the reading of Scripture and prayer, verbal and non-verbal communication, jargon and idioms, pronunciation, and voice projection. The workshop provides priests the opportunity for in-class practice with feedback from the instructor.

Intercultural Ministry

Special modules, such as Women in Ministry, feature speakers with expertise in each area. Priests in the ECS program learn what diverse parishes look like in the United States (groups, languages, etc.), how to create outreach as a priest, what the roles of women are in parishes (and administration), and the corresponding expectations of priests serving in the U.S.

Course Listings

Core Courses

The particular courses taught each semester are based on student needs at the time.

Reading

Course number, credits, and name

ECSR 100	3	Beginning Reading
ECSR 200	3	Intermediate Reading
ECSR 300	3	Advanced Reading

Writing

Course number, credits, and name

ECSW 100	3	Beginning Writing
ECSW 200	3	Intermediate Writing
ECSW 300	3	Advanced Writing

Grammar

Course number, credits, and name

ECSG 100	3	Beginning Grammar
ECSG 200	3	Intermediate Grammar
ECSG 300	3	Advanced Grammar

Listening/Speaking

Course number, credits, and name

ECSC 100	3	Beginning Oral Communication
ECSC 200	3	Intermediate Oral Communication
ECSC 300	3	Advanced Oral Communication

ECS Graduate Program Preparation Courses

Seminary Bridge Program

Course number, credits, and name

BR 300	3	Bridge Seminar

Clear Pronunciation

Course number, credits, and name

ECSA 400	2	Accent Modification 100% online or in person

Book Talks

Course number, credits, and name

ECSR410	2	Book Talks