Instructions for MATE Capstone Paper
Established in 2012

For the graduating essay, MA candidates must write a scholarly paper in an area of the discipline in which they have taken a course in the program. The paper must be 5000-6000 words in length, and consist of original research (from primary literary sources, archival research, and/or critical secondary sources). The process for this graduating essay usually takes the form of contacting a faculty member with whom the student has studied, in the student’s penultimate semester (usually, the fall semester before spring graduation).

The paper should draw on a course the student has taken in MATE in order that it adhere to disciplinary standards for the study of English literature; moreover, the paper should aspire to a standard that would be acceptable for submission to a scholarly journal. The student and faculty member meet to discuss the scope of the paper and to plan a program of meetings and revisions. A second faculty member (the “second reader”) will also advise on the paper, typically in the spring semester. Graduating essays must be approved by both readers by the end of that semester. Students then must prepare a conference-level presentation (15-20 minutes), based on the paper, for the MATE symposium. These proceedings are usually held at the end of April, and are attended by colleagues and family/friends as well as the students’ faculty advisors. Both secondary readers and first readers examine the students on their presentation, research, and scope of inquiry.