Sample Plan for the Major

[Note: In order to declare the English major, you need to write out a document like this one, laying out what you know at this point about your interest in the major, any special areas or approaches you think you’d like to pursue, and what you’d like to get out of the major. We don’t expect you to know everything yet, but we’d like to hear what you’re thinking, even if you change your plan later. Print your plan out and take it to your advisor, who needs to see it before he or she can sign your declaration of major form.]

In high school English classes, early twentieth century American literature jumped out at me more than other literatures did. After enjoying Hawthorne and Melville a great deal, I read and took a particular interest in Hemingway, Steinbeck, and Faulkner. Following this interest, I took American Literature at the Turn into the Twentieth Century my first semester at Oberlin. The class’s emphasis on historical contexts was new to me; it struck me as a sort of study I would like to deepen in the future. I also took a class in British Restoration Literature--this is a period whose literature I knew nothing about.

I would like, in future semesters, to go back farther in British literature and study Shakespeare. Though I do not see this becoming my focus within the English major, it is a background I am eager to get into. Another secondary intention is to study Romantic literature. Japanese literature also interests me; I would like to supplement English department courses with one on Japanese literature in translation. This will hopefully tie into my continuing study of the Japanese language and lead to work in translation.

Also following my interest in creative writing is my wish to study poetry, especially modern poetry. I am familiar with some contemporary poets but have not closely read any modernists; I hope to connect this to my original and strongest interest, the one in American literature. I will make an effort to concentrate my studies on literature within a historical context. The history department courses I plan on taking will likely help this along. I imagine that during the next two years some particular authors and themes will especially excite me, and these will lead to a senior thesis idea. Some possibilities I have in mind now, that may change, are expatriate writing communities and their relationship to war (Hemingway, Stein, Fitzgerald in Paris after WWI), Faulkner’s handling of the South’s reaction to war, and the New York School of poets after WWII.

I would like to take these or similar courses:

Romantics and Their World (227)
History and Structure of the English Language (239)
Shakespearean Comedy (290)
Modern Drama: Ibsen to Pirandello (348)
Six Poets: 1855-1955 (323)
Contemporary Literary Theory (372)
Modernist Chicago (330)
Senior Seminar: Poetics (English 437)
Modern Japanese Literature in Translation (JAPN 118)