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# Comparative History

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See History.

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# Comparative Literature

Courses of Study:  
Minor  
Major (B.A.)

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## Objectives

In comparative literature we explore literatures and cultures within and across national boundaries. We extend our study of “texts” beyond traditional literary genres to include visual arts and media, social discourses and practices, and other forms of cultural expression. These forms pre-exist us—we are born into a certain culture, which consists of a set of discourses and practices—and can be changed or modified by us. Our study of cultural differences, diversities, and similarities, today and in the past, will promote an understanding of our rapidly changing globe; it will also develop the student’s critical perspective on his or her own culture.

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## How to Become a Major or Minor

All students are welcome to enroll in any course in the program, unless prerequisites are stipulated. Students interested in learning more about the comparative literature major or minor are encouraged to speak with the undergraduate advising head for comparative literature. Keep in mind that three literature courses must be taken in a language other than English. Students are strongly encouraged to spend at least one semester abroad, preferably in a country whose primary language is not English.

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## Core Faculty

### Jane Hale, Chair and Undergraduate Advising Head

(Romance and Comparative Literature)

### Roxanne Dávila

(Romance and Comparative Literature)

### Dian Fox

(Romance and Comparative Literature)

### Erica Harth

(Romance and Comparative Literature)

### Edward Kaplan

(Romance and Comparative Literature)

### Susan Lanser

(English and American Literature)

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## Affiliate Faculty

### Mary Campbell

(English and American Literature)

### Jonathan Decter

(Near Eastern and Judaic Studies)

### Stephen Dowden

(German, Russian, and Asian Languages and Literature)

### Patricia Johnston

(Classical Studies)

### Thomas A. King

(English and American Literature)

### Robin Feuer Miller

(German, Russian, and Asian Languages and Literature)

## Requirements for the Major

The major in comparative literature requires nine courses, distributed as follows:

1. ECS 100a or ECS 100b should be taken as early as possible in the student's academic career.
2. Three upper-level literature courses (numbered 110 and above) taught in a language other than English. The three courses may be drawn from more than one language tradition.
3. Two upper-level COML courses and two courses drawn from a list of approved COML and cross-listed electives. Courses not listed may count toward the major if approved by the undergraduate advising head.
4. COML 97 (Senior Essay). All majors are required to enroll in and complete one of the following options in the senior year: COML 97a or 97b (Senior Essay), or COML 99d (Senior Thesis), a full-year course. Students who wish to be considered for departmental honors must elect the thesis option. Honors will be awarded on the basis of cumulative excellence in all courses taken in the major, including the senior thesis. Departmental honors will be awarded on the basis described above. [May be substituted by SPAN 198a Seminar in Literary and Cultural Studies]

Not more than four courses may double count towards both the COML major and another major or minor.

## Requirements for the Minor

The minor in comparative literature requires five courses, distributed as follows:

1. ECS 100a or ECS 100b should be taken as early as possible in the student's academic career.
2. Four electives, among them one from COML, and one from COML or cross-listed courses. The electives must include two upper-level literature courses, each taught in a language other than English. All electives will be selected in consultation with the undergraduate advising head.

## Courses of Instruction

### (1-99) Primarily for Undergraduate Students

**COML 97a Senior Essay**  
Usually offered every year.  
Staff

**COML 97b Senior Essay**  
Usually offered every year.  
Staff

**COML 98a Independent Study**  
*May be taken only by majors with the written permission of the advising head and the chair of the department.*  
Readings and reports under faculty supervision. Offered as needed.  
Staff

**COML 98b Independent Study**  
*May be taken only by majors with the written permission of the advising head and the chair of the department.*  
Reading and reports under faculty supervision. Offered as needed.  
Staff

**COML 99d Senior Thesis**  
*May be taken only with the permission of the advising head.*  
This is a full-year course that must be taken by all senior majors in comparative literature who wish to undertake honors work. Usually offered every year.  
Staff

### (100-199) For Both Undergraduate and Graduate Students

**COML 102a Love in the Middle Ages**  
[ hum ]  
A study of the conventions of courtly love and other forms of love, sacred and erotic, in medieval literature. Readings include Dante's *Vita Nuova*, Boccaccio's *Decameron*, Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and Chretien's *Yvain*. Usually offered every second year.  
Mr. Lansing

**COML 103b Madness and Folly in Renaissance Literature**  
[ hum ]  
A study of the theme of madness and folly as exemplified by the major writers of the Renaissance, including Erasmus, Rabelais, Montaigne, Boccaccio, Ariosto, Shakespeare, Petrarch, and Cervantes. Usually offered every second year.  
Mr. Lansing

**COML 111b Creating the Transnational Caribbean: Language, Gender, Race**  
[ nw hum ]  
A comparative study of Franco, Anglo, and Spanish Caribbean culture to explore ways in which Caribbean writers, artists, and filmmakers of different nationalities and periods have articulated transnational tensions with language, gender, race, and identity. Readings are in English, including translations from French and Spanish, and students with the relevant expertise will be encouraged to read in the original language. Usually offered every fourth year.  
Ms. Perez and Ms. Smith

**COML 122b Writing Home and Abroad: Literature by Women of Color**  
[ nw hum ]  
Examines literature (prose, poetry, and memoirs) written by women of color across a wide spectrum of geographical and cultural sites. Literature written within the confines of the "home country" in the vernacular, as well as in English in immigrant locales, is read. The intersections of race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, and class as contained by the larger institutions of government, religion, nationalism, and sectarian politics are examined.  
Ms. Singh

**COML 130a Poetic Voices of Protest**  
[ hum ]  
Poets are citizens, lovers, artists. Class discusses major poems by Whitman, Baudelaire, Rilke, Mallarme, T.S. Eliot, Anna Akhmatova celebrating American nationhood, protesting world war, or Soviet dictatorship. Topics include myth, self-assertion, love and intimacy, decadence, ethics, history, a mother's voice. Usually offered every third year.  
Mr. Kaplan

**COML 144b The Outsider as Artist and Lover**  
[ hum ]  
Baudelaire, Kierkegaard, and Kafka exemplify the struggle to achieve meaning through literature, but they believed that art or God required them to renounce love and marriage. Buber's analysis of "dialogue" will clarify the interrelation of creativity, faith, and human intimacy in their short stories, prose poems, parables, and philosophical and autobiographical writings. Usually offered every third year.  
Mr. Kaplan

**COML 160b Fiction into Film**

[ hum ]

Examines the construction of narrative and meaning in literature and film. Class discussions of texts and film clips will focus on the interplay between visual and verbal images and imaginings in both media. Examples of works to be examined: Vladimir Nabokov, *The Defense*; Marleen Gorris, *The Luzhin Defense* (film); Jane Austen, *Emma* (novel and film). Usually offered every third year.  
Staff

**COML 165a Reading, Writing, and Teaching across Cultures**

[ wi hum ]

Contemporary literary representations of literacy, schooling, and language from a cross-cultural perspective. Students also analyze their own educational trajectories and experiences with writing and reading. Usually offered every year.  
Ms. Hale

**COML 170a Working across Cultures**

[ hum ]

Gives students a conceptual framework with which to understand the ways in which political, ethical, and cultural differences encountered when working with groups from other cultures are narrated and understood. Intended as a seminar for students who are interested in narratives involving the negotiation of cultural and linguistic differences and for those who are currently involved in cross-cultural internship or who are interested in working with groups from other cultures sometime in the future. Usually offered every third year.  
Ms. Ratner

**COML 179a Life Stories, Spiritual and Profane**

[ hum ]

Examines modern life stories (such as biographies, autobiographies, journals, fiction) concerning personal identity in relation to the search for God, mysticism and anguish, conversion, moral action, and intimate love. Augustine's *Confessions* and Teresa of Avila's *Life* provide models. Usually offered every third year.  
Mr. Kaplan

**COML 180a The Theater of the Absurd**

[ hum ]

A study of the form and content of the theater of the absurd, in Europe and the United States, its antecedents, the theatrical tradition against which this new esthetic was born, and especially reading and presentations of the plays identified as "absurdist" drama. Class consists of lectures, discussions, in-class presentations of scenes, and frequent papers. Usually offered every third year.  
Ms. Hale

**COML 185a Dickens and Dostoevsky**

[ hum ]

Considers such issues as narrative, literary realism, and the manipulation of the grotesque and the sublime in representative works of Dickens and Dostoevsky. Because Dostoevsky was an avid reader of Dickens, class addresses questions of influence, particularly with regard to their shared thematic interests. Usually offered every second year.  
Ms. Miller

**Cross-Listed Courses****AAAS 133b**

The Literature of the Caribbean

**AAAS 134b**

Novel and Film of the African Diaspora

**AAAS 145b**

What is Race?

**ANTH 105a**

Myth and Ritual

**CLAS 170a**

Classical Mythology

**EAS 175a**

Masterpieces of Chinese Literature

**ECS 100a**

European Cultural Studies Proseminar: Modernism

**ECS 100b**

European Cultural Studies Proseminar: Making of European Modernity

**ENG 17b**

African Novel

**ENG 68b**Gods, Transformation, and Rape: The Representation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in Renaissance Literature**ENG 77b**

Literatures of Global English

**ENG 107a**

Caribbean Women Writers

**ENG 111b**

Post-Colonial Theory

**ENG 114b**

Gender and the Rise of the Novel in England and France

**ENG 121a**

Sex and Culture

**ENG 122a**

The Medieval World

**ENG 127a**

The Novel in India

**ENG 127b**

Migrating Bodies, Migrating Texts

**ENG 128a**

Alternative Worlds: Modern Utopian Texts

**ENG 144b**

The Body as Text

**ENG 147b**

South African Literature and Apartheid

**ENG 161a**

Introduction to Cultural Studies

**ENG 181a**

Making Sex, Performing Gender

**ENG 197b**

Testimony, Law, Literature

**FA 20b**

Introduction to Visual Culture

**FA 40b**

The Formation of Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Art

**GECS 167a**

German Cinema: Vamps and Angels

**GECS 180b**

European Modernism and the German Novel

**HBRW 170a**

Israeli Cinema

**HIST 188a**

Narrative Strategies: Writing History in a Post-Modern Age

**HUM 10a**

The Western Canon

**NEJS 175b**

Responses to the Holocaust in Literature

**NEJS 180a**

Love and Passion in Medieval Jewish Literature and Thought

**PHIL 12b**

Philosophy and Literature

**PHIL 121a**

Politics, Philosophy, and the Legal Regulation of Sexuality

**SECS 169a**

Travel Writing and the Americas: Columbus's Legacy

**THA 115b**

The Avant-Gardes