

An interdepartmental program

Comparative Literature

Courses of Study:
Minor
Major (BA)

Objectives

The Comparative Literature Program engages the study of literatures and cultures within and across national boundaries. It comprises the comparative analysis of literary texts not only in relation to genres, forms, and movements but within the larger context of social discourse and cultural practices. Because cultural practices are not static but continually changing, comparative literature is sensitive not only to historical context, but also to how cultural forms adapt to new conditions. Analysis of cultural differences, diversities, and similarities will promote a greater knowledge of the rapidly changing globe we inhabit, and also deepen students' critical understanding of their own cultures.

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.

Program Committee

Michael Randall, Chair and Undergraduate Advising Head

(French and Francophone Studies)

Stephen Dowden

(German, Russian, and Asian Languages and Literature)

Susan Lanser (on leave spring 2009)

(English and American Literature; Women's and Gender Studies)

David Powelstock

(German, Russian, and Asian Languages and Literature)

Fernando Rosenberg (on leave spring 2009)

(Hispanic Studies)

Harleen Singh (on leave spring 2009)

(German, Russian, and Asian Languages and Literature; Women's and Gender Studies)

Requirements for the Minor

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

A. COML 100a (Comparing Literatures: Theory & Practice) to be taken as early as possible in the student's academic career.

B. Two upper-level literature courses (normally 100 or above) each taught in a language other than English.

C. Two comparative literature courses offered or cross-listed by Comparative Literature Program.

No more than two classes taken toward the minor can double count toward any other major or minor.

No course with a grade below a C- will count toward the minor; nor will a course taken pass/fail.

Requirements for the Major

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

A. COML 100a (Comparing Literatures: Theory & Practice), to be taken as early as possible in the student's academic career.

B. Three upper-level literature courses taught in a language other than English. Normally they are numbered 100 and above, exclusive of language skills courses. The three courses may be drawn from more than one language tradition.

C. Four upper-level courses in COML or any of the courses offered by other departments or programs that are cross-listed below. These courses will bridge more than one national literature or literary tradition and engage in cross-cultural examination.

D. One additional literature course. This course need not be comparative.

No course with a grade below a C- will count toward the major; nor will a course taken pass/fail.

No more than three courses may count toward any other major, and no more than two courses in film studies may be counted toward the comparative literature major.

The program encourages students to incorporate a historical focus into their comparative literature curriculum, and to consider beginning or continuing the study of a second foreign literature in the original.

Honors

Students who wish to pursue honors must enroll in COML 99d, normally in the senior year, and complete a thesis. One semester of thesis research may substitute for an upper-level comparative course. A senior project is required only of students pursuing honors.

Courses of Instruction

(1–99) Primarily for Undergraduate Students

COML 97a Senior Essay

Offers students an opportunity to produce a senior essay under the direction of an individual instructor. Usually offered every fall.

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 100a Comparing Literatures: Theory and Practice

[hum]

What is common and what is different in literatures of different cultures and times? How do literary ideas move from one culture to another? In this course students read theoretical texts, as well as literary works from around the world. Usually offered every year.

Mr. Powelstock

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 de Troyes' *Yvain*. Usually offered every second year.

Mr. Lansing

COML 103b Madness and Folly in Renaissance Literature

[hum wi]

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 108a Creating New Histories and Identities beyond the Nation: Transnational Female Voices in the U.S.

[hum]

Readings are in English.

An examination of literature (prose, poetry, memoirs) written by first- and second-generation immigrant women exploring the ways in which the experience of immigration shaped a new identity that simultaneously time incorporates and rejects national boundaries. Usually offered every second year.

Ms. Reyes de Deu

COML 120b Dangerous Writers and Writers in Danger

[hum]

Examines the works of modern, twentieth-century writers from different areas of the world who have suffered exile, imprisonment, or death for their free thinking. Writers include: Alexandr Solzhenitsyn, Wole Soyinka, Gao Xinjan, Breyten Breytenbach, Reynoldo Arenas, and Salman Rushdie. Usually offered every second year.

Ms. Ratner

COML 122b Writing Home and Abroad: Literature by Women of Color

[hum nw]

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. Usually offered every second year.

Ms. Singh

COML 123a Perfect Love?

[hum]

Analyzes how the desire to achieve a "perfect form of love," defined as one that denies the body in favor of a more spiritual attachment, can lead to illness and highly unhealthy behavior in literary texts and modern film. Filmmakers and authors studied include Wang-Kar Wai, Marguerite de Navarre, Boccaccio, Chretien de Troyes, and Hawthorne. Usually offered every second year.

Mr. Randall

COML 130a Poetic Voices of Protest

[hum]

Poets are citizens, lovers, artists. Discusses major poems and prose by Whitman, Baudelaire, Rilke, T. S. Eliot, Anna Akhmatova, Abraham Joshua Heschel, and others celebrating American nationhood, and protesting world war, moral chaos, or Soviet dictatorship. Topics include myth, self-assertion, love and intimacy, decadence, ethics, despair and faith, a mother's voice. Students present a poetry slam. Usually offered every third year.

Mr. Kaplan

COML 144b The Outsider as Artist and Lover

[hum]

Baudelaire, Kierkegaard, Kafka, and Simone Weil 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, essays, and philosophical and autobiographical writings. Usually offered every third year.

Mr. Kaplan

COML 146b Classical East Asian Poetics

[hum nw]

An introduction to the classical poetic forms of China, Japan, and Korea. Special consideration is paid to issues of canonization, classical theories of literature, and the development of multilingual literary traditions. All readings are in English. Usually offered every third year.

Mr. Fraleigh

COML 160a Contemporary East European Literature

[hum]

Open to all students. Conducted in English. Examines works of major East European (Polish, Czech, Russian, and other) authors in the historical context of late Communist and post-Communist experience. Special attention to reading for artistic qualities and engagement of historical and political problems. Usually offered every second year.

Mr. Powelstock

COML 165a Reading, Writing, and Teaching across Cultures

[hum wi]

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 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 for contemporary writers such as Thomas Merton and Dorothy Day. Usually offered every third year.

Mr. Kaplan

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

HUM 125a (Topics in the Humanities) may be considered as a cross-listed course, depending on the topic. Students should contact the undergraduate advising head before registering.

AAAS 125b

Caribbean Women and Globalization: Sexuality, Citizenship, Work

AAAS 132b

Introduction to African Literature

AAAS 133b

The Literature of the Caribbean

AAAS 134b

Novel and Film of the African Diaspora

CLAS 166a

Medieval Literature: A Millennium of God, Sex, and Death

ECS 100a

European Cultural Studies Proseminar: Modernism

ECS 100b

European Cultural Studies Proseminar: Making of European Modernity

ENG 10a

Canonical Precursors: Genesis, Homer, Sappho, Ovid, Virgil

ENG 37b

Modern Drama

ENG 40b

The Birth of the Short Story: Gods, Ghosts, Lunatics

ENG 50a

Love Poetry from Sappho to Neruda

ENG 68a

The Political Novel

ENG 107a

Caribbean Women Writers

ENG 111b

Postcolonial Theory

ENG 114b

Gender and the Rise of the Novel in England and France

ENG 115b

Fictions of Liberty: England in a Revolutionary Age

ENG 127a

The Novel in India

ENG 127b

Migrating Bodies, Migrating Texts

ENG 128a

Alternative Worlds: Modern Utopian Texts

ENG 138a

Making Modern Subjects: Caribbean/Latin America/U.S.A. 1850–1950

ENG 140a

Satire and Its Uses

ENG 155a

Literature and Empire

ENG 171a

History of Literary Criticism

ENG 197b

Within the Veil: African-American and Muslim Women's Writing

FREN 110a

Cultural Representations

FREN 137a

The Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries: Plague, War, and Human Power

FREN 155b

French Drama of the Twentieth Century

FREN 165b

Francophone Literatures

HISP 111b

Introduction to Latin American Literature

HISP 160a

Literatura y Justicia en Latinoamerica

HISP 164b

Studies in Latin American Literature

HISP 193b

Topics in Cinema: Global Latin American Cinema

HISP 195a

Latinos in the United States: Perspectives from History, Literature, and Film

HUM 10a

The Western Canon

JAPN 130a

The Literature of Multicultural Japan

JAPN 135a

Screening National Images: Japanese Film and Anime in Global Context

NEJS 175b

Responses to the Holocaust in Literature

NEJS 179a

Jewish Literature of the Middle Ages and Renaissance

NEJS 180a

Love and Passion in Medieval Jewish Literature and Thought

NEJS 181a

Jews on Screen

NEJS 181b

Film and the Holocaust

SAS 101a

South Asian Women Writers

SAS 110b

South Asian Postcolonial Writers

SAS 140a

We Who Are at Home Everywhere: Narratives from the South Asian Diaspora

THA 33b

Acting IV: Acting the Classics

THA 115b

The Avant-Garde

THA 160a

History of Theater Design: Classical Period to 1900

THA 185b

Dramatic Structure: Analysis and Application