Romance Languages and Literatures

The Department of Romance Languages and Literatures offers PhD programs in French Language and Literature and in Hispanic Studies, preparing students for careers in university teaching and research as well as for diverse career options in areas that include higher education administration, libraries and special collections, and humanities and arts organizations. With our faculty’s wide-ranging expertise, graduate students have opportunities to specialize in many areas of French, Francophone, Latin American, and Iberian cultures. We offer a broad range of study from medieval through contemporary, with opportunities to concentrate in a variety of different areas that reflect the areas of expertise of our faculty, including migrations and communities; popular literacy and cultural memory; early modern and modern cultural production; the intersections of literature, art, and the sciences; modernities and postmodernities; visual cultures and performance; and linguistics and language learning. The department also offers the Graduate Certificate in Language Instruction, which is open to PhD students in other disciplines as well as to those in the department’s own graduate programs.

In both programs, students receive six years of funding.

Contact Information

- PhD program in French Language and Literature (https://rll.wustl.edu/french-graduate-programs)
- PhD program in Hispanic Studies (https://rll.wustl.edu/hispanic-studies-graduate-programs)

For information about the combined degrees — the PhD in French & Comparative Literature and the PhD in Hispanic Studies & Comparative Literature — consult the Comparative Literature program (http://bulletin.wustl.edu/grad/gsas/complit) page of this Bulletin.

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PhD, Columbia University

Michel Rybalka  
Professor of French  
PhD, University of California, Los Angeles

Degree Requirements

Students in both PhD programs take a required seminar in language teaching methodology, in addition to the requirements specified below. Optional pedagogical or interdisciplinary study can be acquired by means of one of the Graduate School's certificate programs.

PhD in French Language and Literature

For the PhD in French Language and Literature, students take courses in all areas of French and Francophone studies and may take up to two courses outside of French for a total of 60 credits at the graduate level. During their third semester, students take the AM exam. During the semester after they finish their courses, students take their PhD exams, which consist of three written examinations and one oral examination by the full faculty, followed by a dissertation prospectus defense before their thesis committee of three faculty members. Students then have approximately two years to complete the research and writing of their dissertations, which they defend during the last semester of their program.

PhD in Hispanic Studies

For the PhD in Hispanic Studies, students take courses in all areas of Latin American and Iberian studies. During the fifth semester, students take comprehensive exams that are based on reading lists developed in consultation with faculty. After passing their comprehensive exams, students submit and defend a dissertation prospectus. Students then research, write, defend, and submit their doctoral dissertation. Details of the program stages and requirements are available on the Hispanic Studies Graduate Programs page (https://rll.wustl.edu/hispanic-studies-graduate-programs) of the Romance Languages and Literatures website.

Graduate Certificate in Language Instruction

To provide our graduate students with additional qualifications and formal development that will make them strongly prepared for a range of demanding academic positions, the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures offers the Graduate Certificate in Language Instruction for students enrolled in PhD programs at Washington University. The Graduate Certificate in Language Instruction is an interdisciplinary certificate related to the fields of applied linguistics, second language acquisition, psychology, neuroscience and other disciplines that have important implications for the way that foreign languages are taught. Study within these different fields provides a fascinating examination of how second languages are learned and how the second language is generated by learners. An understanding of second language acquisition processes both enriches our knowledge of how the mind works and serves to better inform the ways that foreign language teachers design and implement curricular approaches for different levels and skills.
PhD students must apply to be considered for the certificate program at the beginning of their doctoral courses. Applications will be evaluated by a faculty committee twice a year, in October and March. The certificate consists of five courses: three required courses and two electives.

The goal of the five-course sequence is to provide certificate students with a solid base in the theoretical and instructional implications of research on language acquisition across different linguistic subsystems (i.e., phonology, lexis, syntax and pragmatics) and different linguistic modalities (i.e., spoken and written). This formation will also prepare students to be involved in language program design and curricular development.

For more information, visit the Graduate Certificate in Language Instruction page (https://rll.wustl.edu/graduate-certificate-language-instruction), contact Professor Joe Barcroft (https://rll.wustl.edu/people/joe-barcroft), or call 314-935-5175.