Romance Languages and Literatures

The Department of Romance Languages and Literatures offers PhD programs in French Language and Literature and in Hispanic Languages and Literatures, preparing students for careers in university teaching and research. 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 (five if admitted with a master’s degree) in the form of fellowships.

Contact Information

For information on the combined degrees, PhD in French & Comparative Literature and PhD in Spanish & Comparative Literature, consult the Comparative Literature program (http://bulletin.wustl.edu/grad/gsas/complit).

PhD program in French Language and Literature website (http://rll.wustl.edu/french/grad)
PhD program in Hispanic Languages and Literatures website (http://rll.wustl.edu/spanish/grad)

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

Degree Requirements

Students in both 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 French, for a total of 60 credits at the graduate level. In their third semester, students take the AM exam. In the semester after they finish their courses, students take their PhD exams, consisting 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 research and writing of their dissertations, which they defend in the last semester of their programs.

PhD in Hispanic Languages and Literatures

For the PhD in Hispanic Languages and Literatures, students take courses in all areas of Latin American and Iberian studies and may take up to two courses outside Spanish. In the third semester, students take a comprehensive exam that tests their knowledge of some 60 texts from all periods of Spanish and Latin American Literature. Having passed their comprehensive exams, students proceed to a qualifying exam in their sixth semester based on lists that students develop with their faculty advisers. In their eighth semester, students submit an extended prospectus and a draft of a chapter. The student will then defend the prospectus and the chapter to a committee of four faculty members in a one-hour oral exam. Students then research, write, defend, and submit their doctoral dissertation in the course of the next two years.

Graduate Certificate in Language Instruction

In order 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 we teach foreign languages. Study within these different fields provides a fascinating examination of how second languages are learned and how 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; AM students are not eligible for consideration. 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 (phonology, lexis, syntax, pragmatics) and
different linguistic modalities (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 (http://rll.wustl.edu/cert/langinstruction) webpage, contact Professor Joe Barcroft (http://rll.wustl.edu/people/barcroft), or phone 314-935-7951.