

Comparative Literature

Comparative Literature examines literature across national, cultural, and linguistic boundaries. The broad perspective of Comparative Literature generates sustained critical thinking about what literature is and does; how literature relates to other fields, including other art forms and kinds of writing; how literary texts and their translations produce meaning; and the ethical valence of literature in a globalized world. Advanced knowledge of at least one foreign language is essential for understanding and appreciating a given literature and culture. Therefore, all comparative literature and comparative arts majors study a foreign language and literature at an advanced level, and they are strongly encouraged to pursue a study abroad experience. Moreover, the study of works in translation — especially those originally written in non-European languages — facilitates cross-cultural comparisons and helps prepare students for a multilingual, pluralistic, and global world. Comparison of literature to other arts, media and modes of writing develops one's understanding of literature and culture as well as of technologies and aesthetic forms of mediation and transmission of world views, values and critiques.

Comparative Literature and Comparative Arts offer the following to students:

- A high degree of flexibility and individualization in their chosen program
- A rich array of courses spanning national, temporal and medial boundaries organized by genre (e.g., postmodern narrative, comedy, the novel, lyric poetry); cultural issues (e.g., exile, diaspora, cross-cultural encounters); themes (e.g., memory, obsession in the novel, mysticism in poetry); periods (Romanticism, the Renaissance); and transnational regions (e.g., Middle Eastern literature, African literature)
- Courses that instruct the student in the central practices, approaches, and theories of the discipline, including entry-level courses like World Literature and Introduction to Comparative Arts as well as courses on literature, literary theory, and translation
- Preparation for life in a reverberant, multicultural, and plurilingual world, including critical and analytical thinking skills and cross-cultural understanding

With the help of our major and the encouraged semester or year of study abroad, some graduates have pursued careers in international affairs, teaching English as a second language abroad, and international humanitarian programs such as the Peace Corps. Other recent graduates have found employment in such areas as the arts, business, media and technology as well as in writing, editing and publishing. In addition, our graduates are well prepared for the challenges of graduate or professional education in a variety of fields.

Comparative Literature and the Arts & Sciences Curriculum

Comparative Literature offers first-year seminars, writing-intensive courses, community-based learning opportunities and various capstone experiences, including directed research, creative projects and internships appropriate to the student's field.

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