

Comparative Literature, PhD

Doctoral Candidacy

To earn a PhD at Washington University, a student must complete all courses required by their department; maintain satisfactory academic progress; pass certain examinations; fulfill residence and Mentored Experience Requirements; write, defend, and submit a dissertation; and file an Intent to Graduate. For a general layout of doctoral degree general requirements in Arts & Sciences, including an explanation of Satisfactory Academic Progress, students should review the Doctoral Degree Academic Information page of the Arts & Sciences *Bulletin*.

Program Requirements

- **Total Units Required: 60 units** (**Note:** Remission applies for a maximum of 72 graduate-level units.)
- **Degree Length: 6 years**
 - **Note:** Students must be enrolled in 9 graduate credits each semester to retain full-time status. As students complete their course work, if enrolled in fewer than 9 graduate credits, they must enroll in a specific Arts & Sciences graduate course that will show 0 units but does count as full-time status. Students should connect with their department to ensure proper enrollment prior to Add/Drop.
 - The Department of Comparative Literature and Thought provides students admitted into the PhD in Comparative Literature program with full financial support for a minimum of five years as long as the student remains in good academic standing. Funding includes full tuition remission and a generous stipend. Our admission package also includes a health fee subsidy.

PhD in Comparative Literature

Comparative Literature appeals to the desire to transcend cultural borders in the study of literature and related media, both contemporary and historical. It supports sustained engagement with great imaginative works from around the globe deemed world literature as well as examines and critiques the intellectual and scholarly traditions that have yielded these judgments. It lends particular attention to encounters between literary cultures as they borrow, adapt, exchange, and translate cultural materials and to the pathways and modes by which these transformations take place. PhD students in Comparative Literature are expected to have deep knowledge of one language in addition to English and reading knowledge in yet another language, languages pertinent to their transcultural engagements.

Required Courses

The PhD in Comparative Literature program requires 60 units of course credit plus a dissertation. Course distribution normally entails the following: at least 12 credits in core comparative literature seminars, including Comp Lit 502 Introduction to Comparative Literature (3 units). PhD students put together a course of study with at least two areas of concentration, which include the remaining 48 units of elective course credit.

Minimum Grade Requirement: B-

Core Seminar Courses

- Comp Lit 502 Introduction to Comparative Literature (3 units)
- A course in any three of the following four categories (9 units), one of which must be a 5000-level seminar home-based in or cross-listed with Comparative Literature. In rare cases, subject to approval, a course outside of Comparative Literature might fulfill one of these categories:

Category I: Transcultural Studies

Transcultural Studies brings a cross-disciplinary and cross-regional perspective to the study of cultural artifacts and their mobility. Courses in this category therefore study the circulation of subjects, ideas, and texts in specific historical and geographical contexts and provide students with the theoretical and conceptual tools to analyze depictions and narratives of cultural exchanges and conflicts.

Category II: Translation Studies

Translation as practice and as theory has become central to Comparative Literature. With its interest in crossing the borders between languages, cultures, and national literatures, Comparative Literature is implicitly committed to performing and also to assessing theoretically the function and value of “translation” in the widest sense of the term. Courses include review of translation theories, study of translation practices of various literary forms and media, and ideological underpinnings of translation, the political uses of languages in intercultural communication, and the multiple uses of translations of all kinds of literature in a multicultural world.

Category III: Literature, Politics, and Society

Raising basic questions about writing in, for, and about the world, studies in category III are based in the premise that literature has historically mattered and continues to matter to lived human experience and human communities and that it addresses, engages in, produces, and is produced by power relations and social formations worldwide across languages, cultures, and nations. Studies in this area also investigate literature itself as the product of social, economic, and political formations and their attendant pressures.

Category IV: Media Ecologies, Media Histories, Media Poetics

Courses in this category facilitate broad, theoretically informed, and historically grounded thinking about the effects of media transformation on both production and consumption, on the self-conceptions of authors (artists, composers), producers, and consumers (readers/viewers/listeners). Courses in this category address both moments in which transformations in media constitute a crisis, becoming the objects of reflection, and periods in which media do their work “quietly” and surreptitiously, evading reflection. Courses explore how media not only “mediate” but structures knowledge, cultural exchange, artistic expression, perception, and indeed experience itself, asking timely questions about the aesthetics, ethics, and politics of media.

With permission from the Office of Graduate Studies, students who pursue this area in depth might supplement their theoretical and historical study with praxis by taking select courses in the making of media objects.

International Writer's Track

Students admitted in the International Writer's Track take 4 semesters of Comp Lit 512 Literature in the Making (3 units), or the equivalent, as one area of concentration.

Electives

Electives include areas of concentration and should show some evidence of clustering to prepare for comprehensive exams.

Language Requirement and Details

At a minimum, students need to demonstrate — in addition to superior skills in English — superior ability in at least a second language and reading skills in a third language. Beyond the minimum, the choice and number of languages required correspond to each student's areas of concentration. Each language, including English, will be verified by an expert in that language.

Students participating in a Mentored Teaching Experience (MTE) may teach in Comparative Literature and/or in one of our allied programs, including language instruction. Those teaching for the first time at Washington University will be required to fulfill the pre-semester pedagogy requirement. To be qualified to serve as an assistant in instruction in a language department, students may be required to take the relevant course in language pedagogy. The program strives to give students a variety of teaching experiences that prepare them for the academic market in their areas of concentration.

Qualifying Examinations

Progress toward the PhD is contingent upon the student passing examinations that are variously called *preliminary*, *qualifying*, *general*, *comprehensive*, or *major field exams*. The qualifying process varies according to the program. In some programs, it consists of a series of incremental, sequential, and cumulative exams over a considerable time. In others, the exams are held during a relatively short period of time. Exams may be replaced by one or more papers. The program,

which determines the structure and schedule of the required examinations, is responsible for notifying the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences, of the student's outcome, whether successful or unsuccessful.

Mentored Experience Requirements

Doctoral students at Washington University must complete a department-defined Mentored Experience. The Mentored Experience Requirement is a doctoral degree milestone that is notated on the student's transcript when complete. Each department has an established Mentored Experience Implementation Plan in which the number of units that a student must earn through Mentored Teaching Experience(s) and/or Mentored Professional Experience(s) is defined. The Mentored Experience Implementation Plans outline how doctoral students within the discipline will be mentored to achieve competencies in teaching at basic and advanced levels. Some departments may elect to include Mentored Professional Experiences as an avenue for completing some units of the Mentored Experience Requirement. Doctoral students will enroll in LGS 6XXX Mentored Teaching Experience or LGS 7020 Mentored Professional Experience to signify their progression toward completing the overall Mentored Experience Requirement for the degree.

The Doctoral Dissertation

A Research Advisory Committee (RAC) must be created no later than the end of the student's third year; departments may set shorter timelines (e.g., by the end of the student's second year) for this requirement. As evidence of the mastery of a specific field of knowledge and of the capacity for original scholarly work, each candidate must complete a dissertation that is approved by their RAC.

A Title, Scope & Procedure Form for the dissertation must be signed by the committee members and by the program chair. It must be submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences, at least 6 months before the degree is expected to be conferred or before beginning the fifth year of full-time enrollment, whichever is earlier.

A Doctoral Dissertation Guide & Template that give instructions regarding the format of the dissertation are available on the website of the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences. Both should be read carefully at every stage of dissertation preparation.

The Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences, requires each student to make the full text of the dissertation available to the committee members for their review at least 1 week before the defense. Most degree programs require 2 or more weeks for the review period; students should check with their faculty.

The Dissertation Defense

Approval of the written dissertation by the RAC is necessary before the student can orally defend their dissertation. The Dissertation Defense Committee that observes and examines the student's defense consists of at least five members, who normally meet these two, independent criteria:

1. Four of the five must be tenured or tenure-track Washington University faculty; one of these four may be a member of the emeritus faculty. The fifth member must have a doctoral degree and an active research program, whether at Washington University, at another university, in government, or in industry.
2. Three of the five normally come from the student's degree program; at least one of the five must not.

All committees must be approved by the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences, regardless of whether they meet the normal criteria.

The committee is appointed by the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences, upon the request of the degree program. The student is responsible for making the full text of the dissertation accessible to their committee members for their review in advance of the defense. Faculty and graduate students who are interested in the subject of the dissertation are normally welcome to attend all or part of the defense but may ask questions only at the discretion of the committee members. Although there is some variation among degree programs, the defense ordinarily focuses on the dissertation itself and its relation to the student's field of expertise.

Submission of the Dissertation

After the defense, the student must submit an electronic copy of the dissertation online to the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences. The submission website requires students to choose among publishing and copyrighting services offered by ProQuest's ETD Administrator. The degree program is responsible for delivering the final approval form, signed by the committee members at the defense and then by the program chair or director, to the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences. Students who defend their dissertations successfully have not yet completed their PhD requirements; they finish earning their degree only when their dissertation submission has been accepted by the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences.

Master's Degree Along the Way/ In Lieu of a PhD

Program Requirements

- **Total Units Required: 36 units**
- **Degree Length: 2 years**
 - **Note:** Students must be enrolled in 9 graduate credits each semester to retain full-time status. As students complete their course work, if enrolled in fewer than 9 graduate credits, they must enroll in a specific Arts & Sciences graduate course that will show 0 units but does count as full-time status. Students should connect with their department to ensure proper enrollment prior to Add/Drop.

The AM in Comparative Literature may be earned along the way to the PhD ONLY; Comparative Literature normally does NOT admit students to a terminal AM program.

Required Courses

The AM in Comparative Literature requires 36 units of course credit, including Comp Lit 502 Introduction to Comparative Literature (3 units) and three additional courses (9 units) in Comparative Literature on the graduate (5000) level. The remaining 24 units may be pursued in Comparative Literature or in affiliated departments or programs. These 36 units count toward the PhD in Comparative Literature requirements.

Language Requirement and Details

All students earning an AM in Comparative Literature must demonstrate superior skills in English and, at a minimum, reading ability in one additional language pertinent to their areas of interest. Students participating in a Mentored Teaching Experience (MTE) may teach in Comparative Literature and/or in one of our allied programs, including language instruction. To be qualified to serve as an assistant in instruction in a language department, students may be required to take the relevant course in language pedagogy. The program strives to give students a variety of teaching experiences that prepare them for the academic market in their areas of concentration.

Portfolio and Defense

Students present a portfolio of their work in their second year and participate in an oral defense. The submission of the portfolio will be followed by a one-hour conversation with the committee, at which time the student will receive feedback on the portfolio and advice about future steps. Once this defense and portfolio are approved by the Portfolio Committee, the Portfolio Advisor will email the Director of Graduate Studies for submission to the Office of Graduate Studies.

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