

Comparative Literature

A STRUCTURED INDIVIDUAL MAJOR

Director: *Nolden (German)*

Advisory Board: *TBA (ex officio: Chair of Language Chairs), Respaut (French), Rosenwald (English), Weiner (Russian), Zimmerman (East Asian Languages and Literatures)*

Using literary texts as its base of inquiry, “Comparative Literature” promotes the study of intercultural relations that cross national boundaries, multicultural relations within a particular society, and the interactions between literature and other forms of human activity, including the arts, the sciences, philosophy, and cultural artifacts of all kinds.

The comparative literature major is a structured individual major for students seeking to study literature across departmental, national, and linguistic boundaries. Students in comparative literature devise their own programs in careful consultation with two advisors, one in each of two departments, and with the director of the program.

Students who major in comparative literature should, in designing their major, be aware of the many and diverse courses that pertain to the study of literature.

These include, but are not limited to:

- 1) courses in literary history;
- 2) courses in particular literary genres;
- 3) courses in the theory of literature;
- 4) courses in linguistics;
- 5) courses on the theory and practice of translation.

Many courses combine or fall between these categories. Students should also consult the Courses in Literature or Film (from Language Departments) Taught in English section at the back of the catalog.

Directions for Election

1. Ten units. Majors in comparative literature shall complete a minimum of ten units. All courses must count towards the major in the departments in which they are offered.
2. Introduction to Comparative Literature (CPLT 220). This course is strongly recommended and should be taken early on.
2. Comparative Literature Seminar. All majors shall take CPLT 330, the comparative literature seminar.
3. Advanced literature courses. In addition to CPLT 330, majors shall take at least two more literature courses at the 300 level. These two advanced literature courses shall be in at least two languages, of which English may be one, and in at least two departments, and majors shall meet departmental prerequisites for these courses.

4. Premodern literature. Majors shall take at least one course outside of the modern period in at least one of the literatures they are studying; what “the modern period” means for a particular literature will depend on the literature, and will be determined by the major’s advisors.

5. Theory of literature. Majors shall take at least one course offering a theoretical perspective helpful to their particular course of study. Sometimes this will be CPLT 220 or ENG 382 (Criticism), but other courses, too, can meet this requirement.

6. Independent research. Majors shall do a substantial piece of independent work in comparative literature. They may supplement CPLT 330 or a course in a pertinent department with extra independent work or enroll in CPLT 350, CPLT 360 and/or CPLT 370. They may also enroll in a 350 in a pertinent department chosen by the student in consultation with her advisors.

In general, programs will be worked out in relation to the major’s particular languages and interests. Examples of possible interests would include poetry, the novel, women’s writing, and the relations between politics and literature.

Honors

There are two routes to honors in the major: Plan A entails writing a thesis. Plan B entails a dossier of essays written for several courses with a statement of connections among them and critical questions raised by them. Both plan A and plan B require a student to pass an oral exam.

To be admitted to the honors program, a student must have a grade point average of at least 3.5 in all work in the major field above the 100 level; the department may petition on her behalf if her GPA in the major is between 3.0 and 3.5. See Academic Distinctions.

CPLT 113/ENG 113 Studies in Fiction

Topic A: The World of Fiction

Ko (English)

A journey into worlds of fiction that range from grimy and scandalous to fantastic and sublime. As we enter wildly different fictional worlds, we will also think about how those worlds illuminate ours. The syllabus will likely include Francois Rabelais’ *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*, Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, Fyodor Dostoyevsky’s *Crime and Punishment*, Richard Wright’s *Native Son*, Isak Dinesan’s short story “Babette’s Feast,” and Gish Jen’s contemporary novel *The Love Wife*. *Students may register for either ENG 113 or CPLT 113 and credit will be granted accordingly.*

Prerequisite: None

Distribution: Language and Literature

Semester: Fall Unit: 1.0

Topic B: Fantastic Fictions

Sides (English)

When fiction blurs or crosses the line between our “real” world and “other worlds,” the reader (as well as the narrator or main character) has entered the realm of “the fantastic,” a genre that (broadly interpreted) contains “the uncanny,” “the supernatural or ghost story,” and “science fiction.” We will read “fantastic” novels and short fiction by nineteenth-century, twentieth-century, and twenty-first century masters from Europe, Japan, North and South America. Taught primarily in lecture, this course will not be writing-intensive. *Students may register for either ENG 113 or CPLT 113 and credit will be granted accordingly.*

Prerequisite: None

Distribution: Language and Literature

Semester: Spring Unit: 1.0

CLPT 220/ENG 220 Introduction to Comparative Literature

Hickey (English)

Topic for 2008-09: Languages of Lyric. A study of poems from diverse cultural, national, and linguistic traditions, to be read in translation and where possible in the original. The course features translation in the literal sense and as a metaphor. Is poetry “lost in translation”? Is “all poetry translation”? We’ll examine various poetic translations and crossings: from one language to another; from inspiration to print; from poet to text to reader; from literal to figurative; from one time, place, culture, or realm to another; from one aesthetic form to another. We’ll look at poetic responses to visual art, hear music and words crossing in song, and compare the languages of these sister arts. Choice of critical and creative writing options. Guest lectures by members of Wellesley’s humanities faculty. *Students may register for either CPLT 220 or ENG 220 and credit will be granted accordingly.*

Prerequisite: None

Distribution: Language and Literature

Semester: Fall Unit: 1.0

CPLT 284 Magical Realism

Weiner (Russian)

This course examines fictions whose basic reality would be familiar if not for the introduction of a magical element that undermines commonplace notions about what constitutes reality in the first place. The magical element can be a demon, talisman, physical transformation, miraculous transition in space or time, appearance of a second plane of existence, revelation of the unreality of the primary plane of existence, etc. Students will read Kafka’s *Metamorphosis*, Queneau’s *The Blue Flowers*, Bulgakov’s *The Master and Margarita*, Marquez’s *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Calvino’s *If on a Winter Night a Traveler*, Pynchon’s *The Crying of Lot 49*, Murakami’s *Hardboiled Wonderland & The End of the World* and Sokolov’s *School for Fools*, and short stories by Borges, Cortazar, and Nabokov.

Prerequisite: None

Distribution: Language and Literature

Semester: Spring Unit: 1.0

CPLT 330 Seminar. Comparative Literature

Zimmerman (East Asian Languages and Literatures)

Topic for 2008-09: Girls, in Theory. Coming-of-age narratives commonly depict a series of challenges or obstacles faced by girls as they grow. At the same time, writers use the sharp gaze of the adolescent girl to dissect ethnicity, national identity, gender roles, sexual orientation, modernization, and globalization. With identities in flux, adolescent girls are even seen to represent the supernatural and worlds apart. As we delve into specific national literary traditions, we also read works that propose theories of girls' development. We take our coming-of-age stories from around the world, including writers from Japan, India, China, North America, Mexico, Jamaica, and Europe.

Prerequisite: One 200-level course in literature or by permission of the instructor to other qualified students.

Distribution: Language and Literature

Semester: Spring Unit: 1.0

CPLT 334 Literature and Medicine

Respaut (French)

NOT OFFERED IN 2008-09. Drawing on texts from different countries, this course investigates literature's obsession with medicine. Literary representations of doctors and patients, disability, insanity, AIDS, birth, death and grief, the search for healing and the redemptive power of art. Attention will be given to the links between the treatment of medical issues in fiction, in autobiography and in visual representations (film and photography). This course should be of interest to everyone drawn to health related fields as well as students in social sciences and the humanities.

Prerequisite: One 200-level course in literature or by permission of the instructor.

Distribution: Language and Literature

Semester: N/O Unit: 1.0

CPLT 350 Research or Individual Study

Prerequisite: By permission of the Director. See Academic Distinctions.

Distribution: None

Semester: Fall, Spring Unit: 1.0

CPLT 360 Senior Thesis Research

Prerequisite: By permission of the Director. See Academic Distinctions.

Distribution: None

Semester: Fall, Spring Unit: 1.0

CPLT 370 Senior Thesis

Prerequisite: 360 and permission of department.

Distribution: None

Semester: Fall, Spring Unit: 1.0