Comparative Literature

Director, Division of World Languages, Literatures and Cultures
• Russell Ganim

Director, Comparative Literature Program
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Undergraduate major: comparative literature (B.A.)
Undergraduate minor: comparative literature
Faculty: https://clas.uiowa.edu/dwllc/people
Website: https://clas.uiowa.edu/dwllc/comparative-literature/ba-comparative-literature

Students in the comparative literature field study literatures, arts, and cultures from diverse national traditions in an interdisciplinary manner. Students design individualized programs of study that may draw upon texts, visual and performing arts, translation, film, and other cultural technologies. Students enjoy easy access to the resources of the Translation Workshop, International Writing Program, and the programs and departments in the Division of World Languages, Literatures and Cultures.

Comparative literature students also frequently extend their studies to other disciplines across the university, such as history, philosophy, linguistics, anthropology, music, art and art history, and law, among others. Students are encouraged to develop critical and creative thinking skills that effectively prepare them for professional studies in fields such as law, writing, publishing, journalism, the foreign service, international business, and many other fields. A degree in comparative literature also offers excellent preparation for graduate work in the humanities.

In addition to an undergraduate major and minor, the Comparative Literature Program offers courses approved for the Literary, Visual, and Performing Arts areas of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences GE CLAS Core.

The Comparative Literature Program is administered by the Division of World Languages, Literatures and Cultures.

Programs

Undergraduate Programs of Study

Major
• Major in Comparative Literature (Bachelor of Arts)

Minor
• Minor in Comparative Literature

Facilities

The Language Media Center (LMC) is an essential resource unit for faculty and students in the Division of World Languages, Literatures and Cultures. The LMC provides a wide variety of facilities and services for traditional language laboratory work as well as for foreign language digital media production and computer-based activities. The LMC facilities include a 50-computer information technology center (ITC), two digital audio laboratories, a multimedia development studio, a One Button Studio for video production, 13 media viewing stations, and six small group collaboration spaces. The LMC also circulates a collection of over 3,000 foreign language, American Sign Language, and English as a Second Language digital media materials.

The Autonomous Language Learning Network (ALLNet), administered by the Language Media Center in the Division of World Languages, Literatures and Cultures, offers scholarship opportunities to learn critical and less commonly taught languages that are not currently taught at the University of Iowa. Any current university student, staff, or faculty member who is interested in pursuing language study to enhance their professional research or academic profile can apply for an ALLNet scholarship. With the support of the ALLNet staff, learners design their own study plans to learn basic language skills or improve upon existing skills in preparation for study or research abroad. Upon admission to the program, learners are provided with learning materials and tutorial sessions with a trained language and culture consultant.

Courses

Comparative Literature Courses

CL:1000 First-Year Seminar 1 s.h.
Small discussion class taught by a faculty member; topics chosen by instructor; may include outside activities (e.g., films, lectures, performances, readings, visits to research facilities). Requirements: first- or second-semester standing.

CL:1240 Major Texts of World Literature, Antiquity to 1700 3 s.h.
Reading and analysis of major literary texts from writing’s origins to 1700 in the Mediterranean, Asia, and Africa; interrelationship of literature and history. GE: Literary, Visual, and Performing Arts. Same as CLSA:1040.

CL:1241 Major Texts of World Literature, 1700 to the Present 3 s.h.
Reading and analysis of major literary texts from 18th century to present in chronological sequence; emphasis on interrelationship of literature and history. Requirements: completion of GE CLAS Core Rhetoric. GE: Literary, Visual, and Performing Arts.

CL:1500 Ukraine, a Country at the Crossroads: An Interdisciplinary Seminar on Ukrainian History and Culture 3 s.h.
Cultural specificity of Ukraine as a large multicultural European country; vital background information for analysis of present-day political events; strategic location between East and West; centuries-long history and culture; all readings in English, no knowledge of Russian or Ukrainian required. Same as RUSS:1500.

CL:1510 Ghost Stories and Tales of the Weird in Pre-Modern Chinese Literature 3 s.h.
Reading of Chinese literature concerning ghosts, marvels, and supernatural from the first millennium B.C.E. through the 1800s; readings analyzed against changing historical and religious contexts. Taught in English. GE: Interpretation of Literature. Same as ASIA:1510.
CL:1600 Wonder Woman Unleashed: A Hero for Our Times 3 s.h.
Development of the woman warrior archetype in mythology (Athena/Minerva and Artemis/Diana), literature (Camilla from The Aeneid by Virgil), and history (Artemisia and Joan of Arc); focus on the development of Amazon narratives in Metamorphoses by Ovid, The Book of the City of Ladies by Christine de Pizan, and On Famous Women by Boccaccio; students read Wonder Woman Chronicles and one or two critical studies on the subject, which may include The Secret History of Wonder Woman by Jill Lepore. Same as GWSS:1600.

CL:2208 Classical Chinese Literature Through Translation 3 s.h.

CL:2222 Women in Premodern East Asian Literature 3 s.h.
Reading of East Asian literature portraying women from the first millennium B.C.E. through the 1800s; discussion of issues related to representations of women and conventional social, familial roles in premodern China, Korea, and Japan; cross-cultural comparison of different perceptions and portrayals of women in premodern East Asian literary traditions. Taught in English. Recommendations: completion of all ESL courses. GE: Diversity and Inclusion. Same as ASIA:2222, GWSS:2222.

CL:2248 The Invention of Writing: From Cuneiform to Computers 3 s.h.
Invention of writing as one of the most momentous events in the history of human civilizations; how the use of written sign systems, notations, maps, graphs, encryptions, and most recently, computer programs have consequences that reach deeply into all aspects of people’s lives; how writing fascinates and delights, fosters reflexive thinking and facilitates development of complex societies, and gives rise to institutions of social power and control; students explore the invention of writing and its consequences in broad international and interdisciplinary context. Same as ANTH:2248, ASIA:2248, CLSA:2048, COMM:2248, GRMN:2248, HIST:2148, IS:2248, LING:2248, TRNS:2248, WLLC:2248.

CL:2531 Topics in Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies arr.
Topics in Russian literature and culture. Same as RUSS:2531.

CL:2600 Issues in Russian Identity: Nationalism 3 s.h.
Development of the Russian national identity in the works of three 19th-century Russian authors: Alexander Pushkin, Leo Tolstoy and Fyodor Dostoevsky; how major historical events such as Russia’s wars with Poland, Sweden, France, England, and Turkey are portrayed in Pushkin’s Boris Godunov and Poltava, Tolstoy’s War and Peace and Sevastopol Sketches; how Western Europe is viewed in Dostoevsky’s Winter Notes on Summer Impressions, Notes From Underground, and The Idiot. Prerequisites: RHET:1030. Requirements: ENGL:1200. Same as RUSS:2600.

CL:2618 The Third Reich and Literature 3-4 s.h.
Nazi literature, literature of the Holocaust and the Opposition, and exile literature in English translation. Taught in English. GE: Values and Culture. Same as GRMN:2618.

CL:2660 Magic Mirrors, Self-Discovery, and Murder: Gender Trouble in German Literature 3-4 s.h.
German literature since Romantic era as an intensifying battle of wits over language in which gender has played a central role; a stark rift open where literary space offers much less hospitable conditions to women writers than to men; exploration of gendered fault line that runs through literary space; how women writers respond to and rewrite language that confronts them; readings from German literary texts (in English translation) from 1800 to present; emphasis on writings of women supplemented with key texts by major authors to which they respond and reread; knowledge of German not required. Same as GRMN:2660.

CL:2666 Pact with the Devil 3-4 s.h.
Since early modern times, the pact with the devil has served as a metaphor for humankind’s desire to surpass the limits of knowledge and power; students explore a variety of works from German, British, and Russian literature and culture from early modern time to the present, and critique different twists that fascination with the forbidden takes in regard to women. Taught in English. Requirements: RHET:1030 or completion of GE CLAS Core Rhetoric. GE: Literary, Visual, and Performing Arts. Same as GRMN:2666.

CL:2700 Romani (Gypsy) Cultures of Eastern Europe 3 s.h.
Aspects of culture shared by most Roma (Gypsies) around the world; samples of folklore from Europe; impact of Roma on European literature, music, and culture; readings in English; no previous knowledge of Russian or Romani required. GE: Diversity and Inclusion. Same as RUSS:2232.

CL:3104 Topics in International Literature and Culture 3 s.h.
Focus on significant texts or critical problems related to international literature and culture. Requirements: junior or senior standing. Recommendations: two or more courses in literary study.

CL:3107 Literature and Anthropology 3 s.h.
Topics vary. Same as ANTH:3107, ENGL:3107.

CL:3122 Tolstoy and Dostoevsky 3-4 s.h.
Tolstoy’s War and Peace and Anna Karenina; Dostoevsky’s Crime and Punishment, The Demons, and short stories. Taught in English. Same as RUSS:3122.

CL:3124 Invitation to Nabokov 3-4 s.h.
Nabokov’s works and his writings on Russian literature. Same as RUSS:3124.

CL:3131 Undergraduate Reading Workshop 3 s.h.
Analysis of different types of texts—theoretical, cultural, political, philosophical, literary, poetic—and exploration of varying ways to frame and read them. Same as WLLC:3131.

CL:3179 Undergraduate Translation Workshop 3 s.h.
Translation exercises, discussion of translation projects. Same as CLSA:3979, ENGL:3850, TRNS:3179.

CL:3203 Modern Japanese Fiction in Translation 3 s.h.
Introduction to modern Japanese literature from 1868 to present; focus on representative short stories, novels, and manga; the twin advent of modern Japanese language and the modern novel; rise of autobiographical “I-novel”; Japanese bundan (literary establishment), high modernity, andiero nansensu (erotic grotesque nonsense); stories of the war and its endless postwar; the neo-traditional and the avant-garde; literature of economic collapse and internationalization. Taught in English. Same as JPN:3203.
CL:3204 Traditional Japanese Literature in Translation
Early Japanese literature from 7th to 19th centuries including prose, poetry, drama, and Buddhist texts; students bring traditional Japanese culture to life through practice with experiences ranging from calligraphy, letter folding, and layering kimono patterns to courtly contests and bookbinding. Taught in English. Same as JPN:3202.

CL:3206 Warriors' Dreams
Images of the warrior in traditional Japanese literature from ancient legendary heroes, medieval warrior monks, and ninja to the unifying generals, masterless samurai, and women revolutionaries of early modern Japan; students discover what is truth and what is fiction when encountering the warrior in popular culture today. Taught in English. Same as JPN:3206.

CL:3210 Comparative Arts
Cultural and aesthetic issues arising from side-by-side investigation of several art forms, including literature, cinema, painting, music, opera, architecture; periods, schools, styles, and their theories. Same as IWP:3210.

CL:3222 City as Text/Text as City
Ways of reading cities: how built environments are shaped by history; how European cities differ from American or postcolonial cities; how to map, inhabit, remember, touch, smell, and experience a city; what is a global city; what is a sustainable city; how city spaces are felt in terms of gender, class, race, and ethnicity; models that architects, planners, politicians, and designers use to create habitable spaces; how to think of texts as cities (i.e., as spaces where people congregate, meet, live); research paper that combines class readings with independent research on a city of students’ choice.

CL:3223 Reading European Poetry
Development of literary reading skills and critical imagination; increase awareness of the complexity of poetry translation, introduction to works of major canonical poets from several European traditions and languages.

CL:3263 Studies in 20th-Century European Literature
Evolving practices explored through genre, period, movement, or topic, in conjunction with relevant models of analysis; readings in English. Requirements: completion of GE CLAS Core Rhetoric.

CL:3277 Literature and Art
English majors and English and Creative Writing majors may apply this course to the following area and/or period requirement. AREA: Literary Theory and Interdisciplinary Studies. PERIOD: Varies by semester. Same as ENGL:3155.

CL:3302 Russian Literature in Translation 1860-1917
Survey of major works, figures, and trends of 19th and early 20th-century Russian literature; age of the Russian novel; works of Turgenev (Fathers and Sons), Tolstoy (Confession), Dostoevsky (The Idiot, The Brothers Karamazov), and Chekhov (plays). Same as RUS:3202.

CL:3341 Chinese Literature: Poetry
Readings in classical and modern Chinese poetry in English translation. Recommendations: sophomore or higher standing. Same as CHIN:3341.

CL:3379 Literature and Society
English majors and English and Creative Writing majors may apply this course to the following area and/or period requirement. AREA: Literary Theory and Interdisciplinary Studies. PERIOD: 20th/21st-Century Literature. Same as ENGL:3152.

CL:3570 Transnational and Postcolonial Writing by Women
English majors and English and Creative Writing majors may apply this course to the following area and/or period requirement. AREA: Transnational Literature and Postcolonial Studies. PERIOD: 20th/21st-Century Literature. Same as ENGL:3570, GWSS:3570.

CL:4100 Approaches to Critical Theory
Introduction to major critical approaches in literary and cultural theory from a variety of traditions; studying existing models, students learn to think theoretically about language and society, and to orient themselves among existing theoretical discourses, interrogating the latter critically in terms of their own perspectives and theoretical needs; selections from influential works, shared class discussion, and presentations; no prior knowledge in the area of critical theory is presumed. Same as TRNS:4100.

CL:4201 The Tale of Genji
Close reading of Murasaki Shikibu’s classic Tale of Genji; students come to know the characters by exploring the social and cultural context of the tale and discover the art, literature, and film that the Tale of Genji has inspired while tracking its reception through the history of Japan and across the globe. Taught in English. Same as JPN:4201.

CL:4203 Modern Chinese Writers
Readings in modern and contemporary Chinese fiction; in English translation. Recommendations: sophomore or higher standing. Same as CHIN:4203.

CL:4368 Post-Colonial Literature in France
Literatures and cultures of Arabo-French (Beur) and Afro-French immigrations. Prerequisites: FREN:3300 and FREN:3060. Same as FREN:4080.

CL:4648 Issues in Gender and Sexuality
Significance of gender and/or sexuality to cinema, in general or in a period, genre, film type, or national cinema; theoretical approaches, including feminist and queer theory.

CL:4700 Latin American Studies Seminar
Examination of past, present, and future of Latin America; interdisciplinary. Taught in English. Same as ANTH:4700, HIST:4504, LAS:4700, PORT:4700, SPAN:4900.

CL:4800 Seminar in Comparative Literature
Focus on comparative, interdisciplinary, theoretical, and/or inter-arts topic; topics vary; required for comparative literature major. Same as GRMN:4800, TRNS:4800, WLLC:4801.

CL:4900 Independent Study

CL:5201 Seminar in Chinese Fiction
Novels, novelettes; 16th to 18th centuries (Ming and Qing periods). Requirements: ability to read original texts. Same as CHIN:5201.

CL:5202 Seminar in Chinese Literature
Requirements: two years of modern Chinese and one year of classical Chinese. Same as CHIN:5202.

CL:5510 Comparative Stylistics
Translation from English to French, including literary texts. Same as FREN:5510.
CL:6105 Introduction to Contemporary Literary Theory
3 s.h.
How major theories construct literary text; structuralist, semiotic, psychoanalytic, Marxist, reader response, Derridian criticism. Taught in English. Same as SPAN:6905.

CL:6323 Romantic Literature
3 s.h.
Same as ENGL:6400.

CL:7000 Thesis
arr.

CL:7054 Seminar: Postcolonial Studies
3 s.h.
Same as ENGL:7800.

CL:7260 Seminar: Problems in Aesthetics and Literary Theory
arr.

CL:7302 Seminar: Medieval Literature and Culture
arr.
Same as ENGL:7100.

CL:7307 Seminar: Early Modern Literature and Culture
arr.
Same as ENGL:7200.

CL:7500 Independent Study
arr.