Translation

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

Director, Translation Program
- Aron Aji (Asian and Slavic Languages and Literatures)

Graduate degree: M.F.A. in comparative literature—translation
Faculty: http://clas.uiowa.edu/dwllc/mfa-literary-translation/faculty
Web site: http://clas.uiowa.edu/dwllc/mfa-literary-translation

Translation has been an integral part of the curriculum and conversation about writing at the University of Iowa for more than 40 years. The Translation Program is committed to the idea that translation is much more than carrying a work from one language to another; it also involves the linguistic, aesthetic, and ideological dimensions of works as well as the literary, cultural, and historical contexts from which those works arise.

The Translation Program enjoys close relationships with the University’s program in comparative literature; M.F.A. programs in creative writing (fiction and poetry), nonfiction writing, and playwriting; and the International Writing Program. Faculty members from departments in the Division of World Languages, Literatures, and Cultures provide resources for the Translation Program and often serve as language mentors and committee members for M.F.A. students in translation.

Graduates of the program have gone on to work in the world of professional publishing as editors and reviewers or as free-lance translators; to become university professors after earning a Ph.D.; and to pursue other careers involving cross-cultural and artistic exchange. In recent years, publishers of works by Translation Program alumni have included Greywolf, Seven Stories, Autumn Hill Books, Melville House, Word Without Borders, The Iowa Review, 91st Meridian, TWO LINES Online, Circumference, The Literary Review, Passport, Absinthe, and others.

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

Graduate Program of Study
- Master of Fine Arts in comparative literature—translation

Master of Fine Arts

The Master of Fine Arts program in comparative literature—translation requires 48 s.h. of graduate credit, including a thesis. Students typically complete the program and graduate in two to three years.

Translators in the program focus on creating works that can convey the timelessness of the classics or the immediacy of new poetry, fiction, and drama. Students consider ideas of literariness, style, cultural politics, authority, and how these come into play in the relationships between authors and their texts, authors and translators, translations and readers, and in the media landscapes in which these all circulate.

The core of the M.F.A. program is TRNS:7460 Translation Workshop, which every student must take at least four times (minimum of 16 s.h. of credit). Depth in the literature and culture of the source language, creative writing (translation is considered a writing art), translation theory and history, and contemporary literary theory are basic curricular requirements, supplemented with elective courses in which students may develop an area of special interest in consultation with their advisors.

During the first year, each student has an advisory committee of two faculty members: one from the translation program, who is the student’s primary advisor; and one from comparative literature, or from one of the M.F.A. writing programs, or from a department in the Division of World Languages, Literatures, and Cultures. A third member joins the committee during the second year, when the student submits his or her thesis proposal. At least one member of the committee should be competent in the student’s source language.

The M.F.A. in comparative literature—translation requires the following work.

REQUIRED COURSES

Students complete all of these (37 s.h.):

- TRNS:6459 Issues in Translation 3 s.h.
- TRNS:7460 Translation Workshop (taken at least four times) 16 s.h.
- Courses in literature and culture of the source language 9 s.h.
- Courses in contemporary literary theory (chosen in consultation with advisor) 3 s.h.
- Courses in creative writing (chosen in consultation with advisor) 6 s.h.

ELECTIVES

Students earn 5-8 s.h. from these:

- TRNS:3480 Literature and Translation 3 s.h.
- TRNS:4497 Techniques of Translation 3 s.h.
- TRNS:5205 International Translation Workshop 1-3 s.h.
- TRNS:5491 Translation Internship 1-2 s.h.
- Independent study course(s) arr.
- Book arts course(s) offered by the Center for the Book (prefix UICB) arr.

THESIS AND EXAMINATION

Students earn 3-6 s.h. for the thesis, which is a translated collection of poems, literary essays, short stories, a short novel, or a drama with an introduction that sets the work in appropriate context. The introduction should include a critical discussion of issues and problems related to the translation; it should present a rationale for the translator’s approach and strategies, based on interpretation, analysis of the leading features, structure, style, or authorial objectives of the source text. The source text should be a work that has not been translated previously or, at the discretion of the advisory committee, a work whose previous translation is judged to be outdated or inadequate in some respect. An oral defense of the thesis examines the student’s translation and the introductory essay in detail.
Admission

Applicants to the M.F.A. program are evaluated mainly on a writing portfolio. The portfolio should include translations, including source texts, and an original critical literary essay or literary writing in English; a statement of purpose; and three letters of recommendation. Applicants should provide evidence of advanced competence in their source language—normally at least three years of college-level work or the equivalent—and substantial preparation in English literature. Availability of faculty expertise in the applicant’s source language and culture is considered in admission decisions.

All applicants must submit their scores on the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) General Test and transcripts from previous college-level study. Individuals whose first language is not English should provide scores on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL).

Applicants must meet the admission requirements of the Graduate College; see the Manual of Rules and Regulations of the Graduate College.

Financial Support

The program nominates up to two newly admitted, qualified students for the Iowa Arts Fellowship, a full-support fellowship awarded by the Graduate College each year. In addition, qualified students may receive teaching assistantships or part-time graduate assistantships. Students must apply for assistantships and other support; contact the Translation Program and the Office of Student Financial Aid for information.

Resources

Student translators in the M.F.A. program publish exchanges: a journal of literary translation. A vibrant source of international writing in translation, the journal provides hands-on editing and online publishing experience as well as an occasional venue for the editors’ own works. The M.F.A. program regularly hosts and cohosts conferences, invites speakers from around the world for readings and short-term residences, and is a constituent unit of the Virtual Writing University.

Courses

The Translation Program offers courses for undergraduates as well as graduate students. See “Courses” in the Division of World Languages, Literatures, and Cultures section of the Catalog for course descriptions and prerequisites for enrollment.

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<tr>
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<th>Course Title</th>
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<tr>
<td>TRNS:1017</td>
<td>Workshop in Literary Magazine Publishing</td>
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<tr>
<td>TRNS:1018</td>
<td>Workshop in Literary Review Writing</td>
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<tr>
<td>TRNS:2179</td>
<td>Undergraduate Translation Workshop</td>
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<td>TRNS:2499</td>
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<td>TRNS:3201</td>
<td>Workshop in Japanese Literary Translation</td>
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<tr>
<td>TRNS:3480</td>
<td>Literature and Translation</td>
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<td>TRNS:4100</td>
<td>Approaches to Critical Theory</td>
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<td>TRNS:4481</td>
<td>Introduction to Computer-Assisted Translation</td>
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<td>TRNS:5500</td>
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