

Literary Translation, MFA

Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to demonstrate:

- skills and knowledge of literary translation practice as a creative art;
- broad knowledge of the professional field of literary translation;
- familiarity with the cultural and literary context of the student's source language;
- understanding of literary translation as a critical and reflective practice, and of the history and contemporary discourse on translation theories; and
- ability to independently complete a literary translation project of scope and sophistication.

Requirements

The Master of Fine Arts program in literary translation requires 48 s.h. of graduate credit, including a thesis. Students must maintain a cumulative grade-point average of at least 2.75. They typically complete the program and graduate in two to three years.

Translators in the program focus on creating works that can convey the distinctness of the original languages and the immediacy of contemporary languages, whether poetry, fiction, or 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 circulate.

At the core of the MFA program are the workshops, TRNS:6555 Translator-in-Residence Workshop and TRNS:7460 Translation Workshop, which every student must take for a minimum of 12 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 a department in the Division of World Languages, Literatures, and Cultures or from one of the MFA writing programs. A third member joins the committee during the second year when a student submits the thesis proposal. At least one member of the committee should be competent in the student's source language.

The MFA with a major in literary translation requires the following work.

Required Courses

Course #	Title	Hours
All of these (36 s.h.):		
TRNS:6000	The Craft and Contexts of Translation	3

TRNS:6459	Issues in Translation	3
Courses in literature and culture of the source language, or specific genre aspects of the target literature		9
Courses in creative writing (chosen in consultation with advisor)		6
Additional course in theory (chosen in consultation with advisor)		3
Workshop courses, consisting of a mix of TRNS:6555 (usually taken once) and TRNS:7460 (usually taken three times)		12

Electives

Course #	Title	Hours
Students earn 9 s.h. in electives of their choice, or from additional coursework in translation:		
TRNS:4040	Topics in Translation	3-4
TRNS:4480	Literature and Translation	3
TRNS:5491	Translation Internship	1-2
TRNS:5500	Advanced Translation Practice	1-3

Thesis and Examination

Course #	Title	Hours
One of these:		
TRNS:6400	Thesis	3
TRNS:6444	Thesis Workshop	3

Students earn 3 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.

Combined Programs

French and Francophone World Studies, MA/Literary Translation MFA

The Department of French and Italian and the Literary Translation Program collaborate to offer a combined Master of Arts in French and Francophone world studies and Master of Fine Arts in literary translation. Students interested in writing in its different forms—creative, academic, and translation—will find the University of Iowa to be the ideal place to develop their talents and an attractive option for more diversified career preparation.

A separate application and admission to each degree program is required. For more information, review the admissions requirements for French and Francophone world studies and literary translation.

Students in the combined program earn both degrees by completing a minimum of 60 s.h. of coursework, fewer semester hours than if each degree was completed separately. Qualified students may be eligible for up to three years of full funding for a teaching assistant (TA) position.

Requirements

French and Francophone World Studies

Course #	Title	Hours
One of these:		
FREN:5000/ WLLC:5000	Teaching and Learning Languages	3
FREN:6005	Colloquium: Teaching French	3
Both of these:		
FREN:5001	Introduction to Graduate Study	2
FREN:5020	Comparative Stylistics	3
Seven courses in French and Francophone literature, culture, and/or linguistics		21

Students additionally complete written and oral final exams for the MA in French and Francophone world studies. Students are not required to complete a thesis; should they choose to do so, a separate thesis is required.

Literary Translation

Course #	Title	Hours
All of these:		
TRNS:6000	The Craft and Contexts of Translation	3
TRNS:6459	Issues in Translation	3
TRNS:5999	Publishing, Prizes, and Prestige	3
TRNS:6400	Thesis	1
TRNS:6444	Thesis Workshop	3
Six translation workshops (18 s.h.), of which 3 s.h. may be French to English translation		18
Total Hours		31

Students additionally complete a thesis for the MFA in literary translation.

Admission

Applicants to the 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. The availability of faculty expertise in the applicant’s source language and culture is considered in admission decisions.

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

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.

Career Advancement

Graduates 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 PhD; and to pursue other careers involving cross-cultural and artistic exchange. In recent years, publishers of works by translation alumni have included Greywolf Press, Seven Stories Press, Autumn Hill Books, Melville House, Words Without Borders, *The Iowa Review*, *91st Meridian*, Two Lines Press, *Circumference Poetry in Translation*, *The Literary Review*, Passport Publications and Media Corporation, *Absinthe*, and others.

Academic Plans

Sample Plan of Study

Sample plans represent one way to complete a program of study. Actual course selection and sequence will vary and should be discussed with an academic advisor. For additional sample plans, see MyUI.

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Course	Title	Hours
Academic Career		
Any Semester		
48 s.h. must be graduate level coursework; graduate transfer credits allowed upon approval. More information is included in the General Catalog and on department website. ^a		
Hours		0
First Year		
Fall		
TRNS:6000	The Craft and Contexts of Translation ^b	1
TRNS:6459	Issues in Translation	3
TRNS:6555	Translator-in-Residence Workshop ^c	3
Creative writing course ^d		3
Literature and culture of the source language course ^d		3
Hours		13
Spring		
TRNS:6000	The Craft and Contexts of Translation ^b	1
TRNS:7460	Translation Workshop ^c	3
Creative writing course ^d		3
Literature and culture of the source language course ^d		3
Elective course ^e		3
Hours		13
Second Year		
Fall		
Thesis Proposal		

TRNS:6000	The Craft and Contexts of Translation ^b	1
TRNS:7460	Translation Workshop ^c	3
	Literature and culture of the source language course ^d	3
	Theory course ^d	3
	Elective course ^e	3
	Hours	13
Spring		
TRNS:6444 or TRNS:6400	Thesis Workshop ^f or Thesis	3
TRNS:7460	Translation Workshop ^c	3
	Elective course ^e	3
	Exam: Master's Final Exam ^g	
	Hours	9
	Total Hours	48

a Students must complete specific requirements in the University of Iowa Graduate College after program admission. Refer to the Graduate College website and the Manual of Rules and Regulations for more information.

b Taken three times for 1 s.h. each semester.

c Complete workshop courses by taking a mix of TRNS:6555 (usually taken once) and TRNS:7460 (usually taken three times) for a total of 12 s.h.

d Work with faculty advisor to determine appropriate graduate level coursework and sequence.

e Students earn 9 s.h. in electives of their choice, or from additional coursework in translation; work with faculty advisor to select appropriate graduate coursework.

f Students earn 3 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. An oral defense of the thesis examines the student's translation and the introductory essay in detail.

g Oral thesis defense.