

# Comparative Literature

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Department Website: <http://complit.uchicago.edu>

The major in Comparative Literature leads to a BA degree and is designed to attract students who wish to pursue an interdisciplinary plan of course work focused on the study of literature as written in various languages and in various parts of the world.

One student might come to the University of Chicago with a strong background in languages other than English and want to work in two or more literatures (one of which can be English). Another student might have a strong interest in literary study and wish to address general, generic, and/or transnational questions that go beyond the boundaries of national literature offered in other literature departments. Or, a student might wish to pursue an in-depth study of the interrelationship of literature and culture, as well as issues that transcend the traditional demarcations of national literary history and area studies.

These descriptions of academic interest are not mutually exclusive. Each student will work with the Director of Undergraduate Studies to design a plan of course work that will suit his or her individual goals and that will take advantage of the rich offerings of the University.

## Program Requirements

The requirements outlined below are in effect as of Autumn Quarter 2018 and will apply to all students in the Class of 2020 and beyond. Students in the Classes of 2018 and 2019 may request to switch to the new requirements if the updated program suits their interests and fits within their graduation plans.

Students interested in applying to the major in Comparative Literature should review the following guidelines and consult with the Director of Undergraduate Studies in Comparative Literature. These guidelines are to assist students in developing a balanced and cohesive interdisciplinary plan of study.

The major is comprised of seven literature courses selected in consultation with the Director of Undergraduate Studies, one foundational course in comparative literary theory and methodology, two courses in literary theory, methods, or special topics in Comparative Literature, and a BA project workshop that serves as a capstone to the major.

A student works with the Director of Undergraduate Studies to identify a primary field (four courses) and secondary field (three courses). A student wishing to work in two literatures might choose two literatures as the primary and secondary fields (note: the second literature can be English). The secondary field might be a particular national literature or a portion of such a literature (e.g., poetry, drama, novel); another discipline (e.g., mathematics, history, film, performance studies, music); or literary theory.

Study abroad offers an attractive means of fulfilling various aims of this program. More than half of the major requirements must be satisfied by courses bearing University of Chicago numbers.

## Summary of Requirements

Three foreign language courses at the intermediate level or above (See Foreign Language Requirement for details)	300	
Four courses in a literature other than English, one of which can be in a closely related field	400	
Three courses in a secondary field, which can be literature in another language (including English), another discipline (e.g., mathematics, performance studies, music), or literary theory	300	
CMLT 20109	Comparative Methods in the Humanities	100
Two 20000-level courses in literary theory, methods, or special topics in Comparative Literature		200
CMLT 29801	B.A. Project and Workshop: Comparative Literature (See BA Project for details)	100
Total Units		1400

## Foreign Language Requirement

The Comparative Literature major requires three language courses in a single language at the intermediate level or above. Students who come in with advanced proficiency in a language other than English may instead substitute three courses in a third language, at any level. Though students must demonstrate proficiency through at least the second-year sequence in a foreign language, they are encouraged to continue their language study beyond the minimum required for the major. The Department of Comparative Literature works closely with the University of Chicago Language Center and will help students achieve their individual goals in language acquisition by suggesting programs of study that will add to their language expertise as appropriate.

## BA Project

The BA capstone project is to be completed in the student's last year of study. The project should be approved by the Director of Undergraduate Studies and is supervised by a faculty member of the student's choice in Comparative Literature. It may be co-advised by a faculty member from another department. Students must complete their formal application to the major by spring of third year and should identify a faculty advisor at that time.

One obvious choice for a BA project is a substantial essay in comparative literary study. This option should not, however, rule out other possibilities. Alternative examples are a translation from a foreign literature with accompanying

commentary or a written project based on research done abroad in another language and culture relating to comparative interests. Students are urged to base their project on comparative concepts and to make use of the language proficiency that they will develop as they meet the program's requirements. Visit [complit.uchicago.edu/undergraduate](http://complit.uchicago.edu/undergraduate) for more details on the BA project.

This program may accept a BA paper or project used to satisfy the same requirement in another major if certain conditions are met and with approval from both program chairs. Students should consult with the chairs by the earliest BA proposal deadline (or by the end of third year, when neither program publishes a deadline). A consent form, to be signed by both chairs, is available from the College adviser. It must be completed and returned to the College adviser by the end of Autumn Quarter of the student's year of graduation.

### Participation in the Program

Students should express their interest in the major as early as possible. The first step is to meet with the Director of Undergraduate Studies to consult about a program of study. Applicants must submit an application form which consists of a list of completed courses and a list of courses in which they are currently registered. Special mention should be made of language courses or other language training that affirms a student's level of language proficiency. Each proposal will be evaluated on the basis of the interest of the student and his or her achievement in the languages needed to meet the goals of the intended course of study. Students will be notified by email of their acceptance to the program. Finally, students will need to formalize their declaration through [my.uchicago.edu](http://my.uchicago.edu) with the assistance of the College adviser.

Comparative Literature majors should demonstrate literary proficiency in a language (other than English) that is relevant to their proposed course of study (as indicated in requirement number one above). This requirement must be met at the time of application or shortly thereafter. Proficiency is measured by the completion of a second-year sequence (or above) in the language or by demonstration of an equivalent skill. Language ability is essential to work in comparative literature of whatever sort. The Department of Comparative Literature works closely with the University of Chicago Language Center and will help students achieve their individual goals in language acquisition by suggesting programs of study that will add to their language expertise as appropriate.

### Grading

All courses to be used in the major must be taken for a quality grade of B– or higher, except for CMLT 29801, which is graded on a Pass/Fail basis.

### Honors

To be eligible for honors in Comparative Literature, students must earn an overall cumulative GPA of 3.25 or higher, and a GPA of 3.5 or higher in the major. They must also complete a BA essay or project that is judged exceptional in intellectual and/or creative merit by the first and second readers.

### Advising

Students must consult on an ongoing basis with the Director of Undergraduate Studies for selection and approval of course work for the major. Students will need to regularly provide documentation of any approvals for the major to their College adviser for the necessary processing. Further advice and counseling will be available from the preceptor for the program and from the faculty member who supervises the student's BA project.

### Comparative Literature Courses

#### **CMLT 20109. Comparative Methods in the Humanities. 100 Units.**

This course introduces models of comparative analysis across national literatures, genres, and media by focusing on poetry in different languages and cultures and in relation to other discursive and artistic forms. We will examine a wide variety of poetic and critical texts in order to explore such topics as the specificity of poetry and of poetic kinds; orality and folk, art, and popular song; poetry's relation to prose (from philosophy to autobiography to journalism); transnational imitation and translation; poetry and globalization; ekphrasis and poetry's relations to visual arts; and poetry and film. Readings will likely include poems by Sappho, Horace, Dante, Li Bai, Du Fu, Ronsard, Shakespeare, Milton, Basho, Goethe, Wordsworth, Robert Browning, and Dylan; and critical writings by Longinus, Plutarch, Montaigne, Li Zhi, Wordsworth, Auerbach, Jakobson, Adorno, Pasolini, Zumthor, Culler, and Damrosch.  
 Instructor(s): Joshua Scodel  
 Terms Offered: Spring  
 Equivalent Course(s): ENGL 28918

**CMLT 23212. Art, Ekphrasis, and Myth in Early Modern Spanish Theater. 100 Units.**

In the early modern age, the verbal had a strong visual component. Poets and playwrights utilized the sense of sight since it was the highest of the Platonic senses and a mnemonic key to lead spectators to remember vividly what they had read or heard, long before spectacle plays were in fashion. One important technique for visualization was ekphrasis, the description of an art work within a text. Often, to perform was to imitate the affects, sentiments and poses of a painting. For this purpose, playwrights such as Cervantes, Lope de Vega and Calderón often turned to the mythological canvases of the Italian Renaissance along with the portraits of great rulers and images of battle. The class will examine the uses of art onstage: mnemonic, mimetic, political, religious comic, tragic, lyric and licentious. It will also delve into different forms of ekphrasis from the notional to the dramatic and from the fragmented to the reversed. Although the course will focus on Spanish plays of the early modern period, it will also include ancient treatises by Cicero, and Pliny as well as Renaissance mnemonic treatises by Della Porta. The course will be in English. Reading knowledge of Spanish is required since plays will be read in the original. Those taking the class for credit in Spanish must write their final paper in Spanish.

Instructor(s): Frederick de Armas Terms Offered: Autumn

Equivalent Course(s): CMLT 33212, SPAN 33201, SPAN 23201

**CMLT 23700. How to do Things with South Asian Texts? Literary Theories and South Asian Literatures. 100 Units.**

This course provides an overview of different methods, approaches and themes currently prevalent in the study of South Asian texts from various periods. Topics covered will include translation (theory and practice), book history, literary history, textual criticism, genre theory (the novel in South Asia), literature and colonialism, cultural mobility studies (Greenblatt) and comparative literature/new philologies (Spivak, Ette). Readings will include work by George Steiner, Sheldon Pollock, Meenakshi Mukherjee, Terry Eagleton, Stephen Greenblatt, Gayatri Spivak, Ottmar Ette, and others. We will discuss these different approaches with particular reference to the texts with which participating students are working for their various projects. Students interested in both pre-modern and modern/contemporary texts are welcome. While the course is organized primarily from a literary studies perspective, it will also be of interest to students of history, anthropology and other disciplines dealing with "texts". The course is open to both undergraduate and graduate students (no prior knowledge of literary theory or South Asian writing is assumed).

Instructor(s): Sascha Ebeling Terms Offered: Spring

Equivalent Course(s): SALC 23700, CMLT 33700, SALC 33700

**CMLT 24105. Letters to Zion. 100 Units.**

This seminar centers the question: what do we mean when we describe Jewish authors and thinkers from the past as Zionist, anti-Zionist, or non-Zionist? We will approach this question by reading three correspondences: Kafka's letters to Felice Bauer, and the correspondences between Gershom Scholem and Hannah Arendt and between Paul Celan and Ilana Shmueli. In each case, the question of Zionism and of Israel looms in the background of the exchange in some way. Our key question is: can we definitively determine the position of each of these letter-writers on the question of Zionism? And do we want to? Or does the form of the correspondence rather open a possibility for a more flexible, complex account of their positions, allowing us to think of them as changing and evolving, indeed as dialogic? In addition to the letters themselves, we will read other texts by these authors and about them, as well as background reading on the letter as genre and as historical document. We will also take note of the fact that these are all exchanges that cross the gender divide and ask how the question of Zionist ideology intersects with issues of gender in Jewish history.

Instructor(s): Na'ama Rokem Terms Offered: Autumn

Equivalent Course(s): CMLT 34105, JWSC 24105

**CMLT 26210. Oedipus in Zion: The Oedipal Figure in Modern Hebrew Literature. 100 Units.**

Historians often refer to the emergence of Zionism as an "Oedipal Revolution. Hence, the secular son's rebellion against his orthodox father is understood as the thrust that triggered the modern Jewish revolution. Alan Mintz aptly described the inter-generational rift between fathers and sons at the turn of the 20th century as a tragic yet inevitable consequence of modernity, underscoring the psychological difficulties and political dilemmas that haunted the sons who were "banished from their father's table. This seminar will focus on the (highly androcentric) oedipal figure in literary theory and explore its prominence in modern Hebrew literature. Freud's preoccupation with the Oedipus complex at the turn of the century coincided with the emergence of a powerful oedipal narrative in modern Hebrew culture. This confluence provides a fascinating backdrop to the "invention" of the Oedipus complex. We will read a variety of literary texts which rework the oedipal figure from the late 19th century to the 1980s and beyond.

Instructor(s): Michael Gluzman

Equivalent Course(s): JWSC 26210, CMLT 36210

**CMLT 26660. The Rise of the Global New Right. 100 Units.**

This course traces the intellectual genealogies of the rise of a Global New Right in relation to the contexts of late capitalist neoliberalism, the fall of the Soviet Union, as well as the rise of social media. The course will explore the intertwining political and intellectual histories of the Russian Eurasianist movement, Hungarian Jobbik, the American Traditional Workers Party, the French GRECE, Greek Golden Dawn, and others through their published essays, blogs, vlogs and social media. Perhaps most importantly, the course asks: can we use f-word (fascism) to describe this problem? In order to pose this question we will explore the aesthetic concerns of the New Right in relation to postmodern theory, and the affective politics of nationalism. This course thus frames the rise of a global new right interdisciplinary and comparatively as a historical, geopolitical and aesthetic problem.

Instructor(s): Leah Feldman Terms Offered: Winter

Equivalent Course(s): SIGN 26050, ENGL 36660, ENGL 26660, REES 26660, REES 36660, CMLT 36660

**CMLT 28110. Queer Jewish Literature. 100 Units.**

Spanning medieval Hebrew to contemporary Yiddish, this course will explore the intersections of Jewish literature and queer theory, homophobia and antisemitism. While centered on literary studies, the syllabus will also include film, visual art, and music. Literary authors will include Bashevis Singer, Qalonymus ben Qalonymus, Irena Klepfisz, and others. Theorists will include Eve Sedgwick, Zohar Weiman-Kelman, Sander Gilman, and others. Readings will be in English translation.

Instructor(s): Anna Elena Torres Terms Offered: Winter

Equivalent Course(s): JWSC 28110, GNSE 38110, CMLT 38110, GNSE 28110





#### Font Notice

This document should contain certain fonts with restrictive licenses. For this draft, substitutions were made using less legally restrictive fonts. Specifically:

Times was used instead of Trajan.

Times was used instead of Palatino.

The editor may contact Leepfrog for a draft with the correct fonts in place.