

# Comparative Literature

*Chair of the Department of Comparative Literature: Joshua Scodel,  
Cl 43, 702-8501*

*Director of Undergraduate Studies: David Wray, Cl 28, 702-8563,  
dlwray@uchicago.edu*

*Departmental Office and Secretary: JoAnn Baum, Cl 116A, 702-8486*

*Web: [http://humanities.uchicago.edu/depts/complit/undergrad\\_program.html](http://humanities.uchicago.edu/depts/complit/undergrad_program.html)*

The major in Comparative Literature leads to a B.A. degree. This program 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.

Such a student might come to the University 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 by English and 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 design a plan of course work that will suit his or her individual goals and that will take advantage of the rich offerings of this university.

## Program Requirements

The aim of the following guidelines is to help students develop a balanced and coherent plan of study. The Director of Undergraduate Studies in Comparative Literature is available to discuss these guidelines with students who are interested in comparative literature.

1. In addition to the thirteen courses counted toward the major, students must complete a second-year sequence in a language other than English or demonstrate language ability of an equivalent skill through accreditation. Students should have completed this requirement, or be well on their way to its completion, by the time they apply to the program, typically the end of their second year. See Participation in the Program below for further details.
2. Six courses in a primary field, or in closely integrated subject areas in more than one field, are required.

3. Four courses in a secondary field, or in closely integrated subject areas in more than one field, are required.
4. Two courses that emphasize critical and intellectual methods in comparative literature are required, one of which must be an introduction to the study of comparative literature. See, for example, CMLT 26000, 26200, and 28000 under Courses.
5. One directed study course must be devoted to the preparation of the B.A. project (CMLT 29900). The project will be supervised by a faculty member of the student's choice, with that faculty member's consent and the approval of the Director of Undergraduate Studies; that faculty member may be, but need not be, on the faculty of Comparative Literature. A graduate student in Comparative Literature will serve as a tutor or preceptor for all B.A. projects, working with students on the mechanics of writing and providing tutorial assistance. For details, see the section on the B.A. project.
6. Although students do not register for the B.A. workshop, it is required for all majors. The workshop begins fifth week of Winter Quarter and continues until fifth or sixth week of Spring Quarter. All participants are required to present two drafts of their paper, one in the winter and the second in the spring. Participants other than the presenter make written comments on photocopies of the drafts, which are distributed at least twenty-four hours before the workshop meets each week. During the informal workshops, the drafts are discussed and constructive suggestions are offered to the presenters.

### Summary of Requirements

6	primary field courses
4	secondary field courses
2	critical/intellectual methods courses
<u>1</u>	B.A. project (CMLT 29900)
13	

The department encourages students to pursue further language study by taking courses in a second or third language. NOTE: Those language courses will be approved for use in the major only if they are at an intermediate or advanced level; elementary-level courses cannot be counted toward the total number of courses needed to complete the major.

Additional courses in critical/intellectual methods may be counted toward the six courses in the primary field or toward four courses in the secondary field if their materials are appropriate for those purposes, but the total number of courses presented for the major must total thirteen.

A typical student wishing to work in two literatures (one of which can be English) might choose two literatures as the primary and secondary fields. A student interested in literary study across national boundaries with a focus on generic and transnational questions might create a primary field along generic lines (e.g., film, the epic, the novel, poetry, drama, opera); the secondary field might be a particular national literature or a portion of such a literature. A student interested in literary and cultural theory might choose theory as either a primary or secondary field, paired with another field designed along generic lines or those of one or more national literatures.

Courses in the various literature departments and in Interdisciplinary Studies in the Humanities are obviously germane to the building of any individual program. A student is likely to find courses in the Humanities Collegiate Division and in the Department of History that extend beyond the usual definitions of literature (e.g., film, art, music, history) to be appropriate to her or his individual program of study. Study abroad offers an attractive means of fulfilling various aims of this program as well.

**Participation in the Program.** Students should express their interest in the major as soon as possible, typically before the end of their second year. The first step is to meet with the Director of Undergraduate Studies to consult about a program of study. Thereafter, students are required to submit a written proposal of about one thousand words in length that consists of two parts: (1) a statement explaining how the proposed plan of study will take advantage of existing College offerings and meet departmental requirements; and (2) a list of proposed courses (as well as alternates) and indications of how they will fulfill the department's requirements. Applicants must also submit 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.

Comparative Literature majors should demonstrate proficiency in a literary 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. Such proficiency is measured by the completion of a second-year sequence 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 takes language preparation into consideration when evaluating applications, but it will also help students achieve their individual goals by suggesting programs of study that will add to their language expertise as appropriate.

**B.A. Project.** One obvious choice for a B.A. project is a substantial essay in comparative literary study. This option should not, however, rule out other possibilities. Two examples might be 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. For details on the B.A. project, see the Web site at [http://humanities.uchicago.edu/depts/complit/undergrad\\_program.html](http://humanities.uchicago.edu/depts/complit/undergrad_program.html).

This program may accept a B.A. paper or project used to satisfy the same requirement in another major if certain conditions are met and with the consent of the other program chair. Approval from both program chairs is required. Students should consult with the chairs by the earliest B.A. 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.

**Grading.** All courses to be used in the major must be taken for a quality grade, which must be a *B-* or higher.

**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 B.A. essay or project that is judged exceptional in intellectual and/or creative merit by the first and second readers.

**Advising.** In addition to their College adviser, students should consult on an ongoing basis with the Director of Undergraduate Studies in the Department of Comparative Literature. Further advice and counseling will be available from the preceptor for the program and from the faculty member who supervises the student's B.A. project.

## Faculty

D. Bevington (Emeritus), T. Chin, A. Davidson, F. de Armas, L. Kruger, F. Meltzer, M. Murrin, T. J. Pavel, L. Rothfield, J. Scodel, N. Stahl (Visiting Professor), Y. Tsivian, R. von Hallberg, D. Wellbery, D. Wray, A. Yu (Emeritus)

## Courses: Comparative Literature (CMLT)

**20300. Contemporary Drama: Alienation and Cruelty.** (=ENGL 24502) *This course meets the critical/intellectual methods course requirement for students who are majoring in Comparative Literature.* This course takes as its starting point two radical positions that rethink the nature and purpose of theatricality in the twentieth century: Brecht's idea of the alienation-effect and Artaud's theatre of cruelty. We look at recent playwrights influenced by this tradition, including Heiner Müller, Bernard-Marie Koltès, Valère Novarina, Sarah Kane, Caryl Churchill, Tom Stoppard, David Mamet, Athol Fugard, and Jon Fosse. We give close attention to how these plays are aware of their own theatricality, and how this self-consciousness is related to these dramas' political message, their investigation

into subjectivity, and their “violence.” Texts in English and the original. *J. Ulliot. Spring.*

**20500/30500. History and Theory of Drama I.** (=ANST 21200, CLAS 31200, CLCV 21200, ENGL 13800/31000, ISHU 24200/34200) *May be taken in sequence with CMLT 20600/30600 or individually.* For course description, see English Language and Literature. *End-of-week workshops, in which individual scenes are read aloud dramatically and discussed, are optional but highly recommended.* *D. Bevington. Autumn, 2006.*

**20600/30600. History and Theory of Drama II.** (=ENGL 13900/31100, ISHU 24300/34300) *May be taken in sequence with CMLT 20500/30500 or individually.* For course description, see English Language and Literature. *End-of-week workshops, in which individual scenes are read aloud dramatically and discussed, are optional but highly recommended.* *D. Bevington, H. Coleman. Winter, 2007.*

**21200. Marxism and Modernism.** (=HUMA 23201, ISHU 23201/33201, RUSS 23200/33200) For course description, see Slavic Languages and Literatures (Russian). *Class discussion encouraged.* *R. Bird. Winter, 2008.*

**21600. Comparative Fairy Tale: The Brothers Grimm, H. C. Anderson, and Asbjørnsen and Moe.** (=GRMN 28500, HUMA 28400, NORW 28500, SCAN 28500) For course description, see Germanic Studies (Norwegian). *K. Kenny. Winter, 2007.*

**22100. Narratives of Suspense in European and Russian Literature and Cinema.** (=CMST 25102/35102, HUMA 26901/36901, ISHU 26901/36901, SLAV 26900/36900) For course description, see Slavic Languages and Literatures (General Slavic). *Class discussion encouraged.* *R. Bird. Autumn, 2006.*

**22400/32400. History of International Cinema I: Silent Era.** (=ARTH 28500/38500, ARTV 26500, CMST 28500/48500, ENGL 29300/47800, MAPH 33600) *PQ: CMST 10100 must be taken before or concurrently with this course. This is the first part of a two-quarter course. The two parts may be taken individually, but taking them in sequence is helpful.* For course description, see Cinema and Media Studies. *Y. Tivian. Winter, 2007.*

**22500/32500. History of International Cinema II: Sound Era to 1960.** (=ARTH 28600/38600, ARTV 26600, CMST 28600/48600, ENGL 29600/48900, MAPH 33700) *PQ: Prior or current registration in CMST 10100 required; CMST 28500/48500 strongly recommended.* For course description, see Cinema and Media Studies. *R. Gregg. Spring, 2007.*

**23500. Gender and Literature in South Asia.** (=GNDR 23001/33001, SALC 23002/33002) *Prior knowledge of South Asia not required.* For course description, see South Asian Languages and Civilizations. Texts in English. *V. Ritter. Spring, 2007.*

**24000. Fiction and Moral Life.** (=FREN 24000) For course description, see Romance Languages and Literatures (French). Students majoring in French will be required to read some of the texts in the original French language. *T. Pavel. Spring, 2007.*

**24800. Fiction and Freedom.** (=GRMN 25900) For course description, see Germanic Studies (German). *D. Wellbery. Winter, 2008.*

**25300. The Metaphor of the Insect as a Social Critique: Women in Modern Hebrew Literature.** (=NEHC 20460) This course is an exploration of twentieth-century Hebrew poetry and prose written by women. Through close reading of major works (in translation) by writers such as Dvora Baron, Elisheva, Yocheved Bat-Miriam, Rachel Blubstein, Ester Ra'ab, Lea Goldberg, Amalia Kahana-Carmon, Dalia Rabikovitch, Yona Wallach, and Orli Castel-Bloom, the course traces changes in themes and style and studies the emergence and the development of a "woman's voice" in modern Hebrew literature. Texts in English. *N. Stahl. Autumn, 2006.*

**25400. Contemporary Israeli Fiction.** (=NEHC 20461) This course examines the works of three major contemporary Israeli writers: Yehoshua Kenaz, Orly Castel-Bloom, and Yoel Hoffmann. We study the innovative use of style and genres in these works, as well as the new themes and agendas that they offer. Topics include social and political critiques, minority representations, and relation to Jewish history and tradition. Classes conducted in English, but students with knowledge of Hebrew are encouraged to read texts in the original. *N. Stahl. Spring, 2007.*

**25800. The Representation of Jesus in Modern Jewish Literature.** (=JWSC 24800, NEHC 20457, RLST 26601) This course examines the Jewish literary world's relation to the figure of Jesus from the end of the nineteenth century to the present. We study the transformations of Jesus through close readings of major works, both prose fiction and poetry, by Yiddish and Hebrew writers (e.g., Uri Zvi Greenberg, H. Leivick, Jacob Glatstein, S. Y. Agnon, Avraham Shlonsky, Natan Bistrizki, A. A. Kabak, Haim Hazaz, Zalman Shneior, Yigal Mosenzon, Avot Yeshurun, Nathan Zach, Yona Wallach, Yoel Hoffmann). Classes conducted in English, but students with knowledge of Hebrew are encouraged to read texts in the original. *N. Stahl. Autumn, 2006.*

**26000. Multi-Cultural Literatures in Medieval England.** (=ENGL 15801, RLST 28301) *Course meets the critical/intellectual methods course requirement for students majoring in Comparative Literature.* For course description, see English Language and Literature. *M. Murrin. Autumn, 2006.*

**26200. The Enlightenment and the Virtue of Selfishness in Its Historical Context.** (=FREN 26200, HUMA 24904, ISHU 24904) *Course meets the critical/intellectual methods course requirement for students majoring in Comparative Literature. Although the course will be taught in English, students who read French*

*authors on the syllabus in French and do all written work in French may receive credit toward the French major or minor.* For course description, see Humanities. K. Pagani. Winter, 2007.

**26800/36800. Ekphrasis on Stage: From Cervantes to Calderón.** (=SPAN 24301/34301) For course description, see Romance Languages and Literatures (Spanish). F. De Armas. Winter, 2007.

**27000. Historicizing Desire.** (=CLCV 27706, EALC 27410, GNDR 28001) This course examines conceptions of desire in ancient China and ancient Greece through an array of early philosophical, literary, historical, legal, and medical texts (e.g., Sima Qian, Mencius, *Book of Songs*, Plato, Sappho). We attempt not only to bring out the cultural specificities of ancient erotic experience but also to make visible the historical and geopolitical contingencies of our own methods of reading. We explore the broader cultural background of the two ancient periods, and engage with theoretical debates on the history of sexuality, feminist and queer studies, and East/West studies. T. Chin. Winter, 2007.

**27100. Soil: Patriotism, Pollution, and Literature.** (=CLCV 27406) This class investigates the deployment of soil as both symbol and material fact in various texts and traditions, along with the commonly associated practices and concepts of agriculture, property, migration, race, nationhood, and belonging. Our primary and critical texts arrive not only from radically different cultures but also in radically different forms. T. Chin. Spring, 2007.

**27900/37900. Lucretius and Karl Marx.** (=ANST 25606, CLAS 35606, CLCV 25606, FNDL 24211) For course description, see Classical Studies (Classical Civilization). E. Asmis. Autumn, 2006.

**28000. Racine's *Phèdre*: Text, Sources, and Translation.** (=FNDL 29401, FREN 23201) *Course meets the critical/intellectual methods course requirement for students majoring in Comparative Literature.* For course description, see Romance Languages and Literatures (French). Optional French discussion sessions offered weekly. French majors do all written work in French. Comparative Literature majors read one tragedy in the original (French, Latin, or Greek). L. Norman, D. Wray. Spring, 2007.

**28200/38200. Spiritual Exercises and Moral Perfectionism.** (=DVPR 31202, PHIL 21202/31202, RLST 23501) For course description, see Philosophy. A. Davidson. Autumn, 2006.

**28300. European Romanticism.** (=GRMN 28300) *PQ: Reading knowledge of German.* This course examines the philosophical foundations of Early German Romanticism and the major writers belonging to that period (i.e., F. Schlegel, Wackenroder, Tieck, Novalis, Bonaventura, Eichendorff). Simultaneously, we consider the manner in which the *Frühromantiker* affected the English and French versions of Romanticism. F. Meltzer. Winter, 2007.

**28600. Literature and Madness.** (=GRMN 26500) For course description, see Germanic Studies (German). *C. Frey. Spring, 2008.*

**28800/38800. Tolstoy and Stendhal.** (=RUSS 22301/32301) *PQ: Advanced standing.* For course description, see Slavic Languages and Literatures (Russian). *L. Steiner. Winter, 2008.*

**28900/38900. The Novel and Education in Russia: 1840s to 1860s.** (=RUSS 27901/37901) For course description, see Slavic Languages and Literatures (Russian). *L. Steiner. Autumn, 2006.*

**29000/39000. Poetic Cinema.** (=CMST 25501/35501, ISHU 29002, RLIT 39000, RLST 28401, RUSS 29001/39001) For course description, see Slavic Languages and Literatures (Russian). *R. Bird. Winter, 2007.*

**29200/39200. Extremist Poetry: Paul Celan and Sylvia Plath.** (=ENGL 27802/47802, GRMN 29206/39206) *PQ: Reading knowledge of German.* This course examines the relation of lyric poetry to extreme historical experience, considering the Shoah in particular. We focus on Celan's poems for seven weeks and then on Plath's late work for three weeks. *R. von Hallberg. Spring.*

**29300/39300. How Dostoevsky's *The Idiot* Is Made.** (=ENGL 28902/48902, HUMA 27801, RUSS 27801/37801) *Reading knowledge of Russian, French, and/or Spanish is helpful but not required.* This course examines the intellectual and aesthetic backgrounds and structure of Dostoevsky's novel *The Idiot* (1869). We approach *The Idiot* in the contexts of both European and Russian literary traditions, exploring its links to such antecedents as Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, Dickens' *The Pickwick Papers*, and Flaubert's *Simple Heart*, as well as its influence on Dostoevsky's later works such as *The Demons* and *The Brothers Karamazov*. All work in English. *L. Steiner. Spring, 2007.*

**29700. Reading Course.** *PQ: Consent of instructor and Director of Undergraduate Studies. Students are required to submit the College Reading and Research Course Form. Must be taken for a quality grade. This course does not satisfy distribution requirements for CMLT majors unless an exception is made by the Director of Undergraduate Studies. Autumn, Winter, Spring.*

**29900. B.A. Project: Comparative Literature.** *PQ: Consent of instructor and Director of Undergraduate Studies. Students are required to submit the College Reading and Research Course Form.* In consultation with a faculty member, students devote the equivalent of a one-quarter course to the preparation of a B.A. project. *Autumn, Winter, Spring.*

**36900-37000. Non-Discursive Representation from Goethe to Wittgenstein I, II.** (=GRMN 36500-36600, PHIL 50500-50501) *Must be taken in sequence.* For course description, see Germanic Studies (German). *D. Wellbery, J. Conant. Autumn, 2006; Winter, 2007.*