COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

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The Comparative Literature major allows students to address fundamental questions about the nature, function, and value of literature in a broadly comparative context. Students read and write about a wide variety of literary works across periods, genres, and national traditions. They investigate ancient and contemporary approaches to literary study, theories and methods of comparison, and the relationship of literature to film and other media. Majors have the freedom to construct a program of study that reflects their intellectual goals. All prospective majors should register with the director of undergraduate studies (DUS), who will work with them to develop a coherent sequence of courses suited to their individual interests.

The Comparative Literature major offers four unique concentrations: Literature and Comparative Cultures; Intensive Language; Film; and Literary Translation. These concentrations share the same core courses, while providing opportunity for students to explore their particular interests within the study of literature. Other courses are normally chosen from different language and literature programs, many of which offer courses on literature and film in translation. Among these programs are African American Studies, Classics, East Asian Languages and Literatures, English Language and Literature, Film and Media Studies, French, German Studies, Italian, Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Portuguese, Slavic Languages and Literatures, and Spanish.

Prospective majors are strongly encouraged to begin the study of a foreign language as early as possible in their academic careers and to continue such study throughout their time at Yale. All concentrations of the Comparative Literature major require students to have advanced (L4/L5) competence in at least one foreign language. Students interested in graduate study in comparative literature should be aware that many programs require reading knowledge of two or three foreign languages.

REQUIREMENTS OF THE MAJOR

The major for the Class of 2021 With the approval of the DUS, the following changes to the requirements of the major may be fulfilled by students who declared their major under previous requirements.

The major for the Class of 2022 and subsequent classes The Comparative Literature major requires twelve term courses, including the senior requirement. Prospective majors must take two required foundational seminars, one of which must be LITR 130. Beyond the two required courses and the senior essay, the major requires nine term courses, with specific requirements for each concentration. All concentrations require students to take courses in at least one foreign literature; all have a period requirement and a theory requirement.

For the period requirement, students must take at least one course in three of five historical periods: 1) Antiquity; 2) Medieval; 3) Early Modern; (4) 17th–18th centuries; and (5) the Modern period (1800–present). Courses taken from other departments (excluding Directed Studies) may fulfill the period requirement with DUS permission.

For the theory requirement, students must take one elective course that involves a significant component of literary or cultural theory. Students who wish to know if a particular course, particularly those offered in other departments, may count toward this requirement should consult the DUS.

The Literature and Comparative Cultures concentration

Prospective majors electing the Literature and Comparative Cultures concentration must take two required foundational seminars; LITR 130 and one of LITR 140, 143, or 348. Beyond the two required courses and the senior essay, the concentration requires three courses in a foreign literature (see below), three courses that fulfill the period requirement, and three elective courses. One of the electives must involve a significant element of literary or cultural theory. All three elective courses may be taken in any literature department and may include two courses in a related discipline that has direct bearing on the student’s program of study in literature, such as history of art, philosophy, anthropology, music, or theater studies. One of the elective courses may be in creative writing or Directed Studies.

Foreign literature requirement All majors are required to take at least three courses, one of which may award the language distributional requirement (L5), in an ancient or modern foreign literature, in which the literature is read in the original language. Two courses can be taken at a basic literature level (normally equivalent to the third year of language study), but at least one course must be taken at an advanced level (normally equivalent to the fourth year of language study or higher).

The Intensive Language concentration

Prospective majors electing this concentration focus their plan of study on two foreign literatures studied in the original language. They must take two required foundational seminars: LITR 130 and LITR 140; three courses in one foreign literature (one of which may be an L5 course); two courses in a second foreign literature (one of which may be an L5 course); three courses that fulfill the period requirement; and one elective that involves a significant element of literary or cultural theory. In all five of the foreign literature courses, the literature must be read in the original language.
The Film concentration

Students in the Film concentration focus their plan of study on film and media. They must take two required foundational seminars: LITR 130 and LITR 143 (or equivalent approved by DUS); three courses that fulfill the period requirement; and they must take two foreign literature courses (rather than three, though neither course may be substituted with an advanced language course). In addition, students in the film concentration must take one course in film theory and must choose their three electives from courses in Film and Media Studies.

The Literary Translation concentration

Students in the Literary Translation concentration focus on the theory and practice of literary translation. They must take two required foundational seminars: LITR 130 and LITR 348 (or equivalent approved by DUS); three courses that fulfill the period requirement; three courses in one foreign literature (one of which must be an L5 course); and must also choose two of their three electives from courses that engage with some aspect of translation studies; the office of the DUS maintains a list of qualifying courses.

Credit/D/Fail A maximum of two courses taken Credit/D/Fail may count toward the major, with permission of the DUS. None of the specific required courses may be taken Credit/D/Fail.

SENIOR REQUIREMENT

For the senior essay, students develop a research topic of their choice and work closely with a faculty adviser, preferably from the department. Normally, the essay makes use of texts in the language of their original composition. Any exceptions must be approved by the DUS. Deadlines for the prospectus, the rough draft, and the completed essay are listed in the course descriptions of the senior essay course (LITR 491, 492, 493).

The senior essay may be written over one term (LITR 491) or over two terms (LITR 492, 493). Students with an especially well-developed project may petition to write a yearlong senior essay. Interested juniors must apply to the DUS by the last day of classes in the spring term. Students may count the second term of the essay as one elective course toward the total number of courses required for the major. Students expecting to graduate in May enroll in LITR 492 during the fall term and complete their essays in LITR 493 in the spring term. December graduates enroll in LITR 492 in the spring term and complete their essays in LITR 493 during the following fall term. Students planning to begin their essay in the spring term should notify the DUS by the last day of classes in the fall term.

ADVISING AND COURSE SUBSTITUTIONS

A literature course in English translation is sometimes suitable as a foreign literature course. In such cases, majors are expected to request additional assignments from their instructors that demonstrate they have engaged with the texts in the original language. They should submit the appropriate form, signed by the instructor, attesting to their intent to do so. This form is available in the department office in Rm. 102, 451 College St.; students should submit it to the DUS along with their course schedule.

Non-native speakers of English who are granted permission by Yale College to complete the foreign language distributional requirement by taking ENGL 114, 115, 120, 121, or 450 may take three additional English literature courses to fulfill the foreign literature requirement of this concentration, or they may fulfill the major requirements in a third language.

STUDY ABROAD

Comparative Literature majors are encouraged to consider spending a summer, a term, or a year abroad. One course taken through international programs may, with permission of the DUS, be applied to the literature requirement.

COURSES WITH ADVANCED LITERATURE INSTRUCTION

The following table lists languages in which advanced literature instruction is available at Yale, specifying courses that fulfill the basic and advanced literature requirements for the majors. Courses with numbers higher than those listed also normally fulfill the requirement, providing that they focus on literature (rather than language) and that the literature is read in the original language.

Other ancient and modern languages, including those from Africa, South Asia, and the Middle East, may be suitable for either major if a qualified faculty adviser is available to supervise the student.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Basic Literature Course</th>
<th>Advanced Literature Course</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>ARBC 150, 151</td>
<td>ARBC 161 or 165</td>
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<td>Chinese</td>
<td>CHNS 150, 151</td>
<td>CHNS 170 or 171</td>
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<td>French</td>
<td>FREN 170</td>
<td>Courses in French numbered 200 or higher</td>
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<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>Courses in German numbered 170 or higher</td>
<td>Courses in German numbered 200 or higher</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ancient Greek</td>
<td>GREK 131 or 141</td>
<td>Ancient Greek courses numbered 400 or higher</td>
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<tr>
<td>Modern Hebrew</td>
<td>By arrangement with instructor</td>
<td>By arrangement with instructor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>ITAL 162 and 172</td>
<td>Courses in Italian numbered 200 or higher</td>
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<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>JAPN 150, 151</td>
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<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>KREN 150, 151</td>
<td>EALL 470 or 471</td>
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Latin courses numbered 400 or higher
Persian: Courses in Russian numbered 170 or higher
Portuguese: Courses in Spanish numbered 300 or higher

REQUIREMENTS OF THE MAJOR

Prerequisites  None
Number of courses  12 term courses (incl senior req)
Specific courses required  All concentrations – LITR 130; Literature and Comparative Cultures – 1 of LITR 140, 143, or 348; Intensive Language – LITR 140; Film – LITR 143; Literary Translation – LITR 348 or equivalent
Distribution of courses  Literature and Comparative Cultures – 3 courses in a foreign lit, as specified; 3 period courses, as specified; 3 elective courses, 1 of which must involve a significant element of literary or cultural theory; Intensive Language – 2 courses in a second foreign lit; Film – 2 courses in a foreign lit, as specified; 1 course in film theory; 3 electives in Film and Media Studies; Literary Translation – 2 of 3 electives in translation studies
Senior requirement  One-term senior essay (LITR 491); or two-term senior essay (LITR 492 and LITR 493)

The Comparative Literature program is designed for students interested in literary studies who do not want to limit their programs to a single national literature. The major allows students to develop knowledge of multiple languages and cultures, and can be the foundation of an international education.

First-year students with a broad interest in the humanities might consider the Comparative Literature major because it allows the study of literature to be combined with work in history, philosophy, art, film, and other fields. Students may also pursue particular thematic interests such as gender issues, literature’s historical context, or religious and political dimensions of literature. The Comparative Literature major offers four unique concentrations: Literature and Comparative Cultures; Intensive Language; Film; and Literary Translation. These concentrations share the same core courses, while providing opportunity for students to explore their particular interests with the study of literature.

Prospective majors should begin or continue language study during the first year. Interested students are also encouraged to take one or two courses that include some major texts of the Western literary tradition and count toward the major. These courses include:

- DRST 001, Directed Studies: Literature
- DRST 002, Directed Studies: Literature
- ENGL 129, Tragedy in the European Literary Tradition

Students interested in the Comparative Literature major should consult the director of undergraduate studies (DUS) and review the department website.

FACULTY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

Professors  Dudley Andrew, Peter Brooks (Emeritus), Rüdiger Campe, Katerina Clark, Roberto González Echevarría, Martin Hägglund, Hannan Hever, Carol Jacobs (Emeritus), Pericles Lewis, Rainer Niggele (Emeritus), David Quint, Katie Trumpener, Jing Tsu, Jane Tylus

Associate Professors  Robyn Creswell, Marta Figlerowicz, Moira Fradinger, Ayesha Ramachandran

Assistant Professor  Samuel Hodgkin

Senior Lecturer  Samuel Hodgkin

Lecturers  Jan Hagens, Candace Skorupa, George Syrimis

Affiliated Faculty  Rolena Adorno (Spanish & Portuguese), R. Howard Bloch (French), Francesco Casetti (Film & Media Studies), Kang-i Sun Chang (East Asian Languages & Literatures), Michael Denning (American Studies), Wai Chee Dimock (English), Alice Kaplan (French), Tina Lu (East Asian Languages & Literatures), John MacKay (Slavic Languages & Literatures), Giuseppe Mazzotta (Italian), Christopher L. Miller (French), Joseph Roach (English), Maurice Samuels (French), Ruth Yeazell (English)

View Courses