

Catalog Year: 2020-2021

Comparative Literature

AN INTERDEPARTMENTAL MAJOR

The Comparative Literature Major introduces students to fundamental questions about the nature, function, and value of literature in an expansive and broadly comparative context – outside national and linguistic boundaries and in conversation with other texts, cultures, media, or technologies. CPLT majors become adept in multiple cultures and disciplines; they develop habits of mind as well as skills in close reading, critical analysis and written communication that will serve them throughout their lives as citizens and in any career they might choose.

The program brings together faculty from Classics, East Asian Studies, English, French, German Studies, Italian Studies, Middle Eastern Studies, Spanish, and Russian to showcase the exciting breadth and diversity of literary study at Wellesley. Students draw from coursework offered in a variety of departments and programs to construct a program of study that reflects their intellectual goals and areas of interest. Students and faculty in CPLT are vitally engaged with not only language and literature departments but also with interdisciplinary programs such as American Studies, Peace and Justice Studies, Africana Studies, Women's and Gender Studies, Environmental Studies, to name just a few.

All students planning to major in Comparative Literature should work with the director of the program or a major advisor, who will help them develop a coherent, well-focused sequence of courses suited to their individual interests. A student in CPLT might study topics that link literature, defined expansively, with visual media, gender and sexuality, literary history, philosophy, linguistics, environmental studies, colonialism, human rights and global censorship, postcolonial and diaspora studies, literary theory, film, and translation. Majors in CPLT often pursue double majors, because of the flexibility of the major, which allows them to combine their interests in multiple fields, including STEM fields, and to structure their degrees around them. A major in Comparative Literature will add value to any resume, and our graduates pursue careers such as media, law, public service, the non-profit sector, publishing, international business, and academia, among others.

Comparative Literature Major

Goals for the Comparative Literature Major

- Practice and refine skills in the analysis of literary texts, genres and literary movements across departmental, national, and linguistic boundaries as well as in relationship to other texts, cultures, media or technologies.

- Learn to recognize and apply key concepts of theoretical approaches to cultural and textual studies.
- Acquire an overview of the history and disciplines of Comparative Literature and world literature, especially as they evolve in the current global literary moment.
- Acquire a thorough understanding of the dynamics presented by a literary text in translation and adaptation.

Requirements for the Comparative Literature Major

The requirements for the major are as follows: Nine units of course work are required for the major, at least five of which should be from the CPLT curriculum and must include CPLT 180, which should be taken early on in a student's studies and CPLT 375, the capstone course in translation. In addition, students take at least one course outside the modern period and three courses in an area of concentration to be developed in consultation with the advisor and director, and at least one of these classes must be at the 300 level. Students may choose to concentrate in the literature of a nation or a region or in a specific field of inquiry (e.g. literature & religion, translation, literature & politics, philosophical or theoretical inquiries into literature, visual arts & literature, etc.) .

Students are encouraged to explore the diversity of literary studies offered in other departments at the college or if they choose to study abroad. Most courses that deal significantly with literature broadly defined will count for the major, but students are encouraged to consult the Director or Major Advisor to confirm that a course outside CPLT will count toward the major. All units must count toward the major in the departments in which they are offered (unless they are language courses, of which no more than one 200-level course may be counted toward the major).

Honors in Comparative Literature

There are two routes to honors in the major: Plan A entails writing a thesis. Plan B entails a dossier of essays written for several courses with a statement of connections among them and critical questions raised by them. Both Plan A and Plan B require a student to pass an oral exam.

To be admitted to the honors program, a student must have a grade point average of at least 3.5 in all work in the major field above the 100 level; the department may petition on her behalf if her GPA in the major is between 3.0 and 3.5. See Academic Distinctions.

CPLT Courses

Course ID CPLT 175: What is Truth?

This course is an exploration of the notion of "the truth" in a variety of contexts and disciplines. While facts are often taken to be the basis for truth, facts can also spawn untruths or be in

question themselves. Focusing on how several disciplines in the sciences, social sciences, and humanities arrive at, and represent, "truths," we will further explore the relationship between reality and different types of fictional narratives: realist, science, dystopian, utopian, for example. Can there be "truth" in any kind of fiction? What is the relationship between truth and reality in these different disciplines, contexts, and genres? Why do truth and reality become such contested fields in politics and what are some methods used to manipulate them in political discourse? Each student will complete a final project which pursues the question "What is truth?" in a delineated context or field.

Units: 1; Max Enrollment: 60; Crosslisted Courses: CPLT 175; Prerequisites: None; Instructor: Prabhu; Distribution Requirements: LL - Language and Literature; Semesters Offered this Academic Year: Fall;

Course ID: CLST180/ENG180 Title: What is World Literature?

"World Literature" views a literary work as the product of local culture, then of regional or national culture, and finally of global culture. Critics of world literature argue that a text's richness may be lost in translation, that too often a privileged Western literary tradition forces "other" literatures into a relationship of belatedness and inferiority, and that world literature leads to the globalization of culture-and as the global language becomes predominantly English, the world of literature will be known through that single language alone. This course offers an opportunity to not only read rich and exciting literary texts from ancient eras to the contemporary moment but also after reading key critical essays that defend and critique "World Literature" to reflect on the cultural politics that directly or indirectly determines who reads what. Range of texts from contemporary Arabic short fiction, science fiction from China and Africa, global gothic fiction, and poetic forms across time and cultures. *Fulfills the Diversity of Literatures in English requirement.*

Units: 1; Max Enrollment: 60; Crosslisted Courses: CLST180; Prerequisites: None; Instructor: Sides; Distribution Requirements: LL - Language and Literature; Semesters Offered this Academic Year: Fall;

Course ID: CLST200 Title: Graphic Novel - Digital Texts

Intrigued by the complex relationship between image and text, this course will survey major moments in the emergence of the graphic novel and in the development of digital texts in general. We will develop a vocabulary to analyze both the narrative and visual dimensions of the texts at hand to understand what it means to "read," to "play," or to interact with visual and computer-based texts. As a Comparative Literature course, the syllabus will include texts belonging to different literary traditions.

Units: 1; Max Enrollment: 25; Prerequisites: None; Instructor: Nolden (German Studies) ;
Distribution Requirements: LL - Language and Literature; ARS - Visual Arts, Music, Theater, Film
and Video; Semesters Offered this Academic Year: Not Offered;

Course ID: CPLT 210 Title: Beyond Europe: Colonies, Literature, and the Making of Modernity
Historians have shown how features of modernity, such as aspects of governmentality,
secularism, public education, advances in medicine or urban planning, and even technologies
such as film, often originated in the colonies or were dependent on Europe's colonial ventures
for their conception and development into what we too easily take as quintessential European
features. Turning to a broad geography of postcolonial regions in Africa, the Indian
subcontinent, the Caribbean, the Indian Ocean, New Zealand, Ireland, and Australia, this course
proceeds from the idea of European Modernity as it takes shape in a range of colonial
literature. We extend the notion of the "modern" in European Modernity by engaging with
postcolonial creativity. Materials from colonial and postcolonial contexts are also drawn from
cinema, advertisements, the press, and historical documents. No knowledge of foreign
languages is required. All texts will be read in English or English translation (originals may be
used by those fluent in French or vernacular languages for the concerned texts) ; films all have
subtitles.

Units: 1; Max Enrollment: 25; Prerequisites: None; Instructor: Prabhu; Distribution
Requirements: LL - Language and Literature; ARS - Visual Arts, Music, Theater, Film and Video;
Semesters Offered this Academic Year: Fall;

Course ID: CLST225 Title: Digital Media & Culture

In this course, we will analyze some of the profound changes that digital media have brought to
traditional ways of reading & writing, playing, interacting with others, and learning. Starting out
with a discussion of digital texts / hyperfiction, we will look into new forms of narrating and
reading before focusing on the way we connect with others - and ourselves - by using social
media. The last unit of the course will cover the implications of digital media for the way we
learn and know things.

Units: 1; Max Enrollment: 25; Prerequisites: None.; Instructor: Nolden; Distribution
Requirements: LL - Language and Literature; ARS - Visual Arts, Music, Theater, Film and Video;
Semesters Offered this Academic Year: Not Offered;

Course ID: CLST236/EALC236 Title: The Girl in Modern East Asian Culture (In English)

In East Asia, the rise of the girl in literary and popular culture coincides with the appearance of
modernity itself. Beginning with the 'modern girl,' we move chronologically, exploring coming-
of-age tropes in East Asian fiction, manga, anime, and film. How does the objectification of the
adolescent girl illuminate issues around ethnicity, national identity, sexuality, even
globalization? What national anxieties hover around girls' bodies? We read texts in English
translation and explore models of female development that might aid us in our exploration of

this cultural phenomenon. Secondary readings include works by Sigmund Freud, Julia Kristeva, Marianne Hirsch, Carol Gilligan, Elizabeth Grosz, among others.

Units: 1; Max Enrollment: 30; Crosslisted Courses: CLST236; Prerequisites: None; Instructor: Zimmerman; Distribution Requirements: LL - Language and Literature; ARS - Visual Arts, Music, Theater, Film and Video; Typical Periods Offered: Fall; Semesters Offered this Academic Year: Not Offered;

Course ID: CPLT 238 Title: The Color of Green Literature: Writing in the Face of Environmental Collapse

This course discusses the narrative challenges posed by the Anthropocene, the era in history in which “humans have become geological agents, changing the most basic physical processes of the Earth.” (Dipesh Chakrabarty) Reading fictional and critical texts that have emerged in different parts of the world over the course of the last three decades, we will try to answer the following questions: What are the fictional tools and aesthetic strategies that writers are exploring to address the climate catastrophe? Is the catastrophist recounting (Amitav Ghosh) of the apocalypse in dystopian fiction the primary mode of literary responses? What are the contributions of science fiction? What can we learn from environmental criticism about the ethics of “green writing”? Are there traditions of writing about biocide to which contemporary authors can turn when creating new narratives adequate to capture the environmental crisis? How is the tension between the local and the global resolved in these new narratives?

Units: 1; Max Enrollment: 25; Crosslisted ES238; Prerequisites: None; Instructor: Nolden; Distribution Requirements: LL - Language and Literature; Semesters Offered this Academic Year: Fall;

Course ID: CLST247/ENG247/MER247 Title: Arthurian Legends

The legends of King Arthur and the knights of the Round Table, with their themes of chivalry, magic, friendship, war, adventure, corruption, and nostalgia, as well as romantic love and betrayal, make up one of the most influential and enduring mythologies in European culture. This course will examine literary interpretations of the Arthurian legend, in history, epic, and romance, from the sixth century through the sixteenth. We will also consider some later examples of Arthuriana, on page and movie screen, in the Victorian and modern periods.

Units: 1; Max Enrollment: 30; Crosslisted Courses: CLST247; Prerequisites: None; Instructor: Wall-Randell; Distribution Requirements: LL - Language and Literature; Typical Periods Offered: Spring; Semesters Offered this Academic Year: Not Offered;

Course ID: CPLT 260 Global Crime Fiction

Crime fiction has been a widespread literary genre since ancient times and has become even more popular in the epoch of globalization. Novels by crime fiction authors have long been best sellers and are among the world’s most translated texts. The course offers both a historical and geographical survey of the genre. Beginning with *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles, Chinese crime

fiction of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and classic Anglo-American crime fiction of the nineteenth century, the course will include texts by Japanese, Chinese, Yemeni, Italian, Turkish and French authors. Topics to be discussed will include the changing role, gender and sexual preference of the detective; the ideological implications of solving crime; the figure of the deviant; and post-modern crime fiction. We will also devote time to the NPR podcast *Serial*, initiatives such as the European Union's Detecting Transcultural Identity in European Popular Crime Narratives and to real life collective, crowd-sourced investigative phenomena such as Bellingcat.

Units: 1; Max Enrollment: 30; Crosslisted Courses: CLST260; Prerequisites: None; Instructor: Ward; Distribution Requirements: LL - Language and Literature; Typical Periods Offered: Spring; Semesters Offered this Academic Year: Spring;

Course ID: CLST275 Title: Translation and the Multilingual World

A study of translation in theory and in practice, in its literal and metaphorical senses alike, and of the multilingual world in which translation takes place. Topics: translation of literary texts, translation of sacred texts, the history and politics of translation, the lives of translators, translation and gender, machine translation, adaptation as translation. Students taking the course at the 300 level will do a substantial independent project: a translation, a scholarly inquiry, or a combination of the two.

Units: 1; Max Enrollment: 30; Crosslisted Courses: CLST275; Prerequisites: One course in literature (in any language) or permission of the instructor. Competence in a language or languages other than English is useful but not necessary. Instructor: Petterson; Distribution Requirements: LL - Language and Literature; Typical Periods Offered: Fall; Semesters Offered this Academic Year: Spring;

Course ID: CLST284 Title: Magical Realism

This course examines fictions whose basic reality would be familiar if not for the introduction of a magical element that undermines commonplace notions about what constitutes reality in the first place. The magical element can be a demon, talisman, physical transformation, miraculous transition in space or time, appearance of a second plane of existence, revelation of the unreality of the primary plane of existence, etc. Students will read Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, Queneau's *The Blue Flowers*, Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*, Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Calvino's *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler*, Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*, Murakami's *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World* and Sokolov's *School for Fools*, and short stories by Borges, Cortazar, and Nabokov.

Units: 1; Max Enrollment: 40; Prerequisites: None; Instructor: Weiner (Russian); Distribution Requirements: LL - Language and Literature; Semesters Offered this Academic Year: Not offered;

Course ID: CLST294 Title: Utopia and Dystopia in Literature

In his Republic Plato described his utopia as a land where people are divided into four classes depending on their intelligence, where a philosopher-king rules over all, and a guardian class spies and protects, where private property is forbidden and where children are taken from their parents to be raised for the state and taught only things that will increase their loyalty to the state. Eugenics is practiced, literature banished. Plato's vision has inspired socialist utopian fantasies and dystopian warnings alike. Students will read Nikolai Chernyshevsky's *What's to Be Done?*, H.G. Wells' *Time Machine* and *A Modern Utopia*, Evgeny Zamyatin's *We*, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, George Orwell's *1984*, Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged*. We will examine the ideas and plans of Plato, Charles Fourier, Jeremy Bentham, Charles Darwin, Cecil Rhodes and others as they take shape on the pages of the novels we read. And we will consider the extent to which the utopias we read are prophesy or proscription.

Units: 1; Max Enrollment: 20; Prerequisites: None; Instructor: Weiner; Distribution Requirements: LL - Language and Literature; Typical Periods Offered: Fall; Semesters Offered this Academic Year: Fall;

Course ID: CLST350 Title: Research or Individual Study

Units: 1; Max Enrollment: 15; Prerequisites: Permission of the director. Open to juniors and seniors.; Typical Periods Offered: Spring; Fall; Semesters Offered this Academic Year: Spring; Fall;

Course ID: CLST360 Title: Senior Thesis Research

Units: 1; Max Enrollment: 15; Prerequisites: Permission of the director.; Typical Periods Offered: Spring; Fall; Semesters Offered this Academic Year: Fall; Spring; Notes: Students enroll in Senior Thesis Research (360) in the first semester and carry out independent work under the supervision of a faculty member. If sufficient progress is made, students may continue with Senior Thesis (370) in the second semester.;

Course ID: CLST370 Title: Senior Thesis

Units: 1; Max Enrollment: 25; Prerequisites: CPLT 360 and permission of the department.; Typical Periods Offered: Spring; Fall; Semesters Offered this Academic Year: Spring; Fall; Notes: Students enroll in Senior Thesis Research (360) in the first semester and carry out independent work under the supervision of a faculty member. If sufficient progress is made, students may continue with Senior Thesis (370) in the second semester.;

Course ID: CLST375 Title: Translation and the Multilingual World

A study of translation in theory and in practice, in its literal and metaphorical senses alike, and of the multilingual world in which translation takes place. Topics: translation of literary texts,

translation of sacred texts, the history and politics of translation, the lives of translators, translation and gender, machine translation, adaptation as translation. Students taking the course at the 300 level will do a substantial independent project: a translation, a scholarly inquiry, or a combination of the two.

Units: 1; Max Enrollment: 30; Crosslisted Courses: CLST375; Prerequisites: One course in literature (in any language) or permission of the instructor. Competence in a language or languages other than English is useful but not necessary. Instructor: Petterson; Distribution Requirements: LL - Language and Literature; Typical Periods Offered: Fall; Semesters Offered this Academic Year: Spring;