The Comparative Literary Studies Program is an interdepartmental, interdisciplinary program for the study of literature across national and linguistic lines. Those who work in the field of comparative literature hold that language is not an indifferent medium of expression but an integral dimension of every expressive act. Drawing on faculty from the various literature departments as well as from disciplines such as art history, film studies, music, and philosophy, the CLS program examines literary texts within the context of diverse literary traditions and other cultural phenomena. CLS encourages students not only to read and interpret works of literature but also to reflect on the assumptions and methods that shape literary and other humanistic studies.

In contrast to studying one culture’s literature over a specific time period, CLS juxtaposes literatures of different cultures and epochs, studying the themes, conventions, and movements shared by distinct literary traditions as well as those features that distinguish them from each other. Building on comparative literature’s traditional basis in Euro/American and western classical literatures, Northwestern’s CLS Program offers students the opportunity to pursue programs of study in the literatures of South and East Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America, as well as courses offered through Native American and indigenous studies. By engaging in cross-disciplinary scholarship across languages and historical eras, students encounter the literary achievements of people with vastly different histories, frames of cultural reference, and poetic traditions.

Their course of study provides CLS students with a range of innovative theoretical approaches to literary texts, movements, and genres, along with a strong commitment to traditional literary interpretation, philological methods, and critical analysis. In considering theoretical texts ranging from the classics of ancient Greece and Roman to contemporary critical theory, students not only learn to understand specific literary works but also raise questions about their relations to other forms of discourse and about the nature of literature itself. To this end, the CLS program emphasizes the study of a diverse body of literary theories (in domains ranging from poststructuralist, psychoanalytic, feminist, and historicist approaches, to world literature, translation studies, critical race theory, and the environmental humanities) alongside the theoretical and methodological concerns of related disciplines (such as anthropology, history, philosophy, gender and sexuality studies, and sociology).

Finally, the CLS Program considers literary texts in relation to other forms of creative and cultural production. The relationship of literature to cultural practices and the arts, among them music, visual culture, fashion, and new media, is an important focus of interest in many courses, and students are encouraged to take classes in other disciplines.

**Study Abroad**

The Program in Comparative Literary Studies encourages all majors who qualify to consider a year or a term of study abroad as juniors.
visual culture and curatorial practice; and music. Content varies.

**COMP_LIT 303-0 Movements and Periods (1 Unit)** Focused study of intellectual formations belonging to a movement or period, such as Tang Dynasty, Age of Enlightenment, realism, the avant-garde, or post-WWII. Content varies.

**COMP_LIT 305-0 Studies in Film, Media, and Visual Culture (1 Unit)** Focused studies in international cinema or visual and other media (e.g. Brazilian documentary, Middle East visual culture, or Bollywood film). Major theoretical issues in film and media studies. Content varies.

**COMP_LIT 306-0 Studies in Race & Ethnicity (1 Unit)** Representations of comparative race and ethnicity in world literature, criticism, and film. Discussion and theoretical readings address racial and ethnic identity formation, intersection, and difference. Content varies.

**COMP_LIT 307-0 Studies in Gender, Sexuality & Representation (1 Unit)** Representations of gender and sexuality in literature, film, and criticism. Global and comparative topics situated in historical, social and political contexts. Content varies.

**COMP_LIT 311-0 Theory and Practice of Translation (1 Unit)** Introduction to theoretical approaches to literary translation and to the practice of poetry translation.

**COMP_LIT 312-0 Major Authors and Texts (1 Unit)** Study of a major author, text, or body of work in terms of its cultural context and critical reception. Content varies.

**COMP_LIT 320-SA Critical Theory and Literary Studies (1 Unit)** Crisis and critique as they figure in literary and cultural production. This course will examine philosophical texts on critical theory and use them to read literature and the media. This is a Study Abroad course offered through the Paris Program in Critical Theory, Literature, and Media.

**COMP_LIT 383-0 Special Topics in Theory: Critical Theory (1 Unit)** For students with previous study of criticism and literary theory. Content varies. May be repeated for credit with different topic.

**COMP_LIT 383-SA Special Topics in Theory: Critical Theory (1 Unit)** For students with previous study of criticism and literary theory. Content varies. May be repeated for credit with different topic.

**COMP_LIT 390-0 Special Topics in Comparative Literature (1 Unit)** Content varies—for example, problems of literary translation, literature and psychoanalysis. May be repeated for credit with different topic.

**COMP_LIT 390-SA Special Topics in Comparative Literature (1 Unit)** Content varies—for example, problems of literary translation, literature and psychoanalysis. May be repeated for credit with different topic.

**COMP_LIT 398-0 Senior Seminar (1 Unit)** Tools and techniques for writing sustained scholarly essays. Required of senior majors in comparative literary studies. Prerequisite: consent of program adviser.

**COMP_LIT 399-0 Independent Study (1 Unit)**