

# COMPARATIVE LITERARY STUDIES

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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.

## Programs of Study

- Comparative Literary Studies Major (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/arts-sciences/comparative-literary-studies/comparative-literary-studies-major>)
- World Literature Minor (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/arts-sciences/comparative-literary-studies/world-literature-minor>)
- Comparative Literary Studies BA/MA (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/arts-sciences/comparative-literary-studies/comparative-literary-studies-ba-ma>)

**COMP\_LIT 104-6 First-Year Seminar (1 Unit)** *WCAS First-Year Seminar*

**COMP\_LIT 200-0 Introduction to Literary Theory (1 Unit)** Key topics and debates in literary theory and criticism; how theory actively assists in building literary and cultural comparison across history, language, nation, genre, and medium. *Literature Fine Arts Distro Area*

**COMP\_LIT 201-0 Reading World Literature (1 Unit)** Introduction to a diverse range of important works of world literature and central debates and questions about the idea of "world literature." Content varies. May be repeated for credit with different topic. *Literature Fine Arts Distro Area*

**COMP\_LIT 202-0 Interpreting Culture (1 Unit)** Introduction to the theory and practice of interpreting "cultural texts"-the literary and other texts through which human culture imposes structures of meaning on the world. *Literature Fine Arts Distro Area*

**COMP\_LIT 205-0 Reading Difference (1 Unit)** Introduction to representations of social difference in literature, criticism, film, and media. Selective emphasis on such topics as gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, species, and ability. Content varies. *Literature Fine Arts Distro Area*

**COMP\_LIT 207-0 Introduction to Critical Theory (1 Unit)** Crisis, criticism, and critique in philosophical, political, and cultural contexts. Focus on the philosophical aspects of critical theory with reference to social conditions and art, literary, and/ or political forms. COMP\_LIT 207-0 and PHIL 220-0 are taught together; may not receive credit for both courses. *Ethics Values Distro Area*

**COMP\_LIT 211-0 Readings in Genre (1 Unit)** Analysis of major literary and aesthetic genres, such as epic, sacred texts, drama, lyric, visual media, and narrative. Study of particular examples, with focus on historical development, formal features, and social context. May be repeated for credit with change of topic. *Literature Fine Arts Distro Area*

**COMP\_LIT 270-0 Literatures in Translation (1 Unit)** Focused study of literatures from around the world offered in English translation. *Literature Fine Arts Distro Area*

**COMP\_LIT 300-0 Theories and Practices of Reading (1 Unit)** Theories and methods of literary and cultural interpretation. Discussion and readings will prepare students to undertake theoretically grounded projects comparing literature and other forms of cultural expression. Content varies. *Literature Fine Arts Distro Area*

**COMP\_LIT 301-0 Studies in World Literature (1 Unit)** Exploration of a specific body of literature, criticism, or film that cuts across conventional national or literary historical boundaries. Attention given to critical debates about "world literature." Content varies. *Literature Fine Arts Distro Area*

**COMP\_LIT 302-0 Reading Across Disciplines (1 Unit)** Comparative cultural studies across varied media and methodologies. May address literature in relationship to environmental, legal, or public humanities; visual culture and curatorial practice; and music. Content varies.

*Literature Fine Arts Distro Area*

**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. *Literature Fine Arts Distro Area*

**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.

*Literature Fine Arts Distro Area*

**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. *Literature Fine Arts Distro Area*

**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. *Literature Fine Arts Distro Area*

**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. *Literature Fine Arts Distro Area*

**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)**