

HANDBOOK FOR STUDENTS IN THE COMPARATIVE LITERATURE PROGRAM

LSU Program in Comparative Literature

AN OVERVIEW

Comparative Literature at Louisiana State University is an interdisciplinary program that encourages students to approach literary studies from multiple perspectives. The Ph.D. Program is built around a core curriculum grounded in the history of literary criticism and theory. With the guidance of faculty, students develop their own degree plans and research agendas, meant to combine the study of literature, literary theory, language, philosophy, art, history, and other cultural phenomena in worthwhile and innovative ways.

STRENGTHS

As an interdepartmental program, Comparative Literature draws upon the strengths of its affiliated departments:

The *Department of English* boasts a celebrated literary history extending back to the 1930s and the revival of the *Southern Review* by Robert Penn Warren and Cleanth Brooks. Today the department is home to a distinguished faculty that includes many nationally-recognized critics, scholars, and creative writers. Students enrolled in the M.F.A. Program in Creative Writing can simultaneously fulfill degree requirements for a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature.

The *Department of French Studies* has long been acknowledged as one of the premier programs in the country. The most recent National Research Council assessment (2005) ranked the LSU French program among the best in the nation in terms of instructional excellence and faculty strength. The program's work reflects the historical importance of Francophone languages and cultures for Louisiana, as well as the leadership provided by French studies in the European intellectual tradition.

The *Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures*, with graduate faculty in German, Greek, Latin, Italian, Spanish, Arabic, and Chinese, represents a broad spectrum of research interests, from classical antiquity to global world literature encompassing the European, Asian, and African continents and the Americas. It has also established a Resource Center for Languages, Literatures, and Cultures in the Foreign Language Laboratory through the acquisition of videos, films, and printed materials.

Other LSU departments contributing members to the Program in Comparative Literature include History, Music, Landscape Architecture, and Philosophy and Religious Studies. In addition, some Comparative Literature faculty participate in the interdisciplinary programs in Women's and Gender Studies, Louisiana and Caribbean studies, Film and Media Studies and Atlantic Studies.

In 1999 the departments of English and French studies were selected as two of the twelve strongest LSU departments; these departments have been earmarked for special enhancement. Major institutional resources have been shifted during the past two decades to these departments to build academic excellence at levels that reinforce their national and international reputations. The Program in Comparative Literature is proud that two of its affiliated departments were selected for enhancement from among so many strong programs at LSU.

LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY

LSU is located on the banks of the Mississippi River in the state capital of Baton Rouge, 75 miles northwest of New Orleans, in the heart of the French region of South Louisiana, unique in North America for its cuisine, its music, and its cultural ambiance.

LSU is one of the premier universities in the South. Its diverse cultural and scholarly landscape uniquely combines the best facets of academic life. Louisiana's only public Carnegie Designated Research Comprehensive Institution, LSU continues to make significant advancement in its goal to achieve a position of preeminence among national public research universities.

FINANCIAL AID

A certain number of assistantships are regularly available. These awards require the teaching of one course each semester, in the fields of English, World Literature, or foreign languages (French, Spanish, German, Italian, Greek, Latin, Chinese, Arabic), or a comparable assignment as a research assistant. African-American and other minority students are eligible to apply for the Huel Perkins Fellowship. In the past, LSU has welcomed Fulbright Scholars from all over the world. We encourage students interested in attending to apply for nationally competitive fellowships in their country of origin.

LSU has graduate exchange programs with several foreign universities including the University of Liege in Belgium and the University of Limoges in France. Students have the option of doing a dual degree with LSU and several European universities. These exchanges generally carry financial awards. In addition, graduate students are encouraged to apply for outside fellowships and awards. Consult the LSU Graduate School Online for an extensive list of fellowships and awards.

INFORMATION FOR APPLICANTS

Prospective applicants are encouraged to consult the Program's webpage, which may be accessed by selecting "Comparative Literature" under the "LSU A-Z" link on the LSU Homepage (www.lsu.edu). Applicants are urged to contact the Director of the Program before applying for admission. The Director may be contacted through the e-mail address of the Program's webpage complitslu@lsu.edu, or by writing to: Director, LSU Program in Comparative Literature, Louisiana State University, 155 Hodges Hall, Baton Rouge, LA, 70803.

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

An undergraduate major in literature or language is the normal prerequisite for graduate work in Comparative Literature. Applicants must apply using the Hobson's Electronic Application System, which appears under "Graduate School" on the LSU Homepage (<http://gradlsu.gs.lsu.edu/>). Applicants are required to submit transcripts, a writing sample, and at least three confidential letters of recommendation electronically. They are required to take the GRE exam and forward their results to the electronic system. A personal interview, if possible, is highly recommended. In lieu of a personal interview, students should arrange a telephone exchange with the Director of the Program. Preference for admission is given to students who have already a distinct idea of their research agenda.

PROGRAM REGULATIONS

GRADUATE SCHOOL REQUIREMENTS

Graduate students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the Graduate School regulations governing all graduate study at LSU. These regulations appear in the current *General Catalog*, available online (<http://www.lsu.edu/catalogs/>). Of particular importance is the information contained in the sections “Admission and General Information,” “General Graduate School Regulations,” and “Requirements for Advanced Degrees.” These sections deal with such matters and minimum admissions requirements, application procedures, types of admission, residency requirements, minimum and maximum course loads, time limits on degree programs, courses, examinations, and dissertation requirements for the Ph.D. This booklet constitutes a guide to additional regulations governing graduate study in the Program in Comparative Literature.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Students in the Program in Comparative Literature are required to study literature and criticism in at least three languages. **By the end of their first year of enrollment in the program**, they are also responsible for determining, in consultation with their faculty advisory committee, three broadly defined “areas of concentration” that will guide them in designing a curriculum suited to their individual research agenda. These areas will determine their reading lists for the general exam and elaborating their dissertation prospectus at the end of their required courses.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The Program is organized around a simple core curriculum.

All students are required to take both CPLT 7010 (History of Literary Theory and Criticism: From Antiquity to Romanticism) and CPLT 7020 (History of Literary Theory and Criticism: From the Late Nineteenth Century to the Present).

Students must take both CPLT 7120 (Topics in the Theory of Criticism) and CPLT 7130 (Topics in Comparative Literature) at least twice, and CPLT 7140 (Topics in Interdisciplinary Study) at least once. Since the specific topics of these *three courses differ from semester to semester, each may be taken more than once, up to a maximum of 9 credit hours.*

For all students, the distribution of the remaining courses required for the degree is designed by the student in consultation with his or her Major Professor and Advisory Committee. **Students must select their major professor at the latest by the end of their third semester of enrollment in the program.** *In all cases, a primary aim is to make sure that the Comparative Literature graduate has sufficient training in at least one national literary tradition (e.g., English, French, Spanish) to complete effectively in today's academic job market with those who have a degree in a national language and literature.*

Students entering the program with a B.A. can complete requirements for an M.A. in the following fields: English, French Studies, Hispanic Studies, and Philosophy and Religious Studies, providing they meet the requirements for admission to these programs and have the authorization of the departments in question. **Students pursuing dual degrees must meet with the Graduate Advisor in their chosen department as well as with their Major Professor and Director of the Program when they schedule their courses each semester.**

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

- * *All students* must demonstrate advanced reading ability (proficiency) in three languages, of which English or the student's native language may be one. Proficiency in the second language must be demonstrated in the first year of graduate study, and in the third language before the end of the second year, by passing a departmentally-administered examination or by performing satisfactory relevant course work at the 7000 level, at LSU, as attested by a member of the LSU faculty.
- * *All students* must pass a general examination at or near the end of course work, assessing the student's command of three areas of his or her concentration (See below, p. 5), and evaluating their thesis prospectus. This known as the Ph.D. "General Examination." **Students are examined on their dissertation proposal at the time of the "General Examination".**
- * *Students* must complete a satisfactory dissertation on an approved topic, which is considered to be an original contribution to scholarship and defend it successfully in an oral exam.

ADVISING

All students are required to consult with the Director of the Program each semester during their enrollment. In addition, each student shall select a faculty advisor during the first year of study. The faculty advisor (who is usually known as the Major Professor) serves as the student's

counselor. *By the end of the first year of course work, the student and the Major Professor shall establish and shall meet with an Advisory Committee. This committee shall consist of three members of the Comparative Literature faculty, including the Major Professor.* If it is deemed appropriate by the Major Professor and the Director of the Program, LSU faculty who are not members of the Comparative Literature faculty may serve on this committee. It is the student's responsibility to consult with the Major Professor, the Advisory Committee, and the Director of the Program, toward establishing a plan that will culminate in the timely fulfillment of all degree requirements. **Each student must meet with their Advisory Committee yearly and submit a "Program Progress Form"**. As the student progresses toward completion of course requirements, the student and Major Professor, in consultation with the Director, shall set up the appropriate Ph.D. Examination Committee, which will then take over the role of Advisory Committee. At this time, the Major Professor may continue to serve as Chair of the Examination committee; the student may wish, however, to select a new Major Professor, as warranted by the student's primary area of research interest. Similarly, members of the initial Advisory Committee may or may not continue as members of the Examination Committee, depending upon the evolving contours of the student's program of study. Students pursuing dual degrees must meet with the Graduate Advisor in their chosen department in addition to their meetings with their Major Professor and Director of the Program when they schedule their courses each semester.

MEETING WITH ADVISORY COMMITTEE/AREAS OF CONCENTRATION

Near the end of the second semester of course work, the student shall organize a meeting with his or her Major Professor and Advisory Committee. At this meeting, the student shall designate three broadly-conceived "areas of concentration" that will serve as the foundation both for course work and the General Ph.D. Examination. Suitable criteria for defining an area includes: linguistic or national literary traditions (e.g., French literature, American literature); subfields within linguistic or national traditions (e.g., Francophone literature, Latin American literature); chronological periods within such traditions (e.g., 20th century Latin American fiction, medieval Italian literature); a selection of major authors; chronological periods from a transnational and trans-linguistic perspective (e.g., Romanticism, Renaissance literature, Nineteenth-Century fiction); literary genres (e.g., tragedy); literary genres within the context of a chronological period (e.g., classical Greek and Roman lyric); major theoretical topics (e.g., postcolonial theory, gender theory, psychoanalytic theory, translation theory, etc.); the study of one or more modes of cultural production; relations between Western and non-Western literary traditions; a linking of literature with another discipline (e.g., literature and the visual arts, literature and ecology); a major subfield of another discipline related to literary study (e.g.,

Medieval history, 20th century Continental philosophy); and other criteria as deemed appropriate by the Major Professor, Advisory Committee, and Director of the Program.

The purpose of these “areas of concentration” is to guide the student in designing his or her curriculum, establishing a research agenda which will lead to the student’s thesis proposal and dissertation. In selecting his or her courses, the student, in consultation with the Major Professor, Advisory Committee, and Director of the Program, should try when possible to make course selection harmonize with the “areas of concentration.” They also define the parameters for the development of three reading/study lists upon which the Ph.D. General Examination shall be based.

Given the relative unpredictability of both future course offerings and the student’s intellectual evolution, it is understood that some degree of flexibility in revising and redefining these “areas of concentration” will be permitted.

DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

CREDIT HOUR REQUIREMENTS

Course levels

Only courses numbered 7000 level and above may be counted toward the Ph.D. Students are allowed to enroll in a limited number of 4000 level courses, but must complete additional work equivalent to the requirements for 7000 level courses. At the beginning of each semester, students enrolled in 4000 level courses shall consult their professor and establish the additional requirements. The professor of the 4000 level course is requested to communicate in writing the additional requirements to the student and to the Director of the Comparative Literature Program. This additional work may consist of a research paper or supplementary project.

Independent Study

CPLT 8900 (“Independent Study”) is normally offered only on authors and topics not covered in regular courses and may be taken for a maximum of nine credit hours in the Ph.D. program.

Transfer of Credit

A maximum of 12 semester hours of credit from other U.S. schools may, in some cases, be counted toward fulfillment of the PhD degree requirements. Courses taken at other universities cannot be used to substitute for the obligatory courses which constitute the LSU curriculum. See the LSU General catalogue for further regulations regarding transfer of credit.

Minor Fields

Students in Comparative Literature may want to demonstrate an expertise in one or more other fields, by declaring a minor. Students usually minor in a national literature or a related field. Please consult individual departments about the requirements for the minor. Students must include a minor professor from the department in question as a member of their Advisory and Examination Committees.

Minor in Comparative Literature

To declare a minor in Comparative Literature while pursuing a PhD in another field, students must complete 12 hours of Comparative Literature (CPLT) courses. They must also demonstrate language competency in at least three languages, including their native tongue. In order to fulfill this requirement, students must do one of the following:

- 1) Successfully complete a 7000 level course in the national literature/language.
- 2) Submit results from a standardized language competency exam.
- 3) Pass a translation exam administered by the Comparative Literature Program and the specific department that teaches the language/literature in which they would like to demonstrate competency.

REQUIREMENTS FOR RESEARCH AND TEACHING ASSISTANTS

Assistantships are highly competitive and are assigned on a yearly basis. All students who have the privilege of holding an assistantship must adhere to the regulations and procedures of the department in which they are teaching. They must demonstrate satisfactory performance in the classroom based on their supervisor's classroom evaluation, and their teaching evaluations. In addition, they must demonstrate steady progress to their degree, i.e. the timely completion of their required courses, preparation of their reading lists, and selection of their Advisory committee.

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Students who possess a B.A. or its equivalent upon enrollment in the Ph.D. program in Comparative Literature may earn the M.A. degree, following all procedures and satisfying all requirements of the discipline in which they choose to complete their M.A.

COURSE WORK

Students who enter the program with a B.A. are required to take 48 credit hours of course work. Ph.D. students entering the program with an M.A. in an appropriate discipline from LSU are required to take all required Comparative Literature courses, at least 18 credit hours of relevant 7000-level course work. This ordinarily consists of two semesters of course work.

Students entering the program with an M.A. from another institution shall normally be required to take at least twenty-seven credit hours of relevant 7000-level course work at LSU. This consists of three semesters of course work.

PLANNING THE GENERAL EXAMINATION

Students entering the program with a B.A. should envisage planning their General Exam in the second semester of their third year of study. Students entering the Ph.D. program with an M.A. from another institution should plan their General Exam no later than the end of the second year of Ph.D. course work. The student shall have done all of the following: select a Major Professor; form a General Examination Committee; finalize three reading/study lists based on the student's three "areas of concentration;" and demonstrate competence in three national languages and literatures. The General Examination Committee must approve the three reading lists, and they should be submitted to the Director of the Program for final approval. Ideally, the student should take no more than two years to complete their course work and take the General Exam.

*The General Examination Committee must comprise at least four members of the graduate faculty, including the Major Professor, who acts as chair and must be a member of the Comparative Literature faculty. The committee must include a minimum of two graduate faculty members from the Comparative Literature faculty, at least one of whom must be a full Member of the graduate faculty. The remaining members may be from other departments pertinent to the student's area of emphasis; at least one of the remaining members must be a full Member of the graduate faculty. **There must be at least two full Members of the Comparative Literature Graduate Faculty.** In addition, the Dean of the Graduate School appoints a member of the graduate faculty to serve as the Dean's Representative on the General Examination Committee. Students in consultation with their major professor should identify faculty members from other departments who can serve in this capacity. These recommendations will be forwarded to the Dean of the Graduate School.*

TAKING THE GENERAL EXAMINATION

The General Examination for students entering with the M.A. shall ordinarily be taken during the third semester of Ph.D. study. If circumstances warrant, the student in consultation with his or her Major Professor may decide to take the General Examination during the fourth semester of Ph.D. study.

The student selects a time for the oral component of the Examination that is **acceptable to all members** of the Examination Committee. The student shall make sure the appropriate form for

scheduling the oral component of the Examination is submitted to the Graduate School **at least three weeks prior** to the event.

The *General Examination* has *three* components:

- 1) A written prospectus of the student's planned dissertation. The prospectus is usually ten thousand words in length; it explains the hypothesis to be demonstrated; includes a review of critical literature pertinent to the study; enumerates and describes the individual chapters; contains a detailed (preferably annotated) bibliography, an outline and a timeline of when the work will be completed.
- 2) Written examination questions treating two of the three reading/study lists.
- 3) An oral component, based on the evaluation of the prospectus, the two written exams, **and the materials contained in all three reading lists.**

The *timetable* for taking the General Examination is as follows:

No less than one month prior to the time of the scheduled oral component, the student shall submit to all members of the Examination Committee copies of a written dissertation prospectus.

One month prior to the time of the scheduled oral component, the Major Professor, in consultation with the committee members, shall draft three written examination questions, each concerning one of the three reading/study lists. The committee reaches a consensus on two or three written questions. The Major Professor submits the questions to the Program Director who in turn administers them to the student electronically on a day and time decided upon in consultation with the student. The student shall be allowed one week to write the response for each question; there shall be a period of at least three "free days" between the two examinations; the student may write the exams at home or any other suitable place; and the student is free to make appropriate scholarly use of any books, articles, notes or other material, provided these are properly documented.

Paper and electronic copies of the two written examination shall be distributed to all members of the Examination Committee including the Dean's Representative shortly after completion of the second exam, and *at least one week prior* to the time of the scheduled oral component.

The *oral component* of the General Examination shall take place on the date previously agreed upon by the members of the Examination Committee and approved by the Graduate School. The *oral component* shall consist of a defense of the prospectus as well as a defense of the two written examinations; in addition members of the Examination Committee shall be free to ask questions concerning any of the three reading/study list (including the one that was not selected as the subject of a written exam).

At the end of the oral component session, members of the examination committee shall vote on whether the student has passed. This vote shall be based on a consideration of all factors—the written prospectus, the two written exam, oral performance, the student’s knowledge of the material indicated on the three reading lists.

THE DISSERTATION

Students who have passed the General Examination normally direct most of their energies toward preparation of the dissertation, which must be an original contribution to knowledge in the major field of study. The dissertation must demonstrate a mastery of research techniques, ability to do original and independent research, and skill in formulating conclusions that in some way add to the current body of knowledge.

Before writing any part of the dissertation, the student must study carefully the *Instructions on Thesis and Dissertation Writing at LSU*, which is distributed free of charge by the Graduate School office. The student should also be acquainted with the latest edition of the MLA style sheet or a similar approved manual of style.

Particular attention should be paid to the following Graduate School regulation: **“No less than *one academic year* must elapse...and no more than four calendar years may elapse between the passing for the General Examination and the completion of all requirements for the Ph.D. degree.” *The student should also be aware that LSU requires continuous registration of all students during the period in which the student is writing the dissertation.***

It is imperative for students to submit chapters of their dissertation to their major professor and if desired to another member of the committee who serves as a second reader in a timely fashion. A doctoral dissertation must be written in stages which are submitted and then revised before being compiled as a finished draft. Ideally a student should be able to defend his or her dissertation 18 to 24 months after the successful completion of the General Exam.

FINAL EXAMINATION

The last requirement for the doctoral degree is the Final Examination, the traditional oral defense of the dissertation. A request for scheduling the Final Examination must be submitted to Graduate School *at least three weeks prior* to the proposed examination date, and by the current semester deadline, if the student is a candidate for a degree. The Final Examination

Committee, including the Dean's representative, must have paper copies of the dissertation *at least two weeks prior* to the Final Examination.

Although the Final Examination is traditionally conducted as an oral test primarily concerned with the dissertation and related problems, the Examination Committee determines procedure and content, which may be somewhat removed from topics suggested by the dissertation. In order for the student to pass this examination, there may be no more than one dissenting vote. Students are required to make an appointment with the editor in the Graduate School before submitting the final version of their dissertation electronically. It is preferable to make this appointment prior to the dissertation defense. Students must respect all deadlines established by the Graduate School for the submission of their dissertation.

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