

Comparative Literature

Our graduate program is recognized as one of the top Comparative Literature programs in the country. The Comparative Literature department is a vibrant place for the research and study of literatures and cultures in an interdisciplinary framework, from transnational and cross-cultural perspectives. Our faculty and graduate students develop new historical and theoretical frameworks and rethink those we have inherited to open new perspectives on social and cultural forms and relationships.

Comparative Literature provides students with tools for analyzing texts, writing, editing, translating, and thinking across disciplinary and national boundaries. Our graduates engage a variety of literary traditions and historical periods, from Latin American concrete poetry to Yiddish experimental fiction to the discourses of political and race theory. The department offers rigorous training in the following areas, which are particular strengths of our internationally recognized faculty: French, German, Italian, Arabic, Hebrew Studies, Ancient Greek and Roman Studies, East Asian Literatures and Arts, Performance Studies, Film and Media, Poetry and Poetics, Critical Theory, Gender and Sexuality Studies, Postcolonial Theory, English and American Literatures, Early Modern and Renaissance Studies, and Slavic Literatures and Cultures.

All members of the department are deeply invested in the academic development of our students and value their work and research as an integral part of the Comparative Literature community at UC Berkeley. The department aims above all to develop students' creative and intellectual interests and talents. Graduate students receive the opportunity to pursue rigorous research in a variety of fields according to their interests, participate in discussions about political, aesthetic, and social issues, and develop a nuanced cross-cultural understanding of historical and social processes. Many graduate students present and publish scholarly writings in the most prestigious venues as well as producing translations and literary writings. All of our students work closely with cutting-edge scholars in their fields in small seminars, with extensive individualized work. Students participate in the designated emphasis programs on campus, including Critical Theory, Film and Media, Gender and Women's Studies, Renaissance and Early Modern Studies and Jewish Studies, or the Program in Medieval Studies. Students have opportunities to design and teach courses on their topics of interest. Our students form a well-integrated community, but have access to all of the resources of the entire Berkeley campus departments and faculty; in fact, our program requires that students take seminars in other departments for interdisciplinary training. We have one of the most successful placement records for our graduates of any program in the country, and of any Berkeley graduate program. Our doctoral graduates are prominent comparative literature and national literature faculty across the country and the world.

Admission to the University

Applying for Graduate Admission

Thank you for considering UC Berkeley for graduate study! UC Berkeley offers more than 120 graduate programs representing the breadth and depth of interdisciplinary scholarship. The Graduate Division hosts a complete list (<https://grad.berkeley.edu/admissions/choosing-your-program/list/>) of graduate academic programs, departments, degrees offered, and application deadlines can be found on the Graduate Division website.

Prospective students must submit an online application to be considered for admission, in addition to any supplemental materials specific to the program for which they are applying. The online application and steps to take to apply can be found on the Graduate Division website (<https://grad.berkeley.edu/admissions/steps-to-apply/>).

Admission Requirements

The minimum graduate admission requirements are:

1. A bachelor's degree or recognized equivalent from an accredited institution;
2. A satisfactory scholastic average, usually a minimum grade-point average (GPA) of 3.0 (B) on a 4.0 scale; and
3. Enough undergraduate training to do graduate work in your chosen field.

For a list of requirements to complete your graduate application, please see the Graduate Division's Admissions Requirements page (<https://grad.berkeley.edu/admissions/steps-to-apply/requirements/>). It is also important to check with the program or department of interest, as they may have additional requirements specific to their program of study and degree. Department contact information can be found here (<https://guide.berkeley.edu/archive/2024-25/graduate/degree-programs/>).

Where to apply?

Visit the Berkeley Graduate Division application page (<http://grad.berkeley.edu/admissions/apply/>).

Admission to the Program

Students should have completed advanced work in at least one language other than English and, ideally, have begun the study of a second language as well. They should be able to demonstrate the skills of close rhetorical analysis of literary texts through the submission of a writing sample, usually a college-level essay. Applicants are no longer required to take the GRE (Graduate Record Examination), and any submitted GRE scores will not be reviewed.

Normative Time Requirements

Normative time to advancement: 8 semesters

Normative in candidacy: 6 semesters

Total normative time: 14 semesters

Time to Advancement

Curriculum

The Doctoral Program is designed to provide familiarity with one (major) literature in comprehensive historical and critical ways, and the demonstrated ability to do comparative work in national literatures. Normally, as illustrated under the course list below, students study three literatures (two minor literatures in addition to the major), but they may choose, with their adviser's permission, to study two major literatures instead of one major and two minors.* The PhD is awarded upon completion of all required course work, passing the qualifying examination (QE), and filing a doctoral dissertation.

* In the case of students who elect two major literatures, there is a 12-course requirement (instead of 10); 4 courses in Comparative Literature, and 4 courses in each of the two major literatures.

COM LIT 200	Approaches to Comparative Literature	4
Literature, Major Emphasis: Four graduate seminar courses (3-4 units each) in the relevant department		
Literature, First Minor Emphasis: One graduate seminar course (3-4 units) in the relevant department		
Literature, Second Minor Emphasis: One graduate seminar course (3-4 units) in the relevant department		
Comparative Literature, Graduate Electives: Three courses selected from the COMLIT 202-266 series		

Foreign Language(s)

Doctoral students are expected to work in three literatures. They are expected to demonstrate competence in at least three languages other than English. The department recommends that students choose a third language according to their research interests. For example, you may wish to learn the language of the scholarship in your field, to gain historical knowledge of your primary language, to strengthen your profile as a comparatist, to gain exposure to a culturally remote body of literature, or to broaden the cultural range of your literary knowledge.

Permission to Proceed Review

Permission to proceed to the PhD program in Comparative Literature is granted by the Second Year Review Committee. The review is designed to be diagnostic in nature; it should assess the student's progress toward the degree and assist students in planning their course of study toward the PhD.

No later than the fourth semester after entrance into the PhD program, all students will be reviewed by a committee identified by them and approved by the head graduate adviser and consisting of three faculty members, two of whom should be members of the department. The committee should include the student's adviser.

The student submits a one-page statement to the committee in which s/he indicates courses taken and future course plans. Statements should include student progress in the languages chosen for study and the competence already attained in each.

Based on submitted materials and an oral interview with the student, the committee will assess the work done toward coverage in the major literature, recommend further course work, assess language preparation and the student's overall preparation to date. This report constitutes a binding recommendation concerning future course work and advancement toward the degree.

Qualifying Examination

Students should plan to take the qualifying examination no later than their eighth semester in the program.

Preparation for the PhD qualifying examination is intended to encourage students to pursue advanced, independent, and intellectually mature work. The PhD QE constitutes the last review of students' academic progress before the writing of the dissertation. Students are required to prepare a written Statement of Interest and Reading List in advance of the examination for approval. The final QE consists of two written sections and an oral section.

Prospectus

No later than one semester after passing the PhD qualifying examination, students are required to schedule a prospectus meeting with the members of their dissertation committee. At least two weeks before the

meeting, the prospectus, which should not exceed 20 pages, must be distributed to the committee. At the meeting, the student and committee will discuss the prospectus, and plan the writing of the dissertation.

Time in Candidacy

Advancement

The student advances to candidacy upon successful completion of written qualifying exams, an oral examination by a five-person committee, and approval of the Application for Candidacy for the Doctoral degree by the Graduate Division.

Required Professional Development

Teaching

Most students will teach reading and composition courses for the department as part of their professional development. Opportunities for teaching foreign languages are also available in other departments. Students are required to take a pedagogy course in the first semester of teaching.

Comparative Literature

COM LIT 200 Approaches to Comparative Literature 4 Units

Terms offered: Fall 2025, Fall 2024, Fall 2023

Lectures on literary theory, on the study of criticism, and on the methods of comparative literary theory.

Rules & Requirements

Prerequisites: Admission to graduate standing in Comparative Literature

Repeat rules: Course may be repeated for credit without restriction.

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 3 hours of lecture per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: Comparative Literature/Graduate

Grading: Letter grade.

COM LIT 201 Proseminar 1 Unit

Terms offered: Fall 2025, Fall 2024, Fall 2023

This course is designed to give all new graduate students a broad view of the department's faculty, the courses they teach, and their fields of research. In addition, it will introduce students to some practical aspects of the graduate career, issues that pertain to specific fields of research, and questions currently being debated across the profession. The readings for the course will consist of copies of materials by the department's faculty.

Rules & Requirements

Prerequisites: Required for all first year graduate students

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 1 hour of seminar per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: Comparative Literature/Graduate

Grading: Offered for satisfactory/unsatisfactory grade only.

COM LIT 202B Approaches to Genre: Lyric Poetry 4 Units

Terms offered: Fall 2025, Spring 2025, Fall 2024

Application of the methods of Comparative Literature to the study of genres.

Rules & Requirements

Prerequisites: Admission to graduate standing in Comparative Literature: advanced undergraduates may be admitted with the consent of the instructor

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 3 hours of lecture per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: Comparative Literature/Graduate

Grading: Letter grade.

COM LIT 202C Approaches to Genre: The Novel 4 Units

Terms offered: Fall 2023, Spring 2023, Spring 2021

Application of the methods of Comparative Literature to the study of genres.

Rules & Requirements

Prerequisites: Admission to graduate standing in Comparative Literature: advanced undergraduates may be admitted with the consent of the instructor

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 3 hours of lecture per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: Comparative Literature/Graduate

Grading: Letter grade.

COM LIT 210 Studies in Ancient Literature 4 Units

Terms offered: Spring 2022, Fall 2020, Spring 2018

Comparative investigation of a topic in ancient literature between the eighth century B.C.E. and the fourth century C.E. with some attention to subsequent developments.

Rules & Requirements

Prerequisites: Preparation in ancient Greek or Latin and familiarity with at least one modern foreign language

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 3 hours of lecture per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: Comparative Literature/Graduate

Grading: Letter grade.

COM LIT 212 Studies in Medieval Literature 4 Units

Terms offered: Spring 2017, Fall 2016, Spring 2016

Comparative investigation of a topic in literature and culture between the fifth and the fourteenth centuries.

Rules & Requirements

Prerequisites: Preparation in two medieval languages

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 3 hours of lecture per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: Comparative Literature/Graduate

Grading: Letter grade.

COM LIT 215 Studies in Renaissance Literature 4 Units

Terms offered: Spring 2024, Fall 2021, Fall 2020

Comparative investigation of a topic in Western literature in the Renaissance period.

Rules & Requirements

Prerequisites: Preparation in two foreign languages

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 3 hours of lecture per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: Comparative Literature/Graduate

Grading: Letter grade.

COM LIT C221 Aesthetics as Critique 4 Units

Terms offered: Fall 2023, Fall 2020, Fall 2018, Spring 2015, Spring 2013, Spring 2011

A close reading and discussion of the major texts of modern aesthetics, from the 18th century to the present, with emphasis on the Continental tradition of Kant, Adorno, and Derrida.

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 3 hours of lecture per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: Comparative Literature/Graduate

Grading: Letter grade.

Also listed as: RHETOR C221

COM LIT 223 Studies in the 19th Century 4 Units

Terms offered: Fall 2016, Fall 2013, Spring 2010

Comparative investigation of major themes in nineteenth-century literature and culture.

Rules & Requirements

Prerequisites: Preparation in two foreign languages

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 3 hours of lecture per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: Comparative Literature/Graduate

Grading: Letter grade.

COM LIT 225 Studies in Symbolist and Modern Literature 4 Units

Terms offered: Fall 2025, Fall 2024, Spring 2023

Comparative investigation of a topic in literature and culture of the modern period.

Rules & Requirements

Prerequisites: Preparation in two foreign languages

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 3 hours of lecture per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: Comparative Literature/Graduate

Grading: Letter grade.

COM LIT 227 Studies in Contemporary Literature 4 Units

Terms offered: Spring 2022, Fall 2021, Spring 2021

Comparative investigation of a topic in contemporary literature and culture.

Rules & Requirements

Prerequisites: Preparation in two foreign languages

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 3 hours of lecture per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: Comparative Literature/Graduate

Grading: Letter grade.

COM LIT 232 Studies in Near Eastern-Western Literary Relations 4 Units

Terms offered: Spring 2020, Fall 2013, Spring 2008

Comparative investigation of a literary topic requiring the study of both Near Eastern and Western documents.

Rules & Requirements

Prerequisites: Preparation in a Near Eastern or a European language. Undergraduates may be admitted with consent of the instructor

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 3 hours of lecture per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: Comparative Literature/Graduate

Grading: Letter grade.

COM LIT 240 Studies in the Relations Between Literature and the Other Arts 4 Units

Terms offered: Spring 2025, Fall 2023, Fall 2022

Comparative study of the historical and systematic relations between literature and other arts such as the visual arts, music, and film.

Rules & Requirements

Prerequisites: Preparation in two foreign languages

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 3 hours of lecture per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: Comparative Literature/Graduate

Grading: Letter grade.

COM LIT 250 Studies in Literary Theory 4 Units

Terms offered: Fall 2025, Spring 2025, Spring 2024

Comparative investigation of a topic in the theory of literature.

Rules & Requirements

Prerequisites: Preparation in two foreign languages

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 3 hours of lecture per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: Comparative Literature/Graduate

Grading: Letter grade.

COM LIT 254 Studies in East-West Literary Relations 4 Units

Terms offered: Spring 2020, Spring 2017, Fall 2016

Comparative investigation of a literary topic requiring the study of both East Asian and Western documents.

Rules & Requirements

Prerequisites: Preparation in two foreign languages, one of which must be an East Asian language

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 3 hours of lecture per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: Comparative Literature/Graduate

Grading: Letter grade.

Formerly known as: C254

COM LIT 256 The Craft of Critical Writing 4 Units

Terms offered: Spring 2024, Spring 2022, Spring 2021

The course will proceed chiefly through exercises in writing reviews and critical essays, with class discussion of the work that will be done by members of the seminar. Some analytic attention will also be devoted to existing models of critical prose. The class will deal with the minute details that make for lucidity and felicity of style and will also consider larger issues of organization, critical focus, and audience.

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 3 hours of seminar per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: Comparative Literature/Graduate

Grading: Letter grade.

COM LIT 258 Studies in Philosophy and Literature 4 Units

Terms offered: Spring 2025, Fall 2024, Spring 2021

Comparative investigation of a topic in the relationship between philosophy and literature.

Rules & Requirements

Prerequisites: Preparation in two foreign languages

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 3 hours of lecture per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: Comparative Literature/Graduate

Grading: Letter grade.

COM LIT 260 Problems in Literary Translation 4 Units

Terms offered: Spring 2022, Spring 2020, Spring 2019

Theory and practice of translation. Students will complete a project in literary translation.

Rules & Requirements

Prerequisites: Preparation in two foreign languages or permission of the instructor

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 3 hours of lecture per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: Comparative Literature/Graduate

Grading: Letter grade.

COM LIT 265 Gender, Sexuality, and Culture 4 Units

Terms offered: Fall 2024, Spring 2012, Fall 2010

Comparative investigation of a topic related to the study of gender and/or sexuality in literature and culture.

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 3 hours of lecture per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: Comparative Literature/Graduate

Grading: Letter grade.

COM LIT 266 Nationalism, Colonialism, and Culture 4 Units

Terms offered: Spring 2014, Spring 2013, Fall 2012

Comparative investigation of a topic in ideology, politics, and identity and its relation to the formation of national, colonial, and/or post-colonial literatures and cultures.

Rules & Requirements

Prerequisites: Preparation in two foreign languages

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 3 hours of lecture per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: Comparative Literature/Graduate

Grading: Letter grade.

COM LIT 270C Continuing Seminars: Renaissance 2 Units

Terms offered: Prior to 2007

Discussion on problems of the literature of the period.

Rules & Requirements

Prerequisites: Restricted to students who have completed the M.A. and are studying for their qualifying examination in Comparative Literature

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 2 hours of discussion per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: Comparative Literature/Graduate

Grading: Offered for satisfactory/unsatisfactory grade only.

COM LIT 298 Special Study 1 - 4 Units

Terms offered: Fall 2025, Fall 2024, Spring 2024

Primarily for students engaged in preliminary exploration of a restricted field, involving the writing of a report. May not be substituted for available seminars.

Rules & Requirements

Prerequisites: Graduate standing

Repeat rules: Course may be repeated for credit without restriction.

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 0 hours of independent study per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: Comparative Literature/Graduate

Grading: Letter grade.

COM LIT N298 Special Study 2 - 4 Units

Terms offered: Summer 2018 8 Week Session, Summer 2017 8 Week Session, Summer 2016 8 Week Session

Primarily for students engaged in preliminary exploration of a restricted field, involving the writing of a report. May not be substituted for available seminars.

Rules & Requirements

Prerequisites: Graduate standing

Repeat rules: Course may be repeated for credit without restriction.

Hours & Format

Summer:

6 weeks - 2.5-5 hours of independent study per week

8 weeks - 2-4 hours of independent study per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: Comparative Literature/Graduate

Grading: Letter grade.

COM LIT 299 Directed Research 1 - 12 Units

Terms offered: Fall 2023, Spring 2023, Fall 2021

Writing of the doctoral dissertation.

Rules & Requirements

Prerequisites: Satisfactory completion of the Qualifying Examination

Repeat rules: Course may be repeated for credit without restriction.

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 1-12 hours of independent study per week

Summer:

6 weeks - 1-5 hours of independent study per week

8 weeks - 1-4 hours of independent study per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: Comparative Literature/Graduate

Grading: Offered for satisfactory/unsatisfactory grade only.

COM LIT 300 Supervised Teaching in Comparative Literature 1 - 4 Units

Terms offered: Fall 2021, Spring 2021, Fall 2020

Course credit for experience gained in academic teaching through employment as a graduate student instructor.

Rules & Requirements

Prerequisites: Appointment as a graduate student instructor in the department. Consent of graduate advisor

Repeat rules: Course may be repeated for credit without restriction.

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 1-4 hours of independent study per week

Summer:

6 weeks - 2.5-10 hours of independent study per week

8 weeks - 2-7.5 hours of independent study per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: Comparative Literature/Professional course for teachers or prospective teachers

Grading: Offered for satisfactory/unsatisfactory grade only.

COM LIT 375 Methods of Teaching Literature and English Composition-Comparative Literature 2 Units

Terms offered: Fall 2025, Fall 2024, Fall 2023

Discussion of the theory and practice of teaching composition at the college level in a department of comparative literature. Prerequisites: Appointment as a graduate student instructor or consent of instructor.

Rules & Requirements

Prerequisites: Appointment as a graduate student instructor or consent of instructor

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 2 hours of lecture per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: Comparative Literature/Professional course for teachers or prospective teachers

Grading: Offered for satisfactory/unsatisfactory grade only.

Instructor: Jane Stanley

COM LIT 601 Individual Study for Master's Students 1 - 8 Units

Terms offered: Spring 2020, Fall 2019, Spring 2019

Individual study for the comprehensive or language requirements in consultation with the Graduate Adviser. Units may not be used to meet either unit or residence requirements for the master's degree.

Rules & Requirements

Prerequisites: Graduate standing

Repeat rules: Course may be repeated for credit without restriction.

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 0 hours of independent study per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: Comparative Literature/Graduate examination preparation

Grading: Offered for satisfactory/unsatisfactory grade only.

COM LIT 602 Individual Study for Doctoral Students 1 - 8 Units

Terms offered: Fall 2021, Spring 2020, Fall 2019

Individual study in consultation with the Graduate Adviser intended to provide opportunity for qualified students to prepare themselves for the various examinations required of candidates for the Ph.D. May not be used for unit or residence requirements for the doctoral degree.

Rules & Requirements

Prerequisites: Satisfactory completion of the Master's examination

Repeat rules: Course may be repeated for credit without restriction.

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 0 hours of independent study per week

Summer:

6 weeks - 1-5 hours of independent study per week

8 weeks - 1-4 hours of independent study per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: Comparative Literature/Graduate examination preparation

Grading: Offered for satisfactory/unsatisfactory grade only.