

Comparative Literature, M.A.

Two features give Comparative Literature at UC Irvine its distinctive character. First, the department is committed to a conception of transnational comparatism in which the Euro-American zone is not accorded any privileged position while literatures and cultures of the Americas, Asia, Africa, and Latin America - the literatures of the colonized more generally - are accorded their rightful place. Second, the department trains its students in a range of theoretical perspectives that have been transforming scholarship over the past few decades. Ph.D. students in Comparative Literature pursue research that values lines of inquiry over pre-set national and genre categories.

The program views literary texts as one among many contexts of cultural production, such as environmental practices, rural and urban space production, and film images and visual representation. The interdisciplinary nature of the program involves reciprocal and mutually transformative relations with critical theory, informed by such well-established modes of thought as Marxism and psychoanalysis. Intensive, sustained work in critical theory is as important a part of the Ph.D. program as the study of literatures and literary pedagogies.

The M.A. is considered to be a step toward the Ph.D.; only students intending to complete the doctorate are admitted to the program. Applicants must hold a B.A. or equivalent degree and should normally have majored in Comparative Literature or another major involving cultural study. Majors in other disciplines (e.g., philosophy or history) will be considered seriously, provided that a sufficient background in literary and cultural studies and in at least one foreign language is demonstrated.

The M.A. is considered to be a step toward the Ph.D.; only students intending to complete the doctorate are admitted to the program. Applicants must hold a B.A. or equivalent degree and should normally have majored in Comparative Literature or another major involving cultural study. Majors in other disciplines (e.g., philosophy or history) will be considered seriously, provided that a sufficient background in literary and cultural studies and in at least one foreign language is demonstrated.

Requirements

Entering students are assigned a faculty advisor who usually serves as the chair of the student's M.A. examination committee (which consists of at least two other members of the faculty). Nine courses and an examination are required to complete the degree. The normal academic load for both M.A. and Ph.D. candidates is three courses a quarter; teaching assistants take two courses in addition to earning credit for University teaching. Only in exceptional circumstances will students be permitted to undertake programs of less than six full courses during the academic year.

Examination

The M.A. examination is normally taken during the fifth quarter. For the examination, the candidate submits an M.A. paper and a statement of purpose outlining past and future course work and preliminary plans for the Ph.D. qualifying examination. The M.A. examination consists of a discussion of the student's paper and the statement of purpose. In practice, it resembles an extended advising session, but with particularly close attention to the student's paper.