

Comparative Literature, Ph.D.

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 doctoral program in Comparative Literature prepares the student for a professional career in the research and teaching of comparative literary and cultural studies. Some students also choose to enter professions (e.g., specialized research, nonprofit organizations, international cultural exchange) in which the specialized work in a specific field indicated by an advanced degree is highly desirable.

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Program Details

Rather than demanding that Ph.D. students compare two national literatures, graduate students in the program may explore the internal differences of a cultural and political phenomenon or pursue a problem that exists transverse to various categories. Graduate students plan individualized course work with their advisors to prepare them for research on their chosen questions. In addition, the Department offers an emphasis in Translation Studies (see the departmental graduate student handbook for a description of this emphasis). Graduate students in Comparative Literature may also complete collaborative Ph.D.s with other selected Humanities Ph.D. programs within UCI. They may also complete campus-wide interdisciplinary emphases such as the Critical Theory Emphasis, Graduate Feminist Emphasis, Visual Studies Emphasis, and the Graduate Emphasis in Race and Justice Studies.

A minor field specialization is recommended. This optional component promotes engagement with a field or methodology outside the student's specialization. It may be of a national, historical, disciplinary, or methodological nature, with the student of western postmodern literary theory and forms engaging in a focused study of ancient Greek or Roman philosophy and culture, for example, or the student of East Asian languages and diasporic literatures may work in anthropology or ethnography. This optional component of the student's program may be fulfilled through course work, independent studies, or a Qualifying Examination topic.

Graduate students in Comparative Literature must demonstrate a command of two foreign languages consistent with their particular focus of study within the program. Competence in two foreign languages is required for the Ph.D. and is verified through examination, a longer translation project, and/or course work.

Teaching

The Department recognizes that most of its graduate students intend to become teachers, and believes that graduate departments should be training college teachers as well as scholars—indeed, that teaching and scholarship complement one another. Thus candidates for the Ph.D. are expected to acquire experience in teaching, and all Ph.D. candidates gain supervised training as part of the seminar work required for the degree.

Fellowships

A range of fellowships offered by UC Irvine are available to students in the Department (<https://grad.uci.edu/funding/fellowships-awards/>).

Requirements

Normally, students who have not done graduate work at another university must complete at least 18 courses. Upon completion of the course work, the student takes a qualifying examination on four areas formulated by the student in consultation with the four faculty members who make up the examination committee. The four areas are to cover a major field, a secondary field, a special topic, and theory. All four areas are to be related to each other and to work toward the dissertation. The examination is part written, part oral, according to a formula decided by the student and the committee. The examination as a whole should reflect the student's ability to work in at least two languages.

After passing the qualifying examination, the student forms a dissertation committee of three faculty members, formulates a dissertation topic in consultation with them, and submits a prospectus for the dissertation along with a preliminary bibliography. Study toward the Ph.D. culminates in the

dissertation. The normative time for advancement to candidacy is four years. The normative time for completion of the Ph.D. is seven years, and the maximum time permitted is nine years. Program advising and timelines encourage completion in six years.