Comparative Literature (PhD)

The graduate program in comparative literature is founded on the conviction that literary traditions are best understood when contextualized across national and cultural boundaries. To thrive professionally, every scholar in the discipline must be closely trained in a primary national literature, proficient in at least three languages, and attuned to the importance of philology, bibliography, and linguistic training. At the same time, a commitment to comparative study requires a firm grasp of translation among languages and media and the history of reading practices, as well as aesthetic and cultural theory.

Students are admitted to the graduate program with the expectation that they will work toward the PhD degree. At present the Department of Comparative Literature does not offer a terminal master's degree. Instead, students become eligible for the MA on passing their PhD qualifying exams.

Program's Admission Requirements

Please visit the program's website (https://complit.uoregon.edu/admissions/).

The component parts of the doctoral program in Comparative Literature constitute an apprenticeship to a profession that requires the learning outcomes listed below.

Program Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this program, students will be able to:

- Publish as a means to establish oneself as a part of a professional community.
- Become conversant with the principal texts, discussions and problems in and across at least two fields of study (thus, "comparative").
- Be proficient in multiple languages, such that advanced research and analysis can be carried out in a chosen field or fields of study.

The key benchmarks in this apprenticeship are:

- The successful completion of coursework and/or examination in languages relevant to a doctoral student's area of research.
- The Third-Year article.
- The successful completion of a written exam.
- The successful completion of a comprehensive oral exam.
- The successful completion and defense of a doctoral dissertation.

Overview of Requirements

Within their first three years of graduate study, students must complete the language requirement, six foundation courses, at least five courses in the primary field, and at least four courses in the secondary field. In addition, students select at least three elective courses in consultation with their faculty advisors; these courses may be tangential to their main research interests or distributed according to those interests. The foundation courses include Graduate Studies in Translation (COLT 613), Graduate Studies in Comparative Literature (COLT 614), Graduate Studies in Comparative Literature (COLT 615), Transmedial Aesthetics (COLT 616), and at least two other graduate-level COLT courses.

Courses applied to the degree must be passed with a grade of B+ or better, and students must maintain a grade point average of at least 3.50 in all graduate-level courses in order to remain in good standing in the program.

After completing all course work and language requirements, students are eligible to take their written and oral PhD qualifying examinations. Following successful completion of the exams, students submit a prospectus and meet with their committees for the prospectus conversation. A satisfactory prospectus conversation is required for advancement to candidacy. The approximate time from completion of course work to advancement is one year. Typically, the dissertation is completed within two years of advancing to candidacy.

Foundation Courses

The graduate program provides a solid foundation in theoretical and historical methods integral to comparative literature and relevant to working across national literary traditions, historical periods, theoretical paradigms, and media. Through these courses, students are expected to acquire a comprehensive understanding of scholarly method, encountering not only contemporary texts and theorists but also the history of the field, including the central controversies, crucial debates, and cultural contexts that have shaped its development. The student must complete six graduate-level foundation courses; these courses are Graduate Studies in Translation (COLT 613),Graduate Studies in Comparative Literature (COLT 614), Graduate Studies in Comparative Literature (COLT 615), Transmedial Aesthetics (COLT 616), and two others selected from among the COLT graduate course offerings.

Primary Field

The majority of comparative literature graduates are hired to teach in national literature departments and not in interdisciplinary programs. For this reason it is crucial that students develop a primary research field that is based either in a single national literature (e.g., Japanese literature) or in a single linguistic-cultural tradition that crosses national boundaries (e.g., Latin American literature). Depending on the relative breadth of a student's prior training, the primary field may be further delimited according to a period (e.g., postwar Japan) or a genre (e.g., German drama) or even an artistic movement (e.g., French postmodernism).

The student must complete five graduate-level courses in the primary field; at least three of the courses should share the same department subject code.

Secondary Field

This field complements the research within the primary field, either by providing counterpoint or a needed context. There are three ways to define one's secondary field. Most commonly, it represents a second national literature (e.g., Spanish literature) or a linguistic-cultural tradition that crosses national boundaries (e.g., Latin American literature). In addition, where two or more national-linguistic traditions share a common literary history—for example, within a given region or artistic movement—the secondary field may be defined in comparative terms (e.g., the Continental Renaissance, Caribbean literature, or East Asian film). Finally, the secondary field can eschew literary categories altogether in order to represent an alternative disciplinary focus (e.g., religious studies).

At least four graduate-level courses must be taken in the secondary field. Three of them should share the same department subject code. At the discretion of the director of graduate studies, the three courses with

shared subject code may be spread out over the secondary, foundation, and elective fields.

Electives

Three of the program's required 18 graduate-level courses are electives and should be chosen in consultation with an advisor. The electives may cover a wide range of interests or may be carefully distributed among the three research fields to fill gaps or achieve greater depth. Some students may wish to devote their electives to a fourth field of research (e.g., a third national literature). Students hoping to pursue this option are urged to meet with the director of graduate studies as soon as possible.

Language Requirement

Work in at least three languages is expected at all phases of the program, from course work to the dissertation. The language requirement addresses this expectation by ensuring both linguistic proficiency and a minimum level of graduate course work in all three languages. Students are required to complete graduate-level work in their languages. The following guidelines apply: (1) at least two graduate courses must be taken in each language to meet this requirement and should ideally be taught by a specialist in the target language; (2) the seminar paper for each course should demonstrate competency dealing with the target language and should be suitable for publication in the national literature field. The seminar paper for each of the two non-English languages must be submitted to the department at the end of the course for approval. The language requirement must be satisfied by the end of the third year.

Timetable from Entrance to Examinations

Advisors

During their first two terms of study (fall and winter), students are advised by the director of graduate studies. By Monday of week two of the third term, each student formally identifies an interim advisor—a faculty member who agrees to mentor the student through the completion of the first-year conversation and the first two terms of the second year.

By Monday of week two of the spring term of the second year, the student will have chosen his or her advisor of record. This advisor, who will be competent in the student's primary research interests, will mentor the student through the second-year review and the third year of study.

First Year

First-Year Statement

By Friday of week four of spring term, first-year students, in consultation with their interim advisors, submit a two- to three-page statement of purpose. It should identify and justify the primary and secondary fields the student intends to pursue—the general fields of study that form the backbone of a scholar's research profile. It should also clarify the relationship between the students' research languages and research fields, and indicate what linguistic study is necessary to complete the proposed course of study.

First-Year Conversation

In week six or seven of spring term, the first-year student, his or her interim advisor, the director of graduate studies, and one other comparative literature faculty member meet for a conversation about the first-year statement. They evaluate the student's progress to date, including course work and language examinations, discuss the intended fields, and offer guidance for the remaining two years leading to the qualifying examination. With their approval of the statement and the student's general plan, as well as successful completion of all first-year course work with a GPA of 3.50, the student may proceed to the second year. A brief memo written by the student that summarizes the conversation is due to the department by Wednesday of week eight.

Second Year

Third-Year Article

During the second year, as part of preparation for publication in the field, students are required to begin expanding a seminar paper into an article for submission to a journal. Workshops are held to prepare students to write an article and select an appropriate publication venue. This process is meant to provide step-by-step guidance in publishing before the student advances to candidacy.

Second-Year Review

By Monday of week two in spring term of the second year, a student will have chosen the advisor of record. In consultation with that advisor, the student must write a careful self-review of his or her progress to date. The review should revisit both the first-year statement and the report of the first-year conversation. In particular, any recommendations made by the first-year conversation committee should be assessed: how were these recommendations pursued and with what result? The designation of the three research fields should also be addressed, along with any shifts in focus that have proved necessary or desirable. The review should explain what course work remains to be completed, and, where appropriate, should outline a plan for the completion of that work. Any problems in performance or concerns about timely progress should also be addressed. The second-year review must be approved by the advisor of record and submitted by Monday of week eight of spring term. The graduate committee reviews these reports, and small revisions and clarifications may be required before they approve the document. With approval of the review and completion of all second-year course work with a GPA of 3.50, the student may proceed to the third year.

Third Year

Third-Year Article

During the first term of the third year, the student will finalize the third-year article in consultation with an advisor in preparation for submitting it for peer review. By Friday of week five of spring term of the third year, the student will submit this article to the department along with a cover letter addressed to an appropriate journal.

Completion of Course Work and Language Requirement

The program is designed so that students may complete all course work and language requirements by the end of their third year. By Friday of week nine of spring term of the third year, students submit the course work and language requirement completion form for approval by the director of graduate studies and the graduate committee.

PhD Degree Requirements

Code	Title	Credits
Foundation Courses		
Six foundation courses: the four listed below and two other graduate COLT courses.		
COLT 613	Graduate Studies in Translation	4-5
COLT 614	Graduate Studies in Comparative Literature	5
COLT 615	Graduate Studies in Comparative Literature	5
COLT 616	Transmedial Aesthetics	5
Primary Field Courses		
At least five graduate courses [1]		

Secondary Field Courses	
At least four graduate courses [2]	
Electives	
At least three graduate courses [3]	

1. At least three of the courses should share the same departmental subject code.
2. Three courses should share the same departmental subject code. At the discretion of the director of graduate studies, the three courses with shared subject code may be spread out over the secondary, foundation, and elective fields.
3. Choose electives in consultation with an advisor.

Additional Requirements

- Successfully passing the PhD qualifying exams
- Writing dissertation prospectus
- Dissertation

Examination Committee

By the beginning of spring term of the third year, each student selects an examination committee consisting of the advisor of record and two additional faculty members. Of these three, one represents the student's primary field of research (commonly the advisor of record), another represents the secondary field, and a third member is designated the committee chair. The third member also serves as chief mentor for the student's foundation field, advising him or her on the reading list inclusions from that field. All members must sign an agreement form to participate in the exam committee, and all must approve the exam statement and reading list. By Monday of week two in spring term of the third year, students must submit their examination committee membership to the department. Students who have chosen an additional fourth field of research may choose to be tested in that field as well. The logistics of this option should be pursued with the director of graduate studies as early in the process as possible. The examination committee membership must be approved by the director of graduate studies.

Examination Statement and Reading List

In consultation with the exam committee members, each student determines his or her examination fields. These fields correspond to the primary, secondary, and foundation research fields, but are usually narrower and more specialized in scope. Students then devise a reading list covering each field. Each list should include approximately fifteen to twenty primary items (an item is an author and a work or works that represent the author's perspective as a whole). Each field list should also include a separate sublist of pertinent critical-secondary works. Exam committee members can provide assistance in choosing the works on this list.

Students must also compose a six- to eight-page statement that defines the student's core interests, defends the examination fields, clarifies the scope of the reading list, and offers some indication of the future dissertation project and career aspirations for which this reading list provides the necessary comprehensive background and preparation. After being approved by all the examiners, the exam statement and reading list are submitted to the department by the end of week nine in spring term of the third year. Prior to final approval, the exam statement and reading list are reviewed by the graduate committee, which may have additional recommendations and queries. Occasionally, these recommendations may be substantive enough to require additions to or deletions from the list and a resubmission process. Changes to the statement and list may be made no later than four weeks prior to the first written exam and must be approved by both the director of graduate studies and the examination committee members.

When the graduate committee and director of graduate studies have approved the Course Work and Language Requirements Completion Form and the exam statement and reading list, the student may proceed with the examination process.

Overview of Fourth Year

The fourth year is dedicated to completing the doctoral examinations and writing the dissertation prospectus. Typically, students prepare for the exams over the summer and early fall, sit for the written and oral exams by the end of fall term, and complete the prospectus by the middle of spring term. The prospectus conversation must be held by the beginning of week 10 of spring term in the fourth year, so that students may advance to candidacy in a timely manner at the end of spring term.

Written Examination

In this phase, students compose three essays over three 24-hour periods spread out over three weeks (weeks five, six, and seven of fall term in the fourth year). The first essay covers the primary field, with questions submitted by the examiner representing that field; the second covers the secondary field in the same manner; the third essay is comparative, addressing texts from both the primary and secondary fields, with questions submitted by all three examiners. For the primary and secondary field exams, students choose between two questions; for the comparative exam, they choose one of three questions. No exam will cover the foundation field. Instead, the examiners will explore the full gamut of the student's reading list with questions designed to ascertain the student's mastery of his or her methods as applied to the primary and secondary fields.

The three examiners all grade and comment on the comparative essay and read the field exams. The two field exams are graded separately and commented upon by the responsible examiners, except in the case of a failing grade. In this circumstance, the student's essay is graded by the other two examiners, as well. If two out of three examiners fail an essay, the student may retake the exam in that area in the following term. The exam may be retaken no more than once. If more than one of the student's essays fails, or if the student fails a retake exam, he or she does not proceed to candidacy, but may be eligible for a terminal master's degree. Grades for these exams are high pass, pass, or no pass. Students learn their exam results in week nine of fall term—that is, two weeks after completion of the final essay.

Oral Examination

The oral examination is scheduled during week 10 or 11 of fall term; it is proctored by the exam committee chair and is usually two hours in length. The committee and the student revisit the written examinations, discussing areas of strength and weakness. In addition, the examiners may explore the student's expertise more deeply by asking questions about reading list materials not covered during the written exams.

While no grade is assigned for performance on the oral exam, the committee may determine recommendations and even requirements for future study, including retaking the oral examination. Recommendations are communicated in person to the student at the conclusion of the exam and in writing to the director of graduate studies as part of the committee chair's report on the exam. If substantive requirements or concerns have

been articulated, the director of graduate studies will determine any official course of action to be taken.

For students who have failed one or more parts of the written exam, no oral examination will be held; instead, the time designated for the oral exam will be dedicated to a meeting with the student, the exam committee, and the director of graduate studies. Participants review the exam performance, discuss a possible retake exam, and/or review the advisability of a terminal master's degree.

Prospectus and Doctoral Candidacy

By Friday of week five of winter term in the fourth year, the student must designate a dissertation committee, including the dissertation chair and outside reader. The director of graduate studies must approve this committee. For details concerning faculty eligibility, students should refer to the Division of Graduate Studies' Dissertation Committee Policy at gradschool.uoregon.edu/committee-policy.

Committee members should be consulted during the process of writing the dissertation prospectus. A first draft of the prospectus should be submitted to the members of the dissertation committee by Friday of week 10 of winter term. A completed draft of the prospectus, approved by all four committee members, must be submitted by Friday of week five of spring term in the fourth year. After final approval from the director of graduate studies, the prospectus conversation is scheduled between weeks seven and nine of spring term.

A prospectus is not a first dissertation chapter; it is a snapshot of the dissertation project as envisioned by the student, prior to the completion of the bulk of his or her research. The prospectus is typically 10 to 15 pages in length. It should include a clear, concise examination of the problem to be studied, along with a compelling sense of the larger issues at stake in the project, both for the immediate topic and for the field at large. In addition, the prospectus should provide a clear vision of the project's trajectory: a narrative account of the dissertation's structure, an outline of chapters, and a justification for the particular authors and texts to be examined. A substantial research bibliography should be appended.

Prospectus Conversation

The prospectus conversation is scheduled between weeks seven and nine of spring term in the fourth year. This conversation, which includes the members of the dissertation committee, is facilitated by the committee chair and helps to develop the student's plans for the dissertation. Areas of strength and weakness in the project are discussed, and specific recommendations about structure, bibliography, and method are presented. After successful completion of this conversation, and with approval of the director of graduate studies and the graduate committee, the student advances to candidacy.

Dissertation

The dissertation, which is defended in a final oral presentation, is typically completed within two years of advancement to candidacy. Dissertations in a discipline such as comparative literature can hardly be said to follow exact specifications, but as a general principle any such project should involve at least two authors, works, and national literatures, and an explicit methodological orientation.