

Requirements: Comparative World Literature

Interdisciplinary

Beginning the Comparative World Literature Courses

Comparative world literature is an interdisciplinary approach to literature that combines the study of literature with other disciplines. Our courses move between different national literatures and languages and explore the non-Western and cross-cultural perspectives offered by world literature. Fundamental to the concentration is coursework in two literary traditions. Students may choose to complete coursework in two of the three fields: classics, English, and/or modern languages and literature. These lower-level courses will satisfy the prerequisites required for advanced coursework in each discipline.

Concentration Requirements – Three (3) Units

Core Courses — One and a half (1.5) units

Students are required to take the following three courses:

- CWL 120 What in the World is World Literature? or select cross-listed sections of ENGL 103 or MLL 100- / 200-level courses (in translation) or CLAS 130 Classical Mythology or 225 The Ends of the Earth in the Ancient
- CWL 220 No Comparison: The Practice of Comparative Literature
- CWL 333 Reading World Literature

Advanced Coursework — One (1) unit

Students must complete one half (0.5) unit in two of the following three departments (for a total of one (1) unit):

Classics

Any advanced Greek or Latin course in the Department of Classics (normally at the 300 level) will count toward the Comparative World Literature Concentration.

English

Any advanced literature course in the Department of English (normally at the 300 level) will count toward the Comparative World Literature Concentration. Most students must take several lower-level English courses in preparation for this advanced coursework.

Modern Languages and Literature

Any advanced literature course offered and taught in the language of study in the Department of Modern Languages and Literature (normally above the 321 or 322 level) will count toward the Comparative World Literature Concentration. For language disciplines that do not offer advanced literature courses in the target language, such as Arabic, Chinese, Japanese and Russian, students must have completed an advanced-level language course (321 or its equivalent) in order to count a literature course in translation (taught in English) toward the concentration.

Language Study

Students are expected to work in at least one foreign language at an advanced level. Demonstration of this competency is satisfied by the completion of the modern languages and literatures requirement detailed above. Study abroad is strongly recommended.

Senior Capstone

All CWL concentrators are required to submit a 10–12 page capstone essay that highlights a thematic and/or methodological aspect of World Literature. For students majoring in English, modern languages and literatures or classics, the CWL capstone essay should be considered a supplement that enhances and broadens the scope of their capstone project in the major. For CWL concentrators majoring in a different discipline, the 10–12 page capstone essay is a freestanding paper.

In cases of a written supplement of 10–12 pages, the deadline will be the established due date of the capstone project within the home department (English, modern languages and literatures or classics); in cases of a separate 10–12 page paper for CWL concentrators majoring in a department other than English, modern languages and literatures or classics, that paper will be due at the end of week seven in spring term.

Concentrators should consult CWL-affiliate faculty when conceptualizing and writing their paper. While faculty will not take on an active and intensive supervisory role in relation to the CWL capstone essay, they will provide advice and guidance on texts and approaches that the student should consider. The CWL director will serve as an optional second reader of the capstone papers carried out by CWL concentrators in the home departments of their majors (if English, modern languages and literatures or classics), and in cases of CWL concentrators outside of these primary departments, the capstone essay will be submitted directly to the CWL director.

Courses in Comparative World Literature

CWL 120 WHAT IN THE WORLD IS WORLD LITERATURE?

Credit: 0.5

This course is designed for first-year students with two aims in mind: 1) an exploration of literary texts from around the world, and 2) an introduction to the discipline of World Literature. “What in the World is World Literature?” is at the forefront of literary study as it brings global perspectives to Kenyon. It emphasizes the study of literature as a way of crossing linguistic, national, and cultural borders. The course draws attention to language by placing novels, poems, plays and short stories written in different languages and translated into English in conversation with each other. It questions the boundedness of the nation by showing how the writing, publishing and reading of literary texts is already a transnational activity. Finally, it reveals how local and global cultures are intertwined in the literary text. Course readings may include Murasaki Shikibu’s “The Tale of Genji,” Shakespeare’s “The Tempest,” Salman Rushdie’s “Midnight’s Children,” Zadie Smith’s “White Teeth,” Luigi Pirandello’s “One, No One & One Hundred” and Yaa Gyasi’s “Homegoing.” The theme and texts taught in the course will vary each year and students are encouraged to contact the course instructor to find out the specific reading list for a given year. This course counts toward the core course requirement for the concentration. Only open to first-year students. No prerequisite. Offered every fall.

CWL 220 NO COMPARISON: THE PRACTICE OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

Credit: 0.5

This is a methods course that trains students to think and write like a comparativist. Where CWL 120 is an introduction to World Literature as methodology, CWL 220 builds on that foundation by situating world literatures within the broader discipline of Comparative Literature. This is a theoretically-focused course that integrates the study of literary texts with the founding and dominant theoretical movements of the 20th century. Building upon the close reading skills that students will have developed in their first-year core course, students will learn specific strategies of reading literature, including contrapuntal reading, distant reading, and surface reading. Course readings may include Kalidasa's "Shakuntala, Virginia Woolf's "Mrs. Dalloway," Jorge Luis Borges's "Labyrinths," Sophocles' "Antigone" and Kamila Shamsie's "Home Fire". The theme and texts taught in the course will vary each year and students are encouraged to contact the course instructor to find out the specific reading list for a given year. This counts toward the core course requirement for the concentration. Permission of instructor required. Prerequisite: CWL 120 or select, cross-listed sections of ENGL 103/104 or MLL 100- or 200-level courses (in translation) or CLAS 130 or 225. Offered every spring.

CWL 333 READING WORLD LITERATURE

Credit: 0.5

The course is team-taught by two faculty members from English and MLL. It explores what it means to read world literature by focusing on a single theme or problem common to many cultures that takes different forms in each local environment. For example, the course might focus on the problem of migrations to see how global literary forms have found different ways to represent what happens when people move from place to place. Or the course might focus on the different ways of representing coming of age. Yet another theme that the course might explore centers on the Anthropocene and how the environment is figured across cultures. Earlier iterations of the course have focused on travel, print cultures and book history, and global poetry; consequently, readings may include "Gilgamesh," Laila Lalami's "The Moor's Account," Aphra Behn's "Oroonoko," Marco Polo's "The Travels" and Thomas Pynchon's "The Crying of Lot 49." Prerequisite: CWL 220 or permission of instructor. Offered every other spring.