

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 220 Introduction to Comparative Literature — Altered States, Literary Trips
- An intermediate level CWL course
- CWL 480 Senior Seminar

Elective — Half (0.5) unit

The elective course allows students to continue their exploration of comparative world literature on a more advanced level. Comparative world literature courses not used towards the concentration can be used as an elective or any of the following:

- ENGL 310 Narrative Theory
- ENGL 315 The History of the Book
- ENGL 363 Writing the Global City
- ENGL 366 African Fiction
- ENGL 367 The Global South Novel
- ENGL 370 Transnational South Asia

Consult the electives page for [current course offerings](#).

Students must complete a half (0.5) unit of advanced coursework in two of the following (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 below. Study abroad is strongly recommended.

Courses in Comparative World Literature

CWL 200D Programming Humanity

Credit: 0.5

Artificial Intelligence is poised to surpass humans in intellectual abilities that we often associate with being human. What are the implications for how we think about digital humanities? Can we program humanity by employing AI to generate music, analyze vast quantities of literary text, or produce great visual works of art? Or will humans be programmed through predictive policing, manipulations of social media, and domestic surveillance? Can the non-profit OpenAI build an AI to benefit humanity, or will the prophecies of Stephen Hawking, Bill Gates, and Elon Musk (who all claim AI as the greatest existential threat to humanity) come true? This course will bridge the gap between humanities and technology in both a theoretical and practical manner. Each week we will present a fundamental technology like data visualization, social media hacking or machine learning through both lecture and hands-on labs. In parallel, we will contextualize our understanding of new technologies with discussions of the larger social impact and ethical dilemmas through case studies like computational literary analysis, digital profiling for predictive policing or issues stemming from potential broad structural economic unemployment. The broader goal of the course is to understand technologies driving seismic social change in order to be able to speak with an informed voice. This is an introductory survey course with no prerequisites. It is designed for both humanities students seeking to understand technology and technology-oriented students seeking to understand the larger social and ethical issues surrounding technology. No prerequisite.

CWL 215D Crisis and Rebellion: Modernism, the Avant-Garde, and Existentialism

Credit: 0.5

Continuing the inquiries begun in IPHS 113Y–114Y, this seminar addresses the rise of modernism, which represented a massive fissure in Western consciousness. A fault line visible since Romanticism suddenly fractured and one consequence was that something utterly unique, highly unsettling and profoundly revolutionary occurred: the role of art and the artist leapt into extraordinary prominence. Why in modernism do the issues of "self," "society" and "authority" figure so prominently in the aesthetic domain? What does the signal role of art suggest about the character of modernism itself? How successful has art been as the focal point of questions regarding authority? Is art's centrality itself a paradoxical response to the issues of complexity, specialization, fragmentation and relativity that inform the modern world? In view of modernism's paradoxes and chief concerns, we will address contending views of art and authority in various disciplines and media, including the visual arts, architecture, philosophy, literature, music, dance and film. Readings will include Baudelaire, Dostoevsky, Nietzsche, Woolf, Kafka, Breton and Sartre. Films will include "Triumph of the Will", "Rashomon" and "Mulholland Drive." This can be used as 0.5 unit of history toward fulfilling the social sciences diversification, but it must be taken as IPHS 215D. Prerequisite: IPHS 113Y–114Y or two semesters of English or philosophy. Offered every other year.

Instructor: Elkins

CWL 220 Altered States, Literary Trips
Credit: 0.5

This introductory course in comparative world literature introduces cutting-edge approaches to literary studies. Our focus is on a study of literature as an act of border crossings in the widest sense. Highlighted are approaches to literature that diverge from the familiar and the comfortable. Approaches will vary but may include translation studies, comparative and world literature theories, distant reading, literature and the arts, narrative theory, ethics and literature, cognitive approaches, cultural analytics and surface reading.

Instructor: Elkins

CWL 318D Postmodernism and Its Critics
Credit: 0.5

This course investigates the phenomenon of postmodernism and considers its relation to the modernist era. We will study key definitions and ask: Can postmodernism be defined as a postindustrial capitalistic phenomenon, as an increasing emphasis on language games, as a refusal of grand narratives, or as a shift from epistemological to ontological concerns? We will look at the advent of structuralism and its response to existentialism, as well as poststructuralist critiques. What does postmodern politics look like, and what are the implications of its critique of humanism? Postcolonialism, feminism, gender studies and critical race theory also will be considered for their critique of the Western tradition. We will then examine the reinvigoration of religious discourse. Through our study of postmodern architecture, literature, the visual arts and film, we will explore the nature of dual-coding, the critique of "instrumental" rationality, new representations of the past,

identity, time and space, and a new role for the reader/viewer. Finally, we will consider key critics' defense of humanism before asking whether our "information age" demonstrates a clear departure from the tenets of postmodernism. Prerequisite: IPHS 215 or CWL 215. Offered every other year.

Instructor: Elkins

CWL 333 Reading World Literature

Credit: 0.5

Literature is world literature when it is read for its truly global significance. To read literature as world literature is to discover its diversity. It is to see how fundamental questions inspire very different forms of literary creativity across the globe — to seek intersections across time and space and thereby to appreciate the many ways literary texts represent their cultures. This course explores what it means to read world literature by focusing on a single theme or problem common to many cultures but different for each. 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 world's different ways of representing coming of age, or how the environment is figured across cultures. The course studies these themes through focus on texts from nations and cultures not routinely featured together in literature classes. At the same time, the course explores the theory of world literature, as well as the reasons to study it, which include broadening our sense of literature's possible forms and uses, appreciating the world's diversity through its literature and developing one basis for a sense of global citizenship. Offered every other year.

CWL 480 Senior Seminar

Credit: 0.5

The course will provide a setting for guided student advanced work in comparative world literature. Students will work collaboratively to assist one another in the development of individual research projects that represent the synthesis of the courses they have taken in comparative world literature, English, and modern languages and literatures. The course is required of all comparative world literature concentrators.

Instructor: Elkins

Additional Courses that Meet the Requirements for this Concentration:

ENGL 212: Introduction to Literary Theory

ENGL 266: Violence and the Body: Narrative Insurgency

ENGL 310: Narrative Theory

ENGL 315: The History of the Book

ENGL 317: Poetry and the Visual Arts

ENGL 363: Writing the Global City

ENGL 366: African Fiction

ENGL 367: The Global South Novel

ENGL 370: Transnational South Asia

ENGL 412: The Arts of Memory

GERM 225: Rilke, Celan and Theory

IPHS 318D: Postmodernism and Its Critics

MLL 251: World Cinema

SPAN 385: Cities of Lights and Shadows: Urban Experiences in Latin America

SPAN 388: Literary Translation