Comparative Literature

The concentration in Comparative Literature enables students to study literature in cross-cultural perspectives. The aim of the program is to encourage students to study a varied and illustrative range of literary topics rather than the total development of a single literary tradition. True to the spirit of Brown’s New Curriculum, a concentration in Comparative Literature affords great academic freedom. For example: advanced courses in any literature department at Brown count for concentration credit; although English is commonly one of the languages that students apply to their Comparative Literature studies, basically any language--ancient or modern--supported at Brown may form part of a Comparative Literature program. In essence, concentrators study a generous range of literary works—from Western cultures, both ancient and modern, to Chinese, Japanese, and Arabic—and develop a focused critical understanding of how cultures differ from one another. Comparative Literature differs from other literature concentrations largely through its international focus and its broad-gauged view of art and culture in which the study of languages is combined with the analysis of literature and literary theory. All students take a course in literary theory and have the opportunity to complete a senior essay.

Please contact Professor Stephanie Merrim (stephanie_merrim@brown.edu), the Director of Undergraduate Studies, with questions.

There are three concentration tracks in Comparative Literature, as follows:

Track 1: Concentration in Comparative Literature with two languages

- Complete prerequisites(s) for taking 1000-level courses in your two languages by Semester V (students working in non-European languages may be allowed more latitude; be sure to consult a concentration advisor about constructing an individualized plan).
- Comparative Literature 1210, Introduction to the Theory of Literature.
- TEN advanced literature courses (generally 1000-level courses), including Comparative Literature 1210 and:
  a. At least TWO courses in the literature of each of your languages, and the remainder drawn chiefly from among the offerings of Comparative Literature and English, and other national literature departments.
  b. ONE COURSE chiefly devoted to EACH of the three major literary genres: poetry, drama and narrative.
- c. ONE literature course chiefly devoted to EACH OF THREE of the following five historical periods:
  • Antiquity
  • Middle Ages
  • Renaissance/Early Modern
  • Enlightenment
  • Modern. Please note that the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries count as one period, the Modern Period.

Track 2: Concentration in Comparative Literature with three languages

- Complete prerequisites(s) for taking 1000-level courses in your two languages by Semester V (students working in non-European languages may be allowed more latitude; be sure to consult a concentration advisor about constructing an individualized plan).
- Complete the same requirement for your third language before Semester VII (the above proviso for students working in non-European languages also holds here).
- Comparative Literature 1210, Introduction to the Theory of Literature.
- TEN advanced literature courses (generally 1000-level courses), including Comparative Literature 1210 and:
  a. At least TWO courses in the literature of each of your languages, and the remainder drawn chiefly from among the offerings of Comparative Literature and English, and other national literature departments.
  b. ONE COURSE chiefly devoted to EACH of the three major literary genres: poetry, drama and narrative.
  c. ONE literature course chiefly devoted to EACH OF THREE of the following five historical periods:
  • Antiquity
  • Middle Ages
  • Renaissance/Early Modern
  • Enlightenment
  • Modern. Please note that the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries count as one period, the Modern Period.

Track 3: Concentration in Literary Translation

- Complete prerequisites(s) for taking 1000-level courses in your two languages by Semester V (students working in non-European languages may be allowed more latitude; be sure to consult a concentration advisor about constructing an individualized plan).
- Comparative Literature 1210, Introduction to the Theory of Literature.
- Comparative Literature 1710 (Comparative Literature 2720 strongly urged).
- ONE course or MORE in Linguistics, drawn from among these courses: Cognitive, Linguistic and Psychological Sciences 0410, Anthropology 0800, English 1210, Hispanic Studies 1210 or an acceptable substitute.
- FIVE or SIX advanced literature courses (generally 1000-level courses), including Comparative Literature 1210 and:
  a. At least TWO courses in the literature of each of your languages, and the remainder drawn chiefly from among the offerings of Comparative Literature and English, and other national literature departments.
  b. ONE COURSE chiefly devoted to EACH of the three major literary genres: poetry, drama and narrative.
  c. ONE literature course chiefly devoted to EACH OF THREE of the following five historical periods:
  • Antiquity
  • Middle Ages
  • Renaissance/Early Modern
  • Enlightenment
  • Modern. Please note that the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries count as one period, the Modern Period.
- TWO workshops or MORE in Creative Writing
- A senior project to consist of:
  A substantial work in translation (length will vary depending upon language and genre);
  A critical introduction outlining the method used and specific problems encountered, and commenting on the history of the original work together with other translations, if any. For thesis, the student may register for COLT 1990, which will be taken in addition to the ten required courses listed above. Successful completion of the thesis constitutes Honors. (See Guidelines for Honors Theses.)

For additional information, please visit the Comparative Literature website (http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Comparative_Literature/) or see the Director of Undergraduate Studies, Professor Stephanie Merrim.