

# COMPARATIVE LITERATURE, B.A.

**Begin Campus:** Any Penn State Campus

**End Campus:** University Park

## Program Description

Designed for students who want to study literature with an interdisciplinary and global perspective, the major in Comparative Literature crosses the boundaries of geography, time, nationalities, languages, and cultures. The world of literature taught draws upon readings from the Americas, Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, and from many historical periods. The range includes recognized great books along with less-known works, timeless myths and up-to-date graphic novels and video games, gender studies, colonial and postcolonial literatures, indigenous literatures, testimonies, legends, banned books, literatures of the occult, detective fictions, virtual worlds, and cultural theory, and more. Students engage with different languages and cultures, develop the critical skills for literary and cultural analysis, and relate literature to other media, including film and digital media. The major also encourages students to explore the relationship between literature and ethics through course offerings focused on transnational identities, human rights, cultures of globalization, and the problem of violence. A senior seminar clarifies the mysteries of literary theory and provides opportunities for individual projects.

Students majoring in Comparative Literature take courses in the Department of Comparative Literature and in other departments. They also develop competence in a foreign language. Study abroad is encouraged: students may count up to 18 Education Abroad credits toward the major. The department endeavors to provide all Comparative Literature majors with opportunities for an individualized "engaged scholarship" experience, such as an undergraduate research project, an opportunity to assist faculty in research or teaching, an internship, an experience studying or working abroad, etc.

Graduates of the Department of Comparative Literature have undertaken careers in teaching, completed advanced degrees in literature, librarianship, law, and similar fields, entered the Peace Corps or other types of government service, and pursued careers in writing and communications.

The department offers a minor in World Literature, a major in Comparative Literature and an innovative integrated undergraduate-graduate degree through which students obtain both a B.A. and an M.A. in Comparative Literature.

## What is Comparative Literature?

Comparative literature is a discipline of literary studies that explores exciting approaches to literature and culture in a global context. It also examines global media (print, visual, electronic), and engages with questions of ethics, human rights, and the real world contexts of literary and cultural production.

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT COMPARATIVE LITERATURE (<https://complit.la.psu.edu/undergraduate/>)

## You Might Like This Program If...

- You are curious about other cultures beyond your own and want to learn to think critically and creatively about cultural difference and convergence in our interconnected world.
- You want to acquire important skills such as analytical writing, argumentation, and communication in an international context.
- You are interested in acquiring knowledge of a second language and/or culture, which is a key component to success in the global economy.

## Entrance to Major

In order to be eligible for entrance to this major, a student must:

1. attain at least a C (2.00) cumulative grade-point average for all courses taken at the University; and
2. have at least third-semester classification (<https://www.registrar.psu.edu/enrollment/semester-classification.cfm>).

READ SENATE POLICY 37-30: ENTRANCE TO AND CHANGES IN MAJOR PROGRAMS OF STUDY (<https://senate.psu.edu/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/37-00-entrance-to-a-college-or-major/>)

## Degree Requirements

**For the Bachelor of Arts degree in Comparative Literature, a minimum of 120 credits is required:**

Requirement	Credits
General Education	45
Electives	15
Bachelor of Arts Degree Requirements	24
Requirements for the Major	36

**3 of the 24 credits for Bachelor of Arts Degree Requirements are included in the Requirements for the Major, General Education, or Electives and 0-12 credits are included in Electives if foreign language proficiency is demonstrated by examination.**

Per Senate Policy 83-80.5, the college dean or campus chancellor and program faculty may require up to 24 credits of coursework in the major to be taken at the location or in the college or program where the degree is earned. For more information, check the Suggested Academic Plan for your intended program.

## Requirements for the Major

A grade of C or better is required for all courses in the major. To graduate, a student enrolled in the major must earn at least a C grade in each course designated by the major as a C-required course, as specified by Senate Policy 82-44 (<https://senate.psu.edu/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/82-00-and-83-00-degree-requirements/#82-44>).

Code	Title	Credits
<b>Prescribed Courses</b>		
<i>Prescribed Courses: Require a grade of C or better</i>		
CMLIT 10	World Literatures	3
CMLIT 100	Reading Across Cultures	3
CMLIT 400Y	Senior Seminar in Literary Criticism and Theory	3
<b>Supporting Courses and Related Areas</b>		

Select 27 credits from sections A, B, and C, including at least 15 credits at the 400 level: 27

#### A. Concentration

Select one of the following concentrations:

##### Language Emphasis

Select 6-18 credits in the study of a single world language and/or literature beyond the 12th credit level; see department list

##### Student-designed Thematic Emphasis

Select 6-18 credits of CMLIT courses, in consultation with your adviser, organized around a theme you devise, subject to your adviser's approval of a 1-page academic plan in which you explain your theme and the courses that fit into it.

#### B. Literatures

Select at least 6-18 credits in courses on literature. Up to 12 of these credits can be taken through departments other than Comparative Literature. Up to 18 credits may be taken as courses offered through an Education Abroad program with departmental approval.

#### C. Comparative Literature

Select 3 credits in Comparative Literature at the 400 level

## General Education

Connecting career and curiosity, the General Education curriculum provides the opportunity for students to acquire transferable skills necessary to be successful in the future and to thrive while living in interconnected contexts. General Education aids students in developing intellectual curiosity, a strengthened ability to think, and a deeper sense of aesthetic appreciation. These are requirements for all baccalaureate students and are often partially incorporated into the requirements of a program. For additional information, see the General Education Requirements (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/general-education/baccalaureate-degree-general-education-program/>) section of the Bulletin and consult your academic adviser.

The keystone symbol appears next to the title of any course that is designated as a General Education course. Program requirements may also satisfy General Education requirements and vary for each program.

### Foundations (grade of C or better is required and Inter-Domain courses do not meet this requirement.)

- **Quantification (GQ):** 6 credits
- **Writing and Speaking (GWS):** 9 credits

### Breadth in the Knowledge Domains (Inter-Domain courses do not meet this requirement.)

- **Arts (GA):** 3 credits
- **Health and Wellness (GHW):** 3 credits
- **Humanities (GH):** 3 credits
- **Social and Behavioral Sciences (GS):** 3 credits
- **Natural Sciences (GN):** 3 credits

### Integrative Studies

- **Inter-Domain Courses (Inter-Domain):** 6 credits

### Exploration

- **GN**, may be completed with Inter-Domain courses: 3 credits
- **GA, GH, GN, GS, Inter-Domain courses.** This may include 3 credits of World Language course work beyond the 12th credit level or the

requirements for the student's degree program, whichever is higher: 6 credits

## University Degree Requirements

### First Year Engagement

All students enrolled in a college or the Division of Undergraduate Studies at University Park, and the World Campus are required to take 1 to 3 credits of the First-Year Seminar, as specified by their college First-Year Engagement Plan.

Other Penn State colleges and campuses may require the First-Year Seminar; colleges and campuses that do not require a First-Year Seminar provide students with a first-year engagement experience.

First-year baccalaureate students entering Penn State should consult their academic adviser for these requirements.

### Cultures Requirement

6 credits are required and may satisfy other requirements

- United States Cultures: 3 credits
- International Cultures: 3 credits

### Writing Across the Curriculum

3 credits required from the college of graduation and likely prescribed as part of major requirements.

### Total Minimum Credits

A minimum of 120 degree credits must be earned for a baccalaureate degree. The requirements for some programs may exceed 120 credits. Students should consult with their college or department adviser for information on specific credit requirements.

### Quality of Work

Candidates must complete the degree requirements for their major and earn at least a 2.00 grade-point average for all courses completed within their degree program.

### Limitations on Source and Time for Credit Acquisition

The college dean or campus chancellor and program faculty may require up to 24 credits of course work in the major to be taken at the location or in the college or program where the degree is earned. Credit used toward degree programs may need to be earned from a particular source or within time constraints (see Senate Policy 83-80 (<https://senate.psu.edu/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/82-00-and-83-00-degree-requirements/#83-80>)). For more information, check the Suggested Academic Plan for your intended program.

## B.A. Degree Requirements

**Foreign Language** (0-12 credits): Student must attain 12th credit level of proficiency in one foreign language. See the Placement Policy for Penn State Foreign Language Courses (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/general-information/academic-information/advising-planning-degree-program/course-placements/placement-policy-world-language-courses/>).

**B.A. Fields** (9 credits): Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences, Arts, Foreign Languages, Natural Sciences, Quantification (may not be taken in the area of the student's primary major; foreign language credits in this category must be in a second foreign language or beyond the 12th credit level of proficiency in the first language)

**Other Cultures** (0-3 credits): Select 3 credits from approved list. Students may count courses in this category in order to meet other major, minor,

elective, or General Education requirements, except for the General Education US/IL requirement.

## Integrated B.A. in Comparative Literature and M.A. in Comparative Literature

Requirements for the Integrated B.A. in Comparative Literature and M.A. in Comparative Literature can be found in the Graduate Bulletin (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/graduate/programs/majors/comparative-literature/#integratedundergradprogramstext>).

### Program Learning Objectives

- Identify formal and aesthetic aspects of literary texts—including genre, period, style, theme, language, and narrative structure—as they emerge within global patterns of production, translation, or circulation.
- Analyze literary texts and other artistic media through close readings within a comparative or global context.
- Utilize library and digital resources to locate, access, and assess relevant research materials.
- Compare literary texts from different cultures, regions, languages, time periods, and genres with special attention to the benefits and challenges of the comparative method.
- Produce written arguments that advance a compelling rhetorical or theoretical position through analysis of textual evidence, a strong thesis statement, and a sophisticated understanding of how to read global literatures.

### Academic Advising

The objectives of the university's academic advising program are to help advisees identify and achieve their academic goals, to promote their intellectual discovery, and to encourage students to take advantage of both in-and-out-of class educational opportunities in order that they become self-directed learners and decision makers.

Both advisers and advisees share responsibility for making the advising relationship succeed. By encouraging their advisees to become engaged in their education, to meet their educational goals, and to develop the habit of learning, advisers assume a significant educational role. The advisee's unit of enrollment will provide each advisee with a primary academic adviser, the information needed to plan the chosen program of study, and referrals to other specialized resources.

READ SENATE POLICY 32-00: ADVISING POLICY (<https://senate.psu.edu/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/32-00-advising-policy/>)

### University Park

#### Liberal Arts Academic Advising

814-865-2545

Use the Liberal Arts Meet the Academic Advisers web page (<https://la.psu.edu/student-services/academic-advising/meet-the-academic-advisers/>) to see the contact information for the specific adviser(s) of this program

### Suggested Academic Plan

The suggested academic plan(s) listed on this page are the plan(s) that are in effect during the 2023-24 academic year. To access previous years' suggested academic plans, please visit the archive (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/archive/>) to view the appropriate Undergraduate Bulletin edition (*Note: the archive only contains suggested*

*academic plans beginning with the 2018-19 edition of the Undergraduate Bulletin*).

### Comparative Literature, B.A. at University Park Campus and Commonwealth Campuses

The course series listed below provides **only one** of the many possible ways to move through this curriculum. The University may make changes in policies, procedures, educational offerings, and requirements at any time. This plan should be used in conjunction with your degree audit (accessible in LionPATH as either an **Academic Requirements** or **What If** report). Please consult with a Penn State academic adviser on a regular basis to develop and refine an academic plan that is appropriate for you.

First Year		
Fall	Credits Spring	Credits
00 or 100 Level Course in Comparative Literature*	3 CMLIT 100*	3
ENGL 15, 30H, 137H, CAS 137H, or ESL 15 (GWS) <sup>‡</sup>	3 CAS 100A, 100B, 100C, 138T, or ENGL 138T (GWS) <sup>‡</sup>	3
General Education Course	3 General Education Course (GQ) <sup>‡</sup>	3
General Education Course	3 General Education Course	3
World Language Level 1	4 World Language Level 2	4
	<b>16</b>	<b>16</b>
Second Year		
Fall	Credits Spring	Credits
General Education Course	3 World Language level 4*	3
Any Level Course in Comparative Literature*	3 BA Requirements	3
General Education Course	3 General Education Course (GQ)*	3
General Education Course	3 General Education Course	3
World Language Level 3	4 CMLIT 10 (IL)*	3
	<b>16</b>	<b>15</b>
Third Year		
Fall	Credits Spring	Credits
World Language level 5*	3 400 Level Course in CMLIT*	3
400 Level Course in Comparative Literature, English Literature, or World Language*	3 BA Other Cultures Course/ Elective	3
General Education Course	3 ENGL 202A, 202B, 202C, or 202D (GWS) <sup>‡</sup>	3
BA Requirements	3 BA Requirements	3
General Education Course	3 Elective	3
	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>
Fourth Year		
Fall	Credits Spring	Credits
400 Level Course in Comparative Literature, English Literature, or World Language*	3 400 Level Course in Comparative Literature, English Literature, or Foreign Literature*	3
Elective	3 400 Level Course in Comparative Literature, English Literature, or Foreign Literature*	3

Elective	3 General Education Course (GHW)	1.5
Elective	3 Elective	3
General Education Course (GHW)	1.5 Elective	3
CMLIT 400Y (US/IL)*	3	
	<b>16.5</b>	<b>13.5</b>

**Total Credits 123**

- \* Course requires a grade of C or better for the major
- ‡ Course requires a grade of C or better for General Education
- # Course is an Entrance to Major requirement
- † Course satisfies General Education and degree requirement

**University Requirements and General Education Notes:**

US and IL are abbreviations used to designate courses that satisfy Cultural Diversity Requirements (United States and International Cultures).

W, M, X, and Y are the suffixes at the end of a course number used to designate courses that satisfy University Writing Across the Curriculum requirement.

General Education includes Foundations (GWS and GQ), Knowledge Domains (GHW, GN, GA, GH, GS) and Integrative Studies (Inter-domain) requirements. N or Q (Honors) is the suffix at the end of a course number used to help identify an Inter-domain course, but the inter-domain attribute is used to fill audit requirements. Foundations courses (GWS and GQ) require a grade of 'C' or better.

All incoming Schreyer Honors College first-year students at University Park will take ENGL 137H/CAS 137H in the fall semester and ENGL 138T/CAS 138T in the spring semester. These courses carry the GWS designation and satisfy a portion of that General Education requirement. If the student's program prescribes GWS these courses will replace both ENGL 15/ENGL 30H and CAS 100A/CAS 100B/CAS 100C. Each course is 3 credits.

**Bachelor of Arts Requirements:**

Bachelor of Arts students must take 9 credits in Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) Fields (Humanities; Social and Behavioral Sciences; Arts; World Languages [2nd language or beyond the 12th credit level of proficiency in the 1st]; Natural Sciences; Quantification). The B.A. Fields courses may not be taken in the area of the student's primary major. See your adviser and the Degree Requirements section (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/general-information/academic-information/>) of this Bulletin.

Bachelor of Arts students must take 3 credits in Other Cultures. See your adviser and the full list of courses approved as Other Cultures courses (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/general-education/course-lists/ba-other-cultures/>).

**Advising Notes:**

- All incoming freshmen must take a First-Year Seminar (FYS) during Fall or Spring of their first year. Academic advisers can provide a list of FYS being offered and help the student enroll. Most FYS in the College of the Liberal Arts are worth 3 cr. and count as a General Humanities (GH) or General Social Sciences (GS) course. For this reason, the FYS is not listed separately on this eight-semester plan;

most students will be able to fulfill the FYS requirement while also fulfilling a GH or GS requirement.

## Career Paths

Comparative Literature will give you a deeper understanding of this planet and its people, and open doors to new intellectual and cultural worlds. It will train you in important skills such as analytical writing, argumentation, and communication in an international context. The study of world literature, ethics and human rights, and global media—key areas in our program—gives students in professional and technical areas the “soft skills” that allow them to stand out from other applicants when they enter the job market and to build long-lasting careers out of the first job. Comparative Literature will expand your professional and intellectual options, not only immediately after graduation, but for the rest of your life.

## Careers

A degree in Comparative Literature will aid you in finding employment in domestic and international business, public relations, publishing, education, non-profit organizations, and museum acquisitions. Our alumni also pursue graduate degrees in advanced literary studies, law, and library science; and they have become professors, attorneys, librarians, and leaders in business, private institutions, and government service.

## Opportunities for Graduate Studies

The graduate program in Comparative Literature offers students small seminars on a diverse range of topics related to world literatures and cultures across the globe examined from a variety of theoretical approaches. We are committed to the intellectual development and professional success of all our students. We make sure they have opportunities to teach literature classes in their field(s) of study, and we work with them beginning in the second year to prepare them to write for publication. We also offer students the possibility of pursuing internships that prepare them for careers in and beyond academia.

## Contact

### University Park

DEPARTMENT OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE  
442 Burrowes Building  
University Park, PA 16802  
814-863-0589  
[cmlit@psu.edu](mailto:cmlit@psu.edu)