What is Comparative Literature?
Comp Lit is the study of literature from a range of different contexts and traditions. This includes literature produced by various cultures around the world, but also texts that belong to different times, different genres, and different media.

At Williams, Comp Lit is a vibrant interdisciplinary program that brings together faculty and courses from a range of departments and programs, including the foreign language and literature departments, English, Africana Studies, Latino/a Studies, American Studies, Religion, and Theatre, among others.

What kinds of courses can I take in Comp Lit?
Courses listed in the Comparative Literature section of the course catalog cover a wide range of texts and cultures: from the Russian novel to Chinese poetry, from the Qur’an to Japanese film. There are also courses that read different kinds of "texts," like fashion, museums, or the mass media. Classes are typically small, and students receive close attention from professors who work to meet their individual needs and interests.

Do I have to know a foreign language?
Not necessarily. Many of our students are studying foreign languages and reading literature in the original language, but all the courses listed on the back of this sheet are taught entirely in English, and many have no prerequisites.

Can I major in Comp Lit?
Yes! Within the major, we have two tracks students can choose from. In the first track, students focus on a specific national language and work up to advanced literature courses with readings in the original language. The other track emphasizes classes taught in English and reading in translation, but covers a wider range of traditions.

For information, contact the program chair: Janneke.vandeStadt@williams.edu
Core Courses

COMP 111 The Nature of Narrative (W) – Rouhi
COMP 117 Intro to Cultural Theory (W) – Thorne
COMP 202 Modern Drama – Pethica
COMP 206 Book of Job & Joban Literature (W) – Dekel
COMP 224 The Cookbook Through History – Goldstein
COMP 227 Chinese Performative Culture – He
COMP 229 Japanese Society, 800s-1800s (D) – Bolton & Siniawer
COMP 230 Renaissance: Self and World (D) (W) – Vasiliauskas
COMP 240 Intro to Literary Theory (W) – Pye
COMP 242 Americans Abroad (D, W) – Fox
COMP 246 Vampires: Fiction/Film/Fashion (W) – Kone
COMP 259 Adultery in the 19th-Century Novel Tutorial (W) – Cassiday
COMP 285 World War II in Russian Culture – Aliev
COMP 287 Intro to Post Colonial Studies (D, W) – Anam
COMP 288 Comic Abuse in Greece and Rome (W) – Draper
COMP 292 Revolution & Counter-Revolution (D, W) – Eqeiq
COMP 294 Philosophy & Narrative Fiction Tutorial (W) – Mladenovic
COMP 301 Literary Theory & The Sublime – Bolton
COMP 309 Complexion Complexities – Ford
COMP 324 The Digital Caribbean – Josephs
COMP 326 Queer Temporalities Tutorial (W) – Hidalgo
COMP 349 Max Weber & Critical Theory – Josephson
COMP 355 Contemporary Theatre & Performance – Holzapfel
COMP 358 Across the Oceans and Seas (D, W) – Anam
COMP 395 Signs of History – Johnston

Electives

COMP 107 The Trojan War (W) – Hoppin
COMP 128 Reading Asian American Lit (W) – Wang
COMP 204 20th-Century Russian Literature – van de Stadt
COMP 223 Japanese Food Culture (D) – Kagaya
COMP 237 Classical Arabic Poetry – Friedman
COMP 249 Chinese Science Fiction – Liu
COMP 362 Story, Self, and Society Tutorial (W) – Simko
COMP 281 Banlieue in Lit, Music, Film (D) – Saint-Just (in French)

Core courses are literature courses with a particularly strong emphasis on critical theory or on comparison across cultures, languages, media, etc. Courses not on this list that meet these criteria may be counted with the chair or advisor’s approval.

Any literature course at the college can be counted as an elective for the major. Appropriate courses in art or music may also be counted with the permission of the chair or your advisor.