

Senior Theses in Comparative Literature at Williams College

The following text from the course catalog describes the requirements for the degree with honors in Comparative Literature.

Prerequisites

Honors candidates in Comparative Literature are required to have maintained a GPA of 3.5 in the major to qualify for submitting a thesis proposal. In addition, candidates must demonstrate a strong interest in a specific topic for which an appropriate faculty advisor will be available in the senior year.

Timing

Students wishing to pursue a thesis in Comparative Literature are strongly urged to secure an advisor by the end of the week after Spring Break in their junior year. By May 15th of their junior year, candidates must submit to the Program Advisory Committee a one- to two-page proposal and a preliminary bibliography. The Advisory Committee will inform candidates by June 1 whether they may proceed with the thesis and advise them about any changes that should be made in the focus or scope of the project. The summer before the senior year will be spent compiling a more detailed bibliography and preparing for the process of writing the thesis.

In their senior year, candidates will devote two semesters and the winter study period to their theses (493-31-494). By the end of the Fall semester, students will normally have undertaken substantial research and produced the draft of at least the first half of the project. At this point students should also have a clear sense of the work remaining for completion of the thesis. In the course of the Fall semester, students will also have chosen and met with a second reader for the project, who will provide additional guidance and read the final thesis. By the end of Winter Study, students should have completed a draft of the entire project. At that time, the Comparative Literature Advisory Committee, together with the advisor, will determine whether the project may continue as an Honors Thesis, or whether its first portions (COMP 493-COMP 31) will be graded as Independent Studies.

The second semester of independent thesis work will be spent revising as necessary. The completed thesis in its final form will be due one week before the last day of classes. The student will make a public presentation of the thesis as part of the Senior Portfolio Symposium soon after spring break.

Characteristics of the Thesis, Evaluation, and Major Credit

The topic of the thesis must be comparative and/or theoretical. It is also possible to write a thesis that consists of an original translation of a significant text or texts; in this case, a theoretical apparatus must accompany the translation. The complete thesis must be at least 50 and at most 75 pages in length, excluding the bibliography.

The advisor will assign the grades for the thesis courses (COMP 493-31-494); the Advisory Committee will determine whether a candidate will receive Honors, Highest Honors, or no honors.

For students who pursue an honors thesis, the total number of courses required for the major—including the thesis course (COMP 493-31-494)—is 10, i.e., one of the thesis courses may substitute for one course and the Senior Portfolio.

COMPARATIVE LITERATURE 比較文学 ספרות השוואתית 比較文學 litterae comparatae συγκριτική φιλολογία literatura comparada 比较文学 vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft сравнительное литературоведение littérature comparée المقارن الأدب comparative literature 比較文学 ספרות השוואתית