



THE UNIVERSITY OF
CHICAGO

Division of the
Humanities
Comparative Literature

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Advising and Mentoring

Every new student will be assigned a faculty mentor who meets with them at least once a quarter to discuss and approve course registration, and ongoing academic goals. Since the faculty mentors are assigned based on joint interests, the faculty mentor may – but does not have to – become the student’s dissertation adviser. In addition, students meet with their faculty mentor and DGS at the end of each academic year to review progress and plan for summer and the following year. In the first two years of the program, students should also begin to approach specific faculty members for ongoing advising in their respective fields of interest so that they can elicit specialist guidance as they begin preparing for the qualifying examination.

Once students have finished coursework and are registering for fewer than 300 units per quarter, they will be automatically enrolled in an Advanced Studies course for up to 300 units with the instructor listed as the DGS (see the Humanities Division’s policy on academic progress). The pass/fail grades for this Advanced Studies course will be assigned by the DGS based on the annual review of student progress in the spring quarter.

The department relies on intensive mentoring to balance research and teaching priorities as part of each student’s pedagogical training plan. In the first year, students will consult with their faculty member about appropriate teaching plans, and these discussions will then be formalized in consultation with the DGS and Chair. In consultation with the DGS, mentors will make students aware of what courses faculty are teaching, including in the Core, and implement a procedure for matching students to instructors according to intellectual fit and research program.

Outline of the Ph.D. Requirements in Comparative Literature

Year One: Eight graduate-level courses, including CMLT 501 and 502; demonstrated proficiency in one foreign language; qualifying paper.

Years Two & Three: Eight graduate-level courses; demonstrated proficiency in second foreign language; oral and written qualifying examination by end of winter quarter of third year (or end of spring quarter of third year with DGS approval only); dissertation proposal approved by end of spring of third year (or end of summer, prior to beginning of fall quarter of fourth year with committee and DGS approval only).

Years Four through Six: Year 5 dissertation colloquium (or prior to completion of dissertation); completion of dissertation, culminating in dissertation defense and graduation by end of year six.

The timing and nature of teaching under the Pedagogical Training Plan is planned in consultation with the DGS and faculty mentor according to the student’s needs and professional goals.

Coursework

Language Requirements

High proficiency in two foreign languages demonstrated by passing a graduate literature course in the language (and approval by the faculty of record via CMLT department form) **or evaluation by student’s advisor in the case of native fluency (and approval with the CMLT department form)** or a high pass (P+) on the [Graduate Reading Exam](#) proctored by the [Chicago Language Center](#). At least one high proficiency language should be confirmed in the first year. The remaining

language requirement is generally completed in the second year and must be completed before the student is admitted to candidacy.

Students should also be working towards native fluency in the language of their major literature by applying to studying abroad, only after exhausting UChicago language offerings. Funding for language study depends on the language and on the student's immigration status; please review the [Humanities Division](#) and [UChicago Grad](#) websites for more detailed information and policies.

Registration for the language exam (for which a High Pass is required) can be found on the [Graduate Reading Exam](#) page. The exam is proctored by the [Chicago Language Center](#) where you can find more resources on language certificates, courses, and the schedule for language exams.

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The University of Chicago Language Center is a hub of professional development and services for the hundreds of instructors and graduate students that teach the 60+ languages spread across various departments within the university. It also promotes language study and increases the visibility of language offerings, helping students navigate and go beyond the university's language requirements. More information about language study at the University of Chicago, including pedagogical training in teaching languages; the AEPA and ARCA language examinations; and more are available at the [Chicago Language Center website](#).

First Year Qualifying Paper

In spring quarter of their first year of study, students are required to develop a paper written in their first two quarters of the program in a course with a Comparative Literature faculty member (or outside faculty member with DGS prior approval). The student must meet with that faculty member to decide on how to develop the paper – whether for the goal of submitting it as an article or conference paper. The student is required to complete edits to the new form of the paper no later than the third week of spring quarter and to submit a copy for review both to the faculty member and to the DGS. The DGS will circulate the paper to another faculty member in the department. Both faculty members must complete the review of the paper and submit feedback to the student and to the DGS before the end of year review. These papers should demonstrate the student's ability to write scholarly prose, to formulate a clear research argument, and to situate it within the context of secondary literature relevant to the topic.

Qualifying Exam

All students will meet with their exam committee at the end of the second year. Students should bring to this meeting a draft examination list of approximately 60 texts, provisionally organized into three fields of disciplinary, theoretical, or regional inquiry. The list will be discussed with a view to balancing the specificity of research interests in the student's eventual dissertation proposal with the broader knowledge pertaining to teaching and curriculum development that candidates are typically expected to demonstrate in job applications, interviews, and campus visits. The exams themselves will incorporate language that asks students to reflect upon the ways in which their research speaks to the broader field of Comparative Literature and the ways in which their project challenges disciplinary boundaries, rather than focusing exclusively on the student's specific research agenda.

At the beginning of autumn quarter of their third year, students will submit to their committee for approval, a revised list of approximately 60 texts along with a statement of interest outlining the nature of their engagement with them that will guide the examination committee in formulating questions. The examination will take place in the autumn or winter quarter of the student's third year (with possible extension to spring with DGS and committee approval). The committee will provide the student with 2 questions on each list, of which the student must answer one. The student will write 3 written responses of no more than 4,000 words each over a period of 72 hours. The subsequent oral examination will consist of two parts, each 1 hour long: (i) a critical conversation around the lists and written exams, aimed at testing the student's ability to critically frame, defend, and expand upon their responses (ii) a discussion focused on the dissertation proposal that serves as a constructive conversation on the scale, scope, and direction of the project. The goal is to provide an opportunity for the student to parse the parameters of their dissertation project as well as to outline the next steps for crafting a viable dissertation proposal, including identifying potential committee members.

The examination committee will determine the grade for the exam, either "No Pass" or "Pass". In the case of a "No Pass," the student will receive a detailed explanation of why the examination did not pass and advice on revision(s) from the committee. The student will have one opportunity to retake the examination at the end of winter quarter of their third year. In the case of a "Pass," the student should transition immediately to preparing the dissertation proposal. If the student does not pass at the second attempt, they will be removed from the program.

Assembling the committee

The qualifying examination committee is assembled by the student in consultation with their faculty mentor and should be comprised of two or three full-time UChicago faculty members, at least one of whom must be a core member of Comparative Literature. Students are responsible for assembling their lists in consultation with their committee. Once the committee is satisfied, the candidate must complete the examination list approval form and forward it to the DGS. The candidate is responsible for arranging the date of the oral component of the examination with their committee; the department administrator for arranging the room. Examinations are generally not administered during school breaks or over the summer.

If a student has not completed the qualifying examinations by the end of their third year, he or she will be put on academic probation and a timeline established with the aim of avoiding their attrition from the program.

Leaves of Absence

If students need to take a leave of absence during the program, including parental leave, they should review divisional policy on residency and academic requirements in the [Humanities Division Student Manual](#) and discuss options with the DGS, Chair, and Humanities Dean of Students.

Annual Review

Each student while enrolled in the program must complete an annual academic progress report, administered by the department. This report will be used by the faculty to assess students' academic progress during the annual spring review. It complements but does not replace the "Advanced Studies" course that students are enrolled in when taking fewer than 300 units in years three and beyond. See the [Humanities Division Student Manual](#) for more information. The Annual Report, which is due in spring quarter, requires signed approval from a student's faculty mentor, and (if applicable) from their examination and/or dissertation committee chair in the third and subsequent years.

Incomplete Work

Students may not begin the academic year with any incomplete work. This is Humanities Division policy; students are expected to start each term and each year with their full attention on current course work. Students with incompletes in required courses at the time of the spring annual review in May will be required by the Dean of Students to demonstrate that all incomplete work has been completed **and graded before the beginning of Autumn quarter of the next academic year**. All papers for incomplete courses must therefore reach the course professor and the department **before** the start of Autumn quarter. If a student is experiencing difficulty in receiving a grade for a paper they have submitted, they should contact the DGS who will intervene on their behalf.

Students with any incompletes or blank grades at the beginning of Autumn quarter will receive a "UW" or "Unofficial Withdrawal" for that course, which carries no academic credit. They will also be placed on academic probation and given one quarter to reconcile these courses for possible grades. Students with ongoing incompletes will not be able to proceed to the qualifying examination and dissertation proposal, to serve as a TA, or to teach until all incompletes are resolved.

Dissertation Proposal

The dissertation proposal of approximately 15 pages or 4000 words (excluding bibliography) should be approved by the student's dissertation committee and submitted to the DGS before the end of spring quarter of the student's third year. The dissertation proposal should demonstrate that the student (a) has moved from thoughts on a topic to advancing a significant and original set of questions about that topic; (b) has sufficient understanding of the relevant scholarship and of his or her chosen methodology, and (c) has formulated plausible organizing principles for the dissertation as a whole.

A dissertation proposal will typically include the following elements:

statement of the topic or problem the dissertation will address with a succinct discussion of the inadequacies and insufficiencies of previous approaches to this topic or problem. The discussion of previous approaches should not be an exhaustive history of previous scholarship, but rather a pointed discussion of the most important and relevant scholarship with which the dissertation will engage

- Preliminary version of the dissertation's overall argument, as you understand it at this point
- Discussion of the specific contributions to its field of specialization the dissertation seeks to make
- Explanation of the methodology to be used, with relevant representatives cited
- Outline of the dissertation's chapter organization and contents
- Preliminary working bibliography of primary and secondary publications, and archives if relevant

Students should consult their dissertation committee regarding their specific expectations. Once the committee approves the proposal before the presentation, the chair of the committee should submit the signed [Dissertation Proposal Approval Form](#) to the department, and the candidate must file a copy of the dissertation proposal with the department.

Proposal Presentation

The student will present the approved dissertation proposal at a dissertation proposal presentation to which the faculty and graduate students of the department as a whole are invited. The student will circulate an abstract of the proposal beforehand and introduce the proposal for 15-20 minutes with an open discussion of one hour following. The presentation is an opportunity to present and share the approved proposal with other faculty and students in order to get feedback. At the conclusion of the hour's discussion, the student and committee members will meet separately in order to capture the main suggestions from the larger group.

Dissertation Completion

Writing a dissertation is a long and, sometimes, an isolating process. In addition to sharing chapters with their dissertation committee, doctoral candidates' writing, and professional development depend on presenting work to others. Students are encouraged to make use of the resources available on campus such as the Comparative Literature colloquium, the Comparative Literature writing group, Graduate workshops, and Graduate Writing Consultant. Students are also encouraged to explore the writing support offered by UChicago Grad's Writing Workshops, the Comparative Literature Graduate Writing Workshop, and the [Council on Advanced Studies Workshops](#).

Dissertation Completion Fellowships & Advanced Funding

The Humanities Division encourages dissertations to be completed within six years of joining the program. Candidates should be aware that in order to remain in good standing, they should submit drafts of their dissertation chapters to their committee members at regular intervals agreed with their chair and committee. In the event that a student is experiencing difficulty in receiving timely feedback on chapters they have submitted — under normal circumstances, within a month of submission — they should contact the DGS who will intervene on their behalf.

Candidates who are still working on their dissertations in the winter of their fifth, sixth, or seventh years should be prepared to apply for dissertation completion fellowships not only in the Humanities Division, but also in the Center for the Study of Politics & Race and Center for the Study of Gender and Sexuality. Candidates should also inform themselves of outside funding from resources like the Fulbright, DAAD, Lurcy Foundation, the American Council on Learned Societies.

Candidates are eligible to apply for dissertation completion fellowships to be held up through year 8 only if they have completed at least one polished and approved chapter of the dissertation by the application deadline and are in good academic standing demonstrating sustained progress. Fellowship awards require certification that the dissertation will be completed within the term of the award and require students to meet minimum qualifications which vary based on the award. Please note that at this time, students who receive a DCF in year 6 and who complete their program within that year and who apply for the [Teaching Fellowship in Humanities](#), will receive a Teaching Fellowship in Humanities position for the following year.

For more information about fellowships and divisional policies on progress, the inclusive funding package, and more, graduate students should review the [Division of the Humanities website](#) and consult their Departmental Administrator, Director of Graduate Studies, or Dean of Students office.

Dissertation Colloquium

As part of the regular process of dissertation feedback, the chair of the dissertation committee will schedule a dissertation colloquium to review progress with the student and the dissertation committee as a whole. In this colloquium, candidates will discuss with their dissertation committee the current state of the dissertation and outline their plans and schedule for further progress. This meeting will also help ensure that dissertation committee members are aware of each other's views and expectations.

Dissertation Defense

The candidate must conclude their studies by successfully defending the dissertation in an oral final examination. Candidates must get the approval of their committee for a dissertation defense at least a month prior to submitting the full dissertation. The dissertation should be submitted in the standard format required by the University's dissertation office. Please visit the [Dissertation Office website](#) for more specific information on university-wide deadlines, formatting, and submission procedures.

Pedagogical Training Requirements

The pedagogical training of students of Comparative Literature is complicated by the fact that they have to be qualified and prepared not only to teach successfully in comparative literature departments but also in language departments or departments of other disciplines such as religious studies, film studies, area studies, to name a few. Thus, graduates from Comparative Literature must be trained in multiple pedagogical methodologies and have appropriate teaching experience.

All graduates of our program should all be able to:

- Design and teach introductory courses in the discipline
- Design and teach introductory and upper-level courses in their field
- Design effective assignments for a range of courses
- Effectively facilitate discussion
- Design and deliver an effective lecture
- Describe their approach to student learning and give reasons for their pedagogical choices

Students should graduate well-versed in methods and approaches to undergraduate writing instruction and are encouraged to seek additional training in inclusive pedagogy through the [Chicago Center for Teaching](#) (CCT) and Diversity + Inclusion programming.

The Pedagogical Training Plan is established in consultation with the faculty mentor according to the individual student's needs and professional goals, and may be tailored to include the following pedagogical and teaching experiences:

Year 1

Teaching Experience

- None

Pedagogical Training and Mentoring

- Recommended: Graduate Comparative Literature Writing Workshop

Year 2

Teaching Experience

- None

Pedagogical Training and Mentoring

- For Core teaching: HUMA 50000: Pedagogies of Writing (taken in Spring or Summer) or equivalent number of writing center workshops
- Recommended: Graduate Comparative Literature Writing Workshop (if not taken previously)

Year 3

Teaching Experience

- Graduate Student - TA in a course parented by Comparative Literature or with a core faculty member in Comparative Literature. Student must obtain a performance evaluation from the instructor on record.

Pedagogical Training and Mentoring

- *For Core teaching in year 4* (Writing Interns): HUMA 50000: Pedagogies of Writing (taken in Spring or Summer of year 3) or equivalent number of writing center workshops
- Optional Teaching@Chicago (CCT)
- Recommended: Graduate Comparative Literature Writing Workshop (if not taken previously)

Year 4

Teaching Experience

- 1 Graduate Student - TA as per year three

OR

- 1 Preceptorship

OR

- 1 Graduate Student - Lecturer outside of the department by petition to the DGS

Pedagogical Training and Mentoring:

- For departmental assistantships (including Preceptorship): One-on-one pedagogical mentoring with faculty instructor

Year 5

Teaching Experience

- 1 Graduate Student - Lecturer in Comparative Literature

OR

- 1 Preceptorship

OR

- 1 Graduate Student - Lecturer experience outside of the department by petition to the DGS

Pedagogical Training and Mentoring

For lecturers of self-designed course:

- Course syllabus and description approved by the DGS
- Observation and feedback by dissertation adviser (*highly recommended)
- Optional: 2 hours of inclusive teaching programming (CCT)

**at least one Lectureship (stand-alone course) during training should be parented by the department of Comparative Literature

Year 6

(If not completed in year 5)

Teaching Experience

- 1 Graduate Student - Lecturer in Comp Lit
- OR
- 1 Preceptorship
- OR
- 1 Graduate Student - Lecturer experience outside of the department by petition to the DGS

Pedagogical Training and Mentorship

- course syllabus and description approved by the DGS
- Observation and feedback by dissertation adviser (*highly recommended)
- Seminar or Workshop on Teaching Portfolios
- Diversity & Inclusion workshops

NB: At least one Lectureship (stand-alone course) during training should be parented by the department of Comparative Literature

This plan is a suggested schedule for teaching and will be tailored for individual student training needs at the discretion of the Director of Graduate Studies and faculty adviser.

Please note that any teaching assistantship or lectureships outside of the department of Comparative Literature should be reviewed with your advisor and the DGS for their suitability in your pedagogical training plan and are required to be approved before accepting appointment. This pedagogical training plan is reviewed and modified on an annual basis.

Chicago Center for Teaching

The Chicago Center for Teaching supports the University's diverse community of instructors — graduate students, postdocs, and faculty members — in developing their teaching practices with the goal of enhancing student learning across campus. They are committed to the idea that effective teaching begins with an instructor's intentions and expectations for their students. Toward that end, they encourage the use of pedagogical practices that are based in scholarly literature on teaching and

learning and foster dialogue and reflection on effective teaching through workshops, seminars, individual consultations, and other programs and activities. Their aim is to promote teaching as a scholarly practice that is integral to the University's values. For more information about pedagogical training including workshops and one-on-one teaching evaluations, visit the [Chicago Center for Teaching Program Page](#)

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