

# Comparative Literature - BA 2017 - 2018 Assessment Plan

Currently status is: Report Accepted

## I. ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2016 - 2017

### Mission Statement

The mission of the undergraduate program in Comparative Literature is to provide undergraduate students instruction in the cross-cultural, interdisciplinary and trans-historical study of literature and the theories that attempt to define its nature and function. It is our mission to prepare undergraduate students for careers as teachers, scholars and writers, but the program also fosters linguistic competence, critical thinking, and problem solving skills. As such, it aims to provide students with the necessary skills for being viable and informed members of an international community in an increasingly globalized society.

### Goal 1.

The program expects all students to develop skills in a broad range of diverse (world) literary traditions.

### Curriculum

Basic mastery of a broad range of diverse literary traditions is accomplished by successfully completing the following core courses: CPLT 270 (Introduction to World Literature) and two of the following courses: CPLT 301 (Great Books of the Western World I), CPLT 302 (Great Books of the Western World II), CPLT 303 (Great Books of the Eastern World).

### Learning Outcome 1.

Students will demonstrate skill in and knowledge of a broad range of diverse literary traditions.

### Measures and Criteria

Students will successfully complete CPLT 270 and two of the following three courses: CPLT 301, CPLT 302, CPLT 303. In these courses, students will be judged according to their performance on exams, essays, presentations, and research papers.

Students will write a senior thesis.

### Methods

Students will successfully complete CPLT 270 and two of the following three courses: CPLT 301, CPLT 302, CPLT 303. Students will be evaluated by their instructors on their knowledge of diverse literary traditions through a combination of assignments, which include tests, exams, class discussions, presentations, research papers, and senior theses. These assignments are designed to address the following three aspects: First, tests and exams are meant to evaluate students' mastery of basic knowledge of diverse literary traditions, practitioners, and literary concepts; second, essays questions in the tests and exams, research papers, and senior theses are meant to evaluate students skills to critically and analytically write about literary texts; third, class discussions, presentations and writing assignments (e.g. essay questions, papers, and senior theses) are meant to enhance and evaluate students' oral and writing communicative skills and their ability to identify and effectively communicate with various kinds of audience on literary topics. In sum, students will be evaluated by their overall performance in all three aspects.

### Results

CPLT has a small major, and currently has with three BA students. 3 out of 3 have completed CPLT 270. 1 out of 3 has completed two courses of the Great Books series (CPLT 301, 302, and 303), and 2 out of 3 will have completed this requirement by the end of Fall 2017. They all did extremely well in these courses, receiving A's in all of them. Given their excellent academic records in these courses, we assess that this learning outcome was successfully met.

### Use of Results

CPLT 270 and the Great Books series (CPLT 301, 302, and 303) are fundamental to the CPLT BA curriculum, and are popular among both majors and non-majors. One of the current CPLT BA student decided to become a major after taking CPLT 303.

The assessment results could be used in at least two constructive ways:

1. The CPLT Advisory Committee should discuss how these courses can help with major recruitment and retention.
2. To help further improve these courses, current majors could be invited to share with faculty their thoughts and suggestions about these courses.

## **Goal 2.**

The program expects all students to develop skill in at least two literatures, one in a foreign language.

### **Curriculum**

Students will need to successfully complete one elective course in CPLT at the 300-level or above, one 415 topics course, two 300-level or above foreign language courses in literature, one 300-level or above course in the literature of a second foreign language (may be in translation), and CPLT 499 (senior thesis).

### **Learning Outcome 1.**

Students will demonstrate skill in at least two literatures, one in a foreign language.

### **Measures and Criteria**

Students will successfully complete one elective course in CPLT at the 300-level or above, one 415 topics course, two 300-level or above foreign language courses in literature, one 300-level or above course in the literature of a second foreign language (may be in translation), and CPLT 499 (senior thesis). The thesis will directly demonstrate their skill level in these areas.

### **Methods**

With the Director, the Comparative Literature advisory committee will meet annually to discuss curricular goals, how the curriculum is meeting student needs, and the degree to which student performance indicates that learning objectives are being met. The committee will discuss successfully completed senior theses and the degree to which they demonstrate student skill levels.

### **Results**

All three current CPLT majors are on track towards completing courses linked to this outcome.

3 out of 3 have completed one elective courses in CPLT at the 300-level; 2 out of 3 have completed CPLT 300; and 1 out of 3 have completed CPLT 415. All students received a A or B+ in each of these courses.

The requirement for two 300-level or above literature courses in a foreign language is more challenging to meet than other course requirements linked to this outcome. There are two specific difficulties: 1. it usually takes a long time for students to obtain the language proficiency indispensable in taking these higher-level literature courses; 2. even when students' language skills have reached an adequate level, they may not have appropriate courses to take, because not all language programs offer 300-level courses in the original language (e.g., Japanese and Chinese). The Program has been trying to find ways to help students overcome these difficulties. First, all students have been advised to take necessary courses in their first foreign languages (Italian, Japanese, Russian, respectively) early in their career as CPLT majors, with the hope to achieve a high level of proficiency in these languages as soon as possible. Second, in cases where no appropriate 300-level foreign language courses in literature are available, assistance is given to students to find faculty who were willing to offer directed studies in their language areas.

To conclude, despite a few challenges, students were able to meet this outcome.

### **Use of Results**

These results should be used constructively in advisement. As the mastery of a foreign language is time-consuming and requires careful planning and long term effort on the part of the student, the CPLT Program Director, who is also the CPLT undergraduate advisor, will **share these results with the College's First Year advisor**, who then could evaluate and make decision regarding whether to put CPLT majors in foreign language courses in their first year. These results should also be **shared with the designer/coordinator of the new "Major Maps" project** so that the CPLT map will accurately reflect the special challenges of the CPLT major.

## **Goal 3.**

The program expects all students to develop skill in the history of literary theory.

### **Curriculum**

CPLT 300 (What Is Comparative Literature) covers the history of literary theory.

### **Learning Outcome 1.**

Students will demonstrate knowledge of the history of literary theory and adequate ability to apply literary theory to literary texts; they will also acquire a good understanding of the history and development of the field of comparative literature.

#### **Measures and Criteria**

Students will successfully complete CPLT 300 and then demonstrate knowledge and skill in their senior theses.

#### **Methods**

The Director of Comparative Literature will review the successful completion of the Comparative Literature core through course grade sheets and student transcripts. With the Director, the Comparative Literature advisory committee will meet annually to discuss curricular goals, how the curriculum is meeting student needs, and the degree to which student performance indicates that learning objectives are being met. The committee will discuss successfully completed senior theses, the degree to which they demonstrate student skill levels, and how students' overall training has helped them pursue their post-graduate career.

#### **Results**

This outcome is specifically linked to CPLT 300 "What Is Comparative Literature," which on the one hand introduces to students the formation and development of the field of comparative literature, and on the other expose to students major theoretical trends and movements that helped shape the field.

So far 2 out of 3 current CPLT majors have completed this course; 1 out of 3 will have completed this course by the end of Fall 2017.

The two students who have taken this course both did extremely well. Both received high grades on all assignments, which included one individual presentation, one team presentation, two exams, and one final paper. They both demonstrated enhanced awareness of the importance of literary theory to the field, and have developed basic skills to apply theory to text. They also consciously experimented with the comparative approach in their assignments. For instance, in her final paper on Shakespeare's *King Lear*, student Rebecca C. not only offered a critical comparison between the play and an earlier version of the King Lear legend, but applied theories about the paradigm of world literature in her analysis. Furthermore, she also researched secondary scholarship on *King Lear*, critically engaging it in her own effort to make an argument. Judging by the students' performance in their assignments, it is highly likely that they will be able to use the skills and knowledge they obtained from this course in their senior theses.

In sum, this outcome has been successfully met.

#### **Use of Results**

As CPLT 300 is designed to help students acquire a good understanding of the discipline of comparative literature, its theoretical traditions, its development, and its current state, it is advisable that students should take it as early as possible, for achieving a good understanding of the discipline early in their career as CPLT majors would positively impact their study and would enable them to make informed academic plans. Students should also be aware that, due to lack of faculty, this required course can only be offered once a year, instead of once a semester. Therefore, if a student misses the opportunity to take it in a given semester, he/she will have to wait for a year before it becomes available again. This information should be shared with the First Year Advisor, who could encourage students to talk to the CPLT undergraduate advisor about the importance of the courses even if students do not have to take this course in their first year.

### **Goal 4.**

The program expects all students to develop skill in linguistic competence in a second foreign language.

#### **Curriculum**

Linguistic competence in a second foreign language is developed by successfully completing a 122-level course or above in the target language.

### **Learning Outcome 1.**

Students will demonstrate skill in linguistic competence in a second foreign language.

### **Measures and Criteria**

Students will successfully complete a 122-level or above course in the target language. Students will pass the exit exam in that language.

### **Methods**

The Director of Comparative Literature will review the successful completion of the Comparative Literature core through course grade sheets, language exit exam results, and student transcripts. With the Director, the Comparative Literature advisory committee will meet annually to discuss curricular goals, how the curriculum is meeting student needs, and the degree to which student performance indicates that learning objectives are being met.

### **Results**

This learning outcome requires students obtain linguistic competence in a second foreign language by completing a 122-level or above course in that language.

All three current CPLT majors have made plans to fulfill this requirement. One will start her first course in Fall 2017; the other two have had training in their respective second foreign languages, and will take courses to improve or prove their competence.

### **Use of Results**

While the Program only ask students to complete a lower-level (122 or above) course in their second foreign language, students should be aware that learning a second foreign language in addition to a first foreign language requires a lot of preparation and commitment. As the above assessment results show, students have to make careful planning in consultation with the advisor as early as possible in their career as CPLT majors. This information should be shared with the designer/coordinator of the new Major Map project so that the CPLT major map will convey it to all majors and prospective students. Furthermore, as learning a new language requires planning in advance, any change/modification to this requirement should be communicated to all involved parties--e.g., students, First Year Advisors, Staff in charge of the CPLT Major Map, etc.--in a timely fashion.

## **Goal 5.**

The program expects all students to develop skills in basic research methods and communicating in writing.

### **Curriculum**

Mastery of basic research methods and effective written communication skills are developed by successfully completing a written thesis.

### **Learning Outcome 1.**

Students will demonstrate skills in basic research methods.

### **Measures and Criteria**

Seniors write a thesis in which they synthesize previous knowledge and demonstrate the ability to do independent research.

### **Methods**

Students begin to learn research methods by writing research papers during their coursework. The ultimate piece of research is the Senior Thesis. The student must identify a research topic, identify a thesis director, propose the topic and submit an outline and a bibliography.

### **Results**

0 out of 3 of the current CPLT BA students was writing a senior thesis during the 2016-2017 Academic Year. However, this learning outcome, which indicates students should demonstrate skills in basic research methods, can be assessed by evaluating the performance of the two students who took CPLT 300 in Fall 2016. As mentioned in the "results" section of Goal 3, CPLT 300 "What Is Comparative Literature" introduces to students the development and current state of the discipline of comparative literature. A substantial portion of the course is devoted to helping students acquire basic research skills indispensable in the field. In this course, students were required to complete a series of written and oral assignments, including two presentations (one of which required collaboration with a partner), two exams, and one writing

assignment. Among these assignments, the two presentations, particularly the one that required teamwork, as well as the final paper, all specifically required vigorous research. The group presentation, for instance, specifically asked each group to establish a topic on a cultural phenomenon, collect and evaluate primary material and data, consult existing scholarship, create presentation slides, present findings, and organize a discussion with the audience. Both students did well in this assignment, demonstrating their ability to establish topics and conduct research for their projects.

Over the years many CPLT majors participated actively in USC's Magellan Programs offered by the Office of Undergraduate Research, and this is another area where this learning outcome can be assessed. In the 2016-2017 academic year, one CPLT BA student pursued a research project on the early twentieth-century Japanese author Natsume Soseki's novel *Kokoro*. For this project, she applied for and won a Magellan Apprentice Award and a Magellan Mini Award, which would enable her to conduct research in Japan this summer. In her research and grant application process, this student demonstrated not only passion for research but also commendable independence and originality. As a double major in creatively writing, she combines her interest in literary studies and writing in her project, seeking to create account of the major events in the novel from the feminine perspective based on her field research in Japan.

In sum, judging by the students' performance in the above-mentioned research-oriented activities, this outcome was met successfully.

### **Use of Results**

As mentioned in the "results" section of this learning outcome, CPLT students have been active participants in the Magellan Programs offered by the Office of Undergraduate Research. These programs are excellent points of departure for students who are interested in pursuing academic research in the area of comparative literature. The success stories of former CPLT students can be shared with new and prospective students. In addition, the assessment results can be shared with the CPLT faculty, who should be encouraged to help students to identify research interests, establish feasible projects, and take advantage of the rich resources available at USC.

The assessment methods only mention coursework and senior theses as potential areas where we assess students' research skills. As students' Magellan projects (or comparable research projects offered through similar programs offered at USC) are an excellent window into this outcome, next year's assessment plan can be revised to include such programs.

## **Learning Outcome 2.**

Students will demonstrate skills in written communication.

### **Measures and Criteria**

CPLT majors complete a written senior thesis 30-40 pages in length that compares elements of two national literatures or that comparatively examines a literary problem or question.

### **Methods**

The student submits a thesis proposal, an outline, and written drafts to the thesis advisor who provides oral and written feedback on a regular basis. The thesis will be evaluated on the following aspects over the course of the whole process: 1. how feasible the thesis and the outline are; 2. whether the bibliography of the thesis reflects an adequate scope of research; 3. how persuasive the writing is; 4. whether the final product reflects an adequate mastery of research and writing skills indispensable for a comparative literature major.

### **Results**

During the 2016-2017 academic year, none of the CPLT students was writing a senior thesis. However, one student, who expects to graduate in Spring 2018, has identified a thesis director, and has been in conversation with this faculty member about possible topics for her senior thesis. The preparation she did no doubt will contribute to her writing in the new academic year.

As mentioned in the "results" section of Goal 5, Learning Outcome 1, one CPLT student has been working on a Magellan project, for which she has been in regular contact with her faculty mentor about the research topic, relevant scholarship, and plans for field research as well as writing. In addition, she has written and submitted two grant applications, and won two Magellan awards (a Magellan Apprentice and a Magellan Mini). The grant proposal writing process helped sharpening her writing skills, and the fact that she

eventually received two awards speaks volumes about the effectiveness of her writing.

Based on these activities, we assess that that this outcome was met.

### **Use of Results**

The senior thesis continues to be an excellent venue for the Program to assess this learning outcome. At the same time, as our students also participate in other USC-sponsored research programs (e.g., the Magellan programs), these experiences could also be valuable opportunities for the Program to assess this outcome, and thus should be included in future assessment plans.

## **II. FUTURE ASSESSMENT PLAN FOR 2017 - 2018**

### **Mission Statement**

The mission of the undergraduate program in Comparative Literature is to provide undergraduate students instruction in the cross-cultural, interdisciplinary and trans-historical study of literature and the theories that attempt to define its nature and function. It is our mission to prepare undergraduate students for careers as teachers, scholars, and writers, but the program also fosters linguistic competence, critical thinking, and problem solving skills. As such, it aims to provide students with the necessary skills for being viable and informed members of an international community in an increasingly globalized society.

### **Goal 1.**

The program expects all students to develop skills in a broad range of diverse (world) literary traditions.

### **Curriculum**

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#### **Learning Outcome 1.**

Students will demonstrate skill in and knowledge of a broad range of diverse literary traditions.

#### **Measures and Criteria**

Students will successfully complete CPLT 270 and two of the following three courses: CPLT 301, CPLT 302, CPLT 303. In these courses, students will be judged according to their performance on exams, essays, presentations, and research papers.

Students will write a senior thesis.

#### **Methods**

Students will successfully complete CPLT 270 and two of the following three courses: CPLT 301, CPLT 302, CPLT 303. Students will be evaluated by their instructors on their knowledge of diverse literary traditions through a combination of assignments, which include tests, exams, class discussions, presentations, research papers, and senior theses. These assignments are designed to address the following three aspects: First, tests and exams are meant to evaluate students' mastery of basic knowledge of diverse literary traditions, practitioners, and literary concepts; second, essays questions in the tests and exams, research papers, and senior theses are meant to evaluate students skills to critically and analytically write about literary texts; third, class discussions, presentations and writing assignments (e.g. essay questions, papers, and senior theses) are meant to enhance and evaluate students' oral and writing communicative skills and their ability to identify and effectively communicate with various kinds of audience on literary topics. In sum, students will be evaluated by their overall performance in all three aspects.

### **Goal 2.**

The program expects all students to develop skill in at least two literatures, one in a foreign language.

### **Curriculum**

Students will need to successfully complete one elective course in CPLT at the 300-level or above, one 415 topics course, two 300-level or above foreign language courses in literature, one 300-level or above course in the literature of a second foreign language (may be in translation), and CPLT 499 (senior thesis).

#### **Learning Outcome 1.**

Students will demonstrate skill in at least two literatures, one in a foreign language.

### **Measures and Criteria**

Students will successfully complete one elective course in CPLT at the 300-level or above, one 415 topics course, two 300-level or above foreign language courses in literature, one 300-level or above course in the literature of a second foreign language (may be in translation), and CPLT 499 (senior thesis). The thesis will directly demonstrate their skill level in these areas.

### **Methods**

With the Director, the Comparative Literature advisory committee will meet annually to discuss curricular goals, how the curriculum is meeting student needs, and the degree to which student performance indicates that learning objectives are being met. The committee will discuss successfully completed senior theses and the degree to which they demonstrate student skill levels.

## **Goal 3.**

The program expects all students to develop skill in the history of literary theory.

### **Curriculum**

CPLT 300 (What Is Comparative Literature) covers the history of literary theory.

#### **Learning Outcome 1.**

Students will demonstrate knowledge of the history of literary theory and adequate ability to apply literary theory to literary texts; they will also acquire a good understanding of the history and development of the field of comparative literature.

### **Measures and Criteria**

Students will successfully complete CPLT 300 and then demonstrate knowledge and skill in their senior theses.

### **Methods**

The Director of Comparative Literature will review the successful completion of the Comparative Literature core through course grade sheets and student transcripts. With the Director, the Comparative Literature advisory committee will meet annually to discuss curricular goals, how the curriculum is meeting student needs, and the degree to which student performance indicates that learning objectives are being met. The committee will discuss successfully completed senior theses, the degree to which they demonstrate student skill levels, and how students' overall training has helped them pursue their post-graduate career.

## **Goal 4.**

The program expects all students to develop skill in linguistic competence in a second foreign language.

### **Curriculum**

Linguistic competence in a second foreign language is developed by successfully completing a 122-level course or above in the target language.

#### **Learning Outcome 1.**

Students will demonstrate skill in linguistic competence in a second foreign language.

### **Measures and Criteria**

Students will successfully complete a 122-level or above course in the target language. Students will pass the exit exam in that language.

### **Methods**

The Director of Comparative Literature will review the successful completion of the Comparative Literature core through course grade sheets, language exit exam results, and student transcripts. With the Director, the Comparative Literature advisory committee will meet annually to discuss curricular goals, how the curriculum is meeting student needs, and the degree to which student performance indicates that learning objectives are being met.

## **Goal 5.**

The program expects all students to develop skills in basic research methods and communicating in writing.

### **Curriculum**

Students will develop writing skills by completing written assignments in CPLT 300, two of the "Great Books" sequence (CPLT 301, 302, and 303), a CPLT elective at the 300-level or above, CPLT 415, and CPLT 499, the course in which they complete a senior thesis.

#### **Learning Outcome 1.**

Students will demonstrate skills in basic research methods.

##### **Measures and Criteria**

Students begin to learn research methods by writing research papers during their coursework (for instance, CPLT 300, CPLT 301, CPLT 302, CPLT 303, and CPLT 415). The ultimate piece of research is the Senior Thesis (CPLT 499), in which they synthesize previous knowledge and demonstrate the ability to do independent research. The student must identify a research topic, identify a thesis director (with whom he/she meets regularly), propose the topic and submit an outline and a bibliography. Then, under the supervision of the thesis director, he/she writes a thesis that demonstrates his/her ability to establish research questions, use library and online databases in collecting primary and secondary research materials, closely examine and sift these materials, write analytically, and, ultimately, makes his/her central argument.

##### **Methods**

Faculty teaching CPLT 499 evaluate each senior thesis based on the quality of research and writing, using a rubric that helps assess quality of research questions, skills in integrating knowledge learnt and research findings, the ability to make argument based on analysis of research materials, the ability to engage existing scholarship, and the ability to properly cite sources used in the thesis. Each year, we expect that 90% of the senior theses will receive a "satisfactory" rating for the quality of research.

#### **Learning Outcome 2.**

Students will demonstrate skills in written communication.

##### **Measures and Criteria**

CPLT majors sharpen their written communication skills over the entire course of their career in the program. They receive training in writing in their coursework; that is, in courses such as CPLT 300, CPLT 301, CPLT 302, and CPLT 303, just to give a few examples. In their last semester, they complete a written senior thesis 30-40 pages in length that compares elements of two national literatures or that comparatively examines a literary problem or question. The student submits a thesis proposal, an outline, and written drafts to the thesis director who provides oral and written feedback on a regular basis. The thesis will be evaluated on the following aspects over the course of the whole process: 1. how feasible the thesis and the outline are; 2. whether the bibliography of the thesis reflects an adequate scope of research; 3. how persuasive the writing is and how compelling the central argument is; 4. whether the student pays attention to style and format; 5. whether the student cite accurately; and 6. whether the final product reflects an adequate overall mastery of research and writing skills indispensable for a comparative literature major.

##### **Methods**

Faculty teaching CPLT 499 evaluate each senior thesis based on the quality of research and writing. For the learning outcome in written communication skills, faculty use a rubric that assess clarity of expression, logic of argument, organization of ideas/sub-arguments, grammar and spelling, style and format, and overall articulation of central argument. Each year, we expect that 90% of the senior theses will receive a "satisfactory" rating for the quality of research.