

Comparative Literature - BA

Group 2: Cycle 1 - Fall 2017 - Fall 2019

ASSESSMENT REPORT FOR Group 2: Cycle 1 - Fall 2017 - Fall 2019

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. Moreover, students will write a senior thesis.

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.

Methods

As mentioned in the "Measures and Criteria" section, students will successfully complete CPLT 270 and two of the following three courses: CPLT 301, CPLT 302, CPLT 303, and they will also complete a senior thesis. Data of students' performance in these courses and in theses will be collected by the Program Director of Comparative Literature, who traditionally also serve as the Undergraduate Director of the Program: the Director will closely monitor students' grades from these courses, and will in contact with instructors of these courses to collect data on students' performance in assignments. As to the senior thesis, the Director will work closely with each student's thesis director to monitor their progress and collect data on their overall performance.

Results

The CPLT major traditionally has been small. During the Fall 2017-Fall 2019 assessment period, there was a total of six students whose time in the program wholly or partially overlap with the two-year assessment period. During this period, 2 students took CPLT 270, and both successfully completed with excellent grades. Among the 4 students who took at least one of the Great Books series (CPLT 301, 302, and 303), most did extremely well. 2 students successfully completed the CPLT 301 they took in Fall 2017; another student was successful in CPLT 302

and 303 she took in Spring 2018. One student, however, received an W in the CPLT 301 he took in Fall 2019. This student, we should note, successfully completed CPLT 302 in Spring 2014. Given the overall success rate and the high, we assess that this outcome was met, even though not perfectly.

Use Of Results

Use of Results

The student who received a W in CPLT 301 received a W in all his other courses that semester. Therefore, this is a unique case that does not eclipse the overall success of these courses, particularly given the historical record of the overall excellent performance of students in these courses. However, the result can be used to help us reflect on how to identify students with general difficulty with their study based on their performance in classes that most students are successful with. The data could also be shared with Center for Teaching Excellence for solutions on a more general level as the problem observed in the student in question was not limited to CPLT 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

The Director of Comparative Literature (who, as mentioned above, is also the Undergraduate Director for the Program) will closely monitor students' performance in their coursework as well as in their senior theses. The Director will collect data such as grades, course instructors' reports on students' performance in individual assignments, theses progress, etc., and will convey the data to the Comparative Literature advisory committee, which 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

This learning outcome requires that students should demonstrate skill in at least two literatures, one in a foreign language. Specifically, students are supposed to complete two 300-level or above literature courses in their first foreign language, and one 300-level or above course in a second foreign literature, which can be in translation. Among the six students whose time as CPLT majors overlapped with the Fall 2017-Fall 2019 assessment period, 1 student took two literature courses in her first foreign language (Russian), and were successful in both. Two other students each took one 300-level literature course in their first foreign languages. One of them did extremely well, the other, however, withdrew. No student received an F in these courses. As to the requirement of one 300-level or above course in a second foreign literature (which can be in translation), 3 out of 3 students successfully completed their selected courses. In brief, in light of these results, we conclude that this learning outcome has been met.

However, among the two students who took an CPLT 300-level elective, only one student passed successfully. The other student failed the course twice (Fall 2018 and Spring 2019). It should be noted that this student received an F or W in all his courses except one in these two semesters. Four students took a CPLT 415 class during the assessment period. Among them, three were successful with high grades. One student, however,

failed.

In conclusion, we have observed mixed results among our students. While the majority not only passed these courses related to this learning outcome but also passed with flying colors, one student stood out with unsatisfactory performance.

Use Of Results

The Comparative Literature Advisory Committee should discuss the mixed results related to this learning outcome. As most students did extremely well, and only one student stood out with unsatisfactory grades (in both CPLT and non-CPLT courses), these mixed results seem to suggest that the problem is not with curriculum. Rather, help should be sought from university units (including but not limited to the Center for Teaching Excellence, Advising Center, etc.) that offer professional suggestions on how to help students achieve overall academic success.

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 monitor each major's performance in related coursework and 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

During the Fall 2017 to Fall 2019 assessment period, 2 students took CPLT 300 and successfully completed it with good to excellent grades. Students have been successful in this class—all six students whose career as CPLT majors overlapped the Fall 2017-Fall 2019 assessment period have now taken CPLT 300, and have all passed it successfully with good to excellent grades. Clearly, this learning outcome has been achieved.

Use Of Results

As a course that introduces to students the field of comparative literature, ideally our majors should take it as early as possible in their career. However, we have not been able to offer this course every year due to lack of staff. One of the two students who passed did not take it until a few years into her career as a CPLT major. The CPLT Advisory Committee should discuss and explore ways to solve the staffing problem and offer the course more often.

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.

A

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 monitor students' performance in relation to the second-language requirement, and review the successful completion of this requirement 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 was successfully met during the Fall 2017-Fall 2019 assessment period. Among the three students who took a 122-level course in their second foreign languages (1 in Italian and 2 in Russian), all passed successfully with good to excellent grades. In addition, one more student also passed FREN 122 in Fall 2018. If this student decides to use French as his second foreign language, then he has fulfilled this major requirement. In sum, this learning outcome has been successfully met.

Use Of Results

One of the advantages of being a CPLT major at U of SC is that there is a wide variety of languages available to students. The students in the "Results" section, for instance, took courses in French, Italian, and Russian in addition to their first/other foreign languages (e.g., Japanese and Spanish). The CPLT advisor could share with new students the success stories, make students aware at the early stage of their career about the rich options they have and encourage them to explore these options. The advisor should also help students explore options of literature courses related to the languages students are interested in. As has been the case with several students, by encouraging advisees to reach out to faculty in language programs, the advisor can effectively help students achieve a good self-assessment about their interest in the potential languages. This in turn would enhance the successful achievement of this learning outcome.

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. This rubric will be shared with the Director, and students' performance will also be reported to the Director, who then will convey the data to the Comparative Literature Advisory Committee to review the successful completion of this learning outcome.

Results

During the Fall 2017-Fall 2019 assessment period, there were a total of two students who took and completed CPLT 499 "Senior Thesis," one in Spring 2018, the other in Spring 2019. We consider this learning outcome has been successfully achieved for the following reasons:

1. Both students received excellent grades in their respective CPLT 499 courses.
2. That both students did extremely well in their pre-thesis CPLT coursework indicates that the research skills they acquired in their courses well prepared them for their theses.

It is worth point out that one of these two students were actively involved in research in the last two years of her career at UofSC. She was the recipient of two Magellan grants (the Mini and the Apprentice), which funded her research trip to Japan. Based on the experience, she completed a creative writing project drawing on her on-site research, presented her research results at Discover USC, and, importantly, completed her GLD (Graduate with Leadership Distinction) program with focus on research. With ample research experience and skills under her belt, she was admitted into the Japanese MA program at Washington University in St. Louis.

Given the achievements of our students, we consider we have fully met or even exceeded the requirement of this learning outcome.

Use Of Results

We have been sharing the success stories with our current pre-thesis students, who were made aware that CPLT 499 could be combined with their other research pursuits, for instance, GLD-research. Based on our experience with these two successful cases, we have also been encouraging our advisees to secure a thesis advisor as early as possible, reminding them that it will be too late to start finding an advisor in the last semester, when they are required to enroll in CPLT 499. In the future, we should encourage CPLT faculty to familiarize themselves with undergraduate research opportunities across campus to see if their thesis students could further enhance their research skills by getting actively involved in some of these programs (Magellan and/or GLD-research, for example).

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. This rubric will be shared with the Director, who, together with the Comparative Literature Advisory Committee, uses it to review students' completion of this learning outcome. The Director will also consult CPLT 499 instructors on individual students' performance, progress, and the quality of the end product (i.e., the thesis).

Results

As mentioned above, during the Fall 2017-Fall 2019 assessment period, 2 out of 2 students completed their senior theses with high grades. As the senior thesis is the most challenging writing project for CPLT majors, these students' successful completion of their theses spoke volumes about the writing skills they mastered. Moreover, both students did extremely well in their pre-thesis coursework, including CPLT 300, 301, 302, 302, and 415, which all contained a writing component.

In addition, as mentioned above, one of these two students did a creating writing project with the support of two Magellan grants (a Mini and an Apprentice). Its successful completion means that not only could this student write academic papers but she was also able to write effectively as a writer of creative work. Her creative project based on onsite research also contributed to her success with the GLD-research program.

Given these students' outstanding achievement, we conclude we have met the requirement of this learning outcome.

Use Of Results

Again, these success stories will be shared with current pre-thesis students to help improve overall morale and motivation. This seems particularly important because we noticed a student who identified a thesis director to work with and had devoted time to getting prepared, but did not followed our suggestion to register for the course. On a positive note: the success story of the student who completed multiple research and writing-intensive projects has inspired at least one student to participate in the GLD program through CPLT 499, which is listed in the repertoire coursework for GLD-Research. This student is also planning to pursue graduate studies. Our newest CPLT major is also considering the GLD-Research option.