

GUIDE TO DOCTORAL STUDIES

PROGRAM IN COMPARATIVE LITERARY STUDIES

NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

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GENERAL INFORMATION:

The Graduate Program in Comparative Literary Studies (CLS) at Northwestern provides students with rigorous training in a variety of literary traditions, critical theory, and the methodologies of Comparative Literature.

All students admitted to the CLS Graduate Program at Northwestern have a “Home” Department (HD). The purpose of placing students in a HD is twofold: HDs provide professional training and accreditation in widely recognized fields of scholarship, and they prepare comparative literature students for academic positions in these fields. The current HDs are Asian Languages and Cultures, Classics, French and Italian, English, German, Slavic, Spanish and Portuguese, RTVF, and Rhetoric and Public Culture.

The Program Director (Director) and the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) oversee the Graduate Program in CLS. At the beginning of each year the Director names the Graduate Committee, which consists of the Director, the DGS, and at least three additional members of the core faculty.

THE PH.D. PROGRAM:

Year 1: The first year of the program allows students to explore the range of options in literary study generally and the resources of the Northwestern faculty in particular as they approach their field of specialization.

Students will take 3 courses each quarter, including the required Theory and Methods

Sequence (COMP LIT 410, 411, 412). They are also encouraged to start taking courses in the HD, in addition to other courses offered through CLS.

During the first year, they should begin to work toward fulfilling the CLS Graduate Language Requirements. In consultation with the DGS and the First Year Faculty Mentor (Mentor), students will establish a plan for completing these requirements by the end of your third year.

No later than the Spring Quarter of the first year, students will begin preparing for the First Year Theory Exam by choosing two lists and establishing the Examination Committee. The Committee will be composed of two members, one for each of the lists. At least one member of the Committee must be on the core faculty of CLS. The examination lists are on the CLS Graduate Requirements website:

<https://complit.northwestern.edu/graduate/requirements.html#first-year-theory-exam>

At the end of the first year, all new students will be invited to discuss their progress with the Director and DGS in a short First Year Review meeting (lasting approximately 30-45 minutes).

Year 2: Starting in year two, students are likely to be funded by a Teaching Assistantship (TA), Graduate Assistantship (GA), or Research Assistantship (RA). Students normally TA for two quarters during their second year, though they may also be assigned GA or RA responsibilities that do not include teaching for part of this time. As a TA, you hold an appointment in The

Graduate School with teaching duties assigned by the Department. To ease your workload while serving as a TA, you will register for one unit of CLS 490 for the two quarters in which you are required to TA, in addition to two graduate seminars.

At the end of August or beginning of September, before the beginning of classes, all students are required to complete the First Year Theory Exam (written and oral).

During the Fall Quarter of the second year, students should begin discussing the composition of the Qualifying Exam (QE) Committee with the DGS. QE Committees consist of three members of the Graduate Faculty, of whom at least two must be CLS faculty members. The QE Committee Chair should ideally be from the student's HD. The three fields and at least one Committee member should be finalized no later than December 1. The full Committee of three faculty members should be selected and a first draft of the lists turned into the committee by April 1. For more information on the Qualifying Exam in CLS see the Graduate Requirements website:

<https://complit.northwestern.edu/graduate/requirements.html#qualifying-exam>

Year 3: In the third year, students will fulfill the remaining requirements necessary for advancement to candidacy, including completing the QE no later than Winter Quarter. You will also work toward completing a Dissertation Prospectus (and, if requested by your Committee, a Dissertation Proposal), fulfilling the Language Requirement, and giving the Public Presentation. You will also continue to serve as a TA and complete any remaining coursework.

The Prospectus, usually around 12-15 pages plus a detailed bibliography, should be

completed in close consultation with a Dissertation Committee of no fewer than three faculty members. Per TGS policy, at least two members of this Committee, including the Chair, must be members of the Northwestern University Graduate Faculty. The Chair must be CLS core faculty member in your HD. If you wish to name a non-CLS faculty as Chair, you must seek approval from the DGS; in such cases, a co-chair arrangement may be advisable.

Although the CLS program does not formally require the Prospectus to be filed until the end of the fourth year (a TGS requirement for satisfactory academic progress), students are strongly encouraged to complete it no later than the end of the summer of their third year.

TGS requires that all doctoral students advance to candidacy by the end of their third year. Students not in candidacy at the beginning of their fourth year will be placed on probation by TGS. This is a two-quarter grace period within which the student must complete all outstanding candidacy requirements. Anyone failing to do so will be excluded from TGS at the end of the probationary period, though the student can petition for an extension to the probation and for reconsideration of the exclusion decision (either option requires the program's support).

Year 4 and Beyond: Once the prospectus has been approved by the Dissertation Committee and the student has officially advanced to candidacy, their progress toward the degree will depend very much on their own pace and initiative.

All students are expected to make significant progress toward completing the dissertation by the end of the fifth year. Beyond the fifth year, it is vital that students work closely with your committee to set appropriate milestones during the writing phase of the dissertation.

PROGRAM MILESTONES:

First Year Review

The First Year Review is holistic rather than exam based. During the spring quarter of the first year, each student will meet with the DGS and Director to discuss a dossier that includes: course evaluations, a seminar paper, and a progress report submitted by the student. Ideally before, or soon after, the First Year Review, the student will choose their First Year Theory Exam lists (2) and faculty examiners for each list. These lists and examiners need to be approved by the DGS.

First Year Theory Exam

Students complete the written and oral theory exam in late August or early September, before the start of Fall Quarter classes in the second year. Students often prepare for the exam through the Theory and Methods Sequence (410, 411, 412), though they may also select lists not covered by the sequence in any given year.

The Examination Committee is composed of two faculty members, one for each of the lists. At least one member of the Committee must be on the core faculty of CLS. Students should meet with both faculty examiners to discuss which items from the respective lists might be exchanged or removed, receive suggestions for secondary readings, and any other feedback.

There are ten examination lists:

1. Aesthetic and critical theory
2. Decolonial and postcolonial theory
3. Gender and sexuality studies
4. Nationalism and transnationalism
5. Phenomenology, structuralism, and deconstruction
6. Poetics

7. Psychoanalysis
8. Rhetoric, philology, and linguistics
9. Visual culture, sound studies, and media
10. Environmental Thought

Students choose two lists on which to be examined, typically selecting 20 of the 25 items on a given list. Students may substitute up to seven authors of their own choice, per list. (Please check each specific list for any explanatory headnotes).

The written exams are take-home. Students are given one week to submit their answers to the two questions. For example, for questions delivered to students on a Monday morning, exams must be returned by noon on the following Monday. Each answer should be approximately 10 double-spaced pages.

The oral exam will take place after the written exams are completed and the faculty examiners have had enough time to review them. The student will meet with the Committee to discuss the written portion of the exam. The Committee members must write an assessment of the theory exam for the student's benefit. This assessment must be shared with the DGS.

Should a student fail the exam, they will be allowed to retake it within three months. A DGS-designated third examiner must be present during the re-administered exam.

Qualifying Exam

Students should complete the QE no later than Winter Quarter of third year. During year two, students will select a Committee of three members and will develop three lists in consultation with them. The first list addresses the student's Teaching Field. The second list addresses the student's specific area of Research expertise. The third list addresses the Methodology or Theoretical framework used by the student to engage with

one or two sub-disciplines that are useful to the dissertation topic.

Public Presentation

Following the completion of the qualifying exam, in the Winter Quarter of the third year and prior to advancing to candidacy, students will give a Public Presentation related to their proposed dissertation project. This typically takes the form of an abbreviated presentation version of the Prospectus. Students are expected to present in the Spring Quarter of the third year or Fall Quarter of the fourth year.

Language Requirement

CLS graduates should begin working toward fulfilling the language requirement in their first year by creating a plan in consultation with the DGS and their First Year Mentor. Students must show proficiency in two languages other than their native language. A primary foreign language requires two levels of examination (reading and writing; advanced reading is needed for no-longer-spoken languages). This requirement is normally met through graduate level course work or TA-ship in a language course. A secondary language requires only a single level of examination; this requirement is met through a reading exam, administered by the language department.

Students should fulfill the language requirement by the end of their third year. An exception may be requested if a student requires language training resources beyond those available at Northwestern. The student must request an extension in consultation with the DGS early in the third year, and complete the examination no later than by the end of the fourth year.

For additional ways to fulfill the language requirement, please consult the DGS.

The Prospectus

Before qualifying to write the Dissertation, students must submit a Dissertation Prospectus of 12-15 pages written in close consultation with a Dissertation Committee of no less than three faculty members. The prospectus should detail the proposed structure and the general argument of the dissertation. Although the CLS program does not formally require the Prospectus to be filed until the end of the fourth year (a requirement for satisfactory academic progress), students are strongly encouraged to complete it by the end of the summer of their third year.

The Prospectus is submitted to the Dissertation Committee for review and approval. The approved prospectus should be sent to the CLS administrator for the student's file.

In some cases, the Dissertation Committee may ask the student to submit an initial Dissertation Proposal in advance of the Prospectus. For more information about the Proposal, please contact the DGS.

Completion

Your last examination as a degree candidate will be the Dissertation Defense, which must be approved by a Dissertation Committee of at least three faculty members. The Chair of the Committee must be CLS core faculty from the student's HD. At least two members of this committee, including the Chair, must be members of the Northwestern University Graduate Faculty. In exceptional cases, a student might want to name a non-HD or CLS faculty as Chair; to do so, they must seek approval from the CLS Director and DGS; in such cases, often a co-chair arrangement may be advisable.

After the Defense, your committee will provide feedback on your dissertation, assessing in reasonable detail its strengths and

weaknesses, making recommendations concerning possible revision and publication, and, of most immediate concern, recommending whatever final editing needs to be done prior to submission of the dissertation to TGS. Submission of the final version of the dissertation to TGS is the last requirement that must be fulfilled before you are eligible to graduate.

Though specific dates will vary from year to year, you should be prepared to submit the dissertation to The Graduate School at least six weeks prior to the graduation date in question. Spring graduation (including the hooding ceremony) is held in mid-June, while Fall degrees are awarded at the end of December. Students earning a fall degree may walk in the ceremony the following spring if they so desire.

The Graduate School requires that PhD students complete all degree requirements including the defense before the end of the ninth year of study.

Funding

University Fellowships and Graduate Assistantships (GA) are available only to students admitted to the doctoral program. CLS provides support through the fifth year for every doctoral student who has continued into the second year and who remains in good standing in subsequent years. Additionally, funding will be provided in the first five summers, under the same restrictions listed above. Funding between the second and fourth years will take the form of Graduate Assistantships, while the fifth year is covered by a University Fellowship, which frees students of department responsibilities. The Program expects students to dedicate the fifth year to the dissertation.

Though students are guaranteed a second year of fellowship, they are also strongly suggested to apply for external grants no later than the

fourth year of their PhD program. This applies to all students who receive more than two years of guaranteed University appropriated funding (as opposed to funding from sponsored projects).

Graduate and Teaching Assistantships:

Teaching is an essential element of the education and training experience of PhD students at Northwestern. TGS requires that all PhD students serve in some instructional capacity for at least one academic quarter during their graduate education at Northwestern. This teaching requirement is unique to American higher education and is an integral aspect of professional development.

There are three basic forms of undergraduate teaching in which students participate: serving as a TA in a class taught by a CLS faculty member or faculty from a related department; participating in language instruction (usually but not always the language of the HD); and for some advanced students, teaching a small seminar of their own design. The mix of teaching depends on a number of factors, above all, each individual student's evolving academic profile.

In addition to TAs, the program also offers a limited number of Graduate Assistantships (GA), which can take one of two forms: either placement as a GA to a program (for example, the Critical Theory or Poetry and Poetics cluster programs), or as a Research Assistant (RA) to an individual faculty member.

Good Standing and Evaluations

Students' funding depends on maintaining "good academic standing," as defined by TGS: Students cannot carry more than 2 incompletes in any given quarter and must clear all incompletes before they can advance

to candidacy. They must advance to candidacy no later than the end of their 3rd year.

The DGS, in cooperation with other CLS faculty, evaluates students' progress every year. The First Year Review (Spring), First Year Theory Exam (late August or September of year two), the Qualifying Exam (Winter Quarter of year three), the Public Presentation (Spring Quarter of year three or Fall Quarter of year four), and the Prospectus (end of year three) are all occasions for evaluating students' performance. Students are also required to fill out a progress report every year and have them approved and signed by their Dissertation Advisor (once they have one) and the DGS.

OTHER CLS GRADUATE PROGRAMS:

Double Degree

“Co-tutelle de thèse” is an ad hoc agreement that allows outstanding students with specific interests and needs to have their PhD dissertation supervised by scholars from both their home institution and a French or German university. The student then receives a “doctorat” from the French or German university in addition to their Ph.D. from Northwestern.

BA/MA Program

The program in Comparative Literary Studies offers a combined BA/MA program in Comparative Literature for outstanding undergraduate majors. Exceptional undergraduates may be able to earn both a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in less than the usual period of time.

CLS majors interested in pursuing this option are encouraged to discuss it with the Director of Undergraduate Studies (DUS) before applying. In order to apply, students submit a

statement of purpose explaining their interest in this option and proposed course of study. Students are selected on the basis of the statement of purpose, overall performance in CLS courses, and the recommendation of two CLS faculty members. The selection by the program is a recommendation to the Graduate School for admission. Students are officially admitted to the Graduate School only after their credentials have been thoroughly reviewed and approved by the Dean of the Graduate School.

CLS offers two paths to receive the MA: Either students may complete the degree requirements for the bachelor's and master's degree within four years, or they can complete the bachelor's and master's degrees in an extra fifth year. Students can receive their undergraduate degree before completing their master's degree but cannot receive the master's degree ahead of their bachelor's degree.

Neither the Program in Comparative Literary Studies, Weinberg College, nor The Graduate School can guarantee funding for the fifth year for MA students. Students are encouraged to apply for outside funding.

Students who decide to pursue a concurrent BA/MA must enroll in the senior seminar in their junior year in order to free the senior year for writing the MA thesis. Neither the senior seminar paper, nor the expanded Honors Thesis can replace the Master's Thesis. All students receiving a BA/MA in CLS must write both the senior seminar paper and a Master's thesis. Those students who wish to pursue both degrees within four-years must write their senior seminar paper in the junior year and an MA thesis in the senior year. To be eligible for enrollment in the senior seminar in the junior year, students need to have completed all other CLS undergraduate course requirements by the end of the sophomore year. Students who pursue the five-year option need to apply to the

BA/MA program no later than winter quarter of the junior year.

Requirements for the BA/MA program

Nine graduate courses, taken in CLS, the student's first and/or second literature, and/or another discipline (such as Philosophy, Film Studies) according to the student's interests, and in consultation with the DGS. One of the nine courses must be CLS 410. Students can also take one unit of 499 with the permission of the DGS. The general guidelines for the Master's thesis are the same as for the Honors thesis except for length. The Master's thesis can be a substantial development of the student's Honors thesis (or senior essay, if the student did not do Honors in CLS). We suggest a minimum of 50 pages, but length should be determined in consultation with the thesis director and the Director or DGS. The student's faculty advisor and CLS core faculty read and evaluate the thesis.

FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS:

The Presidential Fellowship

On an annual basis, the Graduate School conducts a university-wide competition open only to students who are (or will be in the following year) in candidacy for the Presidential Fellowship, the most prestigious graduate award given at Northwestern. The Department nominates one student each year for the award, based on the applications and supporting letters submitted to the Graduate Committee. Applications for the Presidential Fellowship must be submitted to

your committee by the beginning of the academic year in the Fall Quarter.

Over the summer, students should work with their committees on their applications, which must be submitted to the DGS and Graduate Committee for review. The Graduate Committee may only nominate one student for the award, and the Graduate Committee must select the department's official nominee.

The Comparative Literary Studies Best Essay Awards

Each year CLS awards a prize for Best Seminar Essay and Best First-Year Seminar Essay. Faculty and all students in coursework are eligible and encouraged to submit/nominate a paper. The Graduate Committee reviews the submissions and announces the winners and awards the prizes.

The Comparative Literary Studies Outstanding Dissertation Award

CLS awards an Outstanding Dissertation award. Eligible students may be nominated by Dissertation Chair or another member of the Committee, but self-nominations are not accepted. The Graduate Committee reviews the nominations and awards the prize.

NONDISCRIMINATION STATEMENT:

Northwestern University does not discriminate or permit discrimination by any member of its community against any individual on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, parental status, marital status, age, disability, citizenship status, veteran status, genetic information, reproductive health decision making, or any other classification protected by law in matters of admissions, employment, housing, or services or in the educational programs or activities it operates. Harassment, whether verbal, physical, or visual, that is based on any of these characteristics is a form of discrimination. Further prohibited by law is discrimination against any employee and/or job applicant who chooses to inquire about, discuss, or disclose their own compensation or the compensation of another employee or applicant.

Northwestern University complies with federal and state laws that prohibit discrimination based on the protected categories listed above, including Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. Title IX requires educational institutions, such as Northwestern, to prohibit discrimination based on sex (including sexual harassment) in the University's educational programs and activities, including in matters of employment and admissions. In addition, Northwestern provides reasonable accommodations to qualified applicants, students, and employees with disabilities and to individuals who are pregnant.

Any alleged violations of this policy or questions with respect to nondiscrimination or reasonable accommodations should be directed to Northwestern's Office of Civil Rights and Title IX Compliance, 1800 Sherman Avenue, Suite 4-500, Evanston, Illinois 60208, 847-467-6165, equity@northwestern.edu.

Questions specific to sex discrimination (including sexual misconduct and sexual harassment) should be directed to Northwestern's Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Equity, 1800 Sherman Avenue, Suite 4500, Evanston, Illinois 60208, 847-467-6165, TitleIXCoordinator@northwestern.edu.

A person may also file a complaint with the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights regarding an alleged violation of Title IX by visiting www.2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/complaintintro.html or calling 800-421-3481. Inquiries about the application of Title IX to Northwestern may be referred to Northwestern's Title IX Coordinator, the United States Department of Education's Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, or both.