The undergraduate concentration in Comparative Literature offers students the opportunity to design a program of study that works across languages, cultures, and media in a comparative and interdisciplinary context. The open, flexible nature of the concentration allows students to develop an individualized program of study that incorporates literary and cultural analysis in the exploration of any number of fields and disciplines both within and beyond the Humanities. Some students, for example, develop a curriculum in Literature and the Arts, linking the study of literature with film, music, theater, digital media, or creative writing. Others design programs that connect literary study to contemporary concerns and disciplines beyond the Humanities, focusing their work on the relationship between Literature and Medicine, for example, or Literature and Law, or Literature and Ethics. Still other students find in the study of Comparative Literature a place for the comparative study of multiple literatures, World Literature, and translation, or the examination of aesthetics, philosophy, and literary and cultural theory. In short, the undergraduate program in Comparative Literature provides an ideal home for students who wish to craft a comparative and interdisciplinary concentration that is embedded in the Humanities but has the potential to reach beyond.

Given the comparative nature of our program, the knowledge of more than one language and national literature is essential. Our students work in a multitude of languages—Hindi, French, Spanish, Chinese, Hebrew, Italian, Latin, Arabic, Swahili—to name but a few. We welcome work in any language in which a student has interest and is able to take minimally 3 courses in which they work in the original language. In cases where a student does not have the necessary linguistic competence to undertake literary study, we are happy to help make arrangements to acquire the necessary proficiency through continued course work or summer study.

In order to help students determine whether they can meet their academic and intellectual goals in our department, we ask interested students to apply to the concentration during the fall of the sophomore year, although later applications will also be considered whenever possible. Application includes submitting a brief statement of interest and essay, as well as a conversation with two members of the department.

For more information, please consult our website and our video for prospective concentrators.
THE TUTORIAL PROGRAM IN COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

In consultation with the Director of Undergraduate Studies and the student’s academic advisor, undergraduate concentrators develop an individually tailored but carefully structured program of study that brings together their particular interests and skills and allows them to take courses in a variety of departments across the Humanities. Central to each student’s curriculum is the tutorial program. During the sophomore year, students participate in a small group tutorial in which they are introduced to various disciplinary methodologies and forms of literary and cultural analysis through the study of works from different languages, periods, genres, and media. Junior tutorial offers students the rare opportunity to design their own reading course in which they work one on one with a tutor. During the fall semester, students read broadly according to personal interest and inclination, and explore possible areas of specialization. At the end of the term, they define their special field of study, which they explore in depth during the spring semester. Senior tutorial is again an individual course of study largely devoted to the research and writing of the senior thesis, which is required of all students. All tutorials are reading and writing intensive and form the core around which a student develops a larger field of study.

SOPHOMORE TUTORIAL IN LITERATURE

The sophomore tutorial in Comparative Literature examines fundamental questions about literature, language, and culture through a variety of texts drawn from a broad spectrum of languages, time periods, and genres. Taught by a faculty member in Comparative Literature, the tutorial is structured as a seminar and is reading and writing intensive.

To see sample syllabi for Comp Lit 97, please visit the Sophomore page on our website.

JUNIOR TUTORIAL IN COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

The junior tutorial in Comparative Literature provides students with a year-long opportunity to craft their own program of study as an individual reading course. In collaboration with a member of the Comp Lit Tutorial Board or a member of the faculty, students craft a field of literary and/or cultural exploration. The first semester is ordinarily spent exploring a broad spectrum of texts and topics, and includes a diagnostic close reading exam in a non-English language of the student’s choice. The second semester focuses on the development of a student’s special field. At the end of the spring semester, students write a 20-25 page junior essay which draws on a particular special field topic or text.

Recent Special Field Topics include:

- Toward a New Language: Silence and the Unrepresentable
- Color as Diction: An Exploration of the Effects of Modernist Paris
- Obscurity: Between Literature and Philosophy
- The Circus and Modernist Aesthetics
- Avant-Gardism and the Performance of Ethnic Identity in Art and Literature
- Mapping Memory: Text and Image in Holocaust Literature
- Multi-Lingual Literature: National Identity, Translation and World Literature
- Describing Music: Capturing Melody in Text
- French and Russian Symbolist Poetry, 1880-1920
- Puzzling Post/Modern Aesthetics: Beckett, Nabokov, and Markson

Recent Junior Essay Titles include:

- Exposing Intimate Voices: The Outside Reader in Letters
- Musical Repression: Musicians’ Obsession with Perfection and Control
- New Medium Means New Message?: An Archaeology of Three Webzines
- Haunted Words: The Ghost of Hamlet in Mrs. Dalloway
- Three Stories: How Lao She Teaches an Old Hypocrite New Tricks
- Love and Longing in the Poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke
- English Words, Hebrew Text, English Power
- Olympia and Contemporary Images of the Black Male
- “Bursting through our Barriers:” Stereolab and the Musical Rhizome
- Apocalypse Already: The Undoing of the End of the World by the Human Senses (with the aid of Stanley Kubrick’s 2001: A Space Odyssey and Ridley Scott’s Blade Runner)
SENIOR TUTORIAL IN COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

The senior tutorial in Comparative Literature is largely devoted to the research and writing of the senior thesis, a 45-70 page essay that is due in early March. Under the direction of a member of the Comp Lit Tutorial Board and a faculty mentor, each concentrator writes a thesis on a topic of his or her own choosing. The senior thesis often grows out of the work of the junior tutorial, though this is not a required connection.

Recent Senior Thesis Titles include:

- The Invitation to Reading in T.S. Eliot’s Letters and Poetry
- The Opposite of Television: David Foster Wallace on the Relationship between Television and Fiction
- Ineffable Experience: Girlhood Trauma in Persepolis and A Child’s Life
- Death, Performance, and Visual Play: Three Dramatic Works of Jean Genet
- The Rhetoric of Veiling: Veils and Subjectivity in Language, Love, and Epistemology
- Transformed Voices: Projecting Fantasies of the Transgender Other in Middlesex, Habibi and Immaculate Conception.
- Practicing Literature and Reading Medicine in Guadeloupe: An Approach to Ethics
- Problems with Authority: The Romantic Irony of Futurism and Punk
- A Residence of Resonance: The Role of Sound in Selected Poems of Residencia en la tierra II by Pablo Neruda
- In Translation: Performance and Production of Difference in and around Ha Jin’s The Crazed and J.M. Coetzee’s Disgrace
- Writing: The Urban Calligraphy of New York City
- Floating in Time: Suspended Communication in the Cinema of Federico Fellini
- Industrial Storytelling: Serialization, Television, and the Novel (on “The Wire” and selected novels of Emile Zola)
- A Love that Ruined Cities: A Translation of and Commentary on Eileen Chang’s Qing cheng zhi lian

The latter part of the senior tutorial is spent preparing for the Senior Oral Exam. The exam is evaluated on the Latin scale, and this grade is incorporated into the final degree recommendation.

CONCENTRATION REQUIREMENTS: 14 Half-Courses

I. Required Courses:
   a. Comp Lit 97; Comp Lit 98a and 98b; Comp Lit 99a and 99b (see item 2, Tutorials).
   b. Three half courses from among the courses listed under Comparative Literature in the Course Catalogue, including cross-listed courses. Each of these courses must be passed with a grade of B- or above.
   c. Three half-courses in one or more non-English literatures each passed with a grade of B- or above. Note: A student may petition the Director of Undergraduate Studies to take one non-English course at the advanced language level for concentration credit in this category.
   d. Three half-courses drawn from a variety of related departments. These may include, but are not limited to, other courses in Comparative Literature; English literature; foreign or classical literatures or Folklore and Mythology (including additional courses in the literature chosen under 1c above); Philosophy; Visual and Environmental studies; Women, Gender, and Sexuality; Religion; Linguistics. Students should consult the Director of Undergraduate Studies to determine whether a specific course will count for concentration credit in this category.

II. Tutorials:
   a. Sophomore year: Comp Lit 97. A grade of B- or above is required.
   b. Junior year: Comp Lit 98a and 98b. Graded SAT/UNS.
   c. Senior year: Comp Lit 99a and 99b (the writing of the senior thesis). Graded SAT/UNS. In order for a student to receive a grade of SAT for the first semester of senior tutorial, one chapter of the thesis must be submitted by the end of the semester in which the thesis work is begun.

III. A 20-25 page (5,000-6,250 word) junior essay is required of all students in the junior year.

IV. A 45-75 page (11,250-18,750 word) senior thesis is required of all concentrators in the senior year.

V. Oral Examination: A 60 minute oral examination is required of all students. At the end of senior year, each student will be examined by a sub-committee composed of tutors and faculty familiar with the student’s work. The examination will include a thesis defense as well as questions on texts and topics chosen by the student.

VI. Study Abroad: Comparative Literature supports students in their petitions to study out of residence. Subject to the approval of the Director of Undergraduate Studies, students may receive one term of tutorial credit and up to three other half-course concentration credits for corresponding course work done outside Harvard. However, to ensure that students get the most out of their individualized tutorials, such credit will, as a rule, only be extended for work done outside Harvard during the junior year. Students must also follow the College’s procedures for petitioning for this credit.
VII. Joint Concentrations: Students in Comparative Literature are able to pursue a joint concentration with a number of departments. Philosophy, History of Art and Architecture, Music, and Anthropology, are among those our undergraduates most commonly connect with; but Comp Lit concentrators have also joined with less immediately related fields such as Physics, Math, and Government. In most cases, a joint concentrator is not required to take more than 14 half-courses for concentration purposes. If you are interested in pursuing a joint concentration, please consult with the Director of Undergraduate Studies for further information about requirements.

ADVISING

Each Comparative Literature concentrator is assigned a tutor who also functions as the student’s advisor. In the sophomore year, this tutor is assigned by the Director of Undergraduate Studies, but in following years a student may either request a tutor from among the faculty members of the Department of Comparative Literature and the Tutorial Board; or the student will be assigned a tutor (generally a member of the Tutorial Board) by the Director of Undergraduate Studies according to his or her interests. Generally, this tutor changes from year to year as the student’s program and interests change. In certain cases, however, a student may request the same tutor for more than one year.

Comparative Literature offers no course designed exclusively for freshmen and first-semester sophomores, although students interested in the program might wish to consider Comp Lit 103: Grounds for Comparison. Students are also encouraged to take courses in their first three semesters with members of the Department of Comparative Literature. Students interested in Comparative Literature might also wish to take a language course in their language of choice, if they wish to improve their foreign language competency.

For up-to-date information on advising in Comparative Literature, please see the Advising Programs Office website.

STUDENT PROFILES

The following profiles offer several examples of how recent concentrators have shaped a program of study that they have crafted to address their particular interests and areas of expertise.

FIELD
SPANISH / POETRY AND PERFORMANCE

I. CONCENTRATION COURSES (excluding tutorials)

LIT 100 CONCENTRATION COURSES
- On Comparative Arts (LIT 119)
- 1001 Nights: Adaptations, Transformations, and Translations (LIT 121)
- On Translation (LIT 109)

NON-ENGLISH LIT COURSES
- Advanced Spanish (SP 35)
- Cultural Agents in the Americas (SP 180)
- New York in US Latino Literature and Film (SP 182)

RELATED FIELD COURSES
- Childhood: its History, Philosophy, and Literature (L & A a17)
- Imagining the City: Literature, Film, and the Arts (VES 184)
- Poetry without Borders (A & I 11)

II. SPECIAL FIELD TOPIC
Multi-Lingual Literature: National Identity, Translation, and World Literature

III. JUNIOR ESSAY
How does Nuyorican Poetry relate to the American Canon?

IV. SENIOR THESIS
Nuyorican Newness
(An original website on the history and performance of Nuyorican Poetry)

V. POST-GRADUATE LIFE
Consultant

HOW TO FIND OUT MORE

Students interested in finding out more about Comparative Literature should contact Dr. Sandra Naddaff, Director of Studies, by email (snaddaff@fas.harvard.edu); or Ms. Isaure Mignotte, Program Coordinator, Dana-Palmer House, 617-495-4186; or visit our website: www.complit.fas.harvard.edu
FIELD
FRENCH / TRANSLATION
(ADVANCED STANDING, JOINT CONCENTRATOR IN MATH (LIT PRIMARY); 4TH YEAR M.A. IN COMPARATIVE LITERATURE)

I. CONCENTRATION COURSES (excluding tutorials)

LIT 100 CONCENTRATION COURSES
- On Narrative (LIT 100)
- Furor Poeticus: Madness/Inspiration/Genius (LIT 110)

NON-ENGLISH LIT COURSES
- History of the French Language (French 100)
- Marcel Proust (French 165)
- Image and Text in 16th-Century France (Hist. of Art & Archi. 159)

RELATED FIELD COURSES
- Tolstoy (Slavic 157)
- The Renaissance in Florence (Hist-Std B-19)
- Shakespearian Playwriting (ENG 121)

II. SPECIAL FIELD TOPIC
The Aesthetics of Disease: Infernal Representations in Turn of the Century European Literature

III. JUNIOR ESSAY
Love and Death in the Education of the Writer: Wagnerian Liebestod in Thomas Mann’s Vision of the Künstlerroman

IV. SENIOR THESIS
Remembrance of Words Past: Translating the Drafts of the Madeleine Episode in À la recherche du temps perdu by Marcel Proust (translation thesis with commentary)

V. POST-GRADUATE LIFE
Investment Banker

FIELD
FRENCH / THE CREATIVE NON FICTION ESSAY

I. CONCENTRATION COURSES (excluding tutorials)

LIT 100 CONCENTRATION COURSES
- On the Essay (LIT 108)
- On Translation (LIT 109)
- The 20th-Century Post-Realist Novel in Eastern Europe (LIT 164)

NON-ENGLISH LIT COURSES
- Marcel Proust (FRENCH 165)
- Parisian Cityscapes (FRENCH 167)
- Introduction to Francophone Writers (FRENCH 61f)

RELATED FIELD COURSES
- Global Food Systems (ANTHRO 165)
- Facing Reality: A History of Documentary Cinema (VES 176 n)
- Creative Writing (ENG Cnnr)

II. SPECIAL FIELD TOPIC
By Way of Autobiography: Literature that Straddles the Author’s Literal and Literary Worlds and its Analysis through Docu-Fiction

III. JUNIOR ESSAY
“What is it to be a Fucking Human Being”: a New Look at David Foster Wallace’s Non-Fiction

IV. SENIOR THESIS
Quo Vadis? The Life and Literary Philosophy of David Foster Wallace

V. POST-GRADUATE LIFE
Assistant to the Editor, The New Yorker, and Writer
FIELD
ARABIC / HEBREW / CONTEMPORARY NARRATIVE

I. CONCENTRATION COURSES (excluding tutorials)

LIT 100 CONCENTRATION COURSES
- On Translation (LIT 109)
- Comp Lit and Intellectual History (COMP LIT 215)
- Jewish Languages and Literature (LIT 163)

NON-ENGLISH LIT COURSES
- Advanced Modern Hebrew (MOD-HEB 126)
- Advanced Modern Arabic (ARABIC 241ar)
- Urban Landscapes: The City and Contemporary Arabic Literature and Culture (ARABIC 172)

RELATED FIELD COURSES
- Lebanese Civil War in Fiction (ARABIC 158)
- Advanced Modern Hebrew (MOD-HEB 125)
- Language and Culture (ANTHRO 1640)

II. SPECIAL FIELD TOPIC
Theories of Structure in Experimental Arabic Fiction

III. JUNIOR ESSAY
At Home in the Passage of Sand: Unfolding Possibilities and Reading Nomadically in Ilyās Farkūh’s “Secrets of the Hourglass”

IV. SENIOR THESIS
Reading Realities: Approaches to Reading the “Incomprehensible” in Hasan Mutlak’s Dâbâdâ and Yoel Hoffmann’s The Shunra and the Schmetterling

V. POST-GRADUATE LIFE
Graduate Study in Middle Eastern Studies, University of California, Berkeley

FIELD
FRENCH/AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDIES/CULTURAL THEORY

I. CONCENTRATION COURSES (excluding tutorials)

LIT 100 COURSES
- Introduction to Cultural Studies (LIT 114)
- Culture and Performance (LIT 115)
- The Politics of Aestheticism (LIT 116)

NON-ENGLISH LITERATURE COURSES
- Intro to French Lit 2 (FRENCH 70b)
- George Bataille and his Circle (FRENCH 284r)
- Models of Man in French Literature (FRENCH 105)

RELATED FIELD COURSES
- Interracial Literature (AF-AM 138z)
- Chance (COMP LIT 107)
- Major British Writers 1 (ENG 10a)

II. SPECIAL FIELD
African-American Conceptions of Outer Space

III. JUNIOR ESSAY
Further Diaspora: The African American Galactic Impulse: Hopkins, Wright, Baraka, Muhammad

IV. SENIOR THESIS
The Black Galactic: Towards a Greater African America

V. POST-GRADUATE LIFE
Staff Writer for the New Yorker
Students who have concentrated in Literature/Comparative Literature have gone on to careers in a variety of fields: academics, journalism, film, law, medicine, and business, among others. Past alumni include:


Becky Cooper (2011): Assistant to the Editor of The New Yorker, Author: “Mapping Manhattan: A Love (and Sometimes Hate) Story in Maps by 75 New Yorkers” (Abrams April 2013), Senior Thesis: “Quo Vadis? The Life and Literary Philosophy of David Foster Wallace”

Monica Eav (1999): Immigration Lawyer; Senior Thesis: “Listen all you like, but disbelieve all you hear”: The Contest for Authority, the Politics of Gossip, and the Power of the People in Three Contemporary Novels about the Philippines


Carmen James (2008): EdLab, PhD in Education from Columbia University’s Teacher’s College; Senior Thesis: “The City and the Poem”

Pelin Kivrak (2011): Graduate Student in Comp Lit, Yale University; Assistant to Orhan Pamuk at The Museum of Innocence; Senior Thesis: “Displacement, Travails, Redemption, Success”: Searching for the Traditional Immigration Paradigm in The Works of Aleksandar Hemon

Melissa Lee (2003): Independent Film Producer; Senior Thesis: "Cities "Made of the Measure of Love": Spatial itineraries in Hiroshima Mon Amour (1959) and In the Mood for Love (2000)"


B. J. Novak (2001): Actor and Writer, (The Office, Inglorious Basterds, One More Thing: Stories and Other Stories); Senior Thesis: “‘To Be or Not To Be:’ Hollywood’s Answers to Hamlet’s Question”

Tony Qian (2008): JD, Harvard Law School; Graduate Student, Comparative Literature, Harvard University; Senior Thesis: “Fiction and Testimony: 20th-Century Shanghai in History and the Imagination”

Scott Rubin (1985): Director of Communications, Europe, Middle East & Africa, Google; Senior Thesis: “Theatre as actor: the staging of cultural myths in Genet and Riaza”


Heather Love (1991): Associate Professor of English and Gender Studies, University of Pennsylvania; Senior Thesis: “What We Call Home: Utopian Vision in the Poetry of Renée Vivien”