# Guide for Graduate Students in the Department of Comparative Literature, Harvard University, 2026-2027

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# Guide for Graduate Students in the Department of Comparative Literature, Harvard University

## Academic year 2026-2027 [1]

Harvard University has offered courses in Comparative Literature since 1894; the Department of Comparative Literature was established by vote of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences on April 10, 1906. The department was reorganized in 2007 in a merger with the formerly separate undergraduate Literature Concentration.

The department's *Guide for Graduate Students* is updated annually by the Student Coordinator and the Director of Graduate Studies, in consultation with the department's Graduate Admissions and Policy Committee.

Please take the time to read through the entire *Guide*. Please also keep the *Guide* for consultation. A careful perusal now, even if you are just beginning your graduate studies at Harvard, will help you to think of your program as an organic whole. Your courses, examinations, teaching, and dissertation enable you to pursue your intellectual interests while simultaneously acquiring credentials to obtain appointments in teaching and research as well as other forms of employment.

Please see the first appendix – Deadlines by Graduate Year – for a convenient step-by-step synopsis of the Ph.D. program in Comparative Literature.

Please also note these helpful websites:

GSAS – Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
gsas.harvard.edu/audiences/students
See also on this site: Fellowships Office, Financial Aid, Student Billing, and Teaching Fellow Resources

Fellowships Office
gsas.harvard.edu/financial-support/fellowships

Financial Aid
gsas.harvard.edu/current_students/financial_aid.php

[1] Updated in August 2026. This *Guide* supplements the *Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Handbook*. Please consult the *Handbook* when Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, and/or University-wide regulations are at stake. In cases of discrepancy between this *Guide* and publications by the GSAS, FAS, or University, the most recent versions of university-wide publications take precedence.

Office of Career Services
careerservices.fas.harvard.edu

Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning
bokcenter.harvard.edu

Graduate Student Council
gsc.fas.harvard.edu

Access to your courses and other helpful university websites
my.harvard.edu

# DEADLINES BY G-YEAR

What follows are only department deadlines. You should remain alert to all GSAS deadlines, which are found on the Registrar's website: registrar.fas.harvard.edu/calendars.

Dissertation submission deadlines can be found at:
registrar.fas.harvard.edu/registration-enrollment-degrees/graduation-diplomas

Please see the Student Coordintor or DGS with any questions.

**At the beginning and the end of the academic year the DGS and the Student Coordinator will hold brief meetings with all graduate students. Students are expected to submit short reports (up to 2 double-spaced pages) of their academic accomplishments and summaries of their academic plans and priorities (research and teaching) two weeks before each meeting.**

## G1

G1 students are expected to take courses that will fulfill course and language requirements as outlined in the *Guide*, planning ahead so as to be able to complete all their course requirements by the end of the G2 year. Students are permitted at most one active INC (Incompletes — see more below); they are expected to complete coursework in the semester in which it is due.

October 1 – Declare languages

February – Students can request credit for graduate work done elsewhere any time after their first semester at Harvard.

April 1 – Declare major national literature or related field

## G2

Students are expected to take courses that will allow them to complete requirements by the end of the G2 year, with the exception of those who need additional language training to take courses in their first, second, or third literatures. These students can take a limited number of required courses into their third year. Other exceptions are at the discretion of the DGS. Students are permitted at most one active INC; they are expected to complete coursework in the semester in which it is due.

January-February – Initiate conversations with prospective Orals examiners, aiming to have the fields settled by mid-semester and the lists drawn up and approved by the end of May.

February-March – Orientation meeting with the DGS regarding the Second-Year Paper. Students should also begin speaking with their advisers about conference presenting and publishing if they haven't done so already, and they should be inquiring about teaching for their G3 year.

March 1 – Students submit to the DGS a two-page proposal for their Second-Year Paper April

– Second-Year Paper conference

May 15 – Students are required to submit to the department by May 15 the names of their three Orals fields and the names of the three professors whom they have chosen to be their examiners.

May 31 – Orals lists due (at least one list must be drawn up and approved by both the examiner(s) and the DGS by the end of May; ideally, all three lists should be drawn up and approved both by the examiners and the DGS by this time).

**G3**

All INC must be resolved before students can register for the G3 year.

Early September (first Friday of the academic year) – Second-Year Paper due; students should speak at this time with faculty members about publishing and attending conferences.

September 15 – All Orals Lists must be approved by both the examiners and the DGS.

May – Language requirements must be finished by the end of the third year.

Orals must be passed by the end of the third year. In exceptional cases, primarily when key examiners are on leave in a student's G3 year, Orals may be postponed until September of the fourth year. Regardless of when a student takes Orals, the prospectus is due in December of the G4 year.

**G4**

November 1 – Students ideally submit their Prospectus to the three members of the dissertation committee and schedule a Prospectus Meeting with the three members of the dissertation committee. November to March – Prospectus submitted to the Department for review and approval. A prospectus draft should be submitted at least two weeks before the prospectus committee may convene to discuss it with the student. To ensure faculty approval, the final draft of the prospectus must be submitted at least ten days before the scheduled department meeting.

While prospectuses should be submitted for the November or December department meetings, prospectuses can be accepted for approval up to the March department meeting in the G4 year.

May – Students should show initial progress on the dissertation

**G5**

September – Students should have completed one chapter of the dissertation and have had their first Chapter Meeting.

**G5+**

Students must have at least one and preferably two Chapter Meetings each year. GSAS requires that to remain in good standing students produce at least one acceptable dissertation chapter each year. Chapters generally are understood to be between 30 and 60 double- spaced pages (12 pt. type). Exceptions are at the discretion of the DGS. A dissertation chapter should be submitted at least two weeks before the PhD committee may convene to discuss it with the student.

**Submitting the Dissertation**

As many as three months before the awarding of the Ph.D., Degree Applications are due through the my.harvard portal. For precise dates, please consult:
registrar.fas.harvard.edu/registration-enrollment-degrees/graduation-diplomas

Six weeks before the Registrar's deadline for submitting dissertations students must submit a full version of the dissertation to every member of their dissertation committee. The Registrar's

deadlines are listed on their website:
registrar.fas.harvard.edu/registration-enrollment-degrees/graduation-diplomas

**Dissertation Defense**

To be held at least two weeks before the Registrar's deadline for submitting dissertations, with the exception of students receiving November degrees, who are nevertheless strongly encouraged to hold their dissertation defense before the Registrar's dissertation submission deadline in early or mid-September.

# REQUIREMENTS

## Course Requirements

The number of courses required for the Ph.D. in Comparative Literature is 16, of which at least 8 must be graduate (200-level) seminars. You can arrange to produce extra work, typically in the form of a graduate-style research paper, to receive 200-level credit for courses that are listed at the 100-level in *my.harvard.edu*; such arrangements must be made early in the semester when the course is being taken, ideally within the first two weeks of classes, because your plans must be approved by both the course instructor and the DGS. The necessary approval form is available from the Student Coordinator in Dana-Palmer House, or may be downloaded from the department intranet (a link to the intranet can be found at the bottom of our main webpage: complit.fas.harvard.edu).

Your remaining 8 courses will include 100-level courses, 200-level seminars, a maximum of 3 300-level courses (Reading and Research courses; these courses are graded SAT/UNS and do not generally require a seminar paper), and a maximum of 4 language courses (language training at any level). Additional 300-level courses may be included, pending consultation with and approval from the primary advisor or DGS.

Please note that the Registrar does not allow graduation credit for language courses taken SAT/UNS; the only SAT/UNS courses that count toward the 16 required for graduation are 300-level Reading and Research courses (which must be taken as SAT/UNS). Most 300-level Reading and Research courses do not require papers, so they provide an excellent opportunity for students to do research in a particular topic without the pressure of writing an additional paper.

During your first two years in the department you must balance coursework in the following manner: at least 5 courses in the Department of Comparative Literature (1 of these courses must be CL 299ar, the Comparative Literature Proseminar; the remaining 4 can include up to 2 100-level Comparative Literature courses and occasionally, at the discretion of the DGS, no more than one course with a comparative focus offered in other departments); and 8 courses in 3 literatures – most students will take 4 courses in their first literature, 2 in their second literature, and 2 in their third literature, but other combinations are possible, everything from 3-3-2 to 6-1-1, based on a student's background and needs. You are also required to take Professing Literature 1, 2, and 3 your G1-3 years; these are one-credit courses that address career development topics relevant to the G1, G2, and G3 years, respectively.

Professing Literature is a course, and attendance at the relevant sessions is mandatory. This course meets regularly on Tuesdays at 6pm and students are advised to make arrangements to clear their schedule for this time block.

Students are advised that most academic employment opportunities are in national literature or area studies departments; there are very few full-time comparative literature positions in the United States. You thus are strongly encouraged, from the beginning of your graduate studies, to develop expertise in a particular national literature or other marketable field (e.g., theater, film) in addition to your comparative focus. You also should make certain, guided by the department's many faculty members with joint appointments in Comparative Literature and national literature/area studies departments, that you are completing the coursework and Orals reading, as well as formulating a dissertation topic that will make you competitive on the national literature job market. For more on academic employment, see the section *Going on the Job Market* below.

You are expected to write two or three substantial seminar papers each semester during your first two years. Two is the minimum (and quite sufficient) expectation, for a total of at least 8 seminar papers by the time you finish your G2 year. Three is the maximum number of seminar papers you should undertake in any given semester, so as to have time to write quality work and avoid taking INC.

Most students will write their seminar papers for their 200-level courses (with the exception of CL 299ar), but some students will find it more appropriate to write seminar papers for certain of their 100-level courses, particularly when these courses are in fields in which they would like to publish articles. In the latter case, with the permission of the instructor, students often will have the option of taking 100-level courses for 200-level credit. Students can also write seminar papers for 300-level courses; these Reading and Research courses do not generally have a writing requirement, but, with the permission of the instructor, students can write papers for them.

The department discourages students from taking a course load that requires them to write more than three seminar papers in a semester. If in any given semester students must take four courses that all require seminar papers, they are strongly encouraged to speak with the professors of these courses about doing alternative assignments. When asked, faculty members often will permit a student to take a 200-level seminar as a 300-level Reading and Research course (i.e., students do all the reading and participate in class discussion, but do not write a final research paper); sometimes faculty members allow students to write two short papers rather than a long final paper, or, by mutual agreement with another faculty member, they accept a single expanded paper for two courses. In general, faculty members also readily help students think about their final papers early in the semester. In all cases, you are encouraged to plan ahead.

Students taking four courses in a single semester that all require major seminar papers should also speak with the DGS as soon as possible.

A course that is cross-listed in the Department of Comparative Literature will be counted either toward the Comparative Literature requirement or toward the requirement in the national literature in which it is offered (if the readings were done in the original language), but not toward both. In such cases, you should let the Student Coordinator know how you want the credit to count.

One 300-level Reading and Research course can be used as one of the 4 required Comparative Literature courses. This Reading and Research course must be taught by a Comparative Literature faculty member, and it must have a comparative focus. If you do not write a research paper for this 300-level course, then you must write a paper on a comparative topic for one of your other courses, to be determined in consultation with the DGS. The reading list for a 300- level course used to count as one of your 200-level CL courses must be submitted to the DGS for approval during the first or second week of class.

Under exceptional circumstances, students will be permitted to use one lower-level undergraduate course (General Education courses or courses numbered 1-99) for 100-level credit. For 100- level credit to be granted for the course, graduate students must write longer papers than the undergraduates in the course. To receive 100-level credit for Gen Ed courses or courses numbered 1-99, students must obtain approval from the DGS during the first or second week of class.

In cases where the university offers regular 100- or 200-level courses in a student's first, second, and third literatures, the student generally may not use 300-level courses to satisfy first, second, and third literature requirements. But in cases where the university does not offer regular courses in one of your three literatures (e.g., Czech, Bengali), you will generally be permitted to use 300-level courses. You must, however, obtain the prior approval of the DGS.

To satisfy the literature requirements in the first, second, and third literatures, readings must be done in the original language. Class discussion may, however, be in English. If the department determines that work was not read in the original language, departmental credit will be withheld. Occasionally, students will declare as one of their literatures a literature in which the university does not offer sufficient courses that teach texts in the original language. In this case, if the student is a native speaker of the language, the DGS can make an exception, and grant first, second, or third literature credit for a 100- or 200-level course in which readings are done in English translation. All exceptions must be approved by the DGS in the first or second week of the semester. If students are not native speakers of the language, and there are no 100- or 200- level courses where reading is done in the original language, students must enroll in a 300-level course where readings are done in the original language.

The first literature must have a historical component, whatever your area of specialization; that is, it must include at least one course in a period different from the period examined in the other courses in this literature.

Overall, your coursework must include a significant dimension of comparative historical or cross-cultural study. This dimension can be met by taking a minimum of three courses with a chronological or regional focus different from your primary area of focus. (In the case of chronological breadth, these three courses can include the historically diverse third course in the primary literature.) It is important that the focus of these three courses be distinctly different from the focus of your other work. Thus, someone concentrating on European modernism would not be able to fulfill this requirement with three courses in the European nineteenth century; either greater historical depth or a significant cultural range (e.g., modernism in East Asia) is expected.

Other coursework may include relevant courses in literature, language, or other disciplines relevant to your interests, such as philosophy, history, anthropology, religion, linguistics, art history or media studies. Courses in these topics with a comparative focus occasionally can count toward the 4 required Comparative Literature courses. Which courses can count is at the discretion of the DGS, but the department aims to be as flexible as possible.

You are very strongly encouraged to take at least one course on the literature/culture of a world region different from that of your focus. While students specializing in non-European literatures generally do at least some of their coursework in European literatures or in literatures outside their immediate region of focus, those specializing in European literatures have tended not to take classes on non-European literatures. However, it is important to remember that Europe is as much a world region as are Africa, East Asia, the Middle East, Latin America, and South Asia, and in our global world it is essential to have at least basic exposure to the literature/culture of a non-European region.

Students are expected to fulfill all course requirements by the end of the G2 year, except for those who need additional language training to take courses in their first, second, or third literatures . These students can take a limited number of required courses into their third year. Other exceptions are at the discretion of the DGS.

## Grades

Candidates for the Ph.D. are required, in each year, to receive more A's than B's; no grade lower than B- can be counted toward the degree. More than one grade below B- clearly indicates unsatisfactory progress in the program. Students should take comfort in the fact that grades below a B are highly unusual at Harvard. If you find yourself receiving low grades in a particular course, you should speak with the DGS right away.

## Incompletes

You should avoid taking any Incompletes (INC). Incompletes are administrative nightmares that mar the transcript and damage your chances for receiving Harvard and outside fellowships. Even worse, Incompletes taken in one semester often have a snowball effect that causes students to fall further behind in their coursework and other requirements in the following semester.

With the exception of medical, family, or other emergencies, under no circumstances are students in Comparative Literature permitted to take more than one Incomplete per semester, and, with the exception of medical, family, or other emergencies, under no circumstances are they permitted to take an Incomplete in the Proseminar (CL 299ar).

Students who take two or more Incompletes in any given semester or an Incomplete in the Proseminar will automatically be put on Grace academic status for the semester, until the grades are recorded for these courses. Students on grace status remain eligible for institutional aid and teaching fellowships (but not federal Title IV loans and/or work-study).

Beginning with the class admitted in Fall 2019, all INC courses incurred during a term must be made up no later than six weeks after the start of the next term. Any INCs not cleared by that point will become permanent. If the presence of a permanent INC causes the student to fall below the number of courses needed for satisfactory progress, the student will be placed on

Grace academic status for the following semester, until an added course has made up for the Incomplete.

For those students admitted before Fall 2019, Incompletes must be completed before the end of the semester that follows the one in which the Incomplete was taken, unless the professor sets an earlier deadline. In the absence of extenuating circumstances, students who do not resolve their INC within this timeframe will be placed on Unsatisfactory academic status, which will render them ineligible for financial support from the department and the university. Such students will lose their summer stipends, academic-year stipends, teaching fellowships, and other grants. They also risk being required to take a leave of absence or to withdraw from the program.

All students, regardless of entry year, risk being placed in Unsatisfactory academic status if they have not completed the coursework for these INC grades before the start of the term following the one in which the Incomplete was taken.

Students confronted by medical or family emergencies or other extraordinary circumstances that prevent them from completing their coursework in the semester in which the course is taken are expected, before the end of the semester, to inform the DGS and/or Student Coordinator that they need additional time; the DGS works with such students on a schedule for resolving INC that can be modified as circumstances warrant.

With the exception of medical, family, or other emergencies, all Incompletes must be resolved by the beginning of the G3 year. Students will not be permitted to register for the G3 year, nor will they be permitted to teach, if they have INC in courses being used to fulfill requirements. Likewise, students are not permitted to take Orals if they are carrying Incompletes in courses being used to fulfill requirements. Students with Incompletes will be required to submit to the DGS a plan for completing their coursework. As in all cases, students having academic difficulties should see the DGS at their earliest opportunity.

Please note: most students take Incompletes because they believe the extra time will allow them to write better seminar papers. Paradoxically, this is usually not the case; sometimes an extra week or two may be necessary to produce higher quality work, but any more time than that quickly becomes counterproductive. Perfectionism is not encouraged and in fact hinders academic progress. You also should keep in mind that balancing several papers (deadlines) and exams per semester is excellent training for the academic life, where you will find yourself juggling far more responsibilities at once.

## Credit for Prior Graduate Work

According to a GSAS rule that is implemented by the Registrar, transfer credit may be awarded only after students have completed at least one semester of satisfactory work in GSAS (in Comparative Literature, this means after one semester of satisfactory grades has been reported to the department by the Registrar). Under GSAS and departmental rules, credit will be given only for courses at the graduate level taken while enrolled in a graduate program – transfer credit cannot be awarded for graduate courses taken while an undergraduate. The correspondence between coursework done elsewhere and the department's curricular requirements must be close;

credit is not awarded automatically. At the end of the first semester of completed work (or later) a student interested in receiving transfer credit should submit to the DGS and the Student Coordinator a transcript with the courses in question. A copy of the syllabus and/or papers written in the course may be required as well. These materials are reviewed by the DGS.
The number of course credits granted for graduate work done elsewhere will be based on these materials and on the department's review of student performance at Harvard. The maximum number of outside courses to count toward the Ph.D. is six, and no more than one may count toward the requirement of four courses in Comparative Literature.

Transfer credit usually will be given only for courses equivalent to the department's 200-level seminars (i.e., courses that require a substantial seminar paper or essay). Up to three graduate courses taken elsewhere may be counted as equivalent to the department's 300-level reading courses. Please note that the department does not give transfer credit for language work done elsewhere.

The form *Application for Academic Credit for Graduate Work Done Elsewhere* is available online. This form should be turned in with supportive material no later than the beginning of the fall semester of the second year.

## Language Requirements

You are strongly encouraged to study foreign languages. In September of your first year, after consulting with the DGS and your Field Adviser, you will be required to prepare a list of four (or more) proposed languages; three of these, one of which may be English, will normally be primary languages for your "first," "second," and "third" literatures in which you will be doing coursework, while the fourth will often be an "instrumental" language, as described below. You should submit your list of proposed languages to the DGS no later than October 1 of your first year. Your list of proposed languages may be revised and resubmitted at a later date so long as it meets department guidelines, but it is important at the outset to develop a solid initial plan for the languages and literatures on which you will be focusing.

By the time you take your Orals (by the end of the G3 year), you must be proficient in at least four languages related to your course of study and long-term interests; one of these four languages may be studied for only instrumental reasons. At least one language must stand in a useful cross-cultural or diachronic relationship to others (see below).

Language requirements must be finished by the end of the third year; students must complete all language requirements before taking Orals.

Candidates who wish to receive an A.M. after the second year must complete language requirements in three languages before that degree can be awarded (for more on the A.M. degree, see below).

In exceptional circumstances – i.e., when students need additional time to gain competence in an unusually difficult language such as Arabic or Chinese, or when students change their focus significantly in their G2 year – the DGS may allow students until September of the G4 year to fulfill language requirements.

***Instrumental language:***

Your fourth language may be instrumental, that is to say, a tool for reading criticism, for engaging with philological and/or historical issues, or for making the first steps toward eventually studying the literature and attaining fluency. You may fulfill department requirements for the fourth language by taking an upper-level language course in your instrumental language. (In such cases you must consult the DGS for approval, as the necessary level of coursework varies by language. E.g., for many languages, two years of formal language training are required, while for languages such as Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean, four years of formal language training are required). You also may demonstrate instrumental knowledge by passing a reading exam administered by the Student Coordinator. You may take this exam as many times as needed, but you must pass it by the end of the G3 year. For more on this exam, see below. The instrumental language is an option that may appeal to students who seek in three languages a command that includes not just reading but also speaking, listening, and writing, and in one language a reading knowledge only; other students may choose to develop full command of all four languages.

***Premodern or Cross-cultural Language:***

One of your four languages *must* be either premodern (diachronic) or cross-cultural. The term "premodern" implies that the language stands in a historically foundational or, in certain cases, diachronic relationship to one of the student's other languages. Foundational languages would include classical Latin and Greek, biblical Hebrew, classical Arabic, classical Chinese, classical Armenian, Sanskrit and Old Irish. Normally the "premodern language" is not simply the "Old" form of a modern language which is studied in Old, Middle or Medieval, and Modern forms. In the event of uncertainty, candidates and/or their Field Advisers should consult the DGS. There are inevitably languages that are difficult to classify in this system. A case in point is classical Japanese. The department has considered this case twice and has decided both times that although classical Japanese (*bungo*) differs substantially from modern Japanese, the distinction is closer to the "medieval vs. modern" distinction that is found in other traditions (including the distinction between Old and Modern English). As a result, the department has determined that the standard foundational language for Japanese is classical Chinese. The department's premodern requirement for students of Japanese can also be satisfied by demonstrating reading ability in *kanbun*. Even so, students of Japanese are strongly encouraged to take at least a year of *bungo*, formal training in which is needed to read pre-twentieth century and many early twentieth-century materials.

The term "cross-cultural" implies that this language is from a linguistic-cultural group different from that of your other three languages. Usually, a candidate working primarily on European languages and literatures, and choosing not to study Latin or another classical Western language, would need to study a language such as Chinese or Arabic to meet this requirement. Normally,

English will *not* count as a cross-cultural language. Turkish and Modern Hebrew, however, do count as cross-cultural languages for students whose other three languages are European.

In the academic year 2013-2014 the department revisited the question of what languages count as "cross-cultural" for students working on modern European literatures. In particular, the question was raised as to whether Russian (and other Slavic languages) would count for students working on Romance and Germanic languages, or whether a student working on English, French, German, and Russian (to give one example) would also have to study Latin or another language from outside modern Europe. Colleagues active in framing the department's initial policy confirmed that longstanding department precedent had been that Russian had not counted as a "cross-cultural language" for students working on other European languages. During the academic year 2013-2014 faculty members determined, however, that beginning that year students of Romance and Germanic languages can petition to have a Slavic language count as a "cross-cultural language." The department agreed that the petition will be granted only if the spirit of the cross-cultural language requirement is maintained, namely that students venture considerably far outside their comfort zones, that they take on a language that not only is difficult for them but also gives them access to a considerably different corpus of literature/culture than those with which they are already familiar, and that their studies are significantly wide-ranging. The department remains committed to producing Ph.D.'s who have a fundamentally broad understanding of languages and literatures.

***Language Exams*:**
Competence in languages can be demonstrated by taking 100- or 200-level courses in the literatures of the languages (not language-learning courses, but literature courses in the departments in which those languages are offered: arranging to do some of the required readings in the original language in a course taught in translation is not usually sufficient) or by taking a departmental translation examination. Under most circumstances Ph.D. candidates will demonstrate competence in three of their four literatures by meeting the course requirements for the first, second, and third literatures. For instance, a student who wishes to concentrate on literatures in English, French, and Spanish could take four literature courses in one of these and two in each of the others. Such a student would then also need to take an exam in Latin or another language from outside modern Europe to meet the requirement for a language that stands in a cross-cultural or diachronic relationship to the candidate's other languages.
Students who wish to meet the requirement for a fourth language through an exam—be it to fulfill the premodern/cross-cultural requirement or to showcase instrumental knowledge of another modern language—are encouraged to take the exam as soon as they feel ready; students may take the exam as many times as necessary.

If the fourth language is modern (i.e., the student aims to either meet the cross-cultural requirement or else showcase instrumental knowledge of the same), the translation exam will consist of a 2-3 pp. passage from either a creative or a critical work that students are asked not to translate, but instead to summarize/discuss/analyze. If the fourth language is premodern (i.e., a "classical" language to fulfill the diachronic requirement), the translation exam will consist of a much shorter selection from a primary source which must be translated in full in order to showcase that the student can work through a literary passage with precise understanding of

textual detail. In either case, students are permitted electronic dictionaries, but only to look up words or idioms, not to look up long phrases or sentences/paragraphs. The exam will be on the honor system. Paper dictionaries will also be permitted. The goal of the exam is to demonstrate the ability to read the language in question effectively. Students are given one hour for the exam.

Students who wish to take a language exam should speak with the Student Coordinator. In some cases, it may be possible for you to see copies of old exams, to get an idea of their length, difficulty, and variety. The Student Coordinator is responsible for scheduling the exam and, in consultation with the DGS, for approaching faculty members in the department who are most suited to provide and grade the exam. Students whose program of study requires more than the language training and coursework outlined in the *Guide* are encouraged to speak with their Field Adviser and the DGS as soon as possible to make appropriate arrangements.

## The Second-Year Paper

The first Friday of the fall term of your G3 year you will submit a Second-Year Paper on a comparative topic of 25-30 pages (double space, Times New Roman font, 12 pt. type, 7500-9000 words). This paper can be a study of two literatures written in two languages, but it also can look at a single linguistic corpus through a transmedia perspective (e.g., examining French- language film, together with French-language literature, and other media in French).

The Second-Year Paper can be an expanded version of a seminar paper you wrote during the previous spring semester, or it can be an expanded version of a seminar paper you wrote in an earlier semester. The Second-Year Paper can also be developed on the basis of an individual 300-level reading course guided by a faculty member and taken in the second and occasionally the first year in the Ph.D. program. Writing a Second-Year Paper will demonstrate your ability to do a serious comparative project. Doing so also allows you to receive active faculty guidance on making the transition from doing coursework and writing seminar papers to writing publishable articles. The faculty member advising the Second-Year Paper (typically the instructor of the relevant seminar or 300-level course) and a secondary reader (assigned by the department usually after recommendation by the student) will provide a pass/fail grade and written comments.

The guidelines for the Second-Year Paper are as follows:

- The DGS holds a brief required workshop for G2s (part of Professing Literature 2) on making the transition from writing seminar papers to writing journal articles.
- Second-Year Paper proposals (2 pages, double space) are due March 1 of the G2 year. The proposal must make clear the languages, literatures, and media involved. Students wishing to change their topics after this date require the approval of the DGS. These proposals must also be shared with the two faculty members who will serve as readers of the Second-Year Paper, in advance of the Second-Year Paper Conference.
- In April of the G2 year students have a Second-Year Paper Conference with the two faculty members who will the following fall serve as readers of the Second-Year Paper. By March 15th, please confirm a possible date range (2 weeks in April) with your faculty

readers for this conference and then contact the Student Coordinator Isaure Mignotte (mignotte@fas.harvard.edu), who will send a Doodle to your committee to schedule the final date and time. The Second-Year Paper conference will resemble a dissertation prospectus conference – but special attention will be given to moving from writing seminar papers to writing journal articles.

- Second-Year Papers will be due the first Friday of the fall term of the G3 year, giving students the summer after their G2 year to work on the paper. There will be no extensions, except in cases of family, medical, or other emergencies. Students who plan to be abroad for the summer without access to necessary research materials will be expected to plan accordingly. Students are welcome to turn in their Second-Year Paper earlier in their graduate studies if they are prepared to do so.
- Comments from department faculty members will be due by the end of September of the G3 year. Students are then encouraged, but not required, to meet with their Second-Year Paper readers in October or November to discuss their papers.
- For guidance, students should read the book *Writing Your Journal Article in Twelve Weeks*, by Wendy Belcher (a professor of Comparative Literature at Princeton)

The second year is also an excellent time to begin speaking with faculty about publishing opportunities as well as presenting work at conferences. Faculty members are here to help, but it is your responsibility to initiate these conversations.

## The Ph.D. Orals

The basic academic work for the third year consists of preparation for the Ph.D. Orals, together with initial formulation of the Dissertation Prospectus. Most students will also start teaching in the third year (for more on teaching see below). Preparation for the Ph.D. Orals helps you build interaction with faculty members in your field (often there is some overlap with your subsequent dissertation committee), and the examination itself approximates a job interview or aspects of a campus visit. All three parts of the examination are taken together; when examiners are out of the country for extended periods, they may participate via Zoom or speakerphone. It is much better to take your Orals when you are most prepared, rather than to wait for faculty members to return from abroad.

All course/language requirements must have been completed before taking Orals. This includes resolving Incompletes for courses being used to fulfill requirements.

Orals should be taken by the spring of the third year; under exceptional circumstances (such as leaves of absence of key examiners) the DGS may approve an Orals date in September of the fourth year. Regardless of when Orals are taken, students must have their Dissertation Prospectus approved by the department no later than December of the G4 year. For more on the Prospectus, see below.

Orals are scheduled by the Student Coordinator, Isaure Mignotte (mignotte@fas.harvard.edu). Several months before taking Orals you should first agree on

a date *range* (1-2 weeks) with the members of your committee and then contact Isaure to help you set a precise date and time.

The Oral examination takes two hours. It consists of a one-hour major field and two half-hour minor field examinations, each generally with one examiner, although you may arrange to have two examiners for your major field when a single examiner does not suffice to cover the material. An examiner can also be formally involved in more than one of your three fields, but you should have a total of three or four examiners. Although you develop each list and prepare it with the primary examiner(s) for that field, examiners often join in on the conversation throughout the Orals examination. At least one member of the committee (ideally its chair) will be a member of the Department of Comparative Literature. No exceptions to this rule may be granted under any circumstances.

During the 2014-2015 academic year, the department revised Orals field requirements as follows:

- The major field must include a reading list of at least 40 books (or the equivalent) selected in consultation with your major field examiner(s). The major field should provide the broad context for your eventual dissertation topic, while also preparing you for the job market and to teach a survey lecture course. Some students will choose a major field with a comparative focus, while others will choose a major field devoted to a single literature.
- The two minor fields each involve a reading list of about 20 books or their equivalent. One minor field can be geared directly to your likely dissertation topic (in which case the minor field should not duplicate the issues raised in the major field); the other minor field may have a predominantly theoretical or interdisciplinary cast. If the major field concerns literature of a single period, one of the minor fields should be based in another period.
- Together, the 80 books across the three Orals lists must include at least 10 books in a first language, 10 books in a second language, and 10 books in a third language.

You must begin formulating Orals fields and lining up examiners during the spring semester of your second year. By May 15 of your G2 year you must provide the department with the topics of your three fields as well as the names of the faculty members with whom you will be working on these fields. Ideally, you should also have all three Orals lists drawn up and approved by your three examiners and the DGS by the end of May of your G2 year. Please also email your lists to the Student Coordinator. At minimum you must have one reading list approved by then, so that you can begin systematic reading during the summer. All three reading lists must be approved by your three examiners and the DGS by September 15 of your G3 year.

During your third year, you are expected to meet periodically with your three examiners, on whatever schedule fits your preparation, but you should make sure to have at least one meeting every two or three weeks with one or another examiner. Some faculty members prefer to meet regularly with students (e.g., every other week), while others will want to meet with you only two or three times before the Oral exam. If you find that you need to meet more frequently than a particular faculty member has proposed, you should be certain to request more meetings. Be bold; different students have different backgrounds and thus different needs, and faculty

members might not always be aware of your circumstances. Should you experience any difficulties meeting with your examiners, please be in touch with the DGS as soon as possible.

The Oral examination is graded Pass/Fail. Exams are scheduled for two hours, and ordinarily begin with a short discussion between examiners (while the student is not present) to determine the order of the questions. Each examiner typically takes 25-30 minutes. At the end, the student is sent from the room while the examiners discuss the exam and is then welcomed back to the room and given their grade.

In the very rare case of a failure in one or more fields, a student can repeat the examination on the field(s) in question at a date set by the examining committee, but no later than six months following the date of the initial exam. If the second attempt results in a failure in one or more fields, the student will be granted a terminal AM degree, and withdrawn from the program.

For guidance on fields and examiners, talk with your Field Adviser, with the DGS, and with other faculty members. You need to be active in seeking out faculty members as your examiners and in setting up regular meetings with them as you prepare your lists during the spring of your G2 year and as you undertake your orals preparation over the course of the G3 year. Most departments have Orals; the Comparative Literature format might differ from that of other departments, but most faculty members across the university are very familiar with Orals.

Some faculty members will ask you to write your own Orals list, which they then revise with you; other faculty members have set lists for particular fields. Orals can and should be deeply rewarding, as you move from taking classes to writing your prospectus and then your dissertation. Take advantage of this time to build a solid foundation for the dissertation and other future research, as well as teaching.

# THE PROSPECTUS AND DISSERTATION

## Writing the Prospectus

Ideally, the Ph.D. Oral Exams should function as an engine for formulating a Dissertation Prospectus.

Following the successful completion of the Ph.D. Orals, students develop a Dissertation Prospectus of 10-12 pages, plus bibliography (double space, Times New Roman, 12-point type). Longer prospectuses that do not meet these specifications will not be considered by the department.

A draft of the prospectus is ordinarily submitted to your full committee within three months of the Orals, so that suggestions for revisions may be incorporated with the aim of submitting a final draft of the prospectus for faculty approval no later than **ten days** before the March department meeting in your G4 year. That said, it is strongly recommended that your prospectus is approved by department faculty by December of your G4 year.

Department faculty members discuss and vote on prospectuses at faculty meetings throughout the year, not just in December; you should submit your prospectus to the department for approval when your committee determines it is ready, but no later than December of the G4 year.

Your Dissertation Committee consists of a principal dissertation adviser (PDA) and two other committee members (Readers). At least one member of the Dissertation Committee (ideally its chair/PDA) will be a member of the Department of Comparative Literature. No exceptions to this rule may be granted under any circumstances. Please note that the policy for composition of the committee has recently changed ( https://gsas.harvard.edu/policy/dissertation-advisory-committee )

In most cases, at least one of the three members of your dissertation committee will be a member of the Comparative Literature faculty (more likely, two or even all three will be members). The PDA can be the same person as your G1, G2, and/or G3 Field Adviser, but will often not be the same. If your PDA is a member of the department, then he or she also becomes your departmental academic adviser; if your PDA is *not* a member of the department, then you should choose a different departmental academic adviser, most likely another member of your dissertation committee. The members of your Dissertation Committee can be the same as the members of your Orals committee, but they need not be. Be careful to choose faculty members with whom you have a good working relationship and who will offer you timely feedback. You can feel free to add a fourth faculty member to your committee at any time in the dissertation prospectus/writing process, however, you must inform your PDA before making any changes. If you want to remove a member from the committee, you must first consult with your PDA. Please also check with the DGS and the DA before making any changes.

A dissertation prospectus is a paradoxical object. It is not an abstract (i.e., a summary of a completed dissertation), nor is it a full-scale introductory chapter; instead, it is an attempt to describe what is planned before it has actually been done. It thus most closely resembles a grant proposal (in this case, a proposal for dissertation funding), and like any grant proposal it should set out the value of the topic and your approach in a concise and persuasive manner.

Your prospectus should provide a preliminary description of the proposed dissertation, delineating not only the topic you will discuss but also your primary arguments. You need to explain why this topic merits discussion and the importance of your proposed contributions. In addition, you should indicate your project's relation to existing scholarship, describing your methodology, and outlining your planned structure of chapters.

Finding, defining, and communicating an argument that is at once significant and of realistic scope are tasks that require discussion and collaboration between yourself and your committee members, who should see and respond to drafts of your prospectus.

It is crucial for you to consult with faculty members early in the dissertation prospectus process. Even the most pathbreaking dissertation will not land you a job if it does not meet the needs of a hiring committee or convince a hiring committee that you have the skills they seek. Although many potential employers are quite flexible and welcome innovative comparative work, it is important to keep in mind that departments often are looking for faculty to meet specific department needs. The situation is especially tricky for students of comparative literature, since most will be hired by national language and literature departments. You thus need to be able to demonstrate to a hiring committee that your comparative literature training is an asset, rather than a detriment, that you have the key skills and knowledge needed in a specific national literature, enlivened and given new dimensions by the breadth of your comparative perspective. This is readily done, as long as you plan carefully in advance.

Prospectuses in Comparative Literature vary. But all should answer, as best as possible at this early stage of research, certain fundamental questions:

1. What is the central problem that the dissertation will address, and what will be your major argument? The problem can be theoretical, critical, or historical, but it should, in most cases, be presented as a question or related set of questions to which the dissertation will attempt to offer answers. It is important that this problem and your hypothetical answers (hypotheses) be stated from the outset, so that your research will not risk becoming random and your exposition will not lapse into mere description.

   When writing your prospectus, speak in terms of what you will "argue," "contend," or "claim," rather than simply "explore," "examine," and "discuss." It is fine to speak of "asking" or "inquiring," but questions should in general be associated with an argument or hypothesis.

2. Although you are writing a dissertation for a Comparative Literature Ph.D., your project may not be obviously comparative. The comparative nature of the project may lie in the way it interrupts or revises existing narratives of explanation using new materials. If you will be relying on an intellectual framework developed by a particular theorist or theoretical school, you should say something about how the theory will inform or be at issue in your work. What will count for you as evidence? Will your thesis aim at the revision of a paradigm, or the utilization of one? What will you be "reading" and what will you be presupposing? How does your framework fit your problem, and why have you chosen it? Are you testing it or using it? What kind of end point are you after? Do you want to make us understand something about the text(s), the world, the art form, or the analytic enterprise--or about the inextricability of all of these? Here is where you should define clearly any concepts or terms that will carry important analytical energy for you, and perhaps briefly explain their genealogy or provenance, especially when you are using

contested, general, or often-misunderstood terms.

3. To persuade your reader that you are not just restating what has already been said before, you should include a brief review (about a page) outlining the present "state of the field" with respect to your topic and argument. How have previous scholars treated your topic; how have their arguments differed from yours? How does your approach differ from earlier approaches? Has there been new evidence (for example, a new primary source) that has come to light since previous treatments? For the sake of collegiality with previous generations of scholars, it is advisable not to play games of upstaging for the sake of self-promotion ("My predecessor blundered in not noticing what I have noticed"). Instead remember that your work would not be possible without the work of earlier scholars.

4. Your prospectus should include a chapter-by-chapter outline, with a paragraph or so describing each chapter. Naturally, the final arrangement of chapters may look different from the one developed in your prospectus: when new perspectives open up in the course of your work on the dissertation, you are free to revise the organization proposed in the prospectus. Nonetheless, outlining a sequence of potential chapters will help you to clarify your argument and check the balance of its parts in relation to one another. Chapters typically run anywhere between 30 and 60 double-spaced pages. If the major sections of your dissertation seem likely to exceed this span, plan to subdivide them. You might consider organizing your topic in terms of four or five main chapters, unless your topic is better served by a larger number of shorter chapters. The proposed chapters should be presented in your prospectus in a manner that allows your readers to form a clear overview of the project as a whole. You will probably find that developing this outline helps your thinking to move forward substantially, so that the actual writing of the dissertation will be more clearly focused.

5. Dissertations vary widely in length, but a good target is around 250-300 pages, consisting of four or five roughly 50-page chapters plus your introduction, conclusion, and bibliography. A dissertation can have more chapters when appropriate, and can run longer than 300 pages if necessary, particularly if substantial archival work is entailed, but longer dissertations often lose more in terms of focus and control of the topic than they gain in terms of amplitude of detail. You should ideally have 200 pages of your dissertation written when you go on the job market. Students planning to write dissertations of under 200 pages are advised that hiring committees are likely to be skeptical about uncompleted short dissertations; students writing short dissertations should plan to go on the market with a finished or nearly finished dissertation.

6. Once you have drafted your prospectus under the guidance of your committee, you might want to have it read by someone who knows very little about your topic, to see whether you have clearly set out your problem and defined a workable method. Seeking out a general reader right at the start is a good reminder that though you may be writing on a specialized topic, your thesis should be written in clear, intelligible prose. Make sure you define the theoretical terms and categories you are introducing, and try to avoid technical jargon unless it is necessary to the intricacies of your argument.

7. Remember that you are undertaking to write a connected narrative. You ought therefore to think about that narrative as a whole rather than merely as a series of separate chapters. What overall message would you like people to take away from your dissertation? Try to formulate your subject and your intended destination in a simple sentence or two; make sure that you locate this sentence or two in a prominent place in your introduction.

8. In thinking about your project, you would do well to situate it in the broader field to which it is addressed. By this point in your graduate studies, you have developed a good command of current thinking about your dissertation's overall field. Indeed, you are something of an authority. How is your argument going to change people's ideas, add to the present picture, or revise commonly held views? Thinking in these terms should help you formulate your project so that it is understandable for someone who is not immersed in its field, as well as showing people in the field why they should be interested in reading your work.
9. The audience for an academic dissertation ranges from members of your own generation, to interested undergraduates, to advanced scholars. It also includes thinkers of the future, since most dissertations are readily accessible online, at least after an initial embargo. Be sure to explain your scope or focus. Describe how your work does or doesn't fit into, develop from, or in some other manner deal with relevant (or only apparently relevant) work done by others. This will increase the chance of making your thesis the book you are likely to want it to become, as well as aiding you in deriving articles from chapters of the dissertation.
10. Prospectuses (and then dissertations) tend either to lose themselves in detail or to be too general. To avoid these extremes, try to do what you would in any paper you write: make sure that your main argument remains clearly above ground and that each paragraph has a clear connection with both the preceding and following ones. Enough care and stylistic grace should be exercised so that the prospectus clearly and concisely articulates the project, its arguments, methods, and special considerations in a manner that anyone in Comparative Literature (or literary studies in general) can grasp.

Prospectuses are expected to include a bibliography, which can vary in length. You do not need to have already read every source listed on your bibliography. However, you should have a sense of the most important works for your topic and have taken the time to become familiar with them. Remember that not every source requires scrupulous reading and note taking. At times it helps to annotate the bibliography with brief comments, at least for certain works.

## Prospectus Approval

Once you have completed your draft prospectus you are required to have a Prospectus Conference with your three Dissertation Committee members. Please confirm a possible date range (1-2 weeks) with your faculty readers and then ask Isaure Mignotte, mignotte@fas.harvard.edu, to help you with the scheduling of this meeting. You must send your prospectus to your committee at least two weeks before the Prospectus Conference. This conference is a one-hour discussion both of the work leading up to your dissertation project and the prospectus itself, with the aim of ensuring that you are well prepared to move forward with the project and have developed both a viable conceptual structure and an appropriate outline of the chapters that will comprise the dissertation. The Prospectus Conference usually begins with students speaking for about 10 minutes on their proposed project.

After the Prospectus Conference, the prospectus, revised if necessary, is circulated to the full faculty of the department for discussion and vote at a department meeting; please submit your

prospectus to the department at least ten days before the department meeting at which you would like it discussed. Department meetings are scheduled well in advance; dates can be found in the list of events on our website. You must have your prospectus approved by the department by March of your fourth year. Where appropriate, your PDA (or departmental academic adviser) will communicate to you any suggestions from the full faculty for changing the prospectus and the bibliography. If the department asks for small changes to the prospectus ("passed with minor changes"), there is normally no need for the members of the Dissertation Committee to reconfirm their approval. In some cases, the department will ask for more extensive revisions, in which case the student will be required to resubmit the prospectus to the department for approval at a future department meeting.

Ordinarily, the three faculty participants in the Prospectus Conference will be the three readers of the dissertation.

## Working on the Dissertation

The dissertation is the culmination of your graduate studies, and the years you spend on it can be the best of times or the worst of times, if not both. You should have the satisfaction of drawing on much that you have been learning in the past years, and of finding or refining your scholarly voice and entering fully into the debates in your field; at the same time, you face the challenges of managing a very different kind of schedule and scale of work than anything you have likely experienced before. If the prospectus phase was largely about your dissertation's spatial form (how many chapters, how long, with what narrative arc), the writing phase becomes equally about time. How can you best structure your days, weeks, and semesters to keep yourself working productively at a pace suited to the length of the project, neither burning out nor letting the project extend into an indefinite horizon? Individual projects and schedules vary greatly, but a few basic guidelines can help make this the best of times for you, yielding an excellent written product within the time – and the funding – available.

1. *Break it down*. The best way to write a dissertation (and, generally, a book as well) is one chapter at a time. You often will write chapters in the order in which they will appear in the finished manuscript, but this is not always the case. Usually the introduction and conclusion are best written at the end.
2. *Pace yourself*. For a typical four- or five-chapter dissertation, a good output is roughly one chapter per semester or summer. This may seem a daunting pace, but in fact you've been writing 50 to 60 pages per semester all through graduate school, which is just the rate you should aim for in the dissertation. True, you are supposed to accomplish more in the dissertation than in a set of seminar papers, but you know more than you did before, and the extended work on your prospectus yielded a viable topic, which you now have the challenge of developing at full length.
3. *Make a plan*. Upon approval of your prospectus, you should work out an overall plan for the coming two or so years of dissertation work. Show these plans to your advisers and get their input, then proceed accordingly, modifying the plans from time to time as needed.

Circumstances arise that can alter your plans, such as adding a year of research abroad, but a workable plan is a highly advisable starting point. Along with this overall plan, at the start of each semester you should work up a plan for the semester, taking into account your teaching schedule or other non-dissertation commitments, and building in substantial blocks of time most days for dissertation work. To the extent possible, you should block out in advance your most productive time of day for dissertation writing.
You may be able to do more on some days of the week than on others, but an average of five hours a day (25-30 hours a week) will likely be about right to get the job done and still give you time for other commitments. The semester schedule can and should be revised as needed, but you are much more likely to make steady progress if you have a set plan from which to work.

Many students become consumed by teaching and let dissertations fall by the wayside. Do not do this. A heavy teaching commitment is no excuse for not working on your dissertation; you need to be making steady progress on the dissertation even while teaching. Dissertations cannot be written in several summers alone. Students having difficulty balancing teaching and research should speak with their advisers or the DGS as soon as possible. Department faculty members will help you work out a schedule to better balance your time.

Finally, it is important to have the body of the dissertation drafted by the fall of the G6 year, so that you can make a serious showing on the job market that year. For most academic jobs, you must be able to demonstrate that you will finish your dissertation by the end of the current academic year, and having the dissertation largely complete will leave you the significant time needed for a thorough job search.

4. *See your committee*. Your PDA and other dissertation committee members are there for you, but it is your responsibility to take the initiative to meet with them. If faculty members don't answer your emails, email them again or go to their office hours. In the rare cases when you cannot reach one of your advisers, speak with the DGS as soon as possible. Much as with Orals preparation, you should draw up a schedule to ensure that you see one or more of your advisers every few weeks, first to discuss tentative plans, then to discuss a chapter outline, perhaps again for a general midway conversation on a chapter, then of course to hand in the draft before the chapter meeting that is required at minimum once each year, but that occurs preferably once each semester.
5. *Learn from your chapter meetings*. Approximately once per semester and at minimum once each year, in order to remain in SAT status in the graduate program, you are required to have a chapter meeting with your dissertation committee. Most students use this occasion to discuss a completed draft of a new chapter, although you may occasionally have two chapters to discuss at a time or have a second meeting to discuss a chapter that needed substantial revision after the first chapter meeting. You also can use your chapter meeting to discuss your research/writing to date; this is recommended for those years that you do not produce two chapters. After you have circulated to your committee a draft of your work for discussion, contact Isaure Mignotte (mignotte@fas.harvard.edu), and she will help arrange a mutually workable time for you and your committee to meet, typically two to three weeks after you have circulated your draft.

Chapter meetings usually take one hour. They begin with the student speaking for a few minutes on the chapter and where it fits in the dissertation as a whole; the remainder of the hour is spent discussing the chapter with the dissertation committee. The chapter meeting itself gives you the opportunity to receive sustained responses from your committee members, who will be able to hear one another's advice and your responses and refine their advice in turn. Your committee members may also give you written comments in addition to the discussion at the chapter meeting. A committee member who is out of town may participate via Zoom or a conference call; in unusual cases when this is impossible to arrange, written comments may be sent in advance of the meeting.

Faculty members are encouraged to provide written comments on chapters, but are not required to do so. Students thus should take careful notes during their chapter meetings, and they should feel free to contact their committee members after these meetings with any follow-up questions.

6. *Share your work*. The Poggioli Faculty/Student Colloquium, directed by Professor Luis Manuel Girón-Negrón (giron@fas.harvard.edu), is an ideal forum in which to share one or more of your dissertation chapters; attending this forum also allows you to observe other students developing and discussing their work. Beyond campus, you should present your work at one or two conferences a year (more than that adds little and can slow your dissertation writing); the ACLA annual meeting is particularly recommended. The department has funding to assist in conference travel (see below), as do the Graduate School and several Area Centers on campus (see the relevant websites for details). The department also very strongly recommends that while in graduate school you send out two articles for publication, one derived from your dissertation chapters and another drawing from work separate from the dissertation, which can show the breadth of your knowledge.

## The Fifth Year and Beyond

Assuming that you have completed two chapters of your dissertation by January of your fifth year, you should apply for a Dissertation Completion Fellowship (DCF) for your sixth year. Otherwise, you will need to teach or seek other employment/funding in the sixth year and take the Dissertation Completion Fellowship in the seventh year. You are urged to speak with your dissertation committee about the most appropriate timing for the DCF, since once you have held the DCF you lose eligibility for Harvard fellowships, with the exception of teaching. Students with a guaranteed fifth year of tuition risk losing their fifth-year tuition grant if they take their DCF in the fifth year. All students planning to take the DCF prior to their sixth year should speak with the DA to ensure they understand the financial implications.

Students generally have little difficulty securing teaching for the sixth year and, when necessary, the seventh year; opportunities become much more uncertain after that, which is one reason among many to finish the degree in a timely fashion. (See below for more detailed information on teaching.)

Students should check their offer letters to clarify their funding for the years between G4 and the DCF. Because G5+ students do not receive top-up funds or summer stipends (and, depending on the year admitted, are sometimes required to pay tuition and health insurance), you are encouraged to plan ahead. Many students find it helpful to seek employment in addition to teaching. Consult the GSAS website for a list of employment opportunities. Students are also encouraged to contact the Office of Career Services (OCS).

## The Finished Dissertation

***The Form of the Doctoral Dissertation***

Students are responsible for complying with the requirements set forth in *The Form of the PhD Dissertation* handbook, published by GSAS. The answers to remaining questions must be determined through consultation with your PDA and readers.

***Submitting the Dissertation***

There are three months during the academic year in which GSAS confers the Ph.D. degree: November, March, and May. Students are strongly urged to check with the Student Coordinator and the Registrar's Office about department and GSAS dissertation submission and other deadlines for these graduation dates. *Information for Degree Applicants*, a booklet published by the Registrar's office and available online, explains many of the requirements for graduation.

| | **November 2026** | **March 2027** | **May 2027** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Full version of your dissertation submitted to every member of your committee | July 27, 2026 | November 28, 2026 | March 15, 2027 |
| Application deadline (in my.harvard) | August 3, 2026 | December 1, 2026 | March 24, 2027 |
| Defense deadline | September 30, 2026 | January 10, 2027 | May 10, 2027 |
| Final, approved version of dissertation due to the Registrar's Office | *September 2, 2026<br>*September 3, 2026 | January 12, 2027 | May 12, 2027 |
| Degree conferral date | November 10, 2026 | February 9, 2027 | May 27, 2027 |

* Students who wish to retain health coverage for the fall 2026 term (through January 31, 2027) and who would like to be charged accordingly should submit the dissertation on September 3, 2026.

Defenses for a November degree can be held after the completed dissertation has been submitted to the Registrar (no later than September 30), but department will make every effort to schedule these defenses in early September, whenever possible (faculty schedules permitting).

Well in advance of graduation, students must apply for the degree under the **My Program** section of their my.harvard.edu account, which is approved electronically by the Department. If you do not graduate on the date for which you applied, you must reapply for the degree during the next degree application period.

A full version of the dissertation (either printed or digital, depending on the committee's preference) must be submitted to every member of the dissertation committee at least 6 weeks before the GSAS Registrar's deadline for submitting dissertations to the Registrar. This deadline will allow committee members to make final suggestions. It also gives time for the Dissertation Defense (see below) before the manuscript is submitted in its final, formal version.

It is extremely important for students who are in the final stages of dissertation preparation to allow ample time to gather the signatures required on the Dissertation Acceptance Certificate (DAC) and to ensure that the certificate is submitted by the proper due date. For AY 2026 - 2027, it is anticipated that the DAC will be an either physical or electronic document, and the signatures for the DAC will be gathered by the Student Coordinator Once the DAC is completed, and upon confirmation of a successful defense, the DAC will be sent to the student for inclusion with their dissertation submission.

*The Form of the PhD Dissertation* is available at gsas.harvard.edu/academics/dissertations. Please note that the Registrar is very strict about the form of the dissertation. If a dissertation does not follow published guidelines to the letter, the Registrar will not accept it and graduation may be delayed.

Students are advised that unless they place a specific "embargo" on their dissertation it will be made available online. In only very few cases is online access desirable for the first years following the awarding of the Ph.D. – it is generally a good idea to keep your dissertation out of the public domain until you have published the monograph that draws on it.

### *The Dissertation Defense*

The Department of Comparative Literature holds a required Dissertation Defense for each completed dissertation. The defense takes about two hours. It begins with you giving a brief 5–7-minute summary of your work (with PowerPoints, if any, kept to a minimum), including the dissertation's principal arguments and contributions to scholarship. Dissertation Committee members then discuss what you have achieved, ask questions about your work, outline any revisions that need to be made before the dissertation can be submitted, and make suggestions for future revision toward publication. The defense is normally open to the public and is attended by other interested faculty members (who may make comments or ask questions of their own), as well as by friends, family, and other graduate students. Students who would like a closed defense should speak with the DGS.

In general, your committee will only approve scheduling the defense if they expect the dissertation to pass with no more than minor revisions, although it is always possible that the discussion will result in a request for more substantial revision. Ordinarily such revisions will be reviewed and approved by the committee members, with no further defense required. The great majority of Ph.D.s who have had dissertation defenses have found them to be a rewarding conclusion to their

graduate studies and a helpful start to their postdoctoral work.

The dissertation defense must be held at least two weeks before the Registrar's deadline for submitting dissertations. The one exception is for students receiving the November degree, who may hold their defense after the completed dissertation has been submitted to the Registrar in time for their mid-September deadline. The department will, however, do its best to schedule these defenses for early September.

Please confirm a possible date range (1-2 weeks) with your faculty readers for your Dissertation Defense and the Student Coordinator Isaure Mignotte (mignotte@fas.harvard.edu) will help schedule the final date and time.

## ADVISING

### The adviser–student relationship

Primary advisers and advising committees constitute a crucial resource for students as they move forward in the program, but students are not confined to their advisers or advising committee members for advice or mentoring. Some students will have the same faculty member serve as field adviser and then PDA from the G1 year through the completion of the dissertation, but most will not. It is perfectly natural for a student to have several principal advisers over the course of their graduate career and changes are easily made.

The DGS and your field adviser(s) provide the backbone of your guidance through the program, and it is important for you to turn to them on a regular basis. Yet you aren't at all confined to these sources of advice and mentoring. You are strongly encouraged to speak about your progress and academic plans with other faculty members in the department and across the university and beyond. You should seek out professors whose scholarship complements your own, even when you aren't able to take their courses. All professors not on leave are required by the university to hold weekly office hours, and most professors are available to meet outside office hours as well. You shouldn't be shy about contacting faculty members. If you email a professor and don't receive a response within **three business days**, you should feel free to write to that individual again. By the same token, you should respond promptly to messages from your advisers. Should a student or faculty member find after **five business days** that they have received no reply to an email or to a request for a meeting, they should contact the DGS.

To foster a sense of community among the graduate students, Field Advisers are encouraged to meet with all their advisees as a group at the beginning of each semester. The Student Coordinator will send field advisers an up-to-date list of their advisees at the beginning of each academic year to facilitate this.

Primary advisers, committee members, and other faculty members will be important advocates, collaborators, and colleagues throughout your graduate career, and often beyond. They also direct students to resources for help and counseling if and when students need them (e.g., medical issues, personal emergency, changes in life circumstances, psychological wellbeing, etc.).

It is important to develop a good working relationship and set mutual expectations early on. Once students are admitted into the program, it is the shared responsibility of students and advisers to

have an open discussion in order to establish expectations, boundaries, and channels of communication. Don't hesitate to discuss and clarify advising protocols with your current or prospective advisers early on, with the goal of establishing mutually satisfactory and productive working relationships. To facilitate this discussion, we suggest the following examples as some of the topics of conversation that faculty members are expected to clarify and that you are encouraged and entitled to ask directly:

*choice of courses and fields of study
*students' entitlement to free expression of their views
*the sense of community among graduate students
*the adviser's philosophy of graduate student teaching and advising
*the ways whereby advisers and students can build a relationship of trust and maintain honest and open communication
*frequency of meetings outside of courses
*expectations regarding feedback on graduate student written work
*the adviser's own graduate experience and reflections on how this may influence the adviser's teaching and advising style
*the process whereby students arrive at their research/dissertation topics
*students' freedom in choosing fields of research and dissertation topics
*teaching opportunities and pedagogical training for graduate students
*expectations regarding the duties and rights of teaching fellows
*the adviser's current advisees and their research directions
*the adviser's sabbatical schedule over the next few years and expectations around working with students while on sabbatical
*the adviser's research interests, especially in relation to possible course offerings
*the adviser's administrative duties and other commitments that may affect his or her availability
*the process of applying for outside grants and fellowships
*the best ways to prepare for the job market
*professional training
*preparation for giving papers and publications

Although graduate student colleagues are excellent sources of information, you should also consult the DGS directly, at any time, with any questions about program requirements and policies. If you experience difficulty with their advisers, you should contact the DGS; if students experience difficulty with the DGS, they should contact the Chair, or, if you prefer, a trusted tenured department faculty member.

The Department is committed to protecting individuals from retaliation for speaking out, for engaging in good faith reporting or objecting to any activity by a community member that they believe to be unlawful, unethical, or in violation of university policies. Faculty should take the initiative in discussing their commitment to this policy and creating an environment of free and open discourse.

### General expectations

Some general guidelines for students and advisers:

1. Prompt response to communication is important. Both faculty members and students should respond to emails within three working days.

2. Students can expect to receive comments on their seminar papers within two weeks after submitting them according to agreed-upon deadlines. Students and advisers should discuss and agree upon a set of shared expectations for reading and commenting on dissertation chapters. As a general guideline, students should expect comments on new chapters, or substantially revised chapters, within one month.

3. Requests for recommendation letters should not be last minute. Students should plan to make requests and send the relevant materials (e.g., writing sample, application letter, grant proposal) at least one month before the deadline.

4. It is the responsibility of faculty to ensure that students have the freedom as well as the guidance to develop their ideas in a supportive environment.

5. Students have the choice of changing their advisers or members of their advising committees. They can also seek resources from other departments or outside the university when they are considering a third or fourth reader for their dissertations.

6. Faculty members are not to retaliate against students for voicing complaints or for changing their advisers or members of their advising committees.

### The G1 and G2 years

All first- and second-year students have two official advisers: 1) the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), who for the 2026-2027 academic year is Professor Luis Manuel Girón-Negrón (giron@fas.harvard.edu). 2) a Field Adviser who is most often a faculty member in the Department of Comparative Literature. All incoming students choose a field adviser for their first and usually second years (the "G1" and "G2" years in campus parlance). Students have the option, at the start of the G2 year, of continuing with the same field adviser as during the G1 year, or of choosing someone else. The department understands that academic interests change, so if at any time during the G1 or G2 years you would like to change your field adviser, you should contact the DGS. At the same time, you are welcome to consult other faculty members within and beyond the department for advice throughout your graduate career, including in their first two years. The DGS and field adviser work together to ensure that G1 and G2 students are enrolled in the courses most appropriate for their career plans (i.e., that they are receiving rigorous training in their respective fields, including relevant national languages and literatures), that they are on track to fulfill course and language requirements, that they are planning productively for their Second-Year Paper, that they are formulating appropriate Orals fields and

lists, and that they are preparing themselves for teaching. The duties of the DGS and field adviser overlap, but they can be distinguished as follows.

The DGS signs off on my.harvard for G1s and G2s (approving course selections for the fall and spring semesters) while making certain that students are attending to department requirements. The DGS meets individually with all G1s and G2s at least once each semester to offer advice and ascertain that students are making satisfactory progress to the degree. During these years and beyond, you should also contact the DGS about any academic difficulties, and especially if you are unable to finish coursework or meet deadlines. You are strongly encouraged to take advantage of the DGS's office hours. If you have classes during the DGS's office hours, you should email the DGS to arrange a mutually convenient time to meet.

In addition, the DGS, with the assistance of the Student Coordinator, regularly updates all students' digital records and reviews everyone's progress every spring, as part of the Annual Review of Student Progress; every June the DGS sends each student a letter via email regarding their progress.

Whereas the DGS has overall responsibility for course requirements and the fine points of the program's structure (matters that individual faculty members don't always know in detail), the field adviser is a faculty member chosen, in consultation with you, because his/her field of expertise is similar to your own. Often your field adviser will be a member of the Department of Comparative Literature, yet your adviser can be someone based entirely in another department with experience working with Comparative Literature students. (Please note: Any professor listed on the department website under "Faculty" is fully available as an adviser, whether or not they hold a joint appointment with another department. However, Lecturers, College Fellows, and others on short-term appointments do not serve as field advisers for graduate students.)

The field adviser's primary function is to help students determine the most appropriate courses, summer opportunities, Second-Year Paper topic, Orals fields and lists, and teaching opportunities, in light of their developing scholarly interests and with an eye to rigorous preparation in marketable fields. You should contact your field adviser and initiate discussion of these items of professional development on a regular basis. Field advisers should meet with their advisees at least twice a year, preferably at the beginning of each semester. If you have difficulty getting in touch with your field adviser, or find that your field adviser is unable to assist you with the matters listed above because of changing scholarly interests or other reasons, you ought to inform the DGS.

**The G3 year (Orals)**

In the third year, students have one official adviser, the Field Adviser, who sometimes is the same faculty member who served in this role during the student's G1 and/or G2 years, but often is not the same person because of the student's changing interests. The field adviser for G3s is responsible for releasing the electronic advising hold during the G3 year, for advising students

on Orals lists and fields as well as on teaching, and in particular for guiding students to a potential dissertation project. The field adviser will often supervise the students' major Orals field, but need not necessarily do so. You should inform the DGS if you would like to change your field adviser.

**G4 and beyond (after Orals)**

Following the completion of Orals (typically at the end of the third year), the G3 field adviser, or another faculty member, will become the student's Principal Dissertation Adviser (PDA) in years G4 and above. For more on the role of the PDA, see the sections in the *Guide* on formulating the dissertation prospectus and writing the dissertation. Students whose PDA is not a member of the Department of Comparative Literature should also chose a department academic adviser, usually another member of their dissertation committee, who will sign off in my.harvard and advise on departmental matters.

## Advising summary

Advisers play a crucial part in the development of their advisees as young scholars and future colleagues. They should meet regularly and be in frequent close contact; both students and advisers should answer emails within three business days. Whenever possible, faculty members should reply to student emails within **two** business days, even if just to say that a more comprehensive reply is forthcoming. If students do not receive a response within **three** business days, they should write that faculty member again, making clear that they'd appreciate a response. If **five** business days after a second attempt they still have not heard from the faculty member, they can contact the DGS. This page provides a basic summary of expectations for advisers and students at different stages of the graduate program.

**Field adviser (G1 and G2)**

- Meet individually with advisees at least once a term
- Help advisees determine the most appropriate courses, summer opportunities, Second-Year Paper topic, Orals fields and lists, and teaching opportunities
- Meet at the beginning of each year or term with all their advisees as a group

**Second-year paper readers (G2)**

- Meet with the student to guide them on the approach to the paper, with a focus on developing it into a publication in an appropriate journal
- Participate in the Second-Year Paper Conference with the student in April
- Read the paper and provide feedback on the second-year paper by September; meet with the student to discuss the paper in October or November
- *More details: see Graduate Student* Guide*, pp. 17–18*

**Field adviser (G3)**

- Meet with the advisee at least once a semester and release the my.harvard hold
- Advise on Orals lists and fields (often incl. serving as reader of the primary Orals list); on teaching; and on working toward a potential dissertation project

**Orals committee members (G3)**

- Guide the student through constructing, revising, and reading their Orals lists; offer official approval of the relevant list(s) to the department;
- Meet periodically (at least every six weeks) with the student to discuss progress
- *More details: see* Guide *pp. 18–20*

**Principal dissertation adviser (G4+)**

- Meet with the advisee at least once a semester, ideally rather more often
- Advise on the dissertation prospectus and the dissertation, as well as professional development, the job market, grant and fellowship opportunities and applications
- Communicate faculty feedback on the Dissertation Prospectus to the student
- Offer timely (within one month) written and/or oral feedback on chapter drafts (usually in the context of a chapter meeting)

**Dissertation committee members (G4+)**

- Meet with the advisee at least once a semester
- Advise on the dissertation prospectus and the dissertation, as well as professional development, the job market, grant and fellowship opportunities and applications
- Offer timely (within one month) written and/or oral feedback on chapter drafts (usually in the context of a chapter meeting)

## Mental and physical well-being and accommodations

## Accessible Education Office (AEO)

Students with mental or physical, visible or invisible disabilities are encouraged to register with the AEO as early as possible, including when first arriving at Harvard.

Students with documented disabilities (visible and invisible) at Harvard may be eligible to receive academic accommodations. AEO works collaboratively with students to develop academic accommodation plans based upon their disability documentation, academic history, and the information that is provided to staff during an access meeting.

Academic accommodations are tailored to the individual to eliminate barriers caused by a disability and to afford students equal access and opportunity to participate in academic programs and services. Examples of frequently required academic accommodations include exam accommodations, access to assistive technology, accessible course materials, and note- taking.

Please note that early notification and active communication with instructors is the best way to ensure that accommodation requests are handled effectively. Students requiring academic accommodations will receive a Faculty Letter that verifies their registration with AEO and specifies the accommodations they are eligible to receive.

AEO asks that students deliver their Faculty Letter to course staff *within the first two weeks of classes*. Please note that accommodations will not be provided retroactively.

Harvard University is committed to building a diverse and inclusive community, which includes providing equal access to all students. The Accessible Education Office (AEO) determines accommodations for students with disabilities and ensures legal compliance with non-discrimination for students with disabilities under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and The Americans with Disabilities Act (1990, and Amendments Act of 2008). AEO works in collaboration with Harvard faculty, students, and staff to create equitable educational experiences through the promotion of universal design in learning, reasonable accommodations in inaccessible environments, and the reframing of disability as a valued aspect of the human experience.

More information about the AEO can be found here: aeo.fas.harvard.edu

## Harvard University Health Services

Harvard University Health Services is a multi-specialty medical practice dedicated to caring for members of the Harvard community — students, faculty, staff, retirees, and their dependents.

In addition to providing primary care, internal medicine, and urgent care, HUHS also offers counseling and mental health services (CAMHS). In general, CAMHS services involve five main areas:

- **Short-term Counseling** with a staff of psychologists, social workers, and licensed mental health professionals (via a secure Zoom session)
- **Medical Prescribers** include psychiatrists, nurse practitioners, and medical residents who conduct psychopharmacology evaluations and offer prescription management (via a secure Zoom session)
- **Outside Referrals** for longer-term counseling with providers and experts in the surrounding communities
- **Virtual Workshops** to learn coping skills/psychoeducation and **Support Groups** to address a variety of mental health concerns and topics
- **Urgent Care** (24/7) and limited same day appointments during office hours 8am to 6pm (via phone or a secure Zoom session)

From 6pm to 8am every evening/night and all weekend long including holidays, After Hours Urgent Care is available by phone at 617.495.5711.

Students who opt to work with outside therapists and/or psychiatrists in their local community are referred to our Referral Coordinator who will help students get connected to appropriate clinicians in the Cambridge/Boston area.

CAMHS services are private and confidential. CAMHS follows all applicable medical privacy and confidentiality regulations and laws and does not share any information with anyone without your written permission.

To schedule an initial consultation, an appointment, or to speak with a clinician during regular business hours (8am-6pm), call 617.495.2042.

The CAMHS website provides additional information, resources, and patient portal access: camhs.huhs.harvard.edu For more information about HUHS and their services, please go to huhs.harvard.edu.

The Harvard Graduate Student Union has established a fund which is available for its members to cover co-pays incurred under the Student Health Insurance Plan (SHIP) for mental health, specialist visits and prescription drugs, and out-of-pocket health expenses resulting from exceeding SHIP mental health and specialist visit limits. Please see harvardgradunion.org/health-care-reimbursement-fund for more information.

## Leave of Absence

Occasionally, students may need to take a semester or a year away from their studies for a variety of reasons including family leave or medical leave. Applications for leave of absence are typically due July 1 (fall) and December 1 (spring), and students who are considering taking a leave are asked to speak with the Director of Graduate Studies and/or the Student Coordinator to discuss the matter.

Additionally, immigration regulations require F-1 or J-1 visa holders to maintain full-time enrollment as a resident student while in the United States. F-1 or J-1 students who are considering applying for leave of absence must speak to an advisor in the **Harvard International Office** to obtain approval of their application.

While on leave of absence, students are not considered to be making progress toward the degree and are not expected to meet with advisors to discuss work. However, students should maintain contact with their committee members and the department and should communicate with them when they are ready to return to their degree progress.

More information about the leave of absence process, including a link to the application for leave, can be found here: gsas.harvard.edu/registration/leave-absence/voluntary-leaves- absence

# Comparative Literature Graduate Representatives Roles and Responsibilities 2026-27

***-The Comp Lit Cabinet Representative***

- Two representatives serve each year, but only one attends meetings at a time, either alternating dates or one serving per semester (Spring or Fall).
- The role of the grad student rep is to participate fully in all Cabinet discussions, thereby giving the grad students a voice in departmental governance. The rep is also the liaison between the Cabinet and the other grad students, to inform the grad students about Cabinet discussions which are also summarized at department meetings, and to bring grad student perspectives and concerns to the Cabinet. One representative also attends the Faculty Meetings. The only discussions in which the rep won't participate are those concerning confidential matters, so we would ask the rep to excuse him/herself from the faculty meeting in these cases.
- The rep should send meeting summaries to the whole graduate student body.

***- Graduate Student Council (GSC) Comp Lit Representatives***

- At least one of the two delegates attends GSC meetings. This representation allows Comparative Literature students to apply for GSC conference and research funding. The minimum expectation is to attend two GSC meetings per semester.
- The delegates can send meeting notes or application reminders as necessary.
- GSC representatives receive $1,000 per year in compensation.

**In addition, Delegates oversee:**

- ***Comp Lit Grad Students Happy Hours***
  - Social gatherings with foods and drinks. These will include both Comp Lit graduate students and other Harvard grad students in the Humanities. The goal is to rebuild a sense of departmental community within Comp Lit and facilitate research collaborations across the Humanities.
  - One week before each scheduled event, the delegate communicates with Isaure who will arrange for payment by Comp Lit.
  - Delegates request an itemized receipt for all expenses and take care to transfer it promptly to Isaure.
  - The frequency and budget of the happy hours will depend on available department funding.
  - One week before each scheduled event, the delegate communicates with Isaure who will arrange for payment by Comp Lit.
  - Delegates request an itemized receipt for all expenses and take care to transfer it promptly to Isaure.
  - Delegates may also organize, or invite fellow students to organize, other types of events when funding allows.

**For next academic year, we anticipate the following calendar:**

***Fall:***

- 2 Comp Lit Grad Students Happy Hours

***Spring:***

- 2 Comp Lit Grad Students Happy Hours

# TEACHING

The department strongly advises students to gain teaching experience while in graduate school; teaching experience not only is necessary for a career in academia, but it also can be helpful for any number of careers. As part of their financial aid package, G3s and G4s in good standing are guaranteed funding through teaching. The department recognizes that not all students are aiming for a career in academia and thus does not explicitly require teaching for the Ph.D.

For more detailed information on teaching strategies and opportunities for Comparative Literature students than what is provided below, see the department's Teaching Fellows Handbook, available online. Students also are advised to consult with the Pedagogy Fellow -no Pedagogy Fellow in AY22-23-. The Pedagogy Fellow works with the DGS and Harvard's Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning as well as with peers in other departments to enhance teaching in Comparative Literature and related disciplines. They advise individual students and create training programs, workshops, seminars, and other teaching-related projects.

Students do their teaching in a variety of venues: in lecture and tutorial courses offered in the department's undergraduate program, in General Education (the venue for many of Harvard's large lecture courses and an excellent place to begin teaching), in the History and Literature program, and in the various language and literature departments. Teaching applications for the department and for the Tutorial Board are usually distributed and due in March or April each year. It is a good idea to speak in person with faculty members for whom you would like to teach. Students interested in serving on the department's Tutorial Board – working individually with department juniors and seniors – should also speak at their earliest convenience with Dr. Sandra Naddaff, Director of Undergraduate Studies (snaddaff@fas.harvard.edu).

Virtually all departments (including the national language and literature departments in which many students will do at least some of their teaching) also have teaching applications. Deadlines vary from quite early in the spring semester to April for teaching appointments for the following year, and applicants must confirm precise deadlines with the relative department(s). Some departments notify Comparative Literature about their deadlines, but many do not, so it is your responsibility to check with other departments about their deadlines. If you plan to teach a language, often necessary for job placement, you should be aware that several departments require formal courses or more informal orientation programs of all prospective language teachers.

The department works with Gen Ed, the Office of Undergraduate Education, and neighboring departments to provide students with appropriate teaching positions. Teaching opportunities are in decline across the humanities, so please do not hold out for the alleged "ideal teaching position" (i.e., a course in your precise field). Most academic positions for which you will be applying after the Ph.D. expect you to have a range of teaching experience. And second, the "ideal teaching position" rarely materializes, leaving students stranded at the beginning of the semester and teaching in a course even further from their areas of interest.

***Teaching as a Component of the Ph.D. Program***

It is wise for you to consider teaching alongside coursework, exams, and the dissertation as a primary component in your professional formation and as part of your preparation for the job market. For some students it makes sense to build on strengths, by seeking employment in courses in their major areas. For others, teaching offers relief from the familiar and a chance to acquire knowledge of new material or approaches. By the time you go on the job market, it is often advantageous to have achieved a mix of two or more types of teaching, such as section leading in General Education and department courses, language instruction, and individual tutorials.

***Learning to Teach***

The information about teaching in this *Guide* is meant only as an introduction. Make sure to read the department's *Teaching Fellows Handbook* (available online on the department website), which provides a more detailed discussion of being a Teaching Fellow at Harvard, as well as advice on how actually to teach once you have secured employment.

The department strongly encourages all first-time teaching fellows to avail themselves of the resources provided by the Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning. The Bok Center is housed in room 316A of the Science Center, and its website is bokcenter.harvard.edu.
The Bok Center organizes workshops and orientation sessions on teaching. Its Fall Teaching Conference for those who are new to teaching is a prerequisite for teaching in the General Education Program, and beginning in the fall of 2015, it is also required by the Department of Comparative Literature for all first-time teaching fellows.

Comparative Literature graduate students also are urged to participate in the orientation programs offered by the various departments and units where they plan to teach, especially if they are teaching there for the first time. When graduate students in Comparative Literature have their first teaching experiences in 100-level Comparative Literature courses, the professors who oversee these courses should ensure that their TFs receive appropriate training in pedagogical skills and professional conduct. The department requires that all first-year (and strongly recommends that all second-year) teaching fellows have their performance videotaped or at the very least observed and evaluated by the course instructor, the DTF, or by the Bok Center, and that professors who head sectioned courses in Comparative Literature visit sections. For larger courses, many faculty members also hold weekly Teaching Fellow meetings to discuss pedagogical and other course matters.

Teaching Fellow appointments extend through the end of May. Teaching Fellows thus are expected to remain available and on campus through reading period and until the final exam, unless directed otherwise. Students should speak with the course head at the start of the semester for specific expectations regarding the end of term.

Students concerned that they are not receiving the pedagogical support they require should speak with the DGS as soon as possible. They also should feel free to ask their advisers and other faculty members for advice on teaching. Remember, it is your responsibility to reach out to professors and seek their guidance.

***When to Start Teaching***

Teaching normally begins in the third year. Occasionally, a student may have outside funding or a fellowship that permits a reduced teaching load or, for a semester or a year, no teaching at all. There is no requirement to teach in any given semester or year, but ordinarily, funding in the third and fourth years is tied to teaching. In seeking teaching while pursuing the degree, you should carefully weigh your financial needs, your dissertation progress, and the importance of teaching as training for the job market. Some semesters or years may be more heavily devoted to teaching than others. Try to plan ahead and design an appropriate schedule beyond the next semester or even the next year. Consult with your advisers about teaching loads and types of courses in which you might teach. A reasonable amount of teaching is a great asset on the job market and can help to show the range of your interests beyond the focused topic of the dissertation. Yet it is important to give priority, and quality time, to your dissertation, and not to let your writing be sidelined by the infinitely expandable demands – and the real attractions – of teaching.

***What kinds of teaching are available?***

There are three principal kinds of teaching positions open to students in Comparative Literature: sections, tutorials, and language teaching.

When you teach a section, you are in charge of a small group of undergraduates (no more than eighteen) with whom you meet once a week to discuss the material covered by the professor during lecture. In addition to running the discussion, going to the lectures and doing the reading for the course, your duties include holding office hours and grading papers and exams. Because there are finite numbers of Comparative Literature classes offered each semester, and because most of them are not large enough to warrant more than a single section, if that, it is likely that the section you teach will be in a different department. Most of the time this will be a national literature department or in General Education, although it is possible to find teaching positions in departments and programs further removed from literature, such as Music, History, Anthropology, if not directly through the department, then by teaching General Education classes in those subjects.

In a tutorial, you are matched with an undergraduate student working on a junior essay or a senior thesis. Tutors generally meet with each of their students for an hour or an hour and a half every week to discuss readings appropriate to the students' projects. Tutorial positions also require that you undertake additional pedagogical tasks within the department's undergraduate program, e.g., evaluating junior essays and senior theses, participating in oral examinations, interviewing prospective concentrators, and attending monthly tutorial board meetings, among other duties. Tutorials are available in most departments, but Comparative Literature students usually teach tutorials in the Department of Comparative Literature. It is also possible to teach tutorials in the History and Literature program, but previous teaching experience is required.

Language teaching takes place in the respective national language and literature departments. First-time applicants for language teaching positions are almost always assigned to an elementary course, and some departments require that you take a propaedeutic course simultaneously with your first semester of teaching.

***What should I teach?***

Teaching should be an enriching experience in your academic development. When you teach a section, you gain invaluable experience in what it takes to communicate ideas, generate discussion, and lead a group. Tutorials are different: your relationship with the student will undoubtedly be much closer and you will delve into a subject in greater detail, learning about being an adviser but foregoing the group dynamics. If you have never taught before, the General Education Program can be a good place to start because Gen Ed courses usually have regular staff meetings with the professor and other section leaders to provide you with guidance and support. Moreover, general education courses are a significant component of the offerings of many literature departments, and so experience in Gen Ed classes can help you considerably when you are on the job market.

***How much should I teach?***

Teaching at Harvard is organized around what is called the "fifths" system. Each teaching assignment counts for a certain number of fifths. A course section, for instance, counts for 1/5 in any given semester. Tutorials are trickier: most of the time a tutorial counts for 1/15, so you need three to make up 1/5, but in some departments (including Comparative Literature) a tutorial is worth 1/10.

In economic terms, there is a specific amount of money paid per fifth. One semester fifth (which could be one section in a class, for instance, or two tutorials in the undergraduate concentration) is worth $6,195 in the academic year 2026-27, so teaching 2/5 each semester would provide you with $24,780 for the academic year. In your guaranteed teaching fellowship years GSAS "tops off" this amount, so that you earn the same stipend you did your G1 and G2 years. Please see your original notice of financial support for more details. The value of a fifth changes from year to year. In general, most students are able to cover their living expenses for the year by teaching 2/5 per semester, although careful budgeting is frequently necessary. Please note: the pay for the first month, and occasionally second and third months of teaching may be delayed if your teaching assignment is not secured in time. Talk with your financial aid adviser to learn how to budget appropriately.

Another thing to keep in mind is that there are limits on how much you can teach. Students who are G3 or higher and have not yet passed their Orals are allowed to teach only 2/5 per semester. After passing Orals, students can teach up to 6/5 per academic year, but may not take more than 4/5 in any given semester. So if you teach 4/5 in the fall, you would only be permitted to teach 2/5 in the spring.

Harvard has recently reviewed its policy regarding international students who serve as teaching fellows (TF) in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. Assuming no other work commitments, and consistent with visa limitations, international students may now be hired to TF three standard sections in a single term, as long as at least two of those sections are in the same course. For the purposes of this policy, a standard section is defined as an appointment compensated at Teaching Rate B of the collective bargaining agreement for student workers.

Teaching more than 2/5 per semester can seriously impede progress on Orals preparation, the Dissertation Prospectus, and the dissertation, even when the extra fifth is an additional section in a course in which you are already teaching 2/5. You should teach no more than 4/5 per year, since it is essential to remain on track with your own work; in most cases, it is the quality of this work, not the number of courses or sections taught, that will make you competitive on the market.

Furthermore, students are not supposed to teach more than a total of 16/5 in their time at Harvard. It is possible to obtain permission to continue teaching past the 16/5 limit, but it is important not to let teaching get in the way of your own academic progress. Remember also that once you have submitted your dissertation prospectus you become eligible for writing grants that allow you to devote yourself to your research without having to teach; several of the Area Centers have funds to support dissertation research and writing, and you should consult their websites for details.

Students are also advised that after the G4 year, those who do not receive research and writing fellowships can experience a notable drop in income (i.e., not only do they not receive the G3 and G4 "top off" and summer funds, some also are required to pay tuition and health insurance). You thus are strongly encouraged to check your admission letter to determine how much support you will receive, and then to plan ahead. Many students have found it helpful to complement their teaching with other employment, including serving as Research Assistants for professors, and working at Dudley House, as a Resident or Non-Resident Tutor in the undergraduate houses, or in the library. As mentioned above, employment opportunities for graduate students can be found on the GSAS website.

***How much time should I spend on teaching?***

Aside from the personal and the professional issues, there is the question of how much work you will be doing. According to the GSAS Handbook, "as a general rule, teaching fellows should expect to spend roughly ten hours a week in teaching, preparation, correction of class work, and counseling for every one-fifth fraction assigned, although first-time teaching may require more time." In practice, however, the type of teaching you do will considerably affect how much time is required of you. Language teaching, for instance, can be especially time consuming because you will first be assigned to an elementary class, which often meets five times a week. Some departments also require that you take a pedagogy class. Directing a tutorial in an unfamiliar field is likewise time-consuming, and even if the student's project is close to your own interests, tutorials require extensive preparation, especially as the deadline for the student's project approaches. If you're planning to teach sections, keep in mind that if you teach sections in two different courses (rather than two sections in the same class) you will have nearly double the work. As a rule of thumb, teaching two sections of the same class seems to be the most efficient system in terms of time and workload; this is the ideal scenario.

## The Bok Center

Students should be aware of the Bok Center's Teaching Certificate Program, which offers graduate students a tangible marker of their ongoing development as teachers in higher education. The Certificate Program and associated seminars are based on the following categories: pedagogy, course and assignment design, assessment, professional communication, reflections on teaching, and international teaching fellow development. The Program is structured to give participants the opportunity to reflect critically on their performance as teachers and to actively experiment with various modes of communication in lectures, seminars, labs, and across the academic profession. Certificate participants will be asked to: reflect on their classroom practice through a video-taped or peer-viewing session, complete the equivalent of two Bok Center seminars, and create a portfolio of

teaching materials, including a statement of teaching philosophy. For more information, see: bokcenter.harvard.edu/teaching-certificate

# GOING ON THE JOB MARKET

The information below is on finding academic appointments. Please see Appendix II at the end of this guide for helpful notes from a recent academic job market workshop. Students are encouraged as well to pursue employment opportunities outside of academia. For more information on non-academic employment, contact the Office of Career Services (OCS, 54 Dunster Street; careerservices.fas.harvard.edu ) as early in your graduate career as possible. The department also maintains a list of graduate alumni in non-academic careers available to speak with current students. It is always wise to have several alternative career paths in mind, since employment opportunities in the humanities are becoming ever scarcer, and each year only a small percent of the department's fresh Ph.D.'s secure tenure-track positions. Most Comparative Literature graduates who accept tenure-track offers do not receive these offers in the final year of their Ph.D. program. Instead, they spend several years in postdoctoral appointments, working as lecturers or in similar positions.

***Your Dossier and Recommendations***

It is never too early to establish a dossier with Interfolio at the Office of Career Services.

A dossier is not only essential when you go on the job market but also facilitates applying for grants or even seeking teaching fellowships. Your dossier may contain recommendations from faculty members who have seen you teach, have been your examiners, or from whom you have taken a class. OCS offers assistance in preparing and improving your resume as well.

Allow a month for recommenders to write on your behalf. Faculty members are very busy and often traveling, and they will write more detailed and thus more effective recommendations when allowed the time to do so. Even if you ask them orally, remind them by email of the deadline a week or two in advance. (This is especially important if you are requesting multiple recommendations with different due dates: faculty members will often tailor their recommendations to the different positions for which you are applying, but they need to have a timetable to remind them of which letters are needed by when and for which purposes.) For letters that cannot be submitted electronically, you should also provide an addressed envelope.

Students are encouraged to ask faculty members to write personalized letters for as many jobs as possible. Be bold. Although it is good to have on file with Interfolio a letter (or letters) from each of your recommenders, nothing replaces a personalized letter in which a faculty member can explain to a hiring committee exactly why you are the perfect candidate for that particular job. Faculty members are also often familiar with the departments to which you are applying and may have good friends there, so it is always a good idea to let your recommenders know the precise institutions to which you are applying and ask for their input.

***The Search Process***

Each year two or three members of the department faculty serve as Placement Officers and meet with students who are actively conducting job searches. Placement Officers hold an initial meeting in May for students who plan to go on the job market the following fall and a follow-up meeting in early September for all students planning to go on the market that year. Placement Officers also review students' cover letters, CVs, research and teaching statements, and Career Services dossiers. In addition, they conduct mock interviews in December to prepare students for the annual MLA meeting in January, as well as throughout the spring semester as the need

arises. The department's Placement Officers are here for you, but it is your responsibility to reach out to them. They offer invaluable advice on every aspect of the job search process, and you should reach out to them early and often.

Students also are expected to speak with their advisers about the job market, and they are encouraged not only to share their job search materials with their Dissertation Committee but also to invite members of their Dissertation Committee to participate in the mock interviews, particularly faculty members in the Harvard department that most closely resembles the department to which they are applying (these often will be faculty members from national language and literature departments).

Members of the department faculty are frequently available at the MLA meeting to consult with job seekers. The *MLA Job Information List* is accessible online at mla.org; nonmembers may create a free JIL user account to search the Job Information List.

The department also arranges mock job talks in January and early February for those who are invited for campus visits. Placement Officers likewise help with negotiating offers and are available to answer any questions that students have about the job search process.

The department keeps on file a number of sample cover letters, as well as research and teaching statements. These are available as PDFs on the department intranet. The Office of Career Services also has available many sample materials.

Many books have been written on the academic job search. Most recent is Karen Kelsky's *The Professor is In: The Essential Guide to Turning Your Ph.D. into a Job* (Three Rivers Press, 2015). Kelsky's columns in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and the blog on her website (theprofessorisin.com) are additional, invaluable resources. Other very helpful sources are Julia Miller Vick, *The Academic Job Search Handbook* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008); Sandra L. Barnes, *On the Market: Strategies for a Successful Academic Job Search* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2007); and Kathryn Hume, *Surviving Your Academic Job Hunt: Advice for Humanities Ph.D.s* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). The Office of Career Services has its own list of helpful publications on the job search and on negotiating job offers.

You should cast your net widely on the job market. There are many misperceptions of American higher education, most notably, that the only good jobs are to be found in Ivy League institutions or their equivalent. The United States offers a tremendous range of institutions and departments, with many different combinations of teaching, research, and other responsibilities. Jobs are increasingly available abroad as well, regardless of your citizenship. You are encouraged to speak with as many faculty members as possible about the job openings in your field(s).

# OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

## The Ph.D. in Comparative Literature with a Special Program in the Study of Oral Tradition and Literature

The requirements for this special program are essentially the same as those listed above for the Comparative Literature Ph.D., except that at least one of the student's three literatures must constitute or at least include a substantial corpus that is independent of written transmission and that derives from collections of performance recorded under strictly supervised conditions of fieldwork. A major resource for such purposes is the Milman Parry Collection at Harvard.
Students in this program are overseen by the department's Committee on the Study of Oral Tradition and Literature.

## The A.M. Degree

Application for admission must be to the Ph.D. program; students already in the program may receive an A.M. degree en route to the doctorate.

To obtain this degree the candidate must complete 8 semester courses. One of these courses must be the Proseminar, another must be a 200-level Comparative Literature seminar, and the remaining 6 courses must include 3 in the first literature and 2 in the second literature. No more than one of the 8 semester courses may be a 300-level reading course. Students are required to have at least as many 200-level as 100-level courses, and only in rare exceptions will courses below the 100-level count toward the degree. The candidate must demonstrate proficiency in 3 languages, one of which may be English. One of the languages must be premodern or cross- cultural, as described in the requirements for the Ph.D.

In cases where students have activated transfer credit, it is understood that if they have fulfilled the department's course and language requirements for the Ph.D., they will also be considered to have fulfilled the department's course and language requirements for the A.M. degree.

Please note that the A.M. degree is offered only to graduate students in the Department of Comparative Literature who meet the degree requirements.

## Requirements for the Secondary Field in Comparative Literature

The Department of Comparative Literature offers Comparative Literature as a secondary field in GSAS to enrich the education of Ph.D. students in other departments who seek to do research and teach across the institutional boundaries of national languages and literatures. When they become faculty members, individuals specializing in a national literature may be called on to teach comparative courses or courses in general or world literature. The secondary field in Comparative Literature prepares them to do so by introducing them to basic issues in the field.

Literatures in a single language constitute a coherent tradition, but Comparative Literature seeks to develop an awareness of how literary works move across borders, both in the original language and in translation. The department calls attention to theoretical issues shared not only across the boundaries of languages but also across very different traditions.

**Prerequisites**:

An ability to work in literatures in at least three languages. Normally this will be demonstrated by coursework in which at least some of the primary readings are in the original language.

In certain circumstances the DGS may waive the requirement that competence in a language be demonstrated by coursework, and instead permit the student to substitute a translation exam. If English is used as one of the languages, the other two languages should show some breadth; that is, they cannot be closely allied, either linguistically or by academic convention (e.g., Spanish and Portuguese, Urdu and Hindi, classical and modern Chinese, or Greek and Latin). The judgment regarding what can legitimately count for the set of three languages is at the discretion of the DGS.

**Requirements**:

1. Four courses in Comparative Literature, one of which must be the Comparative Literature Proseminar and two of which must be other Comparative Literature seminars at the 200 level. The remaining course requirements will be met by either 200-level seminars in Comparative Literature or 100-level Comparative Literature courses, approved for graduate credit.
2. Successful completion of a Second-Year Paper of 25-30 pages (7,500-9,000 words) on a comparative topic, as required for students in Comparative Literature. Students doing a secondary field in Comparative Literature do not need to submit the Second-Year Paper by the beginning of the G3 year, but they are encouraged to submit this paper as soon thereafter as possible.

Contact the Director of Graduate Studies, Professor Luis Manuel Girón-Negrón (giron@fas.harvard.edu), with any further questions.

## Secondary in Translation Studies

The Graduate Secondary Field in Translation Studies (GSFTS) offers graduate students the opportunity to undertake sustained study of the theory and practice of translation, broadly understood across languages, media, and the arts. The secondary field in translation studies has a triple rationale: intellectual, multidisciplinary, and practical. By examining a range of linguistic encounters and cultural exchanges, students pursuing the secondary field have the opportunity to root their translation work within their knowledge of at least two languages while expanding their engagement with the craft of translation. As they move through the curriculum, graduate students do more than simply examine how meaning is transferred from one language to another; they acquire the knowledge necessary to intervene in current scholarly debates in the growing field of translation studies, as well as the ability to teach translation to undergraduate and graduate students. While deepening their expertise in at least two languages, students enroll in a range of courses offered across departments that consider theoretical issues raised by and through the process of translation and will then complete a capstone project, supervised by a faculty advisor.

The secondary field provides enrolled students with opportunities for professional development, training in translation pedagogy, and an additional credential in today's extremely competitive academic job market. It complements students' main PhD programs while providing the competitive edge that they need to distinguish themselves as outstanding candidates for jobs at research universities and liberal arts colleges in North America, Europe, Asia, and elsewhere. Faculty with

expertise in one or two national languages and literatures are often now expected to teach broad-ranging comparative courses in and on translation. Even a cursory look at this year's MLA Job List shows that more and more advertisements for junior searches make explicit the desirability for practical and theoretical knowledge of translation studies as proof of interdisciplinarity and crossover intellectual capacity for a prospective faculty member.

Admission Eligibility

A student may apply for the secondary field in translation studies at any point in their academic progression. Students from any PhD program in the FAS may apply; students may pursue only one secondary field. Students in the comparative literature PhD program interested in the translation studies secondary field must ensure that no courses taken for the field are double counted toward the PhD; that is, any courses counted toward the secondary field, including Translation Studies 280, may not be used also to meet requirements for the doctoral program.

**Requirements**

The Graduate Secondary Field in Translation Studies involves the following requirements:

- Translation Studies 280: Proseminar in Translation Studies: offered every other year, the Proseminar combines the study of translation theory with translation practice and will emphasize the development of projects that have the potential to become capstone projects. It will be taught in the fall of 2024 by Spencer Lee-Lenfield.
- Two graduate-level seminars in translation studies, including, for example, Translation Studies 260: Literary Translation Workshop, which, with recurring support from the FAS Elson Arts Fund, pairs professional translators and source language experts with students as they workshop their manuscripts-in-progress. With approval of the student's advisor and the Translation Studies Executive Committee, a summer internship in publishing, literary translation, or design may take the place of one of these two seminars.
- A capstone project which features a substantive translation, of variable length (dependent upon the difficulty of the languages involved), potentially publishable in a scholarly journal or as a short book. The capstone project will be accompanied by a critical essay of 4,000–7,000 words, or, if approved by the student's advisor and the Executive Committee, a digital humanities project or public exhibition. As they complete the capstone project, graduate students will enroll in a semester-long 300-level Translation Studies reading course with their faculty advisor. The project will be supervised by the student's translation studies advisor and evaluated by two appropriate readers from the Harvard faculty who, together with the advisor, will be responsible for assessing the completed project.

**Advising**

The Executive Committee of GSFTS will appoint from among itself or, in the case of a language that is not represented on the Committee, from among the experts on the Harvard faculty, an appropriate advisor for each student in the secondary field, who will offer tailored guidance throughout the curriculum and on the capstone project.

Contact

The chair of the Executive Committee that governs the Graduate Secondary Field in Translation Studies is the department's Director of Graduate Studies. The members of the Executive Committee for 2026-2027 are: Panagiotis Roilos, Sandra Nadaff, Spencer Lee-Lenfield, and Martha Selby.

For additional information, consult GSAS: https://gsas.harvard.edu/policy/translation-studies.

**Secondary in Fields in Other Disciplines**

Secondary fields allow PhD students to broaden their course of study and enhance the professional reach of their degree. PhD students interested in pursuing a secondary field take four or five graduate courses in a discipline, interdisciplinary area, or intellectually coherent subfield. The program offering the secondary field provides an intellectual rationale and outlines the package of courses required.

Please see gsas.harvard.edu/programs-study/secondary-fields for more information about the secondary fields offered and their requirements.

**The GSAS Satisfactory Progress Policy**

To continue to be eligible for financial aid and for teaching appointments, students in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences must be making satisfactory progress. The following ten items provide general criteria for satisfactory progress and incorporate necessary modifications for Comparative Literature students. If you have any questions concerning this policy, please see the DGS as soon as possible. Additional department requirements are found elsewhere in this *Guide*, including in the Appendix.

1. Students must receive more A's than B's, and no grade lower than a B-. G1 and G2 students must complete at least 8 courses each year with no more than one INC. Rising G3 students must have resolved all remaining INC, and have had one of their Orals lists approved.
2. A prospective fourth-year student must have passed Orals, unless the DGS has granted an extension on Orals to September of the G4 year.
3. By December of the fourth year a student must have obtained approval of the Dissertation Prospectus by the department faculty.
4. By the end of the fifth year and each subsequent year, for a student to be permitted to register for the following year, he/she must have produced *at least* one acceptable chapter of the dissertation. Nonresident students who have Traveling Scholar Status must also produce at least one chapter or the equivalent each year (with approval of the DGS, full-time language study or research away from Harvard serve as such an equivalent) and to remain in communication with the department.
5. The department and the Graduate School fully expect students to finish the dissertation no later than the end of the eighth year; Dissertation Completion Fellowships are provided to students in years 5 through 7 who have submitted the drafts of two chapters.
6. A student who has not completed the dissertation by the end of the tenth year will be asked to withdraw; however, the student has the option of applying for readmission at a later date, once the dissertation has been completed.
7. A student who fails to meet a requirement may, on the recommendation of the Chair, the DGS, the Graduate Admissions and Policy Committee, or the full department, be granted an exception, and remain eligible for financial aid, for a grace period of up to one year. At the close of the grace period, in order to be considered to be making satisfactory progress the student must have met both the requirement that was missed and the requirements that would normally be imposed at that time.
8. No student may have more than one year of such grace during the Ph.D. Program.
9. In the case of special circumstances such as pregnancy or the need to care for dependents, a student may request – and shall be granted – a Leave of Absence of a length appropriate

to the given circumstances. Time will be added to the "thesis clock" for students who must take such a leave or who must work at a reduced rate because of special circumstances.

10. In addition, the requirements of this calendar may be deferred by the department during one year of departmentally approved leave. However, students are advised that the GSAS clock does not stop during this leave.

**Time Abroad**

Students in the program often ask about the rules governing time abroad. There is no simple answer, except that the Department of Comparative Literature is strongly committed *both* to having its students acquire mastery of foreign languages for their work with literature and conduct archival research abroad *and* to having its students meet requirements for satisfactory progress. In recent years students in the department have fared very well in their efforts to win dissertation fellowships from sources within and beyond the University that allow them to go abroad. Students have the easiest time maintaining progress in the program if they take fellowships or teaching positions abroad while researching and writing their dissertations. Some go abroad in the early stages, as they seek out resources, both human and material, to help them define their topic and determine the scope of their project. This kind of travel fits more easily into the program if it happens after Orals, but with careful planning it can happen beforehand.

Others travel in the middle stages of writing the dissertation. Finally, there are students who obtain fellowships (such as Rotary Fellowships) that take them out of the program in their G2 year, when they have not yet fulfilled course requirements. If students decide to spend their G3 or G4 year abroad, they should contact the GSAS Finance Office to arrange to port their guarantee of teaching.

Students who have possibilities for fellowship support or teaching positions abroad should discuss them with the DGS and other faculty members.

**Fellowships**

In addition to the financial aid allocated annually by the department through the Graduate School's Office of Financial Aid, there are many fellowships for which graduate students may apply, both internal and external, for travel, research, and/or writing. Information about many of these fellowships and their deadlines are available in the Fellowships and Writing Center (FWC) in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (Richard A. and Susan F. Smith Campus Center 350). Notices and flyers sent by the Graduate School and outside agencies are always posted in the department lounge. The FWC is the first point of contact for students seeking fellowships.

Harvard offers many internal fellowships, through both GSAS and the Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning, as well as the many Area Centers, including the Asia Center, the Center for Jewish Studies, the Humanities Center, the Center for Latin American and Iberian Studies, the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, the Center for the Study of World Religions, the Edwin O. Reischauer Institute of Japanese Studies, the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, the John K. Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies, the Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies, the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies, the Korea Institute, Real Colegio Complutense, and the W.E.B. DuBois Institute for Afro-American Research.

Note that fellowships are often intensely competitive and that students put themselves in a much weaker position if they are behind on requirements, including carrying any grades of INC.

**Department Prizes**

*Susan Anthony Potter Prizes*: These prizes were instituted in 1908 by Professor Murray Anthony Potter in memory of his mother, Susan Anthony Potter, and endowed in 1957 through a bequest of his wife, Bessie Lincoln Potter. The income from the fund is used to provide prizes for students in the Departments of Comparative Literature and Romance Languages and Literatures; there are two prizes for students in the Department of Comparative Literature. One is for the best essay by a student (graduate or undergraduate) on any subject in the field of Comparative Literature. The second prize, half the value of the first, is open only to undergraduates and goes to the best essay "on some subject of Comparative Literature drawn from the Middle Ages or the Renaissance." Please consult the website maintained by the Prizes Office for the most up-to-date information.

The title page of each manuscript submitted in competition for the *Susan Anthony Potter Prize* should show the essay title, the writer's pseudonym (not his or her true name), the writer's academic standing, and the name of the prize. Pdf submissions should be emailed to the Student Coordinator by the date set by the Prize Committee, usually in late April.

Although multiple submissions for one prize are not allowed, eligible undergraduate candidates may submit different essays for consideration for each of the two Potter prizes. The committee has expressed a strong interest in essays that are clear and readable in style.

**Committees, Meetings, Facilities, Travel Funds**

*Graduate Student Council*: In order for Comparative Literature graduate students to be eligible to apply for Graduate Student Council (GSC) travel and conference grants, the department must be represented by at least one student at no fewer than two GSC meetings each semester. The GSC Comp Lit Representative is responsible for representing the department at these meetings. GSC grants are a significant source of funding for students and forfeiting the right to compete for these grants deals a serious blow to the department.

*Poggioli Faculty/Student Colloquium*: The Poggioli Graduate Student Colloquium, directed by Professor Luis Manuel Girón-Negrón (giron@fas.harvard.edu), meets monthly, usually on Tuesdays. Beginning in 2015-2016, the format has been one paper by a graduate student with a faculty member as respondent; and one paper by a faculty member with a graduate student as respondent. Students may present on any aspect of their work, whether an upcoming conference paper, a paper on a new field of interest, a dissertation chapter or other research, or a sample job talk. Both the student and the faculty talks are followed by an extended discussion. Students in all years of the program are warmly welcome to attend these lively and congenial meetings that are usually supplemented by wine and refreshments.

*Departmental Suite*: Dana-Palmer House has mailboxes for students; a lounge with a sofa, easy chairs, and recent journals; a kitchen with tea, coffee, a microwave, and a refrigerator; and a well-equipped seminar room.

*Graduate Student Lounge*: This room on the first floor of Dana-Palmer House has a computer and worktables and is for graduate student use for reading, studying, chatting, lounging and meeting with each other informally or as a formal group. The one restriction is that a student may not use the room for a tutorial, office hours, or any other activity that impedes other students from freely using the room. The room is for the use of all, at all times.

*Graduate Student Work Room*: This room in the basement of the Barker Center has worktables, computers (PC and Mac), printers, and bulletin boards. The room is for the use of all, at all times, but in urgent situations, it may be reserved for departmental business such as orals examinations; please contact Isaure Mignotte for reservation information.

*Letterhead*: The department has a small supply of departmental letterhead for graduate students, to be used for such purposes as writing letters of recommendation for their students, for letters when submitting articles for publication, etc. This stationery is available in the Department Office; small amounts are gratis; larger amounts can be purchased if needed. An electronic copy of the department letterhead is also available upon request.

*Travel Funds*: For the 2026-2027 academic year, up to $350 per student is available for research or conference travel, pending receipts. All applications are due by April 15, 2027. Should there be additional funding available, a second round of applications will be accepted, with a cap of $600 per student. Please see the student coordinator for more information.

# APPENDIX
## Academic Job Market Workshop: Some Advice

Luis Girón-Negrón and Saul Zaritt
October 2018

**I. Cover letter**

a. What are the goals of the cover letter? How do we put ourselves in the heads of the application reader? What do they want?
   i. Institutional and departmental needs
   ii. Time constraints: how to write for someone reading 100 (if not more) applications
   iii. How to present yourself as a colleague, not someone who is still in the mindset of a graduate student (tip: talk about your book project, not your dissertation)
   iv. What are the things you cannot control?

b. In what ways can you write toward their need to read quickly and understand your project/profile immediately while still appreciating its (potential) depth? After reading your letter will the reader be able to summarize your project or your teaching profile in one or two sentences?
   i. The importance of strong topic sentences
   ii. Writing toward a general, but educated reader, NOT your dissertation committee
   iii. Writing toward the non-expert yet giving the impression that YOU are the expert

c. How can you balance between wanting make a good impression in demonstrating the importance of your scholarship while remaining within the expected structures of the genre?
   i. The formula: a) introductory paragraph, possibly including research/teaching areas; b) research/book project description c) "second" project d) teaching philosophy in miniature e) proposed classes that would meet institutional needs f) demonstration of your homework of looking into the department g) a closing statement or two
   ii. In the case of an application for a teaching position, flip b/c with d/e
   iii. Do not get too creative, this actually makes reading harder for the person reviewing applications
   iv. But do not sell your project short! This is ultimately about showing how important your work is for the field(s) or well prepared you are for teaching the needed courses

d. For postdoctoral positions, what should be included in describing the process of dissertation revision?
   i. You may have the instinct to talk about new chapters you are going to add to the project. This sounds good in principle. But in reality you're likely going to have to *shorten* your dissertation in the transfer to a book. (First books are usually around 100,000 words.)

   ii. Be concrete about how and what you want to revise about your book project. The added chapters may be better described as articles. They want to know that you're going to be busy during your time as a postdoc and that you have a plan.

e. What the heck is a second book project?
   i. One way to look at the second book project: are your research interests broad enough to sustain a long academic career? Are you able to ask substantial and exciting questions about your field(s)? Are you someone who will be able to produce enough scholarship to ultimately achieve tenure?
   ii. Readers will often be able to tell if you're simply inventing something out of whole cloth. But this doesn't mean it has to be a fully fleshed out project either.
   iii. Having the topic emerge out of the first book project is fine and even expected. But if it sounds like a single chapter that got cut out of the first project this may not be enough.

f. What is the importance of a teaching statement in the cover letter?
   i. The committee wants to know if you've thought about teaching in some way—always in conjunction with the actual curricular needs they have, which likely spurred the search in the first place. This could be about: literature and culture courses, gen-ed like courses, writing courses, language courses. You will need to write about different kinds of pedagogical settings depending on what the institution needs.
   ii. DO YOUR RESEARCH on the institution. This means reading the call for applications closely, going through the faculty in the department to see what they already cover and what might be missing, taking a look at the course catalog, and trying to find out other information through friends and colleagues. The courses you mention here or the pedagogical strategies you describe are most effective when they line up in some way with the goals and needs of the department.

g. Any other pet peeves that we should know about?
   i. The cover letter is a strangely formulaic document. We just want to admit that so that you don't feel alone with this. But it is the first and maybe only thing someone is going to read, so spend a good amount of time reading it, and get a bunch of eyes on the document so that you can refine it before applying. (Keep in mind: someone on the search committee is initially going to read your file or some of it; if you make it to the next levels of the search more people are going to read your file, and it may be that this is the only document they'll spend any time on.)
   ii. You are also performing collegiality in this document, however hard that is to imagine. It may help to imagine, as you write, the kind of colleague you want to be. This might mean unlearning, if that's even possible, some of the trappings of graduate school. And even more challenging, this may mean moving away from some of the models of mentoring and teaching that your own advisors may have performed (for better or for worse). What kind of scholar and co-worker do YOU want to be?

**II. The Writing Sample**

a. What is the piece of writing I've done (and edited) that reflects well on my abilities as a scholar?
    i. If it is an unpublished essay, please do spend some amount of time editing it to get it in the best shape possible.
    ii. It is probably best to choose a piece of writing that fits in with the overall "profile" you are creating for yourself. Remember, the reader is trying to come up with a single image of you that they can hold onto as they, consciously or unconsciously, compare you with other candidates. Or, if they're like me, they've got a big excel sheet out and they are looking for a few key words to put next to your name in a big list.
b. Which piece of writing has the best opening three or four pages?
    i. Again, readers are looking for a general impression; they will not necessarily be reading closely for that first round of application review. But they might decide to spend a bit of time on the first couple of pages to see if it's worth reading more.
c. How does this writing sample meet the needs of the department?

**III. The CV**

a. What is the easiest and most streamlined way to present the relevant information that the reader wants to find? How can this document provide that information in less than 30 seconds?
b. Is design important?
    i. Yes, to a point. But making it gaudy or "creative" again will be distracting. You only have 30 seconds and the reader wants to find very specific things!
c. What order for the information best reflects my candidacy?
d. What are the categories that are most important?
    i. Education, work experience, book manuscript, published work, fellowships, languages, presentations
e. How do I present published material that is forthcoming, under review, still in progress, not even yet written?
    i. There's no clear set of rules for this. Whatever you do, be clear and precise. Don't fudge anything!

**IV. Interview**

a. How do I dress for a zoom interview?
    i. Dress like it's a regular interview. And pay attention to the background of where you're sitting, aesthetically and sonically.
b. What do I do if there are technical problems?
    i. Push through. Interviews are mostly about measuring your confidence and you should expect a technical delay or problem. If it doesn't bother you or you roll with it gracefully it may reflect well on you.
c. What kind of questions are asked?
    i. Surprisingly, very basic ones: tell us more about your research, how would you teach X introductory course, do you have any questions for us
    ii. The odd thing about interviews is that they are meant to sound like conversations, but they are also evaluations. We don't know what to tell

you in terms of how to achieve the balance between the two. But it may help to be conscious of this "double-bind"?

iii. One thing to be sure of: try not to be aggressive or defensive about a difficult question. The interviewers are trying to see if you're the kind of person they want to see at a faculty meeting and at department events. Is this the kind of person I want to work with for the next, say, twenty years?

d. What kind of follow-up should I do?

i. Thank you notes, offer to send copies of syllabi or any other material

**V. The Job Talk**

a. What is the most important part of the job talk?

i. The Q and A. This is the real reason this strange thing exists. They want to see how you think on your feet and they will extrapolate from there about your ability as a scholar AND as a teacher.

ii. The only way to practice for this is multiple mock-job talks with your friends, colleagues, and mentors.

iii. One thing that calmed me and was advice I received from my mentors: it may actually be kind of fun—when else in your career will you have this many people interested in you and in your work?

b. What about the talk itself?

i. Just slow down. Remember to pause.

ii. Also, we admit. It's a ridiculous thing to prepare. You are trained to give either 15-20 minute conference papers or class-length lectures. This is somewhere in between, something like 30-45 minutes. Shorter is better.

iii. You probably need to hit the following things: present a summary of your larger project; demonstrate an ability to close read literary texts or cultural artifacts; theorize the field(s).

iv. Know your audience: that means showing off your expertise but also speaking in such a way that people adjacent to and outside the field can engage with your work. There will definitely be people outside the field reading your application and attending your talk. They're likely hiring you because they DON'T have someone in your field on the faculty.

v. Give a talk about something you are confident in. The job talk is not a place for experimentation.

vi. Learn the art of presenting and performing, not reading. You're an actor on the stage.

vii. People are going to be bored after about 10-15 minutes. Find a way to wake them up in the middle.

Please also see our intranet site for posted PowerPoint slides from the September 2019 job market workshop.