This course is the required core course for the Comparative Literature and Culture major. The scope of the course acknowledges that the comparative project comprises a set of specific challenges that are also relevant to any coherent program of literary studies. As Aldo Nemesio has put it, if we study human literary behavior, it makes little sense to base the choice of the data we analyze on where they were produced or what language they use. What happens within the boundaries of a culture can be understood only if we relate it to what happens elsewhere, that is, what is prescribed in the comparative method. In other words, any literary theory or approach ultimately needs to grapple with the questions raised by comparative literary inquiry. To that end, the core course touches on a number of the major theoretical trends, more or less in historical sequence, with a focus on how they address some of the following comparative issues:

- What does it mean that we find verbal art in all cultures?
- What, if anything, is universal about verbal art?
- What is culturally specific?
- How can we meaningfully compare texts, genres and themes across cultures?
- Across languages? Across historical periods?
- What is literature, anyway?

All of the theoretical and methodological discussions will be applied to appropriate clusters of literary texts in various genres and originating in various cultures.

The study of comparative literature has changed dramatically since its inception in the early nineteenth century. It arose as an inquiry into the roots of European literatures in a common classical tradition, with a decidedly Eurocentric mission. By now, of course, comparative literature has become far more inclusive and global in scope. Many have even suggested supplanting the old rubric with “World Literature.” Be that as it may, one of the consequences of these developments has been a nearly constant sense of crisis within the field as to its purpose and direction. This history, far from being a weakness, is in fact a symptom of field’s greatest strength, vitality and relevance to literary studies in general and to the present moment in the development of global studies. The history of comparative literature is in a certain sense the history of a discipline that has always grappled with the steady (and sometimes cataclysmic) advent of a global perspective. For this reason, the scope and structure of the course are designed also to touch upon the field’s own inner struggles. An exciting byproduct of this additional focus is the opportunity to discuss the broader issues of the academy in the global context.

Course Aims

- Acquaintance with the basic literary theories and critical tools used in comparative literary studies
- Practical and reflective experience in comparing texts of various genres across time periods, cultures, languages and genres using these theories and tools
- Understanding of the history of comp lit as an intellectual endeavor, especially in view of changing socio-political contexts
- Survey of the current state of the field, its major questions and concerns, and its prospects
Our class meetings will typically begin with an introductory lecture that will help to put the works we read in their historical and cultural context. The focus of each class meeting, however, will be close reading and discussion of the texts. Students are therefore expected to read and reflect upon the assigned materials prior to class and to participate actively in discussion. Success in this four-credit course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 9 hours of study time per week in preparation for class (readings, papers, discussion sections, preparation for exams, etc.).

Students will also be asked to write brief response essays to the readings on a roughly biweekly basis. Each student will be asked to give a short oral presentation focused on one of the secondary readings in the course of the term. This short presentation (5–10 minutes) should aim to identify what the student sees as the major arguments of the piece, to clarify what contribution it makes, what sort of intellectual conversations it is in dialogue with, and also how the student assesses the piece.

A short paper (about 5–7 pages) will be assigned midway through and as a final project, each student will also be required to submit a final paper (about 8–10 pages) that will provide a chance to explore a comparative topic of the student's choice in greater analytical depth. Both writing assignments will be evaluated for their coherence, critical argumentation, persuasiveness, and thoroughness of engagement with the material. Final presentations (of about ten minutes) will serve as an opportunity for students to share their findings with their classmates.

Grades will be determined as follows:

- Attendance and class participation: 20%
- Response essays: 20%
- First presentation: 5%
- Short paper: 20%
- Final presentation: 10%
- Final paper: 25%

Instructor:
Prof. Matthew Fraleigh  
Mail: fraleigh@brandeis.edu  
Phone: 6-3229
Class: M, W 2:00 – 3:20 (Pearlman 202)  
OH: M 10-12 (Mandel 115)

Required Texts – available at the Brandeis Bookstore; other readings available online

Student Accessibility Support:
Brandeis seeks to welcome and include all students. If you are a student who needs accommodations as outlined in an accommodations letter, please talk with me and present your letter of
accommodation as soon as you can. I want to support you. In order to provide test accommodations, I need the letter more than 48 hours in advance. I want to provide your accommodations, but cannot do so retroactively. If you have questions about documenting a disability or requesting accommodations, please contact Student Accessibility Support (SAS) at 781.736.3470 or access@brandeis.edu.

**Course Materials:**
If you are having difficulty purchasing course materials, please make an appointment with your Student Financial Services or Academic Services advisor to discuss possible funding options and/or textbook alternatives.

**Extensions:** Extensions are not granted except in cases of medical or family emergency.

**Academic Integrity:**
You are expected to be honest in all of your academic work. Please consult Brandeis University Rights and Responsibilities (http://www.brandeis.edu/studentlife/sres/rr/) for all policies and procedures related to academic integrity. Students may be required to submit work to TurnItIn.com software to verify originality. Allegations of alleged academic dishonesty will be forwarded to the Director of Academic Integrity. Sanctions for academic dishonesty can include failing grades and/or suspension from the university. Citation and research assistance can be found at LTS - Library guides (http://guides.library.brandeis.edu/c.php?g=301723).

**Week One – Overview**
Wednesday August 28: Introduction

**Week Two – Humanistic Inquiry**
Monday September 2 (Labor Day) – no class
Wednesday September 4:
  - Culler, Chapter 1: “What is Theory?” 1–17.

**Week Three – Comparative Literary and Cultural Studies**
Monday September 9:
  - Culler, Chapter 2: “What is Literature and Does it Matter?” 18–41.
  - BR, 1–27.
Wednesday September 11:
• Culler, Chapter 3: “Literature and Cultural Studies” 42–54.
• BR, 28–53.

**Week Four – Comparative Literature within a single text: Wakan rōeishū (1013)**

Monday September 16:
• Culler, Chapter 4: “Language, Meaning, and Interpretation” 55–68.

Wednesday September 18:
• Culler, Chapter 5: “Rhetoric, Poetics, and Poetry” 69–81.
• BR, 80–107.

**Week Five – Disciplinary Issues**

Monday September 23:
• DSV, Chapter 1 “Comparative literature and the future of literary studies”
• Hugo Meltzl – “Present Tasks of Comparative Literature” (1877). Selections.
• Charles Mills Gayley – *What is Comparative Literature* (1903). Selections.

Wednesday September 25:
• DSV, Chapter 2 “Comparative literature as interliterary theory”
• BR, 108–37.

**Week Six – Comparative Literature and World Literature**

Monday September 30: Rosh Hashanah: No university exercises

Wednesday October 2:
• DSV, Chapter 4 “World literature as a comparative practice”
• J.W. von Goethe and J. P. Eckermann – *Conversations on World Literature* (1827). Selections
• BR, 297–307.
Thursday October 3 (Brandeis Monday):
・ BR, 270–78.

Short Papers due Monday October 7

Week Seven – Translation
Monday October 7:
・ DSV, Chapter 6 “Comparative literature and translation”

Wednesday October 9: Yom Kippur (no university exercises)

Week Eight – Translated Literature and Global English
Monday October 14: Indigenous Peoples’ Day / Sukkot (No university exercises)

Tuesday October 15 (Brandeis Monday):

Wednesday October 16:
・ Selections from Another English: Anglophone Poems from Around the World (Tupelo P)

Week Nine – Global Frames / Postcolonial Approaches
Monday October 21: Shmini Atzeret (No university exercises)

Wednesday October 23:
Week Ten – Global Frames / Postcolonial Approaches
Monday October 28:
・ DSV, Chapter 7 “Comparative literary history”

Wednesday October 30:
・ DSV, Chapter 3 “Comparative Literature and Decoloniality”

Week Eleven – Oral Literature
Monday November 4:
・ Selections Walter Ong, Orality and Literacy
・ Selections Alfred Lord, The Singer of Tales

Wednesday November 6:
・ DSV, Chapter 8 “Interartistic comparison”

Week Twelve – Comparative Literature and National Literature
Monday November 11:
・ BR, 231–38.

Wednesday November 13:
・ Culler, Chapter 6 “Narrative” 82–93.
・ BR, 54–79.
・ DSV, Chapter 9 “The return of literature”

Week Thirteen – Comparing Themes and Genres: Love Poetry
Monday November 18:
・ DSV, Chapter 5 “Comparing themes and images”
・ Selections of love poetry from the ancient world (Greek, Latin, Egyptian, Chinese) from The Norton Anthology of World Literature: Egyptian Love poems, 76–81; Sappho 635–643; Catullus 940–959; Classic of Poetry 1320–30.
Wednesday November 20:
- *BR*, 211–19; 239–69.
- Selections of love poetry from classical Tamil, Sanskrit, and Japanese traditions; *The Norton Anthology of World Literature*. Classical Tamil Lyric, 855–871; Classical Sanskrit Lyric 953–979; *Kokinshū* 1104–18

**Week Fourteen – Identity, Subjectivity, Performance**
Monday November 25:
- Culler, Chapter 7 “Performative Language” 94–107.

Wednesday November 27: Thanksgiving holiday: No university exercises

**Week Fifteen – Digital Humanities**
Monday December 2:

Wednesday December 4:

**Week Sixteen – Final Presentations**
Monday December 9: Final Presentations due

**Final Papers due Wednesday December 11**