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 biweekly basis. 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 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: 15%
- Response essays: 25%
- Short paper: 20%
- Final presentation: 10%
- Final paper: 30%

Instructor:
Prof. Matthew Fraleigh  
Mail: fraleigh@brandeis.edu  
Phone: 6-3229

Class: Tu, Th 2:00 – 3:20  
Office Hours: Tu 10-12  
(Mandel 115)

Disabilities / Other Issues:
If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately. If there are other circumstances of which I should be aware, I hope that you will come talk to me early in the semester.

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/srcs/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/e.php?g=301723).
Required Texts – available at the Brandeis Bookstore; other readings available online


Week One – Overview
Tuesday January 17: Introduction

Thursday January 19
- Culler, Chapter 1: “What is Theory?” 1–17.
- BR, 1–27.

Week Two – Comparative Literary and Cultural Studies, Humanistic Inquiry
Tuesday January 24:
- Culler, Chapter 2: “What is Literature and Does it Matter?” 18–41.
- Culler, Chapter 3: “Literature and Cultural Studies” 42–54.

Thursday January 26:
- BR, 28–53.

Week Three – Comparative Literature within a single text: *Wakan rōeishū* (1013)
Tuesday January 31:
- Culler, Chapter 4: “Language, Meaning, and Interpretation” 55–68.

Thursday February 2:
- BR, 80–107.
Week Four – Disciplinary Issues
Tuesday February 7:
• *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.

Thursday February 9:
• *DSV*, Chapter 2 “Comparative literature as interliterary theory”

Week Five – Comparative Literature and World Literature
Tuesday February 14:
• *DSV*, Chapter 4 “World literature as a comparative practice”
• J.W. von Goethe and J. P. Eckermann – *Conversations on World Literature* (1827). Selections

Thursday February 16:
• *BR*, 270–78.

Short papers due Thursday February 16
(February 20–24 no class; midterm recess)

Week Six – Translation
Tuesday February 28:
• *DSV*, Chapter 6 “Comparative literature and translation”

Thursday March 2:
**Week Seven – Global Frames**

Tuesday March 7:

Thursday March 9:
- *DSV*, Chapter 7 “Comparative literary history”

**Week Eight – Postcolonial Approaches**

Tuesday March 14:
- *DSV*, Chapter 3 “Comparative Literature and Decoloniality”

Thursday March 16:
- {Guest Lecture}

**Week Nine – Translated Literature and Global English**

Tuesday March 21:

Thursday March 23:

**Week Ten – Comparing Themes and Genres: Love Poetry**

Tuesday March 28:
- *DSV*, Chapter 5 “Comparing themes and images”
- Culler, Chapter 7 “Performative Language” 94–107.
- *BR*, 211–19; 239–69.
Thursday March 30:
{Guest Lecture}  

**Week Eleven – Comparative Literature and National Literature**

Tuesday April 4:

Thursday April 6:

**April 10 – April 18 (no class)**

**Week Twelve – Comparative Literature / Comparative Media**

Thursday April 20:
- *DSV*, Chapter 8 “Interartistic comparison”
- Culler, Chapter 6 “Narrative” 82–93.
- *BR*, 54–79.

Tuesday April 25:
- *DSV*, Chapter 9 “The return of literature”

**Week Thirteen – Postmodernism**

Thursday April 27:

**Week Fourteen – Final Presentations**

Tuesday May 2: Final presentations

**Final Papers due: Tuesday May 2**