

Fall 2025 Course Schedule

Program in Comparative Literature & Translation Studies

CODE	COURSE TITLE	Day/Time	Instructor
CPLT BC2000	Introduction to Comparative Literature This course introduces students to the study of comparative literature. For any student interested in what it means to live in a multi-lingual world with rich and diverse forms and traditions of literary, artistic, and philosophical expression, this course serves to cultivate lifelong skills and habits of attentiveness that will prepare you to navigate the world as engaged, critical-thinking cosmopolitan citizens. For students who would like to major in Comparative Literature and Translation Studies at Barnard, this course serves as the gateway course for the program. For students who wish to minor in Translation Studies, this course serves as an elective. The course is designed to introduce you to methods and topics in the study of literature across national, linguistic, and cultural boundaries, across historical periods, and in relation to other arts and disciplines. Readings are selected and juxtaposed in units designed to give you cumulative practice in doing comparative criticism and to foster thereby deepening reflection on underlying historical, philosophical, historiographical, and methodological issues. We will study works of narrative and lyric poetry, novels, short stories, and film and also works of philosophy, political theory, linguistics, and psychoanalysis. We will read texts of literary criticism, literary theory, and translation theory. Topics include: the role of language and literature in different cultures and historical periods, the relationship between genres, the circulation of literary forms, literature and translation, postcoloniality, gender and sexual difference, and the relationship of literature to other arts. By engaging with the particular combinations of texts in the course, students will learn how to read closely and deeply and make well-substantiated critical connections between textual and cultural phenomena that may yield new, original, and surprising insights. Students in this course typically bring with them a range of languages, but not everyone has proficiency in the same languages. Common readings will be in English translation, but students capable of reading the texts in the original languages should feel free to do so. You will be given the opportunity to work with the texts in the original languages in assignments of interpretive and translation criticism.	Tues/Thurs, 11:40-12:55	E. Sun
Major Requirement			
CPLT BC2110	Introduction to Translation Studies This course will introduce students to the principal ways in which translation has been practiced and theorized in the Western tradition. We will consider, cultural, literary and philosophical theories of translation, as well as the role of translation and translators in today's globalized world. Topics covered will include: translation in the context of postcolonialism, globalization and immigration; the translation of children's literature; subbing and dubbing in film and television, including fansubbing; translation and ecology; translation and justice; machine translation; linguistic rights; debates about mono- versus plurilingualism. We will also consider, less extensively, the place of interpreting (i.e. oral translation primarily in legal and medical settings). Specialists from the New York area will come to speak about current needs and challenges in the field of community interpreting. On the literary level, we will examine the role played by foreign languages	Mon/Wed, 2:40-3:55	P. Connor

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	<p>(and translation) in the creative process of contemporary writers. We will read a number of “language memoirs,” narratives that recount the authors’ complex and sometimes agonized relation to acquiring a second language (Eva Hoffman, Xiaolu Guo, Alice Kaplan et al). For one of the assignments you will write the beginning of your own language history. We will also read and study in depth Brian Friel’s play <i>Translations</i>. This play is about the replacement of Irish (Gaelic) place names with English names as a result of an ordnance survey in the early 18th century. The course aims to help students improve their translation skills by translating (mostly literature) from your second language (your L2, as the linguists call it) into English, by critically assessing published translations, and by evaluating each other’s translations-in-progress (including one of the professor’s). There will be a number of guest lecturers (translators, editors, writers, interpreters, etc). Prerequisite for the course: Intermediate or advanced level proficiency in any language other than English. This course is a foundational and required course for students wishing to complete a Translation Studies Minor.</p>		
CPLT BC3025 NEW COURSE!	<p>Documents of Urgency: Reading Walsh, Arendt, and Baldwin</p> <p>In this course, we will consider three mid-20th-Century thinkers who responded to grave injustices of their day through writing: Rodolfo Walsh, Hannah Arendt, and James Baldwin. Taking three texts by these authors as a point of comparison and departure—<i>Operation Massacre</i> (1957), <i>Eichmann in Jerusalem</i> (1963), and <i>The Fire Next Time</i> (1963)—we will explore the urgency of each text and think together about how these works catch the consciences of their readers. In tandem, we will look at related documentary films—<i>Operación Masacre</i> (1973), <i>The Specialist</i> (1999), and <i>I Am Not Your Negro</i> (2016), among others—to enrich our understanding of these writers’ interventions, with a specific eye to their capacity for holding hope and despair together in their work. We will study the narrative techniques each writer uses to depict the suffering they are confronting while also leaving room for the possibility of improved conditions. In each case, we will also read the work of each writer in different genres—poetry and philosophy for Arendt, fiction for Walsh and Baldwin—and think together about the forms and rhetorical functions of poetry, fiction, and nonfiction, in these contexts, as well as the specific affordances of literature as a medium (compared, say, to film). As a final, capstone assignment, students will have the choice of either writing a research paper on one or at most two of the authors/central works, or crafting their own work of long-form cultural criticism in response to a social issue of their choice.</p>	Mon, 12:10-2:00	D. Gitlin
CPLT BC3108	<p>Nazism in Performance</p> <p>Explores the cultivation of national and transnational performances as a significant force of National Socialism, at the same time as challenging the notion of "Nazi Theatre" as monolithic formation. The core of the course inquires into the dialectical analysis of artistic creations in diverse art genres, while working towards an understanding of the social dramaturgy of such events as staging the Führer and the racialized body of the privileged people. Nazism did not harbor ideologies without benefits for the allied nations. Thus, the dynamic performance of transnationalism among the "brothers in arms" will be included as well, in order</p>	Wed, 4:10-6:00	H. Worthen

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	to elucidate how works of art crossing into the Third Reich were reimagined, sometimes in ways challenging to the presumed values of the state stage. Permission of instructor given at first class meeting.		
CPLT BC3144	Stories and Storytelling: Attending to Narrative What is it to attend to narrative? Attending has its etymological roots in Latin, <i>attendere</i> , to stretch (one's mind) <i>towards</i> , to get closer, which implies a gap between one's mind and whatever it is one is attending to. <i>Attendre</i> in French means to wait, to expect, another gesture towards space between one's mind and whatever one is waiting for or expecting. What happens in that space? What is it to attend? Is it to slow down and mind the gap? Or is it to <i>pay</i> or <i>lend</i> attention, as the phrase appears in multiple languages, as though the space is a debt that we or our minds owe? What does it look like to pay attention to narrative and stories? This course offers an introduction to forms and functions of narrative with focus on three modes: perception, reflection, and memory. What distinguishes the texts we will study is how they themselves foreground and reflect on how stories are told and so perform the task of teaching us how to analyze them. Topics include the writing of the self; the nature of memory; the experience of time; the relationship between fact, fantasy, and fiction; and the search for truth. While we will cover a range of scripture, poetry, novels, essays, plays, comics, and hybrid literary forms, the demand of you as readers will be the same: lend your close attention to these works and give yourself time to reflect on them.	Tues/Thurs, 1:10-2:25	D. Gitlin
CPLT BC3164	Trees of Knowledge: Ecocriticism and World Literature This survey of modern and contemporary world literature deals explicitly with environmental issues as a main theme. The course is supposed to serve as an introduction to the new field of "ecocriticism" in the Humanities and to a wide range of literary responses to current ecological concerns and transformations of natural habitat. All texts are available in English, though students will have the opportunity to read them in the original if they desire to do so.	Tues/Thurs, 10:10-11:25	E. Grimm
CPLT BC3630	Theatre and Democracy What links concepts of theatre and concepts of democracy? How does theatre promote democracy, spectators' civic participation, and vice versa, how do concepts and modes of theatre prevent the spectators from assuming civic positions both within and outside a theatrical performance? Arranged in three sections—"Tragedies and Democracies," "Theatrical Propriety and Liberal Democracy," and "Rhapsody for Theatre"—this class explores both the promotion and the denial of democratic discourse in the practices of dramatic writing and theatrical performance.	Wed, 12:10-2:00	H. Worthen

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CROSS-LIST COURSES			
EAAS GU4370	Literati Culture in Pre-modern China Premodern Chinese literati have long been regarded as active historical agents who shaped “This Culture of Ours”—a metonym for civilization in the premodern Sinitic context—while they also fed from, partook in, and influenced popular and foreign cultures. Besides “literary writings” like poetry and prose, literati also engaged in calligraphy, painting, and antiquarianism under the umbrella term of “literary or cultural arts.” In turn, the creation and appreciation of artwork were intrinsic to the aesthetic life of literati community and further established their self-identity. At the same time, social exclusivity, (self-)doubt and identity crises, along with the looming threat of cultural decline, have continually haunted this literati community throughout the ages. Covering the long trajectory of imperial China, this course reveals the birth and development of literati culture. In particular, we take an interdisciplinary approach, introducing intellectual and poetic discourses, socio-historical contexts, literary criticism, visual and material culture, to envision a “common ground” for their civil world. Textual, visual sources plus material objects are meant to have conversations with each other in this course. Important issues include historical transformations of the elite class, cultural geography in different eras, materiality and visibility of elite calligraphy and painting, literati self-expression through aesthetic practice, the roles of the court and literati in producing and preserving art, as well as other relevant issues such as gender studies, vernacular literature, and commodity society. For undergraduates, no background in Chinese language is required in this course, and all reading materials—either translation of primary sources or secondary scholarship—are accessible in English.	Wed, 4:10-6:00	L. Xia
GERM BC3105	Comical Expression in Multicultural German Literature This course is designed for participants who are interested in learning more about the role of humor in 20th/21st-c. literature and film. The survey begins with an introduction to key elements of the comical in literature and film, including slapstick, clowning, mime, or stunts. Discussions revolve around the issue of how or whether humor is universally recognizable or whether it is regionally, historically, and culturally defined. To shed light on this difficult question we will consider both historical and geographical settings. In close studies of popular films and literary texts we will examine the characters’ proclivities and discuss their gender-based perspectives as well as the influence of racial, religious or age-related identities. Our weekly readings—which include excerpts from major novels, selected scenes from films as well as short stories--provide us with rich and instructive examples of how eating habits, choice of food, calendrical events (holiday vs. weekday) may be related to the formation and expression of cultural identity. Romantic comedies reveal not only personal preferences and the joy of eating—they also signal collective taste patterns and indicate what kind of fantasies or constraints have governed the daily or festive dietary practices from the early 20th c. on.	Tues/Thurs, 4:10-5:25	E. Grimm