

Master of Arts in Comparative Literary & Cultural Studies
Program code: 032010

INTRODUCTION

The Department of English Language and Literature offers a Master of Arts program in **Comparative Literary and Cultural Studies**. Students must write a thesis in order to obtain an MA degree, otherwise a diploma is awarded. The program is designed to provide students with the terms, facts, concepts and theories relevant to Comparative Literature to enable them to compare and contrast texts from different schools, orientations and cultures, develop and advanced level of conscious appreciation of other cultures and civilizations and an informed vision of the world literary scene. Only thesis option is offered.

According to the University Council decision dated 4/2/2007, Thesis students admitted with effect from September 2007 are exempted from the comprehensive examination.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

30 TOTAL COURSE CREDITS

9 COMPULSORY COURSES (3 credits each)

- 0321-511 Research Methods and Ethics
- 0321-512 Survey of Literary and Critical Theory
- 0321-513 Comparative Literature: Theory and Praxis

12 ELECTIVE COURSES (3 credits each)

Students must complete 4 of the following courses:

- 0316-539 Modern Trends in Arabic Poem
- 0316-541 Classical Arabic Narratology
- 0321-505 Orientalism
- 0321-516 Arab Literature in Diaspora
- 0321-517 Literature and Ethnicity
- 0321-518 Biography and Autobiography
- 0321-522 Comparative Studies Across Genres
- 0321-523 Gender and Literature
- 0321-525 Modernity / Postmodernity
- 0321-526 Themes in World Literature
- 0321-530 Travel Literature and Theory
- 0321-532 Literature and Film
- 0321-534 Popular Culture

- 0321-535 Visual and Verbal Representations
 0321-536 Key Works in Arabic Literature
 0321-537 Occidentalism
 0321-538 Approaches to the Civic in Kuwait Literature and Culture
 0321-539 Trends in Arab Intellectual History
 0360-508 Philosophy of Contemporary Science
 0360-514 Studies in Contemporary Arabic and Islamic Thought

9 COMPULSORY COURSES

- 0321-597 Thesis (0)
 0321-598 Thesis (0)
 2000-599 Thesis (9)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

**0321-505: ORIENTALISM
CR: 3**

The relationship of power and knowledge in scholarly and popular thinking, in particular, regarding Europeans and how they see the world. A comparative and historical literary review of European scholars and writers looking at, and thinking about, talking about, and writing about the peoples of the Middle East and beyond, thus laying bare the relations of power between the colonizer and the colonized in those texts. This has had far-reaching implications beyond the Middle East and post-colonial studies generally and undermines long-held, often taken-for-granted European ideological biases regarding non-Europeans in scholarly thought.

**0321-511: RESEARCH METHODS AND ETHICS
CR: 3**

This course focuses on the use of interdisciplinary research methodologies and writing strategies relevant to the field of Comparative Literary and Cultural Studies. In addition to an overview of the most significant theoretical and methodological perspectives (e.g. psychoanalysis, gender and ethnic studies, cultural studies, media and visual theory, etc.), the course introduces students to research techniques, academic writing strategies, and the ethics of scholarship. A range of research and writing assignments prepare students for the program's requirements.

**0321-512: SURVEY OF LITERARY AND CRITICAL THEORY
CR: 3**

A survey of modern and contemporary literary and critical theory from the mid-twentieth century to the present. This course begins with a background to contemporary theory (Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, Woolf); continues with an introduction to mid-century cultural materialism (Frankfurt School), feminism (de Beauvoir), and anti-colonial discourse (Fanon, Cabral, James); and then focuses on poststructuralism (Derrida, Foucault, Deleuze, Lyotard), contemporary feminism and gender criticism (Cixous, Irigaray, Butler, Grosz), postcolonialism (Said, Spivak, Bhabha), the decolonial approach (Mignolo, Dussel) as well as critical approaches in Arabic (Khatibi, Kilito), among other areas.

**0321-513: COMPARATIVE LITERATURE: THEORY AND PRAXIS
CR: 3**

Theories of Comparative Literature will be situated historically (e.g. European and American Schools) and the various methodologies described, compared and contrasted (binary, intrinsic, extrinsic, interdisciplinary, etc.). The scope of contemporary Comparative Literature as an academic discipline will be reviewed (postcolonial literature and theory, translation studies, etc.).

0321-516: ARAB LITERATURE IN DIASPORA
CR: 3

This course is to focus on Arab writing (in English, French or Arabic) produced outside the Arab homeland. It can highlight the experiences of Arab-Americans, Anglo-phone and Franco-phone authors residing abroad as well as Arab expatriates (Palestinians, Iraqis, etc. living in exile). Questions pertaining to diasporic studies, acculturation, assimilation & integration, cultural identity, and multiculturalism, can be raised. Equally interesting will be issues relating to history and memory; space: the national and trans-national; literary reception; shifting borders and the 'boundaries of theory'.

0321-517: LITERATURE AND ETHNICITY
CR: 3

The course looks into the increasing propensity in modern literature, the Postcolonial in particular, towards a discourse of ethnic identity and cultural 'specificity'. It seeks to lodge this phenomenon within the cultural and political milieu that engendered it: globalization, multiculturalism, race, group consciousness and affiliation, the cult of difference, the hyphenated identities, the other, minority literature amongst similar related topics. It will attempt to assess whether the trend is an expression of insularity and 'ghettoization' of experience or its antithesis: the opening on other cultures and embracing difference.

0321-518: BIOGRAPHY AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY
CR: 3

This course provides a comparative view of the autobiographical and biographical writing, writing of memoirs, diaries etc. as reflected in different cultures. It aims to show that auto/biographical writing in the past individualized the 'self', while the Post-colonial writers, for example, have been more concerned with projecting the collective 'culture', thus having greater affinities with the discourse of identity, ethnic and gender policies.

0321-522: COMPARATIVE STUDIES ACROSS GENRES
CR: 3

The focus of this course will be the synchronic comparison of texts drawn from the major literary genres (prose fiction, poetry, and drama) based on

the observation of similarities (correspondence, parallel, analogy, affinity, homology) and difference (from comparison to contrast). These will be explicated at the level of genre (e.g. Bildungsroman, novel of manners; ode, elegy; farce, comedy of manners), mode (narrative, lyric, dramatic), form (structure, style, prosody), and idea (philosophy, ideology, belief). An important element of the course will be the study of influence. Selected texts for comparison will be drawn from diverse cultures.

0321-523: GENDER AND LITERATURE
CR: 3

This course will introduce some of the key texts and theoretical positions in the area of gender studies, with particular attention to the presentation of femininity and masculinity in different literary cultures (Western and non-Western) and periods, and how gendered identities have been defined in a variety of literary texts. Students will consider the extent to which gender identities may be socially constructed, culturally mediated, or historically constituted, and will be required to apply theory (e.g. feminist) to one or more primary texts, including a modern novel from the Arab world.

0321-525: MODERNITY/POSTMODERNITY
CR: 3

The focus of this course will be on the major trends and developments in literary modernism (roughly, from its emergence at the end of the nineteenth century until the Second World War) and literary postmodernism, within their historical, social, and cultural contexts. Some of the major representative works in each movement will be examined, with particular attention to the relationships, influences, and continuities between the two. Attention will also be directed to the ways in which the literature of the Arab world reflected these developments. An important aspect of the course will be to investigate the ways in which postmodernism emerges in a critical and complex relationship with the preceding principles of 'classic' modernism.

0321-526: THEMES IN WORLD LITERATURE
CR: 3

Students will learn from this course that the subjects of literature are finite while the range of devices by which they can be rendered is infinite. Finding lists and dictionaries of themes in the

folktale have been made worldwide. The list of available sources for stories in disparate national literatures is not in fact vast. We review how some critics claim that human societies express through their literature a limited set of fundamental feelings, such as love, revenge, ambition, despair. Other critics argue that a certain prominence is given to specific themes, e.g. the evil grandmother, the impossible quest, or the invisible protector. Our course will look at the main recurring themes, such as the spy mission, the journey, the return, the battle, and the defeat of strength by cunning.

0321-530: TRAVEL LITERATURE AND THEORY
CR: 3

The focus of the course will be 1) the portrayal of Arabs and of Arab culture as reflected in the writings of travelers to the Arab world in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A critical examination of stereotypical depictions is undertaken. 2) Arab travel literature as exemplified in the accounts of Ibn Batuta (1303-1377) and Amin Rihani (20th Century). Students will be encouraged to carry out research on a travel book of their own choice. Current theories in the field of travel literature will be examined.

0321-532: LITERATURE AND FILM
CR: 3

An examination of the particular characteristics of both world literature and film and their complex theoretical relationships through a comparison of written and cinematic narrative forms, writing elements and film-composition technique. The course will concentrate on a detailed study of selected novels, stories and plays and the films that have been based on them.

0321-534: POPULAR CULTURE
CR: 3

This course provides a comparative study of various forms of popular culture: among others, television, film, the internet, comics, advertisements, magazines, and/or music. The aim is to examine the link between popular culture and hegemonic or counter-hegemonic social tendencies. We adopt a cultural materialist and/or poststructuralist approach to consider overlooked connections between popular culture and gender, race, class, and politics.

0321-535: VISUAL AND VERBAL REPRESENTATION
CR: 3

This course is designed for the study of verbal and visual cultural representations. It involves a trans-disciplinary critical approach from aesthetics, visual studies and literary criticism. The course will raise several issues concerning the verbal/visual debate that has been ongoing since the Renaissance. The theoretical base will be implemented by training in a theoretically informed visual literacy.

0321-536: KEY WORKS IN ARABIC LITERATURE
CR: 3

The course analyzes contextually and aesthetically issues in key works of Arabic literature from pre-Islamic Arabia, to the medieval period, to modern times. Texts includes pre-Islamic Odes, mystical narratives, episodic stories (Maqamat), historiographical prose, modern drama, poetry, and fiction. Through its selected texts the course traces the various facets of the Arabic culture: Bedouin, Court, urban, folk, elite and popular. Writers include: Al-Shanfara, Umar Ibn Abi-Rabia, Ibn-Mugaffa, Al-Jahiz, Al-Hallaj, Al-Ma'arri, Al-Hariri, Inb Tufayl, Ibn- Al-Arabi, Taha Hussein, Ghaeb Toma Farman, Tawfiq Al-Hakim, Katib Yasin, Saadallah Wannus, Adunis, Mohammed Al-Fayiz, Qassim Hadad.

0321-537: OCCIDENTALISM
CR: 3

This course explores the discourse of "Occidentalism," that is, the image of the West in literary and cultural works by Arab authors. While "Orientalism" has become almost a catch phrase, not much has been said about how the Arab world perceived the western "other." Occidentalism is not merely a counter-discourse to Orientalism, since while the latter prepared the conditions for western colonial domination, the former did not. This course examines Arab conceptualizations of the West, whether denigrating or idealizing, and the role such representations played in shaping Arab agency, subjectivity, and notions of alterity.

**0321-538: APPROACHES TO THE CIVIC IN KUWAITI LITERATURE AND CULTURE
CR: 3**

Examining an array of texts, including novels, plays, essays, memoirs, archival documents, and visual material, written about Kuwait by Kuwaiti as well as non-Kuwaiti authors, this course considers the overlapping aspects of the civic. Among the key themes that the course explores in literary and non-literary works about Kuwait are: urban change and its effects of the life and consciousness of the civic self; modernity in relation to cultural adaptation and civic transformations; the civic as matrix for a new ethos and sensibility.

**0321-539: TRENDS IN ARAB INTELLECTUAL HISTORY
CR: 3**

This course provides a critical analysis of select major intellectual trends in Arab thought and the worldview each extends. Certain themes will be traced and analyzed, for example: the self's place in the world, ethical outlook in relation to the spiritual refinement of self; reason as a liberatory force; revolt against traditionalism. Intellectual trends can include: Neo-Platonism in heritage texts, humanistic trends in Abu Hyyan Al-Tawhidi and others; Mu'tazilism; Islamic Sufism; Arab nationalism; Arab feminism; Islamicization and the hypothesis of cultural unity; secularism in relation to cultural critique.

**0321-597: THESIS
CR: 0**

**0321-598: THESIS
CR: 0**

**2000-599: THESIS
CR: 9**