

## Introduction to Comparative Literature

CMPL 200-01 / ENGL 275-01

3 hours / 3HU, CD, WR / TuTh 1:30-2:45 / Severance 132B

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This course is an introduction to the expansive, exciting, and exacting discipline of comparative literature. We will read and compare texts from several literary traditions in order to explore the topics of theory, translation, East-West comparison, and literature and the other arts. Our method will be to address basic but difficult questions: What kinds of theoretical models are valid for grounding literary comparisons across boundaries of time, space, language, nation, culture, genre, and medium? Is it true, as has often been assumed, that there are special difficulties in comparing “Eastern” and “Western” literatures? If so, what are they? When one translates a literary work, does one translate words, sounds, rhythms, meanings, or something else? Why? Identical to ENGL 275. Diversity. WL. *Prerequisites*: An introductory literature course in any language. Note: Comparative Literature majors must take this course by the junior year.

Please note that to participate in this class, you must understand and adhere to Oberlin’s Honor Code. See [www.oberlin.edu/students/student\\_pages/honor\\_code.html](http://www.oberlin.edu/students/student_pages/honor_code.html). Note also that attendance is mandatory; unexcused absences lower your grade. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to turn your work in on time anyway and learn the material you’ve missed, including discussion, before the next class. Late assignments are reduced one full letter grade per day.

*Required Texts.* Available in the Oberlin Bookstore:

Kazuo Ishiguro: *An Artist of the Floating World*. Vintage. ISBN: 0679722661 (1986)  
Chang, Eileen. *The Rice-Sprout Song*. University of California Press. ISBN: 0520210883  
De Chirico, Giorgio. *Hebdomeros*. Exact Change. ISBN: 1878972065  
Loos, Anita. *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*. Liveright. ISBN: 0871401703  
Próspero Saiz. *Horse*. Ghost Pony Press. ISBN: 0941160122

*Available on ERES:*

Benjamin, Walter: “The Task of the Translator.”  
Bonney, Yves. “Translating Poetry.”  
Cortázar, Julio. “Blow-Up.” (*Las babas del diablo*.)  
De Man, Paul: “Conclusions: Walter Benjamin’s ‘Task of the Translator.’”  
Derrida, Jacques: “This Strange Institution Called Literature.”  
Freud, Sigmund. “The Uncanny.”  
Hoffmann, E. T. A. “The Sandman.” (*Der Sandmann*)  
Iser, Wolfgang. “Grasping a Text.”  
Klein, Holger. “Autumn Poems: Reflections on Theme as *Tertium Comparationis*.”  
Lawrence Venuti: Introduction to *Rethinking Translation*.  
Mallarmé, Stéphane. “Afternoon of a Faun.” (*L’Après-midi d’un faune*)

Ovid. *Death of Adonis* and other selections.  
Perloff, Marjorie. “‘Literature’ in the Expanded Field.”

### *Grading:*

Class participation: 15%. This includes attendance.  
5 Writing Exercises: 10% each. 700 words. Guidelines below.  
1 Oral Presentation: 10% Guidelines given in class.  
1 Final Paper: 25% (2000 word minimum.) Guidelines given in class.

You must write *at least one* of each of these kinds of exercise (5 in all):

1) *Theory exercise*. Analyze and critically evaluate a theoretical model introduced in class. Or: using a theory introduced in class and/or developed on your own, ground and then develop a comparison between two works.

2) *Literature and the other arts exercise*. Compare a literary work with a work of music, visual art, sculpture, film, etc. While you must consider the differences in expressive form, you are not required to make these the focus of your essay. Your comparison must be grounded theoretically and developed with details from both works.

3) *Translation exercise*. There are several options:

i) translate a literary work from one language to another. If you choose this option, then you must also provide a 500-word critical commentary on your translation, explaining the specific difficulties you faced and how you resolved them in your translation.

ii) compare at least two published translations of a literary work;

iii) analyze a theoretical problem that arises from our readings on translation;

iv) analyze a problem in translating between different expressive forms and/ or media.

### *Schedule.*

9/2	Thursday.	Introduction to Comparative Literature.
9/7	Tuesday.	Perloff. “‘Literature’ in the Expanded Field.”
9/9	Thursday.	Derrida. “This Strange Institution Called Literature.”
9/14	Tuesday.	Wolfgang Iser. <i>Grasping a Text</i> .
9/15	Wednesday.	<i>Paper #1 Due by 5 pm.</i>
9/16	Thursday.	Ishiguro. <i>An Artist of the Floating World</i> .
9/21	Tuesday.	Ishiguro. <i>An Artist of the Floating World</i> .
9/23	Thursday.	Ishiguro. <i>An Artist of the Floating World</i> .
9/28	Tuesday.	Chang. <i>The Rice-Sprout Song</i> .
9/30	Thursday.	Chang. <i>The Rice-Sprout Song</i> .
10/5	Tuesday.	Chang. <i>The Rice-Sprout Song</i> .
10/6	Wednesday.	<i>Paper #2 Due by 5 pm.</i>
10/7	Thursday.	Benjamin & Venuti on Translation.
10/12	Tuesday.	Bonnefoy and De Man on Translation.
10/14	Thursday.	‘Autumn’ poetry.

10/15 Friday *Paper #3 Due by 5 pm.*  
*Fall Break.*

10/26 Tuesday. Loos. *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes.*

10/27 Wednesday *Film: Gentlemen Prefer Blondes (7 pm)*

10/28 Thursday. Loos. *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes.*

11/2 Tuesday. Giorgio de Chirico. *Hebdomeros.*

11/4 Thursday. Giorgio de Chirico. *Hebdomeros.*

11/9 Tuesday. Modernism and Surrealism at the AMAM.

11/11 Thursday. Hoffmann. "The Sandman."

11/16 Tuesday. Freud. "The Uncanny."

11/17 Wednesday. *Paper #4 Due by 5 pm.*

11/18 Thursday. Mallarmé. "Afternoon of a Faun"; Debussy, *Prélude to the Afternoon...*

11/23 Tuesday. Saíz, *Horse.*

11/30 Tuesday. Cortázar: "Blow-up." (*Las babas del diablo*)

12/1 Wednesday. *Film: Blow-up.*

12/2 Thursday. Discussion of Cortázar and Antonioni.

12/3 Friday. *Paper #5 Due by 5 pm.*

12/7 Tuesday. Selections from Ovid's *Metamorphoses.*

12/9 Thursday. Ovid-inspired Paintings at the Allen Museum.

12/14 Tuesday. *Catch-up day.*

12/19 Sunday. *Final Paper Due by 7 pm.*