



COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

Encouraging a global perspective and an interdisciplinary approach to literary studies

The Department of Comparative Literature is a magnet for innovative research and teaching in graduate and undergraduate courses that encourage multilingual, international, and interdisciplinary perspectives on literature and culture. Our faculty have joint appointments in Afroamerican and African Studies, History of Art, Asian Languages and Cultures, Classics, English, German, History, Romance Languages, Slavic Languages, Women's and Gender Studies, and other disciplines, as well as affiliations with area studies centers at the International Institute. In existence for over 70 years, we are one of the best-established centers for the study of comparative literature in the country. Today, our doctoral program is ranked in the top 10 of such programs nationally, and our undergraduate curriculum contributes to college-wide initiatives in international studies and translation studies.

The Department of Comparative Literature is building a solid foundation for translation studies at U-M. While academic interest in the theory and practice of translation is growing steadily, skilled translators are also in demand in publishing, business, international communication, science and technology, and in humanitarian contexts. We introduced an undergraduate Minor in Translation Studies in 2014. This minor gives students across LSA an opportunity to learn about translation across various languages and disciplines and to pursue a capstone project that reflects engaged learning, interdisciplinary exploration, and internationalization. All students in the department are well-prepared with substantial skills in analytical reading and argumentative writing, as well as with a firm grounding in literature and a broad understanding of the interrelationships among several literary traditions. Most of our graduate students go on to teaching and research in an academic setting, and two-thirds are in tenure-track positions within two years. We seek funding to support graduate students, for faculty to pursue research and teaching, and to enable U-M to play a leading role in defining the place of translation in American academia.

“TRANSLATION AT MICHIGAN” PROGRAMMING SUPPORT

Funding of \$5,000 to \$10,000 annually is needed to sponsor a regular series of visiting translators, who would read a work in progress to a broad audience and lead a translation workshop with students, or possibly serve as a translator-in-residence for a longer period of time. Visiting translators will raise the profile of “Translation at Michigan” and contribute to activities that students can pursue as part of the undergraduate minor.

“When people ask, ‘What is Comparative Literature?’

I say, ‘Comp Lit is what you make it.’”

Tyler Berndt’s path to Comp Lit started even before he realized it, when his high school teacher assigned the class *Crime and Punishment*, his first exposure to world literature outside the English canon. His was a road with several twists and turns: after high school he took three years off to work, enrolled in community college, took French lessons, transferred to U-M and participated in a Summer in Europe program that changed his course from the English major he was planning on. “If you like other languages, why not do Comp Lit?” was the question that brought him to Tisch Hall. He took several classes, found great advisors and professors who support his curiosity and language learning, and declared his major in Comparative Literature.



His honors thesis focuses on a modern Russian novelist, Eugene Vodolazkin, who’s more relevant now than ever. “It’s a comparison of two different kinds of views within Russia, of Russian history, especially given the conflict that’s been going on recently, which is almost unavoidable. Vladimir Putin has been taking a lot of medieval literature and things from the medieval past of Russia and using them as weapons in order to justify this war. What Eugene Vodolazkin does in his book *Laurus*, is the exact opposite of that, using this kind of anachronistic style in order to talk about healing. I wanted to compare those two competing ideas about the past and how it gets used.”

GRADUATE TRANSLATION INITIATIVES

Annual gifts of \$10,000 to \$50,000 are needed to support professional development of graduate students who are pursuing projects in translation. Funds could be used to enable students to travel to collaborate with authors and/or professional translators, and to provide financial support for students who take the examination administered by the American Translators Association to acquire the Certified Translator (CT) Credential.

In conjunction with our future Graduate Certificate in Critical Translation Studies—which will combine comparative research on multiple histories, theories, and practices of translation with critical reflections on the role of the literary translator—funding could enable students to gain a variety of opportunities to integrate translation studies into their doctoral research or their creative work. Also, funds would be used to recognize translators of exceptional promise through a substantial prize for literary translation in an annual contest open to graduate students from any program across the university. Support for translation projects will help us recruit prospective graduate students with strong language skills.

UNDERGRADUATE TRANSLATION PROJECTS

We seek funding for undergraduate translation projects in the minor in translation studies. Students could propose various kinds of projects that emphasize experiential learning—developing a translation project during study abroad, interning with organizations that specialize in translation, translating for community agencies or local businesses, and working with U-M faculty or staff on campus translation projects. While first priority would go to capstone projects proposed by students for the minor in translation studies, all LSA students would be eligible to apply for Translation Projects. These experiences will help students integrate the LSA language requirement into their studies, deepen their study abroad experience, and provide new options for engaged learning. Gifts of \$5,000 to \$10,000 annually would enable the department to provide students with a stipend while they are working on translations.

FACULTY SEMINAR ON PEDAGOGIES OF TRANSLATION

We would like to offer on a regular basis a faculty seminar on pedagogies of translation, in order to promote curricular development and ongoing discussions about critical issues in the translation classroom. Faculty will be able to collaborate across departments in coordinating courses that integrate new ideas and technologies in the rapidly expanding field of translation studies. The cost of a regular seminar would be \$10,000 annually.

NAMED PRIZE IN LITERARY TRANSLATION

We would like to expand our annual prize in literary translation to be able to provide two prizes of \$500 each for a literary translation submitted by a graduating senior. An endowed gift of \$25,000 or \$1,000 annually would cover the expansion and the prizes could be named after a donor, or in memory of distinguished alumni or professors in Comparative Literature at Michigan.

POSTDOCTORAL TEACHING FELLOWSHIP IN CRITICAL TRANSLATION STUDIES

We seek the resources to fund a two-year postdoctoral teaching fellowship in Critical Translation Studies, which would provide a unique opportunity for top candidates to participate in intellectual exchange with faculty and students at Michigan while contributing to the expansion of our curriculum. Since very few positions are offered at this level, an international search for a Postdoctoral Fellow in Critical Translation Studies would immediately bring attention and prestige to U-M. The Postdoctoral Fellow would teach five courses over two years. An endowed investment of \$1.5M or \$700,000 annually for two years would provide the requisite funding.

WAYS TO FUND YOUR GIFT

Your gifts of cash, pledges, or appreciated securities change lives. Wills, estate, and planned gifts allow you to create a lasting legacy that will enable the best and brightest minds to experience a liberal arts education, solve problems in a changing world, and yield ideas and innovations that will make a difference in Michigan and around the globe.

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