

# Academic Assessment Plan

(MA AND PHD PROGRAM IN COMPARATIVE LITERATURE AND CULTURAL STUDIES)  
(2024)

Prepared and Submitted by  
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## Program Goals

1. Provide master and doctoral-level education in comparative literature and cultural studies for students with previous education in various languages and national literatures.
2. Provide a framework that will allow faculty from a variety of departments to interact effectively with a diverse group of students in pursuing individually-designed programs of study in comparative literature and cultural studies.
3. Promote cross-cultural understanding by providing an environment in which students from a variety of cultures can mutually explore the literatures and cultures of a variety of nations in a variety of genres.

## Student Learning Outcomes

1. Each student shall achieve an advanced knowledge of literary and cultural theory, including the ability to apply the theory to specific literary and cultural texts.
2. Each student shall acquire a solid basic knowledge of literary and/or cultural texts in several different areas, including different genres and different languages.
3. Beginning with this background, each student shall acquire the ability to design his or her own program of classes and research, toward eventual preparation for comprehensive examinations and successful design and completion of a thesis or dissertation project or completing a professional portfolio in the non-thesis MA option.
4. Students shall gain sufficient knowledge to design, in collaboration with their faculty committees, a series of five different reading lists or completion of a professional portfolio in the non-Thesis MA option.
5. Each student shall gain the knowledge and expertise necessary to complete a successful thesis or dissertation project in their particular, highly individualized field or completion of a professional portfolio in the non-Thesis MA option. Students in the non-thesis option of the MA must include samples of literary or cultural analysis in their professional portfolios.
6. Each student shall acquire reading competence in at least one language other than English at the master's level and two languages at the doctoral level.

## Process for Assessing each Student Learning Outcome

1. Each student in our program pursues a highly individualized program of study. Each student has his or her own timeline and goals. As a result, the timeline for assessment must be flexible as well.

2. The primary means of direct assessment for learning outcomes 1-4 shall be the series of two written and one oral comprehensive examinations that are administered individually to students by their particular 3-person faculty examination committee that is specific to each student. In the non-thesis option of the MA, students must successfully complete a professional portfolio evaluated by a 3-person faculty committee on a pass/fail basis. The primary means of assessment for learning outcome 5 will be the thesis or dissertation itself, which will be completed and defended under the guidance of a three-person faculty committee that is specific to each individual student. Outcome 5 can also be assessed by the literary and cultural analysis sample included in the professional portfolio of non-thesis MA students. All of these direct means are assessed on the basis of pass/fail. Each student is also evaluated annually for acceptable progress by the Program Director using the means established by the Graduate School. The primary indirect means for current students shall be (a) the participation of students in professional activities such as attending and presenting at professional conferences and publication of work in professional journals, books, etc. The primary indirect means for students who have recently completed the program shall be their placement rate in professional careers appropriate to their training and backgrounds.

3. Results will be reported annually by the Program Director to the Dean of Fulbright College. These results will be used to assess the effectiveness of the program's structure and requirements, including student advising, which is especially crucial for a program that has no faculty or classes of its own beyond two core classes (WLIT 5193 Introduction to Comparative Literature and COMM5503 Cultural Studies).

## **2023-2024**

### Overview

The CLCS Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies had 24 active Ph.D. Students and 3 active MA students in the fall 2023. The Program Graduated 2 PhD students in the 2023-2024 Academic Year and 2 MA students are expected to graduate in the summer 2024. The program has 4 new Ph.D. and 1 MA students confirmed for entering the program in the fall 2024.

As an interdisciplinary program, each student in CLCS takes a highly individual plan of study, making cohort assessment more complex. Students are working on literatures and cultures of Europe, the Americas, Asia, and Africa, from classical times to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, in a variety of languages, including English, Spanish, Arabic, Vietnamese, French, Chinese, German, Latin and Greek.

The direct assessment measures of student learning outcomes 1-4 in the actual Plan is the comprehensive exams, which consists of two written exams. An additional oral exam may be given to the candidate if the exam's committee determines that there are deficiencies in the written exams. Exams can only be repeated once. In addition, student learning outcomes 1-4 can be assessed through the professional portfolio option for the non-thesis MA students.

The primary assessment measure for learning outcome 5 is the thesis (for MA students in the Thesis option) or dissertation. For the non-thesis MA option, learning outcome 5 is assessed by the required sample literary or cultural analysis included in the professional portfolio.

Each student's academic performance is also evaluated annually for acceptable progress by the Program Director using the means established by the Graduate School.

The indirect means of assessment are (a) the participation of students in professional activities such as attending and presenting at professional conferences and publication of work in professional journals, books, etc. (b) another primary indirect means of assessment of learning outcomes is the student's post graduate work, admission into doctoral programs for MA students and job placement.

In the AY 2023-2024, 1 CLCSMA and 2 CLCSPH students passed the comprehensive exams.

In terms of completing a thesis or dissertation, 2 doctoral students successfully defended the dissertations during the current academic year. One student is expected to complete the thesis in the summer 2024.

Among the indirect means of evaluating students learning outcomes are the participation in professional meetings, publications, employment, recognition, etc.

CLCS students received more than 15 internal and external awards, including travel awards by the Graduate School, Graduate Congress, MEST, Travel awards by the Graduate School, Graduate Council, 2 Sturgis International Awards (15.5K), Master of Fine Arts, Newberry Library Consortium, Michael Schoenecke Travel Grant for Graduate Students.

Other awards include the Imhoff Teaching Award, the Vance and Celestia Parler Randolph Fellowship in English, the Linda K. Overstreet Scholarship, a Popular Culture Association Award, two Latin American and Latino Studies Program Graduate Student Awards, four CLCS Research Awards, one CLCS Dissertation Fellowship, and two Distinguished Doctoral Fellowships. One student completed a certificate in cultural memory from the Universidad de Antioquia (Medellin, Colombia).

CLCS students in the program presented papers at local, national and international conferences, including the Popular Culture Association, Classical Association of the Middle West and South (CAMWS), the Cincinnati Conference on Romance and Arabic Languages and Literatures (CCRALL), UA Graduate Student Conference, Center for Southeast Asia Studies Conference (U o Hawaii, Manoa), Southwest Conference on Asian Studies ( U Houston), Kennedy Center New Directions in the Humanities Conference, Newberry Graduate Conference (Chicago), International Congress of Iberoamerican Studies (Lima, Peru), and Tontitown Historical Association.

CLCS students published 1 book review and one short translation. Other students have submitted work for publication, currently under review.

Considering alumni achievements as program outcomes measure, one alumna was honored with the November Cordes Chair Award by the Teaching and Faculty Center, another published a translation of an Arabic novel, and another alumna published a textbook for Service-Learning courses involving the Latino community.

In brief, both direct and indirect outcome measures indicate that students are meeting program goals and advancing in their degrees.