

Annual Assessment Report
(MA AND PHD PROGRAM IN COMPARATIVE LITERATURE AND CULTURAL
STUDIES)
(2025)

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 and cultures.
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, towards 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 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, space or classes of its own beyond two core classes (CLCS 51903 Introduction to Comparative Literature and COMM55003 Communication and Cultural Studies).

2024-2025

Overview

The Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies program had 29 active Ph.D. Students and 1 Active MA student in the Fall of 2024. The program has 6 new Ph.D. students and 2 MA students confirmed/matriculated for Fall 2025. In a year and under my tenure as new director, the program has grown in the number of admitted students, as in Fall of 2024 we only admitted 4 students. This is due in part to the collaboration and continuous partnership CLCS has kept this past year with the Fulbright Foreign Student Program and the Graduate School & International Education's office who has presented CLCS with 2 students fully funded by their governments. This included extensive one on one meetings with the applicants to explain them CLCS program's unique value and how it stands out from others.

The number of students who apply to our PhD and MA programs evidence CLCS strength as a graduate option and remind us of the need of a dedicated space where students/TAs can gather and build community as well as hold meetings, workshops and reading groups. The CLCS program supports and strength, specially, one of the three pillars of the University's 150 Forward Strategic Plan: Research Excellence.

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 21st Century, in a variety of languages, including English, Spanish, Italian, 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 (June) 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 2024-2025, **5 CLCSPH** students presented and passed the comprehensive exams, and 1 CLCSPH student successfully defended his dissertation during the current academic year and will graduate this Spring (2025).

Among the indirect means of evaluating students learning outcomes are the participation in professional meetings, publications, employment, recognition, etc. CLCS students received **15 awards** from internal and external sources, including, the Sturgis International Fellowship, the Graduate Schools and International Education Dissertation Research Award, the National Scholar for 2025 by the Provost's Office and the Office of Nationally Competitive Awards, the GSIE Travel Grant, the Graduate & Professional Student Congress (GPSC) Grant, 2025 SHARP Research Development Grants for BIPOC Scholars, the 2025 CRGC Fellowship at Saint Louis University, the CLCS Research Award, and the CLCS Dissertation Fellowship.

CLCS students in the program presented **15 papers** at local, national and international conferences this past year, including the Latin American Studies Association (LASA) Conference; the Southwest Popular and American Culture Conference; the 73rd Annual Midwest Conference on Asian Studies; the Making of Blackness Fall Seminars at the University of Barcelona; the Shaping the Future - Interdisciplinary Explorations in Netherlandic Studies Conference at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; the International Congress of Hispanic Studies and Literature at Montevideo; the Arkansas Foreign Teachers Association; the Colloquium in Medieval and Renaissance Studies at the University of Arkansas; and the Paisajes y retratos verbales: écfasis y literature hispánica conference at the Universitas Castellae, Valladolid, Spain.

CLCS students published **3 articles** in peer review journals, and **submitted 4 articles** to well known peer review journals.

Summary results

Based on the learning outcomes and program outcome data presented above, both CLCSMA and CLCSPH students are progressing in their degrees and completing the program. They are involved in the profession, participating in conferences and publishing research. In addition, they are gaining recognition and awards.

Alumni news is also an indirect source of outcomes assessment. CLCS Alumni are successfully publishing, securing academic positions, earning awards and recognitions.