World Literatures

World literatures is focused on historical and contemporary literature and the processes of globalization. Students analyze, in English translation, a wide range of fiction, poetry and drama produced in different geopolitical regions of the world. Students study different literary texts and traditions in their historical and cultural contexts. Program courses emphasize close reading and analysis of particular texts, but also explore the relationships between those texts and the cultures that produced them. Students investigate many complex issues that surround the subject of world literatures: What is lost when literature is translated from one language to another? How are the globalizing forces of today different from those of the past? How is literature related to social change and stability? As world literatures majors, students consider these and many other questions about literature and globalization.

To ensure that students’ understanding of different literary traditions is global in scope, all students select courses in which they study the literature of the following geopolitical regions: Africa, the Middle East, East and South Asia and the Pacific Islands, Europe and North America, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

No advanced study of foreign languages is required, only a serious interest in literature, global interconnection and cultural interaction. The world literatures major makes it possible to study the literatures of the entire world without learning multiple languages. At the same time, students are strongly encouraged to study a foreign language beyond the level required for general education and to substitute one or more courses in a foreign language for courses in translation.

Pursuing World Literatures at Ohio State

All freshman applicants are considered within a competitive admission process for the Columbus campus; find admissions criteria at go.osu.edu/admissions. Upon admission to the university, students can declare a major in comparative studies within the College of Arts and Sciences. Interested students should contact the undergraduate advisor in the Department of Comparative Studies and an undergraduate advisor in the College of the Arts and Sciences.

Students majoring in world literatures participate actively in constructing their own course of study and are encouraged to pursue an independent research project or honors thesis. In consultation with their advisors, students choose elective courses from a list of specified classes in the language and literature departments as well as three required courses in comparative studies.

World Literatures Requirements

The world literatures major requires 36 semester hours: 12 semester hours (four courses) in comparative studies, and 24 semester hours (eight courses) in literatures in other departments. These eight courses are drawn from a list of approved courses in other humanities departments: African American and African Studies, Comparative Studies, East Asian Languages and Literatures, Greek and Latin, Near Eastern Languages and Literatures, Slavic and East European Languages and Literatures, Spanish and Portuguese, and Women’s Studies. Most are focused in the particular literary traditions of the world’s regions, and students must take at least one course in each of those regions.

In addition to those five courses, a strong framework for thinking about the world’s literatures is provided by these three comparative studies courses:

- **Introduction to World Literature**—This course introduces the world’s diverse literary traditions and helps students identify principles of cross-cultural study.
- **Translating Literatures and Cultures**—This course focuses on the complexity of translating literary and other texts from one language (and culture) to another.
- **World Literature: Theory and Practice**—This course builds on the previous two courses to analyze literature in greater depth and more fully explore the role of literature in historical and contemporary contexts of globalization.

Co-Curricular Opportunities

Ohio State offers many opportunities for students to learn and grow outside of the classroom. These range from cooperative education (co-op) and internships to study abroad programs to student organizations. Co-ops and internships place students in professional environments while they are Ohio State students. Ohio State offers more than 100 study abroad programs in 40 countries around the world. In addition, there are hundreds of student organizations on campus to meet the interests of a diverse student population.

These experiences enable students to gain valuable work experience, learn about cultures and take on leadership roles before they enter the workforce. All of these experiences enhance learning and may provide an advantage in the job market.

Honors & Scholars Programs

Ohio State offers the Honors and Scholars Programs to create an environment of intellectual support and stimulation within a close-knit community of high-ability undergraduate students. Through these programs, students have access to smaller...
classes, undergraduate research opportunities, close working relationships with faculty, priority scheduling and unique housing options.

The Honors and Scholars Programs represent great opportunities to be part of a smaller community within a large university. For detailed information about these opportunities, visit honors-scholars.osu.edu.

Career Prospects in World Literatures

Like students majoring in other disciplines in the College of Arts and Sciences, students majoring in world literatures develop skills in critical thinking and verbal communication that are essential to many positions in government and other service institutions, in business and industry, and in education. The world literatures major also prepares students to further their education in professional schools and in graduate degree programs in the humanities.

Graduates have chosen jobs in the public and private sectors, and many have continued their education to become lawyers, professors, teachers and other professionals.

Like other liberal arts majors, the Bachelor of Arts in World Literatures prepares students to be critical thinkers, creative problem-solvers, and good writers and communicators. Graduates with world literatures degrees have increased understanding of cultural differences and interrelationships, which is especially important in today's complex global politics and economy.

Go to asccareerservices.osu.edu to find more information about careers for humanities majors.

More about World Literatures

The world's diverse societies have very different modes and habits of cultural expression, and many nations, including the United States, are themselves broadly multicultural. The major in world literatures will help students develop the knowledge they need to better understand the many complex interrelationships among societies across the world. Ohio State, with its extraordinary faculty and curricular resources in African, East and South Asian, Middle Eastern, Latin American and Caribbean, as well as North American and European literatures, is a particularly promising site for this innovative program.

The major in world literatures is distinct from other majors available to undergraduates within the humanities. It differs from the English major in its broader scope, focusing not only on literatures written in English, but also on a wide range of translated texts. Students in the major study a limited number of texts representing each of five geopolitical regions and concentrate their attention on the differences and interrelations (historical, aesthetic and political) among them. This major also makes available to students literary traditions that would otherwise be inaccessible without extensive foreign language study, particularly Asian and African literatures.

Revised November 2013. Information subject to change. For the most up-to-date information on this program, visit comparativestudies.osu.edu.

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