

Ph. D. in Comparative Literature and Film Studies

Revisions resulting from “Round Table” discussion:

- We added a clause specifying that the dissertation must have an “interdisciplinary” emphasis.
- Anthropology was added to the list of participating departments.
- We clarified our statement on the “Research Methods” and “Theory and Criticism” requirements.
- We underscored the program’s “economy of scale” and how it will make “better use of the university’s asset base and strengths.”
- We further clarified the program’s role in enhancing global studies at U.S.F.

In addition we corrected some confusing figures in DCU Tables 2 and 4.

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SUMMARY

Proposal for an M.A. and a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature and Film Studies

Justification:

Interdisciplinary graduate programs, treating culture broadly and including literature, film, television, and the popular arts, comprise an increasingly important part of the Humanities disciplines and interdisciplines at major research universities in the United States. In recent years, scholarship in humanities disciplines has moved toward interdisciplinarity, incorporating a broadened set of objects of inquiry as well as the kind of social and historical contextualization characteristic of those approaches now commonly known as “cultural studies,” and integrating the traditional humanities disciplines with approaches that originally emerged in the social sciences. In this context, film is treated as a text alongside literary texts, and is regularly studied in English, foreign language, and comparative literature departments, and annual conferences like Florida State’s Film and Literature Conference and the University of Louisville’s 20th Century Literature Conference freely accept papers treating both film and literature, as well as comparative papers that combine the two. The Louisville conference, now in its thirty-fourth year, retitled itself the 20th Century Literature *and Culture* Conference and, more recently, the Literature and Culture since 2000 conference, thus highlighting its interdisciplinary nature and the new millennium. The most visible example of this interdisciplinarity in literature and other cultural manifestations can be seen at the Modern Language Association’s annual convention, which routinely attracts 10,000 scholars (all members) organized into divisions ranging from “Literature and the Other Arts” to “Latin America on Film” to “Popular Culture.” The October 2004 issue of the organization’s journal, *PMLA*, features a special section on “Literary Studies and the Visual Arts (The Changing Profession).” As the MLA’s popular culture division, for example, makes clear, scholars are also now interested in applying the critical tools traditionally used to analyze the fine arts or *belles lettres* to popular or commercial works as well, and not just contemporary works. GEMCS (the Group for Early Modern Cultural Studies, an interdisciplinary organization of scholars whose research explores aspects of the period between 1300 and 1700) scheduled its November 2004 conference on Early Modern Popular Culture at Disneyworld. Beyond the expansion of traditional disciplines, new disciplines such as “cyberculture studies” are emerging. Position announcements in the MLA job listings regularly request “cultural studies” people, who are able to synthesize literary analysis and cultural history into a new, genuinely coherent interdiscipline. The program proposed here will place USF in the mainstream of emerging trends in Humanistic education.

For the purpose of this program, and recognizing the rapidly changing of today’s media, “film” will be interpreted broadly, so as to include its emerging “sister” arts, such as video, computer, and web-based media. This is a humanities base program and not a fine-arts or mass communications program. That is, we are not concerned with writing or producing films or videos, but with studying the artistic and cultural significance of literature, film, and new media in their cultural context.

Such a program would be particularly well-suited to USF for several reasons. Current faculty specializations and interests in a number of departments in the College of Arts and Sciences already provide a solid foundation in Comparative Literature and Film

Studies. This is especially true of recent hires in departments like English, Humanities/American Studies, and World Languages. These hires have included individuals who cross traditional disciplinary boundaries—individuals with terminal degrees in history, for example, but who integrate the study of film in their classes and research, or individuals with degrees in literature, who also have strong backgrounds and research interests in music or visual art. By virtue of its inherently interdisciplinary nature this program would help to realize the college's desire to have more high quality interdisciplinary programs at the Ph.D. level as well as its desire to develop the profile of Ph.D. programs in the humanities typical of a Research I institution.

Another compelling motivation for creating such a program is that it would enhance the college's undergraduate offerings in the humanities, especially in general education courses. In some of the humanistic disciplines at USF, where there are no Ph.D. programs, it is difficult to attract the caliber of graduate students necessary for the best possible instruction of our undergraduates. Graduate students in Comparative Literature and Film Studies would serve as Teaching Assistants in undergraduate courses, particularly in larger lecture courses at the introductory level, where currently there is an insufficient number of qualified graduate students. An influx of such qualified graduate students would make possible a dramatic increase in general education offerings without a concomitantly substantial increase in faculty hires and, in turn, by providing substantive teaching experience and mentorship, help to ensure the future marketability of program graduates. Thus, the implementation of this program would have a synergistic effect beneficial to the academic life and development of the college at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. The development of new Ph.D. programs in the Humanities, together with additional support for existing ones, will not only help the university acquire the profile of Ph.D. programs commensurate with our aspirations, but it will also enhance the quality of undergraduate instruction.

It is no exaggeration to say that there is already a pent up demand for a Ph.D. program such as the one proposed here. The Department of Humanities and American Studies constantly receives inquiries from students who are interested in pursuing such a course of study. Many students who have completed the Master of Liberal Arts program would immediately apply to this doctoral program. Furthermore, a large number of Masters students in Spanish presented the University with a petition in which they requested a Ph.D. program that would suit their needs and interests. Consultation with colleagues in relevant fields from around the country has produced favorable reactions, and the Chair of the Visual Studies Program at the University of Oklahoma states that he would be eager to send his students to a program like the one we are proposing here.

A Ph.D. in Comparative Literature and Film Studies will be a highly marketable degree, because its graduates will be prepared in a program that will mirror the manner in which the humanities disciplines have been developing. Some graduates of this program will find positions in English or Language departments at research universities. Two and four year colleges, on the other hand, will find them attractive because of their versatility and their ability to teach in more than one discipline. A 2001 survey, conducted by Larry McLaughlin of USF's Educational Outreach, revealed a surprising interest on the part of librarians for a program like this one. Librarians often would like to pursue advanced degrees, and a content oriented degree such as this one is very attractive to them. Thus, holders of a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature and Film Studies would be able to take positions in universities, colleges, community colleges, and libraries around the country.

It should be stressed that in order to implement such a program the College of Arts and Sciences would incur little expense beyond its current budgetary and strategic plans. This efficiency is possible because the principal departments involved currently offer a wide range of courses that are immediately applicable to graduate degree programs in Comparative Literature and Film Studies. Moreover, graduate sections in Humanities disciplines typically have space available so, at least for the near future, few new sections would have to be added. Certainly the benefits of this program would far outweigh any costs. It would bring faculty from various disciplines together and would help create vision, focus, and purpose among humanities programs. It would enhance USF's profile of graduate humanities programs and help make that profile more appropriate for a large research university. And students in the program would provide a pool of potential teaching assistants, who would help educate the ever increasing number of undergraduate students state universities are expected to serve.

Major Areas of Concentration:

Film and Literature and Culture

Comparative National Literatures and Cultures

Hispanic Literature and Culture

Academic Requirements:

- Seminars: at least four seminars or other appropriate advanced courses in areas of the student's concentration, two at the MA and two at the PhD levels.
- Theory and Criticism: One course in Theory and Methods of Cultural Studies, Literary Theory, or another appropriate theory and criticism course.
- Methods: One course in Research Methods.

The remainder of the coursework (60 hours of after the BA or 33 after the MA) will be made up of approved courses from departments listed below.

Students will be expected to demonstrate advanced proficiency in at least two major languages and an ability to read at least three languages at an advanced level.

Students pursuing the Comparative National Literatures and Cultures and the Hispanic Literature and Culture concentrations will be required to complete a sequence of courses in the methodology of second language instruction and will be given the opportunity to practice their teaching skills as teaching assistants or discussion

preceptors in large lecture introductory General Education courses. Students in the Film and Literature concentration will be strongly encouraged to take such a sequence.

Dissertations must have an interdisciplinary focus, appropriate to the student's particular concentrations.

Projected departments and programs from which courses will be offered:

English
 World Languages
 Humanities and American Studies
 Africana Studies
 Anthropology
 Art History
 Communication
 History
 Mass Communications
 Philosophy
 Religious Studies
 Women's Studies

Administrative Structure:

A twelve-month Director will be selected from the faculty and will receive a .5 assignment directing and advising the program. S/he will report to an Advisory Board composed of the Chairs or faculty representatives of English, Languages, and Humanities and two other faculty members from other participating departments. It will be the responsibility of this Advisory Board to make the academic decisions for Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies.

A half-time staff person will be assigned to do the clerical work of the program.

Endorsement of the College of Arts and Sciences

The College of Arts and Sciences has endorsed the proposal for a Program in Comparative Literature and Film Studies as part of its larger plan to develop its graduate and particularly Ph.D. programs to a level commensurate with that of a modern Research 1 University. The College is committed to maintaining a faculty in the participating departments that will be able to deliver an M.A. and a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature and Film Studies at a nationally competitive level. In particular it will ensure that faculty staffing in the principal European languages and literatures (including of course English) and humanistic and cultural studies is adequate for the attainment of this goal.