

GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK

Graduate Program in Comparative Literature Brown University

2026-27

This handbook describes the procedures of the Graduate Program in Comparative Literature. It is each graduate student's responsibility to read this document carefully and to consult it when questions about the program arise. Because the department faculty and profession are continually changing, these procedures are revised on a regular basis. As we discover ways of improving the Graduate Program in Comparative Literature, we will bring these proposals to the Graduate Committee. That committee sometimes recommends revisions that require approval of both the Department of Comparative Literature faculty and the Graduate Council. When such changes in the Graduate Program have been approved, we will include them in the annually updated online version of the handbook at the Department of Comparative Literature web page. Graduate students in the department will be notified by email when changes are made to the site.

This handbook should be read in conjunction with The Graduate School Handbook, which defines the most important policies, procedures and practices that guide graduate education at Brown University. Additional information about departmental resources for graduate students is available on our [intranet](#).

Revised 22 June 2026

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When You Arrive on Campus

The Department of Comparative Literature is housed in Prospect House, 36 Prospect Street. Our mailing address is Box 1935, Brown University, Providence RI 02912.

Your first and principal contacts in the Department of Comparative Literature are the Director of Graduate Studies and the Department Administrator. Additionally, first-year students will be assigned an advisor, as a further resource for course selection and acclimatization to campus life.

Consult the DGS with questions about:

- Course requirements
- Course selection
- Recommendation letters
- Teaching Assistantship assignments
- Meeting language requirements
- Assembling Major Literature Examination reading lists and committees
- Assembling Comparative Project committees
- Fellowship opportunities
- Graduate student travel
- Leaves of absence
- Summer support

Consult the Department Administrator for:

- Building and office access/ keys
- Photocopying instructions
- Information about payroll and status
- Information about conference travel funding
- Obtaining coursework evaluations, yearly or semi-annual evaluations, and teaching evaluations

NB: *The primary medium of communication about university or departmental matters at Brown is email.* You are expected to check your email account regularly and respond promptly to emails from university or department officers that require a response from you. If you use a non-Brown email address, it is your responsibility to link it to your Brown email address, which will be the address used to communicate with you.

Before or during the first week of classes, you will make an appointment with the DGS (and your advisor, for first-year students) to plan your course work and to discuss any other issues related to your first year of graduate study. As you make decisions about your coursework, bear in mind the doctoral program course requirements:

Course Requirements for the Ph.D.

Students will usually enter the program with sound training in literature written in three languages, one of which may be English. They will be expected to develop a strong enough competence in one of these literatures to be qualified to teach in a national literature department since comparatists are often hired in such departments or have joint appointments. The major literature is studied in a cross-cultural context linking it with the other two diachronically or synchronically. Students may pursue literary currents or follow the evolution of ideas or themes across linguistic boundaries, or may study features of genre, style, convention, etc. The program may also emphasize theory including poetics, stylistics, semiology, feminist, socio-cultural, post-structuralist, post-colonial and environmental approaches.

Students entering with the B.A. will normally take 15 advanced literature courses (1000-level) and graduate seminars (2000-level). These courses will be spread over three years: 8 in the first year, 6 in the second, and 1 in the third. Two or three of these may be Independent Study/Research work supervised by a faculty member.

Individual programs are worked out in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies to include:

- a substantial core of courses in Comparative Literature, at least one per semester during the first two years of study
- a substantial core of courses primarily in one major literature along with significant related work in at least two others. Courses taken in the second and third literatures must include a minimum of two regularly scheduled graduate seminars (or 1000 level where appropriate with approval of the Director of Graduate Studies)
- a spread of courses comprising work in all three major genres (poetry, drama, narrative) and covering a significant range of distinct cultural epochs (medieval, romantic, modern, and so forth)
- some work in the area of literary theory, literary criticism, or literary translation
- if pertinent, courses relating literature to other fields of inquiry or expression; for example, linguistics, philosophy, psychology, history, music, or the visual arts

Students may petition for credit for up to eight graduate seminars which they may have taken as graduate students at other institutions. Students wishing to do so should submit a request to the Director of Graduate Studies after completing two semesters. The request should be supported in a written statement by the student's advisor and accompanied by a copy of

their transcript and any additional material—syllabi, for instance—that would help the Graduate Committee determine the appropriateness of the courses they wish to transfer and which requirements they may satisfy.

Lectures, talks, and colloquia held in the Department of Comparative Literature are considered part of your professional training; hence it is expected that you will attend events sponsored by the department, regardless of whether they are of direct relevance to your field of study.

Grading Policy

The Department conforms to the grading standards as set out in the Graduate School Handbook.

Incompletes

In exceptional circumstances, you may request to receive an “I” as a letter grade for a course, denoting an incomplete. Incompletes can only be taken with the prior consent of the faculty member teaching the course. Avoid accumulating incompletes: they can greatly impede your progress through the program and can have a significant impact on your evaluation (see below). The deadlines for making up incompletes are as follows: for courses taken in Semester I, by mid semester of Semester II; for Semester II, by the first day of the following semester. These can be extended only at the request of the instructor. However, any incomplete that remains one calendar year after the end of the semester in which the course was taken turns into an “NC,” or “no credit,” and you will have to make up that credit by taking another course.

Evaluation

Students taking courses will receive a brief evaluation letter from the DGS, and an invitation to review Course Performance Reports filed by their faculty instructors, at the end of each semester.

Additionally, the DGS convenes the Graduate Committee in May for the purpose of evaluating every graduate student. We make these evaluations on the basis of written evaluations and commentary of those faculty who have been responsible for teaching, examining, or directing respective students during the preceding semester. Faculty commentary during meetings is confidential.

Following the evaluation meeting, you will receive a letter from the DGS summarizing faculty discussion regarding your progress toward the Ph.D. This letter will be placed on file with the Graduate School, as part of your record. It will identify the strengths you have demonstrated and suggest aspects of your professional development on which you should concentrate

in the semester to come. This letter may also mention any concerns about your adaptation to academic life that if not rectified might limit your ability to complete the degree. The letter of evaluation typically concludes with an assessment of your progress toward the Ph.D.

Letter of Evaluation

On the basis of the faculty's assessment of your progress toward the Ph.D., the DGS will make one of several recommendations:

1. As a result of your successful progress toward the degree, you are approved to continue in the program, and will continue to receive financial support in the following year, either through a Teaching Assistantship or a Fellowship.
2. If the faculty review indicates a deficiency in any aspect of your work, you will be asked to take steps to correct the problem before your next review. In most cases, it is meant to ensure your success in the program. However, in cases where the faculty has serious reservations about a student's progress toward the Ph.D. they may ask the DGS to issue a warning that, unless progress is demonstrated by the next review, the student's standing in the program and funding may be seriously jeopardized.
3. If faculty reservations about the quality of your work are especially serious, the DGS may be obliged to recommend that you complete requirements for the M.A. and not proceed further toward the Ph.D.
4. If you accumulate too many incompletes, the DGS may be obliged to recommend that you take a leave until the problem is resolved and the work completed.

You are entitled to receive your letter from the DGS in a timely fashion after the faculty evaluation meeting. It is not uncommon for the DGS to ask you to make an appointment to discuss your evaluation in some detail. Of course, you are also welcome to request such an appointment at your own discretion.

Language Competence

Students do advanced work in the original language in at least three literatures as demonstrated by the successful completion of at least two courses in each of those literatures at the 2000 course level. In certain cases, appropriate 1000 level courses may satisfy this requirement with the permission of the Director of Graduate Studies. Students whose linguistic competence requires them to take language courses below the 1000 level may do so in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies, but those courses will not count toward the course requirements for the Ph.D.

Normally at least the first foreign language requirement will be satisfied through advanced courses during the first year.

A standard of professional competence should be maintained within the area of likely specialization. For example, a student intending to specialize in the medieval period will offer an appropriate language competence, Anglo-Saxon or Middle English for English, Middle High German for German, Old French or Provençal for French, etc. Students concentrating in Classics must offer both Latin and Greek; German is also recommended. For those with specialties in medieval and renaissance, Latin is recommended.

Major Literature Examination

Students will take an oral examination on their designated major literature (which should correlate to the national literature department in which they expect someday to work) by late September of Semester V.

1. Timing and Committee

Students must declare the major literature on which they will be examined by September 30 of the second year (i.e., Semester III). By October 15 of their second year, in consultation with the DGS, they must form an exam committee. A committee consists of three faculty members, one of whom must be in the Department of Comparative Literature and chair the committee, approving the entire list. The further two committee members may be from Comparative Literature or other departments at Brown.

During the spring semester of their second year, students will take at least two regular courses and may elect one section of COLT 2980 (Reading and Research), an independent study devoted to preparation for the major literature examination, as the required third course. The final reading list, described in the next paragraph, is to be submitted to the committee chair and the Director of Graduate Studies by March 1 of the second year.

2. Scope of the Examination

The examination will be based on a list of 25 entries covering the chronological range of the literature chosen, and 10 entries selected by the student in consultation with the committee to develop an area of interest within that literature, within another literature or to develop a theoretical or comparative field. An entry generally consists of several works, roughly three novels or prose works, eight to ten plays, or two dozen or so poems. The works for each entry are to be chosen in consultation with the examination committee.

Major literature reading lists are available on the department website. The lists of students who have presented the exam recently may be obtained from the Department Administrator by request. Students presenting lists in languages and literatures for which there is not a pre-existing list will consult with the Director of Graduate Studies and appropriate faculty in formulating reading lists.

3. The Oral Examination

The three members of the examining committee will administer the examination in English. It will last no more than two hours. Questions will draw on the reading list, and will be of an appropriate theoretical, historical, or textual nature. Passing will be decided by majority vote taken directly after the examination. If a student fails the examination, one further attempt will be permitted, ordinarily during the following semester. Normally students will either pass or fail the examination as a whole, but in the event that the committee determines a student has failed a portion of the examination, the committee may require that the student repeat that portion of the exam at a later date. Ordinarily the re-examination will take place the following semester.

Comparative Project

The comparative project provides an opportunity to begin focused research leading to the dissertation, and to gain experience in professional writing, oral presentation, and discussion comparable to a conference situation or job interview.

1. Timing and Committee

After passing the major literature examination, students will begin formulating a topic for the comparative project during Semester V and complete it during the third year. The topic for the comparative project will be worked out in consultation with the student's preliminary doctoral committee, consisting of three faculty members, to be established by the student in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies.

Students must declare their intention of fulfilling the comparative project requirement to the Director of Graduate Studies and the Prelim Committee at least eight weeks prior to the oral examination. In Semester VI, students will submit the comparative project to their examination committee in written form. A revised draft, to be considered by the examination committee for the oral defense, must be submitted by April 15th.

2. The Comparative Project

The comparative project is an article-length essay that may or may not become a part of the dissertation. As stated above, the project provides an opportunity to begin focused research on subjects possibly leading to the dissertation.

3. Oral Presentation of the Comparative Project

Each member of the committee in writing must give approval of the written project to the Director of Graduate Studies before the oral examination can be scheduled.

In the oral examination, the candidate will begin with a brief presentation, situating the project and where appropriate, indicating how it might relate to a dissertation. Questions and discussion will follow. The examination should be about one to one and a half hours in length. At the end of the examination, the committee will evaluate the student's performance. Only the student and committee members attend the exam.

Dissertation Proposal

1. Following the completion of the Comparative Project Exam (by May 30 of their third year), students name at least three members of their dissertation committee, of which one must be a member of the Department of Comparative Literature. Students should submit the doctoral thesis prospectus to their dissertation committee by September 30 of their fourth year (i.e., Semester VII). The student will schedule a collective meeting with the committee for the approval of the prospectus by October 30. Students will then send copies to the DGS and department administrator to file.
2. Typically, the prospectus will include a clear statement of the objective of the dissertation, a discussion of the issues involved, a selective account of the key sources (primary, secondary, and methodological), and a chapter outline. Normally, it may run to about 10-15 double-spaced pages plus bibliography.
3. If a student changes topic or advisor, a new prospectus may need to be filed; this decision falls within the discretion of the dissertation advisor.

Completion of the Ph.D.

The requirements stated above are intended to provide both comparatist training and preparation in one major literature. An effort will be made to provide teaching experience not only in Comparative Literature, but also within an appropriate foreign language or English. The timetable envisioned allows for the completion of course work, the major literature examination and a comparative project by the end of the third year,

submission of the doctoral thesis proposal at the beginning of the fourth, and two years to complete the doctoral thesis.

The Graduate School offers incoming doctoral students six years of guaranteed financial support. In years two, three, four and six, support is provided through teaching assistantships and proctorships in Comparative Literature and other appropriate departments. Both fellowships and teaching assistantships are contingent on the timely and successful completion of coursework and examinations. Support for students entering with substantial advanced work or an M.A. will normally be three years with the possibility of a fourth year. In the case of a student failing the major literature examination, provision will be made for a second try. Except for that eventuality or in the case of serious illness, this timetable should be adhered to in order for support to continue.

Master of Arts Degree

The Department does not admit candidates for a terminal M.A. degree, nor does it require a Master's degree as a prerequisite for the doctorate. Students who are not recommended to proceed in the doctoral program at the end of the first year may take an M.A. by completing one year of full-time course work in residence (normally four courses each semester), satisfying two of the three language requirements for the Ph.D., and writing an article-length essay on a comparative subject. This is also the requirement for students to complete an M.A. degree through Brown's Open Graduate Education program.

Alternatively, a student may receive the M.A. (called a "transitional" M.A.) upon completion of the comparative project and advancement to doctoral candidacy. Brown University requires eligible candidates to apply to take the transitional M.A. degree (which is only awarded in May). You can find instructions in the [Graduate Degree Conferrals and Associated Deadlines](#) section on the Registrar's website.

Library Resources

The main humanities library at Brown is the John D. Rockefeller Library. Tours of the library and training sessions can be arranged upon request.

The Comparative Literature Subject Librarian is Karen Bouchard (Karen_Bouchard@Brown.edu). A number of useful research databases have been collected on the Library's Comparative Literature Resources Guide Page: <http://library.brown.edu/gateway/lrg.php?id=11&task=db>

Graduate Student Library Privileges include the following:

- Receive Academic Year and Summer Loans, which are renewable.
- Can recall books from other borrowers.
- Can request books from the shelves and have held for pick up at the circulation desk through Josiah.

Other library resources at Brown include:

1. The John Hay Library, which houses an eclectic selection of rare and interesting collections.
2. The John Carter Brown Library, internationally known for its collection of early American texts and other historical sources pertaining to both North and South America.
3. The Science Library with holdings of important documents in the history of science such as nineteenth-century medical texts and early works of psychoanalysis.
4. The Orwig Music Library holds music books, scores, periodicals, sound recordings, video recordings, and microforms. Graduate students have access to restricted circulations, but you will also find a huge number of recordings on the Naxos Music Library database.
<http://library.brown.edu/about/orwig/>

Computer Services

It is important that you activate your Brown and Brown Gmail accounts as soon as you get your Brown I.D. card. You can do this at <https://myaccount.brown.edu/>. If you wish to forward your Brown email to another email address, you can do it immediately after activating your Brown and Brown Gmail accounts. Be sure to take note of your Brown username and password. You will need them for the computer clusters, online grades, course websites, and accessing the Brown library from off campus. (See the statement at the beginning of this Handbook on the importance of checking and responding to email.)

Check the CIS website (<http://software.brown.edu/dist>) or contact them for an up-to-date list of the specific software they support.

Many software systems are available for on-campus use (or off, if you connect via Brown's VPN client)—see the site above for more information. The advantage of using supported software is that you will be able to get assistance from Brown's help desk.

Graduate Certificate in Translation Studies

The department offers a Graduate Certificate in Translation Studies, which is obtainable by any Brown graduate student interested in and capable of completing the requirements. For a description of the certificate and instructions on how to apply, please visit the [relevant page](#) on the departmental web site.

Teaching

Further information on graduate student teaching in Comparative Literature can be found in the department's [TA Handbook](#) (also available on the department website). Additionally, the Department Administrator will provide access to materials (on specific courses and on teaching at Brown more broadly) compiled by previous and current graduate student TAs.

Teaching Assistantships

Training and experience in teaching are major features of our doctoral program in Comparative Literature. The Department makes every attempt to provide its graduate students with teaching experience at Brown in undergraduate courses suited to the graduate student's interest, including teaching language in other departments. Teaching assistants work under the direct supervision of members of the professorial staff. At least two years of work as a teaching assistant are required for the Ph.D. The Department will keep students informed of positions as they become available in pertinent departments and at other institutions, and will assist them in presenting their candidacy for such positions.

Advanced graduate students who have made substantial progress on their dissertations, who can document their success in the classroom, and who have the support of a faculty member willing to serve as a classroom mentor are invited to submit a proposal to teach an undergraduate course (below 1000-level) in the department. The proposal consists of a 100-word course description, a syllabus, a C.V. that includes a listing of teaching experience, and notes of support from the dissertation advisor and faculty mentor. It is due to the Director of Graduate Studies no later than October 31 of the academic year before the class is taught. The department's Graduate Committee will evaluate the proposals on their merits; no more than two will be approved in any year; final approval will depend on the curricular needs of the department as determined by the Chair.

See the section below on Summer Teaching for information on offering non-credit-bearing departmental courses in Brown's Summer Studies Program. For teaching credit-bearing courses in Brown's Winter and Summer sessions, the department will only support proposals by advanced graduate students who have made substantial progress on their dissertations.

Class Size Policy

Following the principle of equitable division of grading and other kinds of pedagogical work, classes that are assigned one or more TA's and that split into discussion sections will divide students into equitably sized sections. In the event that section sizes are projected to exceed 25, the Department will do its best to secure additional TA's. The instructor of record has final responsibility for all grades.

Teaching Evaluations

Teaching Evaluations serve several purposes: to monitor the quality of teaching at Brown, to help the department make staffing decisions, and to help you improve your teaching. In this respect, you are no different from the regular faculty, who are required to collect confidential student evaluations near the end of each course. The department now has a standard evaluation form for this purpose, which students access online. A section of this evaluation refers to TA's, who are strongly encouraged to review their evaluations each semester. Please ask Tracy Miller for access to your evaluations.

At some point during your graduate career, you may ask a member of the faculty, or the faculty member lecturing the course you are assisting, to visit one of your classes and write an evaluation. Prepare them with copies of your syllabus, if appropriate, or a good description of what you have been doing in discussion section and your teaching objectives in both cases. Such a visit can help jump-start your teaching if you feel you are not doing as well in the classroom as you would wish. Toward the end of your graduate career, you might also benefit from inviting a faculty member to visit your class and write a teaching letter for your dossier in preparation for your venture onto the job market. In this regard, you might also choose to photocopy samples of student work together with your comments and grades on them for a teaching portfolio, should one be requested when you are on the market.

Teaching Resources and Development Opportunities

The Harriet W Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning

The Sheridan Center offers a range of services and resources to graduate students and faculty seeking to improve their teaching effectiveness. See the Sheridan Center's [website](#) and the Departmental Sheridan Representative for additional information.

New TA Orientation

Teaching Essentials for Graduate TAs is an online, asynchronous, self-paced program that takes 4 - 6 hours to complete. It is offered by the Sheridan Center and registration opens in mid-August. Students in the Comparative Literature Department are required to complete this orientation before teaching their first class.

Consultation Services

A range of consulting services is available to all graduate students, regardless of whether they are involved in Sheridan Certificate programs. See the Sheridan Center website for more details.

Certificate Programs

The Center offers a range of [certificate programs](#) that students are encouraged to explore.

English Language Proficiency

International graduate students whose native language is not English may choose to be tested upon their arrival for English proficiency in order to enroll in non-credit ESL courses (listed in CAB as EINT courses). To schedule a placement interview and for more information, please contact Barbara Gourlay (Barbara_Gourlay@Brown.edu) at the [Center for Language Studies](#).

Guidelines for Faculty Use of Teaching Assistants

The Graduate School's policy is that Teaching Assistants should work on average 20 hours a week on teaching.

1. While you may have more work during some weeks than in others, the average hours you put in over the semester should not exceed this limit. It is your responsibility to ask the faculty member running the course when the heavy-duty periods of the semester come and to plan your work accordingly.
2. You are not expected to do all of the grading. This work should be divided equitably between the TAs and the faculty member in charge.
3. You are not expected to lead more than one section.
4. It is perfectly within the faculty member's rights, in keeping with your training as a university teacher, to ask you to deliver a lecture or two,

help plan the syllabus, enter into dialogue with the faculty member in the classroom, participate in a planned panel or debate, or develop some new material for the course.

5. The final grades are ultimately the faculty member's responsibility, and there should be a clear understanding between you and your supervisor as to how your authority is supposed to interact with theirs.

Grievance Procedures

Students having trouble with a faculty member should consult the DGS. The Graduate School has adopted a university-wide procedure, to which you may turn if these less formal and local measures fail. If you want to discuss your situation with someone outside the department, contact the Dean of the Graduate School.

If one of your students complains about your teaching and you cannot resolve the problem yourself, you should consult with the course supervisor or faculty evaluator. If the issue cannot be resolved at that point, you should take the matter to the DGS. In cases where there is some disagreement between you and the faculty member or between either and the DGS, the Chair will review the evidence, discuss the matter with everyone involved, and report her or his conclusions in writing to you. If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of this process, you are always free to pursue the Graduate School's grievance procedures.

Summer Teaching

Graduate students are eligible to propose courses for Brown's Pre-College Programs. More information and forms are accessible on the website. Applications are generally due in November for the following summer: <https://precollege.brown.edu/instructors>.

Teaching Exchanges

1. Brown University graduate students in their fifth and sixth years may apply to teach courses at Wheaton College through the Brown/Wheaton Faculty Fellows Program. (See <https://graduateschool.brown.edu/academics-research/distinctive-opportunities/teaching-fellowships/brownwheaton>). Applications must be submitted to Wheaton College by February 15.

2. Funding

The Tuition Requirement

Brown counts "tuition units" as well as academic credits: A full year's tuition equals 8 tuition units. It is important to note that tuition units are not the

same as academic units. As a Ph.D. student, you are required to enroll in and complete 15 courses for academic credit, but 24 tuition units must be paid for whether you take further courses or not (fellowship support and teaching assistantships pay for 4 tuition units per semester or 8 per year). Candidates for the Ph.D. must have tuition fees for the equivalent of 3 years of full-time study paid, unless they receive credit for work done at another institution. A Ph.D. candidate may transfer up to one year's coursework (8 tuition units). You must, therefore, have 16-24 units paid in order to fulfill the tuition requirement for the Ph.D. degree.

How to Pay for Tuition Units

If external fellowships do not pay for 8 units of tuition credit for each year awarded, the Graduate School generally does. For information on external fellowship opportunities, view the Graduate School's website at <https://graduateschool.brown.edu/financing-support/phd-funding/external-funding>. Policy in relation to external funding is available in the Graduate School's Handbook.

The Office of Sponsored Projects provides access to the Sponsored Programs Information Network, a database of funding opportunities designed to assist faculty and graduate students seeking external support for research, education, and development projects. SPIN's main focus is research funding opportunities, and sabbatical and publication support. For further information, go to <https://division-research.brown.edu/contact/research-support-teams/sponsored-projects>.

Summer Support

All doctoral students admitted to the graduate program are guaranteed summer funding (refer to your letter of admission for the number of years of support). This funding is intended for students to conduct research, study for their qualifying examinations, work on their dissertations, or to advance toward their degrees in other ways.

Part-Time Work Inside Brown

The Graduate School recommends that students on stipend-based appointments avoid or minimize time spent on paid activities unattached to these appointments, although they may undertake such activities, if related to their professional training, for up to twelve hours per week. Please refer to the Graduate School Handbook for further details on this policy.

Students not on stipend-based appointments may find hourly work through the board maintained by the Student Employment Office <http://www.brown.edu/about/administration/student-employment/>. The

Graduate School currently mandates a maximum of 20 hours of part-time work per semester. On an individual basis, it is possible, in extenuating circumstances, to petition the Graduate School for an increase of this limit.

Taxes

Graduate students should be aware that teaching assistantships as well as other forms of employment at Brown are taxable. The University does not withhold taxes from fellowship awards. Students who receive fellowships are responsible for reporting their income accordingly. It is your responsibility to determine your tax liability.

Conference Travel

1. Graduate School Funding

The Graduate School offers up to \$700 travel funds to students in years 1 through 6. Applications are through UFunds and information can be found here:

<https://graduateschool.brown.edu/financing-support/internal-funding-appointments/graduate-school-travel-funds/conference-travel-fund>

2. Departmental Sponsorship

The amount of funding available from the department fluctuates each year because of our funding sources; please consult our [intranet](#) for current funding levels and application procedures. Students may apply for departmental funding for any academic expense (for conference and research travel, students should also apply for funding from the Graduate School as described above. First-year students may also apply for funding for language study during their first summer in the program.

3. International Travel Fund

The Graduate School's [International Travel Grants](#) are available to full-time Brown graduate students who are conducting research abroad or delivering a paper at an international conference.

4. Graduate Student Council Travel Funds

If you have exhausted the sources of funding above on other conference trips, you may request support from the GSC. See the following link for details on the application procedure:

<https://sites.brown.edu/gsc/resources/funding/conference-funding/>

5. Other Sources

Organizations sponsoring conference events (the MLA, for instance) often have funding available to graduate students to reduce their cost of

travel.

Graduate Student Sponsored Lecture

The graduate students in the department have the option to invite a speaker to campus each academic year. If a speaker is to be invited, the graduate students shall decide as a group whom they would like to invite. You are encouraged to consider emerging voices in literary criticism and to consult with the Director of Graduate Studies and other faculty before submitting your proposal to the Chair. This effort is spearheaded by that year's Graduate Student Representatives (see below under Committees); however, all graduate students are strongly encouraged to take an active role in the nomination and voting processes and to participate in the events surrounding the visit. The lecture is usually scheduled for sometime during the spring semester and should be held at a time when broad participation can be expected (i.e. not Friday afternoon). Customarily, organizers write and deliver the speaker introduction (ask the speaker for a CV or a biographical summary), arrange the dinner with graduate students that follows the lecture, offer to facilitate meetings with faculty members and graduate students with similar research interests, publicize the event campus-wide, and, if applicable, arrange a visit to one of the university's archival collections. Event planning resources are available on the [department's Intranet](#). After receiving approval from the Chair, contact the Department Manager for assistance with the logistical components of the visit well in advance of the date on which the event is to take place.

Representation

Graduate Student Representatives

Two graduate students (usually one 2nd-year and one in the 3rd- or beyond) serve as graduate student representatives. As such they have several responsibilities: 1) Attending monthly faculty meetings, taking their own set of minutes, which they report to the rest of the graduate students by email; reporting any major news or concerns on behalf of the graduate students to faculty assembled at the meeting. 2) Organizing the Graduate Student Sponsored Lecture, facilitating the nominations and vote, communicating with the speaker, publicizing the lecture, serving as their contacts during the visit, and introducing or arranging for someone else to introduce the lecturer (based on his or her CV or other biographical document). 3) Organizing events for prospective student visits and for the fall dinner meant to welcome their arrival. 4) Organizing the Departmental Colloquium.

The representative for Fall 2026 is Lucas Joshi.

The representative for Spring 2027 is Sonnet Phelps.

Sheridan Center Representative

The representative for AY 2026-27 is Tianren Luo.

Graduate Student Council Representative

Usually a graduate student from the department in his/her first year of study represents the Department of Comparative Literature to the GSC and, in turn, distributes minutes of the monthly GSC meetings as well as other announcements to students in the department. By sending a representative to at least two meetings per academic year, the department becomes eligible to receive its rebate from the Student Activity Fund. The money (\$5 per enrolled graduate student) should fund a collective social or professional event that benefits all of the students in the department.

The representative for AY 2026-27 is TBA.

Appendix A: Change in Status

Any proposed changes to a student's status (leave of absence, withdrawals, part-time, changes in degree program) should be discussed with the DGS. Formal requests for change in status are generally made to the Graduate School through UFunds.

Leave Policy

The department supports leaves of absence in accordance with Graduate School policy. For categories of leave and application processes, see [The Graduate School Handbook](#), pages 37-44

Parental Relief Policy

The department further supports the Graduate School's Parental Relief Policy, as per pages 46-47 of [The Graduate School Handbook](#).

Partnerships with Other Institutions

Exchange Scholar Program

Advanced graduate students may apply for the opportunity to spend one or two semesters at participating universities. For more information, see <https://graduateschool.brown.edu/academics-research/partnerships-exchanges/exchange-scholar-program>.

Cross-Registration at Harvard University

Brown students may enroll in courses at Harvard without paying tuition. Students in Comparative Literature have often taken advantage of this opportunity when Harvard offers the equivalent of 2000-level courses in a field of study that Brown does not. If interested, inquire about the appropriate forms at the Registrar's Office, which require the signatures of your DGS and a dean in the Graduate School, as well as the DGS of the appropriate department at Harvard and a dean from its graduate school.

Appendix B: Summary of Ph.D. Requirements with Typical Timeline

1: Semester I: 1 COLT; 3 further graduate seminars

1: Semester II: 1 COLT; 3 further graduate seminars

2: Semester III: 1 COLT; 2 further graduate seminars

TA Assignment

Consult with DGS regarding Major Lit Exam

2: Semester IV: 1 COLT; 1-2 further graduate seminars (Optional: COLT 2980: Major Lit Prep)

TA Assignment

March 1: Submit Major Lit Exam final reading list

By the end of the 4th semester all distribution requirements in 1st, 2nd, and 3rd literatures must be fulfilled (*see below)

3: Semester V: 1 Seminar fall or spring

TA Assignment

Major Lit Exam: September

3: Semester VI: (1) fall or spring

TA Assignment

Complete Comparative Project

April 15: revised draft due

Schedule oral examination 8 weeks in advance

4: Semester VII:

September 30: submit dissertation prospectus

Begin dissertation

Fellowship Year/ No TA Assignment

4: Semester VIII:

Fellowship Year/ No TA Assignment

5: Semester IX

TA Assignment

5: Semester X

TA Assignment

6: Semester XI
TA Assignment
6: Semester XII
TA Assignment

Appendix C: Summary of Important Dates, 2026-27

Please see the “Checklist by Year in Program” for deadlines specific to students in each year. Please also see the calendars of the [Registrar](#) and the [Graduate School](#) for important dates and deadlines during the academic year.

August 27	International Graduate Student Orientation
August 30-31	Graduate Student of Color Orientation
September 1-2	All New Student Orientation
September 4-7	Graduate student registration for the Fall semester opens Friday at 4:00 pm EDT and ends 11:59 pm EDT on Monday 9/7/2026
September 8	Opening Convocation at 4:00pm
September 9	Classes of first semester begin.
September 22	Last day to add a course without a fee (5:00 p.m. deadline). Banner Web will be taken down for approximately one hour. Once re-launched, all course adds require instructor override and will be charged late fee of \$15 per course.
October 6	Last day to add a course (includes late fee), change from audit to credit, or change a grade option declaration (5:00 p.m. deadline).
October 12	Indigenous Peoples’ Day. No University exercises.

October 16	Last day to change from credit to audit in a course (5:00 p.m. deadline).
October 31	Departmental course proposals for the following AY (Fall and Spring) are due to DGS.
November 10-17	Registration for Semester II.
November 17	End of pre-registration period.
November 25-29	Thanksgiving recess beginning Wednesday at noon.
November 30	Classes Resume.
December 7-11	Reading Period.
December 12-21	Final Examination Period

Spring 2027

January 18	Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday. No University exercises
January 27	Classes of second semester begin.
February 9	Last day to add a course without a fee (5 p.m. deadline). The web will be taken down for approximately one hour. Once re-launched, all course adds require instructor override and will be charge a late fee of \$15.00 per course Deadline to request travel funding from the Department for Spring conferences.
February 13-16	Long weekend. No University exercises.
February 17	Classes resume.
February 24	Last day to add a course, (include late fee), change from audit to credit, or change a grade option declaration (5:00 p.m. deadline)

March 12	Last day to change from credit to audit in a course (5:00 p.m. deadline).
March 27-April 4	Spring Recess.
April 5	Classes resume.
April 20-27	Registration for Semester I, 2027-28.
April 30 – May 11	Reading Period.
May 1	Deadline for students currently on leave to request readmission from Graduate School (or with medical leave to Office of Student Life) for Semester I. Deadline for May graduates and Transitional M.A. applicants to submit Application to Graduate via Banner. Deadline to confirm participation in Commencement.
May 11	Classes end for courses not observing the Reading Period.
May 12- 21	Final Examination Period. (No exams on Sunday, May 16)
May 29-30	Commencement Weekend

Appendix D - Directory

Department of Comparative Literature

The department is housed in Prospect House, 36 Prospect Street, (Box 1935), Providence, RI 02912.

Administrative Positions

Kenneth Haynes

Chair

Kenneth_Haynes@brown.edu

Esther Whitfield

Director of Graduate Studies

Esther_Whitfield@brown.edu

Michelle Clayton

Director of Undergraduate Studies

Michelle_Clayton@Brown.edu

Administrative Staff

Tracy Miller

Academic Department Manager

Tracy_Miller@brown.edu

401-863-3543

Tiffany Lewis

Administrative Coordinator

Tiffany_Lewis@brown.edu

401-863-2818

Appendix E: Guidelines for Graduate Advising in the Department of Comparative Literature

Advising

Graduate students are encouraged to seek advice not only from their primary advisors, but also from the Chair of the Department, the Director of Graduate Studies, members of the Graduate Committee, and other faculty in the Department. They are also encouraged to seek out opportunities for advice and professional development in cooperating departments.

The selection of an advisor

First year

- Newly admitted graduate students are assigned an advisor to work with them during their first year.

Second year

- In their second year, all students have the DGS as their primary advisor.

Fall semester of the third year

- At the end of their second year, students will form an examining committee for their Major Literature Examination. The chair of that committee (who must be a member of the Department of Comparative Literature) will serve as the primary advisor for the Fall semester of third-year students, and may also be the advisor for Comparative Project and dissertation.

Spring semester of the third year

- During the Fall semester of their third year, students, in consultation with the DGS, assemble a committee for their Comparative Project. The primary advisor for students will be the Chair of that committee if that advisor is a member of the Department of Comparative Literature; if not, the primary advisor will be a member of the committee who has an appointment in Comparative Literature.

Fourth and later years

- In the Spring semester of their third year, the students name the members of their dissertation committee. The chair of the committee will serve as their primary advisor, who may be a member of another department. The student may change primary or secondary advisors at any time, with the approval of the DGS and the new advisor.

Advising responsibilities

Since the student's primary advisor is not necessarily a member of the Department of Comparative Literature, departmental advising responsibilities are shared by faculty who serve in any capacity on our students' dissertation committees; by the DGS; and by the member of the departmental graduate committee responsible for professionalization and job placement.

Members of dissertation committees

- Remain in regular contact with their graduate students, including during leaves and breaks; and reply in a timely way to questions from graduate student advisees.
- Offer comments on submitted writing, including during leaves and breaks, within a reasonable length of time.
- Write letters of recommendation by deadline. Faculty who decline to write letters of recommendation should notify the DGS and the student of this decision at the time of the student's request.
- Attend the annual meeting on, or submit written evaluation of, graduate student progress.
- If a faculty member does not wish to continue as an advisor on a graduate committee, that faculty member should notify the DGS and the student as soon as possible.
- Conduct themselves professionally.

DGS

- Remain in regular contact with graduate student, including during leaves and breaks; and reply in a timely way to questions from graduate students.
- Communicate to students the program's structure, requirements, and deadlines, and monitor and be in conversation with the students about them.
- Conduct themselves professionally.

Member of graduate committee responsible for professional development

- Consider a range of professional development for graduate students in the program and help organize or identify opportunities that contribute to their professional development.
- Conduct themselves professionally.

Appendix F: Checklist by Year in Program

Checklist for First-Year Graduate Students

1. Meetings With First-Year Advisers

It is the student's responsibility to email the adviser to schedule THREE brief meetings over the academic year.

- a) once before the Fall course registration deadline
- b) once before Spring course registration deadline
- c) once in the spring, ideally before pre-registration for the following year

The adviser is responsible for ensuring that these meetings happen and for communicating any issues to the DGS. This is an opportunity for students to discuss their choice of courses, how they are going, summer language plans, etc.

2. Meetings With DGS (Director of Graduate Studies)

Students are also responsible for scheduling TWO meetings with the DGS this year: once in your first week, and once in early February to discuss your progress report. A third meeting at the end of Spring may be called following your second progress report.

3. EIGHT COURSES, with at least one COLT course per semester.

Checklist for Second-Year Graduate Students

The DGS is your primary adviser but you should begin conversations with potential advisers/mentors/examiners.

1. Students must declare the major literature on which they will be examined by **September 30** of the second year (email DGS, cc. Tracy/Tiffany)
2. Begin TA-ing (you need 4 semesters of teaching)
3. **Oct 15:** Discuss and email a list to DGS (cc. Tracy/Tiffany) of the three members of your major literature exam committee. You form your own examining committee with at least one COLT professor (who must chair the committee and approve the entire list); the other two may come from COLT or other departments. **You are responsible for contacting the appropriate three professors this Fall (Sept-Oct) and ensuring their willingness to meet with you to help you with the list (e.g., Independent Study [see 4. below], office hours) and to serve as examiner in September of your third year.

The final reading list is to be approved by the chair of your committee, then submitted to the Director of Graduate Studies (cc. Tracy/Tiffany) by **March 1**. The examination will be based on a list of 25 entries covering the chronological range of the literature chosen, and 10 entries selected by the student in consultation with the committee to develop an area of interest within that literature, within another literature or to develop a theoretical or comparative field. An entry generally consists of several works, roughly three novels or prose works, eight to ten plays, or two dozen or so poems. The works for each entry are to be chosen in consultation with the examination committee.

4. During the spring semester of their second year, students will take at least two regular courses and may elect one section of COLT 2980 (Reading and Research), an independent study devoted to preparation for the major literature examination, as the required third course.

Checklist for Third-Year Graduate Students

The DGS is your primary adviser but you should seek academic and career advice from your committee and chair

1. **Major Literature Examination (oral): Early Sept: Schedule your exam with your examiners and Tracy (cc. the DGS).** Students will take an oral examination on their designated major literature (which should correlate to the national literature department in which they expect someday to work) **by SEPTEMBER 30.** The three members of the examining committee will administer the examination in English. It will last no more than two hours. Questions will draw on the reading list, and will be of an appropriate theoretical, historical, or textual nature. Passing will be decided by majority vote taken directly after the examination.

2. **Comparative Project (written)**
 After passing the major literature examination, students will begin formulating a topic for the comparative project during Semester V and complete it during the third year. The topic for the comparative project will be worked out in consultation with the student's preliminary doctoral committee, consisting of three faculty members, to be established by the student in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies (**as soon as you can, ideally by OCTOBER 20.** Students must **declare their intention of fulfilling the comparative project** requirement to the Director of Graduate Studies and the Prelim Committee **at least eight weeks prior to the oral examination (e.g., March 1 for May 1 exam).** Students will **submit the comparative project to their examination committee in written form (DUE APRIL 3).** A revised draft, to be considered by the examination committee for the oral defense, **must be submitted by APRIL 15th.**

3. **Oral Presentation of the Comparative Project**
 Each member of the committee must give approval in writing of the written project to the Director of Graduate Studies before the oral examination can be scheduled [***Please email your three committee members to have them email approval to the DGS and cc. Tracy/Tiffany***]. In the oral examination, the candidate will begin with a brief presentation, situating the project and where appropriate, indicating how it might relate to a dissertation. Questions and discussion will follow. The examination should be about one to one and a half hours in length. Follow up with paperwork with Tracy/Tiffany.

4. **Coursework (NOV/DEC):** Check whether you'll have met all the course requirements for MA by the end of the year.
 - 15 courses (including any transfer credits you approved)
 - four Comp Lit graduate seminars (must have COLT 2000+ number, but not a Directed Study)
 - two graduate seminars — (2000+ level) or equivalent (1000+ with instructor's approval) — in each of three languages, for a total of six seminars
 - From the handbook: "a spread of courses comprising work in all three major genres (poetry, drama, narrative) and covering a significant range of distinct cultural epochs (medieval, romantic, modern, and so forth)"
5. Late Spring/Summer: Make plans for Fourth-Year prospectus meeting (establish and share requirements with the committee—see next checklist)

Checklist for Fourth-Year Graduate Students

Your dissertation adviser is your primary adviser from Year 4 on. Students should share departmental requirements with the committee

Following the completion of the Comparative Project Exam (by May 30 of their third year), students name at least three members of their dissertation committee, of which one must be a member of Comparative Literature. Students should submit the doctoral thesis prospectus to their dissertation committee **by September 30** of their fourth year (i.e., Semester VII). The student will schedule a collective meeting with the committee for the approval of the prospectus by **October 30**. Students will then send copies to the DGS and department administrator to file.

Typically, the prospectus will include a clear statement of the objective of the dissertation, a discussion of the issues involved, a selective account of the key sources (primary, secondary, and methodological), and a chapter outline. **Normally, it may run to about 10-15 double-spaced pages plus bibliography.**

If a student changes topic or advisor, a new prospectus may need to be filed; this decision falls within the discretion of the dissertation advisor.

After Year 4, your dissertation adviser remains your primary adviser.