Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

PROGRAM IN COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK

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WELCOME (BACK) TO COMPARATIVE LITERATURE!

Whether you're new to the program or a seasoned member of our community, chances are you have at least a few questions about our program. From navigating Rutgers bureaucracy, to planning a graduate student event, to preparing for exams and getting around town, we've got you covered!

We hope you'll find this handbook helpful. If you have any questions about the topics included here, feel free to contact any of the contributors, whose names you'll find at the end of the handbook.

NAVIGATING RUTGERS BUREAUCRACY

Paying your Term Bill

Before each semester, graduate students need to pay their term bill. You can view your term bill through the online student accounting system. These fees can be paid online with a credit card (for a processing fee), via e-check, or in person at the Cashier's Office. Also, students can enroll in the Rutgers University Tuition Payment Plan (RUTPP) to make payments on this bill throughout the semester.

For those students that are Fellows or Teaching Assistants, you'll need to see Fatimah for the Tuition Remission form (referred to as RT100), This form covers the tuition portion of your term bill ensuring you are not charged tuition for that semester (the RT100 must be completed each semester). This form is also used by Accounting when reconciling tuition payments to make sure your tuition is charged to the correct account. Fatimah will enter the account number and sign the form at which time you'll need to take it to the Cashier's Office along with a copy of your term bill.

For those of you that are Fellows or Teaching Assistants, do not be alarmed if your tuition charges appear on your term bill; it can take up to one to three months for the charge to be removed by Student Accounting.

With regard to the fees that appear on your term bill, Fellows are responsible for payment of these fees (they are not covered by your fellowship in most cases). Teaching Assistants do not pay any fees as they are covered by their Teaching Assistant position.

Health Insurance

One of the benefits of being a graduate student in Comparative Literature is access to health insurance.

During your time on Fellowship, the Student Health Insurance Plan (SHIP) is part of your financial package and is covered by the Graduate School. You do not need to pay the insurance fee added to your term bill; the charge will be removed later. You will be automatically enrolled in the Graduate Fellows Health Insurance Plan with UnitedHealthcare Student Resources (UHCSR), though you need to complete the online enrollment form with UHCSR.

During your time as a Teaching Assistant, you will be eligible for the New Jersey State Health Benefits Plan (SHBP). You will learn about all of your options during TA Orientation, and depending on which level of coverage you choose, you will have a certain amount deducted from your bi-monthly paycheck.

In both cases, if you want to waive the health insurance, you must complete a waiver form each semester at University Health Plans (universityhealthplans.com). If you waive the State Health Benefits Plan (SHBP), you need to complete another waiver form for the Student Health Insurance Plan (SHIP). Check the Rutgers website on Health Insurance Eligibility for detailed instructions.

Regarding the use of Student Health Centers on campus: Students who register for fewer than 9 total credits will have to pay a fee for service if they wish to use Rutgers Student Health services, even if they purchase the student health insurance. The primary impact will be on advanced students who registered for one credit per semester to maintain their full-time student status.

Getting a NJ Driver's License

Are you interested in getting a NJ driver's license? Here is the guide for first-time applicants and those who want to transfer their out-of-state or international license to NJ. All these applications are handled by the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission (NJMVC). Search "NJMVC" on Google Maps. NJMVC licensing centers in Edison and South Plainfield are relatively close to New Brunswick.

To apply for your first driver's license, you can get an initial permit by scheduling an appointment with NJMVC and bringing the required materials. After getting the initial permit, you can start

practicing driving and planning for the written exam and road tests. The tests need to be finished within two years. You will get the license after passing both.

For transferring your out-of-state license, you can schedule an appointment with a NJMVC center. Check the NJMVC website to see what documents are needed (usually your current driver's license and 6 Points of ID). The written exam and road test are waived. You also need to transfer your vehicle title/registration to NJ.

For transferring your out-of-country (international) license, you need to prepare more materials and face contingent situations. The official website requires the following: a valid foreign license with translation, proof of identity, proof of NJ residency, proof of Social Security Number, and verification of lawful presence in the US. Previous experiences show that international students can transfer their driver's licenses before receiving their SSN; they will be asked to sign a form that waives the SSN requirement at the DMV. The official website states that with all criteria met, the written exam and road test could be waived, though at times, applicants may be asked to take the written exam.

The Glory of Parking Permits

Parking permits are extremely convenient and affordable for graduate students. Fellows and TAs are eligible for Faculty/Staff parking permits, which allow parking in various lots on all Rutgers New Brunswick campuses. Graduate students pay about $50 for parking for the academic year (fees vary for Fellows and TAs; fees for Fellows are based on the labor union's parking agreement and fees for TAs are calculated based on a salary scale). With the permit, graduate students can park in all lots that say Faculty/Staff Common. If you live on campus, you also have access to your resident lot. For an additional $15 you can purchase a key card for access to gated lots. Campus maps provide a comprehensive list of parking lots and their designations. More information can be found on the Rutgers Institutional Planning and Operations (IP&O) website.

Applying for a parking permit for the first time could be complicated as the rules and requirements are subject to change. Fortunately, there is a way to navigate the process. The parking service is provided by the Department of Transportation Services (DOTS). After locating the parking service on its website, you can contact the DOTS via a service called "DOTS Help," where you can submit a "request form" and speak to an agent. Your case will be handled until it is resolved. You can also ask the DOTS if you can receive a temporary parking permit for the first few weeks of the semester.

Becoming a New Jersey Resident

Applying for New Jersey residency is a process domestic students who are not from the state undertake optionally.

The first thing you will need to do is fill out the Residency Analysis Form provided by the Registrar's Office. The 6-page form requires information from a number of forms including your tax returns as well as that of your spouse and marriage license. Also be prepared to provide information on where you've resided and worked for the past four years.

Once you've completed the form do not sign it until you are in the presence of a notary. Remember that there are notaries on campus, so it isn't necessary to procure this service elsewhere. Since the form is to be submitted at the Administrative Services Building, the ideal location to sign and notarize the form is across the hall. Present this notarized copy with the proof of residency documentation mentioned in the Registrar's instructions document. These include: leases, deeds, voter registration materials, driver's license, and/or monthly bills with your NJ address.

The more documentation and information you provide the stronger your case will be. The staff there is friendly and amenable to questions and their decisions generally take no longer than a week. Although the last page of the form suggests that you need to obtain certification of your tax return from the NJ Division of Taxation, when asked about it in person, the staff said that wasn't necessary.

COMPARATIVE LITERATURE POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Comparative Literature Administrative Office Staff

The Comparative Literature administrative office is the first point of contact for administrative issues. The office supports the Chair, the Graduate and Undergraduate Directors as well as graduate and undergraduate students. Generally speaking, this office processes appointments, handles the budget and payroll, schedules classes, assists with registration, processes forms and expense reports, organizes colloquia, and assists with conferences, amongst many other tasks.

<u>Personal Information and Payroll</u>

The University's Payroll and Budget system is managed through the myRutgers portal. It allows you to update all your personal data (phone, address, emergency contacts), as well as view your paycheck, compensation history, tax forms, voluntary deductions and direct deposit. It is essential

that this information is kept up to date, as the administrative office relies on it to process payroll and ensure accurate payment, among other purposes.

It is also important to make sure your information (name, telephone, location, email) is current in this system because it automatically populates the University's main website when searching for "People" on the Home Page's search area.

In addition, anytime you change your home address, phone number, address or email, please notify the Comp Lit office so we can immediately update our department directories

International Students

With regard to students who are not US citizens, you are ultimately responsible for all your paperwork regarding your status (renewal of passport, DS2019s, I-20s). When documents require the Graduate Director's approval, bring them to the administrative office. Familiarize yourself with the International Student and Scholar Services website.

Always remember to have a signed I-20 form before taking any international trips. The signature expires in a year, and you should remember to get that updated prior to travelling.

Website

For updates that you want added to or deleted from your student information on our website, please send by email to Fatimah Fischer, the program coordinator.

Above all, think of Comparative Literature as your home away from home—a welcoming and supportive community where we're always here to help you in any way we can.

GRADUATE STUDENT EVENTS & INITIATIVES

GSA: The Graduate Student Association

GSA stands for Graduate Student Association. Its mission is to "further graduate student interests; graduate student-University relations; and the social, cultural, and academic enrichment of graduate students." GSA is a body of students representing their respective Graduate Student Organizations (GSOs). GSA convenes monthly and at the beginning of each semester for funding allocation.

Each year, two student representatives from Comparative Literature will lead our GSO, usually serving as President and Treasurer. These are voluntary positions. The GSA representative is

responsible for preparing funding applications, signing funding contracts, and relating important information between GSA and Comparative Literature's graduate students. The responsibilities of the GSA representatives are front-heavy, meaning that there are many responsibilities at the beginning of the semester and taper off quickly. New GSA representatives generally rely upon the experiences of the previous representatives for guidance, especially when it comes to preparing funding requests.

Within Comparative Literature's GSO, the representatives are responsible for collaborating with the other members of the GSO to produce funding requests for events and to purchase durable goods. A GSA-funded event must be organized by graduate students and open to all Rutgers graduate students. It should be adequately publicized and acknowledge the sponsorship from the GSA. Post-event reports should be submitted. Specific duties and requirements can be found on the GSA website.

Joining the Rutgers Union

Joining the Rutgers Union is an important step in ensuring that your voice is heard as a graduate worker. The primary purpose of the Union is to advocate for fair wages, improved working conditions, healthcare, and other essential rights for graduate students employed by the university. By becoming a member, you strengthen collective bargaining power and help shape policies that directly impact your academic and professional life. The Union also provides a vital support network and resources during contract negotiations, grievances, and workplace challenges. Together, we protect our rights and advance equity and justice within the Rutgers community.

When you join the program as a fellow, remember to visit this link to register for membership in the Union. While you are a fellow, you will have to pay a monthly membership of $10, and the payment will be automatically canceled at the end of an academic year.

Graduate Student Events

You are expected to attend all departmental functions—including the faculty lecture series, graduate colloquia, distinguished speaker events, dissertation defenses, and other program activities. Your standing in the program is based in part on your active participation in these events.

Graduate students in Comparative Literature organize different kinds of events. The two most common types are the biennial graduate student conference and invited guest talks or workshops with the students.

The biennial graduate student conference is often scheduled for the spring semester in March or April. It could be a one-day or two-day event with a keynote talk(s) and panel presentations. The conference organization needs the commitment of time and energy. But it is a rewarding experience, particularly for future job applications. Some postdoctoral positions expect their candidates to organize a conference during their appointment. Students in their second and third years are in the best position to organize a conference. They can accumulate relevant experience before entering the job market. If you are interested, see the "Tips for Planning the Graduate Student Conference."

The invited guest talks could be organized by graduate students themselves, although it needs more coordination because graduate students do not have funding to cover the guest's honorarium and travel costs. To host a talk, students need to secure funding from the program and other research organizations (e.g., Center for European Studies, Center for Chinese Studies, Center for Latin American Studies, and Global Asias). Besides that, when faculty in the program organize a conference of their own, our students participate, especially if they are part of a special seminar organized that semester around that theme.

Tips for Planning the Graduate Student Conference

So you want to plan a graduate conference? Great! You are sure to come up with your own strategies as you go along, but here are some tried and true tips to get you started with putting on a successful event.

What kind of event? The graduate conference typically includes an invited keynote talk(s) and panel presentations relevant to the conference theme. Under this template, there are still many things to consider: Will it be a one-day or two-day event? Will the panel need a chair and a discussant? Will you ask panelists to do presentations or submit pre-circulated papers for discussion?
Suggested Deadline: You may not be 100% sure of all of the details in September, but you should have a rough idea of the key pieces (speaker vs. workshop, for example), but by the end of October, you should aim to have: a preliminary description of the event to use for fundraising and early advertising.

Deciding on the conference theme: Finding an appropriate conference theme is crucial. As a chair or co-chair, you can decide on a conference title relevant to your interests, which will give you the motivation to spearhead the event and meet people interested in similar topics. It is also nice to collect ideas from our cohorts to pin down an engaging conference theme. Start drafting a CFP when you finalize the conference theme.

Assemble a committee: Planning an event involves a lot of planning, and the best way to do this is to get as many members of the community involved in as concrete a way as possible. This means forming specific subcommittees for specific tasks.
Suggested Deadline: Early September

Recommended subcommittees:

Chair and Co-Chair (Main Convenors): 1-2 people who are spearheading the event planning. The chair may have come up with the key idea for the event, and one of their main responsibilities is to manage the sub-committees and tie up loose ends in order to make sure the event goes smoothly. This position requires the most investment and as such is very rewarding.

Marketing & Communications: 2-4 people in charge of writing the Call for Papers and writing up the text for advertizing. This team is also in charge of reading abstracts if presentations are being solicited. This team includes the chair and co-chair, as well as an additional 1-2 team members who have a clear sense of the vision of the event.

Advertizing: 1-2 people send out the call for papers to program administrators at the various schools whose students you seek to invite to your event (if applicable); posting the CFP and the event information on social media; working with *Marketing & Communications* to create posters for the event; working with Comp. Lit. administrative staff to print posters; placing posters around campus (additional assistance may be required for this last step).

Development: "Development" is a nifty term from the non-profit and for-profit sectors, which basically means "fundraising." The development team, spearheaded by the co-chairs, will reach out to departments, programs, and other campus entities at Rutgers that might be willing to help fund the event. If you decide to use GSA funds, you will need the help of your GSO representative to ensure that the event planners and vendors adhere to GSA guidelines for reimbursement (including gathering the necessary signatures at events).

Crew: Like a good theater crew, this team is in charge of setting up and tearing down the event space. Never fear, this usually just means moving around some chairs and tables, but it's an important job that takes place a day before and the day of the actual event.

Picking the date(s): This means finding out which dates have already been reserved for other events; which dates should be excluded because they are the dates of key conferences (NeMLA, ACLA, for example). At this stage, you will not be able to settle on a final date, but rather a set of dates to run by your venue and your guest speaker (if you're having one).
Suggested Deadline: Early October

Choose a venue: Will your event be held at the CompLit seminar room? If so, check with the administrative office for its availability. If you require more space, you can consider the following venues: Teleconference Center in Alexander Library; Pane Room in Alexander Library; CSRC Multipurpose Room A and B in CAC student center, 2nd floor; CSRC 411 Room A/B/C in CAC student center, 4th floor. Check with our program leaders and administrator on how to book these venues. It is important to note that all university departments can reserve them for events, so you should book them soon after you identify the event date(s).

Sending out "Invitations": Invite your guest speaker(s) for the keynote talk(s), if you're having one, mention the dates you are considering but state that you will defer to their scheduling within the options available. Once they have confirmed their availability, you can work on confirming your venue and printing that information on advertisements.
Suggested Deadline: End of October.

Send out the Call for Papers: if you're soliciting presentations. Also send early "Save the Date" emails to programs across campus and to schools in the Consortium.
Suggested Deadline: Early November.

Begin fundraising: Now that you have a call for papers and/or a "Save the Date" email, it is time for fundraising. Before sending out emails to seek funding support, discuss with our program chair and graduate director how to make a budget plan.

There are two methods of raising funds. First, contact the previous conference organizers and access the spreadsheet that preserves a record of which departments/programs/centers have previously co-sponsored the Comp Lit graduate conference. You can reach out to their leaders and kindly ask if they could make contributions to your event. Secondly, you may use the GSA fund for the conference. Work with your GSO Representative to request the necessary funds and figure out the steps for reimbursement.

Funds should be requested for (as applicable): guest speaker's travel, hotel, meals, and honorarium; breakfast, lunch, dinner for the event (as needed); funds for printing posters for your event; funds for venue rental. Please note that the funds from Rutgers sponsors are transferred directly to the Comparative Literature Program, so you will work with the program administrator to use them.

The co-chairs and Development will also need to ensure that all vendors are paid in advance of your event (as much as possible) in order to avoid trouble accessing funds after the event.
Suggested Deadline: Early to Mid November

Food and drink: Once you've determined the vision for your event, you'll need to have a very clear sense of how much food you want to provide. Will you provide breakfast and lunch for an all-day conference or workshop? Will there be cookies and coffee outside of your guest speaker's talk? Will there be a post-conference or post-workshop dinner for your guest speaker and a few graduate students? Talk to CompLit's Administrative staff for help on estimating the right amount of food. Be sure also to keep in mind any budgetary restrictions you need to account for (such as the GSA's spending limits).
*Suggested Deadline**:** Up to a month before, order the food. If you are working with GSA, you will need to request funds for food in your initial funding request. You must then submit sign-in sheets (include title and association for each attendee) taken at each meal as well as itemized, original receipts in order to reimburse the relevant vendors.*

Advertizing: Now that you have all the details – the who, what, when, where – email updated blurbs **including names of all co-sponsors** to the relevant programs and campus entities; get on the relevant Rutgers calendars (SAS Digest, GSA calendar, etc.); print and put up posters for your event (Rutgers has preferred printing service suppliers that can print large mounted posters, and you can work with our program administrator to make a purchase order); post the event information on the social media. Are there any undergraduate classes or graduate seminars that have people who might be interested in attending your event (perhaps for extra credit)? Let their instructors know! You're almost there!
Suggested Deadline: Start advertising regularly about a month before as well as the weeks leading up to your event—including the week-of and the day-of.

Set up and tear down: The day before and the day of your event you'll need all hands on deck to ensure your event runs smoothly. The good news is, with all the advertising and the excitement you've been generating for your event you'll be sure to have the support of the Comp. Lit. community for what you've been planning.

Take some time to enjoy the fruits of your labor! Seeing your community come together is a beautiful thing. Enjoy the keynote(s), the panel discussion, and the post-conference gathering. Remember to clean up the conference venue and restore its original layout.

Post-conference wrap-up: After your incredible event, you'll have to make sure that everyone gets paid. When using money from the GSA fund, you pay first via your own card and then get reimbursed. Keep receipts for the reimbursement.

Send out Thank You Letters: Send letters to each sponsor thanking them for their monetary contribution. Give a little summary of the event.

Taking a Course in the Consortium

When planning for the course you want to take, please refer to our PhD program's course requirements, which include our most up to date info on course requirements, consortium courses, language requirements, exams, etc.

During your course work, you may plan to take a seminar at the participating schools in the consortium like Princeton, NYU, Columbia, CUNY, etc. Plan ahead: Go through the course offerings ahead of time in the respective schools, choose a course of your liking and write to the DGS. Once you get an approval from the Director, you will have to fill out an IUDC registration form and coordinate between the offices at Rutgers and the chosen school. Remember, you can only take up to two seminars using the IUDC exchange program, over the duration of your coursework. These courses may be taken starting in the second year of graduate study, and students may not enroll in more than one consortium course per semester.

Once you complete the seminar, the grades usually are sent directly by the respective school. It takes some time (around a couple of weeks) for the grade to appear on your transcript. If not, you will have to contact the PhD program administrator, currently Ben Arenger, to resolve the issue.

EXAMS AND DISSERTATION

How the Exams Process Works*

The exams for Comparative Literature are in two parts. The first part is written, and each of the three professors on your exam committee writes a question for you. The more you have been in communication with your committee before the exams, the better the chance that they will know what kinds of questions they should ask to send you in the right direction. You select two questions and write an essay in response to each over the course of one weekend. You receive the exam questions on a Friday and return the essays by the following Monday morning. Each essay usually ranges from 10-20 pages. The questions are primarily based on your research interest and the reading lists that you arrange in conversation with your committee members. You need to prepare a list with each of your committee member, addressing a particular field, and all three combined

should sum up to a hundred or more titles. Forward your entire list, ideally with an exam rationale, to the DGS, also specifying the dates for the exam.

About a week or two later, you will meet with your committee for the oral part. Expect them to ask you about the third question you chose not to write about, as well as anything else they want to ask about your exam list, the essays you wrote, and the direction you intend to take in your dissertation. Your advisor can take the lead in facilitating the oral exam, but you can feel free to ask another member of the committee who might have more experience with your research.

It is much more difficult than one might assume to assemble your entire committee in the same room at the same time, so make sure you plan well ahead when scheduling your oral exam. The same is true of dissertation defenses, and though professors have been known to Zoom in to defenses, it is obviously not ideal.

Please note that all exams are held in the Comp. Lit. seminar room. Be sure to contact the administrative office to check the availability of this room.

In the time between the exams and the prospectus and between the prospectus and the final dissertation, the project will inevitably evolve. So long as your project doesn't radically change (without approval of the advisor and committee and the program chair) these fluctuations are nothing to worry about. This means that the best way to approach the exams is as an important testing ground for your ability to compile a bibliography, which you can read, synthesize and speak to, and your ability to draw from those materials and propose an independent project. What you end up with after your exams is not the final statement of your project, so don't let it overwhelm and paralyze you. Once you have a preliminary list, start reading! Once you have prepared the materials on your list, don't put off the exam simply because you feel you don't know everything there is to know about your texts. You will never know everything you need to know, and at some point, you need to just stop reading and start writing.

After you pass the exam, you will fill out a document provided by our administrative office staff where you will list all your coursework and grades at Rutgers (a printout of your courses/grades will be provided to you by this office.). You will need your entire committee to sign this form to certify that you passed, so don't let them leave without doing so. Soon after that, you will receive a letter from the Graduate School certifying that you have been promoted to candidacy for the doctorate. In academic lingo, at this point you are ABD (all but dissertation). Generally, once you finish your coursework and research credits and your exams, you will become a part-time student. You must register for research credits each semester to stay enrolled in the program; see the section on research credits below. If your student status for visa purposes or for financial aid purposes will be affected by going part-time, you can speak to the program director about how to maintain full-time status.

Language Exams

Before taking your qualifying exams, you must first complete the language requirements for the degree. This includes demonstrating your speaking ability in one language and your reading ability in two additional languages. Speaking ability can be demonstrated through an interview with a faculty member proficient in the language. Reading ability can be demonstrated in one of two ways. You may either enroll in a free summer reading knowledge program offered by The Language Center at Rutgers, or you may take a Graduate Language Proficiency Test in your chosen language. Here, you will be asked to translate a paragraph given in your chosen language to English, and the results will be sent by the Language Center directly to the Director of Graduate Studies. Please book the slot for exam early on, since they are limited and occur after considerable intervals. If your desired language is not offered by the Language Center, you might approach a faculty at Rutgers, proficient in the language, to hold a translation exam for you or conduct an interview. This faculty member will sign the Language Proficiency Form, available on the Comparative Literature Program page and email the results to the DGS directly, copying the candidate.

Your Intellectual Entourage: Putting Together Your Exam Committee

Start Building Relationships Early: Early in your academic career, start taking classes with people whose research interests you share. If there is someone that drew you to Rutgers in the first place (and even if you don't have your sights set on a particular advisor just yet), get in touch early, meet over coffee, take their classes, get to know each other. Go beyond being a passive member of the class and meet with your professors about your papers, seek their feedback on conference abstracts and fellowship application materials. This will allow you to have ample time to get to know each other's working styles and personalities. Your professors will learn about your interests and work ethic, and you will get a sense of the kind of mentoring, support, and availability your professors are willing and able to provide. Getting started early is especially important in the event that your desired committee member will be on leave in a subsequent semester.

Remain Open to New Possibilities: Although you would have written a personal research statement while entering your graduate school, it is more than likely that your project will transform in unexpected ways while you are here. One factor that will undoubtedly influence you will be the courses you take and the classmates and mentors you encounter, so even as you plan on meeting key faculty members in your field(s), also take the time to enjoy coursework as an

opportunity to let yourself explore new territory. You may find yourself drawn to a new subfield or get to know a professor who really speaks to the kind of scholar you'd like to become.

Chemistry is Key: If we had a single piece of advice to share, this would be it. When choosing your intellectual entourage, be sure you work with people who you know are 100% in your corner. This doesn't mean choosing advisors whose work you seek to emulate, but rather, go with your gut and seek out a committee whose members are excited about your work and have demonstrated an interest in helping you grow.

So, now that you have your dream team picked out in your mind, how do you actually form a committee?

Consider Consulting your Graduate Director: When you feel ready to form your committee and begin thinking about an exam date, talk it over with the Graduate Director. This was done in one particular case where a student's goal was to take the exams ahead of the usual timeline, given the fact that this individual felt ready and came into Comp. Lit. with an MA. During your chat, you might find out whether members have worked together in the past and you'll also get peace of mind knowing that you aren't leaving any holes open in terms of your selection.

Just Ask: Once you're ready, be in touch with the professor you would like to be your exam chair. Express your interest in working with them and indicate whom else you are planning to ask to be on your committee. Of course, indicate why they are a good fit -- their work on your subject, their mentorship, etc. Once they have agreed, reach out to the other prospective members, indicating whom you've asked to be your chair and on the committee. We favor the email approach because it allows the receiver to consider your request without having to react on the spot. This is a considerate thing to do, given that our professors mentor several graduate students through their exams and dissertations.

Once they've all said "yes," you've got a committee! Celebrate the fact that you've built your exam crew!

… and then start thinking about the exams...

Research Credits

You will need to register for 24 research credits before defending, and they are to be taken **only** after passing the oral and written exams. It is very important for you to take them while you are in your award package, taking 6 research credits for each of the following four semesters after the exams. If they're not taken while in package, you'll have to pay for them, which is not cost

effective. After you've taken these 24 credits and still have not defended, you'll need to register for one research credit per semester to stay enrolled.

Preparing for Exams

After you form a committee, or even before the committee is settled, you can start compiling your exam list. The exam list comprises approximately 100 titles. The proportion of primary to secondary texts is up to you, but many faculty will advise you not to overemphasize theoretical or secondary texts at the expense of primary sources, because you want to be able to have a firm grasp on the literary (or filmic or other primary) field(s) which you will write your dissertation on. You can always read more secondary sources as you write the dissertation.

The great thing about the way the exams are structured in Comp Lit is that they are entirely focused on helping you find a project. You create your own exam list based on a bibliography of primary and secondary texts that will be the starting point for your dissertation. Some students, in consultation with their committee, may choose to include canonical texts in their exam lists which may not be directly discussed in the dissertation, but which they deem essential to have read and understood before pursuing the dissertation. But in general terms, Comp Lit exams are not structured around general topic areas of expertise outside of what you are working on. In other departments, students usually create lists based on time-periods or specific subject areas, and then move to establishing an independent bibliography for their own project. Each department or program approaches exams differently, so if the members of your committee are not Core Faculty of Comp Lit, you may want to clarify the exam goals and procedures for Comp Lit with them, or share the attached memo with them, so that everyone is on the same page in terms of the expectations of the program.

Another note: your exam committee should ideally be composed of faculty who are appointed to the Program Your committee chair (your advisor) must be a Core or Affiliate Faculty.

The difficult part about the exam process in Comp Lit is that you have so much leeway in creating your list, so it can take a long time to get one established if you are not drawing on an earlier project or an MA thesis. The upside to this is that once the exams are over, you will have two pieces of writing that can lead you directly to your dissertation prospectus. The best thing to do is to meet with your committee members early and often, as they will likely cast a lot of suggestions for titles and materials. You can also meet with any other faculty whom you think might provide helpful advice and suggestions. Collect all the names and titles you can and start scanning items and bibliographies, making lists of what you might include and what you might keep on the back burner for when you actually start writing the dissertation.

100 titles is a surprisingly small number once you get into it. At some point you will have to just make some choices, with the knowledge that just because something doesn't end up on the list, doesn't mean that it cannot be included in your bibliography for the dissertation. Many students begin the process with a preliminary list which they have approved by their committee, but as they start reading the project inevitably changes or becomes more focused, so they often revise the list several times before the actual exam. The list should be submitted to the DGS of the Program in the semester before the exams are taken, but that doesn't mean it cannot be altered here and there. Just continue to be in touch with your committee and seek their advice and approval for whatever you are doing, and the process can be as fluid or fixed as you and your committee want it to be. You should talk to more advanced students as well, to see how they put together their lists and found the balance they were looking for.

Within the list itself, students often divide the items into groups based on major topic areas or linguistic and historical categories. Some professors recommend including a few guiding questions for each section—questions the student hopes to answer by reading or viewing that selection of works. This approach can help you clarify the purpose of each text and also assist your committee in understanding the direction of your research. In some cases, they might even draw on these questions when developing your exam questions.

Writing the Prospectus

As outlined in our program website, “the dissertation prospectus is a succinct document of no more than ten to fifteen double-spaced pages, plus an extensive bibliography. It should contain the central questions and arguments underpinning the dissertation along with a tentative chapter breakdown.” Specific requirements for the prospectus can vary. Since most faculty in Comp Lit are based in other departments, each advisor tends to expect something different.

The prospectus is written to contextualize your research, stake out your claims, and clarify your contribution to the field. No one really expects your argument to be in final form. What's more important is that you can sketch out the lines along which your project will develop. This means that you should be able to state what your research questions are, as well as what field(s) the project fits into; how it contributes to these fields, and how the project constitutes a timely contribution; what theories you will be working with, and what your core group of texts looks like.

A few potentially useful exercises in starting this kind of writing:

1. Sketch out how you came to the project. What questions or interests led you there? How has the project changed? Sometimes the best way to get a sense of a project is to excavate the foundations.

2. Choose one of your favorite books of criticism and pick apart the introduction. What sort of questions is it asking? How does it situate itself in the field?

3. Imagine that you had to explain your project to an undergraduate. Write three different paragraph-long summaries describing the same project in different ways. Now try condensing those paragraphs into three sentences.

4. Play around with your chapter breakdown. If you have thematic chapter divisions, what happens when you make these chronological? If you've divided the chapters according to theoretical focus, what happens when you divide them according to major author? Find three different ways of dividing your project into chapters.

5. Once you've decided on your chapters, try cutting out one of them. Is there one that doesn't fit as well as the others? Every grad student has commitment issues when it comes to the dissertation. Trimming off the excess just means that you'll have more material for future article publications.

6. The best guide we have found to the conventions of prospectus/grant writing is the one put together by our own Ben Sifuentes-Jáuregui, which can be found in the Appendix.

Writing the Dissertation

Now that you've passed your exams and successfully submitted your prospectus (congrats!), you're faced with a seemingly endless and somewhat frightening period of time in which you are to produce a dissertation. There are many ways to make it look scarier than it is. For example, you can think of it as 1) a book, and 2) as a book that will define your worth as a scholar forever. Most of us do consider the dissertation through these angles at some point, but the truth is the thesis is a draft of a book, and that it is perfectly reasonable to think of it as a collection of long, polished seminar papers. Frequently, coherence emerges over time, quite organically, and the whole project is very different (and often more interesting) than what you had originally conceived.

One of the most difficult parts of this entire process is to get started. Some people realize all of a sudden that they have no idea how to write a paper anymore. It is very helpful to create a document called the "Dissertation Log" in which you have kept track of all your ideas, organizing them by date (this tip, and many others, can be found in Joan Bolker's *Writing Your Dissertation in Fifteen Minutes a Day*. Another useful resource is *The Clockwork Muse* by Eviatar Zerubavel). This system works because you are writing from the very beginning, which gives a nice sense of

progress. Moreover, your ideas are all conveniently kept in one place. When you start drafting your first chapter, you can simply go back to your log and arrange your thoughts coherently. It is likely that you will spend several months reading and taking notes before you actually start writing your first chapter. This is normal, and you will see your argument take shape gradually and perhaps a bit chaotically during that period.

Once you've written your first chapter, you can do one of two things: either turn it into an article that you will submit for publication (you'll need at least one to get on the job market) or move onto the rest of the dissertation and immediately start drafting your next chapters. There are advantages to both strategies, and you will need to discuss these options with your advisor in due time. Keep in mind that writing samples are often requested when applying to dissertation fellowships and jobs, and that having twenty coherent, polished pages often comes in handy. Do not try to condense your fifty-page argument into an article-length text. Rather, pick the part that you find the most interesting (or marketable) and rework it into a paper.

Revisions:
Receiving negative feedback, even moderately negative, can be terribly disheartening, especially in fields like ours where scholars work on their own. Yet it is the only way to improve the quality of anyone's work. Keep in mind that this is an experience that every researcher goes through. Try to get back to writing as quickly as you can. Then do your best to integrate the advice you've received, either clarifying your arguments, backing them up more convincingly, or transforming them. But also feel entitled to defend your work if you think that it is being unjustly denigrated. It is possible that you will receive contradictory feedback from different readers or committee members. Make sure you understand the rationale behind each of these remarks and see how they fit into your project at large, then choose the direction that you want your dissertation to take.

Time Management:
We have come across two very helpful tools against procrastination. One of them is an app called "Freedom" that disconnects your computer from the internet for a set amount of time. You'll need to restart the computer if you want to go online before your set time is up, which is tedious enough that you won't do it too often. The second tool is the "Pomodoro technique," which goes as follows: you write for 25 minutes and then take a 5-minute break. After four segments, or two hours, you take a longer break and then go back to work for a couple of hours. You're also supposed to write down the date on a sheet of paper, and make a mark at the end of each 25-minute unit. There are many "Pomodoro" apps that will ring after 25/5 minutes. We have found this rhythm to be surprisingly productive, and highly recommend it.

We have also observed that doing focused dissertation-related work for two hours every morning was the best way to make steady progress. The afternoon can then be devoted to teaching, applications, conferences, publications, or more dissertation-related work if you have time. Two

hours is good because it's long enough to actually get something done, but short enough that you need to stay concentrated if you want to write, edit, or read a set number of pages. It's also a seemingly innocuous amount of time, so it'll be hard to justify *not* doing it.

Give yourself deadlines and respect them, even if that means that your work may at first not be as great as you had envisioned it. The beauty of the dissertation is that there are many, many opportunities for revision. It will help you stay in good spirits to see how much progress you're making, even if you know in the back of your mind that it all needs to be revised extensively. Deadlines are also useful because they give you a chance to take real breaks: for instance, if you finish your first chapter before Winter break, then we think it's perfectly legitimate to do no dissertation work for those three weeks.

LIFESTYLE

Living in New Brunswick

New Brunswick is a great place to live if you like being close to campus as well as various restaurants and nightlife. Stationed between New York and Princeton, New Brunswick is an ideal place for students without cars. Graduate students mostly prefer staying in Highland Park, which is a quieter (sometimes safer?) residential area, with a variety of restaurants, a grocery store, cafes, and a Friday Farmer's Market... It takes around twenty minutes to walk from Highland Park to the College Ave campus. Buses 810 and 814 run between Highland Park to New Brunswick.

a. Apartments in New Brunswick

In New Brunswick, there are a variety of large apartment complexes, if you are looking to rent an apartment within a larger building. We have come across the following apartments ordered generally from the lowest to highest cost of rent (there is an asterisk on the ones that a student seriously considered when apartment searching.):

- Raritan Crossing
- The Gardens at Raritan
- Livingston Terrace
- The Harrison
- Birchwood Terrace
- Riverside Towers
- Landing Lane*
- Colony House*
- Riverwatch Commons*

- Skyline Towers
- Plaza Square Apartments*
- The Vue
- The George

We recommend Riverwatch Commons, Plaza Square, and Rockoff Hall for their convenient location in downtown New Brunswick. However, these are pricier apartments, and may be affordable only if you share an apartment with a roommate(s).

b. On-Campus Graduate Student Living Options

Rutgers offers many graduate student options for single graduate student accommodation as well as those looking for family housing. Graduate student housings are available on Busch, Livingston, and Cook/Douglass.

On-campus living can be isolating (unless you build a community there) and since it is not very close to College Ave, students without cars must depend on the Rutgers bus services to take trips to College Ave campus. Some students have complained about the buildings being rather old and moldy. However, this might not be the case with all on-campus housings. Also, one benefit about living in on-campus housing is that in case of weather emergencies, you can be sure that Rutgers will do its best to restore electricity as quickly as possible. Another factor to consider is that living on Busch, Livingston and even Cook/Douglass means you will be isolated from the majority of restaurants and grocery stores in the area, and you will likely need to take the bus or drive whenever you want to do grocery shopping.

For On-Campus Housing Options, check this link.

*Keep in mind that there is a deadline for on-campus housing, which is typically in the spring. Apply early to get your first choice.

Highland Park Apartments and Houses: Ask other graduate students living in Highland Park for available apartments. Some students move out and if you are in prior conversations, the space can be yours. Gated apartments like Montgomery or Park Towne are wonderful options but can be expensive. Keep an eye out on Highland Park Facebook pages (beware of fraud!) and stay in the loop with previous graduate students for available options.

Things to Do in and around New Brunswick

a. Restaurants

The best places for restaurants in New Brunswick are George Street and Easton Avenue. George Street has various chain restaurants and Easton is the place to go for more local restaurants, with diverse cuisines:

- Destination Dogs: A 'gourmet' hot-dog restaurant with a great bar, located on Paterson St.
- Stuff Yer Face: A Rutgers University classic, come here for strombolis and beers. Stuff Yer Face was featured on the "Man v. Food" show and is located on Easton Ave.
- Mamoun's: The best place for falafel with many vegetarian options, located on Easton Ave.
- PJ's: One of the better places for pizza in New Brunswick, located on Easton Ave.
- Old Man Rafferty's: A more upscale restaurant that features basic American fare with a great dessert selection in their "gourmet store." It also has a good brunch buffet on Sundays, on George St.
- Chai Chenak: A great place for Pakistani cuisine on George St.
- Indochine: Also on George St and great for pho, noodles, banh mis.
- Ramen Nagomi: Great place for healing noodle soups and Japanese appetizers.
- Efes: On Easton Ave, for sumptuous Mediterranean food. (Also try out Sahara)
- Dashen: Amazing Ethiopian cuisine on Albany St.

Try out the restaurants in Highland Park like Chef Tan (Chinese), Merey (Venezuelan), Pithari (Greek), La Casita (Mexican), Pad Thai (Thai), among others.

Cafes to go to for study and chat: Khyber, Ellinikon, Penstock, Hidden Grounds, etc.

b. Bars/clubs:

Like the restaurants, bars and clubs in New Brunswick are mostly found around Easton Ave or George St. The bars on Easton Ave. tend to draw more undergraduates, whereas the bars on George Street draw more young professionals and graduate students. Many bars feature different specials depending on the night, such as karaoke or musically themed nights. Here are some recommendations:

- Harvest Moon: Bar and restaurant on George Street. Good for beer.
- Stuff Yer Face: Large bar and great outside area during the warm months. Located on Easton. Try the fishbowl!
- Clydz: Great happy hour! Good bar, popular with graduate students and young professionals.
- Old Bay: Cajun-themed bar and restaurant with a nice outdoor patio. It's on the corner of Church and Nielson.
- World of Beer: A new chain bar and restaurant on George Street that looks like a good place to try different kinds of beer. For the sports minded, there are plenty of TVs to watch your favorite games!
- Ale N Wich: A small, low-key bar on Hamilton St. that plays more indie/alternative music.

c. Tastes of Home and Elsewhere

Campus cuisine of pizza, burgers, and burritos just doesn't cut it and sometimes neither does the selection at the local Stop 'n Shop or The Fresh Grocer. This section offers some information for satisfying homesickness or your average foodie craving with a selection of markets and restaurants catering to these particular appetites.

Local grocery store chains:

- Super Fresh on Raritan Ave in Highland Park
- Fresh Mart on Woodbridge Ave
- ALDI
- Bravo in New Brunswick
- Fresh Mart
- H-Mart

The nearest Trader Joe's and Whole Foods are in Westfield and Princeton respectively, both a 45-minute drive from campus.

H-Mart is a Korean supermarket chain located on RT-27 just north of Highland Park in Edison. Inside and next to H-Mart are two bakeries that are also Korean chains with Parisian themes. H-Mart has some of the cheapest and freshest produce you can get in the Highland Park area.

Asian Food Markets of Piscataway is a good place to find East Asian food items.

Twin City Market in Bridgewater has a wide selection of produce including plantains and sour oranges. National food exports like Gutig water from Ecuador, Colombian garlic sauce and an array of salsas can also be found here. There is also a selection of sweet and savory baked goods including Portuguese bread from Newark.

d. Activities

Check your emails often, as we get weekly/monthly emails from SAS (School of Arts and Sciences) as well as Rutgers that will list upcoming events, both at Rutgers and in the city of New Brunswick. Join the Rutgers Graduate Student Association (GSA) and follow them on Facebook for events for Rutgers graduate students. They often have Thanksgiving dinners, Halloween parties, movie nights, dance classes, yoga classes, and more. Also, join RUPA (Rutgers University Programming Association) and follow them on Facebook. They regularly offer trips for Rutgers students, including low-cost trips to NYC for Broadway shows. The Rutgers International Student Affairs Committee is great for international students and those who just want to meet other graduate students. They offer lots of events that are open to both international and non-international graduate students. The best thing for all these Rutgers organizations is to ask to be on their email

listservs, as that is how they spread information on all their events. Here are few other places in New Brunswick to check out:

- The State Theatre: Located on 15 Livingston Ave, the State Theatre always has many fun events to go to, including concerts, musicals, movies, and a variety of shows, including shows for children. There is a discount for Rutgers students, and they also offer discounts for their shows on Groupon.com.
- George Street Playhouse and Crossroads Theatre: Two theatres located next to the State Theatre, the George Street Playhouse and Crossroads Theatre bring many well- known and obscure plays and musicals to New Brunswick.
- Parks: Buccleuch Park, at the end of College Avenue, is a large park that is great for running or walking and also has soccer and baseball fields as well as a play area for children. There is also Boyd Park near the Douglass Campus.
- New Brunswick City Events: Visit the following website: http://www.newbrunswick.com/ for information regarding city events. During the latter half of spring, summer, and early fall, there are various farmers' markets around the city. The best one is usually on Fridays at the corner of Albany and George St. There is also a Raritan River fair in the fall.
- Rutgers Cinema: Located on Livingston campus, this is a great place to watch recent movies at a great price. It is the only movie theater in New Brunswick that is easily accessible without a car.

e. Recreation

Rutgers Recreation offers a wide variety of inexpensive options for exercise and other activities. Rutgers has gyms on each campus, all of which are free with your student ID. These facilities vary widely in terms of size, equipment, hours, pool access, and crowds, so it is useful to experiment to find one that works with your needs and your schedule. The most popular recreation option, the Fitness Flex Pass, costs $60 for access to fitness classes on all campuses for the whole semester or $30 for the second half of the semester. Rutgers Recreation also offers additional classes including dance, martial arts, yoga, scuba diving, and other sports. In particular, the outdoor activities, like rock climbing, hiking, camping, skiing, etc. are an inexpensive opportunity to get off campus and meet people. These trips are not just for undergraduates--a lot of graduate students and international students take advantage of them. Rutgers Recreation occasionally organizes other trips like a Philly Cheesesteak tour and a trip to the Baltimore Aquarium. Also, at the beginning and the end of each semester many classes and special events are offered for free.

f. Studying or Finding Your "Fortress of Solitude"

Everyone has different needs when it comes to studying, so naturally any effort to universalize would be in vain. The following are some of the default spots and strategies when it comes to finding the optimal place to study on campus and in the neighborhood.

Douglass:

The **Douglass Library** has an excellent silent study area on its top floor with a bathroom connected to the study area. If you study film and need to privately watch something outside of your apartment, the basement's media reserve has private cubicles and rooms designated for individual and small group screenings.

College Avenue:

The **Graduate Reading Room** in the **Alexander Library** is an excellent place to study, particularly when one is new to Rutgers. The area houses a graduate computer lab and dozens of lockers for storing your books and other materials on campus.

The **Graduate Student Lounge** behind Au Bon Pain in the Student Center is a more comfortable space for studying with couches for the occasional nap as well as free food and other events ranging from Yoga to Bible Study every week.

Since both of these areas are significant hubs for graduate students, particularly those in the humanities, you can often find yourself running into a classmate from a seminar you haven't seen in a while and spending the time you'd planned to study socializing.

The **Art History Library** is also popular with graduate students.

Livingston:

The **Kilmer Library.**

If you need a bit of ambient noise, here are some cafes and other study spots in *Highland Park* and *New Brunswick*:

Dunkin' Donuts and **Starbucks** are generally hopping.

Ellinikon and Penstock in Highland Park are great study spaces with plenty of seating and good coffee.

Hidden Grounds on Easton Ave is another study spot with upscale coffee and excellent homemade chai and hot chocolate.

Khyber on Church St. is a great place for chats over chai.

The Barnes and Noble behind the train station can be good for commuters. The upstairs has tables with very comfortable chairs. It is often busy, but is an excellent study spot.

Public libraries in New Brunswick and Highland Park offer an alternative to campus libraries.

Getting Around

a. Getting to NYC or Philadelphia:

Traveling between New Brunswick and NYC:
There are two main public transportation options, train and bus, each having their pros and cons. Most notably, the bus is cheaper than the train, but also a bit bumpier. Try them both to find which one works best for you. Check the relevant websites for current fare information.

By Bus:
Megabus travels between New Brunswick and the Port Authority Bus Terminal in NYC. According to the Megabus website, departures from New Brunswick are located on Albany Street (across from the New Brunswick Railroad Station). Departures from New York are located at Gate 417 the Port Authority Bus Terminal. Some great perks of the bus, aside from the savings, is that there are free Wi-Fi and power outlets. Purchase tickets online in advance -- the earlier your purchase, the cheaper the fare.
Coach also operates service from New Brunswick to Port Authority. Coach buses depart frequently, and schedules are available online. Tickets can be purchased online. From Port Authority, located on West 42nd Street and 8th Avenue, you can easily connect to the NYC Subway, a host of other buses, or just head out to Times Square.

By Train:
New Jersey Transit is NJ's rail system, and to get to NYC, take the Northeast Corridor line in the direction of Newark/New York. If you're headed to NYC, your stop is New York Penn Station. Pro-tip: You want the final stop on the train, not to be confused with an earlier stop called "Newark Penn Station."

New York Penn Station ("Penn Station," for short), located on West 34th street between 7th and 8th avenue, is one of the major transportation hubs in NYC, and here you can connect to the Long Island Railroad (LIRR) for service to Long Island, catch an Amtrak train, or hop on the NYC Subway to get around the city. The Empire State Building and Macy's Herald Square (home of the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade) are nearby attractions.

The return trip is essentially the reverse, but make sure to check that the particular Northeast Corridor train you are boarding will stop at New Brunswick! Although Penn Station is always the final destination for the NYC-bound train, the New Jersey-bound trains include express trains that bypass New Brunswick.

Purchase tickets on the platform using the ticket vending machines, with a ticket agent, or preferably on your smartphone using the NJ Transit mobile app where you can also check train schedules. See njtransit.com for other details. If you'll be traveling between NYC and New Brunswick three round-trips or more per week, then it is worthwhile to invest in the monthly pass available at a discounted student rate.

Traveling between New Brunswick and Philadelphia:
As with travel to NYC, you will want to take the New Jersey Transit's Northeast Corridor line from New Brunswick, but this time in the direction of Trenton, New Jersey's capital. Once there, connect to Philly's metro system, Septa. This train will take you to the three major downtown Philadelphia train stations, including the iconic 30th Street Station, Suburban Station, and Market East Station. From these stations you can connect to other train and subway lines servicing the area. Transfers to Amtrak and Megabus are also available at 30th Street Station.

NJ Transit: http://www.njtransit.com/
MTA: http://new.mta.info/
Septa: http://www.septa.org/
Megabus: http://us.megabus.com/

b. Getting Around New Brunswick

New Brunswick is generally easy to navigate if you don't have a car, thanks to the Rutgers bus system and the NJ transit buses. The Rutgers bus system is pretty good and it is very easy to get to the different campuses. If you have a smartphone, install the **myRutgersmobile app** to see real-time bus schedules: https://it.rutgers.edu/guides/rutgers-mobile-app/ . Keep in mind that buses run on different schedules on the weekend.

NJ Transit Bus: The NJ transit bus system is a good way to visit other parts of central New Jersey. East Brunswick has many large stores, such as Best Buy, Staples, etc. You can also take the bus to go to Highland Park and Edison. The best way to get a sense of the schedules is through Google Maps or on the NJ transit website. Some buses run fairly regularly, others run once an hour. Also, they tend to be 5-10 minutes later than scheduled. Try to get to your stop 5 minutes before scheduled and be prepared to wait 10-15 minutes.

c. Biking

Campus itself is pretty bike friendly. There are generally plenty of bike racks, especially in high traffic areas like the student centers and libraries, and there are bike racks on the front of the buses. Bike paths and designated lanes are somewhat rare on campus, making it necessary to join traffic or walk your bike since New Brunswick and Highland Park prohibit riding on the sidewalk. Drivers' rapport with cyclists in New Brunswick is not great. Getting a bike light is one easy way to improve your safety. Kim's Bike Shop on French Street is a good resource for bike accessories and repair.

Here are some tips for biking:

- As one Rutgers biking mantra goes, "cheap bike, expensive lock." There is an issue with bicycle theft on campus, but not a big one.
- The trail between I-18 and the river starting at the bridge to Highland Park stretching down to the Student Activity Center and Deiner Park is not a viable way of getting to campus. The gate allowing entrance to campus is locked up with chains and generally considered unsafe, especially after dark.
- Although it is technically prohibited, biking on the pedestrian path on the bridge to Highland Park is the safest and most common way to get to New Brunswick. Stay on the south side of the bridge to avoid crossing many lanes of traffic.

<u>Recreational Riding</u>

There are a couple of nice trails in the area worth exploring. The River Road Trail is a paved trail through Johnson Park that begins near the Highland Park side of the RT-27 Albany Street bridge and extends a few miles along the river. The park is home to a small zoo, "East Jersey Olde Towne" Village, and Highland Park's Environmental Center & Native Plant Reserve. The D&R Canal Trail extends from the Landing Lane bridge in New Brunswick and extends 77 miles to Trenton with entry/exit points in Somerset and Princeton. The trail sandwiched between the canal and Raritan River was originally used to transport barges using mules.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTORS

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APPENDIXES

The Official Exams List Memo

The Ph.D. Examination and Prospectus in Comparative Literature

The following is a guide to the Ph.D. exam and prospectus for graduate students and faculty in Comparative Literature at Rutgers. It appears on our website (https://complit.rutgers.edu/academics/graduate/phd-program-mainmenu-172) and in the Graduate Student Handbook.

Ph.D. Exam: Rationale and Description

The Ph.D. qualifying exam is taken after the completion of course work and language requirements. The exam is not a stand-alone event disengaged from dissertation research and writing. Rather, it is an occasion for students to begin formulating ideas and arguments that will be refined and extended in the coming months.

The Ph.D. examination has two components, written and oral. Based on a lengthy and highly individualized reading list, it is designed to test each student broadly and in depth about the major texts (including, if relevant, film and works in other media), topics, theories, and critical histories of the student's chosen field. The reading list, composed by the student with strong input from the chair and other committee members, should include about 100 works that serve as the groundwork for dissertation research and writing. When approved by all members of the committee (usually in the semester before the exam), the list should then be filed with the Graduate Director. The committee submits three questions, of which the student answers two. The written exam takes place over a weekend, and is distributed to the student via email on a Friday at 9 am and returned on a Monday at 12 noon. Normally within two weeks, the committee meets with the student for a one-hour oral exam, the purpose of which is to explore questions raised by the written exam, as well as other topics relevant to the reading list but not covered in the written exam.

Examination Committee

The examination committee consists of three faculty members, a chair and two others. The chair should be Core Faculty in Comparative Literature and is usually the professor who has agreed to direct the student's dissertation. Affiliate Faculty can also chair an examination committee, but only with authorization from the Graduate Director. The other members of the committee should be Core or Affiliate faculty in Comparative Literature. The Graduate Director may grant special permission to include one exam committee member who is not on the Core/Affiliate roster, but

only when Comparative Literature does not have a core or affiliate faculty member who can assist the student in her or his areas of academic and research interests. As soon as the reading list is in place, usually at least one semester before exams are scheduled, students should submit their list to their Graduate Director.

Exam Timing and Preparation

Graduate students in Comparative Literature usually have five-year funding packages. Because of the comparative nature of course work in our field, students entering with a B.A. may not be prepared to take their Ph.D. exam before the end of their third year in the program. By contrast, students entering with an M.A. often take their exam earlier in the third year. Since the timing of the exam thus can vary considerably within a graduate cohort, all students should meet with the Graduate Director to discuss scheduling possibilities at the beginning of their third year.

Exam Procedures, Written and Oral

The committee chair, in concert with the student, chooses a Friday-Monday span for the written exam AND an oral exam date no more than two weeks later. The exam is sent to the student via email on Friday at 9 a.m., and the student returns the complete exam on Monday by noon. Exams usually take place during the semester, including the week before and after the end of classes. Exams scheduled at other times should be approved by all the committee members and the Graduate Director.The orals must take place in the Comparative Literature seminar room, AB-4052. The Program Coordinator in Comparative Literature should be asked to reserve the seminar room for the oral exam.

The Written Exam: The committee chair solicits one question from each committee member, compiles the three questions into one document, and sends it as an email attachment to the Program Coordinator and the Graduate Director on the Thursday before the designated Friday. The document should contain these instructions:

Answer TWO of the following three questions in essay form and return them as an attachment to the Graduate Director and the Program Coordinator by noon on Monday, (day/month). Each of the essays should be between 10 and 20 pages in length. They must also be lucid, thorough, well organized, and footnoted where appropriate.

On the Monday, as soon as s/he receives the student's essays, the Program Coordinator forwards them to the exam committee chair and places a copy in the student's files. The chair then forwards the essays to the other members of the committee. Usually within two weeks, all three committee members read the essays and decide whether the student merits a pass and can go on to orals. If so, the orals date is reconfirmed.

The Oral Exam: Orals should be wide-ranging. The student may be asked to respond to the question s/he did not answer for the written exam or to questions about any of the items on the reading list.In Comparative Literature, students pass or fail their exams; we do not designate “high” or “low” pass. Special commendations can be added later to the student’s file or in a letter of recommendation.

Our two-part doctoral exam, put in place when the Graduate Program was revised in 2003, has proven to be a productive and even enjoyable part of a student’s graduate work at Rutgers. We hear again and again that written exams became building blocks for dissertation chapters. The oral exam has also been a positive and confirming moment of the transition to dissertation writing. Indeed, if committee members deem it appropriate, they can devote the last part of the orals to discussing the dissertation prospectus

Prospectus

The dissertation prospectus is a succinct document of no more than ten to fifteen double-spaced pages, plus an extensive bibliography. It should contain the central questions and arguments underpinning the dissertation along with a tentative chapter breakdown.

The prospectus is due usually a month after the completion of the written and oral doctoral exams. We encourage students to submit the prospectus as soon after the orals as possible with the understanding that writing, once underway, tends to modify most research plans. We want our students to move forward with their work without further delay. A copy of the approved prospectus will be included in the student's file.

Dissertation Committee

A dissertation committee typically includes four members: a director, two committee members, and an "outside" member.

The dissertation director is expected to be a Core faculty member of Comparative Literature. Affiliate faculty can direct dissertations with the approval of the Graduate Director. The dissertation committee normally includes two additional Core or Affiliate faculty members and one (or, under exceptional circumstances, two) "outside" member(s) who may be Rutgers faculty from another department or program or faculty from another university. The Graduate Director must approve any changes to the structure of the committee.

Outside committee members are intended to bring fresh perspectives to the supervision of a student's research as well as an unbiased evaluation of the quality of the work. For these reasons, they must be able to assess the dissertation without conflict of interest.

Dissertation Defense

The dissertation defense is the last exercise to complete the requirements for the doctoral degree in Comparative Literature. Defenses are scheduled in consultation with the committee members and the Graduate Director. All defenses should take place in Comparative Literature seminar room. The committee chair and the defending student must be physically present at the final examination (e.g., presence by teleconference is not acceptable). Ideally, all voting members of the committee must be present at and participate in final examinations. In special circumstances, the Graduate School will allow up to two voting members to participate via electronic communication media such as speaker-phone or video-conference link. Students wishing to take advantage of this option should seek approval from the Graduate Director.

The dissertation defense is open to the public. It begins with the doctoral candidate's presentation of the project and concludes with a round of questions posed by members of the committee and by the audience. Defenses usually take place during the semester, including the week before and after the end of classes. Defenses scheduled at other times of the year should be approved by all the committee members and the Graduate Director.

Once the defense is finished, all members of the committee should sign the Ph.D. candidacy form. In the event that the outside member is unable to attend the defense, his or her written approval or disapproval of the dissertation, prior to the defense, will be an acceptable substitute for a signature on the form. If approval is not unanimous, a letter from the dissenting member(s), in which the reasons for disapproval are briefly indicated, must accompany the dissertation. This letter shall be addressed to the Dean of the Graduate School-New Brunswick with a copy sent to the Graduate Director, all members of the committee, and to the candidate. It is strongly advised that approval of the completed dissertation and of the final examination be completed at the same time. In other words, the dissertation should be in near-final form at the time of the oral defense.

Candidates should consult the Checklist for Ph.D. degree to confirm that all necessary paperwork is completed and deadlines met in a timely manner.

Writing a Proposal

Writing a Proposal

(written by Teresa Murphy, George Washington Univ.; updated and modified examples by Ben. Sifuentes-Jáuregui)

1. A concise statement about what you plan to do. (i.e.: "I plan to write a book about the place of melodrama in twentieth century Latin American culture"; or "I am developing a film festival and lecture series based on little-known melodramatic films and texts in Mexico of the forties and fifties.") A title is also very helpful.

2. A working hypothesis. (i.e. "It is my working hypothesis that melodrama plays an important discursive and hegemonic role in Latin American cultural identity; this is quite a different role from the classic, 'feminine' one assigned to it in classic Hollywood cinema or American television during the same period.") The hypothesis should be stated clearly in the first page for a 5-page proposal, within the second or third page for a 10- page proposal.

3. A description of your data. (i.e. "I will draw on early films found at the Cineteca in Mexico City. This is a particularly rich collection because...") It is important to define the research material or corpus, also to relate it directly to (specific parts of) the project itself.

4. Your methodology – how you will prove your point. (i.e. "My approach will combine literary analysis with cultural critique. I will compare ..., and analyze...") Avoid too much jargon or name dropping. Explain how you adapt (the possibilities and limits of) theory to your project.

5. What your finished product will look like. (i.e. "My argument will develop in seven chapters. In chapter one, I will survey how melodrama has been received in literary theory, followed by its critical dissemination in film studies...")

6. Why people should care about this project. THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT because it should discuss your project's contribution to the field. (i.e. "Scholars who have studied melodramatic representation until now have readily assumed that melodrama is gendered feminine in literary forms or film. Judith Butler, for example, has argued... In addition to these scholarly debates, we face larger cultural issues about how melodrama persists as a powerful social force in Latin America...") The two groups you should refer to here are the scholarly community at large (in this case, the Latin American Studies or Literary Studies community) and perhaps the general public. It is not appropriate to tell us that this project is personally meaningful to you, your family, etc.

7. How and why you became interested in this project—namely, as an extension of previous research.

8. Your timetable for completion. Make sure to note what has already been completed and what needs to get done. How will the fellowship enable you to complete your research and writing. Also, indicate whether any part of the project has been published—and in which journals or books.

Writing a proposal is one of the most important skills you need to develop, not only for doing graduate research, but to apply for funding in your future activities. Formats may vary, but you should always be sure to include the following information:

P.S. A few anecdotes thrown in are often useful. Your proposal should be five to ten pages typed, double spaced. Also, do NOT use ridiculously narrow margins or use teeny-tiny font sizes "to make sure it all fits in." These margin and font changes make the proposal difficult to read, and annoy evaluators. Instead, edit the proposal again, using concise and clear language.