**COMPARATIVE HISTORY OF LITERATURE**

**Course descriptor**

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| Title of the course | **Comparative History of Literature** |
| Title of the Academic Programme  | Philology |
| Type of the course  | Core (mandatory) |
| Prerequisites | There are no formal prerequisites for this course. Students should have fluent English |
| ECTS workload | 9 |
| Total indicative study hours | Directed Study | Self-directed study  | Total |
| 104 | 238 | 342 |
| Course Overview | The course expands on and revises historical trends, theoretical concepts, and methodologies in literary history and comparative literature. It concludes the core curriculum in Russian and World Literature by (re)tracing a variety of literary interactions, from Shakespeare to late postmodernism. The course is taught in three modules.In the first module of the course we will examine the institution of national poet (or “bard”) as a central component of nationalist ideology and its imperial extensions in European history. Comparing the reception of William Shakespeare in the anglophone world and Alexander Pushkin in the russophone context, we will trace the emergence and development of the institution through the bard’s reception by intellectual elites, the phenomenon of jubilee celebrations, and the sacralization of the bard’s “homes and haunts.” Our goal will be to develop a nuanced understanding of how the figure of the national poet takes shape in different ways in different countries, as the culture of capitalist modernity moves from west to east across the European continent. In the second module we will follow the historical transition from the romantic praise of individual creativity and authorial self to the celebration of objectivity and science. The focus of the course shifts to the realisms of the nineteenth century, with the general aim of debunking the notion of a literature that simply represents “life as it is.” This can be best achieved through the comparative analysis of the varying theories, aesthetic modes and socio-political contexts that inform the diverse body of texts that has come to be known as nineteenth-century realism (we will focus in particular on the French, Russian, and Anglo-American traditions). Realism will be considered as both a multiplicity of aesthetic styles and as a socio-historical sense of self. We will also examine the intellectual exchange between literary realism and the visual arts: the *peredvizhniki* movement in Russia and impressionism in French painting.The third module will take us through the 20th- and early 21st-century developments of the notions discussed earlier in the course. We will reflect upon late realist/early modernist critique and postmodernist disintegration of the institution of romantic authorship and link them to the problems of pluralistic point of view and polyphonic narrative in the Russian and Anglo-American fiction. To observe how literature reaches out and speaks to other media, we will explore some of its relations with Western art music. The module will close with a discussion of the methodological shift from Eurocentric approaches in Comparative Literature to an open canon of globalized/transnational World Literature(s), negotiating a balanced and up-to-date view of today’s state of the discipline. |
| Intended Learning Outcomes (ILO) | Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:* analyze, relate, and compare literary texts across lingual and cultural borders;
* understand and explain articulately the central theoretical concepts that account for literary relationships among several national traditions of the last two centuries in comparative terms;
* question and think critically about the historical, cultural, formal, ideological, and medial distinctions accepted normatively in comparative literature studies and related disciplines within arts and humanities;
* demonstrate a potential for undertaking independent research in the area of comparative literature studies.
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| Indicative Course Content |
| **№** | **Topic / Course Chapter** | **Total** | **Directed Study** | **Self-directed Study** |
| **Lectures** | **Tutorials** |
| 1 | The Institution of National Bard | 91 | 14 | 14 | 63 |
| 2 | Realism as a Socio-Historical Phenomenon | 106 | 16 | 16 | 74 |
| 3 | Crossing Borders—Twentieth-Century Harvests | 145 | 22 | 22 | 101 |
| **Total study hours** | 342 | 52 | 52 | 238 |
| Teaching and Learning Methods | Lectures, seminars, presentations, groupwork, reading and writing assignments, quizzes, online forum discussions. |
| Indicative Assessment Methods and Strategy  | Module 1* **25% Groupwork**

*Description of activities*During the seminars, students will discuss the texts in small groups, producing coherent comparative arguments about Shakespeare and Pushkin as institutions. After each seminar, a designated secretary for the group will write up the argument (**1000 words**). Each group member must do at least one of the write-ups and no more than two. The grade for this work will be shared among the group, and students are recommended to read and revise the week’s write-up before submitting. If a student misses the seminar, they are required to submit a separate essay on that week’s topic.*Example topics for written argument*:* “Pushkin and Shakespeare: Family Men?”
* “Poets’ Dwellings”
* “Shakespeare/Pushkin in Death”

Module 2* **15%** **Presentations**

Each student will make one 10-15 min. presentation (in English), focusing closely on one text from the assignment for that week. The presentation should avoid background information and summarization of the text; instead students should present a sustained argument with a strong thesis. Students are expected to follow their colleagues’ presentations closely and ask sophisticated questions.*Example topics for presentation*:* *Père Goriot* as a Realist Narrative
* Introducing a Zola Novel
* **20% Term paper** – 5 pg.

*Example topics:** “Dostoevsky’s *Poor Folk* as Psychological Prose”
* “*Physiology of Petersburg* in the Light of French Naturalism”

Module 3* **10%** **Online contribution** – Students submit various assignments to the course participants’ shared blogging platform/google drive/email.

*Example LMS forum discussion assignment*:* PUSHKIN/JAMES/KHARMS?

This forum is for sharing your observations and judgments on whether/where Kharms' *The Old Woman* may be considered a legitimate parallel to James' *The Aspern Papers*, via or beyond Pushkin's *The Queen of Spades*. Submit posts of NO MORE than 150 words by clicking Reply and typing/pasting your message in the opening window.* **30%** **Final paper (Exam)** – 7-8 pg. (Times New Roman, 12 pt., double-spaced). Students submit a research paper on a topic directly related to the content of the course.

*Example research paper topics*:* “The 1988 Opera and the 2018 Film as Adaptation of James’ 1888 *The Aspern Papers*”
* “Shostakovich in Life and in Fiction”
* “Is *Do Not Say We Have Nothing* World Literature?”
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| Readings / Indicative Learning Resources | Mandatory 1. Behdad, A. and Thomas, D. *A Companion to Comparative Literature*. Wiley, 2011. *ProQuest*
2. Halliwell, S. The Aesthetics of Mimesis: Ancient Texts and Modern Problems. Princeton University Press, 2002. *ProQuest*
3. Parvini, N. *Shakespeare and Contemporary Theory: New Historicism and Cultural Materialism*. Bloomsbury, 2012.

Optional1. Bethea, D. M. *Realizing Metaphors: Alexander Pushkin and the Life of the Poet*. University of Wisconsin Press, 1998.
2. Damrosch, D. *How to Read World Literature*. Wiley, 2008. *ProQuest*
3. Schehr, L. R. *Rendering French Realism*. Stanford University Press, 1997. *ProQuest*
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| Course Instructors | Jonathan Platt, Vadim Shkolnikov, Ivan Delazari |