

**Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey**

**PROGRAM IN COMPARATIVE LITERATURE  
GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK**

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**RUTGERS**  
UNIVERSITY

**Comp.Lit.**  
PROGRAM IN COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

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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 Marilyn 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. Marilyn 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 (For U.S. Residents)**

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

**During your time on Fellowship,** health insurance is part of your financial package and is covered by the Graduate School.\*

**During your time as a Teaching Assistant,** you will be eligible for New Jersey State Employee Health and Dental benefits. 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 either case:**

1. Log onto Student Accounting and follow the instructions on waiving health insurance.

Contact Student Health Services with any additional questions via their website <http://health.rutgers.edu/> or by calling 848-932-8285.

2. Regarding the use Student Health Centers on campus: Students whose registrations do not generate the full-time student fees (i.e., those with fewer than 9 total credits) will have to pay a fee for service if they wish to use the campus facilities, unless they are covered by student health insurance (because they are fellows or because they are international students). Full-time student fees include the student health insurance that, in turn, covers access to the health centers. The primary impact will be on TAs or GAs with fewer than 9 credits total. Nevertheless, students will have the option of purchasing student health insurance if they are de facto full-time.

## The Glory of Parking Passes

Parking passes 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 \$25 for parking for the academic year, and can park in all lots that say Faculty/Staff Common. For an additional \$10 you can purchase a key card for access to gated lots. Campus maps provide a comprehensive list of parking lots and their designations. After receiving your first stipend check, you can purchase parking passes through the online system. However, if you need parking at the beginning of the year, you need to bring a confirmation of your attendance to the Parking Office in the Public Safety building, 55 Commercial Ave., New Brunswick, to receive a temporary parking pass for the first few weeks of the semester.

Another note on parking: The Fresh Grocer in downtown New Brunswick has free three hour parking if you spend \$10 in the store. This is a great way to have convenient downtown parking for the evening and then pick up some groceries on your way home.

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\* External Fellowships may be different. When in doubt, consult Marilyn

## Becoming a New Jersey Resident

Applying for New Jersey residency is a process domestic students who are not from the state undertake in their second year. It saves you and the department money because it puts you on a different tier in terms of tuition and fees. The [instructions](#) on the Registrar's website are deceptively complex, so the following is a breakdown of just what is required to obtain residency.

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 due in 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

(Guest Contribution by Marilyn Tankiewicz)

The Comparative Literature administrative office is the first point of contact for administrative issues. The office supports 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 others.

#### Personal Information and Payroll

The University's Payroll and Budget system is referred to as RIAS (Rutgers Integrated Administrative System). 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 extremely important this information be current as the administrative office uses

this information for processing payroll and checks to make sure you are being paid correctly, in addition to many others.

It's 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 our office so we can immediately update our department directories

### International Students

With regard to those individuals in a foreign status, you are ultimately responsible for all your paperwork regarding your status (renewal of passport, DS2019s, I-20s). At times there will be certain documents that require the Graduate Director's approval, so in this case, bring them to the administrative office, the document/s will be reviewed and forwarded to the Director for approval. Familiarize yourself with the Center for Global Services website for all details:  
<http://cifss.rutgers.edu/>

### Reimbursement of Expenses

Monies may be available to reimburse you for some expenses incurred after attending conferences. Specific procedures/requirements will follow at a later date

### Website

Any updates that you want added or deleted to your student information on our website, please send by email to Marilyn

Most importantly, please consider Comparative Literature as your home away from home! It's a warm and friendly environment and we are here to assist you in any way possible!

## GRADUATE STUDENT EVENTS & INITIATIVES

### GSA: The Graduate Student Association

GSA (pronounced gee-suh) stands for Graduate Student Association. It 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 Comparative Literature designates one or two representatives to attend these meetings. The GSA representative is responsible for preparing funding applications, signing funding contracts, and relating important information between GSA and Comparative Literature's graduate

students. When a representative is unable to attend the monthly meeting, members of the GSO may attend in her/his stead but may not act in the capacity of signing funding contracts.

Within Comparative Literature's GSO the representative is responsible for collaborating with the other members of the GSO to produce funding requests for regular events as well as annual or semi-annual special events such as visiting speakers or graduate student conferences. These responsibilities are generally decided at the GSO meeting in the weeks preceding the Fall semester.

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.

## Exit 9: The Comparative Literature Graduate Student Journal

Each year, the Comparative Literature graduate students publish Exit 9, an academic journal, which is published both in print and digital form. The journal is an important way for the department to showcase research and engage in wider academic discussions outside of the classroom. Working on this journal gives graduate students experience in academic publishing and editing and also allows students to collect current research related to their areas of interest. New graduate students are welcomed to submit their work for publication in Exit 9 or work on the editorial board.

## Graduate Student Events

The graduate students in Comp. Lit. usually do at least one event every spring. These events can take lots of different forms. The two most common are a graduate student conference and bringing in a speaker for a talk and a workshop with the students. Sometimes we combine both of these things, and sometimes 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. Examples of this include: "Comparative Literature/Comparative Media" organized by Andrew Parker (2013), "Cross-cultural Eco-criticism(s): Waves and Undertows" organized by Jorge Marcone, (2011), "Postcolonialities" organized by Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel (2009)

To give a brief overview of what events have taken place recently

Year	Event	Theme	Speaker(s)
2014	Grad. student conference	Global Contagions	Priscilla Wald; Grad. student panels
2013	"In house" conference on teaching	Teaching World Literature in the	Comp. Lit. faculty and grad. students

		21st Century	
2012	Invited speaker and workshop with students (articles and films selected by speaker)	New Feelings: Power and Aesthetics Today	Steven Shaviro; Rutgers faculty roundtable
2011	Grad. student conference	Survival Logics: Narrative and the Margins	Michael Rothberg; Grad. students from Rutgers and nationwide on panels with faculty respondents
2010	Invited speaker and workshop; short stories on the metropolis and the common chosen by organizers	The Politics of the Common	Michael Hardt
2008	Conference organized by faculty and grad. students; 2-day event with papers and open dialogues	Translation <sup>3</sup> (Culture-Institution-Theory)	Bruce Robbins, Lydia Liu, Emily Apter, Alamin Mazrui, Roja Singh, Rosemary Arrojo, Robert Joe Lee, Julie Livingston, Christopher Taylor, Brent Edwards, Michael Levine, Eduardo Cadava, Xudong Zhang, Richard Sieburth
2008	Teaching symposium; included keynote talk, faculty papers and presentations by Comp. Lit. students	“Building Critical Toolboxes”	David Damrosch, Talk: “Doing Comparative Literature”

## 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’s your style?** This is my catch-all for “what kind of event are you planning?” Are you inviting a guest speaker? Organizing a graduate workshop led by a faculty member? Putting together a full-fledged conference? Or something altogether different?

**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. NOTE: If the conference is part of a larger University cohort, pay strict attention to deadlines.

**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. **Deadline: Early September**, preferably right after the Fall semester graduate student meeting.

Recommended subcommittees:

*Chair and co-chair:* 1-2 people who are spearheading the event planning. The chair and co-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 any 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 *Advertising*. 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.

*Advertising:* 1-2 people in charge of sending out the call for papers to program administrators at the various schools you seek to invite to your event (if applicable); 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.” Here you will need the help of your GSO representative as well as 1-2 additional team members who will be in charge of working directly with GSA to secure funds, ensure that the event planners and vendors adhere to GSA guidelines for reimbursement (including gathering the necessary signatures at events). The development team will also be in charge of drawing up a list of departments, programs, and other campus entities that might be willing to fund the event, as well as reaching out to them.

*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 a 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). **Deadline: Early October**

**Choose a venue:** Will your event be held at Comp. Lit.? If so, check with the administrative office for the availability of the seminar room. If you require more space, we recommend the Alexander Teleconference Center located in Alexander Library, 169 College Avenue. Then, if you choose this room, immediately contact William Puglisi, Program Coordinator at the Library who schedules this room: [wpuglisi@rci.rutgers.edu](mailto:wpuglisi@rci.rutgers.edu). It's important to note that all University departments can use this room for their conferences, so once the date of your event has been identified, contact the Coordinator at the Library

**Sending out "Invitations":** Invite your guest speaker, 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. **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. **Deadline: Early November**

**Fundraising:** Now that you have a call for papers and/or a "Save the Date" email, begin to contact departments, programs, and campus entities to ask for contributions. Also be sure that your GSO Representative has requested the necessary funds (these will be estimates, but always shoot high!). 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. The co-chairs and Development will need to work together closely in order to ensure that all vendors are paid for in advance of your event (as much as possible) in order to avoid trouble accessing funds after the event. **Deadline: Be in touch with your GSO Representative to stay on top of deadlines.**

**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 Comp. Lit.'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), so be in contact with the Development team for help with this.

**Deadline:** Up to a month before, order the food. If you are working with GSA, you will need to have requested 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.

**Advertising:** 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. Are there any undergraduate classes or graduate seminars who might be interested in attending your event (perhaps for extra credit)? Let their instructors know! You're almost there!

**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. Just one catch: Be sure to collect all signatures and original receipts from the conference for the next step...

**Post-conference wrap up:** After your incredible event, you'll have one more task before you are officially "done" – making sure everyone's gotten paid. The co-chairs need to work with Development and any of the other subcommittees who have collected receipts to ensure that funds are secured from the GSA and that any reimbursements are processed.

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

## EXAMS AND DISSERTATION

### How the Exams Process Works\*

As you can see from the program statement on exam procedures, Comp. Lit.'s exams 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.

About a week or two later, you will meet with your committee for the oral part. Expect them to ask

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\* See Appendix for the official memo about exams that can be sent to faculty serving on Comp Lit exam committees.

you about the third question you chose not to answer, 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 orals, if you like.

One piece of advice is that it is much more difficult than one might assume to get 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 Skype 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 one's 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 of 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'll receive a letter from the Graduate School certifying that you are in 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 register for one research credit each semester until you graduate to stay enrolled in the program. 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 or AA about how to maintain full-time status.

## Language Exams

Before taking your comprehensive 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 intensive course at Rutgers offered by the Transliterations program, or you may take a translation exam offered by the World Languages Institute. Please visit the Transliterations and [World Languages Institute](#) website for more information to learn more about when these courses and exams are offered.

FYI: the language translation exams are offered **only twice each semester** and **require advanced registration**. The sooner you can fulfill this requirement, the better.

For more information on the Language Exams, including the language proficiency form, please see the official [Comparative Literature website](#).

## Your Intellectual Entourage: Putting Together Your Exam Committee

**Start Building Relationships Early:** Early in your academic career, start taking classes with people whose 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 style and personalities. Your professors will learn about your interests and work ethic, and you'll 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 dream committee member will be on leave in a subsequent semester.

**Remain Open to New Possibilities:** Although you've written a personal research statement to get into graduate school, it is more than likely that your project will transform in unexpected ways while you're 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 be one day.

**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 a Master's.. During your chat you might find out whether or not 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 him or her, and also 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! They like you, they really like you!

... and then start thinking about exams...

## RESEARCH CREDITS

You will need to take 24 research credits before defending and they are **only** to be taken after the oral and written exams. It's 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 costly. 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

To prepare for your exams, the first thing you need to do is find a committee. (See the entry on finding an exam committee.)

After you find a committee, or even before the committee is settled, you can start compiling your exam list. The exam list is comprised of approximately 100 items. 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 create lists based on time period or subject area and then later on 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 about what the expectations for Comp. Lit. exams.

Another note: your exam committee should ideally be comprised of faculty who are affiliated with Comp. Lit. 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 building off of an earlier project or Master's 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 Comp. Lit.'s program chair 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.

In the list itself, many students will divide up the items into groups according to major topic areas or linguistic or historical groups. Some professors recommend including a few questions for each section which you are hoping to answer by reading/viewing that selection of works. This can be a way for you to focus in on why you need each text and it can also help your committee to understand where you are going. They might even use these questions to develop one of your exam questions.

## Writing the Prospectus

The shape of your prospectus will depend on your advisor, so the most important thing is to make sure that you understand what your advisor expects. Usually the prospectus will be about 7-8 pages, but your advisor might want slightly less or significantly more. Since most faculty in Comp. Lit. are based in other departments, each advisor tends to expect something different. Nevertheless, there are some constants. First of all, 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 theory 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're 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 and 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. Some students choose to live in New Brunswick because they do not have a car and like being close to the University, the train station, and the many restaurants and bars. In general,

Highland Park is a more quiet, residential area, and many graduate students choose to live there for these reasons. However, if you like being closer to the University and/or don't have access to a car, New Brunswick is a great option! One student lived in on-campus graduate student housing for their first year and moved in their second year to an apartment in 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
- Also, Rutgers used to own Rockoff Hall as an undergraduate apartment-style dorm, but they now have it open to all Rutgers students. It is still owned by Rutgers, but is considered “off-campus,” we believe. This is a great place to live if you are looking for something in-between on-campus and off-campus living.

We recommend Riverwatch Commons, Plaza Square, and Rockoff Hall for their convenient location in downtown New Brunswick. However, these are pricier apartments, and may only be affordable if you share an apartment with a roommate(s). For more advice on living in an apartment, contact Sofia Tirado or Annabel We, Comparative Literature graduate students. You can also rent a room in a house in New Brunswick. For more information on this process, contact Comparative Literature graduate students Bernie Mendoza, Joe Hong, and Enmanuel Martínez.

#### b. On-Campus Graduate Student Living Options

Rutgers offers many graduate student options for single graduate students as well as those looking for family housing. Graduate student housing will be offered in the future on College Avenue, but right now, it is only available on Busch, Livingston, and Cook/Douglass.

In our opinion, on-campus living is a great way to meet other graduate students, and we were able to

meet many graduate students from various departments this way. However, the buildings are often very old, and we have heard many complaints about mold, insects, and various other problems with these buildings. This might not be the case with all on-campus housing, and will definitely not be the case with the new graduate housing they will build on College Avenue. 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 and 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.

Overall, living on-campus is easier during your first year, because you do not have time to go apartment searching, it is fully-furnished (i.e. you will get a desk, bed, and dresser), and it also gives you the opportunity to meet other graduate students. At the same time, the buildings are often not well maintained, and for what you are paying, you can find better quality housing off-campus.

On-Campus Housing Options for Graduate Students (as of Spring 2014):

- Buell Apartments (Busch Campus): Apartments with four bedrooms, to be shared by four graduate students.
- Johnson Apartments (Busch Campus): Apartments with two bedrooms for single graduate students and families.
- Old Gibbons Hall (Douglass): Individual houses for undergraduates and graduate students.
- Starkey Apartments (Cook): Apartments with four bedrooms, to be shared by four graduate students.
- Livingston Apartments (Livingston): A new on-campus residence for both undergraduate and graduate students.

For more information, and to complete an application for housing, go here:

<http://ruoncampus.rutgers.edu/>

\*Keep in mind that there is a deadline for on-campus housing, and it's some time in the spring. Apply early to get your first choice.

## 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 like Chipotle, Starbucks, and Burger King. Easton is the place to go for more local restaurants, especially various ethnic foods.

- 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.

- Thai Kitchen: The best place for Thai food in New Brunswick, on Easton Ave.
- Mamoun's: The best place for falafel with many vegetarian options, located on Easton Ave.
- Maoz: A great falafel place for vegetarians, though a little pricey, on George St.
- PJ's: One of the better places for pizza in New Brunswick, located on Easton Ave.
- Tumulty's: Pub-like restaurant with a great \$5 special for burgers on Tuesdays, on George St.
- Brother Jimmy's: Chain barbeque/Southern restaurant located near the train station.
- 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.

#### **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.
- Brother Jimmy's: A large bar area with lots of TVs.
- Perle: Probably the only dance club in New Brunswick. It has various themed nights, including has salsa on Thursday.

#### **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.

#### **Markets**

Local grocery store chains:

Pathmark  
Stop and Shop  
ShopRite  
Fresh Grocer  
Kilmer's Market on Livingston campus

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.

### **Restaurants**

Pad Thai Restaurant in Highland Park (Thailand)  
Pithari Taverna in Highland Park (Greece)  
Tete Bistronomie in Highland Park (Peru)  
Midori Sushi in Highland Park (Japan)  
Kabab Paradise in South Bound Brook (Afghanistan)  
Pooja Restaurant in Franklin Township (India)  
Makeda Restaurant in New Brunswick (Ethiopia)

### **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 optimum 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.

**Ruthie's** in Highland Park is a great study space with plenty of seating and good bagels, but it closes very early (around 2 or 3pm).

**OQ** on 3rd Street in Highland Park is very popular as a study spot and has higher-end coffee. It is also open later on weekend nights and attracts a lot of students at those times.

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

**PJs** in Highland Park has longer hours than many other cafes but it is often crowded and noisy, and at certain times of day many tables are reserved for customers who are purchasing a meal.



**The Rutgers Bookstore** 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 (referred to as Philly)

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 at on Albany Street (across from the New Brunswick Railroad Station). Departures from New York are located 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 at the B&M Bagel store in Ferren Mall. 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 head out into 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 using your smartphone. See [njtransit.com](http://njtransit.com) for 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. Visit <http://nwkparking.rutgers.edu/njtransitdiscount> for more details.

Traveling between New Brunswick and Philadelphia:

As with travel to NYC, you'll 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.

Links to NJTransit: [http://www.njtransit.com/hp/hp\\_servlet.srv?hdnPageAction=HomePageTo](http://www.njtransit.com/hp/hp_servlet.srv?hdnPageAction=HomePageTo)

Link to MTA: <http://new.mta.info/>

Link to Septa: <http://www.septa.org/>

Megabus: <http://us.megabus.com/Default.aspx>

For great door-to-door travel directions, visit HopStop: <https://www.hopstop.com/>

## **b. Getting Around New Brunswick**

New Brunswick is generally a great city and 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 Rutgers app to see real-time bus schedules. 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. Keep in mind that many stop running early in the night, at around 5pm. 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**

Getting between and across campuses:

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. Rutgers' [Shifting Gears](#) cycling club website offers tips on staying safe and maps of trails for getting around, but neglects a few things:

- 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.

### Recreational Riding

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

**CAROLYN UREÑA** is a fourth year Ph.D. candidate in Comparative literature from New York City. She earned her A.B. in Comparative Literature from Princeton University in 2008 and her M.A. in English Language and Literature from the University of Maryland, College Park, in 2011. She is currently working on her dissertation, which centers on the work of Frantz Fanon, phenomenology, and the representation of illness and disability in U.S. and Latin American literature and film.

**COREY CLAWSON** is a fourth year Ph.D. student in Comparative Literature. His research interests include: Queer/LGBTQ, postcolonial, television, and cinema studies; questions of transnational influence; translation theory; poetry; and literatures in Portuguese, Spanish, and English.

**TARA COLEMAN** is in her sixth year of the PhD program in Comparative Literature. She is currently writing a dissertation about lyricism as a mode for representing memory in contemporary Chinese film and poetry. The dissertation engages with concepts from Chinese and Western poetics, film theory and translation theory.

**SHAWN DOHERTY** is a third-year Ph.D. student in Comparative Literature. Her research interests include contemporary Caribbean literature and multilingualism in literature. She is happy to answer any questions, especially about living in Highland Park, Rutgers Recreation, and parking.

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## APPENDIXES

### The Official Exams List Memo

#### **The Ph.D. Examination and Prospectus in Comparative Literature**

Revised July 2014

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 (<http://complit.rutgers.edu/>) and in the Graduate Student Handbook.

#### **Exam Rationale and Reading List**

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. We do not think of the exam as its own end, disengaged from later 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 reading list, selected by the student with strong input from the chair and other committee members (see below), should include roughly one hundred works that serve as the basis for the dissertation. No two lists are similar. 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.

#### **Examination Committee**

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

#### **Exam Timing**

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 orals must take place in the Comparative Literature building, 195 College Avenue.

Marilyn Tankiewicz, the Administrative Assistant in Comparative Literature, should be asked to reserve the Seminar Room (with the upstairs Graduate Lounge as a possible alternative) 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 Marilyn 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 Marilyn Tankiewicz ([marilyn.tankiewicz@rutgers.edu](mailto:marilyn.tankiewicz@rutgers.edu)) 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 she receives the student's essays, Marilyn forwards them to the exam committee chair and prints out a copy for the student's files. The chair then forwards the essays to the other members of the committee.

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:** The orals should be wide-ranging. The student may be asked to respond to the question she or 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 remembered for a letter of recommendation.

**Note:** 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.

### **The Prospectus**

The dissertation prospectus is a succinct document of no more than *ten double-spaced pages*. It should contain the central questions and arguments underpinning the dissertation along with a tentative chapter breakdown. An extensive bibliography should be appended.

The prospectus is due within the first three weeks of the semester following the term in which the exam was taken. However, 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.

# 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.

## Notes







