The Proposal

Description:

The Ph.D. track in Spanish, Portuguese, and Comparative Literature requires 72 hours of course work, with at least 30 credits coming from Spanish and/or Spanish American literature, at least 21 from our Portuguese, Lusophone African, and Brazilian literature courses, and another 21 from a related field, such as English, French, German, Classics, History, Religion, Latin American Studies, Art, the History of Art, Philosophy, Literary Theory, or Music. We will, subject to the approval of the student’s advisor and doctoral committee, accept up to six hours of Independent Study or Directed Study for the SPCL Ph.D. track. Otherwise, it is our intention that the SPCL track be constituted by didactic, or formal, class hours. Applicants to this doctoral program must demonstrate native or near native fluency in either Spanish or Portuguese (proficiency in the other language must be acquired or demonstrated here at Vanderbilt) and English (if only to more productively engage the larger Vanderbilt intellectual community) and demonstrate, by means of a detailed plan of study, a commitment to developing an interdisciplinary doctoral program that focuses on a core, or unifying, theme and that emphasizes a rigorously comparative methodology.

Demonstrable proficiency in at least three languages and literatures and a clear programmatic coherence with respect to the student’s plan of study are the decisive factors in a first-rate doctoral program in comparative literary scholarship, and we believe that this end is best served by creating a separate doctoral track within our department, one with specific expectations, requirements, and benchmarks such as we have proposed here. For our purposes, “proficiency” means the ability to read and comment on sophisticated texts in the original language and to write, with a final grade of B or better, graduate level papers in that language.

Once admitted to the Spanish and Portuguese graduate program for the comparative literature track, the student must, before the end of the first semester (and before the student registers for the spring semester), submit to the DGS a one to two page outline of the proposed doctoral program that shows how the courses and resources of the department of Spanish and Portuguese and those of at least one other Vanderbilt University graduate program are to be integrated. In this proposal, the student must outline in detail the specific comparative approach to be utilized in his or her doctoral program (a decision that might involve such issues as theme and motif, genre, period and movement, influence and reception, philology, literature and another discipline, theory, literary history, or translation) and the specific courses (including all required courses) that are most likely to compose the degree program. Also as part of this proposal, the student must consult with and receive the written approval of her or his principal graduate advisor as well as the approval of at least three other faculty members, whose departmental affiliations reflect the different departments involved and the essentially interdisciplinary character of the student’s proposed program of study.

With this approach, we believe the training our doctoral students receive will become this field’s standard of excellence, the methodological model against which other Spanish,
Portuguese, and Comparative Literature programs will have to measure themselves. The goal of the Spanish and Portuguese department in proposing this new Ph.D. track is not merely to become a participant in the development of this field, but to become the recognized leader in it.

No new courses will have to be developed, nor would any existing courses have to be modified to accommodate this new Ph.D. track. All courses will be selected on the basis of their pertinence to the student’s primary interests, which will be determined by the student in consultation with the student’s primary advisor and doctoral committee.

The Purpose, Demand, and Justification:

Nationally and internationally, Spanish and Portuguese are rapidly becoming the primary languages for scholars interested in pursuing comparative literary projects at the graduate level.

As an example of the kind of inquiry we are getting more and more of (and, hence, of the rapidly increasing demand that exists for comparative studies involving Spanish and Portuguese), we offer you the following e-mail (received 13 February, 2008) from a prospective applicant:

“Dr. Fitz:

Greetings! I am interested in the PhD program at Vanderbilt. I am very interested in comparative literature with Spanish and Portuguese. As a former student of Dr. Moser at UGA, you come highly recommended and he suggested that I come and talk with you. I would like to schedule a time to visit the school and meet you. Is that possible? I have attached my resume and bio so you have a glimpse of my background. Feel free to talk with Dr. Moser if you would like also. I am looking forward to talking with you soon. Thank you!

Patricia Desouza” (pdesouza@spelman.edu)

With respect to similar programs at other schools, we know, via publications, correspondences with colleagues and from discussions at conferences and professional meetings, that many of our leading doctoral programs in Spanish and Portuguese (Penn State, Indiana, Illinois, Georgia, Duke, UC-Berkeley, UCLA, Princeton, Columbia, and Yale, for example) are enthusiastic about comparative dissertations. Professor David Jackson, of Yale, for example, has long encouraged students of Portuguese to consider taking a comparative perspective in their doctoral programs. As Prof. Jackson writes, of the importance of this approach to Brazilian literature, “Brazilian literature should be recognized for its original, vital, and creative position as a contributor to the international context of comparative literature” (The Latin American Review, Special Issue on Brazilian literature, p. 8). His Yale colleague, Roberto González Echevarría (who is Stirling Professor of Spanish and Comparative Literature), also stresses the importance of the comparative approach to Luso-Brazilian and Hispanic studies in his often cited essay, “Latin American and Comparative Literatures” (Poetics of the Americas, 1997, pp. 47-62). And Mario J. Valdés, Professor of Spanish and Comparative Literature at the University of Toronto, urges, in his 2004 article, “A Historical Account of Difference: A Comparative History of the Literary Cultures of Latin America” (Comparative Cultural Studies in Latin America, Earl Fitz and Sophia McClennen, eds., pp. 160-178) that we consider a new kind of literary history
for the Americas, one that stresses a comparative approach.

Scholars like Prof. Nelson Vieira and Luiz Valente of Brown are taking similar positions with their courses and doctoral students, as are faculty at such schools as Iowa (Maria Barbosa and Daniel Balderston), Minnesota (Fernando Arenas), Illinois (Prof. Ronald Sousa), Indiana (Prof. Deborah Cohn), Penn State (Prof. Sophia A. McClennen), Florida (Prof. Charles Perrone and Elizabeth Lowe), the University of Houston (Lois Parkinson Zamora), the City University of New York (Gregory Rabassa), Williams College (Gene H. Bell-Vellada), Amherst College (Prof. Ilan Stavans), and the University of Chicago (Prof. Fred de Armas). And, in their very influential book, The Comparative Perspective on Literature (Cornell UP, 1988), professors Clayton Koelb (University of Chicago) and Susan Noakes (University of Kansas) discuss the case of the excellent but little known Angolan writer, Manuel Rui, as an example of how an egregiously ignored writer working in Portuguese is expanding the traditional borders of comparative literature as a discipline (a point also made by Professor González Echevarría, who cites parallel cases in Spanish as well).

In this same context, we believe it is important to stress one very important point, however. What these and many other Spanish and Portuguese programs have is a keen appreciation of how important the comparative method is to their work; what they do not have, so far as we have been able to ascertain, is a coherent, systematically structured doctoral program for this particular approach to the study of literature written in Portuguese and Spanish, a doctoral program that, by means of its structure and its requirements, will guarantee that professional quality comparative scholarship will result.

This, indeed, is precisely what we are proposing to create here at Vanderbilt. We do not wish to be merely another Spanish and Portuguese Ph.D. program that is interested in the comparative method; we intend our Spanish, Portuguese, and Comparative Literature Ph.D. track to be the model for our discipline. As indicated in our initial proposal, we already have a reputation in our field for being the place to come if you wish to pursue a comparative approach to Spanish and Portuguese literature. What we now want to do, with this new Ph.D. opportunity, is to solidify our leadership position in the profession by codifying the specific requirements of this doctoral track.

The reasons for the sharp increase in the use of Spanish and Portuguese in comparative studies are, we believe, fairly obvious: Both Spanish and Portuguese are major world languages with dynamic literary histories and cultures, both are increasingly the languages of choice, nationwide, within the discipline of Comparative Literature itself, and both Spanish and Portuguese have, historically, sought to demonstrate their excellence and to justify their position in world literature by means of comparisons with other, better known national literatures. Such comparative issues as influence and reception, themes, movements, and genre study are part and parcel of scholarship related to Spanish and Portuguese departments. For example, scholars of Brazilian and Spanish American Romanticism have, since the 1940s, written about the influence that the poetics of Edgar Allen Poe exerted on many of their writers. And, of course, the case of Faulkner’s influence on the writers of the “Boom” period is now well known, thanks to the comparative scholarship of Professor James Irby (now retired) of Princeton University. More recently, scholars are beginning to examine the influence that Flaubert and Madame Bovary have had on the work of Mario Vargas Llosa. We have students here at Vanderbilt who are interested
in pursuing dissertations related to comparisons between the poetry of Pablo Neruda and that of
T. S. Eliot and to the importance that the film, Citizen Kane, has had for Juan Rulfo’s Pedro
Páramo.

With respect to the successes and challenges these programs are experiencing, we would
have to say that success is the overwhelming hallmark. This is partly because, as indicated
above, students and scholars of Spanish and Portuguese literature are very experienced at
skillfully employing the comparative method, having done so for many decades. But it is also
due to the fact that so many of our authors and texts, from Borges to García Márquez and from
Lispector to Saramago (the 1998 Nobel Prize winner), have become international standards and,
increasingly, studied in an international, or comparative, context (the influence of García
Márquez, Borges, and Machado de Assis on John Barth, for example, is well known, as is
Gabo’s influence on Salman Rushdie and Toni Morrison). Comparative studies of Spanish and
Portuguese writers are succeeding because they are valid, because they reveal a great deal about
changing conditions of literary status and lines of influence, and because they give us a much
more accurate picture of what contemporary world literature is really like, with modern Latin
American literature having become, as the critic Fredric Jameson rightly avers, “. . . the principal
player on the scene of world literature” (“Modernism and Imperialism,” p. 43).

The challenges that these many programs face in cultivating a comparative approach to
the literatures of Spanish and Portuguese are methodological, and not conceptual (as the
preceding list of Spanish and Portuguese departments interested in the comparative method has
sought to show), in nature. The key question, thus, is: How does a department of Spanish and
Portuguese ensure that their comparative doctoral programs are of the highest professional
quality? This is the decisive issue and it is the one Vanderbilt’s department of Spanish and
Portuguese has solved with its rigorous and demanding Ph.D. track in comparative literature. At
the doctoral level, Comparative Literature is defined primarily in terms of the ability to work
with texts written in at least three different languages, which our Ph.D. track clearly requires. It
is our expectation that the student who completes the Spanish, Portuguese, and Comparative
Literature track will be prepared to compete successfully in the Spanish and Portuguese job
market. Because our Ph.D.s will have serious expertise not only in Spanish but in Portuguese as
well, plus proficiency in another language and literature, we are confident that they will appeal
to Spanish and Portuguese departments seeking to develop both languages and to Comparative
Literature programs seeking to hire a young scholar in such fields as Trans-Atlantic Studies (the
University of Chicago was looking for just such a person two years ago, to be hired in
conjunction with the department of Spanish and Portuguese), Post Colonial Studies, or even
Latin American literature. New York University, a few years ago, was advertising for someone
for a joint Spanish/English department hire who would focus on colonial literature. Prof. Sophia
McClenen, of Penn State, is an Associate Professor of Spanish but she is also the Director of
Graduate Studies for Penn State’s Comparative Literature department. And at Indiana
University, Deborah Cohn is a comparatist in the Spanish and Portuguese department where she
works on inter-American literature. And while our own Professor Fitz was at Penn State, as a
faculty member in the Department of Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian, no fewer than three to
five of his colleagues were comparatists, hired specifically because of their ability to connect
these languages and literatures to the larger world community.
But while these job placement opportunities are certainly possibilities, we fully expect that the majority of our students completing the Ph.D. track in Spanish, Portuguese, and Comparative Literature will go to departments of Spanish and Portuguese, which, as we have tried to show, are keenly interested in hiring young scholars able to expand the old horizons of their discipline by showing how their texts engage the rest of the world. Our graduates, moreover (thanks to our requirements), will possess the theoretical training, the linguistic skills, and the methodological expertise that will allow them to excel in this undertaking and, in the process, become leaders in their fields. It is our intention, with this new Ph.D. track, to produce such scholars.

To sum up: The history of the Spanish and Portuguese job market shows clearly that departments of Spanish and Portuguese are very much interested in hiring Ph.D.s who have expertise in both Spanish and Portuguese but who also have the broader, more international, more theoretical, and, in certain cases, more interdisciplinary perspective that comes with training in the comparative method. Indeed, it is to the advantage of departments of Spanish and Portuguese to do so and they are well aware of it.

In the light of the College's recent decision concerning the future of comparative literary studies at Vanderbilt University, we believe we can capitalize on this growing interest in Spanish and Portuguese by creating a new Ph.D. track within our department, one that emphasizes our enthusiasm for and expertise with the comparative method, one that will allow us to develop some exciting new fields (Spanish and Portuguese in a more global context, for example), and one that we believe will attract a new class of outstanding candidates to our program. It is our intention, moreover, to recruit incoming graduate students specifically for this track, and we will not be favorably disposed toward allowing students already in our graduate program to transfer to the comparative track. We believe that students who are recruited specifically because of their stated interest in, and linguistic preparation for, the comparative literature track are more likely to complete this particular Ph.D. track successfully than are those students already enrolled in one of the Spanish and Portuguese department’s other Ph.D. tracks who might wish to change tracks. We thus expect a commitment to the SPCL track to be demonstrated at the outset, and we will not encourage programmatic shifting among established courses of action because we find this pedagogically detrimental to a doctoral student’s plan of study.

To be able to offer a Ph.D. track specifically designed for the young scholar already committed to a comparative perspective will allow us to further develop faculty strengths that we already possess while at the same time breaking new ground for our discipline. Were we to gain approval for a new Ph.D. track for Spanish, Portuguese, and Comparative Literature (SPCL), we would dramatically enhance our already considerable reputation as an innovative and forward looking department – the kind of place the best young minds in our field would want to come for graduate study – and thereby elevate our national and international profile. The Ph.D. track in Spanish, Portuguese, and Comparative Literature thus looks very much to the future of our discipline, and not to the past.

Departmental Support for this new Ph.D. Option:
As reflected in its unanimous vote in favor of the proposal, the faculty of the Department of Spanish and Portuguese strongly support the creation of a new Ph.D. track in Spanish, Portuguese, and Comparative Literature. The department realizes that the comparative perspective is rapidly becoming a very large part of the future for departments of Spanish and Portuguese across the country and internationally, and that such a formal programmatic development is the natural outcome of current trends, especially at Vanderbilt, which is widely recognized as a pioneer in the application of comparative methodologies to literature written in Spanish and Portuguese.

Vanderbilt University has already created the Center for the Americas and the Center for Latin American Studies has been named a National Research Center. What we have in the SPCL proposal is an opportunity to continue to build on these and other established institutional strengths and to move our department forward in an exciting new direction. With the SPCL Ph.D. track, Vanderbilt will take the lead in terms of developing comparative approaches to the study of literature written in Spanish and Portuguese, whether in Spain and Portugal or in Spanish America and Brazil. We are in an exceptional position to succeed with this new venture. We already possess the requisite faculty, the linguistic competency that is essential, and, above all, the expertise and experience (we have several faculty who are already exploring and cultivating this field). In addition, professors Fitz and Prieto actually hold doctorates in Comparative Literature, while several other colleagues have either comparative training or comparative interests. If we fail to develop this truly ground breaking Ph.D. track, we will miss an opportunity to become the discipline’s model department, the leader in the field.

The goal of this new Ph.D. track is thus: (1) to respond, programmatically, to changes taking place in our discipline right now; (2) to establish ourselves as the preeminent program with respect to these changes (which involve Spanish and Portuguese in the development of Comparative Literature as a field); and (3) to enhance the department of Spanish and Portuguese’s reputation as an innovative and dynamic department, one committed to leadership in both teaching and research.

Departmental Support for this New Ph.D. Track Outside of Spanish and Portuguese:

Departmental support for our new SPCL Ph.D. track has been strongly positive, with certain units (History, Religion, Latin American Studies, Classics, French, German, and English) clearly recognizing how their participation in this new graduate education initiative could be a boon to their programs as well.

After contacting the language and literature departments of Classics, English, French, and German to ascertain the level of their support, we can report that their responses are unanimous: These units are very supportive of our new doctoral initiative and have expressed no qualms about participating in it.

Representative of the language departments is the enthusiastic response from Prof. Jay Clayton, of English: “In my view, the idea of a Spanish, Portuguese, and English Ph.D. track in your department is a fine one, and exactly my understanding of the new model for comparative literature study at Vanderbilt. We would appreciate learning more about how you plan to set up the track, potentially as a model for similar initiatives from our end” (12 February, 2008).
Virginia Scott, Chair of French and Italian, has this to say: “Please accept this e-mail as a follow-up to our conversation regarding graduate students in Romance languages and comparative literature. The Department of French and Italian would be most interested in participating in any conversations in this regard.”

And Dieter Sevin, Chair of German and Slavic, writes the following: “Yes, your proposal has the support of our department. If a candidate to this program who lists German as one of his or her languages, wishes to take our graduate level courses in German he could do so, assuming, of course, that his or her German were strong enough to do so.”

Finally, Barbara Tsakirgis, Chair of Classical Studies, offers this endorsement: “Please let Holly know that you have the unanimous support of all six permanent faculty in the Dept. of Classical Studies. Let us know how we can help with the program.”

John McClure, Professor of Religion, has this enthusiastic response: “I’m delighted to hear about this program. This new venture sounds like a tremendous interdisciplinary effort, and I see nothing in what you sent that any of our faculty would disapprove.”

And Professor Elizabeth Lunbeck, Chair of History, generously offers this about possible participation in our new SPCL doctoral track: “This is something we’re ready to support – it sounds great. . . . I appreciate your interest in History.”

And Dr. Ted Fischer, Associate Professor of Anthropology and director of the Center for Latin American Studies, a unit closely tied to the department of Spanish and Portuguese, writes this: “Yes, CLAIS . . . would be pleased to work with you on the new Ph.D. track in comparative studies. Indeed, it would seem especially appropriate for these students to use LAS courses for the third component of their degree program and we would welcome them into our classes and I am sure we could have a faculty member serve on their committee. In this light, I would remind you that we now regularly offer courses in Mayan languages . . . and next year and the following the courses will be in Yucatec Maya” (13 February, 2008).

How this New Proposal Compares to Current Ph.D. Tracks in the Department:

As currently envisioned, our new proposal provides a form of intellectual development that our current Ph.D. options do not offer. At the present time, for example, one can pursue a Ph.D. in Spanish through our department or one can pursue a Ph.D. in our combined Spanish and Portuguese program, though it is clear, we believe, how and why these are quite different from the SPCL program being proposed here.

The Ph.D. track that the SPCL proposal most resembles is our new track in Inter-American Literature, yet even here the essential differences are evident: The I-A literature program is discipline specific (it is designed to address the needs of the newly emergent field known, variously, as “Inter-American Literature” or “The Literatures of the Americas”), it limits itself to the languages and literatures of the New World (including, of course, Native American languages), and it is specifically designed, in terms of its intellectual training, to prepare students for jobs in either departments of Spanish and Portuguese or in departments of English (hence, the active involvement of English in our I-A literature program).

Our new SPCL track, by way of contrast, is not discipline specific (i.e. it is open to much
more than Inter-American Literature), it is not limited to the languages and literatures of the New World, and it is not specifically geared toward the Inter-American literature job market (though we do expect our SPCL graduates to compete successfully in the Spanish and Portuguese job market, the smaller though still significant Comparative Literature job market, and the job market in whatever other language the student elects to work in, graduate level course work in at least three languages and literatures being an absolute requirement of our program).

The scope of the SPCL degree track is therefore much broader than that of the I-A lit degree; indeed, the SPCL program comes close to being the prototypical form of the traditional Comparative Literature Ph.D. itself, one that stresses theory, methodology, and extensive course work, at the graduate level, in at least three languages and literatures. A student wishing to pursue the SPCL degree, for example, might elect to study Spanish, Portuguese, and German, or Spanish, Portuguese, and Classics, or Spanish, Portuguese, and French. Any humanities program in which Vanderbilt has suitable graduate level courses, philosophy, for example, would also provide for a legitimate and exciting doctoral program for this track.

A student who wished to study Spanish, Portuguese, and French would, because of the absence of graduate level courses in Québécois or Francophone Caribbean literature, would gravitate toward metropolitan French literature and not that of the New World. But, of course, a doctorate involving, say, the literatures of Spain, Portugal, and France would prepare the doctoral student quite nicely for a position as a Europeanist (who could teach both Spanish and French as well as Portuguese), or as a comparatist based in a department of Spanish and Portuguese but with an Ibero-European perspective. A similar program could be constructed for the student who wished to study Spanish, Portuguese, and German.

If a student wished, via the SPCL track, to study the literatures of the United States, Spanish America, and Brazil (a fast growing new field), this would certainly be acceptable to us, since the very concept of comparative literary study involves a broad-based and international vision that easily encompasses the much more limited and specific field of Inter-American literature. It is thus conceivable that one day we might have two (or more) doctoral students studying the literatures of the Americas, one via our Inter-American Literature degree program (and thus working directly with both our department and with English to prepare for these two disciplines and job markets) and one coming at it from the more general angle of our degree program in Spanish, Portuguese, and Comparative Literature (for this student, we would, of course, as per the guidelines already established for comparative literary study here at Vanderbilt University, make certain that appropriate courses and faculty from English were involved from the beginning in the student's plan of study and doctoral committee; we will, of course, ensure that this is done no matter what the student's other language or humanistic field is).

COMPARATIVE IBERIAN STUDIES

Finally, we hasten to point out one other very important consideration with respect to our new SPCL proposal: It will allow us to begin to cultivate, here at Vanderbilt, another new field, one that is not yet as advanced as Inter-American literary and cultural studies but one that has the potential to revolutionize our entire discipline. We refer to what we here at Vanderbilt are already calling “Comparative Iberian Studies,” a field that integrates the literatures, histories, and
cultures of Spain and Portugal and that would then seek to link them, again making use of the comparative method, to the larger European and world experience. To establish a Ph.D. track in SPCL would immediately allow us to establish our department as the unchallenged leader in this exciting (and, as yet, uncharted) new field, for it would serve notice in our discipline that Vanderbilt is the place to come if one wants to develop Iberian letters in a variety of comparative perspectives. Professors Fitz, Friedman, and Jrade are convinced that this development for peninsular literature is definitely on our discipline's horizon, and that the first doctoral program that makes possible its systematic study will be the acknowledged leader in the field for years to come, the model other departments measure themselves against. That could be us. Thus, the SPCL degree program would, among its many other virtues as a dynamic and innovative new Ph.D. track (one that, as Prof. Trigo noted, nicely complements our more restricted I-A Lit program), permit Vanderbilt's department of Spanish and Portuguese to garner yet more acclaim as one of our nation's premier departments.

Funding:
This initiative will be funded entirely by the department of Spanish and Portuguese; no additional funding is needed.

Availability of Courses with which to Compose the SPCL Track:

Courses taken by students in this track would be offered by a wide range of faculty members from the department of Spanish and Portuguese (including both Spanish and Portuguese literature as well as Spanish American and Brazilian literature) and from faculty in a variety of other disciplines (to be selected according to the student’s stated interests).

If, for example, a student were interested in the twentieth century novel, she or he would be advised to take such courses as Spanish 239 (Development of the Novel), Spanish 387 (Contemporary Spanish American Novel), Portuguese 233 (Modern Brazilian Literature), Portuguese 342 (Latin American Literature in a Comparative Perspective: The Twentieth Century), English 326 (Introduction to Literary Modernism), French 238 (The Twentieth-Century Novel), and German 262 (The German Novel of the Twentieth Century). Similar course selections can be made with respect to poetry, drama, and a variety of other issues, including questions of literary theory. We keep open the possibility of giving credit for courses taken in our distinguished Center for Latin American Studies. We would particularly favor courses closely tied to literary studies such as those in history, music, art history, or cultural anthropology.

By requiring at least 30 credits in Spanish (and at least 21 in Portuguese), we will ensure that our Ph.D. students are able to compete successfully in the Spanish/Portuguese job market, which more and more seeks young scholars who, in addition to specific areas of specialization, possess the breadth that characterizes a comparative perspective and who are thus able to link the literatures of Spain, Portugal, and Latin America to each other and with the rest of the world.
Estimated Completion Time for the SPCL Track:

We are convinced that the Spanish, Portuguese, and Comparative Literature Ph.D. can realistically be completed within a period of five years, especially if, as we recommend, the student enters with an M.A. degree. Because the department provides five years of funding for students successfully completing this track’s requirements, we strongly urge the applicant to plan on completing the degree within a period of five years, from date of acceptance. Depending on whether the student enters this Ph.D. track with a B.A. or an M.A., we estimate that the student will require either four to five years (entering with an M.A.) or five years (entering with a B.A.) to complete the degree.

Because the department provides five years of funding for students successfully completing its requirements, we strongly encourage the selection of this track by those who have already completed an M.A. degree in an appropriate field.

Completion of the Spanish, Portuguese, and Comparative Literature track is expected, therefore, depending on preparation, to involve three to four years of closely supervised and coordinated course work followed by the presentation of a highly detailed dissertation proposal, one that (arrived at in close consultation with the student’s primary academic advisor and doctoral committee) elaborates the thesis to be advanced, that assesses the pertinent bibliography, that indicates the specific authors and texts to be discussed, and that outlines the argument to be made in each chapter of the dissertation. Indeed, to facilitate preparation of the proposal and completion of the degree within five years, a certain number of directed study courses on the topic of the future dissertation might be taken during the last year of course work. After the proposal has been accepted, the student will take (no later than the eighth semester in the program) his or her exams. Working closely with her or his doctoral committee, the student would then have from one to two years to prepare for writing the thesis and the actual writing itself.

The Ph.D. in Spanish, Portuguese, and Comparative Literature

Admission Requirements:

Basic requirement: Applicants to the program may hold either a BA or an M.A. but all should be prepared to: 1) earn an M.A. in Spanish and/or an M.A. in Portuguese at Vanderbilt University; 2) demonstrate oral and written proficiency in either Spanish or Portuguese (or both), and in an additional language (English, French, or German, for example, or any other language deemed appropriate by the student’s doctoral committee). (In other words, a student who enters the program with an M.A. in Spanish or who earns an M.A. in Spanish must also earn an M.A. in Portuguese. A student who comes in with an M.A. in Portuguese or who earns an M.A. in Portuguese must also earn an M.A. in Spanish. These degrees are earned as part of the course of study, not in addition to it.) If Spanish is the primary language presented, then the student must
be prepared to complete at least 21 graduate credits from the VU Portuguese program; if the primary language presented is Portuguese, then the student must be prepared to complete at least 30 graduate credits from the VU Spanish program.

Our position is that students in the SPCL track must study both Spanish and Portuguese, and in the prescribed amounts, though they may declare either one as their primary language of specialization. However, because of the nature of the Spanish and Portuguese job market (there are typically many more jobs in Spanish than in Portuguese, though the demand for both is growing yearly, as is the demand for Spanish and Portuguese together), our advice will be that students in this track should, unless circumstances dictate otherwise (ex: our getting a strong applicant who is a native speaker of Portuguese from Brazil), declare Spanish as their primary language of specialization, with Portuguese their second language.

General requirements: 1) official transcripts of all undergraduate study, 2) three faculty letters of recommendation, 3) a statement of purpose elaborating the applicant's professional objectives, 4) a writing sample in Spanish or Portuguese (preferably an academic paper), 5) GRE scores, 6) TOEFL score for international students who have not studied in an English speaking country, 7) sufficient proficiency in a language other than Spanish and Portuguese so as to be able to begin to study it at the graduate level here at Vanderbilt.

Degree Requirements:

1. Student Standing: Students must maintain a B+ average or better in all graduate courses to remain in good standing. Students may request up to a maximum of two Incompletes (I) during their entire stay at Vanderbilt and cannot keep an Incomplete (I) for more than one semester. Students must show competency in classroom instruction and advance toward their degrees in a timely fashion. Students should actively participate in the departmental academic life and attend lectures, presentations and other activities sponsored by the department and allied units. Only students in good standing may present a dissertation proposal and take the doctoral exams. Good standing is a prerequisite for financial assistance, including summer support, Teaching Assistantships, and Dissertation Fellowships.

2. Languages: In addition to any other language required for the successful completion of the student’s program, ex: French, German, Latin, etc.), proficiency in English, Spanish and Portuguese is required of all students enrolled in the Spanish, Portuguese, and Comparative Literature Ph.D. program.

With respect to the third language of the SPCL Ph.D. track, we require that the student have sufficiently strong linguistic skills so as to be able to take, and pass, with a grade of B or higher, any literature course in this language that is offered in the Graduate Catalog and that has the approval of the student’s advisor.
3. Course work: The Ph.D. requires 72 credits of course work in three areas: 30 credits in Spanish (Spanish and/or Spanish American literature), 21 credits in Portuguese (Brazilian, Portuguese, and Lusophone African literature), and 21 credits in whatever area the student identifies as her other interest.

Required courses:
1. Spanish/Portuguese 301 (Literary Analysis and Theory).
2. Spanish/Portuguese 302 (Ibero-Romance Philology)
3. Spanish/Portuguese 303 (Research and Grant Writing)
4. Spanish/Portuguese 310 (Foreign Language Learning and Teaching)
5. Spanish/Portuguese 351 (Comparative Methodology; offered alternate years).

We are confident that with these required courses, and with the other language and literature courses involved in this degree option, our Ph.D. in Spanish, Portuguese, and Comparative Literature will be respected by professional comparatists as well as by specialists in our own field. We further believe that we absolutely need to require that at least three languages be used in this Ph.D. track (as is the case for all of the top graduate programs in Comparative Literature) and that two of them must be Spanish and Portuguese. Graduate course work must thus be done in both Spanish and Portuguese and in at least one other language and literature (Spanish, Portuguese, English; Spanish, Portuguese, French; Spanish, Portuguese, Classics; Spanish, Portuguese, German, etc.) or humanistic discipline (history, philosophy, religion, art, art history, music, film, etc.; in this latter eventuality, we expect that the third language will be English, the likely language of instruction).

Restrictions:
1. Transfer credit may not exceed 18 hours.

2. Transfer students will take a partial or complete M.A. exam depending on the type of exam taken at their previous institution and their academic preparation. Students entering with an MA in English will still need to take the MA exam in Spanish and/or Portuguese.

3. All 200 and 300-level Brazilian literature courses in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese that are eligible for Graduate credit may be counted towards the Portuguese component of the Ph.D.

4. All graduate level courses in Classics, English, French, and German will be accepted, as will graduate level courses in other humanistic disciplines (as determined by the student, her advisor, and her doctoral committee).
5. With the specific approval of the student’s advisor, 200 and 300-level Latin American Studies courses that are eligible for graduate credit may be taken to supplement and enhance the student’s doctoral program.

6. Time limitations:
   a) The qualifying examination must be taken no later than the student’s eighth semester in the program (as per the Graduate School Bulletin, p. 55).
   b) The dissertation must be completed within four years after a student has been admitted to candidacy for the degree (completion of qualifying exams).
   (To achieve the goal of keeping to this time frame, it is expected that the incoming student will be awarded one or two years of service-free support.)

4. Reading Lists and Ph.D. Exam Preparation:

   All examination and defense schedules will follow the guidelines established by the Graduate School Bulletin for interdisciplinary degrees.

1. The Period List consists of primary and secondary works in all genres from a particular period directly related to dissertation topic.

2. The Specialized Research List consists of works based upon the dissertation topic, which must be comparative in nature. The dissertation and resulting list can be organized around a genre, an issue, a theme, or any combination of these or other elements, as well as around a particular theoretical problem. The list should include primary works as well as theoretical, historical, and critical works that reflect, or facilitate, a comparative perspective. A two-page statement of the thesis of the dissertation should accompany the Specialized Research List.

3. The reading lists must include texts (read in their original languages) from each of the literatures or subject areas being presented for examination.
   The majority of the texts should reflect the student’s primary, secondary, and tertiary levels of specialization.

4. Each list normally consists of approximately 45 to 65 books (as well as complementary chapters of books, articles, and specific works of literature, theory, and criticism). Each list should be compiled by the student in consultation with her or his advisor and committee. An approved first draft of the lists and the statement should be received by the DGS and distributed to the members of the dissertation committee at least four months before the expected date for the Ph.D. exam.
5. The final proposal for the dissertation and the bibliography, approved by the advisor, should be presented to the dissertation committee one month before the exam.

6. For creation of Ph.D. committees, schedule of reading lists and dissertation projects, and Ph.D. exams, see the Ph.D. timetable below.

7. The Ph.D. Committee will consist of three faculty members from the Department of Spanish and Portuguese, one from the student’s other area of specialization, and one outside member, chosen by the student in consultation with his or her advisor. The outside member is to be drawn from the department in which the student receives her or his training in a third language or area (such as History, Religion, or Latin American Studies). This requirement parallels the regular Ph.D. in Spanish and Portuguese in which the outside member comes from the minor field. The SPCL committee will have a single Chair, who will be a tenured faculty member from the Department of Spanish and Portuguese (the committee chair will also serve as dissertation director unless the student wishes to have co-directors). The composition of the dissertation committee shall be the responsibility of the student (who, after securing the agreement and permission of all parties involved, must provide the DGS with a list of the faculty who will serve on the committee and indicate who will serve as committee chair) and should be established the semester prior to the Ph.D. exam.

5. Ph.D. Exam format:

1. The Written Exam will be organized by the student’s academic advisor/director of the dissertation, will be agreed upon in advance by the entire committee, and will be divided into two parts based on the Period and Specialized Research lists and the Proposal. The student should answer 3 out of 4 questions from each part. The essay answers will be 10 to 15 pages long (double-spaced, New Times Roman, 11-12 point), and should demonstrate dedicated work, sophisticated thinking, and reflect the student's readiness to start work on the dissertation.

   The exams will be administered by the Dept. of Spanish and Portuguese.
   The questions should be a mixture of comparative questions and questions involving individual texts and authors. It is the responsibility of the Chair of the examining committee to make sure this mix of questions exists.
   The slate of questions for each part of the exam (Period and Proposal) must involve literature written in both Spanish and Portuguese and the literature or subject matter of the other area involved.
   If an additional literature, area, or subject matter is involved (translation theory and its relationship to reception theory, for example, or philology), the extent of its presence in the
doctoral exam (and in the dissertation) will be determined by the student and the student's doctoral committee.

2. Oral Exam: the director of the dissertation will distribute copies of the exam to each member of the committee and the DGS. Five to fifteen days after a satisfactory completion of the written part the student will take an oral exam during which the student will present the dissertation prospectus, discuss it with the committee and answers questions regarding his or her written exam. The main purpose of the oral exam is the conceptual and theoretical strengthening of the prospectus, the discussion of the material and content proposed, and the definition of both a plan and a timetable for the completion of the dissertation.

3. Possible outcomes:
   a) Pass with distinction and Candidacy for the Ph.D.
   b) Pass and Candidacy for the Ph.D.
   c) Fail. Depending on the nature of the failure, the student may be asked to repeat either part or all of the exam. If the exam shows that the student is unlikely to have success in the future, he or she may not be given the option of additional testing.

6. The dissertation

1. The director of the dissertation will chair the Ph.D. committee. There can be, however, two co-directors, one of whom may be from a VU administrative unit other than Spanish and Portuguese, if that arrangement will better serve the needs of the student.

2. The dissertation must, in substantial fashion, involve texts written in at least three languages (for purposes of comparative literary study at the graduate level, the dyadic model is not acceptable and will be avoided; two of the languages must be Spanish and Portuguese).

   More languages, literatures, and literary traditions and cultures may be represented as needed.

   Native American languages and literatures, both oral and written, may be included (if linguistic competence is verified and if appropriate training in both the language and literature can be obtained or demonstrated).

   If the Native American literature to be used is written or performed in English, French, Spanish, or Portuguese, then the literatures of at least two other languages must be substantially represented in the dissertation (again, the dyadic model is not acceptable for the Spanish, Portuguese, and Comparative Literature Ph.D. track).
3. The SPCL dissertation must be demonstrably comparative in nature and, in terms of the texts it discusses, should clearly reflect the student's primary, secondary, and, if represented, tertiary areas of expertise.

Upon completion of all requirements for the Spanish, Portuguese, and Comparative Literature Ph.D. track, the student will receive a Ph.D. in Spanish and Portuguese.

Timetable for Graduate Studies

Students entering the program with a B.A.

1st year
- Fall: 3 or 4 classes (9 or 12 credits) including 301 and 302.
- Spring: 3 or 4 classes (9 or 12 credits), including either 301 and 302.

2nd year
- Fall: 3 or 4 classes (9 or 12 credits), including 310. Take Span/Port 351 (Comparative Methodology) by the end of the second year.
- Spring: 3 classes (9 credits) Take first M.A. exam at end of semester.

3rd year
- Fall: 3 classes (9 credits), including 303. Select an academic advisor (future director of the dissertation).
- Take second M.A. exam (if necessary) at end of semester.
- Spring: 3 Classes (9 credits).

4th year
- Fall: 3 classes (9 credits). Create Ph.D. committee: a chair (from the Department of Spanish and Portuguese), 2 additional members from the same department, 1 or 2 members from the third area of specialization, (English, French, or Latin American Studies, for example) and 1 outside member.
- Present to the Chair of the Dissertation Committee the first draft of the reading lists and the two-page statement of the thesis of the dissertation by week 8. An approved first draft of the lists and the statement should be received by the DGS and distributed to the members of the dissertation committee at least four months before the expected date for the Ph.D. exam.
Apply for Dissertation Enhancement Award and other dissertation scholarships.

5th and 6th year: Dissertation.

Apply for Dissertation Enhancement Award and other dissertation scholarships. Dissertation defense and granting of Ph.D.

Students entering the program with one M.A. (in Spanish or Portuguese) or a Licenciatura (or equivalent degree) in a field that may allow transfer credits for the Inter-American Ph.D.

1st year
- Fall: 3 or 4 classes (9 or 12 credits) including 301 or 302.
- Spring: 3 or 4 classes (9 or 12 credits), including 301 or 302.
- A decision about transfer credits (up to 18) will be made at the end of the year.

2nd year
- Fall: 3 classes (9 credits). Take Span/Port 351 (Comparative Methodology) and 310 by the end of the second year.
- Select an academic advisor (future director of the dissertation).
- Spring: 3 classes (9 credits). Week 3: Take second M.A. exam.

3rd year
- Fall: 3 classes (9 credits), including 303. Create Ph.D. committee: a chair, 2 members of the department and 1 outside member. * Present to the Dissertation chair the first draft of the reading lists and the two-page statement of the dissertation thesis by week 8. An approved first draft of the lists and the statement should be received by the DGS and distributed to the members of the dissertation committee at least four months before the expected date for the Ph.D. exam.

4th and 5th year: Dissertation.