

BLUEPRINT

MASTER OF WESTERN LITERATURE
FACULTEIT LETTEREN



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PROFILE AND VISION

1.1. FOCAL POINTS

Plurilingual and intercultural perspective

The program is focused on the study of literature from a multilingual and intercultural perspective. It extends and deepens students' knowledge of Western literary traditions and of the interactions between those traditions from a historical and contemporary perspective.

International learning community

The combination of international and Flemish students from different disciplinary backgrounds generates an international and interdisciplinary learning environment that fosters personal input, interaction, and debate.

Academic orientation

The program sharpens the research-oriented and critical skills of its students. Critical readings of literary and scholarly texts as well as research and presentation skills are crucial elements.

Freedom of choice

The curriculum is flexible and diverse, both in terms of literary traditions and theoretical perspectives. This gives students the freedom to design their own curriculum and to develop their individual interests and expertise.

Broad employability

The combination of broad critical and research-oriented skills and more focused literary and scholarly knowledge prepares students for a wide range of careers. Students develop an extensive cultural knowledge as well as excellent analytical, synthetic, and critical skills. Especially the strong expertise in terms of textual analysis, developed through literary and other texts, can be deployed in the analysis of complex social and cultural phenomena, also in other media.

1.2. GOALS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

The main goal of the program is developing insight into the phenomenon of "Western literature," both from a general theoretical perspective and through a number of more specific research areas and research questions. It emphasizes the interaction between specific literary texts and traditions, on the one hand, and the broader cultural historical context of Western literature and new developments in critical and cultural theory on the other.

The program cultivates knowledge as well as skills. It aims to deepen and broaden the knowledge of Western literature and culture and of the scholarly study of Western literature. It also sharpens the critical, methodological, and research-oriented skills of the students.

This combination of knowledge and skills enables students to (1) acquire scholarly insights in literary texts and other cultural phenomena; (2) critically evaluate existing scholarly work

and apply it in their own research; (3) formulate research questions and collect relevant research material; (4) report on their own research in speech and in writing.

The program educates students to become critical and literate citizens with a lasting interest in Western literature and culture, with a keen insight in diversity and the interactions between different cultures, and with the capacity to mobilize that critical literacy in professional, academic, and everyday contexts.

1.3. TARGET AUDIENCE

This master program targets students who have completed their master programs and who have a marked interest in literature and in the study of literature as a complex language system in continuous interaction with a broader social and cultural context.

The primary target audience consists of students with a bachelor degree in languages and literature. Through a preparatory program composed of literary studies courses (16 sp), the program also recruits students from all other programs in the humanities.

The combination of a Dutch-language and Anglophone curriculum allows the program to reach a target audience that is marked by disciplinary as well as cultural diversity, which results in a productive exchange of ideas and perspectives.

1.4. TEACHING VISION

Assisted independent learning

The program enables the acquisition of analytical and research skills in the field of the study of Western literature by offering students the opportunity to conduct independent literary research under the supervision of their lecturers.

Interactive learning environment

The program aims to create a stimulating learning environment that promotes interaction and discussion between lecturers and students and that sees the exchange of international and multidisciplinary perspectives as an asset.

Research-based teaching

The program is committed to the acquisition of knowledge and insights through literary research. The course content is informed by recent scholarly developments in the fields of literary and cultural studies and by the research expertise of the individual lecturers.

International orientation

The program has a clear international and multilingual orientation, both in terms of the literary traditions and the theoretical frameworks that are being studied and in terms of the target audience, embeddedness in international research traditions, and its sustained comparative perspective.

Critical literacy

The different aspects of the teaching in the program contribute to the basic concept of the program, which revolves around a form of critical literacy that can be deployed in different social and professional contexts.

IMPLEMENTATION

The program implements the goals and learning outcomes (1) through a tripartite structure that combines general and theoretical, intercultural and comparative, as well as corpus-specific perspectives; (2) through the elaboration of an effective learning environment with a wide range of teaching formats that stimulate independent research and critical skills; (3) through a diverse set of evaluation forms that test the acquired skills and knowledge.

2.1. STRUCTURE OF THE CURRICULUM

The 60 sp. curriculum consists of three modules with an increasing degree of freedom for the students. The first, compulsory module aims to offer insight into the phenomenon of Western literature through a theoretical and a practical part. The theoretical part explores the conceptualization and criticism of notions such as Western/European literature, 'Weltliteratur,' and 'world literatures' through critical readings of scholarly texts. The practical part offers students the opportunity to analyze important works in Western literature in a critical and comparative way from an angle of their choice. The second module deepens these theoretical and comparative components through a set of transversal courses in which the different 'national' traditions in Western literature are studied from a specific theoretical angle. Teaching teams of several lecturers assure a multilingual and intercultural perspective on Western literature. Third, the optional module allows students to complete their curriculum with courses that study a particular literary corpus or a particular theoretical perspective in depth. Finally, the master's thesis offers students the opportunity to conduct independent research in the field of Western literature and demonstrate their acquired knowledge and skills in one capstone assignment.

2.2. TEACHING FORMATS

The program implements its goal through a broad range of teaching formats that enable the acquisition of both deeper knowledge and critical research and presentation skills. The traditional lecture format has been replaced by interactive classes, in which lecturing alternates with interactive discussions about particular literary or scholarly texts, possibly complemented by a group discussion on the electronic learning platform Toledo. Smaller student groups in most of the corpus and transversal courses allow for a seminar format in which formulating and presenting one's own insights and the exchange of ideas are central. Some courses adopt group work and the curriculum offers regular guest lectures. In the course "Literary Texts from the Western Canon" and the master thesis, the teaching format is assisted independent learning. The master thesis is accompanied by compulsory presentations in which students present their research to a critical audience of peers and lecturers.

2.3. EVALUATION

The program uses written and oral exams, open book exams, papers, and presentations for an efficient and varied assessment of the learning outcomes. In the exams the emphasis is less on the reproduction of knowledge than on students' independent processing of and critical reflection on the study material. Papers, presentations, and the master thesis test students' capacity to analyze literary texts and other cultural phenomena, to formulate and elaborate research questions, and to present their research in a scholarly way. Permanent assignments and feedback make it possible to support the learning process for these skills.

The learning outcomes of this programme can be consulted on https://onderwijsaanbod.kuleuven.be/opleidingen/e/CQ_50655698.htm#activetab=doelstellingen.