



September 21, 2020

**To:** CAS Curriculum Committee

**From:** Leah Middlebrook, Dept. Head, COLT

**Re:** Proposed changes to the Comparative Literature Major

To the Members of the Committee:

The Comparative Literature Department seeks permission to make two changes to our undergraduate major.

Change 1 – we seek to offer the degree of Bachelor of Science, in addition to Bachelor of Arts  
Change 2 – we seek to reduce the language requirement for our “Disciplines in Dialogue” track, from the 3 years or equivalent of language study required for majors pursuing the “Language and Culture” track to the basic, 2 years or equivalent proficiency required for the UO Bachelor of Arts degree. (Note that the 3-year requirement would still obtain for majors in the Language and Culture track.)

The rationale for these changes has to do with access, on a number of levels. As we know, many students from under-served and under-resourced communities do not receive Humanities training in primary and high school, and they may have their first encounters with literature and culture courses as they work to fulfill the Core Ed requirements at UO. Often, these students will seek a Bachelor of Science degree, for a variety of reasons — among them, the fact that they have not received the prior language training that would furnish confidence when confronted with an advanced language requirement. We would like to facilitate access for those students to the training and the interdisciplinary research we mentor in our department. The proposed changes will advance this cause.

Furthermore, instituting a COLT Bachelor of Science would allow students to double major in, for example, BIO-COLT, or, as one student wants to do, CIS-COLT. These kinds of requests come in at the rate of once or twice a year, as it is. If we offer a B.S., we will open the door to a greater amount of truly exciting, interdisciplinary work with students who may not have considered COLT, or the Humanities, before taking a class with us in satisfaction of Core Ed requirements.

The Comparative Literature major is set up to support these two changes. The impact of instating them would be entirely positive (more students could major in COLT more easily, and they could do so later in their college career —as juniors, for example). As indicated above, our major contains two distinct tracks. Language and Culture would not be impacted by the proposed changes; the language requirement would stay the same. Disciplines in

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Dialogue recognizes students who seek to combine the study of one linguistic tradition with an additional disciplinary focus (e.g. journalism, psychology, creative writing, philosophy, cinema studies, art history). Comparison across languages is not fundamental to this work; what matters most is interdisciplinarity, creativity and intellectual curiosity. By offering a Bachelor of Science in COLT, and by reducing the language requirement in Disciplines in Dialogue, we would be able to welcome more of these students.

Our Director of Undergraduate Studies presented these proposed changes at our June faculty meeting, and the faculty unanimously approved them. I have discussed these proposed changes with Harry Wonham, Associate Dean for the Humanities, and he supports them as well.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with questions.

Many thanks for your time and assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'W. J. ...', written in a cursive style.