ComplLit@HKU consists of three integral parts:

- the Core department (Department of Comparative Literature)
- the Center for the Study of Globalization and Cultures (CSGC)
- the Masters of Arts in Literary and Cultural Studies (MALCS)

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Welcome to CompLit@HKU

Three integral parts of the Department:
—Core department, where we teach literary, cinematic, and cultural texts beyond and across national and linguistic divides;
—Center for the Study of Globalization and Cultures, with many events featuring distinguished international scholars in collaboration with our core teaching staff;
—Masters of Arts in Literary and Cultural Studies that also contributes to a diverse departmental culture.
**Comparative Literature**

**CompLit@HKU** teaches literary, cinematic, and cultural texts beyond and across national and linguistic divides.

**CompLit@HKU** introduces students to literary and cultural theories, making them accessible and applicable in working environments and real life situations. Students learn to see the world around them through diverse texts, mediums, and genres and grasp a set of analytical tools to tackle cultural phenomena critically.

Teaching staff in the Core of the department conduct research and offer instructions in the following five areas:

- Film and Visual Culture
- Literary and Cultural Theory
- Gender and Sexuality
- Hong Kong and Asia
- Postcolonial and Global Studies

Our signature Internship Program places students in real working environments and offers opportunities to realize their classroom knowledge in the local cultural and commercial scene.

About the Department
Prof. Gina Marchetti
Comparative Literature: Film and Visual Culture

Professor Gina Marchetti
Dr. Sze Wei Ang

• What do we think about fiction, culture, and life?
How do we make sense of what we read?

- Art, including fiction, often reflects the norms of social life. Sometimes, they can challenge or subvert what we take to be “normal” about life. Either way, art often calls our attention to how daily life takes place, and in doing so, asks us to think about why life works the way it does.
Why do we need to make sense of what we read or see?

• “How we make sense of life” is another way of describing what “interpretation” really means.

• We all interpret what we see, hear, or read all the time.

• To “study” it is to be more reflective about the process of interpretation.
If we are always already producing interpretations ....

• Let’s do this in the company of others!

• What have others thought about the process of interpretation?

• How do I know that I’m on the right track?

• What have others said that is meaningful?
What happened to enjoying art for art’s sake?

- It’s still here! Art, fiction, and culture produce a great deal of pleasure.
- But even the effect of pleasure is something that doesn’t emerge out of thin air.
- Artists put in a great amount of work and thought into the effects that are generated by their work.
- So we can ask the question, “How are these effects produced?”
But I just want to have fun ....

• That’s great! Novels, films, and stories should be a lot of fun!

• But they also tell us a lot about the people that have come before us, and also about the people we find around us today.

• By learning more about what others have said about fiction, history, and culture, we learn that our own stories are part of a larger, global story.
Expertise:
- Gender and sexuality studies
- Feminist theory
- Queer theory
- Hong Kong literature and culture
- Sinophone studies
- Transnational studies
What is Feminism?

- Feminism refers to the beliefs, ideologies, theories, practice, and social movements that advocate for the equality of the sexes.

- 1st wave feminism (19th-early 20th century): refers to the women’s suffrage movement that fought for the rights to vote. Key thinkers: Mary Wollstonecraft, Sojourner Truth, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, etc.

- 2nd wave feminism (1960s-80s): refers to the range of intellectual, political, and structural changes that address issues such as reproductive rights, sexuality, lesbian feminism, domestic violence, structural inequality, etc.

- 3rd wave feminism (1990s): addresses a much broader range of concerns that were previously overshadowed by a singular definition of “womanhood.” This period saw the flourishing of Third World feminism, woman of color feminism, ecofeminism, sex-positive feminism, etc. Key thinkers: Kimberle Williams Crenshaw, Angela Davis, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Lisa Lowe, Trinh T. Minh-ha.
Key Thinkers of Feminism

Angela Davis

Trinh T. Minh-ha
What is Queer Theory?

• Queer theory offers theoretical, philosophical, and activist approaches that question essentialist ideas and binary thinking about gender, sexuality, embodiment, and desire. Within academia, it overcomes the earlier disciplinary naming of “gay and lesbian studies,” which presumes that gayness and lesbianism are the only ways to be different from heterosexuality. Early key thinkers of queer theory: Teresa de Lauretis, Judith Butler, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, David Halperin, Gayle Rubin, Diana Fuss, Lee Edelman, and others.

• Performativity: Judith Butler introduces the concept of performativity to name the repetition of gender acts over time and its congealment into gendered normative categories, wherein performativity as citationality also implies that gender and sexuality can be performed in ways that deviate from socially intelligible norms.

• Queer of color critique and queer diaspora studies: Queer of color critique argues that gender and sexual normativity in the modern West inherently depends on the marginalization and disciplining of people of color and queers of color as “non-normative” and “perverse.” Alternatively, queer of color subjects can be mobilized as offering standpoints and perspectives for theorizing both racial, gender, and sexual differences. Like queer of color critique, queer diaspora studies questions the Eurocentrism and whiteness of queer theory by studying the alternative narratives, visuality, and ethnographies of queer migration and queer diasporas in both the Global North and Global South. Key thinkers: Roderick A. Ferguson, Jose Esteban Munoz, David L. Eng, Martin F. Manalansan, Gayatri Gopinath, etc.
Key Thinkers of Queer Theory

Judith Butler

Jose Esteban Munoz

Gayatri Gopinath
Key Texts in Feminism and Queer Theory

*Women, Race, and Class* (1981) by Angela Davis

*Disidentification* (1999) by Jose Esteban Munoz
Dr. Aaron Magnan-Park
Ways of illuminating: 30 Years in the Cultural Scene
what is ‘postcolonial studies’?

‘postcolonial studies’ is a field with many different analyses, but the fundamental argument they share is that the world we inhabit is impossible to understand except in relationship to the history of imperialism and colonial rule.
	his means that it is impossible to conceive of ‘philosophy’, ‘literature’, or even ‘history’ without considering the impact of colonial rule around the world.

postcolonial studies has influenced the way we read texts, the way we understand history, and the way we understand the political implications of our own knowledge as scholars.
usually when we discuss ‘colonialism’ we are talking about european imperial rule around the world in the 18th-20th centuries. there have been other empires and other colonies, but these european empires have had the greatest impact on the world we live in today.

the ‘post-’ in ‘postcolonial’ does not mean that colonialism has ended. postcolonial studies is usually concerned with the lingering forms of colonial authority after the formal end of empire.

as an academic practice, ‘postcolonial studies’ emerged in the 1980s, but it is indebted to anticolonial thought from south asia and africa in the first half of the 20th century.
what does postcolonial studies do?

it imagines and critiques forms of political and aesthetic representation.

it accounts for globalisation and global modernity.

it reimagines politics and ethics from underneath imperial power and remaining committed to those who continue to suffer from the effects of injustice.

it engages with new global challenges, from environmentalism to human rights.
**what does postcolonial studies have to do with comparative literature?**

like comparative literature, postcolonial studies helps us understand how different cultures participate in the global circulation of ideas and texts. it reveals how literature and film respond to and deal with interaction, injustice, and globalisation.

it makes us think critically about what counts as ‘knowledge’ (and what doesn’t count), why we read the texts we read (and not others), and how we make other critical judgments.

postcolonial studies has broadened our horizon for what books we read and what films we watch.
why should i take a class on postcolonial studies?

you will read books and watch films from asia and africa. you will discover new ways of thinking about the world from new perspectives, which will challenge you to form your own analysis of the world we live in.

you will learn to think critically about your own education: why are you reading this in english? (hint: british colonialism.) why do we usually think of philosophy as ‘european’? (hint: french colonialism.) but, more importantly, you will appreciate how writers in asia and africa used the english language for new poetry, or re-read french philosophy with a concern for the entire world.

you live in hong kong! this is a city that has had a long relationship with colonialism. it is a city of writers, thinkers, and filmmakers who have responded to that impact in amazing and innovative ways.
Where can I get more information about postcolonial studies?

For beginners, you can check out:
Robert J.C. Young’s *Postcolonialism: A Short Introduction*
Leela Gandhi’s *Postcolonialism: A Critical Introduction*

You can make a reading list from the ‘top 100’ texts:
jdelam.com/postcolonial-top-100

You can write to any comparative literature faculty, including:
J Daniel Elam (jdelam@hku.hk)
Sze Wei Ang (angz@hku.hk)
• We introduce students to literary and cultural theories, making them accessible and applicable in working environments and real life situations.
  
• Students learn to see the world around them through diverse texts, mediums, and genres.
  
• Students will grasp a set of analytical tools to tackle cultural phenomena critically.
• Our signature **Internship** Program

  • Capstone experience: Students are placed in real working environments to realize classroom knowledge.
    
    • Film: Production agencies and distributors
    
    • Publishing: Newspapers and magazines
    
    • NGOs, in the cultural sector
    
    • Local art scene: Curatorship and management
    
    • Teaching and creative education
Internship in Comparative Literature & Cultural Studies

• Aims at placing students in the working environments where their cultural knowledge and their skills in writing, analysis and cultural research will find application and become enriched in the process.

• For Comparative Literature majors only!

• Offered in Fall, Spring, and Summer (all credit-bearing).
List of host organizations:

- AIDS Concerns
- Asia Art Archive
- Broadway Cinematheque
- HK Scholars
- HK ARTION
- Hong Kong International Photo Festival
- Hong Kong International Literary Festival
- Hong Kong Arts Festival
- MOViE MOViE
- Visible Records
- .... etc.
Overseas internship in Summer

GLoCal Project

Is a collaboration with Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of Civil Engineering, and NGOs (e.g. World Vision in 2019).

In Summer 2019, students built a swimming pond and conducted fieldwork related to child injuries prevention.
Ways of illuminating: 30 Years in the Cultural Scene