Optional Ph.D. Emphasis in Translation Studies

Translation studies in the humanities is comprised of two components: translation theory and the practice of translation as a literary art. In the theoretical domain, students are expected to achieve conversance with the history and philosophy of translation, and to discover for themselves an understanding of a number of abstract (theoretical) questions with significant implications: is an original text fixed and complete or incomplete and, in that sense, unstable? What is the relationship/s of a translation to an original? Is it inherently mimetic or can it be conceived as an interaction or even a collaboration? What, theoretically, should a translation achieve or aspire to achieve and what, as a corollary, is the translator's tasks? The contemplation of these and related “big questions” is facilitated by close reading of the “canon” of translation theory including post-structural linguistics, and, more broadly, the philosophy of language.

In the domain of translation as literary art, students labor to render artfully texts from a source language into English. This difficult enterprise confronts students with questions about the nature of reading in a source language, about style, and about the impact on the reader of “technical” approaches that range from literalism to creative fidelity. The translation specialization is designed to encourage and enable students to apply, or at least to relate, what they have understood from their theoretical study about the possibilities inherent in translation and about philosophical goals to approaches, techniques and choices made by translators.

Curriculum and Course Requirements

Courses in Translation Studies engage the theoretical questions that are germane to a philosophy of translation and that inform the practice of translation. The existing UCSB activities help prepare students for their career objectives. The translation curriculum currently examines translation as a cultural practice as well as covering theoretical developments and consequent shifts in the field of Translation Studies. One such development focuses on the shift from the notion of translation as a metaphor to translators or actual writers working in particular circumstances. The curriculum in this case charts the course from prescriptive, theoretical models for translation to descriptive case studies. For example, students watch Translation Studies move past the debates over what a translation ought to be through discussion of the role translators have played in important cultural and literary movements.

Any enrolled graduate student in good academic standing with an interest in literary translation, competency in more than one language and a willingness to complete the required coursework/research project may take part in the emphasis. Following a successful year of masters and/or doctoral study in one of the participating departments (Classics, Comparative Literature, East Asian Languages and Cultural Studies, English, French and Italian, Germanic, Slavic, and Semitic Studies, Religious Studies, and Spanish and Portuguese) students may petition to add the Translation Studies Emphasis, which in addition to Ph.D. requirements of the home department, requires the following:

• Completion of 16 units in the areas of 1) Critical/Theoretical/Historical Approaches to Translation and 2) Translation Practicum (either as catalogue course or independent study).
The required core course is Comparative Literature 170/260: Literary Translation: Theory and Practice, which is offered every year, or an equivalent course covering some aspect of translation theory and practice approved by the Translation Studies faculty advisor in consultation with the advisory committee.

One of the innovations of the Translation Emphasis which make its format slightly different than other emphases is that a student can either complete the 16 credits by taking offered courses or by following an individually-tailored supervised program or a combination therein. The four courses (16 units) may be fulfilled in a number of ways:

• Students must take at least two courses which cover some aspect of Critical, Theoretical and/or Historical approaches to translation.

• At least one of the four courses should be taken outside the student's home department.

• At least four of the 16 units can be taken as an independent study/practicum, in the event a course listed in Appendix A does not have a sister graduate-level course. (See the list of approved course options on the Translation Studies web site, or consult the graduate advisor in one of the participating departments.)

• Students may take any two 4-unit courses in their department in which a translation component can be integrated into the course material—e.g. any literature course in the various language and literature departments; any catalogue or approved independent study course in Religious Studies, Classics, etc. involving close textual reading, linguistic analysis, cultural study/interpretation—and work with the faculty/supervisor on a translation-related final project aside from doing all the course work. These units would be part of the basic 16 unit requirement.

• Completion of a final project (4 to 8 of the 16 units can be an independent directed research course devoted to this project of approximately 30 pages), approved by the Translation Studies advisor in consultation with an advisory committee made up of two additional affiliated faculty, which, based on the translation(s) of a particular text, examines the relationships between textual practice and theoretical perspectives, thus addressing some relevant aspect of translation theory, criticism, or history. Ph.D. students have the option of doing the field project OR of including Translation Studies as a significant research topic or methodology in their doctoral dissertation. For either the 30 page field paper or the actual dissertation, the student may include his/her own translation as part of the project. The final project must be unanimously passed (B or higher) by the three-member project committee, made up of affiliated faculty. The project with comments and grade will then be seen by the advisory committee to maintain consistency among the projects.

Again, see also Comparative Literature website http://www.complit.ucsb.edu/graduate-program/translation-studies for listing of sample curricula and approved course options at UCSB on the Translation Studies web site, or consult the graduate advisor.