

Foreign Language Programs

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Learning a foreign language contributes to a liberal education by providing performative exercises in cultural practices and linguistic concepts that open up new perspectives on what it means to be human. Furthermore, foreign-language courses allow access to world views expressed in the target language on their own linguistic and cultural terms, thus also making possible a more profound reflection on one's own source language and culture. The department of foreign language programs' offerings at all levels investigate and analyze important interconnections between the histories, society, cultures, and languages among the people that speak French, German, Russian, Italian, and Arabic, as well as offering students an introduction to American Sign Language and Deaf Culture. The curricula within the department of foreign language programs assert the importance of attaining fluency not only in the target language but also in the nuances of interpreting the target language's literatures and other modes of cultural production.

The goal of the department of foreign languages programs is to allow students to achieve competency and literacy in the target language in order to employ that target language in a range of intellectual and professional contexts. The department's mission is firmly supported by the study of current thinking in linguistics where language is analyzed as a phenomenon in itself. Courses in linguistics link the study of human language to the cognitive underpinning of language acquisition and production in both the source and target cultures.

The department offers courses in five modern languages, in American sign language, and in linguistics. Language courses are

regularly offered in Arabic, French, German, Italian, and Russian, and on occasion, other Slavic languages.

Coursework in all the programs is designed to promote a level of language proficiency and cultural understanding that will enable students to be active participants in a shrinking multicultural world. Each program's curriculum features a sequence of courses focusing on the development of language skills, at the lower level, followed by a transition to upper-level courses that focus on the appreciation and critical analysis of a wide variety of literary and cultural works. As the Goals 2000 document of the National Standards in Foreign Language Education states: "Knowing another language system, another culture, and communication strategies, enables students to access new information and knowledge, develop insight into their own language and culture, and participate in multilingual communities and a global society."

Students are strongly encouraged to continue or begin the study of the language(s)/culture(s) of their choice as early in their undergraduate career as possible. Doing so will ensure the possibility of completing a major or minor in the language and will open the door to many stimulating study abroad programs. Many students find that the study of other languages and cultures provides a good background for work in other disciplines. In addition, by working to an advanced level of language proficiency and cultural awareness, students may improve their chances for a Fulbright or other international fellowships after graduation.

American Sign Language (SIGN)

101 and 102. Elementary American Sign Language I and II (I and II; 2, 0) Half course.

An introduction to American Sign Language. Training and practice in signing together with approaches to communicating with deaf people. SIGN 101 or equivalent is prerequisite for 102.

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