

“Study in language, literature, and culture has long been a defining feature of education in the liberal arts.” (from 2006 Modern Language Association White Paper [funded by Teagle Foundation])

Students of languages other than English...

- ... learn and practice the ideals of the liberal arts
- ... appreciate complexity and difference
- ... embrace new ways of knowing
- ... appreciate and respond ethically to the interdependent worlds to which they belong
- ... understand that the study of languages is part of life-long learning

As an integral part of a liberal arts education, the study of languages other than English...

- ... develops analytical and critical capabilities, aesthetic awareness, and creativity
- ... fosters awareness of and sensitivity to social diversity
- ... stimulates intellectual curiosity
- ... promotes thoughtful decision-making
- ... encourages students to become more self-confident
- ... encourages responsible action in an interdependent world

The study of languages other than English supports and promotes the following Academic Program Goals of Wells College:

- Examine enduring and contemporary questions that shape human understanding
- Use the scholarly and creative traditions of the liberal arts and contemporary technologies to locate and evaluate information
- Communicate reasoned points of view to inform and persuade a variety of audiences
- Incorporate an understanding of diversity in students’ academic work and as members of a learning community
- Develop an appreciation of languages and cultures in a global context
- Engage in collaborative practices in the classroom, in campus life, and in the community at large
- Develop thorough knowledge of basic principles, methods of inquiry, and current issues in an academic field of study

Modern Languages at Wells College

Modern Languages has two majors:

Modern Languages: French and Francophone Studies

Modern Languages: Spanish and Latin American Studies

Modern Languages has five minors:

French and Francophone Studies

German

Italian

Japanese

Spanish and Latin American Studies

The Modern Languages major is a member of the Association of Departments of Foreign Languages (ADFL) and a number of individual faculty members are also members of our major professional organization, the Modern Language Association (MLA). The ADFL is part of the MLA. Some faculty are also members of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), as well as more specialized professional organizations.

Modern Languages majors are required to take 25 to 31 credit hours in courses in the target language, plus Modern Languages courses taught in English, and must complete at least one semester of study in a country where the target language is spoken. Courses taken abroad may be applied to fulfill requirements for the major. The total number of credit hours in each major is 50.

Modern Languages minors typically require 18-20 credit hours in the target language. Modern Languages minors are encouraged to study abroad.

Program Mission Statement

The mission of the major field of Modern Languages is to educate students to better understand and appreciate other cultures through the study of their languages, contemporary life and cultural heritage. Modern Language students develop intellectual curiosity, analytical and critical skills, and sensitivity to global diversity; embrace new ways of knowing; and learn to respond ethically to the challenges of our complex world.

GOALS FOR MODERN LANGUAGE MAJORS

GOAL 1. Graduating seniors will use the target language at a proficiency level necessary to communicate successfully with native speakers.

Learning Objectives

A. Students learn to engage in conversation, provide and obtain information, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions in a culturally appropriate manner in the target language. (*Measurable learning outcomes: a, b, f*)

B. Students learn to present in writing information, concepts, and ideas, and use clear structures, good grammar, and sophisticated vocabulary. (*Measurable learning outcomes: b, c*)

C. Students understand and analyze written texts in the target language. (*Measurable learning outcomes: d, e, f*)

D. Students understand oral information presented in person or through the media. (*Measurable learning outcome: f*)

Measurable Learning Outcomes

Graduating seniors in Modern Languages shall

- a. demonstrate few errors in oral and written presentations and communication
- b. express their own thoughts and show little interference from their native language
- c. use a sophisticated level of vocabulary, verb tenses and moods, pronoun usage, relative clauses
- d. comprehend main ideas and significant details on a variety of topics found in the media in the target language
- e. recognize tone, style, and author perspective in reading
- f. demonstrate independence as readers or listeners and generally comprehend what they read and hear without relying solely on formally learned vocabulary

GOAL 2. Graduating seniors will be able to understand the literary and other cultural features of the target language and appreciate the contributions of the target language and culture to the world.

Learning Objectives

- A. Students acquire basic knowledge of the literatures (both contemporary and from earlier periods) of the target language. (*Measurable learning outcomes: a, e*)
- B. Students demonstrate basic knowledge of the history and culture of the countries of the target language. (*Measurable learning outcome: b*)
- C. Students learn how to read and discuss a literary text critically. (*Measurable learning outcome: c*)
- D. Students develop an effective critical writing style. (*Measurable learning outcome: d*)
- E. Students investigate the values represented in texts and are able to place themselves imaginatively in other historical and cultural contexts. (*Measurable learning outcome: e*)

Measurable Learning Outcomes

Graduating seniors in Modern Languages shall

- a. demonstrate knowledge of the literatures of the target language
- b. demonstrate knowledge of the history and key cultural elements of one or more countries of the target language
- c. write effective critical essays
- d. read and discuss literary texts critically
- e. apply ethical principles in critical reading of literature

GOAL 3. Graduating seniors will be able to understand the contemporary culture of one or more of the countries where the target language is spoken, both from culture-based course work and from study abroad.

Learning Objectives

A. Students learn about the relationship between the practices, perspectives, and values of the culture(s) studied. (*Measurable learning outcomes: a, b, c, d, e*)

B. Students identify and explore the value systems of at least one of the cultures of the target language. (*Measurable learning outcomes: a, b, c, d, e*)

Measurable Learning Outcomes

Graduating seniors in Modern Languages shall

- a. analyze and appreciate aspects of at least one of the cultures of the target language and learn about the social forces that have shaped those cultures
- b. demonstrate a comparative understanding of some of the different cultures and the diverse ethnicities within the area of concentration
- c. appreciate complexity and diversity through total immersion in another culture
- d. compare and contrast the target culture with their own while learning to appreciate and value the richness of differences and to approach the “other” with respect and understanding
- e. apply ethical principles as they observe, compare, and contrast other ethnicities, and as they participate in other cultures

Means of assessment

Modern Languages faculty have discussed at length the senior capstone experience. We may consider asking seniors to submit a portfolio of their work (x number of representative exams, papers, or projects from each course at the 200- and 300-levels). For some 200-level courses, students would submit exams or projects, for others (for example, 200-level Introduction to Literature courses) they would submit papers; for 300-level courses final papers would be submitted. We would like to consult with other majors about how/if the portfolios are graded, when they are submitted (same semester as comprehensive exam and senior thesis?), etc.

The Senior Thesis Project as a whole could be portfolio + comprehensive exam + longer research (or other) senior essay. Students would continue to do a public presentation (in English) of their senior essay and an oral “defense” or presentation in the target language.

The comprehensive exam (= comprehensive of what has been covered at Wells; not a “centuries” comprehensive exam) should be completed in the same semester as the senior essay (note: senior thesis project has traditionally been in the Spring semester). The comprehensive exam must be individualized for each student, as students do not necessarily take the same combination of courses with the same faculty; this examination should have both written and oral components.

We have also discussed how to integrate study abroad work into both the educational experience itself and the assessment process.

In the future, faculty in each major will meet each year (semester?) to assess individual students and their progress towards the degree. Faculty will have to be more pro-active in pointing out problem areas/weaknesses along the way, not just during senior year. This should begin as early as the semester following the declaration of the major (meet with students). If we were to add a portfolio requirement, students would need to know about the expectations upon declaring the major. We could also announce this in all 200-level courses.