

Foreign Languages and Cultures

Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, College of Arts and Sciences



Departmental Information

Foreign languages taught at Western Illinois University include French, German and Spanish. Knowledge of other languages and cultures is the foundation for successful interaction with peers, colleagues, supervisors, employees and friends from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. When you learn another language, you step outside the cognitive framework to which you are accustomed in order to understand people, events and processes from a new perspective. Learning languages promotes appreciation and respect for cultural diversity, can increase marketability to employers and graduate schools and opens the door to life-changing opportunities for study and work abroad.

Major Program

The University offers the Bachelor of Arts degree in foreign languages and cultures with options in French, German and Spanish. The major in foreign languages and cultures requires a minimum of 32 semester hours (SH). Students are required to choose a primary language and a secondary language. Students with prior study of a language or who are heritage speakers should complete a placement exam and are eligible for advanced placement credit after successfully completing one to two courses in the department. Minors are also available in French, German and Spanish. Classes taken in any foreign language may be applied toward the Bachelor of Arts degree in foreign languages and cultures as part of the secondary language requirement.

The department is committed to promoting foreign languages both as a means of communication and as the prerequisite to cultural understanding. Classes with the prefix of FR, GER and SPAN are taught in the target language and promote students' active use of the language in a culturally and communicatively meaningful context. Classes with the prefix FL are taught in English and allow students the opportunity to reflect critically on cultural practices and products of non-English-speaking countries and people prior to obtaining advanced proficiency in the target language.

Faculty and Facilities

In the WIU Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, students will be taught by experienced, dedicated professors and instructors from many different countries. Small class sizes allow for individual attention from teachers and a friendly classroom environment. In addition, the department provides free tutoring in the languages offered. The Foreign Language Computer Lab (Morgan Hall 303) is available for individual student use. The departmental DVD collection includes a variety of feature films in French, German and Spanish that can be checked out by students and viewed in the lab.

Scholarships

A variety of scholarships are available for students majoring in foreign languages and cultures. The newly established Kline Scholarship for new freshmen and continuing students provides between \$1,000 and \$10,000 annually to multiple students in the department. Several other scholarships are also available to students who qualify, and additional funding is allocated so that majors may study abroad. For further information, including application forms, criteria and deadlines, see wiu.edu/cas/foreign_languages_and_literatures/scholarships.php.

Honors in Foreign Languages and Cultures

To be eligible for the Centennial Honors College, entering freshmen must have an ACT composite score of at least 28 OR have a 26 or 27 composite ACT and be in the top 15 percent of their graduating class OR have an ACT composite score of at least 24 and be in the top 10 percent of their high school graduating class. A comparable SAT score is acceptable. Transfer and current WIU students who wish to join the Honors College (including the Quad Cities Honors Program) must have a 3.4 grade point average on a 4.0 scale based on 12 SH or more. Honors credit is given for honors coursework completed at other accredited institutions. To find out more, visit wiu.edu/Honors. In the Foreign Languages and Cultures major, students take courses for honors credit and, as seniors, prepare an honors thesis under the direction of a department faculty member.

Student Activities

Students may practice their language skills in any of the weekly conversation groups/coffee hours in French, German and Spanish. In addition, faculty regularly sponsor film series and organize activities in cooperation with student language groups. Outstanding students of Spanish are encouraged to apply for membership in Sigma Delta Pi, a National Collegiate Hispanic Honor Society.



Special Opportunities

Study abroad is strongly encouraged for majors in order to improve linguistic and cultural expertise through an extended immersion experience. A wide variety of options are available, including departmental faculty-led programs in Costa Rica and Spain, as well as programs through partner universities in various countries. The Office of Study Abroad (Horrabin Hall 8) is an excellent resource for students who wish to identify an appropriate program. Students attending approved study-abroad programs earn academic credit applicable to their degree requirements. Foreign languages and cultures majors can apply for scholarships of up to \$7,000 to assist in covering the costs of study abroad. For more information, see the department's website at wiu.edu/cas/foreign_languages_and_literatures/scholarships.php.

Since foreign language study adds value to any course of study or career, students frequently combine second-language learning with another major. Curricular sequences are available to assist students in completing a double major with english, history and communication sciences and disorders. Contact the WIU Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures for more information.

After College

Financial columnist Sylvia Porter was right on target when she called knowledge of foreign languages "job insurance." Countless career options are available to people who have advanced foreign language skills in addition to other areas of preparation. The federal government is the largest single employer of persons with foreign language skills. Many local governments also need officials and employees who can speak a second language. Here are just a few other examples: personnel of multinational corporations, banking and financial officers, engineers and technicians with firms manufacturing for export, law enforcement personnel and administrators, security and loss-prevention industries and a wide range of service agencies from social and medical to tourism and travel. Employment opportunities also occur in library systems, publishing, journalism, communications, customs, interpreting or translating, retail sales and other arenas. In academia, Western's foreign language teaching graduates are currently finding growing opportunities as teachers or as graduate teaching assistants. Graduate schools in a variety of disciplines seek students capable of doing research with primary foreign sources.

For More Information

The Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures welcomes visitors. Inquiries may be directed to Luciano Picanco, department chair, at (309) 298-1558 or languages@wiu.edu. The department's website may be visited by connecting to wiu.edu/fll.

wiu.edu/fll

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