Modern Languages and Literatures

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Department Chair: John Thompson

Academic Programs

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The Modern Languages and Literatures Department offers coursework in beginning, intermediate, and advanced French, German, and Spanish, as well as coursework in beginning and intermediate Mandarin Chinese, Italian, and Japanese. Instruction at all levels emphasizes communicative competence and the use of authentic media to prepare students for cultural, educational, literary and professional needs in California, throughout the United States, and abroad.

Students who wish to enroll in language courses for the first time at Cal Poly, numbered 101 through 203, must take the requisite Placement Examination prior to enrolling. Students who have never studied the desired language must begin at 101. Students should contact the Modern Languages and Literatures Department for test dates and procedures.

The department supports the concept of international education and encourages students to investigate opportunities for meaningful international study, internships, and educational experiences. The department works with Cal Poly's and the CSU's International Programs to ensure that courses taken in an experience abroad count toward either major, support, minor, general education and/or free electives, as appropriate. Students interested in studying abroad should consult with the Cal Poly International Center Office and their assigned academic advisor well in advance.

The department collaborates with Cal Poly's School of Education in training students who wish to obtain a bilingual teaching credential.

The department also supports such student clubs as the Cal Poly Language Club, the Chinese Cultural Club, and MEXA (Movimiento Estudiantil Xicano de Aztlán), as well as sponsoring a quarterly film series and other cultural events such as the Chinese New Year celebration and the German Winter Festival.

The PolyLingual International Resource Center (PIRC) is the department's digital language laboratory and multimedia teaching facility. Students and faculty members use the Center for class activities and presentations, and for drop-in language practice and curriculum development.

Undergraduate Programs

BA Modern Languages and Literatures

Modern Languages and Literatures majors and minors have been successful in careers in education, international business, finance, non-profit agencies, the viticulture industry, and government service. Others have attended graduate and professional schools in various fields, including languages and literatures, linguistics, speech pathology, law, medicine, and engineering. Our graduates have also been selected to teach in secondary schools in Spain (North American Language and Culture Assistants) and France (Teaching Assistant Program in France). We work closely with our students to integrate junior- or senior-level education abroad experiences, internships or service-learning experiences in the U.S. or another country, or equivalent professional-level hands-on experiences (with departmental approval) as part of their total capstone experience.

French Minor

German Minor

Spanish Minor