Letters: Language, Culture and Literature Clusters

1. What is the theme you propose for your group of courses? In what ways do you think this theme speaks to issues important to our freshman population?¹

Three-quarter sequence of Language, Culture and Literature Study

The study of language is inherently interdisciplinary. We provide an enriching and diverse course of study in world languages; we teach languages, culture, and literature as inherently related aspects of the intricate phenomenon of human communication. Students “will demonstrate through oral and written works how foundational works in the humanities illuminate enduring human concerns and the intellectual and cultural traditions within which these concerns arise, including both classical and contemporary artists and theorists” (Learning Outcomes for Lower-Division Courses in General Education).

The foreign language courses have content-based lessons that include fine art, music, literature and social studies intertwined into the language curriculum. Students learning a foreign language benefit from the study of the culture, literature, and the art of the people(s) who speak the target language being studied. We carefully select significant artistic and literary readings (and visual presentations: videos, films, slides) that allow students to “critically reflect on the formation of human goals and values, and [. . .] articulate an understanding of the creativity reflected in works of the humanities that influenced the formation of those values” (Learning Outcomes for Lower Division Courses in General Education).

By means of oral and written work—grammatical exercises, oral presentations, written composition and homework, reading materials, including literary texts—we teach the analytical examination of ideas through several methods. In addition, through the written work (grammatical exercises, written composition and homework) we help freshmen students to improve their writing abilities and grammatical notions. Modern Languages provides a significant amount of remedial teaching to our freshmen.

The study of world languages, culture and literature provides valuable experience for our students and a potential advantage in career development and future employment in today’s globalized economy (global market, international consortia, interacting in different capacities across national cultural and linguistic borders). To be an effective professional in most fields—lawyer, scientist, teacher, doctor, businessman, translator, nurse—knowledge of other language(s) is essential in today’s international workplace.

Some of the freshmen speak languages other than English at home; however, many of them are unable to write them (second or third generation bilingual speakers). These students need to expand their knowledge of vocabulary, grammar and culture in general and to learn the formal aspects of that particular language. Expanding their knowledge about a heritage language gives them a competitive advantage in today’s world.

A significant “benefit of language study is an expanded understanding of diverse, culturally rooted attitudes and behaviors” (MLA). Students at CSUEB can greatly benefit by learning about other culture(s) as they study a new language. This experience expands their personal horizon and teaches them tolerance and respect for others in their community, country and beyond.

¹ Average age 18; our most highly diverse class of students; mostly urban, approximately 25% of whom are not native speakers of English and more than 50% of whom will take developmental math and/or composition in their first year.
2. List the courses (prefix, number, title, units)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Units</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MLL 1101</td>
<td>Elementary French I</td>
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<td>MLL 1102</td>
<td>Elementary French II</td>
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<td>MLL 1103</td>
<td>Elementary French III</td>
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<td>MLL 1401</td>
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<tr>
<td>MLL 1601</td>
<td>Elementary Chinese I</td>
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<td>MLL 1901</td>
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<td>MLL 1902</td>
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<td>MLL 1903</td>
<td>Elementary Sign Language III</td>
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3. Explain how the theme will be used to integrate course content in each course. (Describe the contribution of each discipline’s perspective on the theme that will help create a coherent learning experience for the students).

Language reflects culture; students learning a particular language will gain insights about many cultural aspects linked to the study of the particular societies who speak the target language. Our courses focus on the acquisition of language: speaking, reading, and writing with strong emphasis on the appreciation of the culture. All foreign language courses have content-based lessons that include fine art, music, literature and social studies intertwined into the language curriculum. In addition, all courses taught in Modern Languages and Literatures examine significant written and/or oral texts of the creative intellect and aim to teach our students a critical examination of ideas through the use of varied approaches and methods.

4. Explain how each course in the proposed learning community will support student learning of each of the lower division general education area learning outcomes and General Education requirements (passed by Academic Senate February 17, 2004). Please use the GE course application forms to address this question. (If the course has already been approved for GE credit, and the current application form was used, please attach a copy. If the course has not yet been approved for GE credit, the use of the application form will permit review for GE credit, even if the cluster application is not selected. [http://www.csuhayward.edu/ge/subcommitte/ge/learningoutcomes.htm]. Please note: for mixed area learning communities, courses must meet learning outcomes in each area covered by the learning community. For example, a learning community with a course in humanities, one in social science, and one in science must demonstrate that the learning outcomes in humanities, social science, and science are met by the relevant courses.

Since all our courses deal with languages and culture, it is part of our strategy to ask our students to provide oral and written work reflecting how “foundational works in our courses illuminate enduring human concerns and the intellectual and cultural traditions within which these concerns arise” (SLOs). There is a component of reading in all our courses which strengthens the students understanding of the “interaction among historical and cultural contexts, individual works, and the development of humanities over time (SLOs).” We provide our students with literary excerpts, poetry, videotapes, readings on art and culture, slide presentations, and music. Students must provide feedback—oral and written—that will demonstrate their ability to engage in critical thinking and the evaluation of human concerns. Through analysis of creative works and cultural activities in class and outside the classroom (presentation of scholars, visits to museums, films, and varied cultural activities), our students will “reflect on the formation of human goals and values” and will gain an understanding of the “creativity reflected in works of the humanities that influenced the formation of those values (SLOs).”

5. Attach course outlines for the three courses. Each course outline should indicate how the theme would be used in the course and any student activities that cross all three courses. (For example, will there be common reading(s) in the three courses? Will there be common assignments, or assignments on which students work the entire year? Will students keep a cluster portfolio? Etc.

See attached course syllabi.
Approved by Department Chairs:

Signature

MLL 3/24/14
Department Date

MLL 3/24/14
Department Date

MLL 3/24/14
Department Date

Approved by College Dean/Associate Dean from each participating college

Signature

4/4/14
Date

Signature

Date

Signature

Date

Signatures of three faculty members: Ideally, the person who will teach the courses will participate in the cluster planning. However, recognizing the staffing difficulties departments face, the faculty member who plans the cluster must agree to provide a thorough orientation to the expectations and methods developed for the learning community to the actual instructor. If monies are available, faculty should be available for meetings in the late spring to plan integration points in the yearlong curriculum.

Signature

3/24/14
Date

Signature

3/24/14
Date

Signature

3/24/14
Date

Proposals should be submitted as soon as possible and no later than Friday, April 4, 2014. Please submit proposals to sally.murphy@csueastbay.edu and linda.beebe@csueastbay.edu.

*While Colleges do not approve courses for GE, College approval assures support for departmental participation.