

**Department of Modern Languages and Literatures  
Plan for Writing Across the Curriculum**

**I. GOALS**

Written expression in the target language is central to all major programs of language study (viz., French, German and Spanish) offered in our department. Writing tasks, formal and informal, are woven into virtually every course the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures offers its majors. The goals of writing tasks within our courses include the following:

- A. Develop students' understanding of writing as a process that includes organization, drafting, revising, and editing, with particular attention to word choice and sentence and paragraph structure.
- B. Develop students' abilities to use writing to communicate ideas and information clearly and convincingly to multiple audiences.
- C. Give students opportunities to practice various modes of writing characteristic of the educated native speaker of the target language, e.g., critical essays, formal letters, or book reviews.
- D. Improve students' command over the technical features of writing, including the conventions of the MLA (Modern Language Association) style of documentation.
- E. Enable students to use libraries and on-line technology to conduct research and be able to cite appropriately.
- F. Educate students to meet the expectations of different forums, including matters of correctness and convention as well as broader rhetorical concerns, such as persuasiveness and appropriate tone and style.

As stated above, these goals pertain exclusively to the development of the target languages in question.

## II. OBJECTIVES

The writing required of students in the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures varies considerably from course to course and level to level. Our primary goal with respect to writing is to train students to manage a variety of styles and subjects in the target language. This means that students at the 100-level will write at a very rudimentary level. By the time they graduate, however, our students can communicate complex literary and cultural ideas in expository prose pieces several pages in length, in the language of study. This transformation is accomplished by emphasizing writing skills at every level, by continually increasing the amount of writing required, and by diversifying the content and increasing the sophistication. The core writing component our curriculum is as follows:

- A. 200-level: paragraphs and short compositions (1-2 pp.) with a mixture of concrete and abstract content. Letters, diaries and other sorts of informal writing. Written paraphrase of literary and cultural readings, and basic commentaries on literary themes and social issues. Since the traditional MLL major is required to take courses in a second foreign language through the 200 level, MLL majors receive even more development of compositional skills than other majors without such a writing intensive component.
- B. 301, 302; longer compositions (at least 2-4 pp.) with increasingly abstract content. Formalized critical writing on literary themes and social issues.
- C. 340: course taught in English, though majors are required to write in the target language, with content similar to that of the 350-level (see below).
- D. 350, 351, 352, 353: literary survey courses where readings serve as a springboard to wide-ranging and probing discussion of cultural phenomena. Writing reflects this depth and diversity: longer critical essays (at least 3-5 pp.) require textual analysis and often research and documentation.
- E. other 300- and 400- level courses: amplification of expository skills developed at lower levels. Essays of 4-6 pp. and term papers (10+ pp.) requiring greater synthesis of ideas and greater sophistication in research.

## III. COURSES

- A. The department's plan for writing-across the curriculum includes the following specific features to reinforce the broad experience described above. Students will be expected to take any 5 courses from the lists below.

### 1. Writing Plan: Courses for the French Major:

- a. French 201, 202: Intermediate French. Writing experience.
  - b. French 301, 302: Advanced French. Writing experience.
  - c. French 350-351: Survey of French Literature.
  - d. Any 300-level courses (beyond French 302) and all 400-level French courses (except French 498): Two courses required from this group. Writing seminars.
- 2. Writing Plan: Courses for the German Major:**
- a. German 201, 202: Intermediate German. Writing experience.
  - b. German 301, 302: Advanced German. Writing experience.
  - c. German 350-351: Survey of German Literature. Writing seminars.
  - d. Any 300-level courses (beyond German 302) and all German 400-level courses (except Ger 498). Writing seminars.
- 3. Writing Plan: Courses for the Spanish Major:**
- a. Spanish 201, 202: Intermediate Spanish. Writing experience.
  - b. Spanish 301, 302: Advanced Spanish. Writing experience.
  - c. Spanish 350, 351, 352, 353: Survey of Hispanic Literature. Writing seminars.
  - d. Any 300-level courses (beyond Spanish 302) and all Spanish 400-level courses (except Spa 498). Writing seminars.

B. Description of these features:

1. Courses at the 201-202 level meet the General Ed. WAC guidelines for lower-division writing experiences in that these courses are typically taken by underclassmen, and they focus on multiple-paragraph and a minimum of 1-2 page essay length discourse. Significant attention is paid to the development of essay-writing skills which emphasize narration and the retelling of short stories and accounts discussed in class. Short reports on selected cultural topics are also written in the target language. Essays are typically edited for orthography, grammar and stylistic quality. All writing is done in the target language, although occasionally reports on various facets of the target culture may be composed in English. Enrollment will be capped at 25.
2. Courses in the 301-302 course sequence will be modified so that as a writing experience, students will be more intensely engaged in the revision and editing process. These courses should in turn help students to meet the General Education WAC guidelines for lower-division writing experiences. Though technically upper-division courses, it is the department's opinion that 301-302 is the appropriate level for this portion of the WAC program. Our thinking is that since these courses are typically taken by sophomores, and since our 100- and 200-level courses focus more on building basic foreign-language skills, these courses will assist students in the development of writing discourse which will serve as a bridge to writing tasks and expectations commensurate with the advanced level. Stylistic standards will be those of the Modern Language Association. Enrollment will be capped at 25.
3. Courses beyond the 301-302 sequence also provide our majors with significant, advanced writing experiences exclusively in the target language at an advanced level. Revision and editing constitute a regular feature of the writing experiences of students enrolled in the courses. More importantly, however, they constitute upper-division writing seminars in the target language, using the stylistic standards of the Modern Language Association. Students will thus meet this requirement by taking any of these courses (with the exception of 498 courses, which are taught primarily in English, and which entail assignments written in English as well). The normal post 302-level writing experience will be intensified for students satisfying the seminar requirement, demanding of them a greater quantity of writing and assisting them more closely through the revision and editing process. Enrollment will be capped at 25, and grading will depend heavily on the

students' written production. Students normally take 4 of these courses.

Approved, Fall 2003, by the Curriculum Committee,  
Dept. of Modern Languages & Literatures