



St. Olaf College General Education Curriculum Foreign Language (FOL) Requirement

Description:

This requirement aims to develop language skills, extend understanding of language as a human phenomenon, and generate insights into a culture other than one's own. Students must demonstrate intermediate-level language proficiency by:

- completion of a fourth semester course (or beyond) in French, German, or Spanish;
- completion of a third semester course (or beyond) in Chinese, Greek, Japanese, Latin, Norwegian or Russian;
- proficiency examination; or
- transfer of credit.

Intended learning outcomes:

Students will demonstrate:

1. language proficiency: Proficiency in reading and writing (all languages) as well as in listening and speaking (modern languages only) commensurate with the amount of study completed.
2. cultural understanding: The ability to understand, through a target language, that language's culture(s) and one's own culture.
3. metalinguistic awareness: Awareness of language as a system, and of the ways in which language organizes thought processes and information and reflects culture.

Note: The intended level of proficiency to be attained in the requisite skills/modalities upon completion of the FOL requirement will be established by individual language departments in accord with guidelines for proficiency in world languages established by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). The language proficiency levels targeted for each language taught at St. Olaf recognize the distinction between classical languages (reading and writing only) and modern languages (reading and writing as well as listening and speaking). They also take account of the fact that languages are classified in different groups in terms of their relative difficulty (for native speakers of English)

and the amount of instructional time required to attain a given level of proficiency. Norwegian, French and Spanish, for example, are classified as Group 1 languages whereas Chinese, Japanese and Russian are Group 3 languages. The level of proficiency a student can be expected to achieve at the end of a given number of semesters of study will therefore depend in part on the language the student is studying.

Course guidelines with Curriculum Committee comments:

1. Courses develop effective and appropriate communication skills in a language other than one's native language.

Comment: Courses in foreign language generally emphasize a four-skills approach (speaking, listening, reading, writing), where appropriate, in order to achieve proficiency in the language.

In 1986, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages adopted guidelines which identify progressive stages of language proficiency in the areas of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Since the ACTFL guidelines are not based on a particular linguistic theory or pedagogical method, they are a useful tool in the assessment of what the foreign language learner can and cannot do with the language. Although the original ACTFL guidelines applied primarily to the more commonly taught languages (French, German, Spanish), they have recently been adapted to encompass the less commonly taught ones as well.

In the case of Latin and Greek, emphasis is appropriately placed on reading comprehension (the study and interpretation of written texts).

While the departmental statements prepared by each foreign language department at St. Olaf clarify particular goals for the beginning and intermediate language sequence, the General Education guidelines concern primarily the required semester of language.

The Curriculum Committee encourages interested faculty to consider offering a course in a foreign language which would satisfy the guidelines for the general education requirement.

2. Courses include the study of authentic texts, which are texts produced by or for native speakers.

Comment: Students are most likely to use the foreign language naturally if they encounter a variety of texts (oral, written, visual) produced by or for native speakers. Topics chosen should reflect significant aspects of the

culture under study, especially those related to the question of cultural identity.

3. Courses develop a general awareness of language as a socio-cultural phenomenon and of the subtleties and complexities of language.

Comment: An important benefit of foreign language study is the potential for an increased awareness and understanding of one's native language.

4. Courses present information about the cultures of those who use the language.

Comment: The Curriculum Committee recommends providing opportunities for students to continue their language study and use beyond the language requirement through participation in the Foreign Languages Across the Curriculum program and the International Studies Program.

Information for instructors proposing FOL credit for a specific course:

The St. Olaf Curriculum Committee is responsible for reviewing and approving proposals to designate individual courses as meeting the Foreign Language requirement. Instructors may seek FOL credit as part of a proposal for a new course, or may seek to add FOL credit to an existing course. FOL credit is attached to the *course*, not to the instructor or to the specific term in which the course is offered. A proposal for FOL credit must show how the course meets each of the FOL course guidelines; the comments following a guideline provide additional information about how the Curriculum Committee interprets and applies that guideline in reviewing proposals. Instructors are encouraged to consider the comments as well as the guidelines themselves in preparing proposals. Forms and additional instructions for submitting proposals electronically are available on the website of the [Office of the Registrar](#).

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