Texas A&M University

Core Curriculum

Initial Request for a Course Addition to the Fall 2014 Core Curriculum

Foundational Component Area: Language, Philosophy and Culture

In the box below, describe how this course meets the Foundational Component Area description for Language, Philosophy and Culture. Courses in this category focus on how ideas, values, beliefs, and other aspects of culture express and affect human experience. Courses involve the exploration of ideas that foster aesthetic and intellectual creation in order to understand the human condition across cultures.

The proposed course must contain all elements of the Foundational Component Area. How does the proposed course specifically address the Foundational Component Area definition above?

The course (JAPN 202) is a fourth semester course in Japanese language and culture. Foreign language courses in the department follow the standards of foreign language learning outlined by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). These standards encompass five key areas:

- Communication: Students communicate in languages other than English.
- Cultures: Students gain knowledge and understanding of other cultures.
- Connections: Students acquire information and recognize the distinctive viewpoints that are only available through the foreign language and its cultures.
- Comparisons: Students demonstrate understanding of the nature of language and the concept of culture through comparisons of the language studied and their own.
- Communities: Students participate in multilingual communities at home and around the world.

Materials in the course include a variety of written texts, audio samples, videos, and other works, all of which enhance students’ appreciation and understanding of Japanese culture, society, and social relationships. Studying these materials in the original language not only helps students to gain a deep appreciation of foreign cultures, but also leads them to reflect on their own cultural experience and to be attentive to communication in their primary language.

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Core Objectives

Describe how the proposed course develops the required core objectives below by indicating how each learning objective will be addressed, what specific strategies will be used for each objective and how student learning of each objective will be evaluated.

The proposed course is required to contain each element of the Core Objective.

Critical Thinking (to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information):

The course enhances critical thinking by having students engage with material in the foreign language in a variety of formats. Materials include: songs, interviews, structured and free conversations, listening activities, and both intensive and extensive readings. Students must understand and interpret written and spoken language on a wide variety of topics and in different levels of politeness, including very respectful and humble language. Whole class and small group activities allow students to negotiate for meaning and synthesize new information in different levels of speech. Conversations with native speaker guests allow students to inquire about, compare, analyze, and evaluate Japanese and American cultural and social values. Students’ cultural knowledge is reflected in their language use. Evaluation of critical thinking skills takes place orally in group/class discussion, through written work, and through testing. Students demonstrate creative and innovative use of language through the production of short videos.
Communication (to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication):

The format of the course is geared to producing effective communicators in the foreign language. These skills include writing and speaking, as well as listening and reading. Students not only read written texts, listen to audio samples, and watch videos, they also must produce written, oral, and visual materials themselves which are assessed to gauge students’ development in these areas.

Social Responsibility (to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities):

The course enhances students’ intercultural competence through their mastery of the foreign language. This familiarity with the foreign language incorporates viewpoints and other areas of cultural specificity that are communicated only in the foreign language. Students thereby gain an understanding of the relationship between the practices and the perspectives of the culture studied. Students use the language both within and beyond the school setting and participate in multilingual communities. They demonstrate their intercultural competence by learning to respect, appreciate, and engage effectively with Japanese people. They demonstrate social responsibility by learning appropriate levels of speech and when to use them. They show evidence of becoming life-long learners by using the language for personal enjoyment and enrichment, and to communicate their own culture to an international community. Group/class discussions, written work, tests, and creative productions (audio recordings and video skits) are used to assess students’ development in these areas.

Personal Responsibility (to include the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making):

The course activities provide opportunity for intercultural communication which enhances students’ awareness of the importance of personal responsibility for individuals’ choices and actions when dealing with people from different cultures. This awareness enhances their ability to make ethical decisions in unfamiliar situations. Students demonstrate their thoughtfulness on these topics through discussions, writing assignments, and the production of video skits.

Please be aware that instructors should be prepared to submit samples/examples of student work as part of the future course recertification process.