

Higher Education
SUNY New Paltz, New York
Liberal Arts and Sciences Department of Foreign Languages, Spanish

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Languages/dialects taught: Spanish.

SUNY New York offers 11 languages, with majors in French, German and Spanish for undergraduate level.

Program Description

Purposes and goals of the program: Advanced literacy and writing skills, heightened cultural awareness of U.S. Latino and Hispanic cultures around the world.

Program Origins: The program began in mid 1970 and lasted until about 2000; It was revived in the fall 2005. In the mid-1970s there was a strong push for bilingualism across New York and Edgar Rodriguez, the founder, also administered the language component of bilingual program.

Faculty's and administration's expectations for the program: Critical thinking and effective expression in Spanish There has always been reluctance of heritage speakers to enroll in Spanish for Native Speakers; perceived as more difficult and more work.

Students

First-generation: 70%

Second-generation: 30%

Countries of origin: In mid-1980s, mostly Puerto Rican. Now mostly Dominican

Total student enrollment: 20 in fall 05

Age of students: 18-20

Student Grouping: Students are not grouped according to level because there is only one course; Spanish Native Speakers, 89315 (89 Spanish code), 300 level, 4 hours per week for 14 weeks.

Identification of Heritage Speakers: Heritage speakers are identified by counselors. Since the fall of 2005, the first year of the revival of the program, Wilma Feliciano worked with

Economic Opportunities Program (EOP), NYS program for financially and academically disadvantaged students. She explained goals, scope, and sequence and how to identify heritage speakers. EOP counselors decide which students will go into SNS classes. Counselors speak to students in Spanish about language use, Spanish as primary home language, and native accent in an oral interview. Some students visit Wilma Feliciano, and she encourages them into SNS or advises to take it by EOP.

Percentage of students who complete the program: Began with 22, ended with 20

Percentage of students who continue to study the heritage language after completing the program: Uncertain, perhaps 50%. Continuing students take upper-level courses with foreign language students.

Possible reasons for not completing the program: Too much work or too difficult

Students' attitudes toward the language varieties they speak: Most tell counselors that they speak "Spanglish" and feel insecure about formal language skills: They are uncertain about what constitutes formal registers.

Faculty

Total number of faculty teaching in the program: 1

Number of tenure-track professors: 1

Languages in which faculty members are proficient: The instructor is a native Spanish speaker and also proficient in Italian, French, and English. She is an educated native speaker, Ph.D.

Credentials: Teacher certification from New York State in Spanish K-12 and taught Spanish at all levels from K to graduate seminars. BA in Spanish, MA in Spanish, PhD in Latin American drama, and 18 credits in graduate linguistics. NEH Summer Institute "Teaching Spanish to Hispanic Bilinguals," 1978, New Mexico State University.

Professional development opportunities that faculty have: Research and travel grants, competitive funding

Professional development opportunities that faculty needs: More funding

Instruction

Spanish for heritage speakers is one course, 300, advanced level. Students must speak Spanish as their primary home language.

Language Skills

- Listening

- Speaking
- Reading
- Writing
- Culture

Skills and levels of language proficiency that students reach by the end of the program: Most reach advanced level speaking and advanced-low writing. The course focus mainly on writing skills, with a lot of work on content, organization, development, and mechanics

Culture

- History
- Traditions/beliefs
- Dances
- Social and cultural norms
- Cultural appropriateness
- Literature

Kind of student identity the program fosters: US Latino with proclivity toward the Caribbean and Mexico

Methodologies

Spelling: Sounds, division into syllables, accents, dictations, exercises in texts and handouts

Speaking: Discussions based on daily life and readings
Develop ideas into full paragraphs by eliciting additional information; "tu/usted".

Listening: Civility in public discourse; reactions to student input; written responses to recorded material.

Reading: Text begins readings with oral recordings of first few paragraphs, then their students continue reading and responding to questions (both comprehension and interpretive) on own. Readings include current events, essays, and short literary selections, all genres except the novel.

Materials

Textbook: *Entre Mundos: An Integrated Approach for the Native Speaker*. text and workbook. Prentice Hall, 2004.

Other materials: Web sites, audio recordings, maps, cultural realia

Technology used in the program: The class is taught in an electronic classroom. Assignments and supplementary materials are placed online using Blackboard.

Assessment

- Three in-class exams and final: 40%
- Performance-based tasks
- ACTFL OPI (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language's Oral Proficiency Interview)
- Six compositions: First draft with substantive comments, then final revision for grade.
- Journals: grade based on # of one page (steno pad) entries; 12 entries total equal C; writing is 30%
- Oral presentation (10 minutes in pairs)
- Written report (3-4 pp, 3 sources minimum; pairs); any topic related to US Latino history and culture, 20%

Articulation

Opportunities heritage students have outside the college to use their heritage language:
All students in the Fall05 lived in NYC. They have lots of opportunities to speak Spanish. Many speak Spanglish with friends and family. I encourage them to go to plays and museums in NYC. But the university does not promote involvement.

What the program has in place

Financial support comes from the university because it is a regular course.

Other financial support: Encouragement from EOP counselors. The college pays the professor's salary and a reasonable amount for materials (\$200).

System for graduating students and granting credit: regular General Education course, 4 credits. Fulfills the foreign language requirement and counts as the first course toward a major in Spanish or Latin American (36 Credits) or a minor in Spanish (19 Credits) or Latin American (18 Credits). Students need 120 credits to graduate.

How the program track students' overall academic achievement or career goals:
80-90% of students in F05 were EOP, which tracks achievement. SUNY NP has about a 76% EOP graduate rate, higher than the general college population.

Research on heritage language issues or heritage program evaluations: Wilma Feliciano is preparing a paper for a conference sponsored by CCNY, Spanish Department Distinguished Alumni, on aspects of teaching Spanish. She wants to research and present on overcoming the reluctance of native speakers to enroll in heritage courses. She published several articles on SNS in the early 1980s like Feliciano, Wilma. "Spanish Native Speakers (?)," in Teaching Hispanic Bilinguals Guadalupe Valdes and Anthony Lozano, (eds.), Teachers College Press, 1981.

Special Challenges and Comments

Students come from inner-city disadvantaged schools and have rather low critical thinking and writing skills. They need to work from word and sentence level up and distinguish their intimate and familial language registers from formal discourse.

Additional comments: SUNY NP has about 400 self-identified Latinos with varying proficiency in Spanish. Overwhelmingly, they feel insecure about their linguistic command, so the instructor needs to do a lot of confidence building. Students really enjoyed the culture component, and in general expressed more awareness of language as a system and felt more empowered by their enhanced ability to express themselves, both orally and in writing. Many told the instructor it was worth all the extra work. Nevertheless, only six students enrolled for 89315 in the spring 2006 term, and the course was cancelled. Wilma Feliciano spoke to several students. They said the problem is the workload and the fact that the instructor is a rigorous teacher. This reluctance implies that too many heritage speakers want an easy grade over improving their skills.