

Berkeley Undergraduate Student Learning Initiative and Slavic Languages and Literatures

May 2009

In Fall 2007, the UCB Administration and Academic Senate convened an Undergraduate Student Learning Initiative, intended to establish locally defined, discipline-specific, and faculty-driven learning goals and evaluation procedures for all undergraduate majors programs. Below, Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures defines in brief the purpose of our majors: what we expect the students to learn and how we insure that they learn it.

Learning goals

The Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures focuses primarily on the cultures and peoples of the Slavic world. In addition, it has also directed instruction over the years in the non-Slavic languages and cultures of the peoples with close historical ties to the Slavic world: those of Central Europe (Hungary, Romania) and those of the post-Soviet Caucasus and Central Asia (Armenia, Georgia). We will continue to include other neighboring cultures in our purview. The learning goals for the undergraduate majors in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures include:

- 1) Communicative and reading competence in at least one of the languages of the area: the major track in Russian Language and Literature requires communicative competence in the Russian language; the major track in Russian/East European/Eurasian Cultures requires communicative competence in one of the languages of the area (to be chosen from regularly taught languages: Armenian, Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian, Bulgarian, Czech, Hungarian, Polish, or Russian).
- 2) Understanding of the shared linguistic, literary, cultural and historical experiences that unite, and divide, the peoples of Russia, East and Central Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia during a millennium, including their intermediary position between the “West” and the “East,” participation in large multi-national states and empires, and membership in the Soviet bloc in the twentieth century, that is, participation in the cultural and political developments that influenced the history of the large part of the world.
- 3) Solid knowledge of Russian and other major Slavic literatures, from the Middle Ages to contemporary times.
- 4) Understanding of such aspects of the cultures of the area as folklore, film, theater, visual arts and religious thought.
- 5) Mastery of writing, research, and analytical skills, including advance skills in expository writing (in English), in interpreting texts, images, and other cultural artifacts (especially, but not exclusively, those pertaining to the cultures of the area). Mastery of

techniques of verbal communication, independent research, information analysis, and critical thinking.

Slavic majors achieve their learning goals mainly through coursework within the clearly defined, discipline-specific curriculum (see more information below).

How we assess attainment of these goals

We evaluate how students achieve learning goals and objectives identified for the major on a course-by-course basis through homework assignments, tests, papers, research projects, and examinations. To assess language competence, specific written and oral tests are administered throughout the semester in each language course. Knowledge of the linguistic, literary, and cultural material and writing, analytical, and research skills are assessed in structured written and oral assignments (essays, research papers, and oral presentations) required in all courses in literature, linguistics, and culture. Each of the Department courses involves a final written examination that tests accumulative knowledge and skills. (The syllabus for each Department course lists specific requirements.) Note that while the assessment takes place within the frame of specific courses, the Slavic Department assesses the overall knowledge and skills that the students have achieved throughout their course of study within the major. Students who do not satisfy the learning goals will be unable to pass all the required courses and thus will be unable to complete the major.

The core to the Slavic majors is communicative and reading competence in at least one of the languages of the area. Language competence is assessed in accordance with the ALTE (Association of Language Testers of Europe) system as well as the ACTFL (American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages) general proficiency guidelines.

The fact that each student in Slavic majors receives structured consultations and individual tutorials with the Department's faculty and lecturers constitutes a key educational experience in our small, intensive, closely supervised major tracks.

Specific course requirements for the major tracks in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, as well as information about the learning goals for majors and prospective majors, can be found in the brochure *Guide to Undergraduate Programs* (available in the main office 6303 Dwinelle Hall; e-mail: issaug@berkeley.edu; phone 510-642-2979) and on the web: <http://ls.berkeley.edu/dept/slavic/undergraduate.html>. This information is updated annually. Additional instruction is provided by Undergraduate Adviser in regular required consultations with majors and prospective majors.