

Culture, Text, and Language Planning Unit
Program Review
The Evergreen State College
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By Susan Fiksdal with Stacey Davis, Michael Pfeifer

Last program review submitted: 1998

The Culture, Text, and Language Planning Unit (CTL) centers its work on the interpretation of texts through the dual lenses of language and culture. We examine both written and oral texts in their original language or through translation and we do this by integrating our textual study with the historical, cultural, and aesthetic contexts of particular times and places. Our programs include interdisciplinary, theme-based work in literature, history, world languages, philosophy, religion, anthropology, linguistics, folklore, creative writing, and art history. In addition to offering repeating programs in American studies and language and culture programs on the classical world, France and the Francophone world, Japan, Latin America and Spain, the Middle East, and Russia, faculty regularly offer interdisciplinary work in literature, history, linguistics, cultural studies and film. We help develop students' abilities in critical thinking, interpreting texts, creative and expository writing, collaborative inquiry, making connections across texts and themes, synthesizing ideas within their historical context, and developing a personal voice.

This report compiles information from reports on enrollment from 1998-2004, End of Year Program Review reports from 2001-04, a report entitled Academic Interest Areas of New Degree-seeking Undergraduates from fall 2003, an alumni report for students in the class of 2000-01, and a questionnaire (See Appendix A) received from CTL members (n=14). In addition it draws on the experience of the faculty responsible for writing this document. A list of faculty from 1998-2004 can be found in Appendix B.

I. Need for CTL

Besides helping students understand and make use of the disciplinary approaches and some of the traditional subject matter of the humanities and the interpretive social sciences, CTL makes at least five essential contributions to the college through its attention to the five foci of learning and general education goals, its goal of offering students areas of concentration in the humanities and some interpretive social sciences, its willingness to staff Core (freshman-level) programs, its support of all-level programs, and its orientation to a global world view.

To begin with the five foci of learning and general education goals at the college: all our programs are interdisciplinary, all offer collaborative work in seminars and workshops, and all focus on significant differences by examining social groups on the margins as well as in the center of particular cultures through their art, literature, language, religion, philosophy, and history. Our programs encourage personal engagement through many modes including collaborative work in seminar and workshops as well as through in-depth individual intellectual work in papers, presentations, and portfolios. Application of theory to practice occurs in the study

abroad portion of our language and culture programs, in field-based research with groups and communities, in integrative projects, portfolios, and in internships. In terms of general education goals, faculty in this planning unit are trained in helping students become better writers, and create opportunities for students to develop their writing skills in all their offerings whether it is expository, creative, or documentary writing. In addition, students have the opportunity to develop writing skills in world languages. In the 2002 Alumni Survey of the Class of 2000-01, CTL students reported high satisfaction in learning to write effectively (4.07 with 5 being the highest value).

Second, by offering concentrations in the humanities and some interpretive social sciences, CTL is committed to an interdisciplinary approach to our work rather than offering narrowly defined disciplines. Since humanities often serves as a key link in the liberal arts, our faculty teach in many interdivisional programs as well. Faculty comments bring their commitment to these principles to light:

Thad Curtz: *[Our programs provide] the chance to do ambitious work early in college, like reading Mann's Dr. Faustus in a first year program with humanities and science students, which full time study and all level programs make possible.*

Sam Schrager: *Through team teaching, I get to put ethnography into play with literature, history, botany, Native American studies, classics, political science, etc. My colleagues treat their subjects too as fields-without-walls, and the results are synergistic. The pleasure is to see students create their own tangible image of human life as a whole, not splintered.*

Sarah Williams: *I teach mindfulness regarding the interpretive limitations of culture, text, and language. Some of us were trained to be deeply suspicious of textual metaphors and we actively foster this critical take on the humanist agenda.*

Third, CTL's offerings have underpinned the college's curriculum for first-year students; indeed, CTL's contributions to freshmen seats has significantly exceeded those of other planning units and has exceeded CTL's relative share of faculty compared to those units in Core, all-level, and interdivisional programs. In Core programs, for example, the FTE generated each year by CTL offerings greatly exceeded other units' (except in 1999-00):

1999-00	116.1 (Expressive Arts contributed 119.5)
2000-01	134.4 (next highest FTE was SPBC: 95.2)
2001-02	167.7 (next highest FTE was ES: 101.7)
2002-03	127.7 (next highest FTE was SPBC: 91.7)
2003-04	137.8 (next highest FTE was EA: 61.7)

Fourth, CTL offers the all-level program as an invitation to students at any point in their academic career to engage in interdisciplinary study in the humanities and interpretive social sciences. These programs emphasize the importance of collaborative work with students of various backgrounds and ages. The rich environment in these programs also permits dramatic intellectual advancement for students. One of our recent graduates, for example, passed the exam for language proficiency in her graduate program after having taken just one year of language in one of our language and culture programs at the first year level.

Finally, faculty design programs examining values and beliefs in our own culture and across many parts of the world, introducing other world views through primary as well as secondary texts. This is possible through our emphasis on the study of world

literature and languages, culture, religion, history, philosophy, and art. Faculty underscore this approach in their comments:

Pat Krafcik: *CTL faculty represent areas of inquiry which focus on some of human civilization's most enduring and, to borrow an adjective from Russian culture, most 'accursed,' questions.*

Marianne Bailey: *CTL represents the humanist tradition of liberal arts colleges; here, students can join in the conversation, across centuries and millennia, about the human condition and the meaning of our own lives, as well as our ethical responsibilities toward others. Literature, philosophy, history, the arts, all provoke us to pose the question, what it means to be human.*

II. Students in Culture, Text, and Language Programs

Students express strong interest in our programs, and these programs routinely attract a wide variety of students from across the curriculum. In a report in fall, 2003 entitled Academic Interest Areas of New Degree-Seeking Undergraduates, 22% of all new students were interested in the Humanities, with 6% demonstrating a clear interest in language and area studies. Overall, last year, CTL's full-time programs beyond Core were the second most popular in the college. An average of 22.23 FTE was generated for each faculty quarter taught in them, compared to 23.8/faculty quarter in Environmental Studies, 18.4/faculty quarter in Expressive Arts, 19.6/faculty quarter in Scientific Inquiry and 20.33/faculty quarter in Society, Politics, Behavior and Change.

CTL is strong in several areas: American Studies, European Studies, Japanese Studies, Latin American Studies, Middle Eastern Studies, classics, postcolonial studies and gender studies. It is weak in comparative religion, anthropology, art history, creative writing, English literature, and communication studies due to our loss of faculty in those areas. Students can find occasional programs in other planning units in some of these underrepresented areas; for example, students can find offerings in Buddhism and psychology, Victorian Studies (a half-time offering), and art history (in half-time programs and an applied arts program). Students value opportunities for study abroad in our language and culture programs and they have the opportunity to study and learn in France, Spain, Ecuador, the Middle East, and Japan. CTL faculty strongly agree that students should study language, literature, history, and other cultural aspects intensively for two quarters prior to traveling abroad. Regarding student work in the field, they also agree that students should continue their language and culture study in home stays. These programs require enormous commitment on the part of the faculty, who organize every aspect of the trip. They provide, however, an approach to the study of language and culture for students that is unique in higher education. Because of our full-time programs, faculty have the opportunity to create interdisciplinary work that includes language study, creating a rich environment for studying not just one country, but linguistically and culturally related areas – France and Francophone Africa and the Caribbean or Quebec; Spain and Latin America together. (Study abroad also occurs in other areas of the college, such as regular programs in Costa Rica to study environmental science, in Chile for cultural study, and programs offering language study and the arts in Ireland and India every three years.) Students also find opportunities for study abroad in Japan, Ecuador, and Nicaragua in exchange programs supported by faculty in CTL.

Students find many prerequisites for the Masters in Teaching program in our area: multicultural literature, American and Pacific Northwest history, linguistics, English and American literature, comparative and world history, geography. Faculty are responsive to helping students find these offerings within our programs or through individual contract work.

The opportunity for students to take up to 20 credits each quarter has resulted in significant enrollment growth in world language courses. For example, in fall 2000, there were 138 students enrolled, and in fall 2001, the first year allowing students to take 20 credits, the headcount was 270. This number has remained relatively constant, with 266 students enrolled in 2004. Nineteen percent of the students enrolled in world language courses in fall 2001 were enrolled for 20 credits in fall 2001; and this percentage has steadily increased each year; in fall 2004 it was 31%.

At this point, however, students have difficulty pursuing advanced work in many areas due in part to reduction in our staffing, our area's commitment to core programs, and to all-level programs. For example, for literature in world languages and language study, the only regular opportunity to do advanced work is within our language and culture programs and only in certain languages: French, Japanese, Russian, and Spanish. Several languages, although offered regularly in our programs, can be offered only at the beginning level: Arabic, Greek, and Latin. To help deal with this issue, faculty in the area often sponsor students who travel abroad on individual contracts with the goal of doing advanced work in language. The college also offers access to the Jackson School of International Studies at the University of Washington, which allows a few students to transfer there to pursue advanced study.

In other disciplines students find few advanced programs; instead, they must locate individual faculty who have time for individual contracts in order to pursue advanced studies in literature, history, philosophy, linguistics. Due to retirements, we will not be able to offer breadth or depth in English literature or communications in the near future.

III. Faculty in CTL

Our area has welcomed faculty from all areas of the curriculum and most have training in the humanities. Since we welcome the creation of new programs, our faculty, for the most part, may choose their teaching partners and the programs they wish to teach. There is wide-spread satisfaction in being able to pursue interesting questions with rigor. This approach to curricular design does mean that many programs are created from scratch and only offered once. Others cannot be repeated though the faculty would like to do that, because they can't find a time when they are available to teach together again. Some are not repeated because of changing interests, or because budget cuts preclude it.

In the past five years, we have experienced severe attrition: since 1997, we have lost seven humanities positions. Seven more of our current 31 affiliated faculty are over sixty and likely to retire within the next few years. Not all of these losses are due to retirement: four faculty have resigned, to our mutual regret, and in three cases these resulted from partners being unable to find suitable jobs. This reduction in staff combined with retirements this year, and in the near future, makes it impossible for us to continue to support a strong curriculum in the humanities. In particular, we have lost or will lose faculty in English literature, communications, creative writing, Renaissance studies,

Spanish, philosophy, art history, anthropology, and history. We have some support in Evening/Weekend Studies in philosophy, history, art history, and literature, and we regularly advise students to take classes in that area of the college to gain the breadth they need. Still, these offerings are half-time (8 quarter hours) or courses (4 quarter hours) and all-level, so the question of depth in the full-time curriculum remains.

Some consequences of this attrition are noted by our faculty in their questionnaires:

Babacar M'Baye: *CTL's major challenge is to keep up with the development of area studies in the United States and abroad. The theories and methods of disciplines such as American Studies, African-American Studies, and African Studies are continually changed by new findings in and approaches to the study of literature and culture. The paradigms of schools of thought are in flux in an attempt to deal with the unsettling and unchanging problems of racism, classism, xenophobia, violence, sexism, heterosexism, ageism, and other social ailments.*

Nancy Taylor: *We have lost many faculty and have become more specialized. We are teaching more area studies, paying more attention to multicultural studies and doing more group contracts. We are teaching in smaller teams. We are teaching in fewer programs with faculty outside of CTL.*

Bill Ransom: *The college claims all faculty are qualified to teach writing 'across the curriculum.' The results I've seen from students coming to me is that they have either been lazy or misled into believing that their writing is good enough. In general, it's not. We need more qualified writing faculty—nobody here would stand for me teaching physics 'across the curriculum.' My impression is that the majority of the faculty does not agree that writing, particularly creative writing, is an academic discipline.*

Many faculty who responded to our questionnaire remarked that they did not feel we would be able to increase our staffing given the type of arguments accepted as valid for hiring faculty. For example, CTL does not have an introductory program to the area that must be staffed each year; second, although the language and culture programs repeat on a two-year basis, other programs, such as American Studies, appear as newly designed programs since the program titles change even though the fundamental content and disciplines involved are constant. Our commitment to developing and staffing new programs does not bear as much weight in the all-college hiring priorities committee as appeals for faculty positions based on the need to staff regularly occurring. Some faculty see a broader reason for our difficulties in hiring:

David Marr: *The liberal arts and sciences constitute the core of education as distinguished from training. The arts and sciences lie as far outside the reach of instrumental rationality as it is possible to go in modern societies and economies. Even so, the liberal arts and sciences fall under the sway of instrumental reason and market imperatives, from which there is no known actual escape (so long as one remains within an institution).*

IV. Areas of success

A subgroup (n=31) of CTL faculty combined with Evening/Weekend faculty to form the United Linguistic Front this spring, 2005. They successfully lobbied the deans and provost to create a Community Language Lab beginning next fall. This is a first for Evergreen, and a significant step towards claiming some lab space for world language

study at the college. It should be recognized that language faculty have urged creation of a language lab for well over 20 years. Success this year may have to do with the vision of a lab for the Evergreen community as a whole as well as more available space.

The lab will be open to all, with particular welcome to students who want to speak out loud as they practice their language skills. There will be at least 10 individual computers with work space and headphones, a table for 15-20 designated for conversation groups, and a lounge area for students to interact with others interested in language study. Students will use the computers to access materials that accompany their text books, commercial software programs in a wide array of languages (not only those taught at Evergreen), and ESL materials. They will also be able to access materials on the Internet. We see this space as essential for students in our programs and courses, but it is also a place for students who want to work on a language outside of their academic work. It will be staffed by work study students interested in languages.

Other successes noted by faculty in the questionnaires:

Andrew Reece: *Our faculty bring intellectual vigor to the life of this campus. I single out as an example Leonard Schwartz's efforts in bringing poets to Olympia as well as to the airwaves on KAOS.*

Stacey Davis: *We routinely succeed in integrating literature, cultural study, history, and philosophy seamlessly in our programs, so that students in CTL get a firm foundation in the humanities in a truly interdisciplinary yet in-depth, challenging way.*

V. Areas that demand our attention in the next five years.

Clearly, we must convince our colleagues in the rest of the college that we desperately need to hire faculty in the humanities, anthropology, and communication. Specific pleas need to address gaps in creative writing, comparative religion, English literature, Spanish language and literature, British history, art history, classics, anthropology, and communications. We must present arguments that uphold the value of addressing big questions through open-ended inquiry, but also increase awareness of the ways we address these questions. For example, many of our programs do not repeat on a regular basis, but they require a wide range of faculty expertise. We must demonstrate that our ability to offer innovative, theme-based programs at any level will decrease if we must continue with fewer faculty in our unit. CTL has welcomed faculty who wish to affiliate with our unit, which has meant that some disciplines have come to be represented entirely within our area even though it might seem that they would have advocates in other units. Anthropology and communications are two such disciplines. We need to present this complex picture of our unit and the ways in which we contribute to the liberal arts curriculum.

Ginny Hill: *I think the college as a whole isn't aware of the ways we have integrated social science into our curriculum.*

Linked to this need to communicate more clearly with our colleagues is the imperative to better articulate our programs to potential Evergreen students. Our interdisciplinary and open-ended approach to big questions and our study abroad opportunities embedded within full-time programs are unique to Evergreen and should be highlighted in all publications and advising.

We need to decide how students can create concentrations in specific areas of study as well as interdisciplinary ones. We could, for example, promote the notion of the

Senior Thesis. Although our area sometimes offers Student Originated Studies (SOS) in the Humanities, it is never offered as a yearlong offering. In addition, this mode of study may not be the best option for promoting and sustaining advanced work. Because of the many gaps in our faculty expertise, SOS has sometimes offered an opportunity for intermediate level work in several areas. We also need to discuss what we mean by the Senior Thesis—what are its possible manifestations? How would students gain a concentration in areas where we have a gap in faculty expertise in our area and across the college such as English literature, writing, linguistics, communications, anthropology, art history, comparative religion?

Related to both of these topics is the need to discuss the ways we can achieve some depth in our offerings through our faculty staffing. Language and culture programs have been successful in offering repeating programs by having two faculty members willing to sustain them. Ought we to follow this pattern in other areas of our curriculum? **Matt Smith:** *The old long forgotten principle of duplicative depth has really gone by the wayside in the area.*

A long-standing problem we must solve has been breadth and depth of language study. How might we teach intermediate Russian, Greek, Latin, and Arabic? Since courses are under the purview of Evening/Weekend Studies, how can we work with the Evening/Weekend Studies dean to make sure the courses we see as essential are offered? How might we address advanced work in languages, which is always tied to literature studies? Is there another way to achieve our goal of better coverage in world languages?

What about areas that have been neglected and that should be addressed? Faculty in language and culture studies have often talked of Chinese studies as a needed addition to our work and it is mentioned in our 1998 Self Study. Some work has begun: Silk Road Studies are addressed in the Russia program and have been offered in Evening/Weekend Studies. In addition, Expressive Arts has been offering some Chinese Studies. With the addition of just one faculty member in modern Chinese history and language, we could begin offering more breadth and depth. With the looming economic and social importance of China, the college cannot afford to ignore this area. Students and faculty alike are interested. During the past 3 years, for example, there was strong support for a proposed exchange program with Wuhan University of Technology in China. Although the agreement between the institutions was not achieved, discussions across the college indicated we should strengthen our approach to Chinese studies. One faculty member raises a concern related to this notion of areas:

Therese Saliba: *We need to reconfigure the "area studies" model, which is a remnant of the Cold War, and to think in terms of models for comparative cultural studies, as well as teaching skills and knowledge for the practice of global citizenship.*

Finally, we must address the nature of our faculty's commitment to CTL. This past year in particular, meetings have been sparsely attended, and only fourteen members responded to repeated requests to fill out our questionnaire. This apathy towards meeting together must be addressed in order to ensure team teaching in the future and a common understanding of our goals. One approach other planning units use is to share research and teaching interests with each other regularly as a way of becoming better acquainted and maintaining a sense of community. When an entire area of the college feels beleaguered, as ours seems to, it is time to take action to remedy the situation. Evergreen has long promoted the notion of community, but as we grow, this notion is becoming a

relic of the past. We don't know each other through intellectual discussion, and this is ironic, since this is one area which we would all agree holds our planning unit together.

Appendix A

Culture, Text, Language 2005 Self-Study Questions

Please return to Stacey Davis (davisst@evergreen.edu) and Michael Pfeifer (pfeiferm@evergreen.edu) by April 15, 2005. Take as much space as you need for each question and don't feel limited to these questions if you think additional topics are pertinent in reflecting on CTL.

What do you view as CTL's strengths in terms of teaching area studies, languages, and the humanities (focusing on relevant areas to your teaching)? How would you define CTL's value to the college's teaching mission?

What do you view as challenges CTL faces in terms of the above?

Is there an area of CTL's teaching and contribution to the college's curriculum that you think is under-appreciated by the college as a whole? If so, explain and discuss.

In your view, how has CTL changed since our last self-study (in 1998) and/or since you joined the CTL faculty?

How would you like to see CTL change/grow over the next five years?

What's the best aspect about being a member of CTL?

Appendix B

List of Faculty in CTL 1998-2005

1998: 61 Affiliated Faculty

2005: 31 Affiliated Faculty

(Some Faculty Members had an appointment of one quarter/year at various points during this five-year period.)

	Hitchens, David	
Allen, Nancy	Huntington (Rideout), Sara	Powell, David (Retired)
Arney, Bill	Imamura, Ryo (to SPBC)	Rainey, Tom (Retired)
Bailey, Marianne	Kawasaki, Hiro (Retired)	Ransom, Bill
Balderamma, Justino (Retired)	Kimbro, Ernestine	Reece, Andrew
Beck, Gordon (Retired)	Kozick, Stephanie	Reed, Josie (Retired)
Binda, Hilary (Resigned)	Krafcik, Pat	Romano, Evelia
Carlson, Craig (Deceased)	Laird, Lance (Resigned)	Salcedo, Gil (Retired)
Cullyer, Helen (Resigned)	Levensky, Mark (Retired)	Saliba, Therese
Curtz, Thad	M'Baye, Babacar	Schrager, Sam
Daley, Argentina (Resigned)	Marr, David	Schwartz, Leonard
Darney, Virginia (Retired)	Martin, Rudy (Retired)	Sinclair, Pete (Retired)
De Danaan, Llyn (Retired)	McCann, Charlie (Retired)	Smith, Matt
Davis, Stacey	Moruzzi, Harumi	Taylor, Nancy (Retired)
Estes, Betty (Retired)	Mulka, Art (Retired)	Teske, Charlie (Retired)
Fiksdal, Susan	Mullins, Greg	Thompson, Kirk (Retired)
Finkel, Don (Deceased)	Nelson, Alice	Tsutsumi, Setsuko
Foote, Tom (Retired)	Nisbet, Charles (Retired)	Whitener, David (Retired)
Gilbert, Jorge (to SPBC)	Niva, Steven	Williams, Sarah
Gómez, José (to SPBC)	Pailthorp, Chuck	Wong, York (Retired)
Grissom, Tom	Pedersen, Sarah (to SPBC)	
Hill, Patrick	Pfeifer, Michael	
Hill, Virginia (Retired)	Pougiales, Rita	