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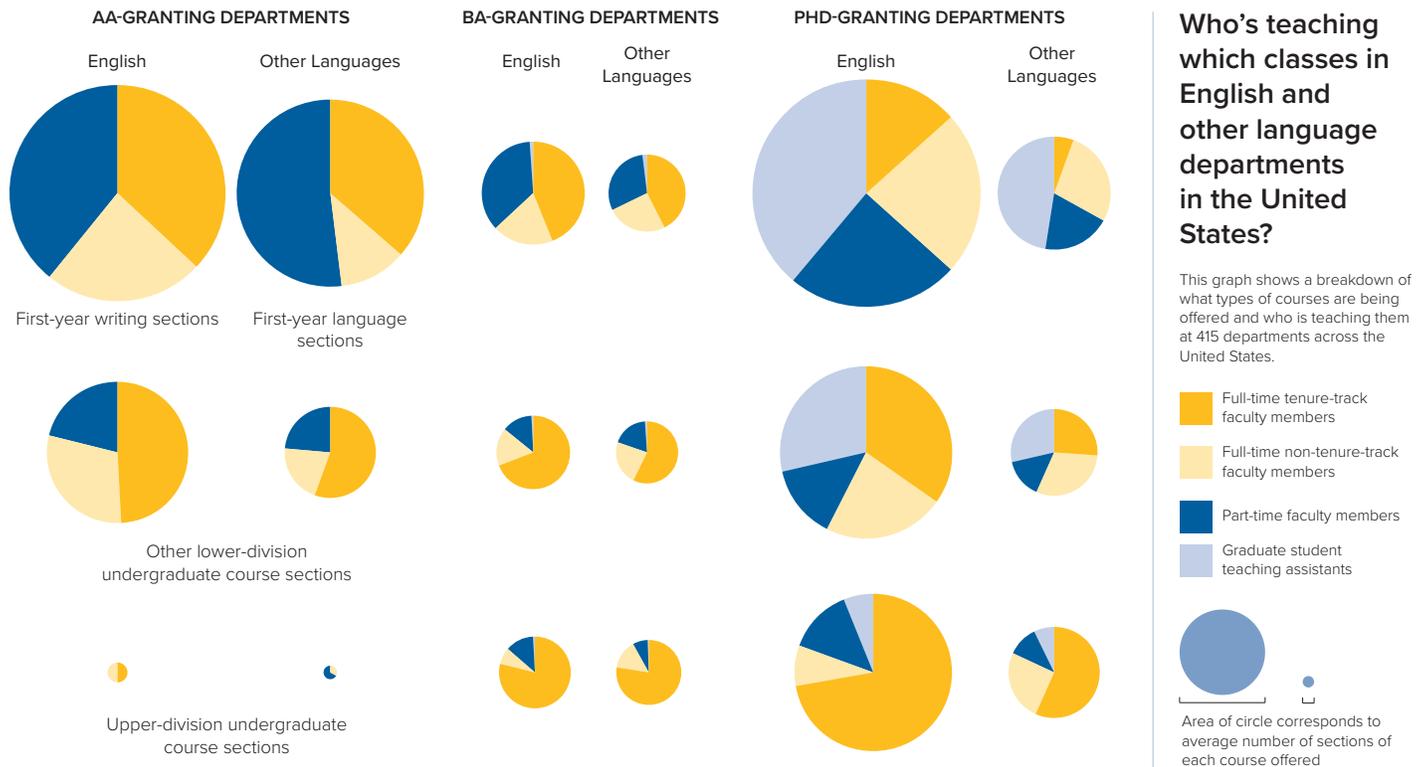


Join Us for MLA 2019!

Registration is open for the 2019 convention.
Learn more and register at www.mla.org/MLA-2019.

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Who's Teaching English and Foreign Language Courses?

Newly published MLA data give us a better picture of who's teaching which courses in English and foreign language departments. While data on faculty appointments are widely available by institution, we know much less about the composition of the faculty and course staffing within specific departments. To help fill this gap, the MLA in 2015 asked chairs of English and language departments to complete a survey on their instructors, the type and number of courses offered, and course staffing in the fall 2014 term.

In all, 438 departments responded, shedding new light on teaching in English and foreign language departments in United States higher education.

COURSE OFFERINGS

The survey results reveal that sections of first-year courses made up a considerable proportion of all sections offered in English and foreign language departments in fall 2014. Sections of first-year writing were by far the most prevalent type of course offered in English departments. This prevalence was evident across all department types, although the share of sections of first-year writing as a percentage of all course sections varied considerably. At AA-granting departments, 74.4% of all sections offered were first-year writing, but first-year English also represented 40.0%, 47.3%, and 50.0% of all sections offered at BA-, MA-, and PhD-granting departments, respectively.

The picture was similar in foreign language departments: sections of first-year language made up 46.0% of all offerings among the departments surveyed. But the proportion of sections of first-year language to sections of other course types varied slightly more among the different types of language departments surveyed than it did for English departments. At BA-, MA-, and PhD-granting departments, between 38.5% and 46.3% of all course sections offered were first-year language, whereas first-year languages represented a full four out of five (80.0%) of all sections offered by AA-granting language departments.

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INSTRUCTOR RANK AND COURSE STAFFING

Another notable finding of the survey concerns the breakdown of teaching assignments by instructor rank. At MA- and PhD-granting departments, full-time tenured or tenure-track faculty members were more likely to teach upper-division courses for undergraduates than any other type of course. Of all the English course sections taught by full-time tenured and tenure-track faculty members in these departments, 43.8% were upper-division courses for undergraduates. In foreign language departments, the share was slightly higher, at 48.7% at PhD-granting departments and 49.5% at MA-granting departments.

While full-time tenured and tenure-track faculty members in BA-granting foreign language departments were also most likely to teach upper-division courses, this was not the case for their colleagues in English departments. In BA-granting English departments, full-time tenured and tenure-track faculty members were about as likely to teach first-year writing courses (35.3%) as they were upper-division undergraduate courses (35.2%).

On the flip side, across all department types, non-tenure-track faculty members, graduate student

teaching assistants (TAs), and part-time faculty members in English departments were more likely to teach first-year writing than any other type of course. On average, 54.4% of the course sections taught by non-tenure-track faculty members in English departments were first-year writing, a figure that jumped to 69.0% for part-time faculty members and 79.4% for graduate student TAs. In foreign language departments, of the sections taught by full-time non-tenure-track faculty members, 47.0% were first-year language courses; this went up to 61.0% for part-time faculty members and 67.0% for graduate student TAs.

In both English and foreign language departments, the likelihood that nontenured or tenure-track instructors were teaching first-year courses was greatest at AA-granting departments. Of the course sections taught by full-time non-tenure-track faculty members, 73.8% were first-year writing and 69.4% were first-year language. Strikingly, of all the sections taught by part-time faculty members at AA-granting departments, 80.2% were first-year writing and an astounding 90.8% were first-year language.

For a more detailed look at the results of the survey, please visit the MLA Web site (www.mla.org/2014-Staffing).

MLA 2019 on the Web

Registration is under way! The Program is live! Don't miss out on the latest information about the 2019 convention: visit the MLA Web site (www.mla.org/MLA-2019) for event highlights, links to registration, housing, and more!

TRAVEL ASSISTANCE

The MLA offers \$400 grants to help cover expenses for travel to the MLA convention, which will be held in Chicago from 3 to 6 January 2019. Non-tenure-track members, unemployed members, and members living abroad who were members during the previous year may apply for financial assistance. For more information and to apply online, visit www.mla.org/financial-assistance. The deadline is 1 December 2018.

INFORMATION FOR ATTENDEES

Did you know there's a page dedicated to information for 2019 MLA convention attendees? To stay current on event highlights, professional development opportunities, and more, go to www.mla.org/information-for-attendees.

POSSIBLE FUTURES CAREER FAIR AND PROGRAMS SHOWCASE

Are you interested in discovering new career paths

CONVENTION DATES AND DEADLINES

6 DECEMBER

Regular convention registration deadline

17 DECEMBER

Postmark deadline for requesting convention registration refunds

20 DECEMBER

Convention hotel reservation deadline

3–6 JANUARY

MLA 2019 Annual Convention

within and outside academia or in seeing what other humanities-related programs are doing to innovate? Then join us on 4 January 2019, from 1:00 to 4:30 p.m., at the Fairmont Chicago, Millennium Park in Chicago. Visit outreach.mla.org/attendees/ for details.

MLA EXHIBIT HALL

Wonder who is exhibiting at the 2019 convention? Check out our exhibitor list (www.mla.org/2019-exhibitors) and locate your favorite presses and publishers before the convention.

PLANNING A CONVENTION SESSION

Need help preparing for or running a convention session? Visit www.mla.org/planning-a-session.

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The Foreign Language Requirement in the Twenty-First Century

In recent years, foreign language requirements at postsecondary institutions have again been subjected to attacks from both inside and outside the academy—attacks motivated by short-term measures of utility, by a misunderstanding of the methods and goals of language study, and all too often by a broader disregard for the humanities and the liberal arts. What is becoming increasingly clear is that responding to such challenges requires a more inclusive, sustained, and systematic discussion of the value of language learning within general education curricula that engages with advocacy for the humanities and liberal arts. To promote the broadest possible participation among stakeholders, the ADFL Executive Committee organized a plenary session entitled “The Foreign Language Requirement in the Twenty-First Century” at the ADFL Summer Seminar North at Michigan State Uni-

versity in June 2018. Using case studies at their respective institutions, the panelists—Mariana Bono (Princeton Univ.), Amy Dooling (Connecticut Coll.), Anne E. Duggan (Wayne State Univ.), and Christina Isabelli (Gonzaga Univ.)—described successful strategies they used to advocate for language requirements. While many language departments have been fighting a reactive battle to defend such requirements, others have proactively sought to expand them.

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Bono’s comments on Princeton’s 2016 “Report of the Task Force on General Education” provide a model for arguing

against waivers of the foreign language requirement for students who have completed a certain amount of seat time or acquired a designated proficiency level. Following this model, all students, regardless of the proficiency level attained through prior study, should be required to complete at least one college-level foreign language course, just as they are required to complete general education courses in other fields, “none of which may be satisfied with advanced placement,” as noted in the committee report. The reasoning behind this approach is that intensive engagement with a foreign language at the postsecondary level is essential to the kind of critical cross-cultural awareness that allows students to become successful professionals in the twenty-first century and also enables them to make informed and ethical decisions on global issues.

Duggan’s remarks laid out the practi-

cal strategies and arguments her department utilized at Wayne State University to anchor its defense of a stronger language requirement in the college when calls were being made for a reduction from a three-semester to a one-semester requirement. The result was a two-semester requirement with an optional third semester that could count toward the new university-level global learning requirement. The department was able to obtain that outcome by situating itself concretely in the university’s mission statement and strategic plan. It did this by creating a fact sheet with talking

points on the urgency of language learning at the national level; making faculty members aware of the necessity of intermediate language skills to maintain the university’s chapter of Phi Beta Kappa; referencing requirements at peer institutions; noting connections within the experiential knowledge gained from language learning as it relates to issues of diversity and cultural difference; and coordinating a response from leaders of ethnic organizations in the Detroit metro area, students, and prominent alumni with direct experience of the value of foreign language study.

Isabelli’s description of her efforts to maintain an intermediate-level foreign language requirement during the general education reform process at a small, private liberal arts college in the Midwest reinforced several of Duggan’s points while also acknowledging the need to take into account accreditation pressures in professional programs that lead the directors of such programs to seek reductions in general education requirements across the board. While it became clear from the panelists’ remarks that one size does not fit all when it comes to an institution’s determining a viable foreign language requirement, it is possible to identify common strategies for advocacy as well as collaborative approaches among institutions that have a history of infrequent communication with one another.

In my capacity as president of the ADFL and together with ADFL Director Dennis Looney, I organized the summer seminar plenary to build upon momentum from the roundtable discussion “Undergraduate Foreign Language Requirements” held at the 2018 MLA convention in New York City, in which panelists from a diverse array of institutions addressed pressing issues related to foreign language requirements. These included coordination between post-

secondary and K–12 schools, curricular reform, and how to leverage language requirements to promote enrollments in language majors and minors. To encourage further discussion of effective advocacy for language requirements and programs, the ADFL Executive Committee will be holding a session

at the 2019 MLA Annual Convention in Chicago entitled “Promoting Language Study in Public Discourse.” In addition to the convention session, a cluster of articles on undergraduate foreign language requirements will appear in a forthcoming issue of the *ADFL Bulletin*. I invite readers to communicate with me

and the ADFL Executive Committee on this important topic. We are especially eager to learn about models, strategies, and practices that have proven successful on your campus.

Gary Schmidt
Coastal Carolina University

Ten Places to See in Chicago

The convention is returning to Chicago! Great food, vast indoor markets, and historical and literary museums are all part of Chicago’s rich urban center. Below are ten places to visit that could make your MLA convention experience even more memorable.

The **AMERICAN WRITERS MUSEUM** is a great place to learn about how American writers influenced our nation’s history, identity, culture, and daily lives. Join an MLA excursion to the museum and experience a private tour with the museum’s president, Carey Cranston, or explore the museum on your own.

The **POETRY FOUNDATION**, nestled between Near North Side and River North, is a space dedicated to the art of poetry. Use a listening booth to experience audio or video recordings of thirty thousand volumes of poetry.

The **CHICAGO CULTURAL CENTER**, known as the People’s Palace, located next to Millennium Park, opened in 1897 as Chicago’s first central public library. Although not a library today, the building is open to the public for free music and events or to admire its Tiffany Favre glass dome.

Looking to learn a little Chicago history while you’re at the convention? Then visit the **MCCORMICK BRIDGEHOUSE MUSEUM** to see the gears of the movable bridge at river level and learn about the Chicago River!



American Writers Museum

AFTER-WORDS, an independent bookstore in downtown Chicago with over seventy thousand new and used volumes to browse, is sure to be a haven for readers of all varieties.

The **GREEN MILL** is a historic jazz bar located in the Uptown neighborhood. It was once one of Al Capone’s favorite haunts. Enjoy cocktails and live music from the ’30s and ’40s in Capone’s old booth!

CHICAGO FRENCH MARKET, an indoor food market across from the Ogilvie Transportation Center, offers cheap and delicious European-inspired food from a variety of local producers and retailers.

READ IT & EAT, half bookstore, half kitchen, located in Lincoln Park, is the

perfect spot for booklovers who love to cook. Take a cooking class or peruse the vast collection of cookbooks!

The **RED LION PUB** is a modern version of the original Red Lion Pub in England, featuring not only drinks and food but also books. If you’re looking for an English-inspired locale where you can enjoy a pint of ale, pub fare, or an extensive collection of books on British literature and history, this is the place for you.

RANDOLPH STREET MARKET, an indoor market for antique and vintage items, is also the place to sample and purchase local produce and food.

We look forward to welcoming you to Chicago!

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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Re-visioning Textual Transactions

Comment on this column at
president.mla.hcommons.org.

AS I LEFT FOR VACATION IN JULY, I

tucked *A Changing Major: The Report of the 2016–17 ADE Ad Hoc Committee on the English Major* into my bag. Not exactly beach reading, I thought, but since my own department slipped from 567 majors in 2012 to 294 in 2018 and is projected to have only 184 majors by 2021, the report felt like a must-read. The Association of Departments of English, a project of the MLA, provides a network for departmental leaders, just as the Association of Departments of Foreign Languages does for chairs of language departments. Both the ADE and the ADFL have long led curricular thinking, and the ADE report on the major is no exception. ADE colleagues scanned departmental Web sites and conducted a survey of ADE-member English departments to create a detailed portrait of English majors.

Sadly, I learned that my department's drop in majors is not unique. Two-thirds of departments reported lower numbers of majors, and only 8% indicated growth in the number of majors. Revision of the major is common: over 70% of departments have recently revised or are currently revising the major; survey courses are being replaced by distribution requirements; creative writing has become more established; and, surprisingly, few departments have made "digital and media studies visible parts of the major or the curriculum" (20). Tracks (sometimes called concentrations or areas of emphasis), usually programs of courses that account for about half the major, are proliferating. In reading the commentary on this phenomenon, I came across these two sentences:

Where tracks are offered, the most commonly available are literature; creative writing; English education; and rhetoric and composition, technical writing, or a writing concentration that combines various writing specializations under a rubric such as professional writing or writing studies. The number of departments featuring this last option is notable, since it was not a response choice provided on the questionnaire but was written in by respondents. (28)

I was relieved that rhetoric and composition and technical writing had been included in the survey, but I was troubled that writing studies and other terms (language, linguistics, TESOL) had not been included—and proud that colleagues had, like Frederick Douglass, written them into "the spaces left."¹ I was troubled because 65% of my department's undergraduate enrollment is in writing studies (including first-year writing) and because these omissions connect to a century-old issue in English departments. In 1901, Gertrude Buck, the first woman to receive a PhD in rhetoric and composition, responded to an MLA survey regarding writing's place in graduate study, noting that literary criticism and rhetoric (today's writing studies) were "subjects often set in different departments or colleges, and jealously deprecated each by the other" (199).

Today's specialists in literary criticism, writing studies, and language sometimes engage in deprecations, especially when making decisions about hiring and tenure, graduate admissions, teaching assignments, the positioning

of first-year writing programs or introductory language courses, and, yes, decisions about the major. In part such deprecations arise from institutional structures and funding patterns that lie beyond departmental control, but they also have roots in a tendency to see words such as literacy and literary, reading and writing, teaching and scholarship, theory and practice in dichotomous rather than mutually constituting terms. I propose that we reconsider some of these dichotomies, and Textual Transactions, my theme for the MLA's 2019 convention, offers a space to re-vision (in Adrienne Rich's sense) our theories and our majors. I invite you to engage in textual transactions in Chicago.

Anne Ruggles Gere

NOTE

1. Shifting terms (and their attendant theories and politics) are not unique to rhetoric and composition or to writing studies. For instance, postcolonial, world literature, global English, and Anglophone literature, among others, likewise contend with one another.

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