

## **UW Academic Challenge and Engagement Study (UW ACES): French and Italian Studies**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Research on learning in college shows that learning is profoundly shaped by the goals, practices, cultures, and values of the academic disciplines<sup>1</sup>, particularly the disciplinary practices in students' majors. Therefore, if we are to understand the kinds of experiences that students find intellectually rigorous (and, thus, engaging), we need to examine challenge in the major. Understanding challenge in the major is important because at every stage of their college experience, students report that they want to be challenged, that they perform better in courses that are challenging, and that they value classes that stretch their thinking and ask them to demonstrate learning more than they value classes that ask little of them.<sup>2</sup> Although learning about where students experience challenge is important, asking students to describe challenging learning experiences in their majors requires some prior understanding of how those majors operate. The Office of Educational Assessment (OEA) designed the UW Academic Challenge and Engagement Study (UW ACES) to accommodate these needs.

### **METHOD**

Qualitative methods are recommended when researchers are seeking to understand the complex learning experiences of students, as well as the meaning they ascribe to those experiences<sup>3</sup>; therefore, we designed the UW ACES to be primarily an interview study.<sup>4</sup> Using a "citizen science" model, OEA asked departmental advisers if they would be willing to volunteer to interview seniors in their departments who came in to advising to apply for graduation. Advisers are knowledgeable about their academic programs, understand disciplinary practice in their departments, and are trusted by students in the major, so they have the best chance of gathering good information from seniors about their experiences in the major.

Sixty-six advisers from 32 undergraduate programs volunteered to participate. During the 2012-13 academic year, the volunteer advisers asked students if they would participate in brief (5-10 minute) interviews about challenge in the major. If the students agreed, advisers asked them to respond to four open-ended questions, entering students' responses directly into a Catalyst survey form that OEA researchers had designed for that purpose. The questions were as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> Beecher and Trowler, 2001; Bransford et al., 2000; Beyer et al., 2007; Donald, 2002; Pace and Middendorf, 2004; Wineburg, 2001, 1991; Neumann et al., 2002; Shulman, 1988; Biglan, 1973.

<sup>2</sup> Beyer, et al., 2007.

<sup>3</sup> Merriam, 2001.

<sup>4</sup> One participating department asked students to respond to the open-ended questions in writing.

1. What do you consider to be the most challenging work that you had to complete in this major? And by "challenging" I mean doing the work that stretched your thinking the most. This can be anything—a project, a paper, an exam question, homework, something else you did related to the major.
2. What made the project/class/activity challenging?
3. What did you do or learn that enabled you to meet those challenges?
4. What do you think you learned by completing this project/class/activity?

In addition, all advisers asked students in what course the challenging work took place and how many quarters they had until they graduated. Sabrina Tatta asked that the following two final question be added to the interviews:

5. What courses in the major, in addition to any we just discussed, did you find most stimulating?
6. Would you say that these most stimulating courses shared anything in common, for example were they clustered around a particular topic, material (literature, cinema, etc.), and/or time period?

Researchers in OEA conducted training workshops in interviewing skills with all participating advisers, provided individual departments with survey customization if required, and monitored all resulting interviews, reporting back to advisers about the interviews they had conducted. By the end of the academic year, departmental advisers had interviewed 1,237 students, about 17% of the total 2012-13 graduating class. Students' responses were analyzed using a constant comparison method<sup>5</sup>, an inductive process designed to let themes emerge, rather than imposing assumed categories on students' comments.

## **STUDY LIMITATIONS**

If we interviewed students post-graduation, they would be likely to identify their capstone courses or their advanced senior-level courses as the ones asking for their most challenging work. However, because we wanted to attach the interview to a time when students would normally see their academic advisers, we interviewed students when they came into the advising office to apply for graduation, which often meant that they were two or three quarters away from graduation. Senior-level courses, particularly capstone or capstone-like classes, are those which students often say are their most challenging and satisfying. Although interviewing students as they applied for graduation meant that we might not gather information about late-senior year courses, we felt that it would be interesting to departments to learn the kinds of challenges that lead to and prepare students for those more advanced experiences.

## **FRENCH AND ITALIAN STUDIES RESULTS**

French and Italian Studies was one of the UW ACES' 32 participating departments. Sabrina Tatta, Lecturer and Undergraduate Adviser asked 28 students if they were willing to be interviewed for the study and all of them agreed. Twenty-two (79%) students were in the French major and six (21%) in the

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<sup>5</sup> Merriam, 2001.

Italian major. This number represents about 72% of the 39 seniors in French and Italian Studies who graduated during the 2012-2013 school year.<sup>6</sup>

### ***Quarters to Graduation and Where Students Experienced Challenge***

Sixteen of the students interviewed reported having two quarters until graduation. Four said they had three quarters remaining and eight were in their final quarter.

Overall, the 28 interviewees listed 18 courses, 13 in French and five in Italian, as presenting them with significant challenges. Seven participants mentioned study abroad courses more broadly with two specifying study abroad in Nantes. Twelve students cited more than one course.

Students identified three 200-level courses, seven 300-level courses, and six 400-level courses as the sites of their most challenging academic experiences. One student cited two French Literature courses but did not know the course numbers.

The list of courses in the major as well as the number of students who identified them (only one if not otherwise noted) were as follows:

- FRENCH 201: Intermediate French
- FRENCH 202: Intermediate French
- FRENCH 203: Intermediate French (2)
  
- FRENCH 302: Advanced French (2)
- FRENCH 303: Advanced French (3)
- FRENCH 305: Survey of French Literature: 1600-1789 (4; with one student mentioning Delcourt and one MacKenzie)
- FRENCH 306: Texts and Traditions II (Mitchell)
- FRENCH 307: Survey of Francophone Literatures and Cultures
- FRENCH 378: The Making of Contemporary France (3; with one student mentioning Watts)
  
- FRENCH 455: One Author in French Literature/Culture
- FRENCH 470: Cinema (2; Watts)
  
- ITAL 303: Italian Stylistics
  
- ITAL 402: Early Modern Italian Readings I (2; Gaylard)
- ITAL 404: Modern Italian Readings I (3; Sbragia)
- ITAL 431: Italian Theater (Gaylard)
  
- ITAL 470: Dante (2; Arduini, Yowell)

As Table 1 shows, those students with an Italian major were more likely to cite 400-level courses as the sites of their greatest challenges in the major in comparison to French majors who noted 300- and 200-level courses more often. However, it is important to note that there were significantly fewer Italian respondents. Furthermore, there were no significant differences between French and Italian majors in their responses to the remaining interview questions.

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<sup>6</sup> The number of undergraduate degree completions is based on the 2012-13 UW Profiles reports published by the UW Office of Planning and Budgeting ([https://bitools.uw.edu/views/13-SummaryandTrendsDegreeAttributes\\_0/13-Dashboard#1](https://bitools.uw.edu/views/13-SummaryandTrendsDegreeAttributes_0/13-Dashboard#1))

Table 1. Site of greatest challenge by major (n = 28)

	100-level course	200-level course	300-level course	400-level course
Italian (n = 6)	0%	0%	20%	80%
French (n = 22)	0%	27%	55%	18%

## 1. Students' Greatest Challenges

Students were asked: "What do you consider to be the most challenging work that you had to complete in this major? And by "challenging" I mean doing the work that stretched your thinking the most. This can be anything—a project, a paper, an exam question, homework, something else you did related to the major."

Two major themes and two minor themes emerged from students' responses.

**A class.** Ten (36%) of the 28 French and Italian Studies majors cited a specific course as their greatest challenge in the major. Students commonly mentioned literature courses and the challenges that come with reading literary works written in the past. As three of these ten participants explained:

- *To this day one of my favorite classes at UW was Making of Contemporary France with Rich Watts. The material and professor were amazing and the class was a look at French culture and the relationship between France and Francophone countries. It was actually the course that led me to declare the French major. I'm a History and French major.*
- *I think that the most challenging aspect of this major was Dante! Specifically, I started the Dante class right after the 334 intensive summer course and it was challenging reading such early Italian while having just finished the 300 level syntax series.*
- *Two of Richard Watts' courses, cinema and literature. Most of the things he brought up were thought provoking.*

**A paper/writing in the major.** Nine (32%) interviewees stated that a paper, or writing in the major more generally, was one of their most significant challenges. Moreover, two interviewees spoke specifically of the challenge in writing analytically. Some examples of this category of responses include:

- *When it got to the point where we were writing essays in French and having to think of the French literature in French, it was writing on an analytical level.*
- *The French compositions, mainly in FRENCH 303.*
- *I think that all the philosophers we read about in the current class that I'm in and past literary courses—it's hard to write papers about them and you have to understand the culture of the time.*
- *I think that the essays were difficult. To write six pages all in Italian made me work. There are things you can say in English but to have to say them in Italian, you sometimes have to say something in a different way to get the point across.*

**Reading in the major.** Six (32%) interviewees stated that reading in the major, both the amount and difficulty level, presented them with their most significant challenges. In the words of three students:

- *I took a class Fall Quarter of 2011 about medieval stories and just reading that medieval script and translating it was really interesting and challenging! I think it was 305.*

- *In terms of what I've already done, the Proust class, French 455, is pretty challenging. The reading is dense and there's a lot of it.*
- *When I was in Nantes and we had to read for a literary class and had to write a paper. It was the first time I'd read an entire book that was more than basic French, and it took a long time, and I had to look up every word.*

**Study Abroad.** Six (21%) interviewees spoke of the challenge of studying abroad, including studying completely in another language and living with a host family. In the words of three students:

- *I think that the study abroad program was the most challenging. I was placed in C2 level in the Nantes Program, and it was the highest challenge to overcome.*
- *Time doing study abroad was most challenging because it was a direct exchange and was at a French University with French students and French professors. It took time to catch up with everyone else.*
- *The most challenging would probably be studying abroad and living with a host family. It challenged my thinking the most.*

**Other.** Two students spoke about the challenge in learning grammar. As one of them noted:

- *Learning grammar was most challenging. The focus on grammar made me learn the rules and pay attention in class.*

Finally, one participant stated the following when asked about the most challenging work in the major:

- *I had to study certain topics that I'd never looked at before and had to incorporate history into them to better comprehend them and that was difficult for me. For example, Dante refers to entities, authors, and political issues I was not aware of because I had not studied the history of the time in which his writing took place.*

## **2. What Made Those Activities/Classes Challenging?**

Next, students were asked to note what it was about the activity or the class they had described that made it especially challenging. The majority of the interviewees identified a single reason the course or project they had described was challenging. One major theme, two minor themes, and various individual responses emerged from the data.

**Reading/translation.** The most frequently given response—noted by 13 (46%) of the 28 respondents—was that the most challenging aspect of the classes/activities in the major involved the time and effort required to read and translate French or Italian texts. The following quotations illustrate this category of response:

- *The translation and the amount of work we had to do in terms of reading. The professor explained it all really well so it ended up being fine.*
- *Reading Proust is like reading Dickens but imagine you've only had four years of English when reading Dickens so it's kind of like that.*
- *The time involved was most challenging. It was hard to keep reading when I did not understand what was going on and I had to stop and look up every word. Obviously I had to read it in order to write about it.*

- *Getting through a lot of reading especially in Italian and it was not standard Italian but older versions of Italian. Also, simply translating a lot of pages every week and getting a lot of reading done.*
- *The language itself, French. In particular French 302 and 303. Memorizing all the grammatical rules.*

**Critically analyzing text.** Six (21%) of the interviewees reported that the class or project was particularly challenging because it required them not just to understand another language but to think critically about the text. For example:

- *The papers we had to write went beyond just language use and required advanced thinking, critical thinking. That was challenging.*
- *I think up until that point essays had been hard because you were writing in a another language but then having to think about the history and culture behind what we were doing. I think we started that in 303.*
- *Comparing literature from the past to modern literature was challenging.*

**Writing in a French/Italian.** Four (14%) interviewees mentioned that writing in a foreign language made these classes or projects particularly difficult. In the words of two students:

- *Trying to fill the page requirement and elaborate in a different language was a challenge.*
- *Trying to say exactly what you want but in a whole different writing style than what you are used to and in another language. It's just tough especially when you've had some time off from the language you get out of practice.*

**Other:** Two or three students each spoke of the following as aspects of the class or project that made it challenging:

- **Being held to the same standards as native speakers (2).** *Being graded in the same way that other native French students were being graded/evaluated.*
- **Working with students from other countries (2).** *Learning how to get by and how to work with other people who were not from the same country. It was very enriching and the language barrier was a challenge at first but as time went on it got easier and easier and it improved my French a lot.*

Five students gave the following individual responses as to why the course/project was challenging:

- *It was unexpected. I was not planning on the learning curve in the beginning or being placed in such a high class!*
- *Lack of help from the professor. The only people I could rely on were classmates and sometimes they were confused as well.*
- *Taking multiple literature courses at the same time.*
- *I did also have quite a few issues with housing and I was a little bit isolated from the rest of UW students and we ended up being in different dorms and I was in a dorm with only*

*a few people. I never got my deposit back, bad construction outside, the housing was a challenge.*

### **3. What enabled students to meet those challenges?**

The majority of interviewees (89%) discussed a single, specific source of assistance that helped to meet the challenges they outlined. Overall, students' responses yielded one major and several minor themes.

**My own efforts.** Twenty-one (75%) of the interviewees explained that their ability to meet the challenges posed by the French and Italian Studies major were a result of their own efforts. Students noted that they fastidiously completed necessary work, especially the readings, and often went above and beyond what was required. Moreover, students commented that they asked for help when needed and developed better study habits. As seven of the interviewees explained:

- *I spent a lot of time on the readings and started my reading early so that I could make sure I understood everything before I moved on.*
- *I did additional work that teachers recommended. For example, I listened to more music in French, watched movies. It all helped me obtain a higher level in the end.*
- *I read through the grammar book like the Koran! The readings were a challenge. We did a lot of reading in other courses and it helped to have the grammar courses before.*
- *I think that was one of the first classes that brought home the importance of doing the readings and I found that if I did not do them I did not know what was going on or could not participate. It caused me to step up my game.*
- *It's simple, going to class and listening and extra work on the side with vocabulary so that I could continue to learn at the level I was placed.*
- *I did research on the historical time period and author's affiliations and what not.*
- *Time management and paying attention to the syllabus and taking advantage of office hours.*

**Working with peers.** Four (14%) interviewees commented that they had met the challenges in the major by connecting with peers outside of class as well as taking part in peer editing in class. In the words of three of these students:

- *I was able to do peer editing which was helpful. We exchanged papers with each other. The ability to recognize mistakes in the papers of others and vice versa was helpful.*
- *I reached out and made sure I made friends with students in classes and pushed myself to make new friends and pushed myself to interact with French native students which allowed me to feel like I was more prepared.*
- *I think I did a lot of collaboration with classmates and discussed readings outside of class with them and brainstormed topics with them. Two major papers and a final project and lots of work with peers, collaboration.*

Finally, individual students noted the following as helpful:

- Professors' availability (e.g., office hours, email)
- Historical context for readings

#### **4. What did students learn by completing this project/class/activity?**

When asked what they felt they had learned by meeting the challenges they had described, one major theme and two minor themes became apparent from the data.

**Language skills.** Forty-six percent of the students interviewed mentioned they learned a great deal of language skills including grammar, vocabulary, and comprehension. Three of these 13 participants specifically cited their increasing ability to write effectively in another language. The following quotations illustrate this category of response:

- *My Italian after only two years was significantly better than I thought, and I was surprised that I could learn a language in such a short period of time!*
- *I learned how to read without knowing every single word, which was a challenge before. I learned how to learn vocabulary from the context.*
- *I learned a fair amount of vocabulary. Also, reading is great for establishing understanding of a language as well as cultural understanding.*
- *I learned a lot. How to write a paper in French first of all and second, learning how to organize my thought processes. [This is important] especially because I'm taking courses now in which I need all the stuff I learned.*
- *I became a better writer.*
- *I think I improved my understanding of the French language.*

**Developed critical thinking skills.** Nine (32%) of interviewees commented that they honed their analytical skills as a result of meeting the challenges they had described. Students noted that they learned to view cultural differences from multiple perspectives and, more generally, cast a more critical eye on their readings. For example:

- *I got a better understanding of French literature and the history of French literature and got skills to better analyze ways of thinking. I learned great ideas that can be applied to everyday life and the job market.*
- *I learned how to analyze texts, French texts, in a deeper way. Rather than telling you what a sentence says literally we learned to read the meaning behind the text.*
- *I suppose that I expanded my horizons and learned how to think outside the box. Not just thinking about the rhetoric of general French themes but little things such as historical aspects that pertained to it.*
- *It was interesting to think that people in different countries organize their writing so differently than they do here.*

**Increased historical understanding.** Six (21%) participants said that they gained a greater understanding of the culture they were studying as a result of meeting the challenges they had described. In the words of three students:

- *It formed the basis for my knowledge of France's relationship with its former colonies, and it's something that I've remained interested in to this day both from a historical and a cultural perspective.*
- *I learned about colonization and former French colonies and how it affects even people in France today.*
- *I learned that France and French culture are more than France itself but also include the different places it has reached across the world, especially in Africa and the islands.*

**Other.** In addition to these themes, two or three students identified the following as things they had learned by completing this assignment/project:

- *Hard work/determination (3). I would say that I developed determination because there is a task to be done and you have to put in the work and not give up but ask for help if you need it.*
- *Independence/resiliency abroad (2). I learned to be resilient and that I love to travel. It's good to go abroad and have these experiences and learn different languages.*
- *Time management skills (2). I definitely gained skills that relate to managing large/long projects over an extended amount of time and how to work those sections into smaller amounts.*

### **5. What courses in the major, in addition to any we just discussed, did you find most stimulating?**

When asked about additional courses in the major that they found stimulating, students noted 11 additional courses in French and four in Italian. The list of courses as well as the number of students who identified them (only one if not otherwise noted) were as follows:

FRENCH 214: The French Fairy Tale Tradition in English (Delcourt)

FRENCH 224: Culture and Medium Forms

FRENCH 303: Advanced French (2; Baraboi)

FRENCH 305: Survey of French Literature: 1600-1789 (2; with one student mentioning MacKenzie)

FRENCH 306: Texts and Traditions II (Baraboi)

FRENCH 307: Survey of Francophone Literatures and Cultures (2; with one student mentioning Watts and one Mitchell)

FRENCH 376: Culture, Politics, and Society in France from The Religious Wars to Revolutions (Turnovsky)

FRENCH 378: The Making of Contemporary France (8; Watts, 4; Collins, 2) *I loved French 378 with Collins. It was nice to hear the perspective of an American on the topic because I feel he could point out the differences based on his experience. He knew what to emphasize.*

FRENCH 390: Supervised Study (Meyer) *FRENCH 390 with Meyer on a variety of subjects including how to give presentations and language building skills.*

FRENCH 470: Cinema (2; MacKenzie)

FRENCH 499: Special Topics (Antisemitism: Collins)

ITAL 234: Intensive Second-Year Italian

ITAL 366: Italian Society in Film and Literature (Sbragia)

ITAL 404: Modern Italian Readings (Sbragia)

ITAL 470: Dante (Yowell)

Other:

- The 300 grammar series (3). *I really liked the 300 [French] grammar series and learned a lot from that. Strong emphasis on developing language skills! Very beneficial!*
- Study abroad (3)
- *Not courses in particular but Helene V Collins is a fantastic teacher! She gets students to engage on a level that I think other professors don't.*
- Film classes with Claudio Mazzola (2). *I was so excited about a few of the movies that I rented them on my own to show my friends.*
- The Summer Intensive course. *I thought it was a more effective way to cover the material than doing the year-long 300 level series [in Italian].. I guess because it challenged me to read quickly and understand what I read and think critically about it in a very short period of time!*

**6. Would you say that these most stimulating courses shared anything in common, for example were they clustered around a particular topic, material (literature, cinema, etc.), and/or time period?**

When asked whether the most stimulating courses shared anything in common, 11 (41%<sup>7</sup>) students said “no” and fifteen (59%) students said “yes.” The following is a breakdown of responses by category for those students who responded in the affirmative:

- High quality professors (4) *In this case it was the professors in my best courses who were awesome and there was an emphasis on accountability. You were never punished for not participating but it was the sort of environment that made you want to participate!*
- Development of French culture (3)
- Literature courses (3)
- Post-revolution France (2) *All of 300 and 378 took place after the revolution and that gave us a modern sense of France and it was connected in that sense.*
- The Enlightenment
- The French Revolution
- *I took ITAL 234 when I got back from being abroad so I saw a lot of connections with the culture and I was able to relate in the classroom with the experience I had just had abroad.*

## SUMMARY

Students in French and Italian Studies were most likely to mention a specific course as the site of their most challenging work with literature courses and the challenges associated with reading older literary works mentioned most often. Students commonly explained that writing in a foreign language was a

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<sup>7</sup> One participant did not answer the question, n = 27.

particularly difficult challenge in the major and 20% noted that their study abroad experience was the site of their greatest challenges.

By and large, students reported that the coursework was challenging because they had to read dense texts and often were required to not only translate the text but to think critically about what was written and reflect in their own writing. One student commented on writing in the major:

*The papers we had to write went beyond just language use and required advanced thinking, critical thinking. That was challenging.*

Students also spoke about the challenges associated with study abroad including learning to work together with students from other countries and, in the process, overcoming language and cultural barriers. In addition, several students reflected on the challenge of being held to the same standards in their academic work as native speakers.

When asked what helped them meet the challenges outlined above, three-quarters of the interviewees explained that their ability to meet the challenges posed by the French and Italian Studies major were the result of their own efforts. Specifically, students explained that they completed all of the readings, asked for extra help when needed, and developed better study habits. One student stated:

*I think that was one of the first classes that brought home the importance of doing the readings and I found that if I did not do them I did not know what was going on or could not participate. It caused me to step up my game.*

Students also reported that working with their peers was instrumental to their success in the major. More precisely, students mentioned that they made an effort to make friends with students in their classes and benefitted from both formal in-class activities such as peer editing as well as more informal study groups outside of class. In the words of one student:

*I think I did a lot of collaboration with classmates and discussed readings outside of class with them and brainstormed topics with them. Two major papers and a final project and lots of work with peers, collaboration.*

When asked what they learned by completing the project/class, students were most likely to focus on their enhanced language skills including grammar, vocabulary, and comprehension. Moreover, one-quarter of interviewees commented that they had gained analytical skills as a result of meeting the challenges in the major, including the ability to view cultural differences from multiple perspectives and, more generally, a greater understanding of the history of the region and its peoples.

In sum, although the number of students interviewed was fairly small, their responses are reflective of the broad goals of the French and Italian Studies major which aims to equip its students with a strong grounding in French and/or Italian language and a rich understanding of the history and culture of the respective regions.

Students' responses to the UW ACES interview questions also suggest that French and Italian Studies majors felt that the challenges they described were intrinsically rewarding. As one student succinctly stated, *"I learned that hard work has its rewards."* This type of response to challenge is consistent with research on student learning, which shows that when an assignment is challenging for students and when instructors help students meet those challenges, students are engaged in their courses and, therefore, learn more than when coursework is easy.

### ***Two Student's Responses to All Six Questions***

**Course where greatest challenges occurred:** Study Abroad Courses (French)

**Q1. What was the most challenging work you did?** The study abroad was the most challenging. Having Francophone teachers made me step up.

**Q2. Why was it challenging?** It was challenging because I kept trying to think in English and then speak in French and having to change that was a hard transition.

**Q3. What helped you meet that challenge?** I did additional work that teachers recommended. For example, I listened to more music in French, watched movies. It all helped me obtain a higher level in the end.

**Q4. What did you learn by meeting that challenge?** I learned that hard work has its rewards.

**Q5. What courses in the major, in addition to any we just discussed, did you find most stimulating?** I loved French 378 with Collins. It was nice to hear the perspective of an American on the topic because I feel he could point out the differences based on his experience. He knew what to emphasize.

**Q6. Would you say that these most stimulating courses shared anything in common, for example were they clustered around a particular topic, material (literature, cinema, etc.), and/or time period?** The culture of France!

**Course where greatest challenges occurred:** ITAL 404

**Q1. What was the most challenging work you did?** I think that the essays were difficult. To write six pages all in Italian made me work. There are things you can say in English but to have to say them in Italian, you sometimes have to say something in a different way to get the point across.

**Q2. Why was it challenging?** Trying to say exactly what you want but in a whole different writing style than what you are used to and in another language. It's just tough especially when you've had some time off from the language you get out of practice.

**Q3. What helped you meet that challenge?** I think that the teachers offered a lot of office hours and were always available through email, and they were really flexible.

**Q4. What did you learn by meeting that challenge?** I'd say that I developed determination because there is a task to be done and you have to put in the work and not give up but ask for help if you need it.

**Q5. What courses in the major, in addition to any we just discussed, did you find most stimulating?** I think the film ones. Claudio taught one that I remember in particular that was really fun. I was so excited about a few of the movies that I rented them on my own to show my friends.

**Q6. Would you say that these most stimulating courses shared anything in common, for example were they clustered around a particular topic, material (literature, cinema, etc.), and/or time period?** No, I don't think so. I had equal interest for all the time periods and topics, although the modern stuff is easier to relate to if it's not in medieval Italian.

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