



**PROPOSAL**  
**TO RESTRUCTURE THE WORLD LANGUAGES CENTER INTO**  
**THE DEPARTMENT OF WORLD LANGUAGES AND CULTURES**  
**WITHIN THE COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES**

*Approved by CSSH Dean Kellee Tsai on 11/4/24*

*WLC Full-time Faculty (24)/Staff (2) recommendation: 24 yes; 0 no; 2 did not vote (10/10/24)*

**PROPOSAL COMMITTEE**

**Stacey Katz Bourns**, Professor of Cultures, Societies, and Global Studies and Director of the WLC (Committee Chair)

**Gina Maiellaro**, Teaching Professor and Associate Director of Curriculum and Instruction

**Vanessa Wei**, Associate Teaching Professor and Associate Director of the Less Commonly Taught Languages

**Christina Agostinelli-Fucile**, Associate Teaching Professor and Coordinator of the Spanish Program

**Daniel Cuenca**, Associate Teaching Professor and Director of the Spanish Major

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## **I. Proposal**

### **A. Introduction: History of the WLC (A Timeline)**

- Up until 2007, languages at Northeastern were taught in the Department of Modern Languages in the College of Arts and Sciences. The Department of Modern Languages offered an array of language majors as well as courses ranging from elementary classes to advanced literature and cultural studies seminars.
- In 2007, the Department of Modern Languages was divided into two separate units: the Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures (LLC) and the World Languages Center (WLC). All the lower-division courses were moved into the WLC, while upper-division literature and culture courses remained in LLC.
- In 2009, the WLC was moved to CPS.
- In 2015, Dean Uta Poiger moved the WLC from CPS into CSSH (which had been established in 2010).
- In 2016, LLC was renamed the Department of Cultures, Societies, and Global Studies (CSGS). CSGS merged at this time with the unit now called Africana Studies. With its new name and focus, CSGS pivoted away from being a languages department into becoming an ethnic studies unit.
- In 2024, almost all language faculty (except for two) are housed in the WLC, and all language-specific courses (either taught in the target language or in English) are offered by the WLC. In addition, all language minors and the Spanish major and combined majors are administered by the WLC.

### **B. Mission and Curriculum of the WLC**

Since 2018, the WLC's curriculum committee, led by Associate Director Gina Maiellaro, has developed a comprehensive curricular model with the goal of guiding students to achieve proficiency in one or more languages while enabling them to communicate effectively in authentic contexts and create connections across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Courses are text-focused, integrating written and oral products of various genres. The WLC offers courses ranging from the introductory level to advanced film, linguistics, and cultural-studies courses (taught in both the target language and in English).

The WLC currently provides instruction in 11 languages and offers minors in 9. Please see Appendix A for the number of students minoring in each language (over 500 students total). The WLC also administers the Spanish major and four Spanish combined majors: "Spanish and International Affairs," "Spanish and Linguistics," "Spanish and Public Health," and "Health Sciences and Spanish." Three of the combined majors, created recently, were spearheaded by faculty in the WLC's Spanish section. The WLC is eager to explore creating similar combined majors in other languages, which will be easier to administer as a department.

### C. Rationale for Departmental Status

- **The WLC already functions like a department.** The term “center” does not describe the WLC’s mission/purpose either on campus or beyond. Language “centers” at other universities are either non-academic units, or they are units that are connected to departments that offer upper-level classes (which is not the case at Northeastern). In addition, at Northeastern, the WLC does not align with the missions or mandates of other centers in CSSH or elsewhere on campus.
- **The WLC faculty is well prepared to constitute a department.** Over the past several years, the WLC has conducted national searches and assembled a solid corps of faculty with doctorates in the fields of applied linguistics, linguistics, foreign language education, and cultural studies. WLC faculty already teach most (if not all) of the courses required for the minors and many of the courses for the Spanish majors. The WLC also runs the language honor societies, and WLC faculty lead Northeastern's language-focused DOCs.
- **Housing the majors and minors in CSGS creates a layer of bureaucracy that is detrimental to the smooth operation of these programs.** The WLC currently administers the majors/minors and the teaching of most of the required classes for those degrees, as well as the classes for the language requirement. Matters such as course scheduling, degree audits, overrides, approvals, etc., which are easily taken care of within the WLC, currently need to be reviewed by CSGS, thus causing communication gaps, delays, and extra work for both units.
- **The current structure is not transparent to students, potential students, and individuals on and beyond our campus.** Students question why language majors and minors are not offered in the unit on campus that teaches languages. Housing the majors and minors in a Department of World Languages and Cultures will provide clarity.
- **Our current structure does not align us with our peer or aspirant institutions.** Every one of our peer institutions has a designated language department (or even several language departments, broken down by language families). See Appendix C for a summary of the structures that are in place at our peer universities from the Group of 14/Colonial Group.
- Finally, the restructuring of the WLC into the Department of World Languages and Cultures will enhance the **visibility** of the current language programs and degrees; it will position the unit for sustained **growth**; and it will establish the Department of World Languages and Cultures as parallel with other CSSH undergraduate degree-granting departments. In addition, since Northeastern values being considered a **global institution**, it is important that it have a bona fide languages department.

## D. Personnel Changes

**Stacey Katz Bourns** (full professor, French) would move her entire appointment from CSGS to the Department of WLC, and **Daniel Noemi Voionmaa** (full professor, Spanish) would move from CSGS to the Department of WLC, with a joint appointment in Latinx studies.

## II. Appendices

### A. Summary of Numbers of Language Majors and Minors

| Language Minors at stats freeze date AY21/22 through AY24/25 Effective 10.2.24 |                    |                    |                    |                    |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Minors (primary and secondary)   | #s by semester     |                    |                    |                    |
| Minor  | Fall 2021 Semester | Fall 2022 Semester | Fall 2023 Semester | Fall 2024 Semester |
| Arabic   | 8                  | 8                  | 11                 | 11                 |
| Chinese  | 47                 | 54                 | 62                 | 52                 |
| French   | 59                 | 62                 | 73                 | 68                 |
| German   | 13                 | 18                 | 26                 | 28                 |
| Italian  | 5                  | 13                 | 15                 | 20                 |
| Japanese   | 34                 | 26                 | 47                 | 36                 |
| Portuguese   | 2                  | 3                  | 6                  | 5                  |
| Russian  | 8                  | 6                  | 6                  | 6                  |
| Spanish  | 313                | 309                | 322                | 290                |
| Spanish for Healthcare   |                    |                    |                    | 12                 |
| <b>Grand Total</b>   | <b>489</b>         | <b>499</b>         | <b>568</b>         | <b>528</b>         |

**Note:** the Fall 2024 numbers are not yet complete.

### Majors:

| Major                         | # of Students |
|-------------------------------|---------------|
| Spanish/International Affairs | 7             |
| Spanish/Linguistics           | 4             |
| Spanish                       | 1             |
| <b>Grand Total</b>            | <b>12</b>     |

**Note:** we do not have the numbers yet for our newest combined majors (with Bouvé).

## **B. List of Current WLC Faculty and their Credentials**

### **Arabic**

Shakir Mustafa, Teaching Professor (Ph.D., Indiana University)

### **Chinese**

Ann Cai, Teaching Professor (Ed.D., Northeastern University)  
Hua Dong, Principal Lecturer (M.A., Emerson College)  
Vanessa Wei, Associate Teaching Professor (Ed.D., University of Pittsburgh)

### **German**

Carolin Fuchs, Teaching Professor (Ph.D., Universität Gießen)

### **French**

Stacey Katz Bourns, Professor (Ph.D., University of Texas)  
Joshua Griffiths, Assistant Teaching Professor (Ph.D., University of Texas)  
Austin Hancock, Assistant Teaching Professor (Ph.D., Princeton University)  
Sali Ziane, Teaching Professor (Ph.D., University of Paris XIII)

### **Italian**

Gina Maeillaro, Teaching Professor (Ph.D., Russian State University for the Humanities)  
Alessio Tognetti, Principal Lecturer (M.A., University of Oregon)

### **Japanese**

Ayako Anderson, Senior Lecturer (M.A., Columbia University)  
Rei Inouye, Teaching Professor (Ph.D., Temple University)  
Kumiko Tsuji, Teaching Professor (Ph.D., Georgetown University)

### **Korean**

Gahye Song, Visiting Lecturer (Ed.D., Columbia Teachers College)

### **Spanish/Portuguese**

Christina Agostinelli-Fucile, Associate Teaching Professor (Ph.D., SUNY Buffalo)  
Gorka Basterretxea Santiso, Assistant Teaching Professor (Ph.D., Georgetown University)  
Monica Canavan, Principal Lecturer (M.A.T., Salem State University)  
Daniel Cuenca, Associate Teaching Professor (Ph.D., Boston University)  
Américo Mendoza-Mori, Visiting Lecturer (Ph.D., University of Miami)  
Tania Muiño, Principal Lecturer (M.A., University of Barcelona)  
Cristina Pérez-Arranz, Assistant Teaching Professor (Ph.D., Universidad Complutense de Madrid)  
Claudia Sokol, Teaching Professor (M.D., University of Buenos Aires)  
Boris Yelin, Associate Teaching Professor (Ph.D., Purdue University)

**Note:** Hebrew and Russian are currently staffed by part-time lecturers.

### **C. Language Departments at Peer Institutions (Group of 14/Colonial Group)**

Our peer institutions all have language departments that offer an array of language majors and minors. Several also offer graduate degrees. In addition, some peer institutions have departments in classical languages, which are not included in this list.

#### **Boston College**

- Department of Eastern, Slavic, and German Studies
- Department of Romance Languages and Literatures

#### **Boston University**

- Department of World Languages and Literatures
- Department of Romance Studies

#### **Brandeis University**

- Department of German, Russian, and Asian Languages and Literature
- Department of Romance Studies
- Department of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies

#### **George Washington University**

- Department of Romance, German, and Slavic Studies
- Department of Classical and Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations
- Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures

#### **New York University**

- Department of East Asian Studies
- Department of French
- Department of German
- Department of Hebrew and Judaic Studies
- Department of Italian Studies
- Department of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies
- Department of Russian and Slavic Studies
- Department of Spanish and Portuguese

#### **Southern Methodist University**

- Department of World Languages and Literatures

#### **Syracuse University**

- Department of Languages, Literatures, and Linguistics

#### **Tufts University**

- Department of International Literary and Cultural Studies
- Department of Romance Studies

### **Tulane University**

- Department of French and Italian
- Department of Germanic and Slavic Studies
- Department of Spanish and Portuguese

**Note:** other languages are offered through interdisciplinary programs, such as Arabic Studies, Asian Studies, etc.

### **University of Miami**

- Department of Modern Languages and Literatures

### **University of Notre Dame**

- Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures
- Department of German and Russian Languages and Literatures
- Department of Irish Language and Literature (!)
- Department of Romance Languages and Literatures

### **Wake Forest University**

- Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures
- Department of French Studies
- Department of German and Russian
- Department of Spanish

**Note:** other languages (Italian, Arabic, etc.) are offered as single-standing programs/minors within other units.