Course Syllabus: Introduction to Mandarin Chinese

Location: Room G-6
Time: Black days 9:25 AM – 10:45 AM (9:50 AM – 10:50 AM on Wednesdays)
Instructor: Mr. Graham Salzer
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Course description

Technology and modern life in general have transformed once isolated countries and continents into a truly global community. Given the nature of this development, the importance of the study of foreign languages becomes clear, indeed. Foreign language acquisition broadens our understanding of the cultures we encounter daily. Apart from this very practical aspect of foreign language learning, the study of foreign languages is of itself a worthy intellectual pursuit. Not only does it give students a greater context for understanding other academic subjects such as classical and modern history and literature, it also is a discipline that deepens the understanding of one’s own language and culture. German philosopher Johann Wolfgang von Goethe wrote that lacking the knowledge of a foreign language, one could know little of one’s own language. Certainly, this observation has taken on dimensions of significance in the twenty-first century that not even Goethe could have foreseen in his own time. This class seeks to incorporate not only the more practical aspects of the Chinese language, but also stresses the intellectual and academic elements of that study as well.

Mindful of the philosophy of Cardinal Newman High School, the instructor has set specific pedagogical objectives in the instruction. Among these objectives are the four skills of communication (reading, writing, listening, and speaking). The class will incorporate historical, cultural and social dimensions into the curriculum.

Introduction to Chinese is a beginning-level course in modern standard Chinese (Mandarin) for students with little or no prior experience in the language. We will start the course by introducing Chinese pronunciation and tones. Recognizing, reading, typing, and writing simplified Chinese characters will follow. Great emphasis will be placed upon standard pronunciation, listening comprehension, and everyday “survival” Chinese. Various supplementary listening materials will be used from the beginning of this course to give students an authentic, practical way to learn correct pronunciation and reinforce class lessons. Students will also be exposed to Chinese language and culture via movies and cultural information.

Objectives

To develop basic listening, speaking, recognizing, reading, typing, and writing abilities in Mandarin Chinese. By the end of the school year, students should to be able to:

1. Read and write Chinese phonetic symbols (pinyin) with correct tones.
2. Understand the basic principles of the formation of Chinese characters.
3. Master about forty basic Chinese radicals and write Chinese characters in the correct stroke orders.
4. Understand short dialogues and passages spoken by native Chinese speakers at a slow speed.

5. Comprehend short written texts and passages with the learned words.

6. Recognize, type, and write at least two hundred characters.

7. Type/write paragraphs of approximately fifty characters.

**Other topics**

In addition to Chinese language studies, each class session will involve about 10-20 minutes discussing the following:

- Chinese geography
- Chinese history (pre 1949)
- Chinese history (post 1949)
- Chinese culture
- Chinese art
- Chinese food
- Politics in China
- The Chinese economy

**Texts, readings and materials**


The teacher may also sometimes use other texts. Whenever this happens, photocopies of the pages will be distributed.

**Movies:** We will watch two or three Chinese movies throughout the semester. These films are highly relevant to Chinese culture and history. Students will be expected to write reactions to the movies.

**Chinese Pod:** Each week, the teacher will upload five “Chinese Pod” mp3 files. You are expected to download these files onto your computer or mp3 player and listen to one per day (Monday – Friday). These files are intended to help you with listening and pronunciation. Also, they contain some useful cultural information. Students will periodically be quizzed on the material within these podcasts.

**Internet:**

http://translate.google.com


http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/

**Evaluation**

40% - **Tests and essays.** There will be three or four tests throughout the semester. Also, near the end of the year, students will submit a 3-4 page research paper on any topic relating to China. The topic must be pre-approved by the instructor. This paper is due in class on **December 13.**
30% - **Quizzes, news presentations, movie reactions.** Quizzes will be given on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. Each student will be assigned a two separate days to give a short 3-5 minute presentation on some interesting current event taking place in China. Whenever we watch a movie, students will also be responsible for writing a 1-page response to be turned in for a quiz grade.

20% - **Homework.** Students can expect to have homework every night.

10% - **Class participation.** If a student comes to class prepared everyday, consistently pays attention, has a positive attitude, asks good questions, and makes thoughtful comments, a grade of 100 will be automatically given for this. The instructor will use his best judgment to award a fair grade in this area.

**Rules and expectations**

Students are expected to put forth their best effort to learn the course material. This can more easily be accomplished if students are passionate about their work and take a genuine interest in the material. This course will require patience and discipline, but offers great rewards and advantages. Students must complete all assignments. Homework will be collected randomly, so each assignment is of great importance.

The following things are below the teacher’s expectations and will result in correction or disciplinary action:

- Sleeping in class. If you are caught sleeping, you have to stand up.
- Talking when the teacher is talking. If you want to say something, raise your hand. Sometimes we will have informal discussions in which this rule is more relaxed, but please do not interrupt anyone.
- Having mp3 players or electronic devices in class, unless the device is used for academic purposes
- Uniform violations
- Cheating, lying, or plagiarizing
- Disrespect towards your classmates or teacher
- Additional rules are outlined in the student manual. Refer to that for details.