

Modern Greek Intermediate Level

“Conversations on Culture”

(Dr. Despina Margomenou & Dr. Anna-Maria Hatzitheodorou)



Successes

- student centered classroom
- near authentic/immersive classroom experience
- builds student confidence in their communication skills
- course activities/coursework become meaningful (contextualized culturally and meaningful as “applicable skills”)
- student performance improves overall (related to confidence building)
- vocabulary retention improves significantly
- students develop personal contacts and long term friendships with students abroad beyond the classroom
- student learning and intercultural understanding continues beyond the classroom
- student evaluations indicate that students consider this kind of interaction “true communication”

Challenges

- scheduling for synchronous and asynchronous student interactions (time zones & conflicting academic calendars)
- achieving equivalent language skills in the FL among the two groups of students
- AUTH students are all volunteers limiting the workload demands that can be placed on them.

Future plans

- expand the collaboration to include other Greek universities/institutions
- expand this project to include 3rd year Modern Greek (Advanced Intermediate Level). This requires significant scheduling changes.

More Information?

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Course Description

Intermediate Modern Greek (2nd Year) is an undergraduate and graduate course offered by the Dept. of Classical Studies, Modern Greek Program. Student numbers range between 10-17. Learning outcomes for Modern Greek 201 and 202 are modeled based on CERF Levels B1 and B2 and ACTFL Intermediate Medium and Intermediate High level outcomes.

Global themes

Instead of the traditional (for Modern Greek instruction) divide between “high culture” (arts/literature) and “low culture” (everyday life/people) that fosters a teacher-centered classroom, the courses are designed beginning from a different set of premises whereby cultural phenomena and different linguistic communities are integrated and constitute a realm for comparison, exploration, discovery, and independent learning. Themes vary, e.g.:

- cultural/ethnic stereotypes
- challenges of student life
- attitudes (politeness, dealing with authority, etc).

Engaged Learning Activities/Interactions

Conversations on Culture is multidimensional, task-based, peer teaching via videoconferencing among UM students learning Modern Greek and AUTH students learning English. It incorporates basic ethnographic methods, Students act as ethnographers (in the foreign language) and as culture specialists (in their native language). Student interactions include:

- asynchronous interactions (online surveys/shared projects)
- synchronous interactions (face-to-face Skype sessions).

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PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS

UM, College of Literature, Science and The Arts (LSA), Language Resource Center (Philomena Meechan, Instructional Learning Lead)

UM Modern Greek Program, Department of Classical Studies (Dr. D. Margomenou)

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH), Greece, Center for Foreign Language Teaching (Dr. Anna-Maria Hatzitheodorou)

AUTH Department of German Language and Literature (Dr. A. Kiliari)

AUTH Department of French Language and Literature/ Language Laboratory and Computer Center (Dr. Panagiotis Panagiotides)

“This is true communication and understanding another culture”
(comment from student evaluation)



UM Modern Greek Studies Students
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