

Interdisciplinary mini courses for the Chinese language and culture classroom

Jenny Yang

Associate Professor, Rutgers University

Abstract :

Since 2013, enrollment in Chinese language classes in higher education, along with most other foreign languages, has steadily declined. The situation has been exacerbated in the past two years by the pandemic. It is now more crucial than ever to find solutions to sustain and grow language programs. This presentation introduces 1-credit mini courses offered by the Language Engagement Project (LEP), a university-wide language initiative at a large state university. These mini courses serve as a gateway for students to sample a new language and culture, allow students with busy schedules to continue their language studies, and complement existing language and culture program course offerings.

The LEP offers three types of mini courses: stand-alone mini courses, modules attached to a 3- or 4-credit parent course, and activities that depart from traditional classroom instruction. This talk will share examples of interdisciplinary mini courses, from inception to implementation. Example of mini courses created by the Chinese language program include “Key words in the media,” “Filming my heritage,” and “Story Time in Chinese.” It is hoped that this discussion will contribute to the conversation of proactively providing solutions to meet the evolving language learning needs of students in higher education.

Presenter Bio:

Jenny Yang is Associate Teaching Professor and Language Program Coordinator in the Department of Asian Languages and Cultures at Rutgers. She currently serves as the Chair of the Curriculum and Pedagogy Board at Rutgers Language Engagement Project. She teaches undergraduate courses on Chinese language and culture, as well as graduate seminars on teaching Chinese as a second language.