

## **Roundtable on Pedagogy I Institutional Identities for Literary and Cultural Studies**

Chairs:

Sharon Johnson, Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University

Carol Rifelj, Middlebury College

The Pedagogical Roundtable held in Mobile, AL in 2007 sparked great debate about the need to redefine or better articulate the institutional identity of our French and Francophone Departments/Programs. Many colleagues regretted that either they could not attend the session or that there was not enough time to discuss our differing visions, arguments, and strategies to increase the intellectual presence of foreign languages and literatures at our universities.

It was (and is) troubling that the MLA Report gives the impression that focusing on literature is “increasingly irrelevant.” At the same time, it praises courses in language departments that concentrate on contemporary society, especially as analyzed by the social sciences. This year, we propose to continue our discussions from last year by adding new views and voices to the discussion as well as those from last year’s roundtable.

Panelists will address questions relating to the institutional identity of French departments. What are the benefits to foreign language departments when they engage in interdisciplinary collaborations with other humanities and social science programs? Are there inherent risks? Looking at the question from a different angle, what arguments have been successful in persuading both students and administrators that literary studies *already* prepare both undergraduates and graduates for the future, not only intellectually and personally, but also “practically”? Finally, what are the challenges that face literature departments at French universities? Are they similar to or different from those in North America?

The papers or working outlines from the 2007 and 2008 Roundtables will be available on line two weeks before the Colloquium. At the conference session, 2008 panelists will summarize the main points in their papers in five minutes in order to allow the greatest possible time for discussion. Available panelists from the 2007 Roundtable will join the discussion phase of this year’s session.

1. Interdisciplinarity and Undergraduate French Studies.  
Carol Rifelj, Middlebury College
2. Preserving Identities: Strategies for Building a Successful French and Foreign Language Program. Richard Shryock, Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University
3. En guise de contre-point: les études littéraires en France.  
Martine Reid, Université de Lille III

Carol Rifelj  
Middlebury College

### Interdisciplinarity and Collaboration in Undergraduate French Studies

Last year’s Pedagogical Roundtable in Mobile sparked great debate about the need to redefine or better articulate the institutional identity of our French and Francophone Departments/Programs. This year, we propose to continue our discussions from last year by adding new views and voices to those of the participants from last year’s panel who will attend this session, and especially including those of the audience.

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Students ask for more “civilization” courses; the MLA report seems to emphasize twenty-first century culture and has been interpreted as saying that a focus on literature is “increasingly irrelevant”; interdisciplinary programs siphon off French majors. It sometimes seems as though there is little space at our institutions for the study of nineteenth-century literature.

My presentation will address several questions. What are the benefits to foreign language departments when they engage in interdisciplinary collaborations with other humanities and social science programs? Are there inherent risks? How can faculty members at smaller institutions or those with small French programs meet the demands of interdisciplinary teaching and also maintain a vibrant literature program?

Presentations at the pedagogy roundtables will be brief, to allow the maximum time for general discussion.

Richard Shryock  
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

### Preserving Identities: Strategies for Building a Successful French and Foreign Language Program

At Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech), we have been very successful at rebuilding a French program that was faltering in the 1990s. In the past 12 years, the number of French majors has more than doubled as have the number of faculty. In fall 2008, we are beginning a new MA program in French. Some of the strategies we have used to increase staffing in French have been useful in garnering more resources for our department of Foreign Languages and Literatures. These strategies have contributed to an increase in the number of positions in our department. Last year, the Provost committed himself to a multi-year expansion. In the first year, he approved five additional tenure lines moving us from 18 to 23 positions. We may receive an additional three tenure lines and two instructor positions for 2009-10 with still more anticipated in the years to come.

Every institution has its particular character, but I would like to present strategies that have been effective at our school, which, despite what the name suggests, is a large, comprehensive state university. As is true with many universities, the importance of languages and the humanities is not well understood at ours either. In general, instead of changing our identity, we have sought to do a better job articulating to faculty, students and the administration the unique role our French program and our department play in helping the university to achieve its strategic goals.

Martine Reid  
Université de Lille III

En guise de contre-point: les études littéraires en France.

La situation des études littéraires en France a évolué assez notablement ces dernières années : ainsi le nombre d'étudiants en lettres a-t-il diminué considérablement à l'université, de

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même que le nombre d'élèves inscrits en "section L" au lycée. On peut avancer à ce changement quelques raisons; on peut ensuite le replacer dans un cadre plus large, celui de l'évolution d'une "discipline" qui peine désormais à se définir et à se renouveler. Les quelques observations qui seront faites permettront une comparaison avec ce qui s'observe aux Etats-Unis, où interviennent des facteurs différents avec des effets en partie semblables.