

Proposed Changes in the Teaching of French

CS✓
7B✓
mBF
Keep handy

- I) A first-year course should be taught dealing primarily with French composition and idiomatic expression. The present 'French Review Course', as far as I can make out, gives adequate emphasis to the following aspects: 1) tenses, 2) moods --especially subjunctives, 3) speaking, 4) reports on books and events. It does not, however, provide for sustained work in composition and idiomatic expression. Frequent tests in the use of French idioms are absolutely necessary and should be regularly administered by the teacher.
- II) For second and possibly third year students a course in translation might be offered, dealing with the problem of transferring concepts from one language into another. Such a course would be invaluable for prospective literature majors who want to read authors like Proust, Gide, Malraux, etc. both in English translation and in the original. It seems odd to me to see girls write theses on foreign novelists without knowing a word of their language.
- III) It might be advisable to have another first-year course in French, conforming even closer than the present to the structure of 'Basic Language and Literature'. This course would be based on a study of the various literary genres (poetry, drama, forms of fiction, discursive writing) - and might be an alternative choice for students who want to start in their second year a more specialized study of literature.
- IV) I don't believe that there is a place in the Bennington curriculum for ~~xx~~ the ASTP "language and area" type of instruction. Girls whose sole aim in learning ~~xx~~ a foreign language is a certain competence in oral discourse, knowledge of local customs, geography, etc. should be referred to Berlitz or similar agencies.
- V) Prospective majors in fields other than literature--social sciences, art, etc.-- should be provided with specialized types of language instruction suited to their needs.
- VI) Oral mastery of a foreign language is very desirable but should not be made the hub of our language program. The two basic French courses suggested earlier might be taught either in French or in English; the composition course preferably in French, the course in literary genres preferably in English since in it the main objective is to get certain stylistic notions across. Starting the second year, all foreign language courses should be taught in the language with the possible exception of an advanced comparative literature course yet to be decided upon.

Francis Golfing