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Illinois Wesleyan Adds Chinese Language, Culture to Classes

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – The Olympic flame may be extinguished in Beijing, but China will still be on the minds of students at Illinois Wesleyan.

This fall, Illinois Wesleyan University has added the Chinese to the language classes offered to students. The addition is timely, and needed, said Sonja Fritzsche, co-chair of the Modern and Classical Languages and Literature Department (MCLL) at Illinois Wesleyan. “No one can deny China is increasing in importance globally,” said Fritzsche. “More students are looking to understand China and learn the language.”

Chinese 101 is currently being offered this fall, with plans for Chinese 102 to be offered spring semester. Visiting Instructor Kelly Changjun Huo joined the faculty this fall to teach the language courses. Along with the language classes, Huo will also be teaching two Chinese culture classes, an ancient Chinese culture course in the fall semester, and a modern Chinese culture course in the spring.

“The history of China plays a big role in China today,” said Huo, who comes to Illinois Wesleyan from The Ohio State University, where she earned her doctorate in teaching the Chinese language. “It is important for students to know of China’s many accomplishments over its 5,000-year history to understand modern-day China better.” The culture courses will focus on everything from literature, art and architecture, to food and festivals.

“Understanding a language is vital to understanding a culture,” said Fritzsche.

MCLL collaborated with Illinois Wesleyan’s Asian Studies Program, working for more than two years to bring the classes to campus. Like all new classes, the language and culture courses are considered under the experimental stage with the University. “The classes will continue to be offered if students remain interested,” said Fritzsche, who noted the University is pursuing grants to help support the new classes.

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