



A Department of Italian Studies event hosted by the Berkeley Language Center

Blended learning: a new (and better) approach to beginning Italian

The study of foreign languages faces numerous opportunities and challenges in today's increasingly globalized world. In the United States, many foreign language programs are disappearing or in decline. Meanwhile developments in technology and the creation of new media challenge our preconceived notions about how foreign languages should be taught and where and when learning occurs. These challenges motivate us to re-think our approaches and make new connections between ideas, cultures and emerging technologies. Hybrid language courses, also referred to as blended or computer enhanced language courses, are at the center of a very lively debate in today's academic world. Although the use of technology at the college level aimed at enhancing foreign language teaching and learning has been in practice for some time now, the idea of substituting entire class periods with time spent working on a computer module is still a source of controversy. The aim of this conversation is to illustrate a model of instruction that addresses both efficiency and accessibility to the study of foreign languages and to share the rationale behind the creation and implementation of a new beginning Italian course using the blended approach. We will start by discussing what blended learning means to foreign language instructors and then explain in detail why and how we created this course; we will share a concrete example of the steps necessary to create an effective blended course and our plans for improvements to be implemented in the coming academic years. Participants will discuss opportunities for blended learning in foreign languages, participate in a discussion about learning technologies concerns, and will identify key challenges for postsecondary students and potential challenges in designing and developing foreign language blended learning courses.

Alessia Blad has been at Notre Dame since 1999, teaching beginning, intensive beginning, intermediate, intensive intermediate, and Italian culture classes. She coordinates Italian language courses and teaches the Graduate course on Teaching Methods and Second Language Acquisition.

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3 – 5 pm

B-4 Dwinelle Hall