

Faculty express doubt about current foreign language requirements, propose increase

Melissa Kansky
Assistant News Editor

Increased international globalization has prompted Elon University to reassess foreign language requirements.

"The reality is that most Americans whose native language is English don't know any language other than English," said Scott Windham, associate professor of German. "Elon students can distinguish themselves by learning another language, as long as they do so with seriousness and commitment."

Proposed revisions to the general studies program reflect this belief.

As of 2005, students are required to have foreign language proficiency at the 122 level or above, which is equivalent to two semesters of foreign language studies. The new general studies program proposes students must complete a 221 level language course. If the general studies curriculum passes, students must also begin foreign language studies in their first year.

"I think we, as a university, have seen with increased globalization that all of our graduates are going to need to find their role in the world and part of finding their way is learning another language and



Sophomore Paolo De La Feld, senior Victoria Cuza and freshman Kacie Brennell practice their Spanish skills.

understanding other cultures," said Janet Warman, director of general studies.

Education regarding a foreign language translates to a better understanding of culture, according to Warman.

A 2009 survey of faculty indicated 44 of the 60 respondents believe a foreign language curriculum should be strengthened. The survey also showed that 91 percent of those 44 responses

supported an increase in language requirements.

"We have not moved our students to fluency," Warman said, "and some would question if they were even proficient."

The current level required does not adequately reflect the level of proficiency needed for a job or on a daily basis, Windham said.

"Taking the minimum requirement

of 121 or 122 isn't enough to claim a real proficiency," Windham said. "Studies show that it takes through the fourth-semester course to achieve a level of proficiency you can actually use in real-world settings."

Knowledge of one specific language does not make one a better job candidate, according to Windham, but skills pertaining to any language can be applied to professional experience.

"The best language for your resume is substantial skills in any language," he said.

While graduate preparedness factored into the decision to strengthen the foreign language program, Phi Beta Kappa requirements also influenced the increase in Elon's foreign language requirements.

In comparison to other Phi Beta Kappa institutions, Elon falls below average in terms of foreign language requirements. Approximately 60 percent of Phi Beta Kappa institutions have greater foreign language core requirements, including College of William and Mary, Trinity College, University of Richmond and Wake Forest University.

"We are always trying to be inline with schools that we aspire to be like or are like," Warman said.

Doherty scholar wins MIT Elevator Pitch Competition

Mariah Irvin
Reporter

Junior Brian Serow was one of three Doherty Scholars to travel to Seoul, South Korea last month for the MIT Global Startup Workshop, a three-day international entrepreneurial workshop for students and professionals alike.

The second day of the conference was most memorable for Serow. In an Elevator Pitch challenge, where conference attendees had 60 seconds to pitch an idea to a panel of judges in hopes of financial backing, Serow won the grand prize of \$1,500.

After being chosen as a finalist from a group of 47, Serow stood in front of three to 400 people to pitch his idea - an application for smart phones that identifies food ingredients at restaurants, an ideal app for anyone with a food allergy.

With 60 seconds on the clock, Serow finished his pitch in 54, he said.

For about two minutes afterwards, three judges, all notable entrepreneurs,

asked him a few questions.

"They asked me 'Why would restaurants be willing to participate in this?' and 'How does this make money?'" Serow said.

He responded that, as someone with an egg allergy, it is difficult to eat at restaurants because most employees don't specifically know all the ingredients that make up a certain dish.

With his app, Serow said he can guarantee that people like him would eat out more often, which could equal to billions of dollars more for the restaurant industry each year.

Gary Palin, director of the Doherty Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership, praised Serow's performance at the conference.

"Brian's one-minute pitch and answers during the Q&A were outstanding," he said. "The concept is innovative and Brian was focused, confident and poised as he presented in a clear and concise manner."

Palin is a founding member of the

MIT Global Startup Workshop Board of Advisors.

"It allows Elon students to build their global network and interact with over 300 entrepreneurial leaders, executives, next generation entrepreneurs and professors from across the globe," he said.

The conference has been held on six continents and has reached participants from over 70 countries.

Serow has been successful not only as a Doherty Scholar, but as the president of Student Entrepreneurial Enterprise Development (SEED) and in working with the Elon Job Network as well.

He said the center has had a great impact on him. The center trains students to think entrepreneurially through integration within the local and global business community.

"You're in an environment to step up and go at any time," Serow said.

In July, his winning pitch idea will be executed with junior Alex Carberry.

"You'll know what you're actually eating for once," Serow said.



Brian Serow will soon be developing his smart phone app, which identifies food ingredients at restaurants.

Religious studies professor channels Satan in new book

Jeffrey Pugh, a religious studies professor at Elon University, will give the annual Distinguished Scholar Award Lecture at 7 p.m. Thursday, April 14 in LaRose Digital Theatre, where he will read selections from his new book, "Devil's Ink: Blog from the Basement Office." The book catalogs fictional blog posts written by Satan as he critiques and encourages all corners of today's society.

Q: How did the concept for "Devil's Ink" come to be?

A: Essentially, the book is an exercise in teasing out some of the ways that evil becomes embedded within culture and society, in such a way that we not only accept it, but we come to understand it as necessary. We live in a culture that thinks about things individually. We think about everything individually, and we seldom step back and get the broader dynamic of what's actually out there, and we're struggling with it. It's a book of dealing with the problem of evil from a structural, not an individual, viewpoint.

Q: How did you come up with the format of blog posts?

A: The voice of Satan has been

Fast facts about "Devil's Ink"

- Page count: 193
- Number of blog posts: 81
- Satan's username: BLZBB
- Sample blog entry title: "Don't Hate the Playa, Hate the Game"

in human literature since the very beginning. Human beings, in their imaginative world, have always used this literary device to explain, or try to get at, the problem of evil. The human landscape is just filled with writers who have used that voice.

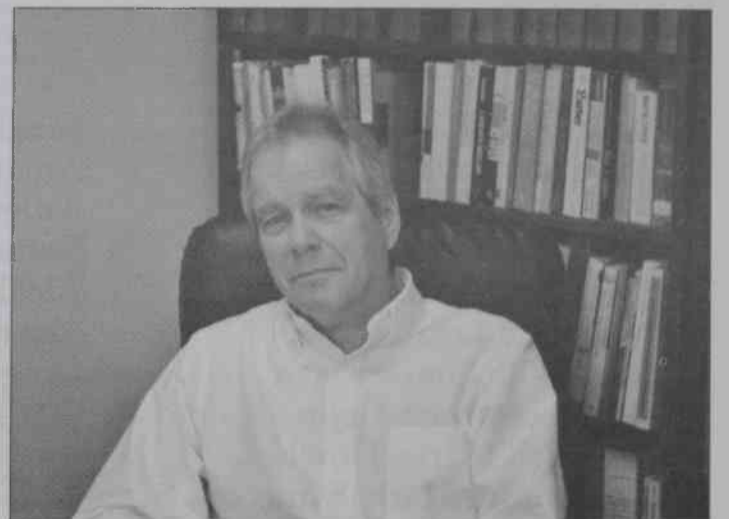
We don't use letters, we hardly even use email anymore. I thought this would be an interesting thing, to take that voice and put it into a blog. There's a different kind of fluidity, there's a different kind of structure than there would be in a book. It's non-linear. That doesn't mean that it's any less profound. It just means that it's non-linear. So I just thought, "Let's try that."

Q: How did you get into the "voice of Satan" mindset when you sat down to write?

A: I just took everything and looked at it from the opposite perspective. How has Satan been portrayed? From Dostoevsky to other writers, how is evil portrayed? And evil is the spirit of negation. It negates everything. Evil would be that which is destructive to human flourishing. Once I had that in mind, the rest is easy. You just write from the point of that which seeks to destroy.

Q: How do you find that the book has been received so far?

A: It's a little early to tell how it's being viewed. You would have to have a pretty good sense of humor. If you're easily offended, you're probably not going to like it. It's an offensive text because Satan is offensive. Sometimes books just get out there and they die, so you just don't know about this one. My expectation is that I would like to engage people in the ideas. I like ideas. I'm a professor because I think ideas are important, and I think ideas are the foundation on which we structure society. In that regard, the expectation that I hope for is that it will strike a nerve with a lot of people, and that they'll be willing to push back.



Jeffrey Pugh's book "Devil's Ink" addresses Satan's response to evil in the world through blogs.

Q: There is a website, devilsinkblog.com, that you are updating periodically, and it is an extension of the book. How do you pick and choose the topics you are going to blog about?

A: In the book, the topics were just things that emerged in my thinking as I was writing. We thought it would be an interesting thing to set the blog up so that people who read the book can interact. The way that things are coming

forth in the blog is that it's more topically related. So, for instance, I've been meaning to get to Terry Jones, the preacher down in Florida who's burning the Koran, and the sort of stuff that's causing. The last entry was about this guy up in Michigan named Rob Bell. In the Evangelical world, he's creating quite the stir with his book, "Love Wins." So I just thought I'd send him a little love.

-Compiled by Rebecca Iannucci, Copy Editor