Hispanic Studies Major Goals

Narrative:
Research in linguistics and psychology consistently demonstrates that learning a second language develops the ability of students to reason abstractly, and therefore improves their capacity to learn in other fields. Research in psychology and education has shown that students who acquire a second language are more successful in interacting with foreign cultures and situations, and have a higher capacity to engage in fields of knowledge previously unknown to them. Several other facts have been clearly demonstrated: that language acquisition is age-sensitive, that languages acquired in non-academic settings develop faster when students receive further academic instruction, that bilingual students acquire additional languages more quickly than monolingual students, and that students of a second language vastly improve their critical reading and writing skills in their first language.

Professionals who have expertise in more than one language are consistently preferred over those who do not in jobs that require international connections. These same language skills play an important role in admission selections for graduate, law and medical schools. Professionals interested in working in education and social work, as well as the medical fields, are often expected to know a language other than English. By the mid-century, it is projected, Hispanics will be the largest ethnic group in the United States.

Hispanic Studies at Brandeis is the Spanish language, and much more. It is Spanish because students improve their language skills in all the courses that they take. And language is the matter of politics, advertisement, media, social communication. A major in Hispanic Studies allows students to wrestle with such questions as: how does artistic production allow a community to examine its origins, identity, and memory? How do literature and the arts in the Hispanic world engage with socio-economic and political history at both a local and a transnational level? How to think across cultures? What do works of the imagination say about the world in which we live that other texts and practices cannot articulate?

Hispanic Studies courses involve literature and film, art and politics, cultures and places from Spain to Latin America and the United States, from the remote past to today. Students engage in the analysis of cultural artifacts and movements as they learn more about language and their own place in the world.

Knowledge:
- an understanding of the diversity and richness of Hispanic cultures in a global context
- competency in literary and cultural history, regarding the Hispanic in conversation with other world traditions
- an appreciation for language as a shaper of identities, cultures, and events
- a recognition of the multiple cultural interfaces between Latin America and the United States, particularly in relation to Latino communities

Core skills:
- an ability to articulate complex ideas in Spanish orally and in writing
- a capacity to enjoy literature and cultural expressions of the Hispanic world
- an ability to comprehend literary, cultural, and theoretical texts, recognizing the various contexts in which they are produced and used
- an ability to do research and analysis in the field of culture
**Social Justice:**

In a global society, if it is to be a socially just one, intercultural understanding is essential. A genuine intercultural exchange requires literacy in various languages and ways of life, thereby increasing the capacity mutually to influence and transform one other. Monolingual education will not be sustainable in an international world of mutual respect. Philosophers, writers, and historians posit that navigating more than one language has been crucial to the survival of communities in exile and under extreme forms of oppression.

**Upon Graduation:**

We train students to be capable of critical intercultural thinking. This prepares them to become professionals able to engage successfully in a complex world. Hispanic Studies majors and minors might continue graduate studies in any field of the Humanities and the Social Sciences; they pursue careers in law and the public sector; they become health professionals and businessmen and women; they do creative work, applying themselves to the arts, to community organization, to media communication.