The Department of Scandinavian Studies at the University of Washington was established in 1909 by a special act of the Washington State Legislature. During its history, the Department has grown from a one-person institution to comprise a teaching staff of twelve full-time faculty in Scandinavian and Baltic Studies. Adjunct faculty whose appointments are in other Departments make their expertise available in a variety of courses with considerable Scandinavian content. Affliate faculty, likewise, occasionally teach and serve as valuable resources to our students. With a total enrollment of approximately 40,000 students at the University of Washington, the Department enrolls 1,600 undergraduates annually in its many courses.

The Scandinavian Department began offering an M.A. program in 1948 and has offered a Ph.D. program since 1967. Graduates from the Department have established careers in business, the professions and education. Graduate seminars are offered in Scandinavian literary genres, medieval literature, mythology, folklore, drama, film, politics, history, Old Icelandic and linguistics. On the undergraduate level, the Department offers majors in Danish, Norwegian, Swedish and Scandinavian Area Studies as well as minors in Baltic Studies, Danish, Norwegian, Finnish, Swedish, and Scandinavian Area Studies.

- Enrollment and Awards
- Department Mission Statement
- Statement on Diversity
- Student Learning Outcomes (SLO)
- Opportunities
- Fiscal Information
- History of the Department
- The University of Washington
- Department Fact Sheet (PDF)
- Department of Scandinavian Studies University-Community Partnership Case Study (PDF, 4 MB)
Department Mission Statement

The Department of Scandinavian Studies seeks to discover, preserve, and transmit fundamental knowledge about the languages, literature, history, politics, and cultures of the Scandinavian/Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden) and the Baltic countries (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania). Focusing on interdisciplinary study in comparative and cross-cultural contexts, language study is the vital core of the Department. Additionally, the Department seeks to provide background training and knowledge of the entire Nordic region to students, scholars, and the broader community.

The Department of Scandinavian Studies seeks to prepare students for productive careers in an increasingly diverse, multi-cultural and global society through a firm dedication to providing excellent undergraduate and graduate education, while facilitating contacts and understanding between Americans and the peoples of the Scandinavian and Baltic countries. As a Department with several disciplines represented, the Department of Scandinavian Studies is a kind of “mini-liberal arts college” that seeks to train future scholars, citizens, and policy makers while also contributing to the establishment of an overall sense of community. In this way, students will be encouraged to learn to think creatively, rationally, and critically, while communicating cogently, correctly, and persuasively.

Statement on Diversity

The Department of Scandinavian Studies at the University of Washington has been premised on diversity since its inception in 1909 when American citizens of Danish, Norwegian and Swedish backgrounds persuaded the Washington State Legislature to establish a Department of Scandinavian Languages and Literature. The Department builds cultural awareness and understanding through research, teaching, service and community outreach. As an integral part of a large university, the Department seeks broad representation of the community in its students, faculty and staff. Our faculty provide scholarly learning opportunities about multiculturalism and diversity. Our students engage curricula and field experiences structured to foster knowledge of others and their cultures. Language is the gateway to interpreting other cultures, histories, politics and literature. Awareness of and respect for
difference is essential to preparing students for citizenship. The Department of Scandinavian Studies views each student as an individual and supports the equal treatment of all those who enroll in our courses and study with us.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLO)

Graduates of the Department of Scandinavian Studies have an advanced level of proficiency in at least one Scandinavian, Finno-Ugric, or Baltic language; they can speak about a wide range of concrete topics in a sustained conversation and they have the ability to interpret and write about literary texts, non-fiction, and other media. Graduates also demonstrate knowledge of major figures, ideas, and institutions in the Baltic and Nordic cultures, history, literature, and politics in a manner that informs a global perspective. They have the ability to research and synthesize source material in the target language and they can produce a scholarly essay in English on a topic within their area of concentration.

An annual exit survey of graduating seniors measures the validity and effectiveness of these student learning outcomes.

Opportunities

Graduates of the Department of Scandinavian Studies have the qualifications to embark on careers that require skills in the interpretation of information from various media, offer critical analysis, engage in effective communication, and to continue in Graduate Programs and Professional Schools that value international, multi-cultural and interdisciplinary perspectives.

Fiscal Information

(fiscal year ending June 30, 2013)

State support and tuition: $982,854
Endowment income: $204,306
Private gifts: $316,623
Endowment value: $7,230,000

History of the Department

Please visit our History page to learn about the evolution of the department since 1909.

The University of Washington

Founded in 1861, the University of Washington is one of the oldest state-supported institutions of higher education on the Pacific Coast and one of the foremost institutions of higher education in the nation, richly combining its research, instructional and public service missions. The primary mission of the University of Washington is the preservation, advancement, and dissemination of knowledge. The University preserves knowledge through its libraries and collections, its courses, and the scholarship of its faculty. It advances new knowledge through many forms of research, inquiry, and discussion; and disseminates it through the classroom, the laboratory, scholarly exchanges, creative practice, international education, and public service.

The UW is located on 703 acres in Seattle's northeast residential area, a beautiful setting on the shore of Lake Washington and Portage Bay. The combination of this spectacular setting with buildings in both neo-Gothic and modern styles give the campus a distinctive character. Instruction and research at the University of Washington are supported by a library system housing more than five million volumes. Its media center, four theaters, concert hall, art gallery and museum provide cultural stimulation and entertainment throughout the year. One of the most beautiful places on campus is the Grieg Garden. Dedicated in 1990, it contains a complex range
of plant diversity, featuring European Birch to commemorate Seattle's connection to its sister city of Bergen, Norway. The centerpiece of Grieg Garden, a bronze bust of Edvard Grieg (1843-1907), was erected in 1917 by the Scandinavian Societies of the Northwest and Alaska. The bust was sculptured by F. H. Frolich and rests on a marble base designed by Carl Gould.

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