



UNC
COLLEGE OF
ARTS & SCIENCES

THE UNIVERSITY
of NORTH CAROLINA
at CHAPEL HILL

DEPARTMENT OF ASIAN STUDIES

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CAMPUS BOX 3267

113 NEW WEST

CHAPEL HILL, NC 27599-3267

T 919.962.4294

F 919.843.7817

www.unc.edu/depts/asia

Dean James Thompson
Office of Undergraduate Curricula
CB 3504

Dear Dean Thompson,

I am writing to request that students who place into Chinese 101 be allowed to take this course for credit even if they have taken two or more years of Chinese in high school.

We have a very rigorous placement test in place to determine the appropriate class for incoming students. In our experience, high school Chinese courses are taught in a wide variety of ways, resulting in very mixed quality. For example, we not infrequently encounter problems with high school Chinese courses that do not teach the reading and writing of Chinese characters. In our Chin 101 curriculum we teach 250 characters, so students that haven't learned characters in high school would be learning Chinese literacy in Chin 101 for the first time. Furthermore, some students arrive with serious deficits in pronouncing tones. Chinese is a tonal language, so this foundation is essential. Such students need to be placed in Chin 101 and are taught the pinyin pronunciation system (a Romanization system that includes tones) for the first time.

Students who are highly motivated to continue their studies in Chinese, but have not been taught in a rigorous high school curriculum, would be discouraged from taking Chin 101 at UNC if they were not allowed to take it for credit. On the other hand, it would compromise our rigorous Chinese curriculum if we were to place the students into a level beyond their skill set. Students have no control over their high school Chinese curricula, and yet the current policy discourages those most interested in the language and culture from continuing to take Chinese in college.

Finally, please note that we already have similar exceptions in place for Hebrew and Japanese, and are seeking to do the same for Chinese. We are requesting that this policy exception be granted through academic year 2020-21, after which we would reassess the situation.

Sincerely,

Nadia Yaqub
Chair, Department of Asian Studies