

Why Pursue a Portuguese and Lusophone World Studies Major/Minor?

Portuguese is the sixth most spoken language in the world today. Portuguese speaking populations are spread throughout Europe, South America, Africa and Asia. With Portugal's established position in the European Union, the growth of Brazil's economy and the emerging markets in Angola and Mozambique, the Lusophone world anticipates a bright future full of opportunities for students who study its language, culture and history. A major/minor in Portuguese and Lusophone World Studies prepares students for careers in business and finance, foreign affairs, international trade, education, medicine, healthcare, and public service. Increasingly, employers seek out students with "cross cultural competence." What better way to develop and showcase this competency than to pursue a major/minor in Portuguese and Lusophone World Studies.

Why Rutgers-Newark? Why Now?

Rutgers-Newark has recently launched an ambitious plan to forge links between the University and the city of Newark. Researching and serving the thriving community of Portuguese and Brazilian immigrants in Rutgers' own backyard is an important part of this plan. Portuguese Studies students have a unique opportunity to enrich their classroom experience by spending time in Newark's Ironbound neighborhood. In addition, the Portuguese Studies Program allows heritage students and adult learners to develop language skills, and learn more about their native culture and history at a distinguished university. This reciprocal relationship between Rutgers and the Portuguese-speaking community of Newark provides an exciting opportunity for students to combine experiential learning with classroom instruction.

Program History

In the early 1990s Professors Asela and Elpidio Laguna-Diaz of the Department of Classical and Modern Languages recognized the urgent need for a Portuguese program, due to the increasing number of Portuguese heritage students attending Rutgers-Newark. With funding and support from the the Portuguese Consulate in Newark, the Instituto Camões, the Foundation for Luso-American Development, and the JP Fernandes Memorial Fund, the Professors Laguna-Diaz started a fledgling program that offered instruction in Portuguese language and literature. They also brought national visibility to the program through the organization of several



academic conferences and lecture series, most notably the visit by José Saramago, the 1998 Nobel Laureate for Literature. In 1999, under the dynamic leadership of NCAS Dean Steven Diner, Rutgers-Newark signed an agreement with the Instituto Camões to jointly enlarge the program in Portuguese Studies. As part of the agreement, the Instituto Camões provided Rutgers with a Professor from Portugal, Dr. António Joel, a scholar of Portuguese Literature, History and Art, who joined Rutgers in September 2000. Rutgers-Newark also hired a scholar of Portuguese literature and culture, Dr. Kimberly DaCosta Holton, who joined NCAS in the fall of 2000. Together these new faculty members have developed a broad curriculum in Portuguese and Lusophone studies, initiated an undergraduate major and minor and organized a program of community outreach. In the time since the Rutgers-Camões agreement to enlarge the program, enrollments have risen thirty percent in courses on Portuguese language and culture.

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