

NORWEGIAN

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Students at St. Olaf have the opportunity to study a unique subject — Norwegian. St. Olaf is one of a few colleges and universities where students can use Norwegian to complete their world language requirement — and beyond the requirement can study in depth the language, literature, culture, and history of Norway. In addition to graduating with a major in Norwegian, St. Olaf students have many opportunities to study and travel in Norway.

The study of Norwegian opens the door to another culture and another way of viewing the world. Students develop skills in communication, research, analytical thinking, and writing that are essential to a liberal education and are useful in a wide range of careers. They learn about Norway's role in technology, environmental awareness, social equality, and international peace initiatives. Some of the world's best literature awaits discovery by students of Norwegian: works by authors like Ibsen, Hamsun, and Undset, as well as by writers who have not been translated into English. Norwegian also enables many students to explore their cultural heritage and encourages contact with relatives and friends in Norway.

Overview of the Major

The Norwegian major is designed for students who wish to gain advanced competency in the Norwegian language along with an understanding of Norwegian society and culture. Following foundational courses in Norwegian language, students undertake coursework in advanced language and in topics relating to culture, history, and literature to engage critically with what makes Norway and its people distinctive.

Intended Learning Outcomes for the Major

Overview of the Sámi and Critical Indigenous Studies Emphasis

The Sámi and Critical Indigenous Studies emphasis is a collaboration between the Norwegian Department, the Nordic Studies program, and the Race and Ethnic Studies program. In addition to courses in these programs, the emphasis includes courses from a variety of other programs to create a space to critically examine indigenous academic knowledge and Nordic colonialism. The emphasis provides an in-depth understanding of the historical experiences, cultural traditions and innovations, and political status of the Sámi and the interconnections among the Sámi and other indigenous peoples worldwide.

St. Olaf College stands on the homelands of the Wahpekute Band of the Dakota Nation. We honor with gratitude the people who have stewarded the land throughout the generations and their ongoing contributions to this region. We acknowledge the ongoing injustices that we have committed against the Dakota Nation, and we wish to interrupt this legacy, beginning with acts of healing and honest storytelling about this place.

The emphasis consists of four total courses: two required foundational courses and two electives. Note that RACE 252 Topical Seminar cannot be used for the Norwegian major.

Distinction

See Academic Honors

Distinction in Norwegian should reflect a special interest in some aspect of Norwegian language and culture. A distinction paper or project may spring out of coursework but must go beyond and must incorporate some public activity, whether that be print publication, website development, oral presentation, or other public performance.

Special Programs

The Norwegian Department sponsors many speakers and activities such as the annual Christmas service and Seventeenth of May celebration and provides students with the opportunity to live in a language house with a native speaker assistant. The Norwegian-American Historical Association, a rich source of information on Norwegian immigration, is housed in Rølvaag Memorial Library. Many students choose to study in Norway on a variety of programs such as the Oslo International Summer School and the St. Olaf-sponsored programs in Norway. Norwegian professors also participate in the Language Across the Curriculum (LAC) program, collaborating with disciplinary professors to offer students the opportunity to use their world language skills in selected courses in other departments.

Requirements

Requirements for the Major

Code	Title	Credits
Foundational courses		5.0
NORW 111	Beginning Norwegian I	
NORW 112	Beginning Norwegian II	
NORW 231	Intermediate Norwegian I	
NORW 232	Intermediate Norwegian II	
NORW 253	Social Debates in Historical Context	
Advanced Courses (in Norwegian):		
Select one (1) option:		1.50-2
Option Æ: two (2) 370-level courses taught in Norwegian:		
NORW 371	Norwegian Literature: An Overview	
NORW 372	Topics in Norwegian Literature/Culture	
NORW 373	Topics in Norwegian Literature/Culture	
Option Å: one (1) level II or 370-level course partially in Norwegian (must total at least 0.50 credit) and one (1) level III course entirely in Norwegian		
Level II courses partially or entirely in Norwegian:		
NORST 277 Islamic Communities in Scandinavia (LAC .25 credit)		

NORW 205	Nature in Nordic Literature and Culture (Taught in English) (LAC .25 credit)
NORW 244	The Sámi: Traditions in Transition (Taught in English) (LAC .25 credit)
NORW 294	Academic Internship (.25 or .50 credit)
NORW 296	Oslo, Norway Internship Reflection Seminar
Study Away/Study Abroad courses: grammar course, Nynorsk course (ISS)	

370-level courses entirely in Norwegian:

NORW 371	Norwegian Literature: An Overview
NORW 372	Topics in Norwegian Literature/ Culture
NORW 373	Topics in Norwegian Literature/ Culture

Cultural and Historical Perspectives (in English):

Select one (1) course that critically examines questions of Nordic diversity, inequity, and social justice: **1.00**

ENVST 283	Topics in Environmental Studies (Arctic Journeys: Literature of the North)
LNGST 301	Germanic Multiethnolects-A Story of Birth
NORST 100	Nordic Values: From Origins to Obstacles
NORST 264	Nordic Explorations of Sexualities and Genders
NORST 277	Islamic Communities in Scandinavia
NORW 224	Topics in Contemporary Nordic Lit: Window on Society (Taught in English)
NORW 244	The Sámi: Traditions in Transition (Taught in English)
PSYCH 232	Gender Equality in Norway (study abroad)

Select one (1) additional humanities course: **1.00**

HIST 188	Topical Seminar (when topic is related to Scandinavia/Arctic Passages)
HIST 211	Vikings: Past and Present
HIST 222	Modern Scandinavia
HIST 225	The Journey North: Migrations To, From, & Within Norway (study abroad)
HIST 271	In their own words: Literature by Immigrants in Minnesota
NORW 180	The Nordic Child in Literature and Film
NORW 240	Vikings Past and Present
NORW 244	The Sámi: Traditions in Transition (Taught in English)

NORW 260	Introduction to Germanic Linguistics (Taught in English)
NORW 282	The Drama of Henrik Ibsen (Taught in English)
PHIL 266	Kierkegaard in Copenhagen (study abroad)

Select one (1) additional Norwegian or Nordic Studies course from courses listed above; students may also select from the following: **1.00**

LNGST 301	Germanic Multiethnolects-A Story of Birth
NORST 264	Nordic Explorations of Sexualities and Genders
NORST 277	Islamic Communities in Scandinavia
NORST 280	Nordic Film Directors
NORST 396	Directed Undergraduate Research
NORW 280	Nordic Mythology and Christianization (Taught in English)

One course may be taken S/U.

A maximum of three courses may count from study in Norway.

Total Credits **9.5-10**

Please note: Students completing both the Norwegian and the Nordic Studies Major must have at least 15 total courses. In the case of a student who tests out of the foundational courses, 11 courses are required.

**By completing this major, the student also satisfies the OLE Core Writing in the Major requirement.*

Requirements for the Sámi and Critical Indigenous Studies emphasis

The emphasis consists of four total courses: two required foundational courses and two electives. Note that RACE 252 cannot be used for the Norwegian major.

Code	Title	Credits
Foundational courses		
NORW 244	The Sámi: Traditions in Transition	1.00
RACE 252	Topical Seminar (Theories of Race, Ethnicity, and Indigeneity)	1.00
Elective courses (minimum of two)		2.00
To count towards the emphasis, students must have a project/paper connected to Norwegian/Nordic colonialism.		
ENVST 283	Topics in Environmental Studies (Arctic Journeys: Literature of the North)	
NORW 205	Nature in Nordic Literature and Culture	
NORW 372	Topics in Norwegian Literature/ Culture (taught in Norwegian; counts if topic is relevant)	

MUSIC 141	Introduction to Musicology
MUSIC 245	Music and Social Justice
MUSIC 237	Local and Global Musicking
SOAN 233	A Sociology of Colonialism and Postcolonialism
Study abroad courses from DIS-Copenhagen; Postcolonial Europe: Narrative, Nationalism, and Race; and Arctic Geopolitics	
Total Credits	

4

Courses

Language Courses

NORW 111: *Beginning Norwegian I*

Proficiency in a second language opens the door to another culture and another way of viewing the world. This course starts students on the road to achieving such a proficiency. Students begin learning to speak, understand, read, and write Norwegian and learn about Norwegian culture through the language. Offered annually in the fall semester.

NORW 112: *Beginning Norwegian II*

Students continue developing proficiency in spoken and written Norwegian, increasing their vocabulary, improving grammatical accuracy, and gaining experience reading and listening to authentic materials. Offered annually during January term and spring semester.

Prerequisite: NORW 111 or by placement test.

NORW 231: *Intermediate Norwegian I*

Students improve proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, with an emphasis on communication as well as improved grammatical accuracy. Reading and discussion of authentic literary and cultural texts allow students to expand their vocabulary and knowledge of the Norwegian way of life. Offered each semester.

Prerequisite: NORW 112 or by placement test.

NORW 232: *Intermediate Norwegian II*

This course is a continuation of the approach of NORW 231, in which authentic cultural and literary texts provide the basis for writing and discussion on topics such as health, work, Norwegian history, society, politics, environmental issues, and minorities in Norway. Materials include a contemporary novel. Offered annually in the spring semester.

Prerequisite: NORW 231 or by placement test.

NORW 253: *Social Debates in Historical Context*

In this course students work to develop competence in Norwegian culture, history and society through a survey of the state and politics and the Norwegian population. Through these topics, students learn about important moments in Norwegian history. They explore some of the most important debates that are taking place in Norway now, and learn to formulate themselves in several oral and written contexts, including informative presentations and discussion and argumentative texts.

Prerequisite: NORW 232 or by placement test.

NORW 371: *Norwegian Literature: An Overview*

This course is a historical survey of Norwegian literary and cultural history from the medieval period to contemporary times. Students read a selection of short texts and a play by Henrik Ibsen. They gain knowledge of the most important periods of Norwegian literature and develop skills of close reading and critical reflection. The course emphasizes the understanding of individual texts in the light of their historical period, while also addressing how Norwegian literature has been used in modern constructions of cultural identity and how it has influenced and reflected larger societal developments. Taught in Norwegian.

Prerequisite: NORW 253 or equivalent.

NORW 372: *Topics in Norwegian Literature/Culture*

This course offers an in-depth investigation of a selected topic from Norwegian literary or cultural history. Topics may be organized by period (Realism, Postwar literature), historical events (literature and World War II), important themes (feminism, social democracy, religion and secularism), or genre (Norwegian poetry, literature and film). The course also emphasizes development of critical, interpretive, and research skills, as well as refinement of Norwegian language proficiency. This course is taught in Norwegian. Offered annually.

Prerequisite: NORW 253 or equivalent.

NORW 373: *Topics in Norwegian Literature/Culture*

This course offers an in-depth investigation of a selected topic from Norwegian literary or cultural history. Topics may be organized by period (Realism, Postwar literature), historical events (literature and World War II), important themes (feminism, social democracy, religion and secularism), or genre (Norwegian poetry, literature and film). The course also emphasizes development of critical, interpretive, and research skills, as well as refinement of Norwegian language proficiency. This course is taught in Norwegian. Offered annually.

Prerequisite: NORW 253 or equivalent.

Nordic Literature and Culture (Taught in English)

NORW 205: *Nature in Nordic Literature and Culture (Taught in English)*

This course examines the representation of nature from creation narratives of Norse myth, 19th century nation-building, and up to present concerns about climate change and environmental destruction in the Nordic region. Students examine central works and contested notions of nature. Alongside these, they will be introduced to ecocriticism as a method of textual analysis. This provides an entryway into the environmental humanities, and an opportunity to explore what makes Nordic literature and culture unique. Offered periodically.

NORW 224: *Topics in Contemp Nordic Lit: Window on Society (Taught in English)*

Recently there has been an explosion in Nordic literature translated into English, providing unprecedented access to contemporary literary texts produced in Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, and Iceland. In this course students read and analyze contemporary Nordic literary texts and examine those societies through a literary perspective. Sample topics: "Murder Nordic Style: Contemporary Crime Fiction" and "Gender and Nordic Society." Taught in English. Offered periodically.

Prerequisite: WRIT 120 or equivalent.

NORW 244: The Sámi: Traditions in Transition (Taught in English)

This interdisciplinary course explores the Sámi, an Indigenous people living mainly in the northern parts of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia. Students first place the Sámi in a historical-cultural context by examining the Sámi's social and economic systems, religion, customs, and values. The major portion of the course examines the Sámi primarily from within: the Sámi will present themselves through their literature, film, music, and art. Taught in English. Offered periodically.

NORW 260: Introduction to Germanic Linguistics (Taught in English)

This course explores linguistic and social processes that underlie language change with a focus on the Germanic language family. Students learn the fundamental methods of comparative historical linguistics to analyze the development of modern Germanic languages (e.g., English, German, Norwegian, etc.) from a common ancestor. These processes concern how language operates as a cognitive system, as well as core social factors that impact language practices. Students also learn to critically engage with linguistic scholarship and develop their research and writing skills through a project on a topic of their choosing. Offered periodically.

Prerequisites: LNGST 250 or NORW 231 or GERM 231 or permission of the instructor.

NORW 280: Nordic Mythology and Christianization (Taught in English)

This course introduces students to the religious situation of Viking and Medieval Scandinavia before and after the advent of Christianity. Through exploring Norse mythology, Nordic Christianization, and Nordic memory of the pagan past, students examine the relationship between religion (both structure and belief) and the everyday lifeworld of a people. Offered annually.

NORW 282: The Drama of Henrik Ibsen (Taught in English)

Students analyze the plays of Henrik Ibsen in English translation using a variety of critical approaches. Students investigate ethical issues and themes in Ibsen's plays by examining the plays through the lens of ethics, using readings in ethical theory to better understand both the ethical issues and the plays themselves. Students also study Ibsen's dramatic technique and the historical and literary context of his work. Taught in English. Offered annually.

NORW 294: Academic Internship**NORW 296: Oslo, Norway Internship Reflection Seminar**

This seminar integrates the experience of work and the search for career in the context of Norway. Course content includes both an internship in Oslo and a reflection seminar. The reflection seminar connects academic theories/analyses of work and Norwegian culture with the internship experience. Through reading, writing, and discussion, this course provides a space in which to reflect on the challenges, hopes, and fears facing students embarking on their post graduation careers. Offered alternate years during January term.

Prerequisite: completion of the World Languages and Cultures requirement in Norwegian.

NORW 298: Independent Study**NORW 394: Academic Internship****NORW 396: Directed Undergraduate Research**

This course provides a comprehensive research opportunity, including an introduction to relevant background material, technical instruction, identification of a meaningful project, and data collection. The topic is determined by the faculty member in charge of the course and may relate to their research interests. Offered based on department decision. May be offered as a 1.00 credit course or .50 credit course.

Prerequisite: determined by individual instructor.

NORW 398: Independent Research**NORW 399: Seminar**

May be repeated if topics are different.

Related Course

HIST 211: Vikings: Past and Present

This course begins by offering a historical survey of the Viking expansion with a particular emphasis on primary written sources, including Eddaic poetry, Sagas of Icelanders and King's sagas (including material on St. Olaf). The second half conversely is focused on contemporary accounts (including literature, comic books and films), both Nordic and English/American, that rework this historical heritage in the present day. Offered annually.

Plan of Study

Norwegian Major - Plan of Study

This is a sample plan that meets the prescribed requirements for the Norwegian major at St. Olaf. This tool is meant as a guide and does not replace working closely with the student's academic advisor.

Students can major in Norwegian whether they start at the beginner level (NORW 111) or have prior experience in the language.

All students with prior experience in Norwegian must complete the **placement exam** in early Summer before their first year.

Course	Title	Credits
First Year		
Fall Semester		
FYS 120 or WRIT 120	First-Year Seminar (or Conversation Program) or Writing and Rhetoric	1.00
HIST 188	Topical Seminar	1.00
NORW 111	Beginning Norwegian I	1.00
Credits		3
January Term		
NORW 112	Beginning Norwegian II (fast track option)	1.00
Credits		1
Spring Semester		
WRIT 120 or FYS 120	Writing and Rhetoric (or Conversation Program) or First-Year Seminar	1.00
NORW 112	Beginning Norwegian II (NORW 231 if fast track option)	1.00
Credits		2
Sophomore Year		
Fall Semester		
NORW 231	Intermediate Norwegian I	1.00
Credits		1
Spring Semester		
NORW 232	Intermediate Norwegian II	1.00
Credits		1
Junior Year		
Fall Semester		
NORW 253	Social Debates in Historical Context	1.00
Credits		1
January Term		
HIST 225	The Journey North: Migrations To, From, & Within Norway (study abroad)	1.00
Credits		1

Spring Semester

NORW 371 or NORW 372 or NORW 373	Norwegian Literature: An Overview or Topics in Norwegian Literature/Culture or Topics in Norwegian Literature/Culture	1.00
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Credits **1**

Senior Year**Fall Semester**

NORW 244 or NORST 264 or NORW 205	The Sámi: Traditions in Transition (Taught in English) or Nordic Explorations of Sexualities and Genders or Nature in Nordic Literature and Culture (Taught in English)	1.00
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NORW LAC 244, NORW LAC 264, OR NORW LAC 205 ¹ 0.25

Credits **1.25**

Spring Semester

NORW 372 or NORW 371 or NORW 373	Topics in Norwegian Literature/Culture or Norwegian Literature: An Overview or Topics in Norwegian Literature/Culture	1.00
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Credits **1**

Total Credits **13.25**

1

Only one of the listed LAC courses (0.25 credit) will be offered per semester periodically

Also recommended:

- Summer between Sophomore and Junior Years: NAHA Summer Internship
- Summer between Junior and Senior Years: Oslo International Summer School

Students must successfully complete the equivalent of 35 St. Olaf credits through a combination of full-credit and fractional-credit courses to earn the Bachelor of Arts.

Visit the Norwegian department webpage or the planning worksheet for more information.

Faculty

Department Chair, 2025-2026

Kari Lie Dorer

Professor of Norwegian and Race, Ethnic, Gender and Sexuality Studies, King Olav V Chair of Scandinavian-American Studies
Norwegian language and culture; applied linguistics; Sami studies; Nordic film

Jenna M. Coughlin (on sabbatical 2025-26)

Associate Professor of Norwegian
Norwegian language and culture; Nordic literature and media; ecocriticism; gender studies

Thea Lund

Visiting Instructor of Norwegian

Andrew (Andy) Meyer

Visiting Assistant Professor of Norwegian

Caitlin Sackrison

Visiting Assistant Professor of Norwegian

Tanya Thresher

Associate Professor of Norwegian
Norwegian language and culture; gender studies, Nordic theater and film, Ibsen, Nordic multiculturalism