

STARTALK FAQ's

What languages will be taught in UNM's STARTALK program in the summer of 2010?

Arabic and Chinese

What are the dates of the program?

June 7 - July 2, 2010

Where will the programs take place?

On the UNM main campus.

Do I need to have any previous knowledge of Chinese or Arabic?

No, the programs are for students with no prior knowledge. We expect to have some heritage speakers (students from homes where they have heard Arabic or Chinese) in the class who will help their peers with oral practice. There will be additional opportunities for heritage speakers to improve their language skills.

What is the daily schedule for the programs?

Classes will meet from 9:20 to 12:30 MTWRF for four weeks. The daily three hours will be split into 50 minute sessions most mornings. Learning activities will focus on communication in the target language. There will be weekly quizzes and a final cultural project that students will write in English.

Two afternoons a week there will be field trips to various community cultural resources and centers.

Who is eligible to participate in the programs?

Current high school students and 2010 high school graduates who are eligible for UNM's dual credit program, through which they receive concurrent high school and 3 hours of UNM credit, equivalent to taking Arabic or Chinese 101. Both of these courses satisfy UNM core requirements in the foreign language area.

May recent high school graduates/incoming college freshmen apply?

Yes, they may apply.

What are the requirements for the dual credit program at UNM?

- a minimum of a 3.0 (on a 4.0 scale) OR a B average OR a ranking in the top 25% of their class OR an ACT composite score of 23 or SAT total score of 1060;
- 16 years of age or older as of June, 2010; applicants under the age of 16 need to send an extra (3rd) letter of recommendation;
- TWO recommendations: one from a current language teacher PLUS one from an additional teacher, counselor or principal;
- for further information, see pp. 18-19 of the current (2008-09) UNM Catalog, available online at <http://registrar.unm.edu/catalog.htm>

Are there any costs to you if you are accepted?

No. The STARTALK grant covers three hours of UNM tuition, pays for necessary textbooks and course materials, and the cost of the bi-weekly field trips. Students accepted into the program will also receive a modest stipend for their attendance.

What if I can't attend all four weeks?

Preference will be given to students who commit to the entire four-week period. Students with a legitimate reason to miss 1-2 days during the period will be considered.

Please see the next two pages for more information on the study of Arabic and Chinese.

Why study Arabic?

The United Nations adopted **Arabic** as one of its six official languages in 1974. In addition to the Palestinians, the governments of nineteen countries list Arabic as their dominant mode of expression. Arabic is also an important language in many other countries of the world. Events in the Middle East affect our daily lives, and only through the study of Arabic can one gain necessary insights into the cultural, religious, and political forces which motivate the inhabitants of that vital region--insights that our monolingual media seldom provide.

The Middle East is also the birthplace of civilization and the cradle of the three monotheistic religions. It contains also, some of the world's greatest archeological and religious sites. It is the locus of two thirds of the world's known oil reserves. Moreover, Arabic is rich with interesting cultures and warm, hospitable people. A good knowledge of Arabic will greatly enhance the enjoyment of your travels there and your ability to work and interact effectively with Arabic speaking people.

The diligent study of Arabic can lead to exciting careers in various fields. The following are only a few of the many positions open to the Arabic speaker. *Communications* : foreign correspondent, reporter, translator. *International finance* : international banker, international consultant, political risk analyst. *Industry* : manager of government relations for oil companies, market analyst for export companies. *Government* : foreign service officer, development program officer, intelligence analyst, government relations specialist, translator or interpreter. *Law*: contractual and corporative consultant. *Academia* : teaching and research positions; the U.S. government currently considers Arabic a critical language and many scholarships are available.

From the website of The American Association of Teachers of Arabic

Why study Chinese?

Chinese is mentally stimulating, interesting and fun! Chinese words are artistically formed by a combination of meanings: e.g. “crisis” is “danger+opportunity.” If you know 1000 commonly used characters, you will recognize 90% of the characters in Chinese newspapers.

Chinese has a relatively uncomplicated grammar. Unlike French, German or English, Chinese has no verb conjugation or noun declension. For example, while you have to memorize different verb forms of “see/saw/seen” in English, all you need to do in Chinese is remember the one word: “kan.”

As the most enduring of world civilizations, with its 5000 year old history, China has a major international cultural presence in literature and cuisine, music and film, dance and art, religion and philosophy, drawing as it does on its tremendous heritage to enrich our present. Knowing Chinese provides a great base from which to learn other Asian languages, literatures and history. Taking Chinese can actually improve your mental power by helping you arrange your thoughts into alternative patterns and organizational models.

China’s recent rise presents new economic, political and social realities that demand greater U.S. engagement at every level. As the foundation of that engagement, we urgently need to increase the number of American who can demonstrate a functional proficiency in Chinese.

Chinese is the #1 spoken language in the world! An official language of the United Nations, Chinese is the most widely spoken first language in the world. China is the most populous nation in the world, with 1.28 billion people, so that about one fifth of the global population is Chinese. More people speak Chinese than English. In addition to the People’s Republic of China and Taiwan, Mandarin Chinese is also widely spoken in Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, the Philippines, and Mongolia.

Chinese is important for your career! The demand for business people who know Mandarin Chinese is skyrocketing! China has the 2nd largest economy in the world and is one of America’s largest trading partners. China’s tremendous economic growth creates new opportunities and challenges for US businesses. China’s political importance in the Asia-Pacific region is broadly acknowledged and, particularly since 9/11, its help has been sought on difficult issues like North Korea and terrorism. Collaboration with China is increasingly deemed essential for solving a range of global issues, from nuclear proliferation to the environment, from currency exchange to trade laws. Finally, in the U.S. the Asian and Pacific Islander population is projected to grow 213% in the next 50 years, to 33.4 million. Knowing Chinese may give you an edge in any of these areas!