

Allison Spenader



Where did you obtain your degrees and what was your area of focus for each degree?

I hold a B.A. in Scandinavian Studies from the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana, and an M.A. in Teaching English as an International Language from the same institution. I also have a Ph.D. in Second Languages and Cultures Education (Curriculum and Instruction) from the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities.

Briefly describe your professional background and experiences with the Concordia Language Villages (if applicable).

I taught English as a Second Language at the University of Illinois, and frequently in the U-46 Elgin school district in Illinois. I was a volunteer ESL teacher at St. Louis Park Junior High for 3 months while completing my K-12 Minnesota ESL teaching license. I also taught English to teens and adults in Krakow, Poland from 1999-2000. I've been a Swedish language teacher at the University of Minnesota, as well as the American Swedish Institute.

What kind of research or other scholarly work do you do? What kinds of topics interest you most?

My research interests lie in 2 distinct areas: content-based instruction, and intercultural learning in study abroad. Teaching the CBI course in the Master's program has led to studies into the nature of CBI curricula in traditional world language classrooms, and more recently to a study of CBI as a vehicle for teaching social justice issues. I am honored to work with esteemed colleagues Dr. Cassandra Glynn and Dr. Pamela Wesely from the Language Villages and the Master's program on these research initiatives. My other strand of research focuses on the value of study abroad in terms of language learning and intercultural development.

What do you do in the M.Ed. program and what do you like most about working with our graduate students?

I teach the Content Based Instruction course AMLA 622 which occurs in the second year of the program. This course is a wonderful opportunity for language teachers to develop new curriculum that teaches language and content concurrently in a way that makes sense for their teaching context. It's such a joy to get to work with creative and dedicated teachers in the Master's program, and to help them take their teaching in new and different directions. I am passionate about creating language classrooms that are meaningful and inspiring, and I love seeing the way teachers in our program utilize their knowledge and experience to create new units for their classrooms. Because I've been a teacher of Less Commonly Taught Languages, I'm used to thinking outside the box and creating my own units of study. My experience in community education settings can be a valuable asset to other teachers who might be working in non-traditional teaching formats.

Is there anything else that you want students to know about you?

I love learning languages and traveling. When I'm not at Concordia, I work as an Associate Professor of ESL and World Languages Pedagogy at the College of St. Benedict and St. John's University in Collegeville, MN. I've led semester-long study abroad programs for St. Ben's/St. John's in Australia and the U.K., as well as a summer program in Sweden and Denmark. I keep my Swedish skills alive by singing with The Cloudberries, a women's choir that sings in Swedish in Minneapolis.