

“A New Course: France, The French and Wine Economics”

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This presentation summarizes our experience teaching a unique interdisciplinary course that combines the study of France and French society and culture with wine economics. After a recent curriculum revision, most general studies courses at our institution, the world’s only four-year liberal arts university for deaf and hard of hearing students, must be taught by two professors from two unique disciplines. To contribute to this effort, we developed this course as a sophomore level offering to address the expressed goal of exposing students to the methods used in each of the two disciplines of the cooperating professors, which, in our case, was the study of French society and of economics. Wine was the catalyst that linked these pedagogies and added to student interest and motivation.

The challenge of this course was to smoothly integrate the three areas of knowledge that we wanted every student to acquire:

- an understanding of French culture (outlook on life, solidarity values, food and drink), institutions (government, education), history and geography;
- a basic knowledge of various economic concepts such as supply and demand, pricing, national income, production, resource use, opportunity costs, comparative advantage, exchange rates and international trade; and
- an appreciation of the various types of wine and grapes, how wine is made, the role of soil and climate, and the laws and rules governing wine quality.

In teaching the course, we found that our combined lecture components would fall into one of three interdisciplinary categories: the French and wine, the economics of France, and wine economics. In doing so, wine became a component of much of what we taught. Since each of us was present in the classroom full-time, we could each jump in with insights into each other’s discipline when the opportunity arose. Occasionally, the holy grail of this interdisciplinary course was achieved—that is, we could lecture on French + wine + economics combined.