

# PeerSpectives

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VOLUME 1, ISSUE 22

SPRING 2017

UWL Academic  
Advising Center



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### **Come & Visit...**

**Monday - Friday**

**8:00 am - 4:30 pm**

**\*(608) 785-6950\***

**\*<https://www.uwlax.edu/academic-advising-center/>\***

## Ethnic and Racial Studies Minor

By: **Sara Vesel**  
Peer Advisor

UWL offers an abundance of different minors to complement the plethora of majors on campus. One of these minors is Ethnic and Racial Studies (ERS). In order to learn more about this minor, I interviewed Dr. Elegbede, a Senior Lecturer of Ethnic and Racial Studies to talk about the minor, what it consists of, and its practical implications.

The ERS minor consists of six classes and eighteen credits. It is a value-added minor that gives students great academic and life implications for everyday situations. Dr. Elegbede stated, "Since the world is not a homogenous society, the skill set students gain within the ERS minor helps them to better en-

gage with their community. It also prepares students with any major in any particular field to work with coworkers or clients of different backgrounds."

The ERS minor consists of four core courses including Introduction to Ethnic and Racial Studies (ERS 100), Introduction to Ethnic and Racial Stereotypes in the Media (ERS 220), Ethnic and Racial Relations (ERS 351), and an Ethnic and Racial Studies Seminar (ERS 490). According to Dr. Elegbede, "We designed the classes to be streamlined, so students take them in a particular order. ERS 100 is the background work. ERS 220 gives you a skill set to apply what you learned in ERS 100 using the media as a lens. ERS 351 is very theory driven, and ERS 490 is

where we pull it all together. Students ideally complete the two electives before ERS 490 as all of the prior classes contribute to the kind of project you would complete in 490." The electives continue to expand as the department offers classes or as other departments begin to offer courses, but a few of the options currently include THA 130, ANT 343, ENG 210, POL 342, and much more.

As some schools have African American Studies or American Indian Studies, this minor is unique in that it is not specific to any one racial or ethnic group. Dr. Elegbede stated, "None of us operate in isolation, so we try to encompass this in our program."

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## About the Author: Sara Vesel

**Major:** International Business with a Finance Concentration

**Minor:** Spanish

**Favorite Song:** Stay - Zedd ft. Alessia Cara

**Favorite part about working in the AAC:** I love the ability to work with students and see their passions unfold as they explore different careers and majors.



## ETHNIC AND RACIAL STUDIES MINOR

Elegbede agrees that students with ERS minors end up in a variety of different occupations. There is no specific major or occupation that encompasses the lessons learned in ERS classes. Rather, the implications can be used in any and every major and occupation. Many people start by taking ERS 100 as a general education credit and then are able to see the value and real life application through that course.

Although the ERS minor does not have programming events or organizations tied to the specific department, the faculty of the department

are actively engaged in organizations and groups on campus that put on different events throughout the year. For example, Dr. Elegbede is a part of an anti-islamophobia working group that tries to bring in a speaker at least once a semester.

After completing the ERS minor, a student walks away with a better understanding of the way our society works and operates. Finally, when asked why a student should select an ERS minor, Dr. Elegbede said, “Understanding people different from ourselves is also about understanding

ourselves, and that is who we are as a nation.”

If you would like to learn more about the ERS minor, stop by the ERS department office in 224 Wimberly Hall or check out <https://www.uwlax.edu/ethnic-and-racial-studies/>

**Dr. Elegbede**  
Senior Lecturer



## The New Student Union

By: **Katie Eisenhauer**  
Peer Advisor

Have you visited the U yet? The New Student Union, commonly known as the “U”, had its official grand opening as the newest addition to the UWL campus on January 23, 2017. The project budget for the 204,787-gross square foot Union was \$55 million. The primary purpose of the U is to function as “the living room of the college campus for students,

faculty, and staff,” says Dr. Larry Ringgenberg, director of University Centers at UWL. The U is in the center of campus, a place where students can have informal interactions with faculty and staff. Additionally, the facility provides a number of resources to its students, including study spaces; a recreation area with pool tables and darts; a movie theater; a larger bookstore and textbook rental space; a UW-Credit Union; and much more.

The overall theme of the U is to bring the outdoors in and create a unique space that reflects the interests and needs of the UWL

community. According to Dr. Ringgenberg, before the planning process even began, architects Melissa Rudolph and Scott Kindness spent a lot of time wandering the campus and talking to students and faculty about what they love about the campus and the greater La Crosse community. They quickly found a common theme in the campus responses, that “people like La Crosse because of the outdoor opportunities and how beautiful it is”. Students, faculty, and staff alike all enjoy hiking the bluffs, exploring the marsh, and walking alongside the river.

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## THE NEW STUDENT UNION



### “Go visit the U!”

The architects wanted to incorporate what UWL values in the new building, so they decided to use the natural features of the La Crosse area to guide the design of the building. According to Dr. Ringgenberg, the front of the building was fashioned to resemble Grandad Bluff and as you enter in the main doors, you’re able to see tall brown pillars designed to look like trees with small green lights hanging around them as the “leaves” of the trees. There are three distinct paths on the main floor of the building, symbolizing the three rivers that

meet in La Crosse, including the La Crosse River, the Black River, and the Mississippi River. The Eagles Nest lounge on the second floor has a window constructed to represent an eagles’ nest, with the “branches” or frames of glass going every which way. The building is full of subtle designs and features that create a space in which the architects could bring the natural components of the La Crosse area into the architecture.

Dr. Ringgenberg believed that involving students in the planning process was essential and stated that “people don’t always realize how important students’ voices were in the whole process” and that “we have nice areas in the building, but none of these areas work effectively unless they’re being used and used by students frequently.” To incorporate students’ input, the planning committee took students to various college campuses in the state to look at different student unions and find what they liked or didn’t like about them. By taking the time to talk with students, it allowed for the U to truly

be a building for the students of UWL.

What is Dr. Ringgenberg’s favorite part of the U? He said, “When I see students using the space, that becomes my favorite area”. Additionally, he envisions that once spring is in full swing, students will enjoy the balconies on the third floor, with beautiful views of campus and the surrounding La Crosse area, as well as the brand-new fire pit in front of the building.

Want to learn more about the U? Stop by today to explore or visit <https://www.uwlax.edu/university-centers/> to learn more about the history, architecture, and facilities in this beautiful new building!



## American Sign Language

By: **Rachel Novakovic**  
Peer Advisor

What is American Sign Language and who uses it? American Sign Language (ASL) is a complex visual language that involves handshapes, facial expressions, and body positions to communicate. This language is mostly used by the Deaf community in the United States and in English speaking parts of Canada. You may have seen ASL being used at public events, in classrooms, on television, or in your own community through friends or family. If you haven’t seen or heard of ASL before, then do some re-

search and YouTube “American Sign Language.”

Now that you are interested, would you like to learn more about this fascinating language? Well you are in luck, because you can take ASL classes at UWL! You may be thinking, how did I not know about this, it’s not under the language portion of classes to take? Well it’s not, it is under SPE, special education, and to clarify, no you do not have to be an education major or minor to take this class. I know from experience because I have taken two ASL classes and am not an education major or minor.

To take your curiosity even further, I can give you the inside scoop about what class is like. So hypothetically, let’s say you are signed up for SPE 207, Teaching and Learning about Deafness and Communication I, you would learn ASL vocabulary and etiquette, about Deaf culture as well as challenge yourself to sign with other individuals in your class. You also have fun projects thrown in



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like reviewing movies that talk about Deaf culture, wearing ear plugs for half a day to get a different perspective, and as a final, signing a song!

In SPE 214, Teaching and Learning about Deafness and Communication II, you learn even more about Deaf culture, how to have complex conversations, understand how to conceptually think about ASL, and even more interesting projects like signing a weather report, and a restaurant experience where you can't talk, only sign. This may seem pretty intimidating at first, but the class prepares you for those bigger projects and experiences.

Don't just take my word for it; my classmates were happy to share their thoughts. One classmate said "It

was such an eye opening experience, and brought awareness to things we take for granted." Another student went on to add "the small group atmosphere is very positive, warm, and inclusive." The class as a whole agreed that even though ASL may be challenging at times, it is worth it in the end and the information we learn in the class has real world application.

Our professor Colleen Cudo, who is an actual certified ASL interpreter, makes the class fun and interesting. She says, "Sign language can be tough, but it is a lot of fun, and once you get into it, you realize... there is a whole other world out there... a world that will open your eyes." Cudo went on to say that the Deaf community "[doesn't] get recognized in a lot of

things and they get ignored for information, or pushed away ... which leaves them very isolated." When asked how can students become more involved in the Deaf community she responded with "awareness of the disability and the willingness" to reach out and try to communicate.

ASL is something you can use to increase your awareness of the Deaf community and further your understanding of human differences. This class has been very eye opening for me, and I believe that other students should have the same experience. So next time you sign up for classes, keep SPE 207 in mind.

## The Easy Houseplant: Succulents



Do you want to brighten up your room or breathe in some fresh air? Having potted plants in your living space will not only make it more appealing but purify the air by absorbing pollutants and converting CO<sub>2</sub> into breathable oxygen. You might be thinking, I don't have the space for a plant or I would always forget to water it. We have all had those thoughts, and selecting the right type of plant can help you overcome your worries. What am I suggesting? Succulents.

Succulents are plants that come in a wide variety and can fit in many spaces. They are plants that store water in their leaves which makes them able to go long periods of time without being re-watered. Although they do prefer warm temperatures, they can live anywhere as long as it is not freezing. You

can buy potted succulents at greenhouses, Walmart, Home Depot, occasionally the market, and even online.

If you want to go one step further, you could plant the succulent yourself. First you will need the succulent, a container, soil (preferably one that is more rocky or sandy to help with water drainage), and a positive attitude. Second, you will fill the new container almost to the top with your soil (about 2/3 full). Next, take your succulent out of the planter you bought it in, and remove the dirt around the roots. After you have done that, place the plant into its new container, the one you previously filled with dirt. Once placed in the new container, cover the roots with more soil until it is level with the rim. Success, you have just planted your new plant!

Wait a few days before you first water it to give the plant time to adjust. Depending on the type of succulent, lightly water once a week or research the type of plant you have for

detailed instructions.

Whether you are a first time plant owner or an experienced gardener, succulents are an easy and beautiful addition to your living space. For more information head to Succulents and Sunshine.com <https://www.succulentsandsunshine.com>

