In the Department of French and Italian Studies

Chair, Associate Professor Audrey Brunetaux (French)
Professors Bénédicte Mauguière and Adrianna Paliyenko; Associate Professors Audrey Brunetaux, Valérie Dionne, and Mouhamédoul Niang; Visiting Assistant Professors Flavien Falatín and Thomas Muzart; Language Assistant Stéphane Veniant

Unless otherwise specified, all courses are conducted in French.

Achievement Test: Students seeking entrance credit in French and wishing to pursue French at Colby must have taken either the College Board SAT Subject Test in French or the French Department’s online placement test.

The major in French studies promotes the acquisition of superior language skills along with an opportunity to explore, via a set of multidisciplinary approaches, the richness of French and Francophone cultures. Emphasis is placed on developing skills in critical analysis that enhance appreciation of print and visual texts while also broadening and deepening students’ understanding of values foreign to their own. Advanced competence in French and a heightened reflection about cultural differences offer students a fuller grasp of the world in an era of globalization and the opportunity to secure employment that will allow them to develop further their foreign language skills.

Requirements for the Major in French Studies

Students must successfully complete a minimum of 10 courses in French, including French 231, two other 200-level courses, six 300-level courses, and a senior seminar. All 200-level courses must be taken prior to senior year. Students who begin their French studies in the 125-126-127 sequence, however, may elect to count FR128 or FR131 toward the major. Majors fulfill the senior seminar (493) requirement by electing the seminar section of a 300-level course, either in the fall or spring of their senior year, with supplementary work authorized by the instructor.

The 10 (or nine) courses completed on campus or abroad must include

- one course focusing on early modern France, pre-1800 (such as French 232 and select 300- or 400-level courses)
- one course focusing on the Francophone world (such as French 236, 237, 238, 297, and select 300- or 400-level courses)
- one course focusing on the acquisition of critical tools and methods and/or the application of theory (such as French 237, 252, and select 300- or 400-level courses)

One course conducted in English in a department such as art, government, or history, in which the principal focus is France or Francophone countries, may be counted toward the major; it must be approved in advance by the advisor in the major or department chair. Majors must take at least one course in the department each semester. For students returning from foreign study, these courses must be numbered 300 or higher. Majors are required to spend at least one semester studying in a French-speaking country and are strongly encouraged to spend a full academic year. Three semester courses of transfer credit may be counted toward the major for a semester of study away from Colby, a maximum of five for a year.

The point scale for retention of the major is based on all French courses numbered above 127. No major requirement may be taken satisfactory/unsatisfactory.

Honors in French

French studies majors with a 3.5 average or higher in the major may apply to do a senior honors thesis. Grades in all French courses taken in the major, either on campus or abroad (whether a Colby or a non-Colby program), will be included in determining the average.

Formal application must be received by April 30 (in the spring of the junior year) or Sept. 7 (in the fall of the senior year).

Students who successfully complete the honors thesis, including the oral defense, will graduate with “Honors in French.”

Course Offerings

FR125f  French I  First in a sequence that develops communication skills in a careful progression over three semesters. In addition to working on the four traditional skills of language acquisition—speaking, comprehension, reading, and writing—students will be introduced to the cultural contexts of France and the Francophone world. Use of audio and videotaped material is an integral and required part of class work. Students are placed in the appropriate level by their score on the College Board French SAT Subject test, a placement test during fall orientation, or through consultation with a member of the faculty in French.  Four credit hours.  BRUNETAUX

FR126fs  French II  Strengthens and expands the skills introduced and practiced in French 125 by offering a learning environment conducive to the practice and development of writing, reading, listening, and oral performance. Because language practice is closely tied to cultural understanding, we use authentic texts and contexts that foster linguistic competence while highlighting the diversified cultural
FR127fs  French III The last course in the required language sequence (French 125-127) that develops communication skills in a careful progression over three semesters. In addition to working on the four traditional skills of speaking, comprehension, reading, and writing, students are encouraged to develop critical thinking through reading and language learning.  

FR127Jj  French III (Paris) An intensive version of the last course in the required language sequence, held in Paris, France. Students not only learn French (developing their speaking, comprehension, reading, and writing abilities), they use French to learn, doing analytical work related to France's past (using Louis Malle's screenplay and film Au Revoir les enfants as a point of departure) and France's present (through class excursions). Students also learn to adapt to a foreign culture while immersed in a French-speaking environment. Estimated cost: $3,000.  

FR128fs  French IV: Reading in Cultural Contexts Builds reading skills and broadens cultural background through a wide variety of readings in French. Emphasis is on the texts and contexts of culture, whether in France, Quebec, or other Francophone areas such as Africa and the Caribbean. Continuing work in improving oral and written skills.  

FR131s  Conversation and Composition Designed specifically for students wishing to develop oral skills and to acquire an extensive modern vocabulary, with additional practice in writing short compositions. Preparation for further study of French. It will also improve students' reading skills while fostering their understanding of French culture and society. Through the exploration of a French contemporary novel and of French films, students acquire the skills to critique and interpret while engaging in active thinking.  

FR132f  Boundaries and Margins: Speaker Series  

[FR223]  French Theater Workshop Designed for students wishing to develop their French language skills in a less traditional environment. Through close study of French plays, students acquire in-depth knowledge of contemporary French theater. As their final project, they have the unique opportunity to select, direct, and perform a French play. This workshop engages students in collaborative and experiential learning. Emphasis on analysis, drama performance, French oral practice, and creativity. No prior acting experience required. May be repeated once for additional credit.  

FR224s  French Studies Lab Project: Maine, Ecology, and Gender Students hone their skills in oral and written French through "hands-on" learning. Projects focused on a specific issue or topic may include: arts initiative involving the community and Colby museum, creative performance or exhibit, design project, Digital Humanities platforms, educational materials for local schools, environmental initiatives, field work, non-profit work and engagement with local organizations, public podcast, social media, and translation. This experiential course fosters intellectual curiosity, collaboration, learning by doing, problem solving, critical and creative thinking along with skills in research and project management.  

FR231fs  Advanced Grammar and Composition Provides a comprehensive overview of French grammar through presentations of the overall structure and frequent practice in writing. Required of majors and open to others wishing to improve their written expression in French.  

FR232f  French Cultural History: The Rise and Fall of Versailles From the end of the Renaissance to the beginnings of revolution: an introduction to the major figures, movements, and works of 17th- and 18th-century France. Continued development of the ability to read, speak, and write in French, while also enhancing analytical skills.  

FR234fs  Intensive Spoken French Exclusively for French majors or students preparing for study in a French-speaking country. Weekly practice in oral French conducted by the French language assistant under the direction of a faculty member. May be repeated once for credit. Nongraded.  

[FR236]  Introduction to the Francophone World: The Americas A comprehensive introduction to the French colonial and postcolonial cultural impact across the Americas. Students will examine issues of race, cultural and linguistic identity, cultural survival, and the concept of emerging literature in a minority context. The cultural connection between Louisiana, Haiti, French Guiana, as well as contemporary Francophone migrant literature will be examined.  

FR237s  Francophone African Cinema An introduction to major sub-Saharan Francophone filmmakers and their engagement with
certain aspects of African history and cultural practices. Students will discuss and write about the films and the issues they deal with. Supplemental readings will be provided to contextualize the films. Prerequisite: French 128 or 131. Four credit hours.

[FR238] Introduction to the Francophone World: Africa What does the term "Francophone" mean? Is it free from polemics? What is its history? Introduction to Africa from the 19th to the 21st century surveys many of the multifaceted cultural identities and histories of the former French-speaking colonies on the continent. Topics include colonization, politics, gender, language, the fight for independence, modernity and tradition, and the major literary movements in Francophone Africa. Course materials will include film, music, art, folktales, poetry, maps, newspaper articles, literary works, excerpts from scholarly texts, and films. Prerequisite: French 128, 131, or 240D. Four credit hours.

[FR239] Paris: Literary and Historical Topographies Offered in Paris, an exploration of the relationship between literary, historical, and contemporary Paris. How are Parisian spaces imagined in texts, in visual sources, and in our own mappings of today's cityscapes? Our corpus will include novels as well as historical and contemporary artifacts such as postcards and posters. Includes both traditional class sessions and student-led walking tours, which are organized around both physical space and our corpus. Provides a Francophone learning environment to French majors and other advanced French students to encourage thinking interdisciplinarily, particularly concerning the relationships between literature and history, word, and image. Cost to be determined. Prerequisite: French 128, 131, or 240D. Three credit hours.

[FR240] Surrealism Listed as Art 238. Four credit hours.

[FR243] French Pronunciation through Phonetics How do you know how to pronounce a word in French, without someone pronouncing it for you first? How can you truly decide if some letters should be pronounced or not? One of the main objectives of the French studies major is mastery of near-native pronunciation and the ability to continue to learn to speak French autonomously, as you come in contact with French speakers. Through an exploration of French and Francophone music, this course will give you the theoretical foundations to understand the logic behind the French pronunciation system, practice in the form of pronunciation labs, and a hands-on speaking project. Prerequisite: French 128, 131, or 240D. Four credit hours.

FR252fs Provocative Texts: Fake News, Secrets, and Controversies How does one approach print and/or visual culture critically? Students engage with a range of "texts," such as poetry, works of art, theater, short stories, novels, and/or film, to acquire the tools and methods of critical interpretation and analysis. Significant writing accompanies close reading of what a particular "text" does and thus how it "speaks" or conveys meaning. Students apply genre-specific vocabulary and take interdisciplinary and analytical approaches to response papers, interpretive essays, and/or multifaceted digital/video projects. Prerequisite: French 128, 131, or 240D. Four credit hours.

[FR253] Voices of Dissent in Early Modern France or the Quest for Freedom An introduction to free-thinkers and libertines, and an exploration of the concept of freedom. We shall consider great thinkers and provocative writers like Montaigne, Molière, Diderot, and Sade, who challenged religious and social norms in search of a more just society. Through close reading of texts, and discussion of the their historical and cultural context, from the wars of religion to the French revolution, we will study how the writers dissimulate their controversial opinions, while advocating liberté de pensée in the face of fanaticism and dogmatic thinking. This course will conclude with Laclos' great book Dangerous Liaisons. Prerequisite: French 231 and at least one other 200-level course, preferably two. Four credit hours.

[FR332] Minority Issues and Social Change in the Americas Examines issues of cultural representation, migration, diaspora, and social change primarily in Quebec, Maine, and Louisiana. Postcolonial, transatlantic, and border theories will be used to better understand the French experience in the Americas. Goals include developing critical reading, presentation, and writing skills. Students will analyze print and visual texts, including films and oral stories, and they will contribute to a digital humanities project as part of an on-going, interdisciplinary effort to remap America and American studies. Prerequisite: French 231 and at least one other 200-level course, preferably two. Four credit hours.

[FR351] Parisian Encounters: Great Loves, Grand Passions The sexual and racial selection of genius exposes the weight of prejudice against creative women in French cultural history. In studying the impact of "great" couples during the long 19th century (1789-1914), we shall map and interrogate their legacies across a broad sweep of (colonial) history, the arts, letters, and sciences. Learning goals emphasize interdisciplinary practice of critical analysis, close study of images and works of art in the Colby Museum, and the development of advanced oral and written expression in French. Prerequisite: French 231 and at least one other 200-level course, preferably two. Four credit hours.

[FR355] The Other French Empire, Then and Now The French trailed behind the British, not abolishing slave trade until 1815 and slavery in 1848. Yet, beginning in 1850, French colonial expansion was dramatic. By 1914, France possessed the second-largest colonial empire in the world. How do different generations of thinkers and artists represent this past, which is ever present? Students gain knowledge of French colonization and skills in cross-cultural analysis. They engage in critical thinking across disciplines not only via the
course material but also as they conduct archival research on a topic of their choice to produce an original website or other creative project. Prerequisite: Senior or junior standing as a French studies major. Four credit hours. L, I.

[FR357] Illuminating Turns to Science in 19th-Century France Examines how painters, poets and thinkers across the disciplines shed light on the "triumph" of science and its biases in 19th-century France. A chronological study of primary sources, both print and visual, tracks advances in anatomy, physiology, embryology, and psychology during the first half of the century, followed by the impact of experimental medicine, evolution and social Darwinism in the 1860s and beyond. Via this transdisciplinary course exposing the blind spot as well as the limits of human knowledge, students engage critically with new historicism and gain advanced skills in archival research, analytical writing, and creative oral presentations. Prerequisite: French 231 and at least one other 200-level course, preferably two. Four credit hours. H, I.

FR361s Creolization, Culture, and Society in the Indian Ocean Islands Explores issues of race, gender, identity, diversity, cultural contact, and conflict in Indian Ocean island cultures and literatures written in French through selected writings from Mauritius, Madagascar, Reunion, the Seychelles, and the Comoros. We will examine the complex social, cultural, and historical context of the region with an interdisciplinary perspective. Topics include slavery, "marronnage", cultural hybridity, "métissage," "coolitude," and the development of colonial and postcolonial identities and subjectivities. Students will develop their presentation and writing skills through the production of critical essays and research projects. Prerequisite: French 231 and at least one other 200-level course, preferably two. Four credit hours. I. MAUGUIERE

[FR370] Corps, Espace, et Genre: Postcolonial Space in Francophone Africa The transition from the colonial to the postcolonial in Francophone Africa changed the way in which post-independence writers and filmmakers engage with space. These writers and filmmakers treat family and collective anthropological spaces in conjunction with the body and/or self. Through analysis of novels, short stories, essays, and films from the 20th and 21st centuries, along with postcolonial concepts of hybridity, resistance, and the subaltern, we examine the politics and praxis of the body in space as it relates to gender, age, identity, ritualized performance, and belief systems. Prerequisite: French 231 and at least one other 200-level course, preferably two. Four credit hours. L.

[FR371] L'écriture de soi Explores concepts of memory and self-fashioning in autobiographical writing, and questions the (im)possibilities of writing the self. Through theoretical readings, students will acquire a better understanding of the processes by which memoirs, autobiographies, and oral/written testimonies are produced. Particular attention will be paid to narratives that deal with traumatic personal and historical events. Discussions and debates, informed by theoretical readings and supplementary material, will develop critical and analytical skills. Prerequisite: French 231 and at least one other 200-level course, preferably two. Four credit hours. I.

[FR373] Writing of Place: Migration, Nationalism, and Memory An exploration of themes of migration, nationalism, and memory through fictional works by authors from the Maghreb and sub-Saharan Francophone Africa living on the continent or in France. Focus is on the migrant experience and its impact on the writing and perception of place, as well as the advent of the nation in the 1960s and the nationalist discourse that serves as its backbone. The narrative of place will be emphasized along with the recent memorializing of the Rwandan genocide. Readings supplemented by theoretical works and films. Students will expand their knowledge and practice of French as it relates to postcolonial Francophone Africa. Prerequisite: French 231 and at least one other 200-level course, preferably two. Four credit hours. H, I.

FR375f Narratives of Identities in Francophone African Literature The quest for and celebration of identity are key thematic and aesthetic components in contemporary Francophone African literature and cinema. We will engage with works of fiction and film that provide a narrative of identity within the framework of African cultures such as sub-Saharan Africa or the Maghreb. Focus will be on communal and individual identities within the framework of ethnicity and/or tribalism. Students will learn how and why these writers and filmmakers narrate identity, and will engage with African identities through structured writing, oral presentations, captivating readings of texts, and film screening. Prerequisite: A 200-level course in French. Four credit hours. NANG

FR377f Staging Justice: The Theater of Revolt French and Francophone theater have a lengthy fascination with revolution—against injustice, despotism, sexism, slavery, and religious and social constraints. We will read, analyze, and discuss plays by Molière, Anouilh, de Gougues, Camus, and Glissant, among others. These dramas, written before, during, and after the French Revolution, will allow us to explore the motivation for rebellion and revolution. As the point of departure for a broader analysis of the revolutionary impulse, we will discuss The
Rebel by Camus. Prerequisite: French 231 and at least one other 200-level course, preferably two. Four credit hours.  L, I.

DIONNE

[FR378]   French Revolution and Human Rights The French Revolution ushered in the modern world through the concepts of freedom, equality, and fraternity. We will hone critical skills by analyzing the development of those concepts during the Enlightenment, focusing especially on the questions of natural (human) rights and tolerance in Voltaire, Rousseau, Montesquieu, Beaumarchais, and Condorcet. We will hone communication skills while examining the consequences of those concepts, interrogating the justification for revolutionary terror, discussing whether the French Revolution was a success or a failure, and considering controversial figures like Marie-Antoinette, Robespierre, and Marat. Prerequisite: French 231 and at least one other 200-level course, preferably two. Four credit hours.  H.

FR379s   Race and Gender in France From Josephine Baker to the blackface controversies of the recent years, France has always had a fraught relationship with race, largely rooted in, and compounded by, its colonial history. Black/African, Afro-descendant, brown men and women continue to face racial exclusion, discrimination, and exoticization in color-blind France. This course challenges the country’s problematic discourse on race and gender, and its systemic racism, through a critical analysis of film, performance, art, fashion, online media, advertising, podcasts, and social justice movements. Emphasis placed on black feminisms, critical race theory, and intersectionality. Prerequisite: French 231 and at least one 300-level French course. Four credit hours.  L, I.  BRUNETAUX

FR483f, 484s   Senior Honors Thesis The senior honors thesis counts as one of the 10 courses required for the major. The thesis, written in French, is to be a substantial study of a carefully defined topic, supported by critical sources. Prerequisite: A 3.5 or higher major average at the end of the junior year and permission of the department. Three credit hours.

FR491f, 492s   Independent Study Individual projects in areas where the student has demonstrated the interest and competence necessary for independent work. Prerequisite: Permission of the instructor. Two to four credit hours.  FACULTY

FR493Bf   Seminar: Narratives of Identities in Francophone African Literature The quest for and celebration of identity are key thematic and aesthetic components in contemporary Francophone-African literature and cinema. We will engage with works of fiction and film that provide a narrative of identity within the framework of African cultures such as sub-Saharan Africa or the Maghreb. Focus will be on communal and individual identities within the framework of ethnicity and/or tribalism. Students will learn how and why these writers and filmmakers narrate identity and will engage with African identities through structured writing, oral presentations, captivating readings of texts, and film screening. Prerequisite: Senior standing as a French studies major. Four credit hours.  L, I.  NIAng

[FR493C]   Seminar: Minority Issues and Social Change in the Americas Examines issues of cultural representation, migration, diaspora, and social change primarily in Quebec, Maine, and Louisiana. Postcolonial, transatlantic, and border theories will be used to better understand the French experience in the Americas. Goals include developing critical reading, presentation, and writing skills. Students will analyze print and visual texts, including films and oral stories, and they will contribute to a digital humanities project as part of an on-going, interdisciplinary effort to remap America and American studies. Prerequisite: Senior standing as a French studies major. Four credit hours.  L, I.

[FR493D]   Seminar: Parisian Encounters: Great Loves, Grand Passions Sexual and racial selection of genius exposes the weight of prejudice against creative women in French cultural history. In studying the impact of "great" couples during the long 19th century (1789-1914), we shall map and interrogate their legacies across a broad sweep of (colonial) history, the arts, letters, and sciences. Learning goals emphasize interdisciplinary practice of critical analysis, close study of images and works of art in the Colby Museum, and the development of advanced oral and written expression in French. Prerequisite: Senior standing as a French studies major. Four credit hours.  I.

FR493Es   Seminar: Creolization, Culture, and Society in the Indian Ocean Islands Explores issues of race, gender, identity, diversity, cultural contact, and conflict in Indian Ocean island cultures and literatures written in French through selected writings from Mauritius, Madagascar, Reunion, the Seychelles, and the Comoros. We will examine the complex social, cultural, and historical context of the region with an interdisciplinary perspective. Topics include slavery, "marronnage", cultural hybridity, "métissage," "coolitude," and the development of colonial and postcolonial identities and subjectivities. Students will develop their presentation and writing skills through the production of critical essays and research projects. Prerequisite: Senior standing as a French studies major. Four credit hours.  I.  MAUGUIERE

[FR493F]   Seminar: Corps, Espace, et Genre: Postcolonial Space in Francophone Africa The transition from the colonial to the postcolonial in Francophone Africa changed the way in which post-independence writers and filmmakers engage with space. These writers and filmmakers treat family and collective anthropological spaces in conjunction with the body and/or self. Through analysis of novels, short stories, essays, and films from the 20th and 21st centuries, along with postcolonial concepts of hybridity, resistance, and the subaltern, we examine the politics and praxis of the body in space as it relates to gender, age, identity, ritualized performance, and belief systems. Prerequisite: Senior standing as a French studies major. Four credit hours.
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Seminar: Voices of Dissent in Early Modern France or the Quest for Freedom  An introduction to free-thinkers and libertines, and an exploration of the concept of freedom. We shall consider great thinkers and provocative writers like Montaigne, Molière, Diderot, and Sade, who challenged religious and social norms in search of a more just society. Through close reading of texts, and discussion of the their historical and cultural context, from the wars of religion to the French revolution, we will study how the writers dissimulate their controversial opinions, while advocating liberté de pensée in the face of fanaticism and dogmatic thinking. This course will conclude with Laclos' great book Dangerous Liaisons. Prerequisite: Senior standing as a French studies major.  Four credit hours.

Seminar: Illuminating Turns to Science in 19th-Century France  Examines how painters, poets and thinkers across the disciplines shed light on the "triumph" of science and its biases in 19th-century France. A chronological study of primary sources, both print and visual, tracks advances in anatomy, physiology, embryology, and psychology during the first half of the century, followed by the impact of experimental medicine, evolution and social Darwinism in the 1860s and beyond. Via this transdisciplinary course exposing the blind spot as well as the limits of human knowledge, students engage critically with new historicism and gain advanced skills in archival research, analytical writing, and creative oral presentations. Prerequisite: Senior standing as a French studies major.  Four credit hours.

Seminar: Race and Gender in France  From Josephine Baker to the blackface controversies of the recent years, France has always had a fraught relationship with race, largely rooted in, and compounded by, its colonial history. Black/African, afro-descendant, brown men and women continue to face racial exclusion, discrimination, and exoticization in color-blind France. This course challenges the country’s problematic discourse on race and gender, and its systemic racism, through a critical analysis of film, performance, art, fashion, online media, advertising, podcasts, and social justice movements. Emphasis placed on black feminisms, critical race theory, and intersectionality. Prerequisite: Senior standing as a French studies major.  Four credit hours.  A, I.  BRUNETAUX

Seminar: Staging Justice: The Theater of Revolt  French and Francophone theater have a lengthy fascination with revolution—against injustice, despotism, sexism, slavery, and religious and social constraints. We will read, analyze, and discuss plays by Molière, Anouilh, de Gouges, Camus, and Glissant, among others. These dramas, written before, during, and after the French Revolution, will allow us to explore the motivation for rebellion and revolution. As the point of departure for a broader analysis of the revolutionary impulse, we will discuss The Rebel by Camus. Prerequisite: Senior standing as a French studies major.  Four credit hours.  DIONNE

Seminar: L’écriture de soi  Explores concepts of memory and self-fashioning in autobiographical writing, and questions the (im)possibilities of writing the self. Through theoretical readings, students will acquire a better understanding of the processes by which memoirs, autobiographies, and oral/written testimonies are produced. Particular attention will be paid to narratives that deal with traumatic personal and historical events. Discussions and debates, informed by theoretical readings and supplementary material, will develop critical and analytical skills. Prerequisite: Senior standing as a French Studies major.  Four credit hours.  L.