FRENCH

In the Department of French and Italian

Chair, Professor Adrianna Paliyenko (French) and Associate Chair, Mouhamédoul Niang (French)  
Professors Arthur Greenspan, Bénédicte Mauguière, and Adrianna Paliyenko; Associate Professors Audrey Brunetaux, Valérie Dionne, and Mouhamédoul Niang; Assistant Professors Sylvain Montalbano; Language Assistant Juliette Bouanini

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 while offering an opportunity to explore the richness of French and Francophone literatures and cultures. Emphasis is placed on developing the critical and analytical skills that enhance the appreciation of various forms of cultural production and on broadening and deepening students’ understanding of values foreign to their own.

Requirements for the Major in French Studies

Students must successfully complete a minimum of 10 courses in French, beginning with either 128 or 131 (not both) and including French 231, 493, and two courses selected from 223, 232, 233, 236, 237, 243, and 252. All 200-level courses must be taken prior to senior year. Students who begin their French studies in the 125-126-127 sequence are required to take a minimum of nine courses. 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, 378, 392)
- one course focusing on the Francophone world (such as French 236, 237, 351, 361, 370, 375)
- As of the Class of 2020, one course focusing on the acquisition of critical tools and methods and/or the application of theory (such as French 237, 252, 323, 351, 354, 355, 371, 373)

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. 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 10 (in the spring of the junior year) or Sept. 10 (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.  MAUGUIERE

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 contribution of the French and Francophone world.  Four credit hours.  MONTALBANO, NIANG, PALIYENKO

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.  

Four credit hours. BRUNETAUX, MONTALBANO

[FR127J] 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: $3,300. Prerequisite: French 126 or equivalent.  

Three credit hours.

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. Prerequisite: French 127.  

Four credit hours. L. MAUGUIERE, NIANG

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. Prerequisite: French 127 or a score of 60 on the College Board French SAT Subject Test or its equivalent on the placement test.  

Four credit hours. NIANG

[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. Prerequisite: A 200-level French course.  

Four credit hours.

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. Prerequisite: French 128, 131, or 233D.  

Four credit hours. BRUNETAUX, PALIYENKO

FR232f French Cultural History I 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. Prerequisite: French 128, 131, or 233D.  

Four credit hours. H. GREENSPAN

[FR233] French Cultural History II Provides an overview of French political and cultural history from the late 19th century to today's France. Explores various intellectual, artistic, social, and political movements through a variety of authentic material: newspaper articles, literary texts, paintings, photography, music, film, and pop culture. Engages students in active thinking through debates and discussions, developing both their critical and analytical skills. Prerequisite: French 128, 131, or 233D.  

Four credit hours.

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. Prerequisite: Acceptance in a study-abroad program in a French-speaking country.  

One credit hour. BOUANANI

FR236f 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. Prerequisite: French 128, 131, 231, or 233D.  

Four credit hours. I. MAUGUIERE

[FR237] 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, 131, or 233D.  

Four credit hours. I.

[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 233D.  

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 233D.  Three credit hours.  L.  DAVIES

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

FR243s  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 233D.  Four credit hours.  MONTALBANO

FR246  Business French  French is one of the most important languages for trade and business in the world. How does one find and prepare for a job in a French-speaking country? This project-based, hands-on course will prepare students to enter the French-speaking job market by helping them acquire the vocabulary specific to the business world. Students will learn how to prepare a linguistically and culturally appropriate professional CV and cover letter in French, build an on-going professional portfolio, take a job interview, and navigate the daily administrative paperwork of professional life. Prerequisite: French 231.  Four credit hours.

FR252s  Provocative Texts: A Critical Toolbox  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 233D.  Four credit hours.  L.  PALIYENKO

[FR323]  Holocaust in French Cinema  An investigation of how French cinema has maintained a complex relationship to the Holocaust from 1945 to the present, while providing insight into Vichy France and its role in the roundups and deportations of Jews during World War II. We will examine how French film aesthetics mediate the memory of the Holocaust. Emphasis will be placed on critical analysis of films (including film form, language, and theory). An innovative humanities lab project with the Holocaust and Human Rights Center of Maine, which will engage students in experiential learning outside Colby. Meetings with Holocaust survivors will complement the course. Prerequisite: French 231 and at least one other 200-level course.  Four credit hours.

FR345  Advanced French Translation  This hands-on, project-based, and reflective course is intended to provide advanced students of French with translation method and practice for a variety of English to French (thèmes) and French to English (versions) texts; to sensitize them to the various styles, intricacies, and nuances particular to both languages; and to develop an awareness of the issues arising in passing from one language to the other accurately and idiomatically, as well as strategies for overcoming these issues, including an exploration of computer-mediated translation techniques. Prerequisite: French 231 and at least one other 200-level course, preferably two.  Four credit hours.

FR351s  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.  L.  MAUGUIERE

[FR354]  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
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.

FR358s  Passionate Discontent: The 19th-Century Epidemic  Civil unrest and war along with rapid change that accompanied the industrial revolution spread malaise throughout the French population, giving rise to the study of the human mind and its discontentments. Figures of mental suffering reveal how passionate discontent, traditionally associated with the genius of male Romantics, became a "female" malady and then a sign of racial degeneration. Through the study of representative texts, drawn from medicine, art, and literature, students engage in comparative cultural analysis of the development of psychology. Interdisciplinary approach also taken to independent research conducted in the archives. Development of analytical writing and oral presentation skills emphasized. Prerequisite:  French 231 and at least one other 200-level course, preferably two.  Four credit hours.  L.  PALIYENKO

[FR361]  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, "maroonage," 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.

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.  I.

[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.

FR373f  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.  L.

FR375  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.

FR377  Staging the Revolution: 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:  A 200-level French course.  Four credit hours.  L, I.
French Revolution: Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, or Death  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 these 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 these 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.

Picasso's Suite Vollard and Its Contexts  Listed as Art 471. Four credit hours.

French Intellectuals and the Struggle for Social Change  Racism, fanaticism, and feminism: these topics have periodically thrown France into disarray. Again and again French intellectuals like Voltaire, Hugo, Zola, de Beauvoir, and Sartre rose to the challenge confronting their times and charted an idealistic course to a better society grounded in reason, principles, and sound intellectual arguments. We will discuss how these debates have transformed French society, intellectual life, and political thought; examine the emergence and origins of the public intellectual; and analyze controversial ideas expressed through satire, philosophical texts, and intellectual debates. Prerequisite: French 231 and at least one other 200-level course, preferably two. Four credit hours. L.

Post-World War II France  Post-World War II France was shaken by two major events—the Algerian War (1954-1962) and the student uprising of May-June 1968—and profoundly touched by a remarkable group of poet-musicians seemingly unaffected by the conflicts between peoples and generations. Through film and song, offers a look at these 15 years that still haunt France, for better and for worse. Prerequisite: French 231 and at least one other 200-level course, preferably two. Four credit hours. GREENSPAN

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. FACULTY

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

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Seminar: Passionate Discontent: The 19th Century Epidemic  Civil unrest and war along with rapid change that accompanied the industrial revolution spread malaise throughout the French population, giving rise to the study of the human mind and its discontents. Figures of mental suffering reveal how passionate discontent, traditionally associated with the genius of male Romantics, became a "female" malady and then a sign of racial degeneration. Through the study of representative texts, drawn from medicine, art, and literature, students engage in comparative cultural analysis of the development of psychology. Interdisciplinary approach also taken to independent research conducted in the archives. Development of analytical writing and oral presentation skills emphasized. Prerequisite: Senior standing as a French studies major. Four credit hours. PALIYENKO