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# French Language and Literature

Courses of Study:  
 Minor  
 Major (B.A.)

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## Objectives

Learning to speak, read, write, and think a new language teaches us, as Montaigne wrote, to “knock off our corners by rubbing our brains against other people’s.” French, in its historical development in Europe and its subsequent spread to many areas of the earth, is inextricably tied to the intellectual, artistic, historical, and cultural development of a large portion of the world’s population. The French curriculum is designed to teach students to express themselves clearly and effectively in written and oral French, as well as to acquaint them with the historical depth and geographical breadth of literary and cultural expression in French.

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## How to Become a Major or a Minor

Students considering a French major should complete the language requirement as soon as possible. Students who complete a 30-level French course or earn an AP French score of 4 or an SAT II score of 620 in French are advised to enroll in FREN 104b and/or FREN 105a. Students with an AP French score of 5 should enroll in Fren 105a or FREN 106b. Students should take FREN 106b, and /or FREN 110a before taking courses numbered above FREN 110a. Students interested in learning more about the major, the minor, or about studying abroad are encouraged to speak with the undergraduate advising head in French. Please note: many French majors and minors choose to study abroad for all or part of their junior year.

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## Faculty

See Romance and Comparative Literature.

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## Requirements for the Major in French

The major consists of nine semester courses:

- A. FREN 106b (The Art of Composition).
- B. FREN 110a (Cultural Representations).
- C. Six additional French courses numbered above 110a.
- D. FREN 97a (Senior Essay—fall semester). After completing FREN 97a in the fall, students who have a 3.5 GPA in French courses seeking to fulfill requirements for departmental honors can petition to take FREN 99b, the senior thesis, in the spring. Honors are awarded on the basis of cumulative excellence in all courses taken in the major, including the senior thesis.

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## How to Fulfill the Language Requirement

The foreign language requirement is met by successful completion of a third semester course (numbered in the 30s) in the language program.

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## How to Choose a Course at Your Level

To choose the appropriate course, you need to take a placement exam. It is a self-graded exam that you can access online at [www.brandeis.edu/registrar/frentest.html](http://www.brandeis.edu/registrar/frentest.html). After finishing the exam, choose the course that seems to best fit your needs and then complete a questionnaire online. A faculty member will contact you to discuss the courses that you have chosen.

If you have a score of 620 or above on the French SAT II, or a score of 4 or 5 on the French AP exam, these scores will automatically fulfill the language requirement, and you are eligible to enroll in 100-level courses. See above under “How to become a Major or a Minor.”

Students seeking credit toward the French major for French courses cross-listed under European Cultural Studies should do all reading and writing assignments in French. (The abbreviation FECS denotes French and European Cultural Studies courses.) Majors may receive credit for the major for related courses taken outside the department with written permission of the undergraduate advising head.

All students pursuing a French major will be assigned an advisor in the department.

## Requirements for the Minor in French

The minor consists of five semester courses:

A. FREN 106b (The Art of Composition).

B. FREN 110a (Cultural Representations).

C. Three additional courses in French numbered above 100. One of these may be an FECS (French and European Cultural Studies) course, provided that all reading and writing assignments are completed in French.

All students pursuing a French minor will be assigned an advisor in the department.

## Special Notes Relating to Undergraduates

Students may take two 30-level French courses for credit with permission of the Director of Language Programs.

## Courses of Instruction

### (1-99) Primarily for Undergraduate Students

Students may take at most two 30-level French courses for credit with permission of the language coordinator.

#### FREN 10a Beginning French

*Students who have previously studied French must obtain permission from the instructor before enrolling.*

For students with no previous knowledge of French and those with a minimal background. Intensive training in the basics of French grammar, listening, comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing within the context of French and Francophone cultures. Usually offered every semester.

Staff

#### FREN 20b Continuing French

*Prerequisite: FREN 10a or the equivalent.*

Continued work in French grammar, listening comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing within the context of French and Francophone cultures. Usually offered every semester.

Staff

#### FREN 32a Intermediate French: Conversation

[ fl ]

*Prerequisite: FREN 20b or the equivalent.*

Focuses on improving the speaking ability of students who wish to develop greater fluency in conversation while discussing contemporary French and Francophone cultures. Students continue to improve their skills in listening, comprehension, reading, and writing. Usually offered every year.

Staff

#### FREN 33a Intermediate French: Reading

[ fl ]

*Prerequisite: FREN 20b or the equivalent.*

Focuses on improving the reading ability of students who wish to develop greater competence in reading comprehension. Selections from modern literature, political essays, and newspaper articles, etc., form the basis for examining various topics in French and Francophone cultures. Students continue to improve their skills in listening comprehension, speaking, and writing.

Usually offered every year.

Staff

#### FREN 34a Intermediate French: Topics in French and Francophone Cultures

[ fl ]

*Prerequisite: FREN 20b or the equivalent.*

Focuses on increasing the knowledge of students who wish to develop greater understanding of fundamental principles of French and Francophone cultures, such as education, identity, and so on. Students continue to improve their skills in listening comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing. Usually offered every year.

Staff

#### FREN 97a Senior Essay

*Students should consult the undergraduate advising head before enrolling.*

FREN 97a offers students an opportunity to produce a senior essay under the direction of an individual instructor. Students normally enroll in FREN 97a in the fall.

Only under exceptional circumstances will students enroll in FREN 97a in the spring. Offered every fall.

Staff

#### FREN 98a Independent Study

*May be taken only with the written permission of the undergraduate advising head and the chair of the department.*

Reading and reports under faculty supervision. Offered as needed.

Staff

#### FREN 98b Independent Study

*May be taken only with the written permission of the undergraduate advising head and the chair of the department.*

Reading and reports under faculty supervision. Offered as needed.

Staff

#### FREN 99b Senior Thesis

*Students should consult the undergraduate advising head before enrolling.*

Usually offered every year.

Staff

### (100-199) For Both Undergraduate and Graduate Students

All courses are conducted in French unless otherwise noted. The abbreviation FECS denotes French and European Cultural Studies courses, which are taught in English.

#### FREN 104b Advanced Language Skills through Culture

[ hum fl ]

*Prerequisite: A 30-level French course or the equivalent.*

For students who would like to continue studying French beyond the foreign language requirement. Topics will vary, but all investigate aspects of French and Francophone cultures, such as French history through film, French Impressionism, issues of immigration, or understanding contemporary France.

Reinforces the acquired skills of speaking, listening, comprehension, reading, and writing. Usually offered every year.

Staff

**FREN 105a France Today: French Conversation**

[ fl hum ]

*Prerequisite: A 30-level French course or the equivalent, or permission of the instructor.*

For students who have acquired knowledge of conversational French and wish to develop greater fluency in conversation. Role playing, vocabulary building, and guided speaking and writing activities will develop conversational skills for various situations. Discussions of contemporary texts and films assist in vocabulary building. Usually offered every semester. Staff

**FREN 106b The Art of Composition**

[ fl wi hum ]

*Prerequisite: FREN 104a or FREN 105a or the equivalent, or permission of the instructor.*

For students who want to improve their knowledge of written French and develop greater competence in examining and interpreting texts in order to better understand how to think *à la française*. Focuses on writing resumes, analyzing recits and portraits, and composing *explications de texte* and dissertations. Usually offered every semester. Staff

**FREN 110a Cultural Representations**

[ fl hum ]

*Prerequisite: FREN 106b or the equivalent, or permission of the instructor.*

A foundation course in French and Francophone culture, analyzing texts and other cultural phenomena such as film, painting, music, and politics. Usually offered every year. Staff

**FREN 111a The Republic**

[ hum ]

*Prerequisite: FREN 106b or the ability to take a class conducted in French.*

The "Republic," a product of the French Revolution, understood the individual as a "citizen", devoid of religious, ethnic, or gender identity. Studies how this notion has fared in light of developments, such as European integration, immigration, colonialism, and multiculturalism. Usually offered every year. Mr. Randall

**FREN 113a French Fiction**

[ wi hum ]

*Prerequisite: FREN 106b or the equivalent or permission of the instructor.*

Power, passion, creativity in the French novel. Major novels of the 19th and 20th centuries by Balzac, Stendhal, George Sand, Flaubert, Zola, and Proust reflect France's social and political upheavals. Topics include psychological analysis, revolution and class conflicts, male and female relationships, the creative process. Usually offered every second year. Mr. Kaplan

**FREN 114b French Poetry**

[ hum ]

*Prerequisite: FREN 106b or the equivalent, or permission of the instructor.*

The lyric imagination. Reading modern French verse and prose poems, from Baudelaire to Yves Bonnefoy, with essays on the creative process. No previous experience with poetry is necessary. Topics include rebellion against romanticism, surrealist love, ethnic and female voices, beauty and spiritual meaning. Usually offered every third year. Mr. Kaplan

**FREN 120a The French Middle Ages**

[ hum ]

*Prerequisite: FREN 106b or the equivalent, or permission of the instructor.*

The Middle Ages was a time of contrast, obsessed with love of God and the carnal functions of the body. Investigates the dual character of medieval literature, looking at the powers of "le rire" and of "le sérieux." Literary forms studied include plays, *fabliaux*, *lais*, *chansons*, *ballades*, and romances in the context of the art, architecture, and philosophy of the time. Usually offered every second year. Mr. Randall

**FREN 122b The Renaissance**

[ wi hum ]

*Prerequisite: FREN 106b or the equivalent, or permission of the instructor.*

The literature of the 16th century was erotic, tragic, and comic. The love poetry of writers such as Louise Labé and Joachim Du Bellay, the darkly comic novels of Francois Rabelais, the essays of Montaigne, and the baroque and polemical works of Agrippa d'Aubigné will be read. Issues of basic interest in the Renaissance such as Neoplatonism, the Reformation, and the "Querelle des femmes" will be analyzed. Material is studied in the context of the art, architecture, and philosophy of the time. Usually offered every second year. Mr. Randall

**FREN 130a The Seventeenth Century**

[ hum ]

*Prerequisite: FREN 106b or the equivalent, or permission of the instructor.*

Heart and mind in French Classicism. The combat of passion and reason in 17th-century masterpieces of comedy, tragedy, Pascal's *Penseés*, and the psychological novel, *La princesse de Clèves*. Topics include the conflict of love and duty, social class, skepticism and religious faith, gender roles. Usually offered every third year. Mr. Kaplan

**FREN 135a The Nineteenth Century**

[ hum ]

*Prerequisite: FREN 106b or the equivalent, or permission of the instructor.*

Liberation and selfhood in 19th-century France: short stories, novels, poetry, and theater. Topics include love and intimacy, the struggle for identity, gender roles, myth and folklore, religion and secularization. Authors may include Lamartine, Hugo, Desbordes-Valmore, Musset, Nerval, Sand, and Balzac. Usually offered every second year. Mr. Kaplan

**FREN 137a The Twentieth and Twenty-first Centuries: Plague, War, and Human Power**

[ hum ]

*Prerequisite: FREN 106b or the equivalent, or permission of the instructor.*

Compares responses written in French to humanitarian and political crises of the last century to those written in response to today's crises. Authors may include Boris Diop, Giraudoux, Camus, Beckett, Sebban, Sartre, and Sijie Dai. Usually offered every year. Ms. Hale

**FREN 142b City and the Book**

[ hum ]

*Prerequisite: FREN 106b or the equivalent, or permission of the instructor.*

Analyzes the symbolic appearance of the city in French literature and film from the Middle Ages to the present day. The symbolic representation of the city in literature and film will be contextualized in theoretical writings by urbanists and philosophers. The symbolic and theoretical depictions of the city will be used to understand the culture in which they were produced. Usually offered every second year. Mr. Randall

**F ECS 143a French Existentialism: An Introduction**

[ hum ]

*Open to all students. Conducted in English. Readings and essays in French for French majors.*

Sartre and Camus are known as the founders of French existentialism, a philosophy of the absurd, radical freedom, and responsibility. Study of them and other writers on ethnic and female identity in light of war, colonialism, and the Holocaust. Usually offered every third year. Mr. Kaplan

**F ECS 147a Jewish Identities in France since 1945**

[ hum ]

*Open to all students. Conducted in English with readings in English translation with French originals available.*

After the Holocaust, French thinkers such as Sartre, Levinas, and Memmi provided a foundation for reconstructing Jewish life. Topics include assimilation, Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jews, Muslim, black, and Jewish identity, the role of women, secularism, ethics, and religious faith. Usually offered every year. Mr. Kaplan

**FREN 155b French Drama of the Twentieth Century**

[ hum ]

*Prerequisite: FREN 106b or the equivalent, or permission of the instructor.*

Jarry's Ubu roi revolutionized what could happen on stage, announcing the absurdist theater of such authors as Ionesco, Genet, and Beckett. Sartre, Camus, and Yourcenar wrote neo-classical plays in the same years. Francophone theater in the Caribbean, Quebec, and Africa (Schwarz-Bart, Farhoud, Mbia) borrowed from and adapted esthetic principles from the French dramatists to dramatize colonial and postcolonial experiences. Students may choose to perform a play as a final class project. Ms. Hale

**FREN 165b Francophone Literature of Africa**

[ nw hum ]

*Prerequisite: FREN 106b or the equivalent, or permission of the instructor. May be repeated for credit with permission.*

A summary of Subsaharan African literature written in French. Topics include Negritude, French and African languages, gender, tradition, education, oral and written literature, Islam, and film. Usually offered every second year.

Ms. Hale

**FREN 186b French Literature and Politics**

[ hum ]

*Prerequisite: FREN 106b or the equivalent, or permission of the instructor.*

A historical analysis of the development of political theory and literature. The class analyzes how a literary work relates to the political culture in which it was produced. Usually offered every third year.

Mr. Randall

**FREN 190b Advanced Seminar**

May be repeated for credit with permission. Refer to the University Writing section of this *Bulletin* for information regarding applicability to the writing intensive requirement.

Staff

**Cross-Listed Courses****ECS 100a**

European Cultural Studies Proseminar: Modernism

**ECS 100b**

European Cultural Studies Proseminar: Making of European Modernity