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# French and Francophone Studies

Courses of Study:  
Minor  
Major (BA)

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## Objectives

As Michel de Montaigne wrote, "Learning to speak, read, write, and think a new language teaches us, to knock off our rough corners by rubbing our minds against other people's." The French program puts Montaigne's maxim to use by allowing students to study the historical development of French culture in Europe and Francophone culture throughout the world. The cultural capital represented by French language and culture played a crucial role both in the creation of a French national identity and in the response to it in many Francophone countries and in modern France today. 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. Normally, students should take FREN 106b, and FREN 110a, and/or FREN 111a before taking courses numbered above FREN 111. Students interested in learning more about the major, the minor, or about studying abroad are encouraged to speak with the undergraduate advising head. 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 Studies.

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## Requirements for the Major

The major consists of nine semester courses:

- A. FREN 106b (The Art of Composition).
- B. FREN 110a (Cultural Representations) or FREN 111a (The Republic).
- C. Six additional French courses numbered above 111a.
- D. FREN 97a (Senior Essay). 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, complete the questionnaire online. A faculty member will then contact you to discuss your placement. Students who fail to take the placement exam will not be permitted to enroll.

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.

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## Requirements for the Minor

The minor consists of five semester courses:

- A.** FREN 106b (The Art of Composition).  
**B.** FREN 110a (Cultural Representations) or FREN 111a (The Republic).

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. Normally, two courses from study abroad will be accepted toward the minor.

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

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## Special Notes Relating to Undergraduates

Students may take two 30-level French courses for credit with permission of the director of language programs.

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## Courses of Instruction

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

#### FREN 10a Beginning French

*Prerequisite: Students enrolling for the first time in a French course at Brandeis must take the online placement exam*

[www.brandeis.edu/registrar/frentest.html](http://www.brandeis.edu/registrar/frentest.html). 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. Students enrolling for the first time in a French course at Brandeis must take the online placement exam*

[www.brandeis.edu/registrar/frentest.html](http://www.brandeis.edu/registrar/frentest.html). 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. Students enrolling for the first time in a French course at Brandeis must take the online placement exam*

[www.brandeis.edu/registrar/frentest.html](http://www.brandeis.edu/registrar/frentest.html). 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. Students enrolling for the first time in a French course at Brandeis must take the online placement exam*

[www.brandeis.edu/registrar/frentest.html](http://www.brandeis.edu/registrar/frentest.html). 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. Students enrolling for the first time in a French course at Brandeis must take the online placement exam*

[www.brandeis.edu/registrar/frentest.html](http://www.brandeis.edu/registrar/frentest.html). Focuses on increasing the knowledge of students who wish to develop greater understanding of fundamental principles of French and Francophone cultures, such as education and identity. 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

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## (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

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*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**

[ hum fl ]

*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**

[ hum wi fl ]

*Prerequisite:* FREN 104b 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 fl wi ]

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

The "Republic" analyzes how the republican ideal of the citizen devoid of religious, ethnic, or gender identity has fared in different Francophone political milieux. Course involves understanding how political institutions such as constitutions, parliaments, and court systems interact with reality of modern societies in which religious, ethnic, and gender identities play important roles. Usually offered every year. Mr. Randall

**FREN 113a French Fiction**

[ hum wi ]

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

Power, passion, and creativity in the French novel. Major novels of the nineteenth and early twentieth 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, and the creative process. Usually offered every second year. Mr. Kaplan

**FREN 114b Quest for the Absolute**

[ hum ]

*Prerequisite:* FREN 106b or the equivalent, or permission of the instructor. Readings, discussions, and papers in French, with some translation.

Imagination, the drug experience, even madness can convey absolute meaning. We read creative journeys in prose and poetry by Balzac, Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Maria Krysinska, Senghor, and Bonnefoy to explore topics of good and evil; racial and gender identity; love and intimacy; spiritual faith. Usually offered every third year. Mr. Kaplan

**FREN 120a The French Middle Ages: Before France Was France**

[ hum ]

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

Before the creation of the French nation-state in the sixteenth century, what we know as France today was a tapestry of feudal and postfeudal states. The strangeness of this culture can confound modern understanding as much as many foreign cultures. Studies works such as eleventh-century hagiographies, *Le Roman de la Rose*, the knightly romances of Chrétien de Troyes, as well as the poetry of the troubadours, Christine de Pizan, and François Villon. Usually offered every second year. Mr. Randall

**FREN 122b The Renaissance: When France Became France**

[ hum wi ]

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

The creation of the modern nation-state in the sixteenth century was inextricably linked to the literature and art of the period. The defense of French language and culture was the battle cry of the cultural vanguard of the Renaissance. The political and religious turmoil of the period is matched only by the intensity and beauty of its artistic creations. Works studied include Rabelais's *Gargantua*, Montaigne's *Essays*, Marguerite de Navarre's *Heptameron*, as well as the poetry of Ronsard, du Bellay, and Louise Labé. Usually offered every second year. Mr. Randall

**FREN 130a The Seventeenth Century: Reason and Passion**

[ 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 seventeenth-century masterpieces of comedy, tragedy, Pascal's *Pensées*, 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 134b Masculine/Feminine in French Literature**

[ hum ]

*This course may not be repeated for credit by students who took FREN 190b 2 in fall 2006.*

Examines diverse representations of masculinity and femininity in French literature with special focus on historical and cultural aspects. Readings include: Racine, *Andromaque*; Rousseau, *Emile*; Stendahl, *Le Rouge et le Noir*; Duras, *L'Amant*; and articles from Beauvoir, Badinter, etc. Usually offered every year. Ms. Voiret

**FREN 135a The Nineteenth Century**

[ hum ]

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

Liberation and selfhood in nineteenth-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 literary 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, Sebbar, 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

**FECS 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, loneliness, freedom, and responsibility. Novels, plays, and essays are read on moral commitment and on black, Jewish, female identities in light of war, colonialism, and the Holocaust. Usually offered every third year.

Mr. Kaplan

**FECS 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 Ashkenazic Jews; Muslim, black, and Jewish identity; the role of women; secularism; ethics; and religious faith. Usually offered every third year.

Mr. Kaplan

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

[ hum ]

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

A study of plays corresponding to the following movements, eras, and styles: 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 neoclassical plays in the same years. Francophone theater in the Caribbean, Quebec, and Africa (Schwarz-Bart, Farhoud, Mbia) borrowed from and adapted aesthetic 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**

[ hum nw ]

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

A survey of sub-Saharan African literature written in French. Topics include negritude, French and African language(s), 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**

[ hum ]

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

**HUM 125a Topics in the Humanities**

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An interdisciplinary seminar on a topic of major significance in the humanities; the course content and instructor vary from year to year; may be repeated for credit with instructor's permission. Usually offered every third year.

Staff

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

European Cultural Studies Proseminar: Modernism

**ECS 100b**

European Cultural Studies Proseminar: Making of European Modernity