Department of French, Columbia University 2026-27

Ph.D. Student Handbook[1]
(updated 10/30/26)

[1] Adapted from the Graduate Handbook of the Columbia Department of Classics

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I. PRACTICALITIES

1. Welcome

Welcome (back) to the Department of French! The information contained in this handbook is accurate as of summer 2026. If you have any suggestions to make on future iterations of this handbook, please contact the DGS.

This handbook should be read in conjunction with GSAS' Policy Handbook.

2. Faculty Officers

Madeleine Dobie, Department Chair
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Madeleine Dobie, Director of Graduate Studies
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Madeleine Dobie, Graduate Placement Officer
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Pascale Hubert-Leibler, Director of Graduate Student Teaching
ph2028@columbia.edu

For profiles of all faculty in the Department, see https://french.columbia.edu/faculty.

3. Staff

Nicole Meily
Director of Academic Administration and Finance (DAAF)
nam2214@columbia.edu
515 Philosophy Hall
Areas of responsibility: general administrative and financial planning/management including departmental hiring, course scheduling/administration, liaising with ISSO

Troy Freeman-Cheng
Manager of Academic Operations
tf2596@columbia.edu
708 Philosophy Hall
Areas of responsibility: financial transactions, including reimbursements.

Haley Donovan
Academic Programs and Curriculum Coordinator
hmd2151@columbia.edu
515 Philosophy Hall
Areas of responsibility: conference room reservations, communications (website and email); exam, prospectus and dissertation defense scheduling; degree conferral processing; student academic job dossier maintenance.

Meritza Moss
Financial Assistant
mm2023@columbia.edu
520 Philosophy Hall
Areas of responsibility: financial transactions including reimbursements.

4. Main French Office and Office Hours

The main French office is located in Philosophy Hall, Rooms 514-521. The Department of French's normal operating hours are 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM, Monday-Friday. For faculty office hours, see https://french.columbia.edu/content/office-hours-fall-2026.

All graduate students are welcome to request a key to the main French office, which is locked outside of business hours. Please contact Benita Dace or Meritza Moss to request a key, which you should return upon graduation. If you enter the office outside of normal operating hours, please lock the door upon your exit.

You will also have swipe access to Philosophy Hall during business hours. If you would like to request swipe access to the building after hours and on weekends, please contact Julie Stevens, who will in turn contact Public Safety. These requests can take a few weeks to process and must be made every semester.

5. IDs

Information about obtaining an ID card can be found here: https://ssc.columbia.edu/obtain-id-card. Students may pick up validation stickers from the Student Service Center (210 Kent) or the ID center (210 Kent) for the valid semester.

The Passport to Museums program grants free access to participating museums to Columbia students who present a University ID card with a valid term enrollment sticker. See https://artsinitiative.columbia.edu/museums/

6. Course Registration and Vergil

Vergil is your multi-purpose tool for:

- Checking your registration appointment times;
- Registering for your courses;
- Viewing your bill;
- Updating your address;
- Checking for holds that may be blocking your registration;
- Requesting transcripts.

When you are on your teaching fellowship, Vergil is also where you will input grades. First, activate your UNI, and then go to vergil.columbia.edu.

7. Email and Website

The Department will send all communications to your Columbia UNI email account; please check it regularly (or set up email forwarding). If you haven't done so already, please activate your UNI.

It is possible to set up an alias for your email address which will allow you to create an email address that is easier for other people to remember (e.g., eliza.zingesser@columbia.edu instead of ez2135@columbia.edu). To set up an alias, see this site.

The Department of French regularly updates its website with profiles of faculty and graduate students, as well as news about faculty and student accomplishments. If you have information to update or news to share, please send it to Benita Dace.

8. Mail, Mailboxes, and Lockers

PhD students are issued a mailbox in 515 Philosophy. Mail should be addressed as follows:

Name
515 Philosophy Hall, MC 4902
1150 Amsterdam Ave.
New York, NY 10027

Lockers are also available to graduate students in the Department. Students must empty their locker at the end of each semester for cleaning. No food may be kept in the lockers. Please see Benita Dace for your locker assignment. You must provide your own lock and give the code to the Department in case of emergencies.

9. Graduate Student Office

The Graduate Student Office (502 Philosophy) is available for use by all doctoral students in the Department while they hold a teaching appointment. During the first two weeks of the semester, Teaching Fellows enter their office hours into a shared Google Doc (link available via Benita Dace). If 502 is occupied when you have a meeting with a student, you may also book the Conference Room in the main office (contact Benita Dace).

10. Financial Support for Conference Participation

Students are encouraged to give papers at conferences and to apply for funding to assist with the associated costs (travel, lodging, registration fees). The Department will fund up to $2,000 in reimbursement for students en-route to the PhD degree (total, over the duration of the program).

GSAS will match departmental funding up to $400 through the GSAS Conference Matching Travel Fund. Note that there is a maximum of one academic award per year, and a maximum of two awards during a student's enrollment at Columbia. Consequently, you should save matching funds for expensive conferences.

In order to apply for funding for conference participation, please contact the Director of Graduate Studies with the following:

- Conference description;
- Copy of participation invitation, or program page (NB: if you have not yet heard from the organizers about your invitation to speak, you may still apply for funding, which may be approved conditionally);
- Budget outline;
- Your completed portion of the GSAS Conference Matching Travel Fund application. This is a required step in securing Department funding.

Students are encouraged to choose conference participation carefully and ensure that they do not use all their funding in Y1-3.

Additionally, students may apply for the Arts and Sciences Graduate Council Student Travel Grant to receive $500 in funding.

11. Summer Money

Depending on departmental budgetary considerations, PhD students can receive summer funding to attend summer schools, workshops or do research in the US or abroad. Students apply in the early spring using the form sent by the DGS

12. Library Carrels

A limited number of carrels in Butler Library are available for students writing their dissertations. Assignments are made by the Chair. Advanced students who live far from campus will be given priority.

13. Letterhead

Students on the job market are welcome to use the Department's official letterhead. Printed letterhead can be found in the supply closet in Philosophy 515. Electronic letterhead is also available. Please contact Benita Dace, Meritza Moss, or Julie Stevens.

14. Printing and Scanning

You are welcome to use the printer/scanner in Philosophy 515 for work related to seminars, research or teaching. The IP address can be found next to the machine. Color printers can be found in a few locations on campus, including Room 304 in Butler Library. If you have a long document to print (e.g., a dissertation draft), please avoid peak hours.

15. Glossary of Acronyms and Other Abbreviations

Here are some common acronyms and abbreviations used at Columbia:

AAADS = The Department of African American and African Diaspora Studies" (pronounced "triple A" "D" "S")

A.B.D. = "all but dissertation," i.e., the status acquired after having completed all requirements for the Ph.D. except the dissertation

CC = "Columbia College" or "Contemporary Civilization," depending on the context. Columbia College is the undergraduate college of Columbia University for traditional students. Other undergraduate colleges include Barnard College, General Studies, and the School of Engineering and Applied Science. Contemporary Civilization is the mandatory political philosophy and intellectual history course for second-year students in CC.

Core = the Core Curriculum of Columbia College, which includes Literature Humanities and Contemporary Civilization, among other classes

CPS = Counseling and Psychological Services

CUIT = Columbia University Information Technology, i.e., the people in charge of the computers in the classrooms in which you will teach

CTL = The Center for Teaching and Learning

DAAF = The Director of Academic Administration and Finance (pronounced "daf"), i.e., in French, Julie Stevens

DGS = Director of Graduate Studies

DUS = Director of Undergraduate Studies

FGSA = The French Graduate Student Association

HiLi = The M.A. Program in History and Literature offered in Paris (pronounced "he" "lee")

ICLS = The Institute for Comparative Literature and Society

ISSG = The Institute for the Study of Sexuality and Gender (formerly known as "IRWGS," the Institute for Research on Women and Gender Studies")

ISSO = The International Students and Scholars Office, i.e., your go-to site for information about visas

IUDC = The Inter-University Doctoral Consortium (see below)

GS = "General Studies," the undergraduate college of Columbia University for "nontraditional" students or for students in dual-degree programs run by Columbia (e.g., Trinity College Dublin)

GSAS = The Graduate School of Arts and Sciences of Columbia University

LAIC = Latin American and Iberian Cultures ("lie" "eek")

Lit Hum = "Literature Humanities" (the "hum" pronounced as in the first syllable of "humming"). Literature Humanities is Columbia's mandatory great books survey for first-year students in CC.

Med/Ren = The Medieval and Renaissance Studies program

MESAAS = The Department of Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies (pronounced "me" "sass")

ODS = Office of Disability Services

P/F = Pass/Fail (a modality of grading)

SEAS = "School of Engineering and Applied Science" (pronounced "sees"). One of the undergraduate colleges of Columbia University.

SIPA = The School of International and Public Affairs (pronounced "see" "puh")

UNI = the combination of initials and numbers used to identify you at Columbia, also used as the beginning of your email address, i.e., [uni]@columbia.edu (pronounced "you" "knee")

UW = University Writing, one of the mandatory courses in Columbia College's Core Curriculum

II. ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

The Department of French admits students into five graduate degree-granting graduate programs:

- MA in French (New York)
- MA in History and Literature (also known as 'HiLi,' Paris)
- BA/MA in French (New York, Columbia undergraduates only)
- PhD in French (New York)
- PhD in French with a certificate in Comparative Literature (New York)

This guide concerns the PhD in French (with or without the ICLS Certificate) only. Students completing the MAO (standalone M.A.) should consult the separate handbook designed for them.

Students in the PhD program have been admitted to a six-year fellowship during which, subject to their satisfactory completion of the requirements at each stage, they will obtain an MA (stage 1) and an MPhil (stage 2), before receiving the PhD after the completion and successful oral defense of an extended research dissertation (stage 3). The PhD must be completed on a full-time basis.

The PhD in French

The PhD is a degree program comprised of three stages. At the successful completion of each stage, students will be awarded the corresponding degree. The MA must be completed by the end of the

second year. The MPhil must be completed by the end of the third year. The PhD is typically completed by the end of the sixth year. On very rare occasions, when they apply successfully to an advanced teaching or mentoring opportunity at Columbia, students may be able to secure funding for a seventh year. The Department is not allowed to select its own students as teaching fellows in Y7.

1. STAGE ONE: M.A. in French

Description

The MA in French trains scholars in the literature, culture, and history of France and the Francophone world.

The requirements described below are valid for students entering the program from Fall 2024 onward.

Advising and Mentoring

First-year students are assigned an academic advisor from among the department's faculty and also receive guidance from the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS). They must meet with the DGS regularly, at least once per semester, to touch base on their completion of program requirements and their course selection. The DGS will share a Google Doc with each student in which their progress in the program is tracked. In the second semester of Y1, they choose an advisor from among the French faculty with whom they work on their M.A. Essay.

Incoming students will also be paired with an advanced current graduate student in the program, who will serve as an informal mentor.

Coursework

Courses that count for graduate credit at Columbia are at the 4000 level or higher.[2] 4000-level courses are open to both undergraduate students and graduate students, while classes at the 5000-level or higher are open only to graduate students. Students should consult the Directory of Classes to see current and past course offerings. They can also consult the Department website to see which courses are taught in French and which in English.

Course Requirements for the M.A.

- A minimum of 30 credits comprised of eight graduate-level courses, seven of which must be taken for graded credit (one may be taken for R credit, a grading mode in which credit is assigned for the course without a qualitative grade). GU 4000 (Proseminar / Theory of Literature I) counts towards these eight courses, but MA Essay Direction does not.
- Students are required to enroll in the following courses:

  GU 4000 Proseminar/Theory of Literature I (Fall of Y1, letter grade).

[2] Students may count one 3000-level language course (in a language other than French) if they wish.

This course offers an introduction to literary theory, close reading, the *explication de texte* and fundamental research techniques.

GR 8092 MA Essay Direction (Spring of Y1, letter grade).
This 6-point course is not a taught course. Instead, students should meet with their prospective MA advisor, agree upon a topic, and set up a schedule for research and writing. At the end of the semester, students will receive a grade of CP (credit pending) for the course. The grade will be overturned for a letter grade once the MA Essay is graded in the fall semester of Y2.

GR 6020 French Lecture Series (both semesters Y1 and Y2, P/F)
Open to members of the Department of French only, the Lecture Series exposes graduate students to new work in the field, including new methodologies and emerging areas of research and teaching.

Distribution requirement

Ph.D. students completing the MA en-route to the PhD must take at least one pre-1800 course in the Department of French in their first year.

By the end of their coursework, students must take an additional two courses with a significant focus on literature/culture before 1800 (3 total over the course of the program). At least two of these courses must be taken in the Department of French, and the three courses must cover a minimum of two different periods (e.g., medieval and seventeenth century). If you are unsure whether a course will satisfy this requirement, please contact the DGS.

Courses outside the Department

MA students en-route to the PhD (including those completing the ICLS certificate) may take up to two courses outside the Department. They may take another two courses at the M.Phil. stage.

R-credit courses

MA students en-route to the Ph.D. may take one course for R credit (and an additional course in their coursework for the MPhil).

Schedule of coursework

MA students en-route to the PhD typically follow this schedule:

Year 1	Required Courses	Additional Activities
Fall	1. GU 4000 Proseminar/Theory of Literature 2. GR 6020 French Lecture Series 3. Graduate seminar (4000-level or above)	

	4. Graduate seminar (4000-level or above) 5. Graduate seminar (4000-level or above)	
Spring	1. GR 8092 MA Essay Direction 2. GR 6020 French Lecture Series 3. Graduate seminar (4000-level or above) 4. Graduate seminar (4000-level or above) 5. Graduate seminar (4000-level or above) 6. Graduate seminar (4000-level or above)	Student chooses MA Essay advisor and begins to meet with them
Summer		Student writes draft of the MA Essay
Year 2		
Fall	1. GU 4025 Practicum in French Language Pedagogy 2. GR 6020 French Lecture Series 3. Graduate seminar (4000-level or above) 4. Graduate seminar (4000-level or above) 5. Graduate seminar (4000-level or above)	Student turns in a first draft of the MA Essay (by October 1st) and then the final draft of the MA Essay (by November 15th) Teaching
Spring	1. GR 6020 French Lecture Series 2. Graduate seminar (4000-level or above) 3. Graduate seminar (4000-level or above) 4. Graduate seminar (4000-level or above)	MA degree conferred (typically in February) Teaching Preparation of three reading lists for Qualifying Exam **Per GSAS policy, all work for the MA must be completed at the latest by the end of Y2.**
Summer		Preparation for Qualifying Exam

For the schedule beyond Y2, see below.

Checklist

See Appendix 1 for a checklist of requirements.

Registration and Degrees

You may register for courses on Vergil during your registration appointment period. Two Residence Units (RU) are required for the MA degree. Four additional Residence Units, for a total of six overall, are required for conferral of the MPhil and PhD degrees. For more information about Residence Units, click here.

Academic degrees are conferred three times a year, always in October, February, and May.

It is the responsibility of degree candidates to apply for degrees by the relevant deadlines. Benita Dace will assist in submitting the necessary forms.

- For the MA, see https://www.registrar.columbia.edu/content/application-degree-or-certificate.
- For the MPhil and PhD, see https://www.gsas.columbia.edu/content/dissertation-dates-and-deadlines.

Certificates

Certain programs at Columbia offer graduate certificates to students with home departments elsewhere. These include the Institute for Comparative Literature and Society (ICLS), Human Rights, Medieval and Renaissance Studies, African Studies, Psychoanalytic Studies, and the Middle East Institute. Students should contact the DGS of these programs as soon as possible for more information if they are interested; admission sometimes occurs only in the fall of the first year.

Comparative Media, the Institute for the Study of Sexuality and Gender (ISSG), and the Institute for Religion, Culture and Public Life (IRCPL) also offer unofficial certificates.

Credit Cap

Full-time students are allowed to register for a maximum of 20 credits per semester, per GSAS policy. Beyond 20 credits, students will be charged extra tuition per point.

Summer Tuition Credit

Doctoral students in GSAS do not register for, and do not earn, Residence Unit credit during the summer. For summer courses, GSAS awards Summer Tuition Credit to incoming and continuing doctoral students in the Arts and Sciences who hold departmental fellowships for the following fall term.

Students applying for the Summer Tuition Credit should complete the application form and submit it to their academic department for approval. Completed applications should be forwarded to the Office of Financial Aid in 107 Low Library. Any course changes made after the application is sent to the Office of Financial Aid must be submitted to that office in writing.
Please note the following policies regarding Summer Tuition Credit:

- Students may be awarded up to eight points of Summer Tuition Credit. All courses must be required for the completion of a Graduate School of Arts and Sciences degree and taken for credit. Language courses may be taken if required for the completion of the degree.

- Students must obtain approval from their department and the Office of Financial Aid.

- Summer Tuition Credit includes tuition for courses offered through SPS plus any fees normally covered by a multiyear fellowship.

- Students are responsible for tuition for courses offered by other schools at Columbia and for all fees that are not covered by a multi-year fellowship.

- Students must complete all courses for which they receive Summer Tuition Credit. After tuition credit has been awarded, students are responsible for tuition and fees if they drop courses after the full-tuition refund deadline set by the Office of the Registrar for the session in which the courses are taken.

- Students must register in a full-time registration category in the following fall semester. Students who take a leave of absence in the fall will be billed for the full amount of the Summer Tuition Credit they previously received.

Transfer Credit

A maximum of two courses can be transferred from previous graduate-level study. These must meet the following criteria, among others:

1) They must be at the graduate level;
2) They must be seminars rather than lectures;
3) The scope of the course and written assignments must be similar to those of a Columbia French graduate course;
4) They cannot have fulfilled a requirement for the prior degree;
5) They cannot have already counted towards any prior degree received. (For instance, if you took *more* credits than you needed to graduate from your previous graduate program, we might be able to exempt you from a graduate seminar at Columbia, but if you took only the requisite number of credits for the prior degree, we cannot.)

Students who wish to transfer credits must apply to do so *in their first semester* at Columbia. They should submit syllabi and copies of writing assignments to the DGS, as well as the GSAS Application for Transfer Credit. The decision of whether or not to accept the transfer credits ultimately resides with the DGS and with the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (GSAS).

Incompletes

Per GSAS policy, to remain in good academic standing, a student may carry only one grade of incomplete at a time. The grade should be requested in writing from the instructor with the DGS copied on the email.

Good Standing

To remain in good standing, students must:

- Maintain at least a B+ average;
- Carry only one grade of incomplete at a time;
- Consult with the DGS at the beginning of each semester to review their program and remain in regular contact with their advisors. Additionally, students at the dissertation

stage must meet simultaneously *at least* once per semester with two members of their committee;
- All students must remain in regular contact with their advisors.

Requirements Beyond Coursework

MA Essay

The essay can take several different forms, although it is typically an expanded version of a seminar paper written for a course in the Department. It can offer an original analysis of a single work or treat a question or theme across several works. Though typically written in French, the MA Essay can be written in English if there are compelling reasons (this decision must be approved by the advisor). The essay must include a bibliography and footnotes and should reflect the consultation of critical, historical and/or theoretical sources appropriate to the project. It is written under the direction of an advisor from the Department of French. The minimum length is 25 pages, excluding the bibliography and any appendices. Students may use either MLA or Chicago format.

Students choose either to defend the thesis in a one-hour examination to a committee consisting of the advisor and a second faculty member, in which case both assign the letter grade in consultation with each other, or they can simply submit the thesis to the advisor, who assigns the letter grade.

The first draft is due by **October 1st** of Y2 and the final draft by **November 15th** of Y2. If students choose the defense option, the defense should be held by the end of the fall semester of Y2.

Note that, per GSAS policy, all work for the MA, including the MA Essay, must be completed by May 31 of Y2. Students who do not meet this deadline will be regarded as not in good academic standing, may not be appointed to a teaching or research role for the ensuing semester, and may be placed on probation or even terminated from their PhD program.

2. STAGE TWO: MPhil

In addition to the requirements for the MA, the following are required for the MPhil:

- 21 additional credits comprised of at least 7 additional graduate seminars including the required Practicum in French Language Pedagogy in the fall of Y2 (3 credits). 3 additional credits will be granted for the Lecture Series, which must be taken consistently in Y1 and Y2). (NB: The additional seminars are typically all taken in Y2 but it is possible to defer two courses to Y3 if you wish);
- Completion of the Qualifying Exam;
- Completion of the *Explication de texte* exam;
- Satisfaction of the Foreign Language Requirement.

Coursework

Required Courses

The following courses are required at the MPhil stage and beyond:

GU 4025. The Practicum in French Language Pedagogy

This course, run by the Director of the French Language program, serves as an introduction to language teaching and offers students help with the transition to teaching. It is taken P/F.

GR 9701. Dissertation Workshop
This course must be taken during all semesters of enrollment once the student is at the prospectus stage. Students abroad may participate on Zoom. The Dissertation Workshop is offered as an official course (available on Vergil) only in the fall semester, but students should participate unofficially in the spring. At the discretion of the DGS, exemptions may be made under exceptional circumstances if the student is part of another active writing group that meets regularly (please contact the DGS for approval). The course is taken P/F.

Upon completion of the M.Phil. requirements and a successful prospectus defense, the student becomes "A.B.D." ("all but dissertation").

Schedule of Coursework beginning in Y3

Year 3		
Fall	(any graduate seminars deferred from Y2)	Qualifying Exam + *Explication de texte* exam Teaching
Spring	1. GR 9701 Dissertation Workshop	Prospectus Teaching MPhil degree conferred **All work for the MPhil must be completed by the end of Y3**
Year 4		
Fall	1. GR 9701 Dissertation Workshop	Write dissertation Meeting with dissertation sponsor + at least 1 other committee member Teaching (or Dissertation Fellowship)

Spring	1. GR 9701 Dissertation Workshop	Write dissertation Meeting with dissertation sponsor + at least 1 other committee member Teaching (or Dissertation Fellowship)
Year 5		
Fall	1. GR 9701 Dissertation Workshop	Write dissertation Meeting with dissertation sponsor + at least 1 other committee member Teaching (or Dissertation Fellowship)
Spring	1. GR 9701 Dissertation Workshop	Write dissertation Meeting with dissertation sponsor + at least 1 other committee member Teaching (or Dissertation Fellowship)
Year 6		
Fall	1. GR 9701 Dissertation Workshop	Write dissertation Meeting with dissertation sponsor + at least 1 other committee member Job applications under the guidance of the Placement Officer
Spring	1. GR 9701 Dissertation Workshop	Complete and defend dissertation Meeting with dissertation sponsor + at least 1 other committee member

For a checklist including this schedule, please see Appendix 1.

Courses outside the Department

In all of their coursework, including that done for the MA, PhD students not completing the ICLS Certificate may take a maximum of 4 courses outside the Department. Students completing the ICLS Certificate may take a maximum of 6 courses outside the Department.

Distribution Requirement

By the end of their coursework, PhD students must take a total of 3 courses with a significant focus on literature/culture before 1800. At least 2 of these courses must be taken in the Department of French, and the three courses must cover a minimum of two different periods (e.g., medieval and

seventeenth century). If you are unsure whether a course will satisfy this requirement, please contact the DGS.

Please note that the distribution requirements are different for students completing the ICLS certificate. See below.

The Inter-University Doctoral Consortium (IUDC)

PhD students may wish to avail themselves of the Inter-University Doctoral Consortium (IUDC), a partnership with CUNY, Fordham, the New School for Social Research, New York University (NYU), Princeton, Rutgers, and Stony Brook that allows doctoral students from Columbia to take courses at these institutions. PhD students in their second year and beyond can register. With special permission of the DGS and the instructor of the course, exceptions may be made for first-year PhD students. Courses taken within the IUDC count as courses taken outside the Department, even if they are offered by a French department at another institution.

R-credit courses

In their coursework for the MPhil, students may take 1 course for R credit (in addition to the one at the MA level).

Other Requirements for the MPhil

The Qualifying Exam

In the spring of their second year, in order to obtain their MPhil, PhD students start working with a committee of three faculty members from the Department of French on their three Qualifying Exam reading lists (the exam itself is taken in Y3). Although the three lists do not need to be finalized by the spring of Y2, they should be far enough along that it is possible to do the bulk of the reading and preparation for the exams in the summer between Y2 and Y3.

The purpose of the Qualifying Exam is twofold: it is designed 1) to allow students to develop an awareness of scholarship and debates in areas in which they might wish to teach and 2) to set the groundwork for the dissertation bibliography. Students should propose list topics that are broad enough to allow for future teaching but narrow enough to help them prepare for the dissertation (e.g., for a dissertation about Italian troubadours who wrote in the wake of the Albigensian Crusade, the three lists might be "troubadour poetry," "diaspora and war in medieval literature," and "trauma theory"). The scope of each list and articulation between the lists should be discussed with the three members of the QE committee.

Reading Lists

If possible, the three lists should be drawn up in preparation for the dissertation project. There is no set length for the lists. One of the lists is a longer "primary" list (both in the sense that it is the most developed and in the sense that it comprises primary sources) with the remaining two lists covering historical and/or critical work (and sometimes also primary sources). Decisions on the length and content of each list are made by the list advisor. Students should not add or subtract works from the lists without consulting their list advisor.

Advising

At least two of the three Qualifying Exam committee members should be from the Department of French. In exceptional circumstances, students may petition the DGS (who will ask permission from GSAS) to include two committee members (out of the three) from departments other than French at Columbia. Students interested in this possibility should contact the DGS as soon as possible. The three Qualifying Exam committee members subsequently become the student's "internal" committee members for the dissertation unless the student (in consultation with the dissertation sponsor) decides to change the composition of the committee.

One of the three list advisors should be designated as the primary advisor (typically the anticipated dissertation sponsor). The primary advisor should work with the student and coordinate with the two other members of the committee to ensure coherence among the three lists. Students should meet regularly with each list advisor in the lead-up to the exam to discuss their reading. They should also circulate the final versions of all three lists to all their list advisors at least two weeks before the exam.

The Exam

In Y3 (typically at the end of the fall), students take a two-hour Qualifying Exam on their reading lists. During the Qualifying Exam, students answer questions about individual works on their three lists as well as broader thematic, theoretical and historical questions. Before each examiner asks their questions, the student discusses the list for five minutes and explains its logic and, if known, its relevance to the dissertation project. The primary advisor is given 45 minutes while the other two list advisors are each given 30 minutes. Typically, the primary advisor goes first. Grading is PASS/FAIL.

The *Explication de texte* Exam

Once students have completed the Qualifying Exam, they progress to a one-hour *explication de texte* exam, which should be taken no later than two weeks after the Qualifying Exam. A week before the exam, one of the members of the Qualifying Exam committee, usually the intended dissertation sponsor, assigns a passage for analysis. During the exam, which is held in French, the student presents the passage for about 30 minutes, then discusses it with two faculty examiners. The student is allowed to bring notes but should not read from a prewritten script. Grading is PASS/FAIL.

Foreign Language Requirement

Students must show at least an intermediate to advanced level competency in a language other than English or French. This can be demonstrated through coursework (a grade of B or higher in the fourth semester language course), or through a passing grade on the proficiency exam offered by the relevant Columbia department. One course taken to fulfill the language requirement at the 3000-level or above can count towards the required courses for the MA or PhD. Students whose first language is neither French nor English are not exempt from this requirement; they must prove proficiency by taking a proficiency exam.

3. STAGE THREE: PhD

In addition to the requirements for the MA and the MPhil, the PhD requires the successful completion and defense of a PhD dissertation.

Dissertation

Dissertation Prospectus

After completing all coursework and examinations, students write a dissertation prospectus. This document describes the topic of the dissertation, outlining its anticipated methodology, conceptual framing and structure as well as the original contribution that it makes to a particular field or intellectual debate. The prospectus includes a preliminary bibliography and a chapter
breakdown. It should be ten pages long at minimum, excluding bibliography and appendices. It is written under the guidance of the dissertation sponsor with input from the two other dissertation committee members (on the composition of this committee, see below). The prospectus must be defended at a one-hour meeting with all three committee members present. All three committee members must approve the prospectus, in addition to offering feedback on the scope and methodology of the project. The Prospectus Defense is graded P/F.

Students must defend the prospectus by the end of their sixth semester (spring of Y3).

Beginning at the prospectus stage, students must participate in the Dissertation Workshop every semester (on Zoom if they are abroad).

Dissertation Committee

The dissertation committee consists of five members. Three of the members of the final defense committee (Dissertation Defense Moderator, Dissertation Advisor, and Third Examiner) must be inside examiners (typically, this means they hold a formal appointment in French and have been approved as dissertation advisors in French but the three members of the Qualifying Exam committee also count as internal regardless of their department). Of the two remaining members, one *must* be external (see this GSAS page for specifics). Per GSAS policy, "students may not select their own defense committees" and "students should not be placed in the position of having to ask particular faculty members to serve on their defense committees" (the invitation should come from the dissertation sponsor). All five members (three internal, two external) participate in the defense. External members should agree to participate *well in advance* of the defense.

Per GSAS policy, all students must meet simultaneously with their primary and at least one other committee member at least once per semester. While GSAS monitors the meeting process, in consultation with the DGS, students are responsible for scheduling the meetings themselves.

Dissertation and Defense

The dissertation, written in English, presents the student's original research and argumentation and represents a new contribution to a particular field and scholarly conversation. It is divided into chapters and includes an introduction, a conclusion, an abstract and a bibliography. The dissertation must be formatted according to the guidelines of Columbia University. Templates are available on the GSAS website.

The dissertation is usually defended in the sixth year. The defense is a two-hour exam conducted by the three 'internal' and the two 'external' committee members. It is not open to the public. The defense should be scheduled by Benita Dace. Please note that, per GSAS policy, "a maximum of two members of the dissertation defense committee may participate remotely, but the dissertation defense moderator and the advisor must be present at the defense." Dissertations are either

approved with minor changes, approved with major changes to be completed within six months of the defense, or (in exceptional circumstances) failed.

Fellowships, Employment, and Job Placement

Employment and Fellowships

In every year of the program except for their Dissertation Fellowship year (see below), Ph.D. students may not exceed twenty hours per week on employment at Columbia or elsewhere. International students may wish to verify their employment eligibility with ISSO before accepting any paid position. As Dissertation Fellows (Y4 or Y5), students are allowed to work up to ten hours per week. The full GSAS policy is available here.

The Dissertation Fellowship

Students with a six-year package from GSAS are entitled to a year of "Dissertation Fellowship," which must be taken in the fourth or fifth year of the program. This fellowship can be used during the ENS exchange (see below), at another location relevant to the student's research, or in residence in New York.

ENS Exchange

The Department has a longstanding exchange with the École normale supérieure, both the rue d'Ulm (Paris) site as well as the ENS in Lyon. Graduate students may spend one year at either ENS site in Y4 or Y5. The ENS provides access to their library and seminars. Students who participate in the ENS exchange typically use their one year of Dissertation Fellowship to cover their expenses.

Students must have their prospectus approved before participating in the exchange.

External Fellowships

Students should be aware that, per GSAS policy, they must apply for at least one external fellowship in Y1-4. Some fellowships of particular interest to students in French are:

- The Phi Beta Kappa Sibley Fellowship;
- The Phi Beta Kappa Jensen Fellowship;
- Dissertation Fellowships from the Medieval Academy of America;
- The Fulbright US Student Program;
- The Chateaubriand Fellowship;
- The Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship (FLAS);
- The Camargo Foundation (Cassis, France);
- New York Public Library Fellowships;
- American Association of University Women (AAUW) Dissertation Fellowship;
- Charlotte Newcombe Fellowship;
- W. E. B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research Fellowship;

Students are encouraged to update the Department's shared Google Doc if they discover other relevant fellowships.

Job Placement

Students are advised on job placement by the DGS and the Placement Officer as well as by their dissertation committee. In the fifth and/or sixth years they participate in workshops that prepare them to apply for academic positions and postdocs. Students interested in other careers can seek guidance from the Placement Officer and the DGS but are also strongly encouraged to participate in career workshops and programs organized by GSAS, including GSAS COMPASS.

Students should also utilize the resources offered by the CTL, which offers workshops on cover letters, teaching philosophy statements, and other professional documents.

Convocation and Commencement

Participation in Doctoral Convocation and University Commencement must be authorized by GSAS. Typically approval is granted if one of the three conditions is met:

- Your degree was conferred in October or February of the prior year;
- You successfully defend your dissertation on or before a specific date in mid-May (see GSAS website), or
- You are scheduled to defend no later than a certain date in late May (see GSAS website), and your Application for the Dissertation Defense form has been approved by GSAS.

If you are planning to participate in GSAS Convocation and University Commencement, you must **verify your eligibility and register for GSAS Convocation**.

The PhD in French with an ICLS Certificate

The requirements for the Ph.D. in French with a Certificate in Comparative Literature are the same as those for the regular Ph.D. with the following exceptions:

- Students must also meet ICLS requirements in addition to those in French.
- They are allowed to take six courses outside the Department instead of four;
- They must take a minimum of two pre-1800 courses instead of three. At least one of these courses must be taken in the Department of French and the two courses must cover two different periods.
- Their prospectus and dissertation committee must have a minimum of one internal member with a full or joint appointment in French (rather than two). The sponsor must be a member of the Department of French.

III. TEACHING

General

Students in the PhD program must teach for three years (Y2, Y3 and either Y4 or Y5 depending on when the Dissertation Fellowship is taken). Students begin teaching in their third semester (i.e., fall of Y2), following a pedagogical orientation offered by the director of the French language program.

During the first semester of teaching, they enroll in the Practicum in French Language Pedagogy (GU4025). The Director of the Language Program will share abundant resources for teaching French via Courseworks. In Y2 and Y3, students usually teach elementary and intermediate French language courses. As they advance in their program, they are often invited to teach advanced literature and culture courses. Teaching outside the department, e.g., for the Core Curriculum or the University Writing program, is also encouraged. Advanced students may propose their own courses in Y4 under the GSAS Teaching Scholars program (to be taught in Y5).

The Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) and the Lead Teaching Fellows

Further teaching support is available from Columbia's Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL).

Students are encouraged to apply to CTL's Lead Teaching Fellows program, which provides training opportunities as well as funding for teaching-related events in the Department. Each year, the Department's LTF(s) organize(s) workshops and serve as facilitators for pedagogy-related initiatives in the Department.

Senior Lead Teaching Fellows (SLTFs) are returning LTFs who serve as mentors to each year's cohort of new LTFs.

Course Observation

Students who are teaching an advanced course (anything beyond the language sequence) should ensure that their course is observed by the DUS. Please contact the DUS at the beginning of the semester to schedule a date for a class observation.

IV. GETTING INVOLVED

There are multiple opportunities for graduate students to get involved in academic life in the Department and beyond.

French Graduate Student Association (FGSA)

Each year, the PhD students appoint at least two representatives who serve as a liaison between students and the administration and faculty. Typically second-year Ph.D. students serve on the FGSA. The FGSA also organizes occasional workshops, typically run by the DGS, of interest to graduate students. Recent topics have included archival research, external fellowships, and conferences.

Arts and Sciences Graduate Council (ASGC)

The Arts and Sciences Graduate Council is Columbia University's student government representing MA and PhD students in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (GSAS) and affiliated programs. French must send one representative for MAO students and one representative for PhD students each year.

The role of the departmental representatives involves serving as a bridge between the department and the ASGC, ensuring that the needs and concerns of students are communicated effectively. Additionally, the representative is responsible for sharing information about resources, which can be disseminated through monthly newsletters or similar communications.

Please note that this position requires the representative to be physically present at the monthly plenary meetings, the time of which varies from year to year.

If the Department does not send representatives, students from French will not be eligible to receive ASGC travel or diversity grants.

The Diversity and Inclusion Committee of the Department of French

The French Department's Standing Committee on Diversity and Inclusion advises the Department on policies and practices in addition to proposing initiatives to promote diversity and inclusiveness. It includes representatives from the professorial faculty, lecturers and PhD and MA student bodies. If you are interested in joining, please contact the Chair.

University Seminars

The University hosts many "University Seminars," extracurricular and cross-departmental groups that meet periodically to hear papers on a particular topic. Each seminar is chaired by one or two faculty members. Graduate students are eligible for the paid position of rapporteur of each seminar. If you are interested, contact the chair of that seminar.

Some University Seminars of possible interest to students in French:

- University Seminar in Affect Studies;
- University Seminar in Arabic Studies;
- University Seminar "Beyond France";
- University Seminar in Cinema and Interdisciplinary Interpretation;
- University Seminar in Classical Civilization;
- University Seminar in Comics and Graphic Albums;
- University Seminar in Human-Animal Studies;
- University Seminar in Human Rights;
- University Seminar in Literary Theory;
- University Seminar in Material Texts;
- University Seminar in Medieval Studies;
- University Seminar in the Renaissance;
- University Seminar in Studies in Contemporary Africa;
- University Seminar in the Theory and History of Media;
- University Seminar in Women and Society

This list is not exhaustive. Students should consult the University Seminars website.

The GSAS Writing Studio

The GSAS Writing Studio is dedicated to supporting Arts and Sciences graduate students in the process of writing dissertations and MA theses.

The Studio offers workshops, writing groups, retreats, structured co-working time, and quiet writing stations on the third floor of Lehman Library. Additional meeting rooms, including a downstairs Seminar Room, are available by reservation for dissertation-related group work. All GSAS Writing Studio programs are restricted for use to GSAS graduate students in these Arts and Sciences departments; some, including use of the Studio's physical space, are also restricted to students in the dissertation writing phase of the Ph.D.

If you have questions regarding accessibility or accommodations, please contact: gsas-writingstudio@columbia.edu.

Mailing Lists

Students are encouraged to join mailing lists both of nearby French cultural sites and of the profession more broadly. Invitations to participate in conferences are typically disseminated via these mailing lists. Some mailing lists you might join:

- Columbia Maison Française;
- NYU Maison Française;
- H-France;
- Francofil;
- Women in French;
- Villa Albertine;
- Period-specific lists like that of the Medieval Academy of America

V. DEPARTMENTAL CULTURE AND POLICIES

General

The Department of French is committed to providing a learning and working environment that is free from bias and discrimination. We seek to foster a community that is inclusive and respectful of diversity, consistent with the broader values of Columbia University. Our understanding of diversity is ample: it includes but is not confined to considerations of race, ethnicity, culture, socioeconomic background, family history of higher-educational opportunity, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, life experience or age, and veteran status.

We encourage undergraduate and graduate students from all backgrounds to enroll in our courses and to apply to our programs. Our faculty strives to create classroom environments that are supportive and inclusive, and we seek to provide each student with the resources they need to thrive.

As a Department of French, our scholarship, teaching, and programming engages in particular with the rich diversity and pluralism of the Francophone world in which what is held in common—the French language—supports a vibrant intellectual community.

Harassment

We as a department understand that any commitment to inclusion and equity must be in keeping with ongoing efforts to combat discrimination and harassment, sexual or otherwise, within the Department, the discipline, and the wider academic community. Students who wish to report an incident involving an alleged violation should contact the Office of Institutional Equity (OIE). If there is an immediate risk to a student's health or safety, please contact Columbia Public Safety at 212.854.5555.

Leaves of Absence

Follow this link to learn more about Leaves of Absence.

Mental Health

The Department aims to cultivate an environment that is emotionally and psychologically supportive for students. While we understand that various stages of the program can be intense and at times stressful, we aim to be available for strategizing and locating resources for students in need of counseling. You may also wish to seek help from Counseling and Psychological Services.

Office of Disability Services (ODS)

For disability services and accommodations, see
https://www.health.columbia.edu/content/disability-services-service-directory

Further Health Services Resources

http://www.health.columbia.edu/

- Gender-Neutral Restrooms: https://visit.columbia.edu/content/maps-and-directions-update
- Lactation Rooms: https://worklife.columbia.edu/lactation-room-access#!#text-1841
- Back-up Child and Elder Care: https://worklife.columbia.edu/backupcare

Use of A.I., Language Assistance, and Plagiarism A.I.

Absent a clear, written statement from a course instructor granting permission, the use of A.I. tools to complete any assignment (for seminars, the MA essay and the dissertation) is prohibited. The unauthorized use of A.I. shall be treated similarly to unauthorized assistance and/or plagiarism.

Language Assistance

Students are welcome to use print or online dictionaries. They are not, however, permitted to use Google Translate or any similar tool in order to write papers or complete assignments. Students are not permitted to seek help or feedback with issues of content in their written work. The only exception is the use of Columbia's Writing Center. Absent a clear, written statement from a course instructor, students should assume that they may *not* seek linguistic help from a native speaker or French or any other individual.

Plagiarism

The use of words, phrases, or ideas that do not belong to the student, without properly citing or acknowledging the source, is prohibited.

Self-plagiarism, i.e., the use of any part of an assignment to fulfill the requirements of more than one course, is also prohibited (except with instructor permission).

Appendix 1: Checklist for PhD Students

Reminders:

- Courses counted as graduate seminars must be at the 4000 level or higher.
- You may count ONE language course outside the Department as long as it is at the 3000 level or higher. You are welcome to take additional language classes but they do not count towards the requirements for the degree.
- You may take TWO elective graduate seminar for R credit (total, over the course of all of your seminars).
- PhD students not completing the ICLS Certificate are required to take 3 pre-1800 courses during their coursework. The pre-1800 courses must cover a minimum of two distinct periods (e.g., medieval and 17th C). PhD students completing the ICLS Certificate are required to take 2 pre-1800 courses during their period of coursework. The pre-1800 courses must cover a minimum of two distinct periods (e.g., medieval and 17th C).
- PhD students not completing the ICLS Certificate may take up to 4 graduate seminars outside the Department. Students completing the ICLS Certificate may take up to 6.

Year 1

Course	Course #	Fall	Spring	Grade	Pre-1800?	Outside Department?
Theory of Literature I	GU 4000	X				
MA Essay Direction	GR 8092		X			
French Lecture Series	GR 6020	X	X			
7 Graduate Seminars						
1.						
2.						
3.						
4.						
5.						
6.						
7.						

Summer between Y1 and Y2 (M.A. Essay)

MA Essay Title	M.A. Essay Advisor	Grade

Submit first draft by October 1st of Y2, final draft by November 15th of Y2

Year 2

Course	Course #	Fall	Spring	Grade	Pre-1800?	Outside Department?
Practicum in French Language Pedagogy	GU 4025	X				
French Lecture Series	GR 6020	X	X			
6 Graduate Seminars						
1.						
2.						
3.						
4.						
5.						
6.						
Note: All requirements for the MA (including the MA Essay) must be satisfied by the end of Y2.						

MA conferred; teaching in both semesters

Year 3

Course	Course #	Fall	Spring
Dissertation Workshop	GR 9701		X
(**Any courses deferred from Y1-2; 2 max)**			

Qualifying Exams	
Primary Advisor	
List 1	
Advisor	
List 2	
Advisor	
List 3	
Date completed	

***Explication de texte* Exam**	
Primary advisor	
Secondary examiner	
Date completed	

Prospectus	
Title	
Sponsor	
Internal committee member	
Internal committee member	
Internal committee member	
Date of defense	

Foreign language used to satisfy foreign language requirement	

Means satisfied (course at the Intermediate II level or proficiency exam)	
Grade	
Date	

MPhil conferred; teaching in both semesters

Beginning in the spring semester of Y3, at the prospectus stage, you should enroll in the Dissertation Workshop (GR 9701) every semester while enrolled in the program.

Year 4 or Year 5: Dissertation Fellowship (can be used for research abroad or in residence at Columbia). Teaching both semesters in whatever year you do not take the Dissertation Fellowship.

Year 6: No Teaching (unless you wish to)