

The MAO (MA Only / Freestanding MA) in French at Columbia

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Overview

The MA in French trains students in French and Francophone literature, culture and history. The program consists of approximately one year of coursework, including both required and elective courses, and an MA essay.

Advising

First-year students are assigned an academic adviser 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 selections. In the second semester, they choose an adviser from among the French faculty with whom they work on their MA Essay, a first draft of which is due at the latest on October 1st of their second year (assuming full-time enrollment). After receiving feedback from their faculty adviser, the student should submit the final version by November 15. Part-time students who prefer to receive the degree in May should register for M.A. Essay Direction in the fall of the year they wish to graduate and begin working with an adviser. In the spring, they turn in a first draft of the MA Essay (due by February 1) and a final draft after receiving feedback from their adviser (due March 15).

Time to Degree

Full-time students typically complete the MA degree with one year of coursework, an MA Essay written in the summer after the first year, and the final MA Essay approved in the fall of their second year. On this schedule, students will receive the MA degree in February of their second year.

Part-time students can pursue the degree at whatever pace they wish, as long as the degree is completed within four years of initial enrollment.

Students should inform the DGS whether they are pursuing the MA on a full-time or part-time basis.

Coursework

Courses that count towards graduate credit at Columbia are at the 4000 level or higher (though students may count one 3000-level language course towards the degree if they wish). 4000-level courses are open to both undergraduate students and graduate students, while classes at the 6000 level or higher are open only to graduate students. Students should consult the [Directory of Classes](#) in order 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.

The MA in French requires 8 courses and completion of the MA Essay. The required course, Theory of Literature I (GU 4000), counts towards these 8 courses, but the required French Lecture Series and M.A. Essay Direction (see below) do not. A maximum of two of these eight courses may be taken outside of the Department of French.

Required courses

In the fall of their first year, both freestanding MA and PhD students take Theory of Literature I (GU4000), which offers an introduction to close reading, the *explication de texte* and fundamental research techniques. This course is taken for a letter grade.

In the spring of their first year, full-time freestanding MA and PhD students should register for M.A. Essay Direction (GR8092). Part-time MA students should register for the course the semester *before* they actually intend to write the thesis. M.A. Essay Direction is not a taught course. Instead, students should meet with their prospective essay adviser, 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 and the MA will be conferred in February, assuming all other requirements have been met. A part-time MA student who wishes to receive the MA degree in May should register for M.A. Essay Direction in the fall of the year they wish to graduate and begin working with an adviser. In the spring, they turn in a first draft of the MA Essay (due by February 1) and a final draft after receiving feedback from their adviser (due March 15).

Freestanding MA students and PhD students in their first year also register for the French Lecture Series (GR6020) in both semesters. This 1-point course is a professionalization opportunity for students, who select scholars of French Studies from other universities to give a talk at Columbia. Students introduce the speakers when they come to campus, take a leading role in the Q&A, and have dinner with them following the talk. Generally speaking, the Lecture Series brings two speakers to campus each semester. PhD students and freestanding MA students who register for coursework in their second year enroll in the Lecture Series again in each semester of Y2. The Lecture Series is taken for R credit and does not count towards the 8 required courses.

Distribution requirement

Freestanding MA students must take one pre-1800 course in the Department of French.

Courses in other departments

Freestanding MA students may take up to two of the required eight courses in other departments, provided these classes are at the 4000 level or above.

Incompletes

Per [GSAS policy](#), to remain in good academic standing, a student may carry only one grade of incomplete at a time.

Transfer Credit

It is not possible to obtain “advanced standing” through transfer credits from other institutions attended prior to Columbia. A maximum of two courses can be transferred. These must meet the following criteria:

- 1) They must be 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 already counted towards any prior degree received.

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. 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).

The MA Essay

The essay can take several different forms, e.g., it can offer an original analysis of a single work, or treat a question or theme across several works. It is often an expansion of a seminar paper written for a course taken at Columbia. It can be written in either French or English; the decision on language should be made in consultation with the adviser. The thesis 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 adviser from the Department of French. The minimum length is 25 pages, excluding the bibliography and any appendices. Students choose either to defend the thesis in a one-hour examination to a committee consisting of the adviser 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 adviser, who assigns the letter grade. For those who are completing the degree as full-time students, the first draft is due by October 1st of Y2 and the final draft by November 15th. If students choose the defense option, the defense should be held by the end of the fall semester of Y2. Part-time students may also choose to take M.A. Essay Direction in a fall semester, in which case the first draft of the thesis is due by February 1 of the following spring semester, and the second draft due by March 15. In this case, the MA degree will be conferred in May.