

PhD Program in French Studies

MA REQUIREMENTS

Coursework

Students should have their program of courses approved by the Director of Graduate Studies at the beginning of each semester.

Students must complete the requirements for and apply for the MA degree by the end of the fourth semester or they may be removed from the program. The requirements for the MA are the completion of eight courses for credit, and the submission and defense of a Master's thesis.

The total number of credit points for the degree is 30 (8 courses worth 3 points each, plus one MA thesis worth 6 points).

The minimum for good standing is a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 derived from all courses in which a student has registered and received a grade.

MA course distribution

No class other than the Proseminar may be taken Pass/Fail. The classes are distributed in the following manner:

- Proseminar (an introduction to research methods, critical approaches, and techniques of close reading). This class is taken Pass/Fail.
- Four classes in four of the following seven fields of French and Francophone literature and culture: Middle Ages, Renaissance, Classical, Enlightenment, Nineteenth Century, Twentieth and Twenty-first Century, Francophone. These classes may not be taken for R credit.
- Three elective classes. Two may be taken outside of the French Department after consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies. Two of these electives may be taken for R credit.

There are two basic categories of graduate courses offered by the Department, roughly distinguished as lectures (4000-level courses) and seminars (6000- and 8000-level courses). These distinctions correspond to the course number designations in the bulletin and registration listings. The 4000-level lecture courses, which typically allow for discussion, cover broad aspects of a given period. The 6000- and 8000-level seminars are specialized courses. These courses focus on particular writers, themes, genres, movements or theories

MA thesis

The MA thesis is a paper of approximately 30 to 40 pages, either developing a paper written for a class or based on new research. Students must choose a sponsor (in consultation with the DGS if necessary) and consult regularly with him or her.

The MA thesis gives students practice in carrying out a research project that, while necessarily limited in length and in scope (30 to 40 pages), presents a problem treated in more depth than in a term paper. Under the guidance of a sponsor, they compile an adequate bibliography, choose the appropriate methodological approach, organize the material, and present it in a scholarly (as well as readable) fashion.

The thesis should be written according to the specifications of the MLA Style Sheet. When the sponsor has approved the thesis, the student provides the second committee member and the Graduate Coordinator with final copies. The thesis is defended orally before the committee consisting of the sponsor and one other member of the faculty, at least one of whom must be a tenured associate or full professor.

MA degree conferral

The MA degree is awarded in October, January and May. Please consult with the Graduate Coordinator for all questions concerning deadlines for applying. In order to get credit for the MA thesis, students must register for GR8092 MA Essay Direction.

MPHIL REQUIREMENTS

The MPhil degree

Students are awarded the MPhil degree upon completion of six Residence Units and all departmental requirements for the PhD except the dissertation.

The requirements for the MPhil in French are the completion of eight classes beyond the MA, fulfillment of the two language requirements, the oral presentation of the explication de texte, and the oral examination.

We encourage students to finish coursework for the MA and the MPhil in 2½ years (5 semesters) and to fulfill all other requirements before the end of their third year. Students must complete the requirements for the MPhil degree and defend their dissertation prospectus (see below) by the end of the eighth semester.

MPhil course distribution

- Theories of Literature.
- ☑Practicum in French Language Pedagogy.
- Two classes in the seven fields in such manner that, over the course of the MA and MPhil, students take classes in six of the following seven fields: Middle Ages, Renaissance, Classical, Enlightenment, Nineteenth Century, Twentieth and Twenty First Century, and Francophone. These classes may not be taken for R credit.
- Four elective classes. Three of these elective classes may be taken outside of the Department with permission of the DGS. Two of these electives may be taken for R credit.

MPhil language requirements

Reading proficiency in two languages other than English and French. In consultation with the DGS, students should choose languages that are pertinent to their intended area of specialization (e.g. Latin for research on Medieval or Early Modern literature, or Arabic for research on Francophone literature from the Maghreb). To fulfill the two language reading proficiency requirements, students must either pass the translation exam administered by the relevant department, or receive a grade of B (or better) in the fourth semester language course.

Explication de texte

Students may do the required explication de texte at any time they wish before they take the Oral examinations. The text is selected from their field of study. They are given a week to work on the text before the explication, which is administered in French by two faculty members. The explication consists in the oral presentation of a close reading of a literary text, usually a poem or a relatively brief prose passage. The explication de texte is scheduled to last one hour. Students should take about 30 minutes to present the text,

with the rest of the time set aside for questions, comments and discussion. Students work from minimal notes and do not read a formal paper. They receive a letter grade for the explication de texte.

- For more details on the practice and theory of the explication de texte, see *Explication de texte* ed. Jean Sarrail (New Jersey: 1970), Roland Barthes *S/Z* (Paris: 1970), Michael Riffaterre *Text Production* (New York, 1983) and Jane Gallop "[The Historicization of Literary Studies and the Fate of Close Reading](#)" in *Profession* 2007.
- Students also learn how to do explications de texte in the Proseminar.

Doctoral oral examination

The oral examination is divided among three fields, a major field and two minor fields. Each field is supervised by a faculty member. The goal of the oral examination is to develop a deep familiarity with three separate fields, and to help students refine and synthesize their knowledge of these fields. The exam is two hours long. The major field of the orals serves as a launching pad for the dissertation and as preparation for a job market in which specializations are largely constituted by major periods of literary history and/or geographic areas. In consultation with a faculty advisor, students create a reading list of approximately 30 books and articles. The context for the major field should be fairly broad, and not limited to what will become the dissertation topic or problématique.

The first minor field is constituted of a bibliography of approximately 15 books and articles. This bibliography can serve as a theoretical basis for the work done for the dissertation. The second minor field is based on a bibliography of approximately 15 books and articles. This field need not be related to the dissertation topic but can serve as a selective survey of material from an author, a period or an area of interest.

For each field, students are asked to write a short descriptive paragraph accompanying the final list of books. This paragraph should briefly describe the subject area covered as well as the most pertinent questions and issues raised by the readings.

How to determine a field? Fields can be constituted according to historical time periods, literary movements, author, geography or genre. Working with their main advisor, students constitute a list of works that have a fairly broad coverage. It is important to keep in mind that the orals are, at least in part, an occasion to engage with some of the key texts of a given period, topic or nation, even if in their dissertation, students end up focusing on less canonical works.

PHD REQUIREMENTS

The prospectus

Within six months of the Orals date, and before the end of the eighth semester of registration, students submit a dissertation prospectus for approval by three faculty members. The prospectus should be approximately 10 pages long, should include a presentation of the need and relevance of the subject, a brief survey of the extant criticism on the subject, a description of their approach and methodology, an outline of the projected chapters and a bibliography and a tentative schedule for completion. When the prospectus has been put together, the student and the faculty committee will meet to discuss the dissertation project. Once their prospectus has been approved by their faculty advisors, students file the prospectus with the Department. They should consult with the graduate coordinator, Benita Dace, about filing the prospectus.

- Please review: [GSAS Student Guide](#)

Committee selection

The Dissertation committee consists of five faculty members: the sponsor, a second and third reader and two outside members. The sponsor of the Dissertation committee is a tenured faculty member in French who is responsible for overseeing the advisee's work and convening meetings. The Second and Third Readers can be from inside or outside the Department and act as full advisors. The final two members of the dissertation committee participate in the dissertation defense.

Please review: [GSAS Student Guide](#)

Dissertation and defense

Beginning in the semester following the defense of their prospectus, students will meet once each semester with their sponsor and at least one other faculty member, in order to receive timely feedback on their dissertation work and regular support throughout the dissertation-writing process. Review GSAS policy guidelines here: [Dissertation Progress Meeting \(DPMs\)](#).

Dissertations are written in English. Advisable length is 250-300 pages. If students have exceptionally compelling reasons to write their dissertation in French, they should carefully attend to the procedures stipulated by the GSAS Dean's Office. The Dean's Office also provides a set of guidelines for students preparing the five copies of their dissertation for the pre-defense deposit. This deposit should not be done until the sponsor, second reader and third reader have approved the final draft. Please note the deadlines for applying for a defense and for submission of the five copies. After the copies are deposited, the Chair, upon the recommendation of the sponsor, appoints an examining committee of five faculty members (the three who approved the dissertation and two outside readers). The defense of the dissertation is an oral examination lasting no longer than two hours.

Please review: [GSAS Student Guide](#)

TEACHING OPPORTUNITIES

Building a teaching portfolio

All students are expected to teach as part of their training for the PhD. Students usually start teaching in the fall of their second year and must then enroll in the Practicum in French Language Pedagogy, which explores both methodological and practical issues. Teaching Fellows for the 1101-2102 courses work with Coordinators, meeting regularly to discuss teaching strategies. They prepare tests and the Final Exam. The Coordinators, who acquaint students with teaching responsibilities, policies and procedures, will provide course syllabi.

In their third year of teaching, students can apply to teach more advanced courses in the Department (Third-year grammar and composition, Introduction to literary studies, Introduction to French and Francophone studies, or a course of their own design) or in the Core Curriculum of Columbia College (Literature Humanities or Contemporary Civilization).