Department of French



Spring 2027 Classes

Need advice about French courses? Interested in declaring a major or minor in French?

Please reach out to Professor Joanna Stalnaker, Director of Undergraduate Studies in French:
jrs2052@columbia.edu

Fall Office Hours: Wednesdays from 4:15-6:15pm
512 Philosophy Hall
https://calendly.com/joanna-stalnaker/office-hours

MAJOR IN FRENCH AND FRANCOPHONE STUDIES

COURSES: a minimum of 30 points beyond completion of the language requirement (FREN UN2102) distributed as follows:

Core (4 courses, 12 points):

- FREN UN3405 Read, Think, Write in French
- FREN UN3409 Introduction to French and Francophone History FREN
- UN3410 Introduction to French and Francophone Literature FREN
- UN3995 Senior Seminar

Electives (18 points, or 15 points in case of a Senior Essay):

- Six electives in French or Francophone literature and culture at the 3000 or 4000 level of which one covers the period before 1800 and of which a maximum of two are "French Through X" (Film, Pop Culture, Art, Paris, Current Events) classes (FREN UN32XX).
    - Courses in other Departments (English, History, ICLS, AAADS, MESAAS, etc.) as well as courses at Barnard College can be counted with DUS approval
    - Courses at Reid Hall in Paris serve as elective credits for the major -- complete your major in your semester abroad!
- Senior Essay (3 points, OPTIONAL): The Senior Essay is an opportunity for students to immerse themselves in a semester-long research project and to hone their research and writing skills. It substitutes for an elective and allows students to be eligible for departmental honors. Summer research funding is available through the department after junior year.

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS HERE:

Questions? Reach out to DUS, Prof. Joanna Stalnaker
jrs2052@columbia.edu, 512 Philosophy Hall

MINOR IN FRENCH AND FRANCOPHONE STUDIES

COURSES: a minimum of 15 points beyond completion of the language requirement (FREN UN2102) distributed as follows:

Core (2 courses, 6 points):

- FREN UN3405 Read, Think, Write in French
- Either FREN UN3409 Introduction to French and Francophone History or FREN UN3410 Introduction to French and Francophone Literature

Electives (3 courses, 9 points):

- Three electives in French or francophone literature and culture at the 3000 or 4000 level
  - Can take unlimited number of "French Through X" (Film, Pop Culture, Art, Paris) classes (FREN UN32XX)
  - Courses at Reid Hall in Paris also serve as elective credits for the minor -- complete your minor in your semester abroad!

Questions? Reach out to DUS, Prof. Joanna Stalnaker
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WHY FRENCH AT COLUMBIA?

- Dedicated teaching and cutting-edge research, with **distinguished faculty** covering major aspects of French and Francophone literature, culture, history and politics

- Interdisciplinary elective **courses** in subjects as diverse as global pandemics, African philosophy, francophone romance, comics and graphic novels, translation studies, histories of French empire, transgressive fiction, the Haitian Revolution, Global French cinema, Medieval Animals, and more!

- Opportunities for **experiential learning** courses in pre-law and art, collaborations with non-profit organizations (like Project Rousseau and S.O.S Méditerranée) and practical skill courses (French for Diplomats), with the possibility of future **internships**

- Study Abroad at the Undergraduate Global Center at **Reid Hall** in Paris during the academic year or summer, with the possibility of English-language or **French-immersion** tracks, housing in residence halls or home stays. Complete your major or minor in Paris!

- Ongoing public events, lectures, and film screenings at the **Maison Française de Columbia**, including semesterly film festivals on topics like Across Generations, Ethics of Care, French Gourmand Cuisine, Being in the World, and more! See also collaborations with the French Embassy, Villa Albertine and outdoor film screenings with **Films on the Green**

- Student-run activities with the **French Cultural Society**

- **Undergraduate Research Fellowships** for students who pursue research abroad in conjunction with a Senior Essay

- Prizes for the **Promise in French Studies**, as well as the **Senior French Prize**

Learn more about Maison Française events here:

Sign up for Maison Française newsletter here:

Department of French
Spring 2027 Course Offerings

UN3244
French Thru Current Events
Samuel Skippon
MW 11:40am-12:55pm

Gain a deep understanding of the fundamental concepts structuring French society through the lens of live news. Designed as an advanced language course, we will use the study of current events to help students develop high-level French proficiency. By analyzing how major events—such as the 2027 Presidential election—unfold within the French media landscape, students refine their linguistic precision through a dynamic selection of French press, television, and digital sources. Throughout the semester, students will provide regular press reviews to practice and perfect their command of the language in a real-world context. The course explores the essential pillars of French society, including the structure of government, the role of political parties and unions, the welfare state, and the complexities of "cultural exceptionalism". Students will further develop their fluency by engaging with topics of national identity, immigration, demography, and France's evolving role in European and global politics. This course is ideal for students across CC, SIPA, GS, and Teachers College looking to consolidate advanced fluency in French.

UN3405
Read, Think, Write in French

Section 001
Pascale Crepon
MW 10:10am-11:25am

Section 002
Alexandra Borer
TR 11:40am-12:55pm

UN3405 enables students to hone and perfect their reading and writing skills while improving their ability to express and organize thoughts in French. In this engaging advanced language class, students are exposed to major texts in fields as diverse as journalism, sociology, anthropology, politics, literature, philosophy and history. Stimulating class discussions, targeted reviews of key grammatical points in context, and an array of diverse writing exercises all

contribute to strengthen students' mastery of the French language. This course also works as a bridge class between Intermediate French II and courses that focus on French and Francophone cultures, history and literature (such as 3409 and 3410). Students who take this class will be fully prepared to take advanced content classes or spend a semester in a Francophone country. This class is required for the French major and minor.

UN3409
Intro to French & Francophone History
Eleanor L Grabowski
TR 4:10pm-5:25pm

Who were the Gauls and when was Paris the "capital of modernity"? What caused the French and Haitian Revolutions? Why do the French care so much about religion, nation, empire or, for that matter, food and fashion? This class surveys the history of France and the Francophone world from the Middle Ages to the present. It provides an introduction to major events and ideas that have shaped the lives of millions of people in France and across the world, in its former colonies. From feudalism and absolutism to imperialism, capitalism, and republicanism, we explore how questions of identity and difference play out in politics, culture and society. The class is based in lecture and discussion and relies on close readings of primary sources. The course is taught entirely in French and is one of two core courses for the major and minor in French. Students are encouraged to take FREN 3405 prior to this course.

UN3410
Intro French & Francophone Literature
Aubrey A Gabel
TR 2:40pm-3:55pm

This class offers students an introduction to major works that have marked the history of literature in French from the Middle Ages to the present. Our focus will be on close reading and discussion, but works will also be placed in historical context. We will look at a variety of literary genres (sonnet, short story, comedy, autobiography, narrative poetry, novel), and our readings will be complemented by visual materials such as paintings and films. The course is taught entirely in French and is one of two core courses for the major and minor in French. Students are encouraged to take FREN 3405 prior to this course.

UN3412
Contemporary French and Francophone Literature: US Goncourt Prize Selection
Laurence Marie

TR 10:10am-11:25am

This contemporary French and Francophone literature course designed for undergraduate students is part of the "Choix Goncourt USA" (US Goncourt Prize Selection), an initiative led by the Goncourt Academy in France and the Cultural Services of the French Embassy (Villa Albertine) in the United States. The course provides students with the unique opportunity to read the latest French contemporary fiction through the lens of critical literary tools, to experience being part of a selecting literary committee, to interview outstanding contemporary writers, and to practice writing book reviews, in addition to the more traditional essays and close readings. This course is entirely conducted in French (readings, discussions, and writing).

UN3688
Writing Desire: Sex and Sexual Politics
Rj McIntyre
TR 11:40am-12:55pm

This seminar examines how French and francophone writers have given form to desire in novels, memoirs, poetry, polemic, and film from the nineteenth century to the present. French writing has been uniquely preoccupied with sexuality, its representation, its regulation, and the scandal that erupts when private life becomes public text. Flaubert was prosecuted for Madame Bovary, Colette scandalized and seduced in equal measure, and Duras made the novel a repository of erotic memory. In the twenty-first century, writers such as Édouard Louis, Abdellah Taïa, and Vanessa Springora have turned to memoir and autofiction to reckon with questions of queer desire, sexual violence, and consent. Moving across two centuries, we will read works that explore the boundaries between confession and fiction, between liberation and exploitation, and between secrecy and exposure. Authors include Flaubert, Baudelaire, Colette, Gide, Leduc, Duras, Ernaux, Taïa, Louis, and Springora alongside films by Malle and Campillo. This course will be taught in French.

AHFR2240 (NEW COURSE)
Birth, Death, and the Human
Joanna Stalnaker and Meredith Gamer
MW 10:10-11:25

In the age of AI, the humanities have a vital role to play in reflecting—slowly, deeply, and critically—on what it means to be human in a world shaped by machines. Birth and death as embodied human experiences lie at the heart of this inquiry. This interdisciplinary course treats these topics historically, looking back to the eighteenth century as a moment when modernity

brought intense new pressures to bear on the autonomy and precedence of the human. From William Hunter's scientific illustrations of human pregnancy to Denis Diderot's pronatalist Tahitian dystopia to Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, we will put a microscope to a range of images and texts that reflect on birth, death, and the human in this crucial period of transformation. In each case, our acts of collective visual analysis and close reading will lay the groundwork for a broader critical discussion of the challenges these works pose to our own understanding and lived experiences of birth and death in the twenty-first century. In keeping with the capaciousness of Enlightenment thought, this course is geared towards students interested in art history, literature, philosophy, intellectual and cultural history, and medical humanities. The course will be taught in English, with required discussion sections.

UN3995
Senior Seminar
Elisabeth Ladenson
W 4:10pm-6:00pm

In this capstone seminar for the major in French, we will read and discuss a small set of works to be determined on the first day of class, alongside related images and films. The seminar also serves as an introduction to research methods in French, with library and archival sessions. Students will develop final projects in consultation with the instructor (these projects are distinct from the Senior Essay, which is optional for majors). The Senior Seminar is required for the major and is taught in French. Minors are also encouraged to enroll.

GU4270
Theater, Controversy, and Cultural Authority in 17th- and 18th-Century France
Alexis Stanley
T 6:10-8:00pm

This seminar examines the turbulent world of French theater from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a period in which the stage became a privileged site of aesthetic innovation, ideological conflict, and political negotiation. Far from being mere entertainment, early modern French theater functioned as a laboratory for debates about morality, genre, gender, spectatorship, censorship, and the shifting boundaries between public and private spheres. Through close readings of plays, polemical pamphlets, critical prefaces, censorship dossiers, and theatrical memoirs, students will explore how dramatists, critics, and audiences used theatrical controversy both to challenge and to reinforce notions of cultural authority.

The seminar moves chronologically from the Querelle du Cid, which crystallized debates about classical decorum and the authority of the newly founded Académie française, to the theatrical politics of Louis XIV's court and commercial stages, through Régence libertinage and the emergence of bourgeois drama, and finally to the ideological stakes of Revolutionary theater. Special attention will be paid to the intersections of performance and power; the moral panic surrounding actresses; the rivalry between the Comédie-Française, Comédie-Italienne, and fairground theaters; disputes over comic vs. tragic decorum; and the Enlightenment's attempt to transform theater into a pedagogical and civic institution.

Students will engage critically with major early modern French playwrights and theorists. The course also incorporates recent scholarship in performance studies, cultural history, and gender studies to reconsider canonical controversies and recover lesser-known debates. By the end of the semester, students will develop a nuanced understanding of how theater shaped, and was shaped by, the political, philosophical, and social transformations of early modern France. This course fulfills the pre-1800 requirement for French majors and will be taught in French.

CLFR GU4716
Francophone Romance Love, Sex, Intimacy
Madeleine Dobie
M 2:10pm-4:00pm

The forms of domination and violence that have characterized the phenomenon of empire have always been interwoven with desire and various forms of intimacy. Personal relationships have been vectors of colonial power as well as sites of resistance. In this course we consider various ways in which love, desire and intimacy have emerged as questions in the French colonial context. The course covers a broad historical and geographic span stretching from the age of plantation slavery to the era of decolonization and from the Caribbean and Louisiana to Vietnam and Africa. We consider both the transmission of categories and practices across colonial contexts and historical transitions and regional specificities. The course methodology is interdisciplinary, drawing on insights from history, sociology and law. The primary lens is, however, be that of literature, a medium in which the personal dimensions of empire have often found expression. We consider how recurrent themes and figures of colonial desire and intimacy have taken shape across different genres and registers of writing.

CLFR GU4722
Annie Ernaux: Writing as a Knife
Thomas Dodman
T 10:10am-12:00pm

The forms of domination and violence that have characterized the phenomenon of empire have always been interwoven with desire and various forms of intimacy. Personal relationships have been vectors of colonial power as well as sites of resistance. In this course we consider various ways in which love, desire and intimacy have emerged as questions in the French colonial context. The course covers a broad historical and geographic span stretching from the age of plantation slavery to the era of decolonization and from the Caribbean and Louisiana to Vietnam and Africa. We consider both the transmission of categories and practices across colonial contexts and historical transitions and regional specificities. The course methodology is interdisciplinary, drawing on insights from history, sociology and law. The primary lens is, however, be that of literature, a medium in which the personal dimensions of empire have often found expression. We consider how recurrent themes and figures of colonial desire and intimacy have taken shape across different genres and registers of writing.

GU4819
Images of the French Revolution
Caroline Weber
M 4:10pm-6:00pm

Along with the American Revolution which immediately preceded it, the French Revolution was the most important political event in modern history. The bloody end of the 18th century ushered in modernity, retrospectively marking a definitive break between “early modern” and “modern” eras. The French Revolution has been endlessly and variously mythologized and analyzed, as well as depicted in polemical writings, novels, poetry, theater, film, and opera. This course is designed as an overview of responses to the ten-year event, concentrating on popular depictions in Francophone and Anglophone works. We will start with contemporary responses and move on through 19th- and 20th-century literary representations of the Revolution, including plays and films, both adaptations of literary responses and original treatments. Readings will include works by Wordsworth, Coleridge, Burke, Wollestonecraft, Sade, and Dickens, along with more recent responses.

GR8819
Sociologies of the Everyday
Aubrey A Gabel
W 2:10pm-4:00pm

What is everyday life? Is it the day-to-day grind of *métro, boulot, dodo* or the raucous pleasure of the *soixante-huitards*? The overlooked and underappreciated lives and experiences of the working class? Or the subtle changes of a single street, in a single square, over days or years? In

this course, we will consider critical investigations of the everyday in literature, film, and beyond. Mid-to-late 20th-century France saw the rise of literary practices less centered on narrative, and more on the experience of everyday life. Influenced by scholars from diverse intellectual traditions (like Marxism, history, anthropology, sociology, and psychoanalysis), authors and intellectuals directed their attention to analyzing, understanding, and documenting lived experience. This explosion of interest in the *quotidien* reversed the ethnographic gaze—compelling sociologists like Morin to direct their attention to the spaces of modern Europe. In the dynamic political and social climate of the *Trentes glorieuses,* there was much to consider, from the rise of consumer culture to the blights of the working class, to major political events of the period (such as the student-worker strikes of May '68 or the Algerian War). But above all, as the playwrights of the *Théâtre du quotidien* argued, the goal was to tell the stories of real people ("raconter la vie des 'gens'") and to offer a glimpse into their lives ("une tranche de vie"). In this literature and cultural studies course, we will consider the cross-fertilization across a variety of intellectual disciplines (notably sociology, ethnography, structuralism, and so on) provoked by interest in the everyday. We will consider how literature engaged in "*comportements analogiques*" (as Derek Schilling calls them) to sociology, undertaking its own critical investigation of *le quotidien.* Moving into the 21st century, we will consider the legacy of the everyday in contemporary French fiction, in light of major sociopolitical changes in late 20th-century France, most notably, the failure of communism and the decline of industrialism. In this era "after" (post-industrial, post-communist, post-avant-garde, or even post-political), how do authors document and interrogate daily life? With the radical globalization of culture in the digital moment, how do authors and artists apprehend the changing dynamics of lived experience?