

FRENCH

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French (Romance Languages)

"... la langue française n'est pas fixée, et ne se fixera point. Une langue ne se fixe pas. L'esprit humain est toujours en marche, ou, si l'on veut, en mouvement, et les langues avec lui. Les choses sont ainsi." ["... the French language is not fixed, and never will be. A language does not become fixed. The human spirit is always on the march, or, if you prefer, in movement, and languages with it. Things are made so."]

Victor Hugo, 1827

More than 220 million people around the world — in North and South America, the Caribbean, Europe, Africa, the Middle East, the Pacific and Indian Oceans — speak French. It is an official language in 25 countries, and the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie estimates that by 2050, over 700 million people (80% of whom will live in Africa) will speak French, and that by 2025, French will be the most common native language in Europe.

French is one of the official languages of governing institutions in diverse domains: diplomacy; international trade and economics; healthcare and science; and sports. For centuries, it has been one of the languages most associated with art, music, film, literature, cuisine, and fashion. The French language's far-reaching geographical and cultural influence helps to explain why it remains the second-most-taught language in the United States.

Indeed, connections between the United States and the French-speaking world run deep. In the late 18th century, Thomas Jefferson recommended that those studying "Mathematics, Natural philosophy, Natural history, &c." learn French (*Letter to Peter Carr, 19 Aug., 1785*). Much more recently, writer Ta-Nehisi Coates wrote of his relationship with the French language and France as both a personal project, and as part of a long history of African Americans relocating to Paris: "It occurred to me ... that France was not a thought experiment but an actual place filled with actual people whose traditions were different, whose lives really were different, whose sense of beauty was different" (*Between the World and Me*, 2015).

A major in French complements any other St. Olaf major and extends students' liberal arts education and multicultural competence. By studying the French language and Francophone cultures, civilizations, and literatures, students develop and enhance their oral and written language skills, analytical thinking, and familiarity with diverse perspectives sought by employers and graduate schools today.

The French section of the Department of Romance Languages offers a variety of courses, on campus and abroad, for beginning, intermediate, and advanced students, both majors and non-majors. To expand students' exposure to French beyond the classroom, the French program hosts a weekly French conversation table, culture table, and film series and sponsors an honor house (Maison francophone). St. Olaf benefits annually from the presence of a number of international students from Europe and Africa whose first language is French.

Overview of the French Major

In courses for the major, students refine their oral and written French, gain intercultural competence, and develop analytical skills through the study of Francophone contemporary cultures, civilizations, and literatures.

Level II courses are divided into three sequences:

- French 231, 232, and 237 are topically organized content-based courses, with lexical and grammatical work grafted onto and integrated into the study and discussion of a wide range of texts. French 231 focuses on intercultural comparison of French and American institutions such as the family, school, and immigration. In French 232, students explore the question of identity in the French-speaking world outside France. French 237, a January term immersion course offered in French-speaking Canada, examines issues of immigration and identity in Montreal and Quebec City; it may be taken in lieu of French 232.
- In 250-level courses, students hone their emerging language skills through textual analysis, writing, and discussion.
- In 270-level courses, students explore the diverse cultures and literatures of the Francophone world while continuing to refine their French language skills.

Level III courses build upon the interpretive skills and knowledge of the Francophone world acquired by students in 270-level courses. Level III courses examine a particular topic or genre as well as critical or theoretical issues associated with it through the analysis of representative literary and non-literary works.

Intended Learning Outcomes of the Major

Distinction

See Academic Honors

Off-campus Study

French faculty lead January term courses in Paris, Morocco, and Quebec. St. Olaf is affiliated closely with semester and year-long study programs in France and Cameroon. Eligible students should contact the program advisor for current information.

All French majors are urged to study in France or in another Francophone country.

All course credit from study abroad is subject to department review and approval.

- Students who participate in an approved semester-long St. Olaf study abroad program in a French-speaking country receive credit for up to two department-approved French courses toward the major.
- Students who participate in an approved year-long St. Olaf study abroad program in a French-speaking country receive credit for up to four department-approved French courses toward the major.
- Students who participate in an approved semester- or year-long St. Olaf study abroad program in a non-French-speaking country may receive credit for one course that is not taught in French but that has a significant French or Francophone focus, subject to department review and approval. Such a course would be one of the "two additional relevant courses of the student's choosing" toward the major; see requirements for the graduation major,

below and the one course allowed to count from a department outside of French.

- The total number of courses counted toward the French major from St. Olaf study abroad programs spanning two semesters or more may not exceed four. Course credits from non-St. Olaf study abroad programs must be reviewed and approved by the department for major credit in advance. All course credit from study abroad applied to the French major must meet department standards for course level and content.

St. Olaf's French Education program has been discontinued. Students interested in obtaining a K-12 French teaching license are encouraged to complete an undergraduate major in French and then apply to a graduate program that offers a Master's degree combined with teaching certification in French.

Languages Across the Curriculum (LAC)

French program faculty also participate in the Languages Across the Curriculum Program, collaborating with faculty in other departments to offer students the opportunity to use their language skills in selected courses in other departments.

Requirements Requirements for the Major

The graduation major consists of a minimum of eight (8) courses in French above FREN 112, as follows:

Code	Title	Credits
Two 250-level courses, at least one of which must be taught by a St. Olaf instructor		2.00
Two 270-level courses, at least one of which must be taught by a St. Olaf instructor		2.00
Two 300-level courses taken on-campus and taught by a St. Olaf instructor		2.00
Two additional relevant courses of the student's choosing (may include: FREN 231 (or AP 4); FREN 232 or FREN 235 (or AP 5); a maximum of one course with a significant French/Francophone focus from another department or program on campus.)		2.00
Sample Courses include:		
HIST 210	Methods Seminar: European History	
PHIL 236	History of Modern Philosophy	
PSCI 260	History of Modern Political Thought	
THEAT 270	History of Theater up to 1700	
Total Credits		8

Independent study or research may not be counted in lieu of any of the courses referred to above. Transfer credit must be approved in advance by the Department chair.

**By completing this major, the student also satisfies the OLE Core Writing in the Major requirement.*

Courses

FREN 111: *Beginning French I*

Students begin to learn French through listening, speaking, reading and writing about topics familiar to them. They study social and cultural notions inherent in the daily life of peoples in diverse Francophone communities and learn to think critically and make interdisciplinary connections and informed cross-cultural comparisons. Offered in the fall semester. Does not count toward French major. Open to students with no prior background in French, or placement.

FREN 112: *Beginning French II*

Students expand their developing language skills by continuing to listen, speak, read, and write on topics familiar to them. They continue their study of social and cultural notions inherent in the daily life of peoples in diverse Francophone communities and learn to think critically and make interdisciplinary connections and informed cross-cultural comparisons. Offered during spring semester. Does not count toward French major.

Prerequisite: FREN 111 or placement.

FREN 231: *Intermediate French I*

Through study, discussion, and analysis of a wide variety of texts, students explore specific social and cultural topics relevant to French culture yesterday and today (e.g., stereotypes, the family, education, immigration) and develop and expand their ability to listen, speak, read, and write in French while also learning specific listening and reading strategies. Explicit focus on cross-cultural comparison/contrast and analysis. Offered each semester.

Prerequisite: FREN 112 or placement.

FREN 232: *Intermediate French II*

Students explore questions of identity in the wider Francophone world through reading, discussing, and analyzing a wide variety of texts, including cultural documents, short biographical pieces, literary texts, and films. They consolidate their language skills and continue to develop their ability to analyze and communicate in French by engaging in interactive group activities, making oral presentations, and writing essays. They also work to expand their vocabulary and to review the French verb system and other key grammatical structures. Offered each semester.

Prerequisite: FREN 231 or placement.

FREN 235: *French Language and Moroccan Culture in Fez (study abroad)*

Students study French language and Moroccan culture in the Imperial City of Fez. An immersion experience that includes home stays with local French-speaking families, the course focuses on Moroccan culture, emphasizing the multicultural aspects of Morocco and facilitating student interaction with the local population. Second-year French grammar and writing and speaking skills are integrated into the reading and discussion of texts pertaining to Morocco's history and culture and their relation to present-day Morocco. Taught in French. Offered periodically during January term. Apply through Smith Center for Global Engagement.

Prerequisite: FREN 231 or placement in FREN 232.

FREN 237: *Immigration and Identity in Québec (study abroad)*

Students study French language and Québec culture through an immersion experience that includes home stays with local French-speaking families in Québec City and Montreal. Second-year French grammar and writing and speaking skills are integrated into the reading and discussion of texts focusing on the experiences and identities of immigrants to Québec and their descendants, as well as how immigration is shaping the linguistic and cultural identity of the broader Québec population. Taught in French. Offered periodically during January term. Apply through Smith Center for Global Engagement.

Prerequisites: FREN 231, placement in FREN 232, or by permission of instructor.

FREN 250: *Speaking (of) French*

This course provides an on-campus immersion experience for students interested in improving their oral language proficiency. Students engage in small and large group discussion, give individual and group oral presentations, and review grammar and registers of language. They also explore the notions of communicative competence and oral proficiency in order to become more effective speakers. Taught in French. Offered at least alternate years; one 250-level course will be offered each fall and spring semester.

Prerequisite: FREN 232 or FREN 235 or FREN 237, or equivalent.

FREN 251: *Writing French*

Students engage in intensive practice in various types of writing in French (e.g., summary, extended description, narration, and professional correspondence). Literary and non-literary texts provide topics and models. The course involves discussion, writing, and revision, and stresses advanced grammar review. Taught in French. Offered annually; one 250-level course will be offered each fall and spring semester.

Prerequisite: FREN 232 or FREN 235 or FREN 237 or equivalent.

FREN 253: *Introduction to Literary Analysis*

Students read a variety of French literary texts. The course focuses on aspects of literary analysis, terminology, methodology, and literary history. Students develop critical skills through discussion and analytical writing. Taught in French. Offered annually; one 250-level course will be offered each fall and spring semester.

Prerequisite: FREN 232 or FREN 235, or FREN 237 or equivalent.

FREN 265: *Memory Wars: Remembering and Forgetting in Post-World War II France*

How do film, literature, and the law in France address the trauma of World War II and its aftermaths? What are the "memory wars" and how are they represented and negotiated? In this course, students read short theoretical texts on memory and trauma studies and think about how theories of memory and forgetting intersect on page and screen, as well as in policy and public opinion. Students respond to novels and films and analyze historical flashpoints and cultural interpretations over time. Taught in English. Offered periodically. May count toward the French major (see instructor).

Prerequisite: WRIT 120, equivalent, or permission of instructor.

FREN 271: *The Francophone World*

Students explore French-speaking regions of the world outside France through the close reading, discussion, and analysis of literary and non-literary texts as well as other cultural artifacts. Readings, discussions, viewings, and written and oral assignments are organized around the exploration of specific topics or themes. May be repeated if geographical region is different. Taught in French. Offered at least alternate years. Counts toward Africa and the African Diaspora concentration when topic is Francophone Africa.

Prerequisite: minimum of one 250-level course (two recommended).

FREN 272: *Contemporary France*

Students are introduced to contemporary French political, economic and social institutions and/or issues through close textual analysis of articles from the contemporary French press and other media (e.g., the internet, cinema). Students read, analyze, discuss and write in French on a wide variety of non-literary topics. Taught in French. Offered alternate years.

Prerequisite: minimum of one 250-level course (two recommended).

FREN 273: *Period Studies*

Students explore a particular period or century through examination of selected literary and non-literary works within their socio-historical and cultural contexts. Coursework includes discussion, analysis, and interpretation of representative works. Sample topics: "19th-Century French Literature," "La Belle Epoque," and "20th-Century French Literature." May be repeated if period is different. Taught in French. Offered at least alternate years.

Prerequisite: minimum of one 250-level course (two recommended).

FREN 275: *Interdisciplinary French Studies in Paris (study abroad)*

Students delve into advanced language work and on-the-spot investigation of French culture, past and present, including theater, film, visual arts, the French court, and the medieval cathedral through background readings and visits to important monuments. Students read, discuss, see, and critique plays ranging from the classical to the contemporary. Taught in French. Offered alternate years during January term. Apply through Smith Center for Global Engagement.

Prerequisite: One French 250-level course (two recommended).

FREN 294: *Academic Internship***FREN 298: *Independent Study*****FREN 372: *Topics in Francophone Studies***

Students explore a specified topic or theme in language, in literature, or in culture/civilization, or in a combination of these, through close reading, discussion, analysis, and interpretation of selected literary and/or non-literary works. Recent topics include "War and Terrorism," "Crime and Memory in Fiction," and "Translation Studies." May be repeated if topic is different. Taught in French. Offered annually.

Prerequisite: minimum of one 270-level course.

FREN 373: *Genre Studies*

Students study a particular genre or medium (e.g., novel, play, poetry, short story, film) from a variety of periods and authors, with particular emphasis on form. Coursework includes close reading, discussion, in-depth analysis, and interpretation of works. Recent topics: "Autobiography," Contemporary Francophone Film," and "The Algerian Novel," May be repeated if genre is different. Taught in French. Offered annually.

Prerequisite: minimum of one 270-level course.

FREN 394: Academic Internship**FREN 398: Independent Research****FREN 399: Seminar in Francophone Studies**

In an integrative seminar, students examine specific issues and conceptual notions central to the understanding of the French language and/or Francophone literatures and cultures. Coursework includes readings, critical analysis, research methods, student reports, and substantive projects. May be repeated if topic is different. Taught in French. Offered periodically.

Prerequisite: minimum of one level III FREN course.

Plan of Study

French Major - Plan of Study

This is a sample plan that meets the prescribed requirements for this major at St. Olaf. This tool is meant as a guide and does not replace working closely with the student's academic advisor.

This plan is for a student who places into French at St. Olaf at the 231 level. Students can major in French whether they start at the beginner level (FREN 111) or have prior experience in the language.

All students with prior experience in French must complete the **placement exam** in early Summer before their first year.

Course	Title	Credits
First Year		
Fall Semester		
FYS 120 or WRIT 120	First-Year Seminar (or Conversation Program) or Writing and Rhetoric	1.00
FREN 231	Intermediate French I (depending on placement)	1.00
Credits		2
Spring Semester		
WRIT 120 or FYS 120	Writing and Rhetoric (or Conversation Program) or First-Year Seminar	1.00
FREN 232	Intermediate French II (depending on placement)	1.00
Credits		2
Sophomore Year		
Fall Semester		
FREN 250 - Level Elective Course		1.00
Credits		1
Spring Semester		
FREN 250 - Level Elective Course or Semester Abroad (2 credits towards major)		1.00
Credits		1
Junior Year		
Fall Semester		
FREN 270-Level Elective Course		1.00
Credits		1
Spring Semester		
FREN 270-Level Elective Course or Semester Abroad (2 credits towards major)		1.00
Credits		1
Senior Year		
Fall Semester		
FREN 300-level Elective Course		1.00
Credits		1
Spring Semester		
FREN 300-level Elective Course		1.00
Credits		1
Total Credits		10

Students must successfully complete the equivalent of 35 St. Olaf credits through a combination of full-credit and fractional-credit courses to earn the Bachelor of Arts.

Visit the French department webpage for more information.

Faculty

Section Head , 2025-2026**Livi C. Yoshioka-Maxwell**

Associate Professor of Romance Languages - French

Cédric Briand

Visiting Assistant Professor of Romance Languages - French

Sean P. Killackey

Associate Professor of Practice in Romance Languages - French

Maria F. Vendetti

Associate Professor of Romance Languages - French

20th- and 21st-century French and Francophone literature; literature and testimony during and after the Algerian War of Independence; literary and filmic representations of torture, trauma, and war

Madeleine Wolf

Assistant Professor of Romance Languages - French