

French

at Centre College

Denis Diderot, the 18th-century French philosopher, said we must change the common way of thinking (“*changer la façon commune de penser*”). If you study French at Centre, you will accept his challenge. You will change your mind. You will study a melodic language with a grammar remarkably different from that of English, but with a vocabulary that has enormously enriched our own since Chaucer.

How does Centre approach teaching and learning in French?

The study of French is more than the study of language. It is about people and places, too. Our students travel to France and French-speaking regions. They harvest grapes and climb mountains. They study in our abroad program in Strasbourg (on the Rhine). Recently, many French majors have won the prestigious Fulbright scholarships for study overseas and have been named teaching assistants by the French government in places like Dijon, Rouen, Clermont-Ferrand, Paris, and Strasbourg.

The French program at Centre has two primary goals. The first is to teach within a context, helping students understand that the French language is linked to the history and culture of France. The second is to compare French culture with American culture, giving students a new appreciation for their own language and history.

Beyond these broad goals, our French program is marked by the skill of our professors. Professors Keffer and Mothion have served as residential directors for our Centre-in-Europe program in Strasbourg and with short-term programs abroad. Their enthusiasm for French has prompted them to conduct all departmental business in French, speak with French majors and minors in French, and enjoy meeting students in the library or the coffee shop for a conversation *en français*.

On campus, our majors and minors tutor students, design Web sites for our courses, meet with faculty in round-table discussions, and do independent research in the John C. Young honors program. Frequently among the best at Centre—including the 1999, 2000, and 2002 valedictorians—they currently study for master’s degrees and doctorates at Purdue, at Vanderbilt, at the University of Virginia, and at the University of North Carolina.

The curriculum for French at Centre is new and newly strengthened by a common vision. Initial courses emphasize connections to Strasbourg and the yearly Tour de France bicycle race. Second-year courses take the form of workshops in the fall and spring, where students gain practical experience in French history, painting, cinema, music, grammar, or current political events. At the next level, our program highlights conversation and composition.

During the January CentreTerm, students can travel to France, study the Celtic culture of Brittany or recent cinema, or engage in internships and other immersion experiences.

For the advanced level we have chosen the following themes and questions to guide our work together over the next years: French gastronomy and the Art of Love, the theater of Molière and the representation of Paris, the impression and the dilemmas of Existentialism. Senior majors participate in a final seminar where they discuss topics of mutual interest with all French faculty members.



Harry Gerard
Centre Class of 2010
French Major

“The study abroad program in Strasbourg gives Centre students a chance to live with French-speaking families. This is an ideal opportunity to learn about French culture while improving communication skills.”

What opportunities do students have for study abroad?

Centre is strongly committed to international study, and the College maintains a permanent, residential program in Strasbourg, France. Students apply for a semester of study based in Strasbourg, and a senior faculty member lives in Strasbourg for the semester to coordinate the program and teach courses. A French native also coordinates and teaches in the program. Most students live in apartments, although some opt to live with local families on a home-stay basis. Virtually all participants travel extensively in Europe during the course of their semester.

Internships

An internship provides valuable experience that is important in securing future employment. French majors have participated in internships in Besançon and in Francophone areas such as the Central African Republic, as well as at the Centre de Linguistique Appliquée.

Who teaches French at Centre?

ALLISON CONNOLLY (Ph.D., University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill), Assistant Professor of French, winner of Tanner Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching at University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, specialist in contemporary Francophone literature.

KENNETH KEFFER JR. (Ph.D., University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill), Stodghill Professor of French and German, specialist in the essays of Montaigne.

PATRICE MOTHION (M.A. in English, Université de Caen, France; Ph.D. in French, City University of New York), Associate Professor of French, former director of Virginia Governor's School Académie Française, specialist in Balzac, Brittany, and Normandy.

Additional Faculty

MARIE VAUBOURG MANHEIM (M.A. in English and French), teacher in Kentucky Governor's Scholars Program, specialist in the Lorraine and Alsace.

What do Centre's French students do after they graduate?

Many of our French students complete a double major, choosing another field to complement their studies in French. This approach provides wider skills and greater flexibility for job-hunting after graduation. Here is a sampling of recent graduates:

- Audrey Rogers '08 (Fulbright in Chateauroux, France)
- Rachel Tapley '07 (Fulbright in Dijon, France; graduate school in French literature at University of Wisconsin-Madison.)
- Sherri Rose '04 (graduate school in French at the University of Virginia)
- John Forsythe '03, Nathan Henceroth '03 (both received teaching assistantships from the French government for 2003-04 and 2004-05)
- Jessica Hunt '03 (Fulbright in Amiens, France; law school)
- Sarah Eskridge '02 (professional French master's program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison)
- Kate Lacy '02 (valedictorian, John C. Young Scholar, Phi Beta Kappa)
- John Goodman '00 (valedictorian, Phi Beta Kappa; Fulbright Scholar in La Réunion, law school)

Visit Centre

The best way to judge Centre is to tour the campus, attend a class, talk to the professors and students, and spend the night in a residence hall. We invite you to visit and encourage you to contact the Admission Office if you have any questions.



For further information about French at Centre, write, call, or e-mail

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French Web page

www.centre.edu/web/academic/majors/french.html

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