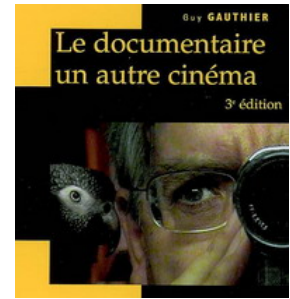




## French and Francophone Studies Oral History Documentary



Instead of a thesis, majors in French and Francophone can complete an oral history documentary project to fulfill the capstone experience under the close guidance of a member of the department. Students also get an academic credit for it. We offer the following advice so that this exciting and challenging experience may be as successful and rewarding as possible.



**1. Process and product.** The oral history documentary capstone in French and Francophone Studies is NOT defined as a product labored over in isolation and handed in on some pre-determined due date. It is a process of **intellectual exploration and revision**, particularly given the challenges of engaging with members of a Francophone community in Maine or abroad, master basic documentary technics of recording and editing, being aware of the ethical issues when working on and with the stories and lives of others, and write a self-reflexive assessment of your documentary project. All these steps take time and awareness. It is important to plan ahead.

**2. First important steps.** In order to assist you better, we impose several parameters so that gradual progress is made, particularly in the initial phase during which you need to identify community members who will participate in your documentary project and become familiar with recording technics and ethical consideration related to documentary filmmaking. Based on the focus of your project and the anticipated interviews you will conduct and record, your advisor will suggest 2-3 short readings on documentary making and working with human subjects. One short resource we recommend, is a 8 minute video on “Ethical Editing” from the IWitness project created by USC and the Shoah Foundation: <http://iwwitness.usc.edu/SFI/sites/university/> (once on the home page, click on the image “Videos” and click once on the red arrow on the right to access the video on “Ethical Editing”).

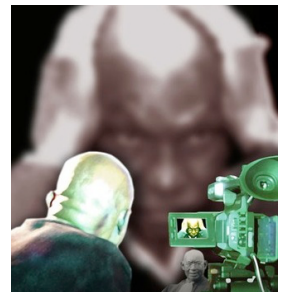
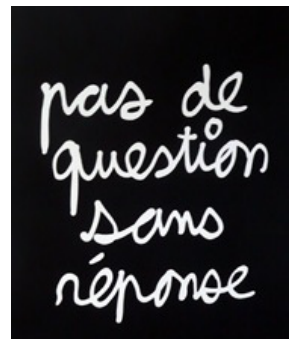
**3. Bates College Institutional Review Board (IRB).** In order to conduct your project ethically and in accordance with Bates IRB rules, you must first complete the National Institute of Health’s Protecting Human Research Participants online course which take approximately 3 hours. Once you have your certification of completion and have identified your project and the community persons you will interview and film, your oral history documentary project must be approved by Bates College IRB.

For all info, visit Bates IRB site:  
<http://abacus.bates.edu/irb/index.html>

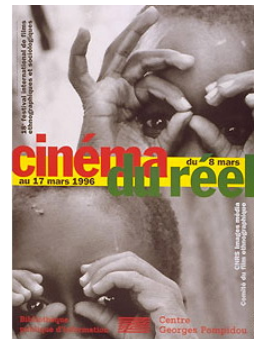


**4. Trajectory.** It is best to start putting thoughts on paper earlier rather than later in order to think and reason in writing even before you start the IRB process and even more so shooting and editing your documentary. As you will need to turn in a self-analytical paper evaluating the process of your oral history research, analyzing how the interviews went and what guided your editing selection, reordering and choices, it is useful to practice the grammatical and analytical skills that will bloom over the course of the semester. To this end, here are several due dates:

- **Junior year, spring and summer: identify a topic:** Ideally at this time, you are thinking ahead to capstone and preparing ideas. Certain students studying abroad have used their work from that experience, developing it further. If you plan to conduct an oral history project within a Francophone community abroad, you can apply for a Barlow fund to return abroad during Thanksgiving or the Winter break. Planning ahead is always key and here even more so. It is never too early to be thinking about topics. With email, you are never too far from a potential faculty advisor. Call in please.
- **September: Oral History Doc project brief description and short bibliography:** For this meeting, have with you a brief paragraph describing the general topic and as coherent a thesis as possible about the works you wish to explore. Also, include a preliminary bibliography of at least 5 works.
- **November: Individual Meeting with advisor and chair:** Individual meeting with your oral history advisor & the Chair of French and Francophone Studies to prepare submission of the first rough cut of your documentary
- **November: For Students who plan to do an Oral History Doc in the Winter:** For students planning to do their capstone in the Winter meet with your advisor and start the conversation to identify a topic.
- **November: Submission of the first version of your documentary.**
- **December: Due date for second version of the Documentary and first draft of the self-reflection (4-5 pages):** You will have time to revise up until the end of finals week, but having this draft will assure that you are not handing in unedited doc or unseen prose at the final hour.
- **December: For Students who plan to do an Oral History Doc in the Winter: Brief description and short bibliography**
- Submit a brief paragraph describing the general topic and as coherent a thesis as possible about the works you wish to explore. Also, include a preliminary bibliography of at least 5 works.
- **December: Due date for the final version of the Documentary DVD accompanied by the self-reflection (10 pages)**
- **February 26-March 2: Individual Meeting with adviser and chair:** Individual meeting with your oral history advisor & the Chair of French and Francophone Studies to prepare submission of the first rough cut of your documentary



- **March: Submission of the first version of your documentary**
- **March: Mount David Summit FFS Panel:** FFS majors who have chosen to do an oral history documentary project are required to present an excerpt of their documentary and their research on an FFS panel.
- **April: Due date for second version of the Documentary and first draft of the self-reflection (4-5 pages):** You will have time to revise up until the end of finals week, but having this draft will assure that you are not handing in unedited doc or unseen prose at the final hour.
- **April: Due date for the final version of the Documentary DVD accompanied by the self-reflection (10 pages)**



**5. Thoughts on topics.** It is a misguided conception that just because something is filmed, recorded or written in French it may count as an oral history project in French. We are a faculty trained in literary, cinematic, and cultural studies and it is usually through the analytical lenses of literary, cinematic and critical theory that we engage our material and a wide array of topics encompassing gender issues, national identity, immigration trends and cultural encounters, social transformation and the raise of new cultural practices and ways of seeing.



While our work often is in dialogue with the discourses of anthropology, sociology, natural sciences, history and art and visual culture, our theses tend to remain embedded in a French and Francophone tradition of cultural representation, be it fiction, poetry, documentary film, critical theory or other. It is best to check in early with your (potential) advisor to see if your direction meshes with their thinking and expertise.

In the case of oral history project and documentary filming and editing, it is worthwhile to engage early in ethical discussion regarding the art of interviewing and the range of issues to consider in the editing phase to remain true to their voices and stories of the people who accepted to take part to your project.

**6. French.** One of the most salient features of both your major in French and Francophone Studies capstone experience is the development of analytical thinking and fluency in a second language. Producing in certain cases subtitles as well a self-analytical essay in French can be both exhilarating and daunting.

- Seek the assistance of our foreign language teaching assistant for help. Our International TA is not on call: try to respect their office hours and plan ahead when making appointments.
- Avail yourself of the style sheet for paper writing available through the department: it is taken from the Collins Robert French-English dictionary and can be useful in finding helpful French phrases and expressions that help unlock certain ways into your arguments.

- Use French spell check. It exists. It is very discouraging for your advisor to have to wade through spelling mistakes that a machine could take care of ahead of time.
- Stop in at ARC. While there may not always be someone on call who knows French well, they can often be of great help conceptually.
- Careful and voracious readers make for better writers. Pay attention to the style and syntax of the authors that you use for your self-analytical essay (both primary and secondary sources). Take note of recurring mistakes and of exceptionally clear and successful passages in your writing and learn from them.



**7. Don't be a stranger.** No news is no news. You should schedule a weekly meeting with your advisor to be checking in and should not avoid contact if and when you hit a difficult period. We are here to help. This is a commitment for us as well and remaining engaged and consistent is the best policy, even when you reach those inevitable moments of (temporary!) despair.



**A vos cameras et  
à vos claviers!**

**Silence on tourne  
mais plus en rond !**



**Your oral history documentary project should demonstrate some of the following analytical principles that guide research in French and Francophone Studies**

- cultural competency: ability to evaluate and interpret cultural differences beyond stereotype
- ability to contextualize francophone cultures socio-historically
- ability to describe, narrate, express abstract ideas with advanced proficiency in French
- proficiency in research and citation in the field
- proficiency in “reading”: written texts, film, media, photography, theatre
- evidence of a critical, methodological “toolbox” for appreciating, decoding, analyzing, francophone texts
- knowledge of the history of francophone world, across time periods and geographic and political location
- self-knowledge and awareness: self-reflexiveness about one's own subject position and that of others