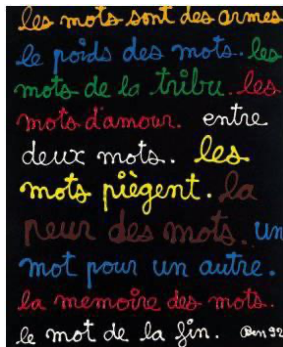




French and Francophone Studies Thesis Guidelines



A thesis is not required for the major in French; students may opt to write a senior essay or complete an oral history project to fulfill the capstone experience. Many majors, however, embrace the thesis experience for the opportunity it provides to research and write in depth (and in French) under the close guidance of a member of the department. You also get 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 thesis 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 grammar, syntax and vocabulary that extended writing in a second language entails. The thesis culture at Bates is often contrary to this approach: your friends may regale you with tales of torturous, sleepless nights, tapping away under mountains of dog-eared books and empty coffee cups. Such a life does not produce cogent, readable, French prose. Plan ahead.

2. Trajectory. In order to assist you better in avoiding this scenario, we impose several parameters so that gradual progress is made, particularly in the initial phases of the writing. It is best to start putting thoughts on paper earlier rather than later in order to think and reason in writing and practice the grammatical and analytical skills that will bloom over the course of the semester.



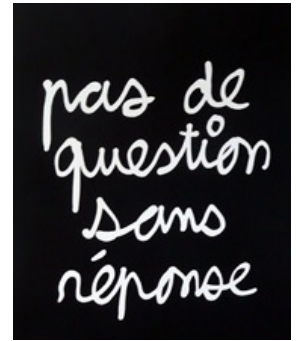
3. Junior year, spring and summer: identify a topic:

Ideally at this time, you are thinking ahead to thesis and preparing ideas. Students studying abroad often use their work from that experience, developing it further. They may become enamored of a certain author, for example, a literary movement or cultural issue that they wish to explore in depth. 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.

4. **Thoughts on topics.** It is a misguided conception that just because something is written in French it may count as a thesis 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.



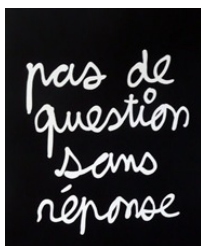
While our work often is in dialogue with the discourses of anthropology, sociology, natural sciences, history and art and visual culture, our theses tend to remain embedded in a French and Francophone tradition of cultural representation, be it fiction, poetry, documentary film, critical theory or other.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



5. **French.** One of the most salient features of both your major in French and your thesis experience is the development of analytical thinking and fluency in a second language. Producing a lengthy work in French can be both exhilarating and daunting.



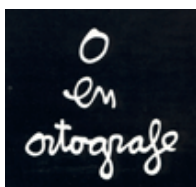
- Seek the assistance of our foreign language teaching assistant for help. She/He is not on call: try to respect their office hours and plan ahead when making appointments. They are there to assist you, NOT to write your thesis. It is easy to tell when you've given your voice over to someone else. Hang on! Work with each other to craft your own voice and analytical framework!



- 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 the Peer Writing Center and or the Writing Workshop. 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 are reading (both primary and secondary sources). Take note of recurring mistakes and of exceptionally clear and successful passages in your writing and learn from them.

6. **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 claviers!

Allez-y!...



Your thesis 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