

FRENCH/FRANCOPHONE STUDIES, PHD

From Old French to Louisiana Creole, from codex to hypertext, graduate study at Tulane fosters a comprehensive and integrative approach to French and Francophone Studies. With an international faculty covering a broad range of research and teaching interests, our program allows students to choose from a rich array of courses and encourages them to approach the study of language, literature and civilization through transhistorical and cross-cultural perspectives. This kind of comparative engagement provides students with intellectual depth and interdisciplinary dynamism.

In New Orleans and Louisiana, French is a living language. In no other state in the Union – in no other city – is French culture so integrally built into the social fabric and its heritage still so vitally in play. The strong appeal of our program both nationally and internationally demonstrates that place matters: students who choose Tulane understand the compelling logic of pursuing their passion in a city so thoroughly steeped in its Francophone past. Located in what is often referred to as “the northernmost city of the Caribbean,” Tulane is at the crossroads of the two Americas and the larger Atlantic world, and in proximity to Haiti and the French Antilles. With the cultural history of French in our city and region, a living tradition of *Francophonie*, and the presence and activities of the French Consul General, our city is an ideal place for French study.

Students at Tulane have unique opportunities for exploring the French, Creole, and Cajun cultures of Louisiana. Our location affords us a privileged vantage point from which to observe other situations of localized or marginalized languages and cultures in their relationship to broader, often hegemonic forces: France’s regional languages (Occitan, Breton, Alsatian, etc.) in conflict with the official language revered as an inviolable symbol of national unity; immigrant cultural practices (such as the wearing of the veil) in conflict with French cultural norms; creole languages stigmatized as corrupt forms of the standard, etc. In our various fields of research, a focus on the local provides both a revealing lens through which to view the global and a healthy check on universalizing theories of culture and language.

The program’s areas of strength include Francophone, Afro-Caribbean, and Mediterranean studies, medieval studies, cultural studies and cultural history, critical theory, political theory, gender studies, film theory, creole linguistics, European and African philosophy, performance studies and poetics.

Financial support includes full tuition remission and a stipend for up to five years of Ph.D. study.

To apply, please go to: <https://applygrad.tulane.edu/apply/>

Requirements

The Ph.D. builds on a solid core of course work in French and Francophone Studies and includes as well a concentration in an interdisciplinary subfield that may be fulfilled entirely or in part through courses taken in other departments or programs. The degree is interdisciplinary and integrative, drawing on diverse fields for a broad methodological base.

Course Work

Students must complete a minimum of 54 credit hours, including transfer work and work already presented for the M.A. degree. For students entering with a B.A., it is expected that course work will be completed by the beginning of the third year of study. Students will graduate with a Ph.D. in French and Francophone Studies and a concentration in one of five integrated areas:

- Visual cultures and technologies – Courses in film, urbanism, new media, performance
- European studies – Courses in human rights; political, cultural and institutional histories; Islam in Europe; medical anthropology; and ethno-psychiatry
- Francophone colonial and post-colonial studies – Courses in Atlantic, Caribbean and African area studies; Creole(s) and creolization; Arabic and Islamic studies
- Language and identity – Courses in theory, philosophy, ethics and law, minority languages and identities, world languages and literatures
- Linguistics – Courses to include Survey of French Linguistics (FREN 6070), History of the French Language (FREN 6210), Field Research on French in Louisiana (FREN 6110), Special Problems in French Linguistics (FREN 6910), Translation Theory and Practice (FREN 6160), and courses in the Linguistics program (any course with an LING prefix).

Students entering the program with the M.A. should declare their concentration at the end of their second semester on campus. B.A. students who will be continuing on to the Ph.D. should inform the Graduate Director of their choice of concentration when completing the M.A. degree.

Concentration in one of the four subfields will be constituted by successful completion of two graduate courses on topics related to the subfield. Students are also expected to demonstrate knowledge of their chosen field of concentration in the Ph.D. qualifying exams. One or both of the required courses may be taken in correlate departments or programs. Each semester, students at the Ph.D. level are allowed to take at most one course outside the Department of French and Italian.

FREN 6050 Teaching French (3 c.h.) and FREN 6150 Introduction to Critical Theory (3 c.h.) are required of all students and must be taken in the first semester that they are offered after the student enters the program.

Beyond the 3 credits of 7000-level courses required for the M.A., doctoral candidates who begin the program with a B.A. must complete two additional 7000-level courses (that is, 6 credits of seminar-level courses). Students entering the program with an M.A. from another institution must complete two 7000-level courses in the Tulane program.

During the course of their graduate study, Ph.D. students cannot take more than 3 hours (1 course) in independent study. Independent studies courses are approved only in exceptional cases; students are encouraged to fulfill their course requirements through regularly scheduled courses.

Ph.D. Qualifying Exams

For students entering the program with a B.A., two of three written Ph.D. preliminary exams will be taken in the Spring semester of the student's third year, no later than two weeks before the end of classes. The specific date will be determined on an annual basis by the Graduate Advisor. The third, self-designed, exam will be taken in the second full week of classes of the Fall semester of the student's fourth year.

Students entering the program with an M.A. will take their first two exams in the Spring semester of their second year, no later than two weeks before the end of classes. The specific date will be determined on an annual basis by the Graduate Advisor. These students will take the third, self-designed, exam in the second full week of classes of the Fall semester of their third year.

In the first week of the Fall semester prior to the semester in which the student plans to take the first two exams, they must notify the Director of Graduate Studies. The Director of Graduate Studies will then contact the student's prospective dissertation advisor, who will serve as head of the examining committee and will select two additional readers.

Students will sit for three written examinations and an oral examination. The oral examination will normally take place in the week following the first two written exams. All three written exams are take-home and open-book. The questions for the written exams normally will be made available to the student on a Friday morning at 9:00 a.m., and the answers must be submitted electronically to the examining committee by 5:00 p.m. of the following Monday. It is expected that the answers be both synthetic and analytical, and that they demonstrate familiarity with the primary and secondary texts on the reading list independently of recourse to lengthy quotation and paraphrase. All sources consulted must be duly cited.

For each written exam, the student will answer either one or two questions. Students will normally write from 3500 to 4200 words (i.e., 10 to 12 pages in 12-point Times New Roman font with one-inch page margins) for each exam. If an exam consists of two separate questions, the 10 to 12 pages should be divided more or less evenly between them.

The first written examination will cover a particular century. The second written examination will cover either a century or one of the four sub-fields listed above. The third, self-designed, written examination will be based on a reading list composed by the student in close consultation with their prospective dissertation director. The reading list for the self-designed exam should not significantly overlap with the reading list for either of the other two written exams and should be considered a blueprint for the dissertation bibliography.

The oral examination will last for approximately one hour, the first twenty minutes of which will consist of the student's analysis of a literary text. The analysis should not be read but presented extemporaneously from a copy of the primary text along with an outline or notes prepared ahead of time by the student. The remainder of the oral exam will cover the same material that was initially tested on the two written exams.

The passage for textual analysis is chosen by the committee head in a conversation with the student in the semester prior to the examination semester. The student will not know ahead of time the precise work from which the text for analysis will be drawn, but will be provided with the text immediately upon his or her completion of the written exams.

For all preliminary exams, the language of examination will be alternately French and English. The first exam will be written in one of those two languages and the second exam will be written in the other. The self-designed exam is to be written in the same language as the dissertation. The opening portion of the oral exam (the textual analysis and subsequent questions or comments pertaining to the analysis) will be presented in French. The remaining portion of the oral exam will be conducted primarily in French, but examiners may also ask questions in English, particularly when the reading material being tested is in English. When students announce their intention to sit for the Ph.D. exams, they should remember to inform the Director of Graduate Studies of their choice of language for each of the written exams.

All examinations will be evaluated on a Pass/Fail basis, and a failed exam may be re-taken only once, normally within two to three weeks of the original exam. Students must pass all four exams, written and oral, in order to be admitted to candidacy. They will be informed of the result of the oral examination immediately following that exam, and they will learn of the committee's decision regarding the first two written exams, including any need for re-takes, only after all sections of the exam (both oral and written) have been completed. Once the student has passed the self-designed exam, s/he will meet with the members of the examining committee to discuss the answer(s) to the exam and obtain guidance for writing the prospectus.

Defense of the dissertation prospectus

The dissertation prospectus should be defended by December 15 of the semester in which the student sits for the self-designed exam. The prospectus is approximately 10 to 15 pages in length, including a supporting bibliography that convincingly lays the ground for subsequent dissertation research. The student should be familiar with the works listed in the bibliography and be able to explain their relevance to the research project. After summarizing the prospectus, the student will answer questions from the faculty. The prospectus is to be approved by the dissertation director (first

reader) and by two other professors serving as second and third readers. All committee members and all full-time faculty of the Department of French and Italian are invited to attend the prospectus defense, which is to be held during the academic year, but not during semester finals or between semesters. The prospectus must be submitted to readers no less than two weeks before the date of the defense, with a copy left in the conference room for other faculty to read.

Upon successful defense of the prospectus, the student should ask readers to sign the form provided by the School of Liberal Arts (<https://liberalarts.tulane.edu/academics/graduate-studies/resources> (<https://liberalarts.tulane.edu/academics/graduate-studies/resources/>)).

Reading knowledge examinations

Students must demonstrate by examination reading competence in a second foreign language (beyond the language presented for the Master's) that is pertinent to their field of study. Students normally choose from among Arabic, Creole, Spanish, Italian, Latin, German, and medieval Occitan, but they may petition to have another language accepted if they can clearly demonstrate that it will be of significant use in their research.

Language competence may be demonstrated by passing an examination administered by the department at Tulane in which the language is taught by standardized (ETS) examination, by official record of competence demonstrated elsewhere at the graduate level, or by satisfactory performance in a 6000- or 7000-level course taught in the language.

In the summer, the Graduate School may offer reading-competence courses in languages for which there is adequate demand. Satisfactory performance on an exam given at the end of the course fulfills the reading-competence requirement for the degree. However, students may, if they wish, opt to take one of the external exams (as listed in the paragraph above) rather than sit for the in-course examination.

As an alternative to demonstrating competence in this second foreign language (actually a fourth language, beyond French, English, and a third language for the M.A.), students may elect to do advanced coursework in the same language in which they demonstrated competence for the M.A. Successful completion of a graduate course requiring reading, speaking, writing, and lectures in that language will be accepted by the department in lieu of an examination in an additional language.

Students who wish to conduct research in the early periods, as well as those who wish to pursue topics in other fields requiring special linguistic competence, are strongly urged to consult with faculty members in the relevant fields so that they may plan which languages to study.

Defense of the dissertation

The oral defense of the dissertation, held after the dissertation has been approved by all three committee members (or, if necessary, by two out of the three), will be open to all members of the committee and to all full-time faculty of the Department of French and Italian.

Contact

For more information, contact the School of Liberal Arts (<https://liberalarts.tulane.edu/french-italian/contact-us/>).