

A GUIDE TO INDEPENDENT STUDY IN FRENCH

The College of Wooster

Philosophy of Independent Study

Howard Lowry, who founded the Independent Study program at Wooster, summarized its challenge simply: “It invites all students to come to their best in terms of their own talents.” The philosophy underlying this challenge is summarized by Robert Bonthius, James Davis, and J. Garber Drushal in their study, The Independent Study Program in the United States (NY: Columbia University Press, 1957):

The purpose of higher education is to stimulate and assist growth. . . . Facts may stimulate thought, but thought is not imparted. That is the individual’s reaction. Education is an active, not a passive, process, in that it does not consist in receiving but in reacting to information, ideas, concepts. Independent thinking is a difficult art but it is the primary goal of the educative process. (vii)

The Department of French views Independent Study as a means of enhancing students’ abilities as readers and writers of texts and enlarging their critical understanding of language itself and of writers and their cultural contexts. Independent Study marks the culmination of undergraduate study and the point at which students should be prepared to draw on the critical and theoretical insights achieved in courses and their own reading to design an original research project that will demonstrate an understanding of texts, culture, and language. The Department of French expects that Independent Study will help students to develop intellectual curiosity and self-discipline, to analyze texts with greater methodological and theoretical sophistication, to sharpen their critical and analytical skills, to increase their ability to express ideas effectively, and to come to understand how language and texts function to structure belief and knowledge and to shape both individual lives and cultural and historical contexts.

Thesis Prerequisite: French 401 (Junior Independent Study)

French 401 (junior independent study) is a prerequisite for beginning the senior independent study project. The course is normally taken in the spring of the junior year or, for students who spend the spring semester of the junior year off campus, in the fall of the junior year. Students who spend the entire junior year off campus should plan to complete 401 in the spring of the sophomore year. Although the course is generally structured as a tutorial and conducted independently under the direction of a departmental advisor, all students will be introduced to pertinent resources, methodologies, and bibliographies useful in the study of Francophone texts, culture, and language so that all French majors, whatever the nature of their anticipated senior projects, develop a general background in the research methods of the discipline. One long paper (25-30 pages)--or

an acceptable alternative project--is also required. The long paper may be a self-contained analysis or it may explore an area that the student wishes to examine further in the Senior Thesis. Students must select topics that can be essentially supported by the resources available in Andrews library or through the library resources of CONSORT or the OHIOLINK. Although students will usually select topics that allow them to benefit from or to build upon previous course work, 401 may, in certain cases, provide an opportunity for students to fill in gaps in their previous course work. Students who complete French 401 in the sophomore year may wish to identify a project that allows them to improve their linguistic competence; translation projects (from English to French), for example, may be of particular benefit. All work for 401 is completed in French.

Double majors must complete two courses in 401, one in each of the departments in which they have elected to major.

In truly exceptional circumstances and with prior approval of the Chair of the department, students may be allowed to substitute course work completed off campus for French 401, but the project itself will be completed under the close supervision (by e-mail, mail, and phone) of a College of Wooster faculty member. All stages of the project, including choice of topic, methodology, and preliminary bibliography must be submitted to and approved by the on-campus faculty advisor, who must also read and approve the final paper (25-30 pages), both in rough draft(s) and in its final form. The paper should be submitted in rough draft to the Wooster advisor prior to the conclusion of the off-campus course; and the revised final paper is due, at the latest, by Friday of the first week of the senior year.

Students are encouraged to talk with various faculty prior to the semester in which they plan to register for French 401, but the final assignment of the 401 advisor will be made by the Chair of the department in light of student interest, faculty expertise, and teaching loads. Advisor assignments will be made, at the latest, by the middle of the second week of classes.

All French majors are expected to demonstrate competence in written French. Upon completing French 220, French 224, or, in exceptional cases, French 216, students should consult with the professor of the course to see if the quality of their written work qualifies them for departmental proficiency. Students may also demonstrate competence by passing an essay examination and submitting a writing sample; the essay examination will not test knowledge of any particular subject matter but only competence in written French. Majors who have not met departmental proficiency requirements by the beginning of the senior year must register for French 203 (if appropriate), French 316 (if offered), or a tutorial in advanced composition in the fall of the senior year.

Assessment Criteria for French 401 (Junior I.S.)

Although departmental assessment should not be confused with the evaluation of student work, the department's assessment criteria for French 401 provide helpful insights into expectations for the final essay:

Content

- Shows evidence of ability to use sources in the original language
- Reveals careful study of relevant secondary sources and background contexts
- Includes careful analysis of primary texts
- Includes smooth integration of analysis of primary texts and knowledge of secondary theoretical and critical sources
- Represents a significant and appropriate culmination of student learning in French at this stage of study

Methodology

- Has an original and substantial thesis statement
- Shows a clear and coherent intellectual framework grounded in the methodology of the subfield (e.g., Literature; Cultural Studies; Film Studies; Theoretical or Applied Linguistics)
- Has a clear and logical structure
- Reflects sustained, rigorous engagement with the subject matter

Quality of the Written Product

- Shows firm control of the morphology, syntax, and writing conventions of standard French
- Develops an argument effectively
- Sustains the methodological analysis throughout
- Is edited carefully to assure mechanical, syntactic, and stylistic correctness (e.g., smooth transitions, elimination of wordiness and redundancies, strong introduction and conclusion, etc.)
- Reflects control of appropriate terminology

Advisor Assignments

During the first few days of the senior year--and, whenever possible, during the spring semester of the junior year--students should discuss possible projects with the Chair of the department and with all other members of the French faculty. Although the department attempts to give students their first choice of advisors, official assignments are also made in light of faculty interest, expertise, and teaching load. The final choice of advisor and of the general topic of the Senior Thesis must be approved by the Chair of the French Department, preferably by the end of the second week of classes of the semester in which a student is registered for 451 and certainly by the end of the third week.

During the semesters in which a student is registered for 401 and 451-452, he or she has the responsibility of conferring regularly (usually weekly) with the advisor and of meeting deadlines indicated by the advisor. After the advisor has been appointed and the topic chosen, the student's first meeting with the advisor should be devoted to a careful review of the information contained in this guide and to establishing an appropriate plan for determining and meeting deadlines. Although deadlines will vary with the student, the advisor, and the nature of the project, the following model is proposed as an effective

schedule for 451:

- Week 3: Topic selected and carefully defined (in writing)
- Week 5: Critical Approach/Methodology carefully defined (in writing)
- Week 6: Preliminary Bibliography
- Week 9: Preliminary Outline
- Week 10: Complete Bibliography (with annotations of those works read)
- Week 12: Detailed Outline
- Week 14: Significant Piece of Writing completed (20 pages)

By the end of the semester in which students have registered for 451, they should expect to have essentially completed the research for their project and to have produced a detailed outline of the entire paper to come. They should also expect to submit to their advisors prior to the end of the semester some significant piece of writing (approximately 20 pages)--a chapter of the thesis or an appropriate equivalent as determined by the student and the advisor. Students who fail to meet these criteria will not receive credit for French 451.

French 452 is primarily devoted to the writing and the revision of the thesis. Students should expect to submit a complete and revised rough draft of the entire thesis to the advisor two weeks prior to spring break. Once spring break begins, the advisor has no further responsibilities until he or she receives the final copy of the thesis. During the second semester of work on the senior thesis, the student should consult with the advisor about possible second readers. The Department will make the final assignment of second readers.

Choice of Project

Prior course work in the department and French 401 offer guidance on how to conduct research in French and how to choose and define a research topic. The topic of the Senior Thesis should be developed within the context of a student's prior course work and of the focus the student has been pursuing within the major; this is **not** the time to begin entirely new work for which a student has no prior preparation. The advisor may require appropriate evidence of preparation for the proposed project, including prior course work, personal study, or a portfolio.

Possible areas of inquiry vary considerably: for example, study of a genre or type of text; in-depth analysis of a selected text or texts; inquiry into an issue relevant to linguistics or foreign language instruction; the translation or the editing of a text, completed by a critical introduction; investigation into a particular historical, social, or cultural context; study of a writer in relation to her or his culture; construction of personal essays, fictional or nonfictional narratives, or a play; inquiry into a concern in literary history; interdisciplinary study of a text or group of texts; etc. All projects should include a discussion of the purposes of the inquiry and should identify the means (methodological and theoretical) by which the project addresses those purposes.

Students should verify that primary and secondary source materials can be obtained in the original French to support a given project. Although students may well include some secondary source materials in English, in no circumstances can such scholarship constitute the majority of the sources consulted.

Students who study in a French-speaking country during the junior year are encouraged to collect any primary and secondary source materials that might prove useful in researching the Senior Thesis. This is particularly appropriate in the case of projects that focus on popular culture topics (e.g. music, television or contemporary film, bandes dessinées, French editions of magazines also published in English-language versions, etc.), on current political events, and on regional concerns.

Length of Project

Independent Study projects in French typically range from 65-80 pages, but length will vary to some extent depending on the specific nature of the project. An expected length should be agreed on in conference between the advisor and the student. Although topics clearly cannot be treated adequately in a very short paper (under 50 pages) and excessive length (over 100 pages) is often the result of inadequate revision, quality, not quantity, is the chief criterion in judging all independent study projects.

Resources, Grants, and the Library

Students should recognize that no single library, not matter how extensive its holdings, is adequate for every project. Students should consult with their advisor to select a topic that can be completed with resources available in Wooster or through CONSORT, OHIO LINK, or ILLiad ILL. The College of Wooster libraries maintains a subject guide for French (<http://www.wooster.edu/library/resources/subjects/french.php>) that provides valuable information about available resources in the field.

Students should be aware that they may apply for funding from the Henry J. Copeland Fund for Independent Study (<http://www.wooster.edu/vpaa/copelandfund.php>) to visit other libraries, to subsidize travel for purposes of research, or to purchase essential primary or secondary sources. The deadline to apply for such funds is normally early in the fall semester of the senior year, although some funds for summer research are made available in April of the junior year; students should consult with their advisors about the appropriateness of making such application.

Format and Documentation

Mechanics, documentation, and works cited must conform to the style outlined in the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers (Sixth Edition, Ed. Joseph Gibaldi, 2003). Copies are available in the bookstore and in Andrews library. Students should be aware that French regulations governing capitalization, punctuation, and syllabic division differ from those of the English language; these rules should be reviewed carefully by the student and discussed, as necessary, with the advisor.

A sample title page is attached to this guide. Every Junior Independent Study and Senior Thesis in French must include an annotated critical bibliography; sample entries are attached.

The preferred letter size and font for the Senior Thesis is Times New Roman 12. Students are permitted to quote in the original but quotations of less than a sentence, directly attached to the French text, should be translated.

Language

Majors in French are normally expected to write their Senior Thesis in French. In exceptional circumstances, however, students may petition the department for permission to write in English. Such circumstances might include the following: double majors for whom no faculty member in the second department is able to read French or students planning to pursue graduate work in another field who seek to improve their writing skills in English. Students who seek permission to write in English should consult with their advisor and with the Chair of the department. Before the end of the third week of 451, the student must present a written request to the Chair of the department. The request should be in English and should include a full and detailed justification; the chair or any member of the department may request to see additional samples of the student's written work in English. The department will vote on the merits of the student's request, and its decision will be final. The decision to write the thesis in English will have no effect on its final evaluation and grading.

The choice of the language of the thesis will in no way affect the research process. In all cases students will select topics, as indicated above, for which adequate documentation in French is available. Similarly, all conferences for French 451 will be conducted in French.

College Regulations on the Responsibilities of the Advisor

The responsibilities of the advisor are as follows:

1. to encourage the student to attempt an inquiry or project of appropriate rigor within the limitations of the student's potential, the time available, and the College's and the student's access to resources (library, laboratory, studio, computer, field work facilities, etc.);
2. to advise the student toward the successful completion of the chosen I.S., meeting the general College specifications as interpreted by the department;
3. to be available to meet regularly with the student and help guide the research process; while the length and structure of meetings will vary by discipline and for the individual student, on average faculty members should expect to be available for each advisee for between forty-five minutes and an hour each week;
4. to assist with the editing of the I.S. thesis according to the following guidelines:
 - a. On all drafts of the thesis/project, including the final draft if received by the deadlines specified below, the advisor is responsible for indicating to the student typical errors of logic, style, and mechanics, etc., which may occur. He or she is not required to edit and proofread these drafts paragraph by paragraph and sentence by sentence. The editing of any

draft by the advisor does not imply the ultimate acceptability of the thesis.

b. After the completed I.S. thesis/project is submitted and evaluated, the advisor is responsible for indicating to the student any specific typographical and mechanical errors that must be corrected before the document is filed with the Department.

c. If the deficiencies in the final copy extend beyond “specific typographical and mechanical errors,” then the student must re-enroll for 452 in a subsequent semester. Students who enroll in Summer Session to complete I.S. 452 will not be given a reduced tuition fee.

College Regulations on Deadlines

Departments and advisors may impose deadlines for the purpose of commenting and advising when the work is in progress. The student may not expect editorial comment, guidance, and advice on drafts of the thesis or versions of the project submitted after the eighth week of the semester in which the student enrolls in I.S. 452.

Two bound copies of the I.S. thesis are due in the Registrar’s office by 5:00 p.m. on the first day of classes following Spring Recess or four weeks prior to the end of classes for Spring Semester, whichever date is sooner. For an independent study thesis completed in the Fall Semester, the due date is four weeks prior to the end of classes. Any extension to the I.S. thesis deadline can only be granted by the Dean of the Faculty in advance and only with the support of the I.S. advisor.

Each student is also required to submit to the College a digital copy of his or her thesis for archiving, granting to the College and its employees a nonexclusive royalty-free license to archive it and make it accessible, in whole or in part, in any medium. The student retains all other ownership rights to the copyright of the thesis.

Any delay in turning in a thesis beyond the deadlines specified above automatically establishes the grade of I for the thesis. The conditions for changing the I to a passing grade will be established by the Dean of the Faculty after consultation with the student’s advisor. The I automatically becomes NC two weeks after the deadline for the submission of the thesis unless prior approval for an extension of the I has been given by the Dean. No thesis turned in after the deadline will receive a grade of Honors without the unanimous vote of the department and the approval of the Dean.

The Oral Exam

In the weeks following submission of the final copy of the project to the Registrar, the student is examined by the advisor and by a second reader, at a time that is mutually convenient for all three participants.

The oral is normally conducted in the language of the thesis. At the beginning of the exam, the student will be invited to make a brief statement (approximately 5 minutes). Students may choose to summarize significant aspects of their work, outline the problems they now perceive in the project, or further develop their conclusions. The oral exam then proceeds as an inquiry into the project’s purposes and results, including

questions of style, form, methodology, and documentation. Students should expect factual and interpretive questions on any aspect of their project, including the bibliography. In all cases, the second reader takes primary responsibility for conducting the oral.

The student's performance on the oral exam is considered by the two readers in determining the grade. Upon completion of the oral exam, the advisor and the second reader will immediately determine whether or not the independent study thesis is judged to be satisfactory and will so inform the student. After further consultation, and within 48 hours of the oral, the advisor will inform the student of the grade that the project has received. A copy of this evaluation will be filed with the chairperson of the department. The prime copy of the thesis is returned to the student; the department retains the second copy. Students may be asked to make minor alterations before the copy is accepted.

The second reader is responsible for providing the student with a written evaluation of the thesis prior to the end of the semester in which the student is registered for French 452. The written evaluation will address specifically the elements of content, method, and form and the manner in which these have been combined in the realization of the project.

College Regulations on Grading

In evaluating the I.S. project the faculty readers will consider the following three elements and the manner in which these are combined in the realization of the project:

Content: The choice of the I.S. thesis topic should reflect a considered judgment as to the significance and manageability of the subject, and the completed project should represent a serious and systematic attempt to deal with it by having used effectively the available resources. An awareness of what has and has not been accomplished should be part of the presentation of the project.

Method: The methods chosen should be stated and followed. The choices involved in the design should be made clear, and an appreciation of its uses and limits should be one of the results of the project.

Form: Form is an essential element of clear expression. The project should reflect explicit attention to the requirements of form for a given discipline, field, or mode of expression.

Independent Study projects are graded as follows:

Honors: Outstanding in terms of content, method, and form.

Good: Significantly above average in terms of content, method, and form.

Satisfactory: Acceptable overall in terms of content, method, and form, though consideration may be given to balancing weakness in one area by strength in another.

No Credit: Seriously deficient in content, method, or form with no compensating strengths in other areas.

Departmental Honors and the I.S. Thesis

A graduating senior will receive departmental honors by attaining all of the following:

1. A cumulative grade point average of 3.500 or better for all courses completed in the French Department.
2. A cumulative grade of 3.200 or better for all courses completed at the College.
3. Honors for the I.S. Thesis or the unanimous vote of the department that the student's overall performance in the major is of the quality to merit departmental honors.

Assessment Criteria for French 452 (Senior Thesis)

Although departmental assessment should not be confused with the evaluation of student work, the department's assessment criteria for the Senior Thesis provide helpful insights into expectations for the final essay:

Content

- Shows evidence of ability to use sources in the original language
- Reveals careful study of relevant secondary sources and background contexts
- Includes careful analysis of primary texts
- Includes smooth integration of analysis of primary texts and knowledge of secondary theoretical and critical sources
- Represents a significant and appropriate culmination of student learning in French at this stage of study

Methodology

- Has an original and substantial thesis statement
- Shows a clear and coherent intellectual framework grounded in the methodology of the subfield (Literature; Cultural Studies; Film Studies; Theoretical or Applied Linguistics)
 - Has a clear and logical structure
 - Reflects sustained, rigorous engagement with the subject matter

Quality of the Written Product

- Shows firm control of the morphology, syntax, and writing conventions of standard French
- Develops an argument effectively
- Sustains the methodological analysis throughout
- Is edited carefully to assure grammatical, mechanical, syntactic, and stylistic correctness (e.g., smooth transitions, elimination of wordiness and redundancies, strong introduction and conclusion, etc.)

- Reflects control of appropriate terminology

Independence of Learning

- Student demonstrated resourcefulness and initiative throughout the process
- Student sought appropriate guidance from the thesis advisor
- Student made effective use of constructive guidance offered by the advisor
- Student worked independently on the project
- Student established a schedule for completion of the project and followed it consistently
- Student used the I.S. Handbook effectively

Performance on the Oral Exam

- Student made a clear and appropriate opening presentation of the project
- Student demonstrated a thorough understanding of the project
- Student showed evidence of good preparation
- Student answered questions clearly and accurately
- Student provided evidence of the scholarly appropriateness of the subject matter and of the methodology of the thesis
- Student effectively elaborated on the methodology used in the study
- Student used appropriate terminology
- Student presented the conclusion(s) of the study clearly and accurately
- Student used clear and effective language

N.B. The Department of French reserves the right to make changes and additions in successive editions of this guide (last revised 2009-2010).

(Sample Title Page)

The College of Wooster

LA PHILOSOPHIE D'ALBERT CAMUS

By
Frances F. Francophone

Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirement of Independent Study
French 451-452

Supervised by
T. Lingua Franca

March 24, 2008

(Sample Annotated Works Cited Entries)

Fitch, B.T. Le Sentiment d'étrangeté chez Malraux, Sartre, Camus, et Simone de Beauvoir. Paris: Lettres modernes, 1964.

Il s'agit d'un livre intéressant qui montre l'évolution du sentiment d'étrangeté chez Meursault. Fitch insiste sur l'importance du fait que Meursault se voit comme "un peu fautif."

O'Brien, Conor Cruise. Albert Camus of Europe and Africa. New York: The Viking Press, 1990.

J'ai trouvé cette étude très utile à cause de la façon dont elle est organisée. O'Brien nous propose une biographie de Camus divisée en trois étapes qui correspondent aux trois romans: L'Etranger, La Peste, et La Chute.

Guibert, Armand. Léopold Sédar Senghor. Paris: Editions Segher, 1969.

Cette étude chronologique de l'oeuvre de Senghor est complétée par un choix de textes. L'auteur parle des influences sur ce qu'il appelle "le poème d'une vie."

Nezu, S. Okechukwu. Léopold Sédar Senghor et la défense et l'illustration de la civilisation noire. Paris: Librairie Marcel Didier, 1968.

Nezu a écrit une étude sur Senghor dans le contexte général du réveil de l'homme noir et de la poésie noire de cette époque. Ainsi, Nezu consacre une partie de son étude à l'analyse de la poésie de Senghor comme expression de son âme noire.

McKeon, Joseph T. "Saint-Exupéry, the Myth of the Pilot." Publications of the Modern Language Association of America 89 (1974): 1084-1089.

McKeon souligne l'idée que l'identité du pilote se développe et change dans les oeuvres de Saint-Exupéry. Alors, le personnage du pilote est bien différent dans ses premiers livres, ce qui indique une évolution dans la pensée de Saint-Exupéry.

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Recent Senior Theses in the Department of French

Une Affaire de bûcherons et de casse-tête : La Traduction de quelques textes au sujet de l'histoire des Franco-canadiens dans le Michigan

Deux Femmes en colère : Une Réflexion sur les minorités religieuses, la féminité, les principes républicains, et la différence en France aujourd'hui

A la Quête du Petit Prince à travers les autres ouvrages de Saint-Exupéry

Une Exploration du théâtre de l'absurde : Une Autre Vue de *Fin de Partie* (French/English double major)

Le Passé recomposé : L'Histoire et l'histoire dans *Les Trois mousquetaires*

Tearing Women's Identities Out of the Advertisements in *Elle* and *Vogue* (French/English double major)

La Privatisation d'Airbus : Élément clé pour partir à la conquête du ciel

Du Plein Emploi aux 35 heures : Repenser la place du travail dans la société française depuis les trente glorieuses (French/History double major)

Fighting HIV/Aids in African Countries : International Bureaucracy and the Organization Behind the Baobab (French/Anthropology double major)

Un Quatuor de voix : Brossard, Cixous, Wittig, et Moi

Bienvenue à la technologie : La Pédagogie et le cinéma français

Anglais, Frances, Spanish : La Possibilité et la réalité de la l'éducation bilingue

Entre Deux Espaces : La Femme africaine à Paris

« Ange ou Démon, Qu'Importe ? » Napoléon Bonaparte vu à travers six hommes de lettres français du XIXe siècle (French/History double major)

Une Fiction : Sirven et les comptes D'Elf

Le Pygmalion du cinéma : Le Féminisme et l'image de la femme dans les films d'Agnès Varda

Sur le Chemin de la révolution tranquille : *Bonheur d'occasion* et *Au Pied de la pente douce*