

Department of Modern Languages

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Why study French?



French is spoken on five continents by over 274 million speakers, and is classified as the fifth language in the world when including second language speakers. Geopolitically, it is the world's second official language: the *Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie* (OIF), created in 1970, has 80 member states of which over 30 have French as an official language. Furthermore, French is an official working language of international organizations including the UN, UNESCO, NATO, and the IOC. French is also cited as the language most often required or requested for international jobs by the US State Department and, according to the OIF, French is the fourth most important language of the Internet.

A world leader in technology and scientific research, France is the home of the *Minitel* (precursor to www online services), the TGV or *Train à Grande Vitesse* (one of the fastest trains in the world), the *Institut Pasteur* (a leader in medical research which first isolated the AIDS virus), and Airbus (one of the world's principal aerospace engineering firms). France is also a major research partner in the field of high energy physics, and shares with French-speaking Switzerland the CERN complex, the world's most sophisticated atom smasher.

France has important commercial ties to the US, with over 200 French companies active in Florida. France is the 9th largest trading partner for the US, while the US is France's top trading partner outside of Europe. French is also an official language of Canada, the US's largest trading partner. Mastery of French thus leads to many opportunities in international business.

France is also very well known for its luxury products such as perfumes, wines, and designer fashions, as well as its cultural icons including authors, artists, actors, film makers, and musicians, of which the French are very proud. Knowledge of the French language and its rich cultural heritage is thus a critical asset to any business relationship involving France.

Why major in *French and Francophone Studies* at FIU ?

We have an excellent core of dedicated professors in literature and linguistics willing to spend time mentoring students. Our professors represent a variety of interdisciplinary interests including 19th century French literature, French cinema, post-colonial Francophone literature, comparative literature, women's and gender studies, contemporary French and Francophone literatures, Caribbean and African writers, history and evolution of the French language, Natural Language Processing, theoretical French phonology, and Haitian Creole.

Among our faculty are an expert on experiential learning, as well as a docent at the on-campus Frost Art Museum. Subsequently many of our classes take place off campus -- from Little Haiti, to Hollywood, Florida (with a large Quebecois population in the winter months), to the Wolfsonian-FIU museum on South Beach. Our students have the opportunity to practice French both on campus and the South Florida community at large. We have an extremely active French Club (*Le Cercle Français*) and national Honor Society (Pi Delta Phi), which offer numerous activities each semester (cine-club, conferences, workshops, excursions, community and philanthropy activities, museum tours in French). Many students also obtain valuable experience as interns at the French Consulate.

We facilitate study abroad experiences for our students, both for summer semesters and longer term. We regularly offer a summer semester in Angers, France, a modern city situated in the Loire Valley – a region famous for its history, tapestries, castles, climate (*la douceur angevine*) and welcoming attitude (*accueil*). FIU's Office of Study Abroad also has exchange programs for semester study in France and Canada, which simplifies transfer of credits earned abroad.

After graduation, many students have pursued advanced degrees in prestigious institutions in the US, Canada, and Europe. Graduates have also participated in the compensated Teaching Assistant Program in various cities in France (TAPIF). Our major emphasizes multi-cultural aspects in French language and culture, opening the door to European countries, as well as the entire Francophone world in Africa, Oceania, Asia and the Americas.