



University of Colorado **Boulder**

2016 Program Review

Department of French and Italian

Academic Review and Planning  
Advisory Committee Report

Approved

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fred M. ...".

04/14/2017

Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs: Date

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## Process overview

The review of the the Department of French and Italian (FRIT) was conducted in accordance with the 2016 review guidelines. The Academic Review and Planning Advisory Committee (ARPAC) conducts and writes the final reviews of all academic units on the Boulder campus. The unit prepared a self-study, which was reviewed by an internal review committee (IRC) of two CU-Boulder faculty members from outside the department. An external review committee (ERC), consisting of two experts from within the discipline outside of the University of Colorado, visited the unit over April 11 and 12, 2016, reviewed the relevant documents, and met with faculty, students, staff, university administrators, and members of ARPAC. ERC comments and recommendations are cited at appropriate points throughout the report. This public document reflects the assessment of and recommendations for the Department of French and Italian as approved by ARPAC.

Academic Review  
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## Unit overview

The campus' standardized description of the Department of French and Italian (FRIT), and information regarding comparable units, can be found on the Office of Data Analytics' (ODA) website (<http://www.colorado.edu/oda/institutional-research/institutional-level-data/information-department/academic-review-and-0>). ODA updates profiles annually in the fall semester. This report cites the ODA data for FRIT posted in November 2015, reflecting the state of the department as of academic year (AY) 2014-2015. More recent data from the FRIT self-study are cited where appropriate.

The Department of French and Italian is a vibrant and innovative community focused on the languages, literatures, cinema, and cultures of France, Italy, and other areas where these languages are spoken. It is focused on providing opportunities for CU students to develop as global citizens, and therefore takes in a wide range of areas of study including, for example, metropolitan and borderline communities, multiculturalism, migration, culture and language in the Caribbean and Africa, comics, music, and film.

## Personnel and governance

The department has ten tenured and tenure-track faculty lines: three full professors (one of whom is currently an associate dean in the College of Arts and Sciences), three associate professors, and four assistant professors. The department also employs two full-time senior instructors, three part-time instructors, and six lecturers. Five of the ten TTT lines are held by females; no line is held by someone identifying as an underrepresented minority. FRIT also employs a full-time program assistant and a part-time administrative assistant.

Research, scholarship and creative work

The Department of French and Italian faculty specialize in a wide range of areas, including medieval, Renaissance, and Baroque culture and language, as well as 18/19<sup>th</sup> century and modern literatures; new media; contemporary literature, theory, and aesthetics; contemporary Francophone theater, France and the Caribbean in the 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The group employs a variety of approaches in these areas, including experimental literature, literature and philosophy, literature and science, theater, activism and social media, political science and literature, journalism and literature, animal and trauma studies, disability studies, feminist approaches, literature and the law, postcolonial studies, and translation and editing. Since the last ARPAC review, FRIT faculty have published widely and received numerous awards, including one faculty member knighted and inducted into France's Ordre des Palmes Académiques, and the Aldo and Jeanne Scaglione Prize in French and Francophone Studies, the Modern Language Association's highest prize in the field. Faculty members have successfully obtained local funding to support research, including a University of Colorado Seed Grant that supported a conference and edited volume in the emerging field of Mediterranean Studies, and three faculty fellowships from the Center for Humanities and Arts.

Undergraduate education

The department offers separate BA programs in French and Italian; both focused on speaking, understanding, and writing across everyday and intellectual settings; historical contexts; on analyzing and interpreting texts from a variety of genres; as well as communicating analyses and interpretations in English. The faculty strongly encourage department undergraduates to enroll in study abroad programs. A minor is offered in either language.

In academic year (AY) 2015-2016, FRIT awarded 10 BAs and

had 53 majors; a decline of about half in five years. One hundred and twenty-two students are enrolled as degree minors.

Non-majors accounted for 94% of student-credit hours generated by the department in 2015 (this is among the highest in the arts and humanities). Sixteen percent of student-credit hours are taught by TTT faculty, with instructors teaching 24%, GPTI/TAs responsible for 39%, and 'other' teaching 22%.

Scholarship related to information literacy is currently the subject of a number of advanced courses, ad-hoc workshops, as well as the work of the bibliographer assigned to FRIT who manages French and Italian collections and creates information guides for graduate students.

#### Graduate education

The department offers MA and PhD degrees in French Literature. The graduate program covers a variety of historical aspects of French and Francophone studies, including all historical periods from the 17<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, offering seminars on history of science, philosophy and politics, aesthetics and cultural studies, and literary and post-colonial perspectives. In the academic year (AY) 2015-2016, FRIT granted 4 MA degrees and 3 Ph.D.s; it currently enrolls 8 MA students and 16 Ph.D. students. The vast majority of courses taken by graduate students are taught by tenure-line faculty. Recent Ph.D. graduates have been well-placed.

#### Budget

The Department of French and Italian has an annual operating budget of approximately \$30,000, a reduction from its budgets in 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 that averaged closer to \$50,000. It currently supplements this budget through summer course enrollments, gifts, and endowed funds.

Space            The department occupies the third floor of the Eaton Humanities building. It shares a front office and a conference room with the Department of Classics, as well as a small library with Classics, Asian Languages and Civilizations, and Religious Studies. The vast majority of the Eaton space is dedicated to faculty offices.



## Past reviews

The Department of French and Italian last underwent review in 2009. At the time, the Academic Review and Planning Advisory Committee (ARPAC) recommended that FRIT hire a Francophone literacy specialist and to add faculty to the Italian program. Since then, FRIT has hired four new faculty, one in Italian (Media and Mediterranean Studies), and three in French (public sphere theory and the historical development of literary audiences in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Haitian culture and interactions between literature and science, literature and drama of Sub-Saharan Francophone Africa, and Theater and Performance Studies).

ARPAC addressed five recommendations to the unit:

- (1) Apply for new funding mechanisms for graduate students in general, and first-year graduate students in particular.
- (2) Examine problems with retaining new professors – including issues with hiring decisions and mentoring – before requesting new faculty lines. Since 2009, FRIT has retained and promoted faculty in a healthy and energetic working environment.
- (3) Offer large courses in English to attract more students (and potential majors). Attend to the balance between large, general courses and specialized courses. Since 2009, FRIT has successfully developed and offered several large-enrollment, undergraduate courses in English.
- (4) Offer at least one senior seminar in Italian instead of English; this course is in the FRIT offerings and was last taught in the Fall 2015 semester.

- (5) Work in conjunction with ALTEC and other language units to establish a one-semester language pedagogy course for graduate student teachers; this course is currently taught as FREN 5770 Methods of Teaching French as a Foreign Language.

## Campus context

Like other departments focused on language, culture, and literature, FRIT has been subject to declining undergraduate enrollments and graduate funding, to which the department has responded by focusing on offering large, undergraduate course sections in English, migrating some courses online or into hybrid formats, and routinely offering popular courses (e.g. FREN 1900: Modern Paris in Literature, Photographs, Painting and Movies; FREN 1880: Zombies in History and Popular Culture, and ITAL 1500: That's Amore).

Department of French and Italian faculty have contributed significantly to campus leadership; in addition to the aforementioned A&S associate dean, FRIT lent a full professor to serve as interim dean of the now closed School of Journalism (during which time the College of Media, Information, and Communication was formed), and another professor served an interim chair of the Department of Philosophy. These commitments were made possible by the willingness of others to step into department leadership roles.

## Disciplinary context

The department has prioritized opportunities to extend French and Italian language and culture studies to involve more research and teaching into areas of global relevance, such as Sub-Saharan Africa, film, comics, music, and migration.

These efforts to extend the department's contributions come at a time when falling humanities enrollments highlight questions of students' preparation to begin lives enriched by multilingualism and cultural awareness.

The Department of French and Italian has engaged the Leeds School of Business in discussions to require MBA students to take a language.

## Analysis

The Academic Review and Planning Advisory Committee (ARPAC) commends the Department of French and Italian for answering the broad enrollment decline in the humanities with curricular innovations. The committee echoes the external reviewers who praised the unit for showing “an incredible esprit de corps, cohesion and harmony on all levels...one could not wish for a better atmosphere in a department.”

### Personnel and governance

Recent contributions to the ranks of campus leadership have had a possible negative consequence. Namely, the ERC notes that the transfer of so many senior members into external appointments has resulted in higher service loads for those remaining and this has fallen – perhaps disproportionately – on the female associate professors. On a positive note, the department is a model for integrating instructors in unit governance.

Both the self-study and the ERC endorse a growth in FRIT faculty ranks through at least two strategically aligned lines: one hire in French Film and visual studies, with clear possible connections to Film Studies, and another, a scholar of medieval or early-modern periods, that could connect with the emerging Mediterranean Studies field.

### Research, scholarship, and creative work

The department has an impressive scholarship record. According to the 2015 ODA data cited in the self-study, FRIT faculty’s number of articles and books published exceeds that of AAU peer departments according to the self-study. In addition, FRIT faculty have recently received several awards and grants, among these a grant that supported a conference and book. FRIT is also helping to take the lead in the developing area of Mediterranean Studies and is expanding its focus to include film and digital media, undertakings that call for university support and continued

investment. Moving forward, the unit's assistant professors are exemplary and poised to make substantial contributions to their discipline. And several excellent associate professors are nearing promotion to full.

Undergraduate education and support

ARPAC commends the Department of French and Italian for its campus-leading role in bringing humanities courses online or into hybrid formats, making courses more flexible and accessible. The department contributes significantly to student credit hour generation in the College of Arts and Sciences. Its commitment to teaching large courses taught in English has resulted in attracting large numbers of students from outside the department's majors and minors. Meanwhile, those majors and minors enroll in impressive numbers relative to other language departments at CU Boulder.

But there are also indications that FRIT undergraduates have complaints. The internal review committee noted that students responding to the undergraduate survey said that required courses are sometimes cancelled, making the timely completion of major requirements difficult. Unfortunately, these requirements were in many cases filled by independent study courses, which add to the teaching loads of tenure-line and instructor-line faculty. The external review committee commended the student advisor for helping to anticipate bottlenecks arising from course cancellations, and alerting faculty.

The ERC also noted its surprise at the relatively low number of FRIT students who had studied abroad, and encouraged the university and the department to explore ways to provide funding so that a larger proportion of students may benefit from living and studying in French- and Italian-speaking countries.

Another concern is the low percentage of undergraduate courses taught by tenure-track faculty (less than 25%). Also, it appears that graduate students and instructors do the majority of work to migrate courses online. While the tenure-track faculty teach the majority of graduate-level courses, they need to take on more undergraduate courses, particularly in their areas of expertise; for example, migration, a topic that might draw student interest from across the university.

Graduate education and support

The department offers MA and PhD degrees in French. The external reviewers found that FRIRT graduate students were generally satisfied, and the ERC cites the high satisfaction of graduate students even though high teaching loads have extended the time to degree for many. In particular, new online courses—especially those employing Voicethread—require more time for graduate students to provide student feedback than do traditional courses. Reducing graduate student teaching loads, perhaps by securing additional funds, would permit the students more time to focus on their research and to proceed toward graduation in a timelier manner. It is hoped that the new Consortium of Doctoral Studies in Literatures and Cultures will open additional funding opportunities.

The internal review committee's survey showed that graduate students appreciate the quality of advising; however, some noted that it was not always timely and suggested that the faculty should proactively address degree requirements and expectations. The IRC/ERC? suggested that the department implement annual graduate student progress reviews, saying that these would encourage accountability and support a more timely degree completion.

The department would like to extend its involvement with campus graduate education, especially to bring culture and language programs training to a wider audience. The department has initiated conversations with the School of Education to develop a Master of Arts in Teaching, as well as with the Leeds School of Business to explore a language and culture requirement as part of the MBA programs.

#### Inclusive Excellence

Since the last ARPAC review, the Department of French and Italian has hired four new faculty, two of whom are women, three are international scholars, and one is a member of a minority population. Also, the international contingent of FRIT students has grown, including students from Africa who have recently completed degrees.

FRIT examines issues of diversity and multiculturalism through its course offerings and faculty outreach, including courses on multiculturalism in Italy, Senegalese theater, and courses on Haiti and the Caribbean, including public lectures and film screenings.

The department's focus on hiring a new faculty member in French and Francophone film is likely to result in a diverse applicant pool, and would have the potential to further diversify the faculty.



# Recommendations

To the unit:

The members of the Academic Review and Planning Advisory Committee (ARPAC) address the following recommendations to the Department of French and Italian, and to the offices of the dean and chancellor. It is the committee's intention that the recommendations serve to benefit program improvement and development and to further the mission of the University of Colorado Boulder.

1. Create conditions conducive to the promotion of associate professors (e.g. through reductions in service loads).
2. Develop a more formalized process for graduate student progress reviews.
3. Examine alternate ways of funding Ph.D. students, such as the Doctoral Consortium for Literature and Culture, that would lessen the teaching burden and allow more research time.
4. Explore how engaging research-productive faculty in emerging areas of study could offer more courses attractive to the undergraduate population (e.g. following the example of a recently-hired scholar focusing on documenting the role of social media in trans-Mediterranean migration).
5. Develop a hiring plan that takes into account possible retirements within this review cycle. While simply arguing to replace departing faculty is unlikely to be persuasive, the unit should consider arguments for making at least one senior hire in order to maintain the department's strong research profile. The department should be looking for a scholar who can further department research strengths and who can offer the

kind of exciting classes that will attract larger student enrollments.

To the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and to the Dean of Graduate Studies:

6. Consider matching or exceeding previous FRIT funding levels.
7. Consider facilitating cross-campus conversations to further develop FRIT proposals for a MAT in French (with the School of Education) and a possible language and culture requirement for Leeds School of Business undergraduate and MBA students focused on international business.
8. Consider permitting two new hires, one in medieval or early-modern periods (perhaps with an interest in Mediterranean Studies) and the other in French Film and visual studies.
9. Consider providing financial support for FRIT faculty—including instructors—to further develop online hybrid courses.
10. Consider further supporting options to better fund humanities doctoral students such as the newly organized Doctoral Consortium for Literature and Culture.

To the Office of Advancement:

11. Assign a designated development officer to work with FRIT to increase gift funds for undergraduate study abroad and to supplement budgets to support department outreach efforts.

## Required follow-up

The chair of the Department of French and Italian shall report annually on the first of April for a period of three years following the year of the receipt of this report (i.e., April 1st of 2018, 2019, and 2020) to the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and to the provost on the implementation of these recommendations.

Likewise, the dean shall report annually on the first of May to the provost on the implementation of recommendations addressed to the college. The provost, as part of the review reforms, has agreed to respond annually to all outstanding matters under her/his purview arising from this review year. All official responses will be posted online.