

French for Natural Sciences

FREN-3003-3503 (3 credits)

Madagascar: Biodiversity and Natural Resource Management

This syllabus is representative of a typical semester. Because courses develop and change over time to take advantage of unique learning opportunities, actual course content varies from semester to semester.

Course Description

The focus of this course is on oral proficiency in the context of the natural sciences, including the critical thematic areas of biodiversity and natural resource management. Language teaching is linked to activities in the thematic and field studies seminars in order to help students work more independently in the field. The objective is to facilitate students' interactions with a range of professionals in the field working to manage resources while promoting development within the local cultural context. This linguistic groundwork helps to enhance students' oral proficiency so that they are better prepared to conduct field research for their Independent Study Project. The French for Natural Science course uses classroom and field instruction to achieve these aims, in addition to improving students' French oral, reading, and writing skills. Based on in-country testing, students are placed in intensive and appropriate level classes with further language practice in homestays, lectures, and field visits. Levels of language instruction are based on students' language capacity determined through an oral test done at the beginning of the semester. For advanced students, the goal is to take them to the superior level by the end of the course. This means that students who were at the advanced level at the beginning would have gone a step further to be able to communicate in French with accuracy and fluency and would be able to participate fully and effectively in conversations on a variety of topics in formal or informal settings from both concrete and abstract perspectives. Additionally, students will be able to demonstrate an increased ability to carry out research projects relating to the program theme. Various methods will be used to assess student performance including oral interviews, written tests, quizzes, class participation, and oral presentations.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate superior capacity in oral comprehension on themes relating to the natural sciences, biodiversity and natural resource management;
- Understand lectures in French and demonstrable ability to explain ideas presented in French consistently, in detail and all time frames, and provide structured arguments to support one's opinions;

- Demonstrate proficiency and mastery of French grammar, vocabulary and spelling through the production of an independent and thematically appropriate research topic and paper;
- Increase proficiency in French by two sublevels – i.e., if entry level is determined at “advanced low”, students successfully completing the course should achieve “advanced high”.

Language of Instruction

This course is taught in French.

Instructional Methods

SIT’s teaching and learning philosophy is grounded in the experiential learning theory developed by Kolb (1984; 2015) and informed by various scholars, such as Dewey, Piaget, Lewin, among others. Experiential learning theory recognizes that learning is an active process that is not confined to the formal curriculum; “knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (Kolb, 2015, p. 49). Learning involves both content and process. Learning is holistic and happens through various life experiences upon which students draw to generate new ways of knowing and being. Learning involves a community and is a lifelong endeavor. Learning is transformational. The suggested four step-cycle of a *concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation* embedded in the experiential learning model is not linear and might not always happen in that specific order, as any learning is highly context dependent. These stages of taking part in a shared experience; reflecting on that experience by describing and interpreting it; challenging their own assumptions and beliefs to generate new knowledge; and ultimately applying new knowledge, awareness, skills, and attitudes in a variety of situations and contexts are important for students to engage in to become empowered lifelong learners.

Required Texts

- Bertrand, Alain. (2003). “Le Boisement, le bail, et la législation environnementale à Madagascar.” *African Studies Quarterly, The Online Journal for African Studies* 3.2 (Fall 1999): 61-81. Web. 02 Aug.
- Callamand, M. *Grammaire Vivante du Français*. Paris: Clé International. (1992).
- Hansen, J. (1998). *Madagascar à Travers Son Histoire Politique, Economique, et Sociale*. Antananarivo:
- O’Connor, Sheila, M. Pidgeon et Z. Randria. (1981). “Un programme de conservation pour la Réserve d’Andohahela.” *Madagascar, un Sanctuaire de la Nature*. Ed. Philippe Oberle. Paris: Kintana. 31-36.
- Raevoniaina, Luis Manera. (2011). *La Pratique de la Langue Française*. Madagascar: SIT.
- Rakouth, Bakolimalala. (2004). “Biodiversité,” “Coevolution Plante-Animale”, et “La Conservation.” Lecture notes, Madagascar: Biodiversity and Natural Resource Management, SIT Study Abroad.
- Ravoavy, Toky. (2004). “Gestion des revenus miniers de l’exploitation du sable minéralisé des gisements de Mandena, Petriky et Sainte Luce.” Par auteur, Janvier.

Vasseur, Pierre. (1997). "Ecosystèmes Côtiers en Danger dans la Région de Tuléar." *Milieux et Sociétés dans le Sud-ouest de Madagascar*. Ed. Jean-Michel Lebigre. Bordeaux: CRET.

Assignments and Evaluation

Assignment Descriptions and Grading Criteria

Teachers evaluate student performance at each class meeting. Planned lessons are tailored to students grouped according to learning pace and individual strengths and weaknesses. At the end of the semester, students are evaluated, taking into account both classroom performance as well as the use of and improvement in language skills over the duration of the class. Students are also evaluated on oral presentations, written work in French and efforts made to use French outside the classroom. In addition, teachers give a second oral proficiency exam to help in assessing student progress over the course of the semester. The Academic Director determines the final semester grade based on a combination of the aforementioned criteria.

Timely completion of all assignments is expected. Late hand-ins will be penalized. All assignments are evaluated according to organization, analytical quality, depth of understanding, argumentation, and presentation of evidence. Assignments and activities include:

- Oral Presentations
- Grammar lessons and exercises prepared by French teachers
- Reading and listening sessions
- Study of the SIT French Text and exercises
- Debates and discussion of articles on appropriate themes found in newspapers and magazines
- Interactions with Malagasy students
- Usage of new vocabulary learned in seminar lectures
- Homework assignments and class discussions
- Language use outside of class

1) Oral Presentations (6-8) (60%)

Each student or group will deliver a series of presentations on various program themes. Each presentation will be followed by a question and answer session the goal of which is to clarify the information presented. The length of each presentation will be determined by the selected theme and will be presented to the whole class or in small groups. Each student will be encouraged to ask questions or comment during the discussion sessions that follow the presentation. Your grade will depend on your participation.

The following will be taken into consideration:

- Clarity of the presentation
- Organization
- Development of theme
- Grammar and syntax
- Use of appropriate visual aids
- Volume and clarity of voice
- Pronunciation and articulation
- Style and fluency

2) Written Assignments (15%)

Students will involve on the following thought processes: analysis, evaluation, interpretation, narration, synthesis, reflection, clarification, summarization and creative expression. Students should provide a succinct and clear description of the topic.

Students increase their knowledge of be grammatical structures and improve control of using those structures of writing.

3) Homework (5%)

4) Language Use in Class (10%)

The language use in class should be formal, meaning that it should not sound conversational or casual. You should particularly avoid colloquial, idiomatic or slang, in favor of precise vocabulary. Language teacher will make a weekly evaluation by doing oral presentation

5) Language Use Outside of Class (10%)

Language use Outside of the Class will be evaluated from your ability to deal with everyday life such as using public transportation, bargain price with local market. Student have to weekly report (oral) their language use outside of the class to the language teacher.

Assessment

Oral Presentations – 60%

Written Assignments – 15%

Homework – 5%

Language Use in Class – 10%

Language Use Outside the Class – 10%

Attendance and Participation

Due to the nature of SIT Study Abroad programs, and the importance of student and instructor contributions in each and every class session, attendance at all classes and for all program excursions is required. Criteria for evaluation of student performance include attendance and participation in program activities. Students must fully participate in all program components and courses. Students may not voluntarily opt out of required program activities. Valid reasons for absence – such as illness – must be discussed with the academic director or other

designated staff person. Absences impact academic performance, may impact grades, and could result in dismissal from the program.

Late Assignments

SIT Study Abroad programs integrate traditional classroom lectures and discussion with field-based experiences, site visits and debriefs. The curriculum is designed to build on itself and progress to the culmination (projects, ISP, case studies, internship, etc.). It is critical that students complete assignments in a timely manner to continue to benefit from the sequences in assignments, reflections and experiences throughout the program.

Example: Students may request a justified extension for one paper/assignment during the semester. Requests must be made in writing and at least 12 hours before the posted due date and time. If reason for request is accepted, an extension of up to one week may be granted at that time. Any further requests for extensions will not be granted. Students who fail to submit the assignment within the extension period will receive an 'F' for the assignment.

Grading Scale

94-100%	A
90-93%	A-
87-89%	B+
84-86%	B
80-83%	B-
77-79%	C+
74-76%	C
70-73%	C-
67-69%	D+
64-66%	D
below 64	F

Program Expectations

- Show up prepared. Be on time, have your readings completed and points in mind for discussion or clarification. Complying with these elements raises the level of class discussion for everyone.
- Have assignments completed on schedule, printed, and done accordingly to the specified requirements. This will help ensure that your assignments are returned in a timely manner.
- Ask questions in class. Engage the lecturer. These are often very busy professionals who are doing us an honor by coming to speak.
- Comply with academic integrity policies (no plagiarism or cheating, nothing unethical).
- Respect differences of opinion (classmates', lecturers, local constituents engaged with on the visits). You are not expected to agree with everything you hear, but you are expected to listen across difference and consider other perspectives with respect.
- Storing Your Work: Keep several copies of your work as back up and keep one copy accessible to you through an online forum, such as an attachment in your email, the course learning management system, or cloud-based storage. This way your work will

always be available to despite technical issues. Lost files, deleted drives, or computer crashes are not excuses for late, missing work.

- Personal Technology Use: Cell phones and other personal electronics can be used for taking notes and other class activities. Off-task usage is not acceptable. You may be marked as absent for habitually using them for something other than classroom activities.
- Content Considerations: Some texts and activities you will encounter in this course delve into sensitive topics that may be emotionally and intellectually challenging. Our classroom is a space where we can engage with challenging ideas, question assumptions, and navigate difficult topics with respect and maturity. As possible, I will flag content and activities that are especially graphic or intense, so we are prepared to address them soberly and sensitively. If you are struggling to keep up with the work or participate in the course because of the nature of the content and activities, you should speak with me and/or seek help from counseling services.
- Classroom recording policy: To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student's own private use.

SIT Policies and Resources

Please refer to the [SIT Study Abroad Handbook](#) and the [Policies](#) section of the SIT website for all academic and student affairs policies. Students are accountable for complying with all published policies. Of particular relevance to this course are the policies regarding: academic integrity, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), research and ethics in field study and internships, late assignments, academic status, academic appeals, diversity and disability, sexual harassment and misconduct, and the student code of conduct.

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad Handbook and SIT website for information on important resources and services provided through our central administration in Vermont, such as [Library resources and research support](#), [Disability Services](#), [Counseling Services](#), [Title IX information](#), and [Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion](#) resources.

Course Schedule

Please be aware that topics and excursions may vary to take advantage of any emerging events, to accommodate changes in our lectures' availability, and to respect any changes that would affect student safety. Students will be notified if this occurs.

Module 1 – Advanced Oral Comprehension, Reading and Writing

This unit is designed to improve students' French oral, comprehension, reading, and writing skills by focusing on general pronunciation, advanced level grammar, advanced vocabulary acquisition, sentence structure and specific local nuances of French as is spoken and written in Madagascar. In order to reinforce language acquisition and its

use in Madagascar, students participate in field exercises and other activities requiring the use French.

Module 2 – French for Natural Sciences (advanced)

Through a range of methods including class discussions, assigned readings, lectures and appropriate site visits, students increase their capacity to speak, read and write French through its study in the context of the program theme including the study of the natural sciences, biodiversity and natural resource management. In so doing, students build capacity and increased proficiency in spoken and written

French to facilitate the ability to perform most linguistic tasks with ease, confidence and competence. This includes competent handling of discussions abstractly, using precise vocabulary with proper intonation and the ability to demonstrate fluency to native speakers. Topics covered include terrestrial ecology, marine ecology, conservation and development interventions, natural resource management and conservation, and people and the environment.