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French and Italian
CTL Faculty Fellows Final Report
May 1, 2026

Project: Collaborative hybrid instruction methods for a French-language literature class

Project Summary

The goal of this project was to create a hybrid version of a current upper-division French literature class that is regularly offered as a requirement for French majors and minors in the department of French and Italian. The course involved the creation and use of twelve instructional videos created by the four tenure-track faculty members of the French program. The in-person instruction was covered by a designated instructor who also managed the hybrid material and students' engagement with it. We decided to create this course in order to meet the needs of our French majors and minors who increasingly expressed their frustration: as the department grew smaller due to retirements and the departure of faculty who were not replaced by the college, we have been forced to reduce the number of course offerings thus making it difficult for our students to fit our requirements in their busy schedules. This is a well-documented challenge being faced by modern language departments across the country. We believe that this course will facilitate enrollment for current students, as it only includes one in-person session per week, while allowing us to promote the French program as flexible enough to serve as a minor or secondary major to students with demanding primary majors.

The course in question is FREN 3100, "Introduction to Critical Reading and Writing in French." This is one of our third-year advanced French requirement options. The class introduces students to major French authors and literary movements. One of the challenges that we expected to face in creating this course was the difficulty of maintaining active student engagement while working with course material that is typically taught in an in-person format. However, we thought that the hybrid format would also come with a few advantages. First, it would allow students to receive instruction from a broader range of faculty members, each of whom would be speaking about their specific areas of expertise (medieval, 18th century, francophone, etc.). We hope that an early exposure to multiple faculty members will also motivate students to continue with their studies within the department. Lastly, with the department's challenges of scheduling while understaffed, it is helpful for logistical reasons to have a course that is pre-designed and can be taught in any given semester by any of our highly qualified instructors. The course was offered during spring semester 2026 and was taught by Associate Teaching Professor Aimee Kilbane. We created the syllabus, online video lectures and activities during the fall semester. I remained in touch with the instructor during the spring to discuss the effectiveness and progress of the course throughout the semester.

Assessment of impact

Professor Kilbane surveyed the students verbally as a group regularly during the semester about the course's content, modality, and level of engagement and accessibility. At the semester's start, she asked how many students were able to enroll solely because the class was being offered in a hybrid format (in other words, they would not have been able to fit a fully in-person format into their schedule). The overwhelming majority of the classroom raised their hands. The feedback

regarding the course content was positive. Professor Kilbane reports that, in class discussions that took place at the end of the semester, all students reported satisfaction with the hybrid format. In their remarks, they especially expressed satisfaction with the online content and lecture videos. Professor Kilbane also found that the students were able to complete their assignments at a level comparable with that of students who take the class in an in-person format. The class average at the end of the semester was 90.69, which is higher than usual for this class. Notably, one student told Professor Kilbane at the end of the semester that she thought that the class had helped her to overcome a sense of blockage that she previously felt regarding her spoken French. This was taken by the faculty as a positive sign indicating that the hybrid format did not reduce the sense of interpersonal interaction that the student was able to glean from the course.

We made our best effort as a department to distribute an assessment questionnaire at the end of the course to solicit student feedback on the hybrid format. We sent the short survey (3 open-ended questions) to the group on three occasions before the end of the semester. Ultimately only one student responded, and this has posed a considerable obstacle to our qualitative assessment data. The student who responded simply wrote that they found the course to be rigorous and adequately similar in the breadth of content and interaction as an equivalent in-person course. The single testimonial was positive, but we clearly need to adjust our assessment technique to an environment in which students frequently ignore requests for feedback.

Lastly, a review of the work produced by the students confirms that they have attained an equal level of competency in the course material as students who attend the all-in-person format. Students were able to interpret literary works, compare genres, and synthesize the material to formulate a coherent and even convincing argument.

Self-reflection

We collectively went into this exercise somewhat nervous, some of us perhaps even skeptical, as to how effective this hybrid version of our class could be. This was the first experience of its kind for the department and only one of the five collaborating instructors had any experience with online or hybrid instruction. We hoped that a first run of the course would at least indicate promising pathways forward for improvement. We were delighted, however, at the semester's end, to discover that the students not only clearly enjoyed the class but also seemed to be getting as much out of it as our students who took the same class in-person. The students were especially pleased with the twelve videos recorded by the collaborating tenure-track professors in our program. This suggests that students enjoy hearing from a variety of different voices throughout the 15 weeks of the semester, and this particular format allowed each faculty member to focus on the area of French literary studies that they knew best and in which they had the highest level of expertise. This turned out to provide a substantial benefit for our students.

Moreover, the inaugural instructor, Aimee Kilbane, had a positive experience teaching the class overall and was pleasantly surprised at how enjoyable and effective the hybrid format could be. I would add that the success of this first run for the class had much to do with several judicious choices made by Professor Kilbane. Open to the potential of remote learning but concerned with the possibility of students turning in AI-generated work, she decided to administer a majority of the student assessments in class, even encouraging students to submit hand-written work when

possible. This approach ensured that the students were not getting lost in the online aspect of the course and received close attention to work that they were generating on their own. In truth, our students are typically very eager to improve their French skills; it's what leads them to our major or minor in the first place. Yet the pressures and temptations of AI are a frequent obstacle and one that Professor Kilbane adeptly navigated. The proof of this lies in the degree to which students felt that they had the chance to work on and improve their language skills throughout the course.

Our general assessment of this experience is that the hybrid version of French 3100 was a success. We will continue to offer the course once a year, in the spring, alternating with the in-person version of 3100, which will be offered each fall semester. This will allow students to benefit from the advantages of the hybrid course when desired or avoid it if they prefer the in-person format (and are able to fit it into their schedule).

We have several steps ahead to ensure that the course remains relevant and accessible to students. First, we need to improve our means of assessing student experience with the course. In order to receive adequate student feedback, we will probably need to include a form of incentive to reply to our survey requests. Close and regular assessments of this type will be especially important for the hybrid format to ensure that the class has not become outdated and that it maintains a high level of quality even if taught by different instructors. This assessment will be carried out yearly by the department's Associate Chair of Undergraduate Studies.

We must also ensure that the hybrid class continues to meet its enrollment goals, as one of the main objectives of this project is to make it easier for our students to enroll. The inaugural version of the course enrolled 12 students, which is a respectable number, not particularly high but also not excessively low for an upper-division literature class taught in a foreign language in today's era of plummeting enrollment rates for modern language classes. As we push forward on other recruitment initiatives in the French program (an easier, pathways-based requirement system and a "French for International Careers" track for majors and minors), we hope that this hybrid 3100 will make it easier for students to add the French major or minor to their degree plans. In this, we believe that this new hybrid course will be of great help in our efforts to promote the major and minor to students who are pursuing degrees in demanding areas such as the sciences.

We will work to make the course more streamlined and accessible. The video lectures are not currently all uploaded in the same format. It would be easier for students if they were, and we will work on improving this for the next iteration. Most of the video lectures include subtitles but not all of them. Subtitles are very helpful for students following material in a foreign language, so we will endeavor to have subtitles included in all videos.

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Une présentation par le professeur Kieran Murphy

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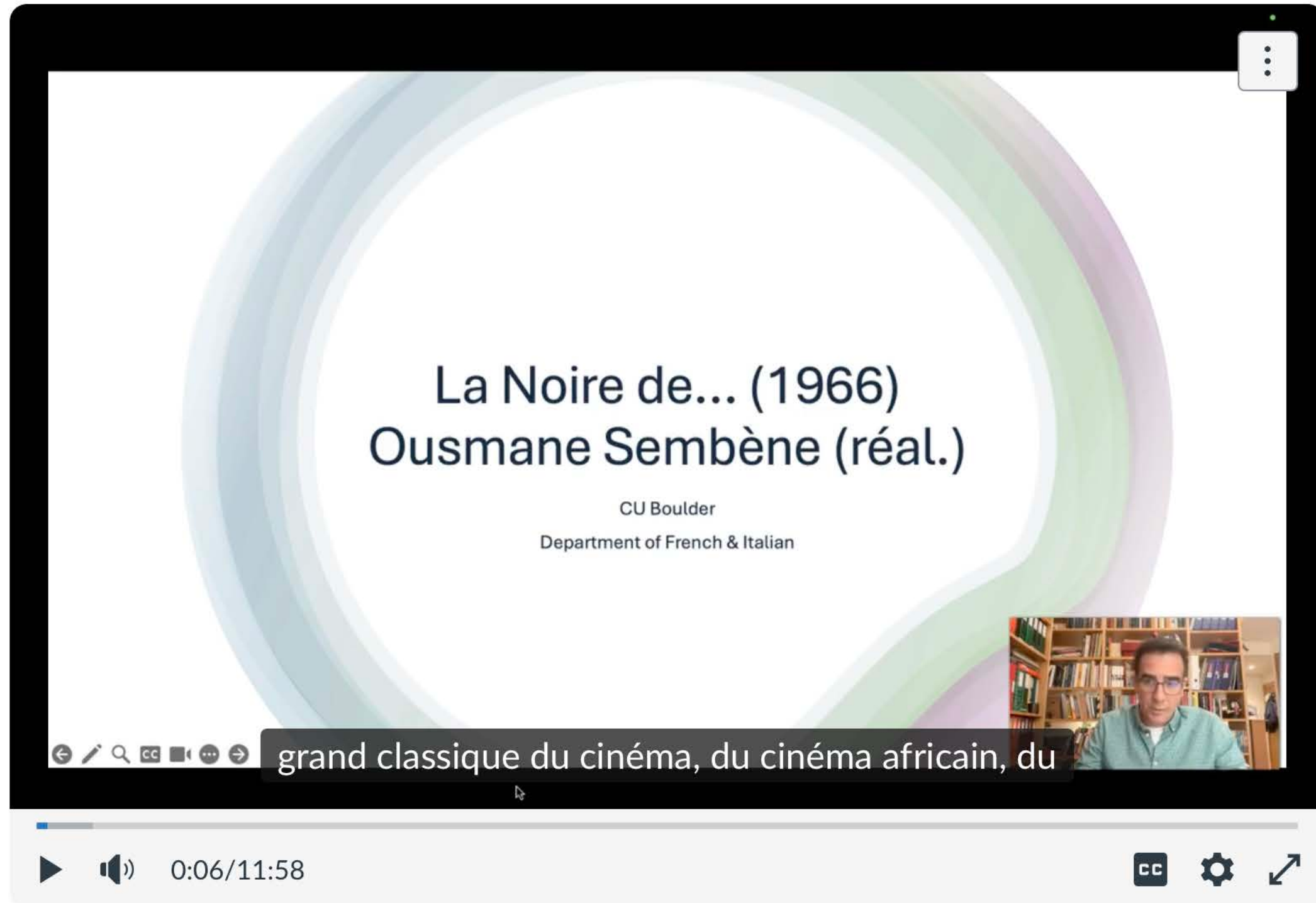


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MARIE DE FRANCE: GUIGEMAR

Bonjour, Pour ceux qui ne me connaissent pas, je