

Yale Department of French

THE DISSERTATION AND THE PROFESSION

Students, particularly those in the last three years of the program, should strive to maintain a proper balance between work on their prime task--the dissertation--and the development of professional skills. The dissertation is the centerpiece of the PhD. It defines a scholar's identity as he or she enters the profession. The completion of an outstanding dissertation is a consuming and demanding task; distractions must be kept within strict limits. The Department strongly urges students to consult with their advisor before making any ancillary commitments during their dissertation years, and to maintain a dialogue on the best uses of their time. The dissertation should be mostly completed by the time the student enters the job market, normally in the fall of the sixth year.

The Department also recognizes the demands of professionalization in contemporary academia and works to help students prepare for a full range of activities. Students and their professors should engage in regular dialogue about professional development, in order to enhance each student's potential contributions. Opportunities for publishing articles should be carefully examined.

The Department actively supports student participation in conferences, in two ways. Every two years, normally, the graduate students in French organize a colloquium at Yale with backing from the Department and other sources. Students are responsible for all aspects--intellectual and practical--of the conference. Recent topics have included "La volonté de paraître: The Cult and Cultivation of Appearances in French and Francophone Literature and Culture" (2007); "Besoin de Désirer: Appetite between Wants and Needs" (2009); and "Literature and Ethics" (2012). In Spring 2014, students are organizing a colloquium on "Bad Literature." Students also invite distinguished lecturers in years when they are not preparing a conference.

The Department also encourages graduate student participation in conferences outside of Yale. Each student should participate in a conference at least once during his/her graduate career. The Department offers a total of \$1000 in support to each student during the course of his/her graduate career. See Rules document for details.

In addition, the Yale Graduate School offers a wide array of professional training, from basic writing tutoring to all aspects of pedagogy. See the following resources:

- The McDougal Center: <http://gsas.yale.edu/life-yale/mcdougal-graduate-student-center>
- The Yale Teaching Center: <http://teaching.yale.edu/>
- The Writing Center: <http://gsas.yale.edu/academic-professional-development/yale-center-teaching-learning/graduate-writing-center>