

UNITED STATES NAVAL ACADEMY  
Language Studies Department

FF101 – BEGINNING FRENCH

Automne 2004

---

Bonjour! Bienvenus au cours de français, FF101!

As you will see with the syllabus for FF101, Beginning French includes almost all classroom instructions in French, even from the first day. This is to assist you in acquiring a working knowledge of French for everyday use. Your objective in this course should be just that, learn French everyday use and work on French a little bit, "un petit peu," everyday. Our textbook, *Débuts*, gives complete explanations for all grammar points and homework. You MUST bring a copy of the textbook to each class period since we will be working intensively with materials there for two semesters, FF101 and FF102. It is highly recommended that you buy your own copy of the textbook and the *Workbook and Laboratory Manuel*, Part I, plus CD's. We will have daily homework assignments from these materials. There is a separate workbook, *Workbook and Laboratory Manuel*, Part II, plus CD's. Do NOT discard Part I after FF101 since we will begin FF102 with lessons there.

OBJECTIVES: The overall objective of this course is for you to understand, speak, read and write comprehensible French appropriate for a first-year or beginning student. What is that?, you might ask. The short answer to this more complicated question is this: pronunciation, grammar and sentence structure, and basic vocabulary. Our textbook, *Débuts*, means "beginnings." We use this word in English. In fact, we use many French words in English, since French is a source language for our native tongue (remember the Battle of Hastings in 1066? William the Conqueror even had the famous or infamous "Doomsday Book" compiled to assess the value of his newly claimed territory). We also lay the foundations here for a more thorough mastery of the French language, literature, and culture.

GENERAL PLAN: (a) **Thinking in French.** For the first few days, we will devote class time to learning and understanding phrases spoken in French and learning to say them easily and naturally in French. From the beginning, you will learn to react **in French** to everyday situations. You should expect to use French in the classroom everyday and "react" in French to greetings, such as "Bonjour, monsieur" or "Bonjour, mademoiselle," just as you would in English to "hello" or "hi." In French the more informal greeting is "salut." Does that word remind you of anything? Look at military terminology and you will see a lot of French, "lieutenant," "brigade," "corps," etc. Learn to associate the sound of French with its meaning and "think" in French.

(b) **Pronunciation:** The key to correct pronunciation is correct listening. You will learn how French is pronounced by listening to your instructor and to the CD's of the listening-comprehension lessons. We also have a film course that accompanies the textbook, *Le chemin du retour*. This film course deals with fairly serious topics, such as the Nazi occupation of France, in an entertaining way, as you will see! We will meet the

main characters in this *feuilleton*-style film course. *Le feuilleton* is the French word for "soap opera." Pronunciation only improves with practice. When you do your homework, practice it out loud outside class. Language is meant to be spoken and it "sticks" in our heads when we use it in speaking. "Use it or lose it" really does apply here, as does "practice makes perfect," so we will be doing a great deal of speaking in class.

(c) **Grammar, writing, and reading French:** You will also learn to read and write what you say in class. While we begin with listening comprehension, just as you learned English, you will learn how French is put together grammatically. There is a lot of merit in mastering the complexities of a "foreign" language. Studies have shown that bilingual speakers have fewer problems with memory loss as they age (See the *Washington Post* "Science Notebook," "Bilingualism's Brain Benefits," 14 July 04). It is always better to learn words in context, not as isolated terms. It is also better to learn how to pronounce French words first and then the spelling afterwards. If you see the word **Monsieur**, you will not have a clue, at first, as to how to spell it. As you hear it, learn how to spell it. By learning the speaking first, you will make much more rapid progress than if you learn all about grammar, verb forms, and the relationship between spelling and pronunciation. We thus have a pragmatic approach to French which has been well established by linguists as a proven way to learn to speak and use a second language. You learned your native language by speaking it first, after all. You acquire a second language the same way.

PROCEDURE: FF101 meets three hours per week. Spend time doing your homework, especially the listening-comprehension exercises (marked in your workbook/lab manual with a set of headphones). The syllabus indicates just which exercises you are to write and turn in. Look under **Devoir** (which means both "duty" and "homework"). You may turn in the homework on a sheet of paper or simply tear out the workbook pages. In all instances, make sure you have on your paper **your name, the date, and the assignment as listed in the syllabus**. As with any complex structure, French must be learned bit by bit. You eat the elephant one bite at a time, not in one swallow! Do not try to memorized two-week's work in one night before a quiz or exam. Work steadily on a daily basis. This is why we require daily homework.

Exams and quizzes: We will have a series of exams, quizzes, homework, and oral presentations, speaking tests (one or two during the semester and one as part of the final exam) plus a final exam (25% of your final grade). Instead of a six-week or twelve-week exam as such, we will have frequent chapter quizzes upon which your interim grades will be based, along with homework. We will also have speaking tests, a "one-on-one" test with your instructor in his or her office. Based on a "question bank," of 15 to 20 questions, your instructor will ask you at least 10 questions and you will respond in French. No English will be used during the speaking test (about 10 minutes) and you will receive a grade for the speaking test immediately afterward with an assessment of the instructor on your abilities. For all tests, you will have a study guide so that you can focus on various aspects of each chapter. You should know just where you stand in the class, as far as the grade goes, on a weekly basis. If you are in doubt, ask your instructor!

Each class period allows you to practice your French in an interactive way, either in group work with a partner or with the class as a whole. Since we cover a lot of ground in each class period, **please inform your instructor if you are going to be absent for any reason.** E-mail is the best way to contact your instructor. If you are in doubt about any aspect of this course, the best thing to do is ask questions.

Finally, set goals for yourself. What do you want from this course? Yes, it is a requirement for Division III majors, but make the most of it! You will get out of this course what you put into it. There are no magic formulas, however. If you don't "grapple" with the language, you simply will not learn even the basics. If you do not listen to the audio clips for homework, for example, you will not be able to understand the listening-comprehension portions of tests and quizzes. Ask yourself: If I go to France, will I be able to understand what people say? Will I be able to ask questions? Will I be able to communicate with people in everyday situations? No one speaks "Basic French," so am I learning to understand "the real thing?"

Please contact me in my office in Nimitz 58 for any questions or EI. I am the Course Coordinator for FF101 and FF102, so I am responsible for setting up course materials. You can reach me in my office or by e-mail, [voros@usna.edu](mailto:voros@usna.edu). I want to hear your comments!

Sharon D. Voros, PhD  
Professor of Spanish and French  
Course Coordinator, FF101