

FRENCH ITALIAN

LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES

Handbook for Teaching Assistants, Teaching Fellows, and Part-time Instructors

2020



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www.frit.pitt.edu

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Welcome to the Department of French and Italian at the University of Pittsburgh!

Whether you are a new Master's student, an exchange student, or a new Ph.D. student, a new part-time or visiting instructor, we are delighted that you are here. As you read this, you have just embarked on the journey of being both a student and teacher—a journey that will be both challenging and rewarding.

We hope that the information contained in this handbook will facilitate your teaching experience in our program and serve as a reference tool for important policies, campus contacts, and teaching procedures. From our own experiences as Coordinators, we know that only by collaborating with one another, by seeking out advice and resources available to us both within and beyond our University, and by solving problems proactively can we improve our own teaching and our students' language learning in the department.

It is recommended that you refer to this handbook whenever appropriate and review this information carefully. However, we know that no handbook can prepare you for all of the unforeseen circumstances that accompany the instruction of diverse and sometimes unpredictable students. In addition, please know that active and regular communication with your Coordinator about your daily lesson plans, your ideas for curricular design, and your questions about teaching will be *essential* components of your development as a language instructor. This communication will depend in large part on planning your daily lessons thoughtfully and building time into your schedule for consulting with your Coordinator and seeking feedback on how to teach in a coherent and meaningful way. You will also find tremendous benefit through interacting with other TAs, TFs, and part-time instructors (PTIs) in French and Italian who have taught the same course that you are now teaching and have rich previous experiences in the French/Francophone or Italian language, literature, and culture--do not hesitate to seek their advice or to ask to observe them in the classroom!

We look forward to providing you guidance as you begin your teaching journey here in our department and to collaborating with you. We hope that this teaching experience will be fruitful and productive for both you and your students.

Sincerely,

Brett Wells, French Coordinator
Lorraine Denman, Italian Coordinator

Teaching Objectives of our Language Programs

We want our students to develop to the greatest possible extent a competence in comprehending and producing the target language, both spoken and written, as well as socio-cultural competence in communicating with people who speak the target language.

The main focus of classes is on communication, and we strive for maximum use of the foreign language in the classroom.

The approach used in our courses can be characterized as **communicative** and **integrated**.

“Communicative” means that the focus of the course is on language use in realistic settings, not on performing exercises, which have no immediate justification other than the practice of a particular procedure. “Integrated” means that the various aspects that make up the language-learning experience are not separated or isolated but will be treated as complementary to one another. In one single activity, students may learn some facts, procedures, practice certain grammatical structures, and practice communicative strategies.

It is important to keep in mind that communicative language teaching has been criticized for its emphasis on oral competence while neglecting to provide appropriate instruction in literacy skills (e.g. reading and writing). These will be the most challenging aspects of your job as a language teacher: To **balance interpersonal communication** activities such as partner interviews or teacher-led questions about preferences, and to **provide a well-structured and clear presentation of new material**. This material might be a contextualized grammar point or an introduction to a magazine article through pre-reading question. No matter the nature of the material, it will always require thoughtful preparation and coherence in order to achieve maximal language acquisition on the part of your students. Although students and teachers alike enjoy the interpersonal aspect of the language-learning experience (and we encourage this!), it should be integrated with other aspects of language such as writing an article, reading a poem from the target countries, or explicitly coaching your students on writing strategies. Only by providing our students with a firm foundation in both communicating in the target language and understanding target-language texts of all types can we motivate students to use their language knowledge toward their own future goals.

Finally, we strive to show students **the value of learning a foreign language**. Students come to our programs for a variety of reasons. Some want to fulfill a requirement, some want to pursue an international career, others are curious about the world and want to explore it. Whatever their motivation, we know that students will benefit from the hard work of learning a foreign language and that they will frequently look to you for guidance and support. Please keep in mind that we are all here to help you and your students, so please never hesitate to ask help!

A Communication/Task-based Lesson Plan Template

Date: _____

Context/Theme: _____

Function/Speech Act: _____

New Vocabulary: _____

Grammatical Point(s): _____

Handouts/Powerpoint: _____

Homework: _____

Lesson Sequence

Warm Up: _____

Anticipated Time: ____ min. (Actual time: ____ min.)

Presentation: _____

Anticipated Time: ____ min. (Actual time: ____ min.)

Comprehension
Check(s): _____

Anticipated Time: ____ min. (Actual time: ____ min.)

Guided Practice(s): _____

Anticipated Time: ____ min. (Actual time: ____ min.)

Independent
Practice(s): _____

Anticipated Time: ____ min. (Actual time: ____ min.)

Closure: _____

Anticipated Time: ____ min. (Actual time: ____ min.)

Lesson Plan Checklist

The following checklist was developed by the Language Program Coordinators to provide a general structure for lessons and as a way to assess instructor performance.

Before the start of the lesson	YES	NO	Comments
Arrives at least five minutes before class begins			
Date/homework/announcements written on the board			
Engages students in small talk (chit chat) in the target language before class. Greets students as they enter the class.			

Beginning of class period	YES	NO	Comments
Clear description of learning objectives of the lesson			
A short warm up activity that includes what was learned in the previous class and to prepare for the day's lesson.			
Active comprehension checking throughout activity			

Presentation of new material	YES	NO	Comments
Clear functional context is visible in the lesson (i.e., speech event, or "Today we will learn how to describe your best friend")			
Clear goals and reasons for the presentation of new material is given to students (i.e., "I will now present to you my best friend; listen for new words/adjectives that you hear"). If grammatical terms are used, they are defined in functional ways (e.g., Adjectives help us describe people, places, and objects, the subjunctive allows us to give advice or express emotions)			
Use of visuals that support learning (i.e., highlighted focus-on-form text, images that indicate meaning)			
Use of the target language (e.g., accuracy, avoidance of English, appropriate vocabulary and grammar for the level of the class, use of language that does not confuse or 'go over the heads' of students, clear speech)			
Interactive (e.g., frequent comprehension checking)			

Principled use of corrective feedback provided when needed (e.g., about the objective of the lesson)			
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Guided Practice (if necessary)	YES	NO	Comments
Transitions from presentation to guided practice are explicitly stated (i.e., "Now, you will tell me two adjectives that describe X")			
Objective(s) of the activity are explicitly stated (e.g., Now let's practice describing important people in our lives).			
Use of visuals that support learning (i.e., highlighted focus-on-form text, images that indicate meaning)			
Use of the target language (e.g., accuracy, avoidance of English, appropriate vocabulary and grammar for the level of the class, use of language that does not confuse or 'go over the heads' of students, clear speech)			
Principled use of corrective feedback provided when needed (e.g., about the objective of the lesson)			

Independent/Extended Practice	YES	NO	Comments
Clear functional context is visible for independent practice (i.e., speech event, or "Describe your best friend to your partner")			
Clear directions for the independent practice activity (i.e., "Take notes on your partner's best friend and find adjectives that you have in common with the description of your own best friend")			
Quality of materials that guide and support participation during independent practice, i.e., handout, graphic organizer). Teacher-made materials are neatly prepared, inviting, and easy to read.			
Teacher supports students' use of the target language during independent practice (e.g., monitoring students for task completion and avoidance of English)			
Principled use of corrective feedback provided when needed (e.g., about the objective of the lesson)			

Conclusion/Wrap-Up	YES	NO	Comments
Deliberate conclusion of activity/review of independent practice			
Error correction/corrective feedback provided in review of activity			
Clear directions for homework/for next day			

Overall comportment	YES	NO	Comments
Teacher talk is clear and comprehensible to students (as evidenced through comprehension checking)			
Teacher makes effective use of the classroom (e.g., walks around, does not sit on/at desk, judicious use of chalkboard)			
Calls on by name and engages all students during the lesson			
Overall, students speak more than the teacher			

Ten commandments for motivating language learners: results of an empirical study

Zoltán Dörnyei & Kata Csizér (1998)

Dörnyei and Csizér are leading experts on student motivation in the foreign language classroom. The following provides some tips to help motivate your students:

- 1. Set a personal example with your own behavior:** student attitudes and orientations towards learning are, to a large extent, modeled after their teachers both in terms of effort expenditure and orientations of interest in the subject.
- 2. Create a pleasant, relaxed atmosphere in the classroom:** Student anxiety created by a tense classroom climate is one of the most potent factors that undermine L2 motivation.
- 3. Present the tasks properly:** The way teachers present a task is a powerful tool in raising students' interest in the activity as well as in increasing the expectancy of task fulfillment by setting realistic goals and offering effective strategies in reaching those.
- 4. Develop a good relationship with the learners:** A great deal of the students' learning effort is energized by the motive to please the teacher, and a good rapport between the teacher and the students is a basic requirement in any modern, student-centered approach to education.
- 5. Increase the learners' linguistic self-confidence:** One's perceptions of one's own competence as well as judgments of one's abilities to achieve a goal greatly determine the person's aspiration to initiate and perform goal-directed action.
- 6. Make the language classes interesting:** The quality of the learners' subjective experience is an important contributor to motivation to learn.
- 7. Promote learner autonomy:** Enhanced motivation is conditional on learners taking responsibility for their own learning and perceiving that their learning successes and failures are to be attributed to their own efforts and strategies rather than to factors outside their control.
- 8. Personalize the learning process:** The L2 course should be *personally relevant* to the students (e.g. sharing personal information, interpersonal awareness-raising).
- 9. Increase the learners' goal-orientedness:** Goal-setting can have exceptional importance in stimulating L2 learning motivation.
- 10. Familiarize learners with the target language culture:** Make the L2 'real' by introducing learners to its cultural background, using authentic materials, and promoting contact with native speakers of the L2.

University Classroom Policies [To be updated with a COVID statement]

There are certain classroom policies that are common to all courses at the University of Pittsburgh. Four of these are identified in the syllabi for all of our courses and are as follows:

1. 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.

2. Email Policy

Each student is issued a University e-mail address (username@pitt.edu) upon admittance. This e-mail address may be used by the University for official communication with students. Students are expected to read e-mail sent to this account on a regular basis. Failure to read and react to University communications in a timely manner does not absolve the student from knowing and complying with the content of the communications. The University provides an e-mail forwarding service that allows students to read their e-mail via other service providers (e.g., Hotmail, AOL, Yahoo). Students that choose to forward their e-mail from their pitt.edu address to another address do so at their own risk. If e-mail is lost as a result of forwarding, it does not absolve the student from responding to official communications sent to their University e-mail address.

Your instructor will do his/her best to respond to your emails within 24 hours of receiving them.

3. Students with Disabilities Statement

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and Disability Resources Services (DRS; www.drs.pitt.edu), 140 William Pitt Union, (412) 648-7890, drsrecep@pitt.edu, (412) 228-5347 for P3 ASL users, as soon as possible in the term. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

4. Office Hours

Each instructor must have two hours per week that is designated for office hours. You should indicate your office hours on your syllabus.

In addition to these policies, there are other policies that are not explicitly stated on syllabi but must still be observed by all instructors.

1. Faculty Response to Student Injury (Full memo [here](#))

This policy states that if a student should fall ill or be injured in your class and require emergency medical attention, you must call Campus Police at 412-624-2121. In a non-

emergency situation, you should also attend to the student and make sure that they receive proper care (this may entail taking the student to Pitt's Wellness Center). Please read the full memo for more details.

2. FERPA (More information [here](#))

FERPA is a federal law that details the rights of students to review, inspect, and release their education records. For you, the key thing to keep in mind is that you may not give out any information regarding students' grades or performance to anyone except the student. If a parent calls to inquire about their child's grades, you are not permitted to speak with them on that subject. Please consult the linked website for more information.

3. Title IX (More information [here](#))

Title IX is a federal mandate that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex or gender. We will provide full Title IX training either during Orientation Week or the first weeks of class in the fall term. The main item to note is that according to Title IX, you are considered a "responsible employee". This means that if any student or peer discloses that they have been sexually harassed or assaulted or has been the victim of other related offenses (e.g., stalking, domestic violence, discrimination), you must report this to the Title IX Office. The Title IX training will give you more complete information and instructions regarding this policy and its related procedures.

4. Student Evaluations of Courses (More information [here](#))

All instructors at Pitt must submit a student survey at the end of the term. These student evaluations are colloquially called "OMETs" at Pitt, after the Office of Measurement and Evaluation of Teaching. The standard OMET survey is automatically created for you online every semester that you teach. You may add additional questions to your survey with the guidance of your Language Coordinator. Surveys are administered at the end of the term, but you will not receive survey results until after grades have been submitted to the Registrar.

5. Policy on Extreme Weather Conditions (Found [here](#))

The university very rarely closes due to poor weather conditions, but you should consider your own safety and make thoughtful and reasonable decisions about cancelling classes.

6. Recognizing Religious Observances (Found [here](#))

Students may not be penalized in any way if they miss class due to religious holidays.

7. Grading deadlines, etc.

All instructors must observe all deadlines given by the Office of the Registrar and the Provost's and Dean's Offices. These are updated in the official [Academic Calendar](#).

Other policies will be discussed during Orientation Week or as they are announced by the Provost's or Dean's Offices.

Departmental Classroom Policies

In addition to university policies, the Department of French and Italian has its own policies for all instructors. These include:

1. Courseweb

All instructors should use the university's online learning management system, Courseweb. You will receive training on Courseweb during Orientation Week.

2. OMET student surveys

All instructors must have students complete OMET surveys at the end of the term (more information below).

3. TA/TF/PTI Contracts and Agreements

We expect you to read, sign, and comply with all contracts and agreements that relate to your teaching and/or studies. Your DGS (or Chair) will provide you with these documents.

The following policies are to be used on all departmental syllabi in the language programs:

1. Grades

All syllabi must show how final grades are calculated. An example from ITAL 0101:

Midterm	20%
Final	20%
Quizzes (6)	15%
Speaking Assessments (Extempore)	15%
Homework/Participation (in class)/Progetti	30%

2. Grading Scale

All syllabi must have a grading scale. For example:

A+ 98%	B+ 88%	C+ 78%	D+ 68%	F 59% or lower
A 93%	B 83%	C 73%	D 63%	
A- 90%	B- 80%	C- 70%	D- 60%	

3. Cell phones/laptops

We recommend that the following statement be included on all syllabi:

"Cell phones should be switched off at the beginning of class, unless your instructor asks you to use them. **You are not permitted to make or take calls, text, or otherwise use your phone**

during class time. Your participation grade may be negatively affected should you choose to do so. Laptops may only be used to take notes, at the permission of your instructor."

4. Placement Exam

According to the Registrar, we cannot exclude any student from any class that they wish to take. However, we strongly recommend that students who already know some French or Italian take a placement test to determine their level. The following statement is to be included on all syllabi:

"If you have not previously taken Italian courses at the University of Pittsburgh *and* have some knowledge of Italian, you are required to take a placement exam before registering in this course. If you have taken a placement exam recently and were placed into this course, please contact your instructor to confirm that this level is appropriate for you. Please contact your instructor if you have any questions regarding this information."

5. Participation

You should describe participation and how you will assess it in your class. Here is an example from an Italian syllabus:

"Since participation is a large component of your final grade in this course (20%), your daily efforts to arrive punctually, come to class prepared, and participate in all class activities are essential. ***Outstanding participation*** is defined as habitually arriving for class on time, always listening attentively when others speak, asking pertinent questions, volunteering in all activities, participating in all activities with enthusiasm, and responding to questions from others. ***Average participation*** is defined as occasionally arriving late to class, sometimes listening to others when they speak, sometimes asking questions, participating in some activities, occasionally contributing to group activities, and occasionally responding to questions. ***Unacceptable participation*** is defined as often arriving late to class, not listening when others speak, seldom asking questions, not contributing much to group work, and seldom responding to questions. Your instructor will keep track of your participation and will keep you informed of your progress in this area. The grading rubric will be posted on Courseweb."

6. Assignments and Quizzes

You should include a statement on late assignments. For example:

"All homework must be handed in on time. In addition to assignments posted to Courseweb, you will be given other written assignments as well as web-based activities that are to be turned in to your instructor or posted to Courseweb for grading. Quizzes will be given in class or on Courseweb on a regular basis to check your progress. All assignments and quizzes must be completed on time—your instructor will not accept late work unless there are extenuating, documented circumstances. Always communicate such circumstances as soon as possible to your instructor."

7. Attendance

You must include an attendance policy on your syllabus. Here is an example from an Italian class:

"Because of the communicative nature of this course, it is essential to come to class regularly. Attendance is taken every day. You are allowed up to two "free" absences during the semester. There are no excused or unexcused absences for these two absences. **On your third absence, you will lose 5 percentage points from your final grade and each subsequent absence will result in one additional point off the final grade for any classes missed.** For example, if at the end of the semester you have a final grade of 85% (B), upon the third absence the final grade is automatically penalized for a total of 80% (B-). A **documented** medical condition or family or personal emergency (provided to your instructor within one week of your return to class) will constitute the sole exception to this rule."

8. Tests

This policy regards make-up tests and quizzes:

"Students who are unable to take a scheduled test **must notify their instructor prior** to the test. Students who miss a test without notifying their instructor **will not be allowed to make up the test or oral exam.** Students who have conflicts with the final exam time must notify their instructor **at least two weeks prior to the final exam.** The department will then provide for an alternate testing time. All students must take the exam during these two departmental sanctioned times."

9. Student Evaluations of this Course (OMET)

Our department requires that you conduct OMETs in class. This is the statement that you are to read on that day:

"The Department of French and Italian greatly values student feedback. The OMET online evaluations are the primary tool we use to assess instructors and evaluate courses. These evaluations are used to develop and improve curricular design and instructional efficacy. In addition, OMETs are shared with upper level administration when deciding on contract renewal, promotion, awards, tenure, etc. We thank you for taking the time to provide thoughtful and constructive feedback. Whether in the Language Media Center or in the regular classroom, OMETs will be conducted during class time towards the end of the semester; however, students may opt to complete the OMET online after the link becomes live on my.pitt.edu. There is no penalty for students who opt not to take the OMET."

10. Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

All syllabi must include a policy on academic integrity. Below follows an example from an Italian 0101 syllabus:

"Plagiarism is a serious ethical matter and an infraction of University Policy. Students should familiarize themselves with both the University Policy on Academic Integrity (available at <http://www.as.pitt.edu/fac/policies/academic-integrity>) and the Department of French and Italian Plagiarism Policy (<http://www.frenchanditalian.pitt.edu/undergraduate/plagiarism.php>).

Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

1. Use of human or online translators (i.e. Google Translate)
2. Unauthorized editorial help (asking a friend in an upper level course for help)
3. Unattributed use of an author's ideas (theft of intellectual property)
4. Unattributed use of an author's words (lack of proper citation)

Any student who plagiarizes will be immediately reported to the Assistant Dean of Undergraduate Studies charged with matters of Academic Integrity. Sanctions for first-time violations typically result in a '0' or an 'F' grade for the assignment. Second violations may result in a failing grade for the course and expulsion from the University. Please do not hesitate to contact your instructor or the Language Program Coordinator, Lorraine Denman (denman@pitt.edu), if you have any questions or concerns regarding this policy."

New Diversity Statements for all FRIT Syllabi

The FRIT diversity committee convened in AY 2017-2018 to craft new statements that support students from diverse backgrounds. They are as follows:

University of Pittsburgh's Nondiscrimination Policy:

The University of Pittsburgh, as an educational institution and as an employer, does not discriminate on the basis of disability, race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, genetic information, marital status, familial status, sex, age, sexual orientation, veteran status or gender identity and expression in its programs and activities.

The University does not tolerate discrimination, harassment, or retaliation on these bases and takes steps to ensure that students, employees, and third parties are not subject to a hostile environment in University programs or activities.

The University responds promptly and equitably to allegations of discrimination, harassment, and retaliation. It promptly conducts investigations and takes appropriate action, including disciplinary action, against individuals found to have violated its policies, as well as provides appropriate remedies to complainants and the campus community. The University is committed to taking prompt action to end a hostile environment if one has been created, prevent its recurrence, and remedy the effects of any hostile environment on affected members of the campus community.

For complete details on the University's Nondiscrimination, Equal Opportunity, and Affirmative Action Policy (07-01-03) and Sexual Misconduct Policy (06-05-01), please visit <http://diversity.pitt.edu/affirmative-action/policies-procedures-and-practices>

The Department of French and Italian's Statement on Diversity:

Inspired by the University's nondiscrimination policy, we, the members of the Department of French and Italian, embrace a notion of intellectual community enriched and enhanced by diversity in all forms. We appreciate that identities are complex, intersectional, and dynamic, in the classroom, in course materials, and in French- and Italian-speaking communities beyond campus. Diversity provides the benefit of allowing multiple perspectives inside and outside of the classroom. We expect that all members of our learning community commit to 1) creating an intellectual space where students are free to express their opinions in ways that are respectful of others and their perspectives, 2) engaging in the process of questioning and revising their own identities and perspectives, and 3) understanding the ways in which our identities position us within the classroom.

University of Pittsburgh's Students with Disabilities Statement:

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and Disability Resources Services (DRS; www.drs.pitt.edu), 140 William Pitt Union, (412) 648-7890, drsrecep@pitt.edu, (412) 228-5347 for P3 ASL users, as soon as possible in the term. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

The Department of French and Italian's Statement on Accessibility:

The Department of French and Italian aims to foster an environment that supports, facilitates, and encourages the learning process. Students at Pitt can access formal, university-level assistance and request accommodations with DRS. Alongside the DRS office, the Department of French and Italian strives to make all components of our courses accessible to all students. Please do not hesitate to contact your instructor to discuss your learning needs. We will make every possible effort to accommodate students in a timely and confidential manner. In addition to ongoing needs, we recognize that life circumstances (personal, health, family, financial or other concerns) may interfere with your studies. In this case, please contact your instructor to discuss possible adjustments or alternative arrangements regarding coursework.

Common and Uncommon Classroom Issues

1. **If a fire alarm goes off during class**, you must escort your students out of the building. The Pitt Police will tell you when you can reenter the building. If the alarm happens towards the end of class, you may excuse your class. Please read the full [Fire and Emergency Evacuation Procedures](#) memo for more information.
2. **If your building is closed**, your class will be canceled. An example of this would be that there is an electrical outage in a building. Sign up for the Pitt [Emergency Notification Service](#) to receive automatic texts and/or emails regarding campus emergencies.
3. **If your classroom door is locked** when you arrive to class, call Pitt Police at 412-624-2121.
4. **If you must cancel class due to an emergency**, please call your Coordinator to let them know as soon as possible. You should also call the Main Office at 412-624-5220 so that they can notify students with a sign on your classroom door. If you need to move your class for any reason, please notify your Coordinator and the Main Office.
5. Your classroom should come equipped with a media cabinet that allows you to show DVDs, project from your computer, play music, etc. **If you have a problem with your media cabinet or the projector**, [use this form](#) to report the problem.
6. **Plan on arriving to your classroom ten minutes before your class begins**. This will allow you to set up your computer, pass out handouts, collect homework, and get to know your students before class. Please make sure you end class on time and leave the classroom as soon as possible.
7. If a student arrives late to class once or twice, you do not have to penalize them. **If a student arrives habitually late to class**, you should talk to the student about this and penalize their participation grade if necessary.
8. **If a student is disruptive during class**, you may ask that student to step out or leave the classroom. If you are concerned about the safety of your other students or for your own personal safety, call 911 or campus police at 412-624-2121. We will talk about how to work with distressed students in the first weeks of the semester.
9. **If you need to give a student a makeup exam**, please contact Lucy DiStazio (or ask your Coordinator) to reserve a proper room. You should not administer exams in common areas (such as CL 1317, the hall of the 13th floor, etc.)
10. **If a student wants to dispute a grade**, you should first meet with the student to talk about the assignment, how you assessed the student, and the student's concerns. If they would like to further appeal a grade, they would then contact the Coordinator for that class.

Observation Procedures

Observation Calendar

For you as a new teacher, observations provide valuable feedback about your own teaching. The Coordinators and faculty will use these observations to write persuasive letters of recommendation on your behalf as you pursue scholarships as well as future academic appointments (e.g., summer teaching).

OBSERVATIONS IN FRENCH

French TAs and TFs teaching French 0101, 0102, 0103, 0104 are observed 3-4 times during the year. TAs teaching French 20, 21, 55, 56 and 58 may request observations as necessary from their faculty mentors. In the fall semester, each TA is observed twice by the French Coordinator. One of these observations is announced; the other is unannounced. In the spring semester, each TA is observed once (twice if necessary). Video recording of the spring observation is recommended and should be discussed with the Coordinator prior to the scheduled spring observation. After each observation, TAs must fill out the auto-evaluation form (in French or English) and turn it in within 48 hours of the observation in preparation for a post observation meeting.

OBSERVATIONS IN ITALIAN

Italian TAs are observed twice per semester. In the fall semester, each TA is observed twice by the Italian Coordinator. One of these observations is announced; the other is unannounced. In the spring semester, each TA is observed twice. The second observation may be conducted by another faculty member or colleague. In case a third observation is needed during the spring semester, the Coordinator will conduct a third, announced observation. Video recording is also recommended, but not required. After each observation, TAs must fill out the auto-evaluation form (in Italian or English) and turn it in within 48 hours of the observation in preparation for a post observation meeting.

Post Observation

On the same day that you are observed, please schedule a follow-up meeting with your Coordinator. It is important that you fill out your Post-Observation Self-Assessment Form and place the form along with your lesson plan in your Coordinator's mailbox within 48 hours after the observation. (The form can be found on the next page.)

The post-observation meeting is not designed as an opportunity for one-way communication from the Language Coordinator to TA/ TF, but as an opportunity for a dialogue between two teachers about what aspects of your lesson were successful and what aspects of the lesson need improvement. It is very important that you share with your Coordinator your own impression of your teaching as well as your impressions of your students' interaction and reactions to the lesson.

Post-Observation Self-Assessment Form

Name: _____

Course Number: _____

Date of Observation: _____

Time and Location: _____

1. Please describe your overall impression of the session:

2. Please describe which part of the session was the most successful and why:

3. Please describe which part of the session you felt was the least successful and why:

4. If you could change something the next time you teach this session, what would it be?

PLEASE STAPLE THIS TO THE OBSERVATION GRID AND YOUR LESSON PLAN AND RETURN TO MY MAILBOX WITHIN 48 HOURS. THANK YOU!

Guidelines to Respect as a Teacher and Colleague

With Colleagues

An environment of collaboration among language teachers in our department is one of our explicit goals. During your first semester as a teacher, you will not only work together on a daily basis in the same office, but you will also have weekly meetings and an introductory course in foreign language teaching methodologies. We expect you to come to each weekly meeting and the pedagogy course ***ready to contribute your own ideas but at the same time willing to embrace different ideas*** shared by colleagues. For native speakers of French or Italian, you will inevitably find errors in the speech or writing of your non-native speaker colleagues; we are grateful for your corrections and ask that you make them in a supportive manner. For native speakers of English, you may encounter similar errors in the English of your colleagues, and we ask that you also make corrections in a supportive manner. During weekly meetings, discussions are sometimes lively, but again, your cooperation is sought to ensure that each person's ideas may be expressed without interruptions or distractions. The other instructors with whom you are teaching Elementary and Intermediate language courses will be a constant source of good ideas and help for you. We encourage that you speak with them, seek their advice, and share your own concerns related to teaching and coursework. To maintain a good spirit of cooperation amongst your colleagues, please respect shared areas (e.g., TA/TF offices, CL 1317) by keeping them clean, organized, and locked whenever you leave them. Another good idea for both collaboration and efficient use of resources is to ask colleagues teaching the same course as you before printing a handout or homework assignment on the Ricoh printer in order to make copies for everyone in one printing—in this way you are both sharing a good idea and saving time and money!

Part of being a good colleague is a willingness to substitute for other colleagues in case of sickness, emergency, or comprehensive exams. Realize that your flexibility and generosity with your colleagues will be returned when you yourself need assistance with your own class in one of these situations. We will ask you to identify at least one of your colleagues who agrees at the beginning of the semester to substitute for you based on his or her teaching schedule. Be sure you know how to contact this person at home or by cell phone, and also provide your own contact number to your colleagues in the event that they might need to contact you for substitution. Lastly, in case you ask a colleague to substitute for you, please provide him or her with your lesson plan and adequate instructions for teaching your class (e.g., class roster, class location, homework, etc.)

As a graduate student, you are experiencing the first step in developing a professional career. Each of you is a valuable and skilled member of our language community here in the Department of French and Italian, and we encourage you to contribute to our community by sharing your ideas and enthusiasm as a teacher, your active participation in your own graduate classes, and your attendance in departmental activities such as Pause Café / Tavola Italiana conversation hours, guest lectures, conferences, and other scheduled events.

With Faculty

Faculty members are an important source of guidance and support for you as a teacher, student, and colleague. We encourage you to seek interaction with faculty members. Please bring important concerns to the attention of the appropriate faculty member (e.g., the Coordinator for matters concerning teaching or a problem student, the DGS for matters concerning your own program of study) in a timely way. However, ***please be considerate of faculty members' own teaching schedules, office hours reserved for their students, and other appointments.***

With Staff

Monika and her staff work extremely hard to ensure the efficient running of departmental courses, faculty and staff actions, and other general administrative duties. During your first weeks at Pitt, you should try to learn the division of responsibilities between Monika and other administrators in our team; these responsibilities are explained in detail [online](#), but in general, Monika oversees our administrative staff and matters related to faculty actions. The Graduate Administrator, Keanna Cash, is responsible for matters related to your own graduate courses and program of study. We ask that when seeking their assistance in any of these matters realize that you will often find them already helping someone else or speaking with someone by telephone to resolve a problem (or both at once!)—***please be courteous and know that your question will be resolved as soon as time allows and the previous person has been helped.*** Sometimes you might even want to stop back by the department to seek their assistance rather than lingering in the departmental office. Please do not be offended if you are asked to step away as Monika or her staff assists someone else (in person or on the phone) with a confidential matter. Know that your own requests will be met with equal discretion.

With Students

Just as course policies state that students enrolled in your class arrive on time each day, you set the tone in the classroom by your own example in this area; it is expected that you arrive ***at least five minutes*** before your scheduled time to teach. Here in the Cathedral of Learning, you will most likely need ten minutes to get from the 13th floor to the 2nd or 3rd floor where most of our classes are taught. While teaching class, be aware that you will experience a wide diversity of students—not only in terms of race and religion, etc., but also in terms of previous education and motivation for being enrolled in the class. All of these students should be respected in the same manner and shown equal opportunities to participate in class and contribute to your class community.

Frequently Asked Questions about Teaching in the Department

Question: May I switch classrooms? How do I do so?

Answer: Usually, this is very difficult (if not impossible). If you find that there is not enough room to accommodate you and your students, notify your Coordinator and Lucy DiStazio as soon as possible. Turnaround time for these requests varies, but assume that it will take days and, in some cases, weeks to find an alternative classroom. Never switch classrooms with a colleague from our department without informing the office (this is important should an emergency arise so that you or one of your students could be found).

Question: Can I give a final exam on a different date or at a different time than the scheduled departmental exam?

Answer: NO. When students have another conflicting final examination that is scheduled on the same date and time, they must notify their instructor no later than two calendar weeks before the final exam date and arrange to take the departmental make-up final exam (typically the same day but during the next scheduled exam period).

Question: I woke up and it is snowing. Is the university closed?

Answer: Not necessarily. In the case that the university is closed and classes are cancelled, you can be notified by Pitt's Emergency Notification Service. Your Coordinator may also contact you. Assume that classes will be held as scheduled and please do not call the department to ask about cancellation of classes as this ties up the phones.

Question: Because of an emergency on the way to the university to teach, I will not make it in by the time my class starts. What do I do?

Answer: Go to a phone as soon as you can and contact your Coordinator, Monika, or someone in the office to inform them of your circumstances. Make sure you have your Coordinator's contact info in your cell phone.

Question: I am teaching in five minutes and my classroom door is locked. What do I do?

Answer: Call the Pitt Police at 412-624-2121 (or by dialing 811 on a campus land line).

Question: My class is scheduled to start, and there is another group in our classroom. What do I do?

Answer: Typically, this situation arises when a class from the previous hour has run behind for a few minutes. In that case, the previous group should leave by five minutes before the hour. At that point, politely inform the instructor that you have a scheduled class. On rare occasions, two classes or a special lecture might

be mistakenly scheduled in the same room at the same hour. In this case, call the main office immediately to resolve the situation.

Question: My class is scheduled to start in ten minutes, and I am trying to make photocopies for my students, but there is someone making hundreds of photocopies in front of me from a different department. What do I do?

Answer: You should have planned ahead! The Ricoh photocopier (the one on the right in the copy room used for making multiple copies for class) is shared by numerous departments in our building. Therefore, plan ahead and do not be surprised if you arrive just before your scheduled class and find a long line for use of the copier. Typically, between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. there is a wait to use the machine.

Question: One of my students left something (purse, sweater, etc.) in my classroom. What should I do?

Answer: Bring any lost items up to the department office and leave them with a staff person there. Leave a note in the classroom if possible so the student knows where to find his or her lost article and email the student to let them know where you left the article. If the item is of great value, you may want to call the Pitt Police and they will hold it for you. If a student is looking for a lost item, there is a Lost and Found at the Pitt Police Station and in the Cathedral of Learning at the Nationality Rooms shop on the first floor.

Question: I am planning to take a long weekend away from Pittsburgh, and I have already arranged for my roommate to cover teaching my class on Friday. Is this ok?

Answer: NO. Substituting of classes may be done under very specific circumstances such as illness, unforeseen emergencies, attending an academic conference, or taking comprehensive exams. You must notify your Coordinator if you plan on missing a class. Travel for pleasure does not constitute an acceptable reason for absence from teaching. Keep in mind that you should adhere to the substitution policy of the department in any circumstance.

Question: I am having a very full week and would like to stay at home this afternoon and catch up with my reading for one of my classes. Do I have to come to the weekly TA meeting?

Answer: YES. Your attendance at each TA meeting is MANDATORY since this is where you will receive most of the information that you need to teach your class. Often the meetings are a time to accomplish time-sensitive tasks that can be delayed by the absence of a member of the group.

- Question: I am swamped during the week and would like to use weekends to correct my students' homework in time to give back on Mondays. Is this permissible?
- Answer: Homework is used as an indicator for students of their comprehension and possible weaknesses. For this reason, it is important to do your best to return homework in a timely manner. "Turnaround time" is a frequent criticism by students in written evaluations if they feel they have not had appropriate and timely feedback. However, we realize that your own academic deadlines must be met: Do your best to establish a balance between grading and corresponding with your students and preparing your own graduate coursework. Generally, a one-week turnaround time is acceptable (but only for major assignments, exams, etc.)
- Question: I am teaching in the summer a single section course. May I change the departmental exams?
- Answer: NO. Departmental exams may not be changed unless you receive approval from the Coordinator. Departmental exams are created in collaboration with instructors as well as the Coordinator.
- Question: I am scheduled to meet with my Coordinator but other appointments have come up. May I skip the meeting?
- Answer: NO. If you have any scheduling conflict please give your Coordinator adequate advance notice.
- Question: I have created new materials for the class. Should I share it with my colleagues and my Coordinator?
- Answer: YES! You will be supplied with a great number of materials that have been developed over the years. This material is designed to help you with your classroom teaching. However, there is always room for new ideas, which is highly encouraged. Sharing of ideas leads to new ideas and a better understanding of teaching. Additionally, sometimes materials, which may look great on paper, may not actually work in the classroom. By providing your Coordinator with the materials, he/she may provide with some invaluable feedback that will help you get your message across in a more pedagogically sound way.
- Question: My students invited me for a drink at Hemingway's after class. Should I go?
- Answer: NO. Fraternalizing with the students outside of class is inappropriate. Please remember to professional at all times. You should also avoid adding students to your social networking sites (Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, etc.)

Assigning Midterm and Final Grades

Grading systems vary widely among different university systems throughout the world. Especially for international students, you may be experiencing a new grading system for the first time as both a student and teacher. In the United States, students' grades are a personal, private indicator of relative degrees of success or failure on an assignment or exam, which are taken very seriously; these grades are between you and the student only and should not be shared with other students. For all new teachers, it is sometimes difficult to ascertain what grade a student has merited; for this reason, we provide you with grading rubrics for student participation, portfolio assignments and written / oral exams which include specific grading criteria and a corresponding evaluation for each. However, you are urged to consult with your colleagues, your TA/TF Mentor, and your Coordinator should you find yourself hesitating about assigning a grade to a student.

Grade inflation, the phenomenon of assigning an unusually high number of unmerited grades has been a problem in recent years in most university departments. Please understand that while the short-term reaction on the part of a student to a desirable grade may be a positive one, the student will be hindered in the long-term as he or she continues through language courses and encounters the later reality that their grade did not correspond with the appropriate level of mastery required. On the other hand, you are not expected to have a statistical majority of mediocre C grades with outlying superior A grades and failing F grades. If you ever find yourself in a position where a student is contesting a grade that you have assigned him or her, please copy your Coordinator on all correspondence (typically by e-mail) with that student as soon as the problem surfaces.

Careful record keeping through multi-section grade online spreadsheets is a requirement in the Department of French and Italian. Each semester you will be provided with a grade book, which is located in your Courseweb, and contains the spreadsheet from your Coordinator with all of the necessary formulas to generate participation, homework, quizzes, examination, and final grades as well as attendance records. In addition, it may be mandatory that midterm grades are assigned to all freshmen in your class; you will receive a reminder from the department when midterm grades are due.

In the Department of French and Italian multi-section course students' grades should not be "curved," or adjusted according to the highest scoring students' result in your class. However, emergency circumstances occasionally arise during which you are encouraged to work with Coordinator to find a solution that is fair for the students in your class while still providing a valid assessment of their language competence.

The University of Pittsburgh Grading System is as follows: A (90-100) for meritorious work that is exceptional in all respects, B (80-89) for work that is exceptional in almost all respects but not at the same level as A work, C (70-79) for work that is of mediocre quality, D (60-69) for work of that is unacceptable in many respects or is incomplete, and F (0-59) for failing work that is unacceptable in every aspect or simply was not completed.

End of Semester Procedures

Final Grades

At the end of every semester, you each will have a final Grade Roster (via the my.pitt.edu website) with a list of all of the students in your class. This may include students who have withdrawn or resigned from the class; their grades should already be filled in. It is important that you look over your list during the week before the Final Exam in case there are any questions you have concerning students who are or are not on your roster. It is very important that these Grade Roster forms be filled out correctly and in accordance with the departmental deadlines. This gives enough time to make sure everything is in order by the University's deadlines.

Please keep the following guidelines in mind:

- Check to make sure that the class roster (students' names) is accurate. If it does not accurately reflect your class enrollment, please see your Coordinator.
- Check the "Grade Option" column before grading. Some students may have chosen the "S/N" option (*Satisfactory/No credit*, AKA *Pass/Fail*). This means that they either receive credit for the course ("S," with a C or better) or they don't ("N," with a C- or worse). If a particular student has chosen this option, it will be marked as such in this column, and you should award them only one of these two grades. On a related note, you should be aware (and remind your students) that they cannot go on to French or Italian 0102 / 0103 with a C- or worse. This is the policy of the College of Arts and Sciences.
- When you are filling in the grades, you should select the letter grade (with appropriate + or – sign, if necessary) from the drop-down box. Please consult your Coordinator if you have any questions.
- When you are finished filling in grades, you must save your work and then using the drop-down box at the top of the page, submit your final grades. Make a photocopy of it for the final grade packet that you will hand in to your Coordinator.
- Final packets should contain: All final exams, with final exam grade clearly marked on front, in alphabetical order; A hard (paper) copy of every sheet from the Courseweb Gradebook; a photocopy of the Grade Roster form placed in an envelope with the following information clearly marked on the front of the envelope: Your name, the class you taught (FR 010__ or ITAL 010__), the time you taught, the term (2191).

Helpful Websites and Resources for TAs, TFs, and PTIs

In addition to the [Department of French and Italian](#)'s main site, you may find the following links, resources, and offices useful:

1. [University Center for Teaching and Learning](#) – workshops, one-on-one course and lesson design counseling, and the place to go for questions about classroom technology and media.
2. [Graduate Student Teaching Initiative](#) at the University Center for Teaching and Learning – TA/TF-specific programming
3. [Language Media Center](#) – computer lab, recording studio, and more for teachers and students.
4. [Disability Resources and Services](#) – information for both students and instructors. Find contact information here if you have questions about student accommodations.
5. [Office of Measurement and Evaluation of Teaching](#) (OMET) – information on students' assessment of instructor performance.
6. [Student Health Services](#) – health and wellness info.
7. [Helping Students in Distress](#) (Student Affairs website)– helpful links.
8. [The University Counseling Center](#) – for students at all levels.
9. [Kanopy](#) – streaming movie service available through the [University Library System](#) (Italian and French movies available).
10. [Title IX](#) (Office of Diversity and Inclusion) – information for students and instructors on Title IX.
11. Pitt's [Academic Calendar](#) – official holidays and other closings, info on enrollment and Add/Drop, etc.
12. [Grading Options and Policies](#) (Office of the Registrar) – for students and instructors
13. [FERPA](#) and more [FERPA](#) – info on students' rights.
14. [Office of Graduate Studies](#) and [Graduate Student Services](#) at Pitt
15. [Office of Human Resources](#) at Pitt – information on benefits and HR policies
16. [24/7 Computer Help Desk](#) – or call 412-624-HELP

17. [Office of International Services](#) (OIS) – for international students.

18. [Pitt Police](#) – or call 412-624-2121

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