



2026

---

THE 12<sup>TH</sup> INTERNATIONAL

# Women in French

Conference

“Visible and Invisible  
Transgressions”

MAY 7-9  
JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

---

12th International Women in French Conference  
James Madison University  
May 7-9, 2026



#### President's Welcome

I'm so pleased to welcome you to the 12th International Women in French Conference hosted by James Madison University. Our conference organizers, WIF Treasurer Amina Saidou and her colleagues Yenisei Montes de Oca and Verónica Davila Ellis, have worked incredibly hard to put together an excellent program with many sessions to engage you during your time in Harrisonburg. For me, one of the highlights of a conference like this one is the opportunity to connect with colleagues during the breaks between sessions and over meals. I'm especially looking forward to our keynote speakers and our ongoing discussion of our current One Book, One WIF selection *Marrakech, lumière d'exil*. Whether this is your first WIF conference or your twelfth, I hope you will take advantage of the many opportunities it offers for the exchange of ideas and professional connections. –Warmly, Stephanie Schechner

C'est un grand plaisir de vous souhaiter la bienvenue au 12ième Colloque International de Women in French reçu par James Madison University. Nos hôtes du colloque, WIF Treasurer Amina Saidou et ses collègues Yenisei Montes de Oca and Verónica Davila Ellis, travaillaient vraiment dur pour organiser un programme excellent avec beaucoup de séances à vous engager pendant votre séjour à Harrisonburg. Pour moi, l'un des temps forts d'un colloque comme celui-ci c'est l'occasion de discuter avec des collègues pendant les pauses entre les séances et pendant les repas. J'attends avec impatience nos discours inauguraux et la discussion continue de notre sélection actuelle One Book, One WIF *Marrakech, lumière d'exil*. Que ce soit votre premier colloque WIF ou votre douzième, j'espère que vous profiterez de toutes les possibilités qu'il nous offre pour l'échange d'idées et de contacts professionnels. – Chaleureusement, Stephanie Schechner

Welcome to 12th International Women in French Conference hosted here at James Madison University, an institution dedicated to scholarly-research excellence and immersive learning experiences.

The range of approaches reflected in this year's program is fitting for the College of Arts and Letters, long the intellectual home for scholarship by and about women. Like this conference, CAL celebrates global perspectives, nurtures interdisciplinary collaboration and dialogue, and cultivates an intellectual community in which scholars and students can thrive.



You may be familiar with the saying, “Well-behaved women seldom make history,” but perhaps not its origins: it first appeared in an obscure 1976 scholarly article, by American historian Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, as an observation about the lives of ordinary women. In her 2007 book about the statement’s popularity, Ulrich then focused on three extraordinary, history-making women: American suffragette Elizabeth Cady Stanton, British feminist Virginia Woolf, and 15th century French court writer, Christine de Pizan, who in 1405 published a prose work about famous women.

Ulrich’s message about the relationship between history and unconventionality stretches over time, around the globe, between languages, even across the scholarly and the popular. I can’t think of a better way to honor this conference and its focus on transgression: the crossing of boundaries between cultures, nations, language traditions, disciplines, genres — and behaviors.

With best wishes for an excellent conference,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Traci Zimmerman'.

Traci Zimmerman  
Dean, College of Arts and Letters



April 13, 2026

Dear Colleagues,

On behalf of the Department of World Languages and Cultures, I am pleased to welcome you to James Madison University for the 12<sup>th</sup> International Women in French Conference (WIF) with the theme “Visible and Invisible Transgressions.” The faculty, staff, and students in our department as well as members of the College of Arts and Letters and the university community at large, look forward to engaging in conversations with you on this important topic. We know that our three days together will be filled with stimulating intellectual exchanges, meaningful conversation, and good cheer. We are extremely excited about both our international and local keynote speakers. Dr. Rajae Benchemsi will be joining us from Marrakech and will speak about her book *Marrakech, lumière d'exil* (2002). We will also feature two presenters from our department: Dr. Dorothee Polanz, who will speak about Marie Antoinette as a worldwide pop icon, and Dr. Peter Eubanks, who will provide a retrospective on the teaching and learning of French at JMU based on a student-driven research project.



We are grateful to all of you who will join us from near and far to participate in what promises to be an exciting event. We would like to thank all our sponsors at James Madison University. We also greatly appreciate the support of the WIF executive board, its current president Stephanie Schechner, and its past president Arline Cravens. Finally, we would like to extend our thanks to the French Cultural Services of the French Embassy in the United States and Higher Education Attaché, Jean-Christophe Dissart, for their presence and co-sponsorship. We are so honored to receive this support of the WIF conference at our university.

We wish everyone an exciting and engaging conference and extend our warm welcome to Harrisonburg, the Friendly City in the Shenandoah Valley.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Cynthia S. Chalupa".

Cynthia Chalupa  
Academic Unit Head  
Department of World Languages & Cultures  
James Madison University

## PRESENTATION OF KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



### **DR. RAJAE BENCHEMSI**

Born in Meknes, lives and works in Marrakech. Rajae Benchemsi is a poet, novelist, writer and art critic. She is a former lecturer in the history of ideas at the École Normale Supérieure of Meknès and a former presenter on the 2M television channel. She has numerous publications to her credit, including collections of poetry and novels, an essay on art and two monographs on Farid Belkahia, one published by Editions Skira Paris and the other by Editions Venise Cadre. In 2015, she founded the Farid Belkahia Foundation, of which she is President, and in 2016 the Mathaf Farid Belkahia Museum. She is a member of AICA-France (International Association of Art Critics).

### **One Book, One WIF: Featured Author**



## PRESENTATION OF KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



### **DR. PETER EUBANKS**

Peter Eubanks (Ph.D. Princeton) is Professor French at James Madison University. His research and teaching interests center around early modern French poetry (including Christine de Pisan, Marguerite d'Autriche, and Marguerite de Navarre) and cross-cultural encounters and misunderstandings (particularly in the Franco-American space). His articles have appeared in *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, *Montaigne Studies*, *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies*, *Literature and Belief*, and other venues. His keynote address on "The History of French at James Madison University: Insights and Inflection Points" is the result of a collaboration with several first-year female undergraduate students under the auspices of the JMU First-Year Research Experience Program (FYRE).



## *Presentation and Exhibition*

MARIE ANTOINETTE: POP CULTURE ICON - TALK AND EXHIBITION  
THURSDAY, MAY 7TH @ 4:30PM IN DUKE HALL

As part of WIF 2026, Dr. Doe Polanz is giving a talk presenting the concept of her exhibition "Marie Antoinette: Pop Culture Icon". One display case also features the students works from the art competition "Visions of Marie Antoinette". We invite you to attend the talk and right after at 5:30pm, come discover the exhibit at Sawhill Gallery in Duke Hall and continue the evening with the WIF Welcome Reception for an evening filled with surprises!



**DR. DOE POLANZ**

Doe Polanz ([polanzdx@jmu.edu](mailto:polanzdx@jmu.edu)) has been teaching French and Acting for the past 18 years in the greater D.C area and is an Associate Professor at James Madison University in Virginia. Polanz's research interests range from the 18th-century libertine novel, engravings and automaton to 19th-century Orientalism, performance and film studies. She published several articles on the Marquis de Sade and Marie Antoinette and their representations in movies and pop culture. She was a consultant at the National Museum of the French Revolution (Vizille, France) analyzing the representation of Marie Antoinette in America and Japan (in movies, manga and in pop culture) showcasing her own impressive collection of pop objects revolving around the infamous French Queen. Her collection was also featured at Syracuse University in October 2025 where she was invited to receive the Harold Jones Award for Best Essay for 2024 for her article "From Myth to Meme: Reinventing (Yet Again) Marie Antoinette in the Age of Streaming".



## Conference Events Locations

### Madison Union



Both Taylor Hall and Warren Hall are part of the Madison Union, which is located in the Bluestone Area of campus. Warren Hall connects to Taylor Hall via a 2nd-floor hallway. The Union Ballroom is located inside Warren Hall in the 5th floor.

#### Conference Sessions

All conference sessions will be held at Taylor Hall

#### Opening Remarks Ceremony

The Opening Remarks Ceremony (Thursday, May 7th at 9:30am) will be held at the The Union Ballroom

#### Plenaries

Dr. Rajae Benchemsi's plenary (Thursday, May 7th at 1:15pm) and Dr. Peter Eubanks' plenary (Friday, May 8th at 9:15am) will be held at The Union Ballroom

Check-in and Complimentary Lunches will also be held at The Union Ballroom

.....



### Miller Hall

#### Marie Antoinette: Pop Culture Icon Talk and Exhibition

Dr. Doe Polanz 's talk (Thursday, May 7th at 4:30pm) will be held at Miller Hall 1101.



### Duke Hall

The talk will be followed by the exhibition at Sawhill Gallery in Duke Hall

## Conference Events Locations



### **Hotel Madison**

#### **Welcome Reception**

The Welcome Reception (Thursday, May 7th at 6:30pm) will be held in the Quills room located inside the Hotel Madison.

---

### **The Hall of Presidents (in D-Hall)**



#### **Dinner and Reception**

The Dinner and Reception (Friday, May 8th at 5:30pm) will be held at the Hall of Presidents in 3rd floor inside of D-Hall.



# WIF 2026 Conference Schedule

## Thursday, May 7, 2026

8:30am-9:30am      Check-in & Continental Breakfast      **Location:** The Union Ballroom  
Guest pick up at 8:00am from Hotel Madison's Lobby for guided walk to The Union Ballroom  
(average walk time is 15 minutes)

9:30am-10:15am      **Opening Remarks Ceremony**      **Location:** The Union Ballroom

- **Dr. Amina Saidou & Dr. Yenisei Montes de Oca**, Organizing Committee
- **Dr. Traci Zimmerman**, Dean, College of Arts and Letters
- **Dr. Cynthia S Chalupa**, Academic Unit Head, World Languages and Culture
- **Dr. Jean-Christophe Dissart**, Director, Campus France USA Embassy of France in the United States

### Session A

10:30am –12:00pm

#### **Panel A1: Transgression and the Politics of Visibility I**

**Moderator:** Sombo Muzata

**Location:** Taylor 309

**Eric Wistrom**

"Transcrits publics et cachés dans les "Chroniques" de Facebook"

**Sasso Pagnou**

"Le jugement des infractions mystiques entre réalisme et transgression juridiques en Afrique de l'Ouest francophone"

**Francis Mathieu**

"Ourika de Claire de Duras: transgresser l'idéologie raciale par le Romantisme"

#### **Panel A2: Transgression in a Global Context: Literature, Technology, and Social Justice I**

**Moderator:** Dorothee Polanz

**Location:** Taylor 302

**Latifa Zoulagh**

"Dévoilements du visible et de l'invisible dans *La Controverse des Temps* de Rajae Benchemsi : la quête de vérité comme cheminement sacré"

**Guy Spielmann**

"Trangression, libération et soumission: paradoxes de Colette (1900-1954)"

**Feriel Lamri**

"Intitulée de la communication : La ruse du verbe féminin: subversion et détour dans 53 cm de Bessora"

12:00pm-1:00pm Complimentary Lunch Boxes

**Location:** The Union Ballroom

12:00pm-1:00pm **Board Members' Meeting**

**Location:** Zoom + Taylor 311

**Plenary 1 (virtual)**

1:15pm-2:30pm

**Dr. Rajae Benchemsi**

**Discussion with Dr. Latifa Zoulagh**

**Location:** The Union Ballroom

2:30pm-2:45pm

Coffee Break

**Location:** Taylor 400

**Session B**

2:45pm-4:15pm

**Panel B1 : Migration, gender and queer transgressions I**

**Moderator:** Anne Quinney

**Location:** Taylor 309

**Ariane Ngabeu**

"*Le Harem du roi* de Djaili Amadou Amal: Pouvoir, tradition et politique de la transgression féminine"

**Patience Odeh**

"Transgressive Powers Systems in Djaili Amadou Amal's Novels"

**Panel B2 : Transgression in a Global Context: Literature, Technology, and Social Justice II**

**Moderator:** Verónica Haun

**Location:** Taylor 305

**Amanda Parraguez Mulligan**

"Dialectics of Transgression in Luis Buñuel's *Belle de Jour* (1967)"

**Teona Eriogü & Choshi Modjadji**

"Cyber-Civic Wellness by Design: Leveraging Machine Learning to Detect Social Engineering Scams and Protect Vulnerable Communities"

**Thomas Tooley**

"Refusing to Dramatize: Transgressions of the Virtual Reservation"

**Panel B3: Gender and Identity Transgressions I**

**Moderator:** Giulia Cardillo

**Location:** Taylor 304

**Vicki Mistacco**

"Gender Insurrection in Louise de Keralio's *Amélia et Caroline*"

**Martine Wagner**

"S'écrire malgré tout : l'agenda d'Amélie Henriquel-Dupont (1871)"

**Roxanne Ewoudou Same**

"L'infanticide dans le film *Saint Omer* : immigration, transmission traumatique, et relation(s) mère(s) fille(s)"

**Talk and Exhibition**

**Dr. Dorothee Polanz**

**"From Victim to Transgressive Icon: The Transfiguration of Marie Antoinette in Worldwide Pop Culture"**

4:30pm-5:15pm

**Location:** Miller 1101

**Exhibition - Marie Antoinette: Pop Culture Icon**

5:30pm – 6:30pm

**Location:** Duke Hall

6:30pm-8:00pm

**Welcome Reception**

**Location:** Quills in Hotel Madison

7:15pm-9:00pm

**WIF Board Members Dinner**

**Location:** Dolley Madison Room  
in Hotel Madison

**Friday May 8, 2026**

8:00am-9:00am      Check-in & Continental Breakfast      **Location:** The Union Ballroom

**Plenary 2**

9:15am-10:15am

**Dr. Peter Eubanks**

**Location:** The Union Ballroom

**Session C**

10:30am-12:00pm

**Panel C1: Migration, gender and queer transgressions II**

**Moderator:** Anne Quinney

**Location:** Taylor 302

**Diweng Mercy Dafong**

"Spoken Wounds: Orality in Burkinabè Women's Poetic and Cinematic Voices"

**Jessica Li Zhi Biao**

"La Parole du Paysage chez Édouard Glissant et Ananda Devi"

**Adamu Abubakar**

"Immigration et Décolonisation du Français chez Beyala, Diome, Yabouza et Sow Fall"

**Panel C2: Politics of intersectionality, agency, resistance, and multi-layered forms of transgression I**

**Moderator:** Guy Spielmann

**Location:** Taylor 304

**Theresa Kennedy**

"Claiming the Stage: Women, Authorial Presence, and Theatrical Transgression"

**Choshi Modjadji**

"Visible and Invisible Borders: Transgressions in Global Health Leadership from South Africa to Virginia"

**Luckson (Luc) Bonhomme**

"Poétique de la transgression: écrire la honte pour ne pas mourir de la vérité dans la littérature postcoloniale francophone"

**Panel C3 : Politics of intersectionality, agency, resistance, and multi-layered forms of transgression II**

**Moderator :** Sombo Muzata

**Location:** Taylor 305

**Matteo Silvestri**

"Androgynous and Gender Transgressions in Rachilde's *Monsieur Vénus* and *Madame Adonis*"

**Jade Cazorla**

"Ces récits lesbiens qui contournent la censure... Du manuscrit à l'œuvre: trajectoire d'une écriture transgressive"

**Stephanie Diane Tsakeu Mazan**

"53 Cm de Bessora: la transgression discursive au féminin"

12:15pm-1:30pm Complimentary Lunch Boxes **Location:** The Union Ballroom  
**WIF Business Meeting / General Session for WIF Members**

**Session D**

1:30pm-3:00pm

**Panel D1 : Women's agency and political discourses in francophone Africa (Part I)**

**Moderator:** Leon Mwamba Tshimpaka

**Location:** Taylor 305

**Leon Mwamba Tshimpaka**

"Francophone Queens Without Borders: Intercontinental Citizenship Among Europe-based Congolese Women"

**Muyamba Mangu (virtual presentation)**

"Women as Agents of Change: Exploring Women's Strategies for Political Engagement in the Democratic Republic of Congo"

**Tukala Celestin Tshimande (virtual presentation)**

"Construction de la Paix en République Démocratique du Congo: Implication des Femmes"

**Panel D2: Transgression and the Politics of Visibility II**

**Moderator:** Susan Muterspaugh

**Location:** Taylor 304

**Michèle Bacholle**

"Transgressions, agentivité et changement: *Triste tigre et Chair tendre*"

**Haby Ka**

“Differential Thematizations: Gender and the Politics of Representation in Senegalese Print Media (1945 – 1975)”

**Jennifer Carr**

“Necropolitics in the Nitrostate: Lamia Ziadé’s *Mon port de Beyrouth*”

**Panel D3: Memory – Transgression – Revolution**

**Moderator:** Laura Cangiano

**Location:** Taylor 309

**Lyna Ami Ali**

“Unruly Arabic: revolutionary fragments in Leïla Sebbar’s work”

**Elizabeth Langley**

“The Wounded Eye as Witness: Memory and Transgression in Evelyne Trouillot’s *L’Oeil-Totem*”

**Preea Leelah**

“Visibly Invisible: Sanité Bélair, Solitude, and the Gendered Memory of Revolution”

3:00pm-3:30pm

Coffee Break

**Location:** Taylor 400

**Session E**

3:30pm-5:00pm

**Panel E1 : Women’s agency and political discourses in francophone Africa (Part II)**

**Moderator:** Leon Mwamba Tshimpaka

**Location:** Taylor 305

**Tumba Tuseku Dieudonné (virtual presentation)**

“Navigating Women’s Agency and Inclusive Environmental Justice: The Adverse Effects of the extractive industries in the Democratic Republic of the Congo”

**Christel Mpongo Nziazi (virtual presentation)**

“Challenges and Prospects for Women’s Leadership in the DRC”

**Panel E2: Transgression of religion, taboo, and cultural normativity I**

**Moderator:** Karla Feghali Semaan

**Location:** Taylor 302

**Kathleen Antonioli**

“Reading Colette after #metoo”

**Julie Gaillard**

“Transgression Hidden in Plain Sight: on Incest Culture”

**Panel E3: Politics of intersectionality, agency, resistance, and multi-layered forms of transgression III**

**Moderator:** Susan Muterspaugh

**Location:** Taylor 304

**María Mimi Gilbert**

“Censorship, resistance, and the politics of visibility”

**Mary McCullough**

“Jeanne Galzy’s intersectional transgressions”

**Anne H Quinney**

“*Les statues meurent aussi*: A case of Censorship, Resistance and Visibility in 1950s France”

5:30pm-8:00pm

**Remarks by WIF President: Dr. Stephanie A Schechner**

**Dinner and Reception**

**Location:** Hall of Presidents

**Group Photo**

## Saturday May 9, 2026

8:30am-9:30am      Check-in & Continental Breakfast      **Location:** The Union Ballroom

### Session F

9:30am – 11:00am

#### **Panel F1: Women's agency and political discourses (*Virtual Panel*)**

**Moderator:** Zareen Gul Aga

**Location:** Taylor 302

##### **Mathilde Savard-Corbeil**

"Methods of Transgression: Autotheory against Heteronormativity in Marie Kock's *Vieille Fille*"

##### **Valentina Denzel**

"Oh People, unhappy Citizens! Listen to the voice of a fair-minded and sensitive woman– Olympe de Gouges or the fight for visibility"

##### **Jingyu Wei**

"When Care Becomes a Quiet Transgression: Gender and Power in China's Health System"

#### **Panel F2: Politics of intersectionality, agency, resistance, and multi-layered forms of transgression III (*Virtual Panel*)**

**Moderator:** Holly Yanacek

**Location:** Taylor 400

##### **Michele Schaal**

"The GenX Slacker as Transgressor: Virginie Despentes's *Teen Spirit*"

##### **Katie-Rose Nandhra**

"'Je n'étais déjà plus un être humain': Sovereign power and forbidden communion in Laure's sacred moment"

##### **Zoé Chou**

"Silence ou transgression invisible: le « nous » clandestin dans *Les Samothraces* (2016) de Nicole Caligaris"

**Panel F3: Transgression of religion, taboo, and cultural normativity II**

**Moderator:** Cynthia Chalupa

**Location:** Taylor 305

**Marie Kondrat**

"Revers de l'excès: autour de "Lascaux 2" de Monique Peytral"

**Unclid Paul**

"The Right to Remain Illegible: The Ethics of Opacity in Marie Cécile Agnant's *Le livre d'Emma* and Kettly Mars's *Je suis vivant*"

**Danica Guerrero**

"Visible and Invisible Transgressions in Marie-Cécile Agnant's *Le Livre d'Emma*"

**Panel F4: Politics of intersectionality, agency, resistance, and multi-layered forms of transgression III**

**Moderator:** Sombo Muzata

**Location:** Taylor 402

**Ashley Scheu**

"A Story I'm Not Supposed to Tell: Transgression, Aesthetics, and Recognition in Springora and Sinno"

**Eric Disbro**

"Mauritian Sorority vs. the Male Literati: Denouncing Abuse after Nathacha Appanah's *La Nuit au cœur* (2025)"

**Luna Larocque**

"Wadaha: Danse, résistance et performativité féminine au potentiel queer"

11:15am-12:30pm Complimentary Lunch Boxes

**Location:** The Union Ballroom

# A HISTORY OF JMU



Founded in 1908 as the State Normal and Industrial School for Women, James Madison University was originally established to prepare women for careers in teaching, responding to the growing demand for public school educators in the early twentieth century. At its inception, the institution consisted of only two buildings—now known as Gabbin Hall and Jackson Hall—which remain part of the historic campus quadrangle. Over time, the University expanded both physically and academically, evolving from a specialized teacher-training school into a comprehensive public university offering a wide range of undergraduate and graduate programs. This year, Keezell Hall—home to the Department of World Languages and Cultures—celebrates its 100th anniversary, marking a century of language learning and global engagement at the University.



The College of Arts and Letters stands at the academic core of the University. Established in 1971, the College plays a central role in the education of all undergraduates by providing foundational instruction in the humanities, languages, social sciences, and the arts. It is one of the University's largest academic divisions, serving thousands of students across





numerous departments, including English; World Languages and Cultures; History; Philosophy and Religion; Sociology and Anthropology; Political Science; Justice Studies; the School of Writing, Rhetoric and Technical Communication; the School of Media Arts and Design; and the School Communication Studies. Through its diverse array of majors, minors, and graduate programs, the College fosters critical thinking, cultural awareness, and interdisciplinary engagement.



Within the College, the Department of World Languages and Cultures occupies an important place in the University's liberal arts mission. The department offers five majors (Arabic, French, German, Italian, and Spanish), as well as six minors, three professional minors, and three interdisciplinary minors. French, one of the earliest languages offered at JMU, continues to play a central role

within this academic landscape. The program contributes through its major and minors, as well as a range of courses that engage students with the language and the rich cultural, historical, and literary traditions of the Francophone world.

Throughout its evolution, the University has maintained its longstanding commitment to academic excellence while broadening its mission to meet the needs of a diverse and dynamic student population. What began as a small, specialized institution has grown into a vibrant academic community, grounded in the liberal arts and dedicated to fostering intellectual and cultural inquiry.



# FRENCH FACULTY



## Amina Saidou

Dr. Amina Saidou is assistant professor of French and Francophone Studies at James Madison University in Virginia since 2022. She holds a master's and a Ph.D. in French and Francophone Studies from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, US. Saidou received a B.A. in TESOL from Wilson College, Pennsylvania, a BA and MA in Anglophone Literature from Abdou Moumouni University, Niger. She is a JMU Faculty Fellow in Collaborative Dialogue, a Fulbright scholar (2009-2011) and a Carnegie African Diaspora Fellow (2024). She currently teaches 20th and 21st century literature, cinema, and cultures from Sub-Saharan Africa, Maghreb, the Caribbean, and the African Diaspora. Dr. Saidou is the author of several articles, and a book titled *Allégorie initiatique et stratégies de résistance féminines*.



## Peter Eubanks



Peter Eubanks (Ph.D. Princeton) is Professor French at James Madison University. His research and teaching interests center around early modern French poetry (including Christine de Pisan, Marguerite d'Autriche, and Marguerite de Navarre) and cross-cultural encounters and misunderstandings (particularly in the Franco-American space). His articles have appeared in *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, *Montaigne Studies*, *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies*, *Literature and Belief*, and other venues. His keynote address on "The History of French at James Madison University: Insights and Inflection Points" is the result of a collaboration with several first-year female undergraduate students under the auspices of the JMU First-Year Research Experience Program (FYRE).

## Dorothee Polanz

Doe Polanz has been teaching French and Acting for the past 18 years in the greater D.C. area and is an Associate Professor at JMU. Polanz's research interests range from the 18th-century libertine novel, engravings and automaton to 19th-century Orientalism, performance and film studies. She published several articles on the Marquis de Sade and Marie Antoinette and their representations in movies and pop culture. She was a consultant at the National Museum of the French Revolution (Vizille, France) analyzing the representation of Marie Antoinette in America and Japan (in movies, manga and in pop culture) showcasing her own impressive collection of pop objects revolving around the infamous French Queen. Her collection was also featured at Syracuse University in October 2025 where she was invited to receive the Harold Jones Award for Best Essay for 2024 for her article "From Myth to Meme: Reinventing (Yet Again) Marie Antoinette in the Age of Streaming".



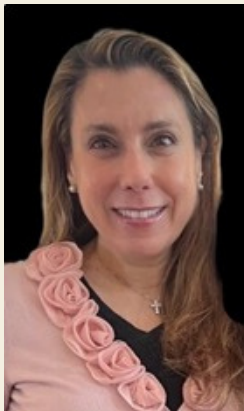


World Languages  
and Cultures

# FRENCH FACULTY

## Mélanie Munier

Mélanie Munier, instructor of French. I have a Masters degree in "Science of Education" and I have been teaching French at JMU since 2017. I am the Director of a Summer Study Abroad Program called "Food and Culture of France" since 2023 and I am an advisor for the World Languages and Cultures Department.



## Karla Semaan

Karla Feghali Semaan is an adjunct instructor at JMU with nearly 20 years of teaching experience, specializing in elementary and intermediate French. She holds a BA in Journalism and Communication Arts and an MBA from the Lebanese American University. Having lived in several countries, Karla brings a broad international perspective and valuable real-world experience to her teaching and professional work. At JMU, she also serves as the faculty advisor for the Dancing Dukes and is an active member of Catholic Campus Ministry.

## Susan Muterspaugh

Susan Muterspaugh received her Ph.D. from New York University. Her research interests include: Medieval French literature, French Gothic literature and Ballet.

*Explore our Study Abroad Programs!*

# Art and Food on the French

Riviera NICE, FRANCE



## Apply Now!

APPLY TO OUR 6-CREDIT, 4-WEEK PROGRAM IN IMMERSION IN THE SOUTH OF FRANCE, IN THE BEAUTIFUL CITY OF NICE, BY THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA!

- Dates: May 29 – June 27, 2026
- Classes offered: 6 credits, with a choice of 2 classes from the following:
  - Classes taught in French:
    - FR 109, FR 231, FR 232, FR 300, FR 308, FR 464
  - Class taught in English:
    - HUM251: Birth of the Modern in France,



**Scan for more information!**

 @jmu\_french\_riviera

Program Director: Doe Polanz, Associate Professor.  
Dept. of World Languages and Cultures (WLC) | polanzdx@jmu.edu

# France: Food and Culture



## Location

Paris, Beaune, France

## Program Description

This 3-week summer course in Paris and Beaune, France, explores the history and impact of French food on contemporary culture. Through a wide range of experiences and on-site lectures, students will be exposed to the history of French cuisine and its importance in the modern dining experience.

Students will visit historical and cultural sites that help to demonstrate the history of France, and especially Paris. We will visit the Louvre, the Musée d'Orsay, the Eiffel Tower, take a boat ride on the Seine, have a macaron tour, see most of the famous regions of Paris, and eat our way through marketplaces and several famous restaurants.

## Location Description

Paris is the center of all French culture. It holds many of the greatest sites and museums in Europe. Beaune, Burgundy, is one of the prettiest towns in all of Europe and the center of Burgundy the famous wine region. There we will bicycle through the vineyards of Burgundy.

## Director

Melanie Munier | munierma@jmu.edu | World Languages and Cultures

## Application Deadline

Program Full

## Dates

**Summer 2026:** July 15 -  
August 01, 2026

All dates are tentative and  
subject to change

## Courses

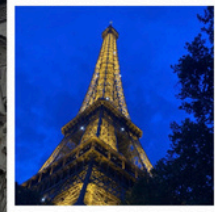
**WLC 447:** Topics in  
Civilization and Culture:  
Food and Culture of France

Courses listed here are to  
be used as a general  
guideline for program  
curriculum. \*All courses are  
considered pending until  
approved by the Academic  
Department, Program,

# FOLLOW IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF FAMOUS AMERICANS IN PARIS



Scan me!



Follow Americans from **Benjamin Franklin** and **Thomas Jefferson** to **Fitzgerald**, **Hemingway**, **Josephine Baker**, **James Baldwin**, and more. Visit famous sites like the Eiffel Tower and the Louvre Museum while dining at some of Paris's most famous restaurants and cafés!

## Program Info

This will be in Paris • January 4-16, 2026

HUM 200 (3 credits + fulfills GenEd Literature req.)

Contact Prof. Peter Eubanks (eubankpj@jmu.edu)

Studying abroad in Dakar, Senegal, offers a unique and enriching experience that blends academic growth with cultural immersion. Dakar, the vibrant capital of Senegal, is known for its bustling markets, rich history, and dynamic arts scene. Students will have the opportunity to engage with locals. The city's universities, such as Université Cheikh Anta Diop, provide a range of programs in fields like African studies, international relations, and environmental science. Beyond academics, students can explore Dakar's stunning coastline, visit historical sites like Gorée Island, and participate in traditional music and dance. This experience not only broadens academic horizons but also fosters a deeper understanding of West African culture and global perspectives.



### Courses

**AAAD200: Intro to AAAD Studies**  
(3 credits)

**FR 446: Francophone African culture through literature** (3 credits)

**FR447: Francophone African culture** (3 credits)

(All courses are taught in English and are open to all JMU students)

# STUDY ABROAD

## DAKAR, SENEGAL

JUNE 2 – JUNE 30, SUMMER 2025

Francophone  
African  
Studies  
for both English and  
French speakers



<https://www.gettyimages.com/detail/photo/dakar-senegal-downtown-royalty-free-image/141946942?adppopup=true>



West African Research Center



AFRICAN RENAISSANCE MONUMENT



### Information Sessions:

- 11:00 am Monday, September 30 (on Zoom, email saidouax@jmu.edu for link)
- 5:30 pm Thursday, October 24 (in person, Keezell Hall Room#103)

### QR CODE



Things to do in

# HARRISONBURG

... and surrounding areas

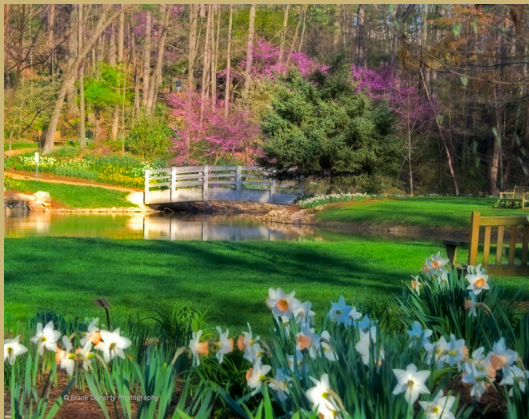


*Court Square at night*

## Edith J. Carrier Arboretum and Botanical Gardens

Walk winding woodland trails landscaped with native plants and botanical gardens.

Stroll through the gardens, attend an event or just spread a blanket on the lawn and relax.



All information, unless otherwise noted, has been obtained from the Harrisonburg Tourism Website.

**DISCOVER HARRISONBURG, FRIENDLY BY NATURE!** The Harrisonburg Tourism Website offers a comprehensive list for restaurants, hotels, events, and other attractions Harrisonburg and the surrounding area has to offer.

Explore food, shopping and more here: <https://visitharrisonburgva.com>. You can also find more information in the flyer provided in your welcome packet.



## Shenandoah National Park/Skyline Drive

Located just outside of Harrisonburg, the Shenandoah National Park is a national treasure which includes the scenic 105-mile long Skyline Drive – a designated National Scenic Byway.

## Luray Caverns

Famed for its Great Stalacpipe Organ, Luray Caverns offers an otherworldly experience as the stalactites “sing” throughout the caverns. Located in Luray, VA, the caverns feature well-lit, paved walkways leading visitors through rooms with towering stone formations and cathedral-like ceilings.



Visit: <https://luraycaverns.com>

# ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

## Profiles



### Amina Saidou

Dr. Amina Saidou is an Assistant Professor in the Department of World Languages and Cultures at James Madison University. Her teaching and research focus on Francophone literatures and cinemas, particularly from Sub-Saharan Africa, the Maghreb, the Caribbean and the diaspora, with an emphasis on feminist and postcolonial approaches. She serves as Treasurer and Board Member of Women in French (WIF), where she contributes to the organization's financial management and strategic direction. She is also a member of the editorial board of *Recherches Francophones*, supporting scholarship in French and Francophone studies. She is the official organizer of the Women in French Conference hosted at James Madison University, where she oversees program development and coordination in collaboration with her colleagues in the WLC department.

### Yenisei Montes de Oca

Dr. Yenisei Montes de Oca is an Associate Professor in the Department of World Languages and Cultures at James Madison University. Originally from Tijuana, México, her transborder upbringing informs her work on bilingualism, cultural identity, and intercultural dialogue. She earned her B.A. in Spanish and Psychology and her M.A. and Ph.D. in Hispanic Studies at the University of California, Riverside. Her research focuses on 20th- and 21st-century Spanish literature, with particular attention to memory, trauma, and identity in narratives of the Spanish Civil War and its aftermath, as well as transnational approaches to cultural trauma. Some of her publications include *Narrativa española y colombiana: una aproximación transnacional al trauma cultural contemporáneo* (Pijao Editores, 2022) and the co-authored article "Benefits and Impact of Bilingual Education: Dual Masters Degree in Spanish Language and Culture for Educators" (*International Journal on Responsibility*, 2025).



### Verónica Dávila-Ellis

Dr. Verónica Dávila Ellis (they/them/elle) is a cultural critic, musician, and listener. They are currently an Assistant Professor of Spanish in the World Languages and Cultures Department at James Madison University. Their first monograph, titled *Uttering Sonic Dominicanidad*, centers the voices and production techniques of queer Dominican dembow performers to analyze how artists and audiences negotiate scripts of gender, race, and sexuality through sound. Their research on queerness, womanhood, and race in reggaetón and dembow has appeared in print and audio publications such as *Revista de Género y Sexualidades*, *CENTRO Journal*, *Oxford American*, *Ori Magazine*, *USA Today*, *The Washington Post*, *NACLA*, and *Afropop Worldwide*.



## Special Thanks

We are deeply grateful to the individuals whose work behind the scenes made this conference possible. Their commitment and generosity of time and effort have been essential to its success. We would like to recognize the following individuals for their contributions:

**Cynthia Chalupa (WLC, Academic Unit Head and German Professor), Laura Stewart (WLC, Administrative Assistant),  
Stephany Plecker (WLC, Director of Language Resource Center and Russian Instructor),  
Delores Phillips (AAAD, Director), and Christal Marshall (JMU, University Business Office).**

# Thank You to our Co-sponsors

We gratefully acknowledge the generous support of our co-sponsors: the College of Arts and Letters; the Department of World Languages and Cultures; Women in French; the Department of Political Science; the Department of English; and the African, African American, and Diaspora Studies Center (AAAD). Their commitment and support have been essential to the realization of this conference.



We are also very grateful for the visit and support of Dr. Jean-Christophe Dissart, Higher Education Attaché - Director, Campus France, USA.

