“My first Godard on a big screen, ever!” said an enthusiastic cinephile as she entered Boardman’s Art Theatre in Champaign to watch the famous director’s newest movie, *Notre Musique*. Her experience—and that of hundreds of other students, faculty, and local residents—was made possible by the Tournées French Film Festival, held October 7-13, 2005, and organized by French department professor Maggie Flinn.

Professor Flinn collaborated with colleagues at Parkland College and the owner of Boardman’s Art Theatre in the planning stages of this unprecedented event, which provided an exciting chance for our community to view several recent French and French-language films. In addition to securing funding, preparing publicity, hand-selecting the films, and organizing the screenings, Flinn successfully incorporated the festival into University events: free passes were distributed to students through professors and TAs in courses with curricular tie-ins, U. of I. faculty (including the French department’s Zsuzsanna Fagyal) introduced films during the festival, and a public panel co-sponsored by the Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities (IPRH) and the Unit for Cinema Studies featured one of the festival’s films, *Moolaadé*.

Viewers were offered a range of cinematic styles and topics, with multiple daily screenings of the following five films:

- *Brodeuses/Sequins* (Eléonore Faucher, France, 2004): the story of an unmarried, pregnant teenager and the “embroidery” of delicate human relationships
- *L’Esquive/Games of Love and Chance* (Abdellatif Kechiche, France, 2003): set in the projects of Paris, the film follows a group of teenagers in a world of broken homes and poverty
- *Moolaadé/Mooladé* (Ousmane Sembene, Senegal, 2004): this important director takes on the explosive issue of female circumcision, a practice still common in Africa
- *Notre Musique* (Jean-Luc Godard, France-Switzerland, 2004): a timeless meditation on war as seen through the prisms of cinema, text, and image
- *Qui a tué Bambi/Who Killed Bambi?* (Gilles Marchand, France, 2003): a stylish and troubling noir about a young hospital intern and her ominous stalker

The Tournées Festival was made possible with the support of the Cultural Services of the French Embassy and the French Ministry of Culture. Tournées is an annual grant program designed to support the screening of contemporary French cinema on American college and university campuses; for more information, see www.facecouncil.org.

With over 2,000 tickets sold, the Tournées Festival was an unmitigated success, garnering rave reactions from members of the French department and the larger community. Armine Mortimer thanked Professor Flinn for the excellent diplomatic skills and enthusiastic drive that allowed her to bring these fine French films to central Illinois with “intelligent planning, successful community engagement, and outstanding pedagogical enhancement.” Karen Fresco called the festival “a stimulating breath of fresh air” that led to many interesting conversations with colleagues and students. Graduate students Jessica Sturm and Jessica Miller thanked Professor Flinn for the “incredible event” and its “great impact.” And Jane Kuntz collected a number of reactions from members of the community and local media: “Without question, the Tournées French Film Festival is an event not to be missed. It’s a celebration of a brand of cinema that refuses to follow conventions, as each of the movies it contains touch upon different aspects of the human experience, with each providing a unique perspective on the various universal constraints” wrote Chuck Kopilinski, for *The Hub*, October 6, 2005. Diana Steel, assistant professor in DEIL, noted: “Although the Art Theatre is this community’s primary resource for non-Hollywood-type films and does a great job on the whole, it was still pleasantly refreshing to have an entire week devoted to one particular culture/language.” All viewers looked forward to this becoming a yearly event.

Bravo and vive les Tournées!
Dear Friends,

This semester I am replacing Armine Mortimer, who is taking a well deserved sabbatical leave. This gives me a chance to tell you what we have been up to since the last issue of The French Connection.

Congratulations to Peter Golato, who received tenure last spring. His first book, Processing French: A Psycholinguistic Perspective, has been published by Yale University Press. A specialist of second language acquisition, Peter is working with six doctoral students at various stages of their dissertation projects. He is off and running on his new research project, which deals with the psychology of language processing on the level of words and sentences.

After a brief hiatus, the department has reinstated its Illinois Program in Paris (IPP) in order to foster our students’ interest in strengthening and deepening their understanding of French language and culture. Our resident director is Ed Costello, an American who has lived in Paris for some 30 years. This fall 26 students left to spend the year there and they have just been joined by 27 additional students for the spring semester (for a total of 53!). Some are living in residences and dorms and others with families dotted around Paris. They take courses at the Institut Catholique or at Paris-IV Sorbonne. We are also continuing our exchange program with the prestigious Sciences Po. Two of our students are currently studying there.

This year we have welcomed four exchange students from France: Nicolas Dolisy from Metz, Coraline Déchaux from Dijon, Johann Defer from Lyon, and Céline Vidallet from Poitiers. They are teaching the conversation courses for our French majors and minors. They have also organized a well-attended film series and the weekly pause café at the Espresso Royale across from the Krannert Center (Thursdays at 5:30 p.m.—come early or you won’t find a seat!).

In October our annual French Means Business forum directed by Liz Martin again drew about 300 attendees, including students from Taylorville, Danville and Carbondale. Speakers and high school teachers frequently write to Liz to tell her how much they appreciate the opportunity to discuss careers in international business. Many students get a chance to speak individually with representatives who come from such companies as Air France, Maytag, Caterpillar, Deloitte & Touche, Air Liquide, RBC Dain Rauscher, Inc., and Rotary International. In fact, several of our students have received internships from these companies—a real leg up in the race for a good job. Nina Boras currently holds an internship with Rauscher, Inc., and Rotary International. In fact, several of our students have received internships from these companies—a real leg up in the race for a good job. Nina Boras currently holds an internship with the French-American Chamber of Commerce in Chicago. Martha Quinlan is now assistant director of FACC. To those alumni who generously agree to participate in this event, some of you year after year, our sincere thanks.

The online translation courses taught by Liz Martin draw increasing interest, with inquiries about next semester’s offerings flowing in from 23 states and Mexico. We hear of successes achieved by the alumni of this online certificate program. An example: Stephanie Cash, who lives at the southern tip of New Jersey, a two-and-a-half hour drive from the nearest university, unable to move because her husband is the captain of the ferry connecting New Jersey to Delaware, could not take courses anywhere but online. After completing our program in translation, she now has a successful career as a business translator, a business that she can conduct online from her home.

As I close this letter, we are busily organizing a conference next November to mark the 60th anniversary of the granting by France of département status to Guyane, Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Réunion. This event will gather international scholars to discuss the civic, economic, and cultural issues raised by this institution. Our next issue of The French Connection will contain further news about this event.

I encourage you to send us your news. Drop by if you are in town. We are always delighted to see you.

Amitiés,
Karen Fresco
From Mahomet to Paris

Growing up in a small town in central Illinois did not predispose Melinda Fricke to be “particularly enraptured or consumed” by the study of French, admits the senior, who is currently researching second language acquisition as part of the University of Illinois Program in Paris. But her gradual development of a passionate interest in the field began when she transferred from a school in Mahomet to the rigorous academic program of University High School in Champaign; there, she met weekly with a tutor to catch up with her classmates, who were further advanced in foreign language study. Apparently, it’s never too late: by the end of her junior year in high school, Melinda had won second prize in the American Association of French Teachers National Competition—not one, but two years in a row.

Her first direct contact with France came the following summer, when she participated in a Tufts University program, living with a host family in Annecy and attending classes in international relations in the nearby town of Talloires. Melinda was particularly excited by side trips to Interpol in Lyon and the United Nations in Geneva. By the time she returned home, Melinda was sure she wanted to continue her French studies. But what to do with a senior year ahead of her and all of Uni High’s requirements fulfilled? Take a college class, of course! Occasionally, high school students enroll in university-level classes, but in the French department, these are usually limited to intermediate language courses. Melinda, however, did something rare: she completed with impressive success French 210, a survey of modern French literature that left her well-placed to specialize further when she entered the U. of I. as a freshman in 2003.

Linguistics quickly emerged as Melinda’s chosen path. She took a graduate-level course on phonetics and phonology with Professor Suzanna Fagyal, who was impressed by this undergraduate student’s dedication and talent. Professor Fagyal cites Melinda’s “impeccable social and organizational skills” and active commitment to learning as secrets of her current success and future potential.

“The French connection / Summer 2006

UNDERGRADUATE PROFILE

Melinda Fricke

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“‘When I go back and analyze the recordings, I’ll be doing things like measuring the vowel formants and voice onset times for the consonants, seeing to what extent speed and fluency changed, and looking for more native-like intonation patterns. It should be extremely interesting!’

Melinda plans to go to graduate school to study psycholinguistics, phonetics, or linguistic anthropology, fields that will allow her to indulge in her enthusiasm for language: “I truly believe that no matter what language I’m surrounded by, I’ll always be fascinated by it, and it will always make me wonder just what’s going on in these amazing brains of ours when we do something as simultaneously simple and complex as asking someone to pass the salt.” Meanwhile, she is enjoying Paris, where she has found time to play piano, join a volleyball team, and learn toddler-French as the au pair to two young children.
On a chilly evening in October of 2005, a group of friends retreated into downtown Champaign’s Blind Pig bar. Inspired by one of the films presented during the Tournées Film Festival they had just seen, the discussion turned to French culture. Zhenya Tumanova, a U. of I. French alumna and currently a freelance translator, expressed the desire to play French and francophone music at a local radio station. Nicola Dach, a current graduate student in the Department of French, agreed with this promising idea: “If you look at the developments in the nouvelle vague of chanson, at the mixing of cultures and at the recent chansons à texte, there’s a lot of new and exciting material people might be interested in.”

Together, the two agreed to combine support of the community radio station, WEFT, with their desire to expand listeners’ knowledge of French and francophone cultures. Zhenya remembers: “I’ve always thought the term ‘world music’ was rooted in a frame of reference defined by Occidentalism. In a way, it’s ‘world music’ if it sounds ‘native’-like (read ‘primitive’), has a funny foreign language, and, if possible, involves drumming. I wanted a ‘world music’ show that would take on a more defined form and from which a listener could get something concrete.”

Nicola and Zhenya soon put their vision into process as they trained to become “airshifters”—a WEFT term for a disc jockey—and hosted their first show on October 31, 2005, featuring Bénabar, Zebda, Souad Massi, and Amadou et Mariam, among others. The show was held in English to cater to a wide audience.

On the selection criteria, Nicola says, “Anything that is French or francophone is fair game. By that we mean songs that are either in French, from a francophone country, or both; so you will also hear a lot of non-French languages. Then we will also occasionally sneak in a track that is simply “French-inspired”—for example, Brazilian DJ Dolores with electronica inspired by Madame Bovary…although that happens more rarely!” The genres on the show turn out to be of an impressive variety, from region-specific ones such as rai, zouk, chanson, Cajun, or salsa to widely spread rock, pop, rap, or reggae, and of course also including all kinds of more traditional “world” music.

To title their show, Nicola suggested “Francophiliacs,” which her co-host defines as “people infected by recurrent or uncontrollable Frenchness.” Those not afraid of this particular illness are encouraged to email music@francophiliacs.org to be a guest on the show and enrich the program with music from their own collections.

“The listener response to the show has been very positive,” says Nicola. “During the show, we regularly receive calls from listeners saying that they enjoy what we’re playing or asking for song titles—and even some francophone artists have become aware of us: A California-based café music ensemble spontaneously sent us an album, and we recently received a CD from a French nouvelle scène artist.” Listeners also enjoy the lively on-air banter between the hosts. Zhenya adds, “Given WEFT’s limited audience, the fact that we get at least one call per show demonstrates that we are playing the music for a sizable and curious audience.”

The show airs every Monday from 2 to 4 p.m. on WEFT 90.1 FM.

Due to Nicola’s plans to study abroad during the 2006-07 academic year, Zhenya will be looking for a replacement co-host starting in September.

Information on Francophiliacs is available at www.francophiliacs.org.

Zhenya and Nicola are also frequent guests on the French Hour, a show entirely in French hosted by Stéphane Alnet, broadcast every other Saturday from 6 to 7 p.m. on WRFU 104.5 FM (http://rfurf.blogspot.com/).
Setting Sail (part 2)

By Jessica Miller

In last year’s issue of *The French Connection*, I commented on the job search process as I observed fellow students in the Department of French go through that demanding, but rewarding, experience. This year, my turn has come to browse the job lists and mail out several applications. When faced with the daunting task of preparing a dossier, I tried to make use of what others before me had learned. I listened to my friends and took notes. I met with professors and followed their advice. I benefited from a mock interview. I attended all the workshops offered by the Graduate College. And all these things undoubtedly made me a stronger candidate. But what I’d forgotten to do was to re-read the remarks I had collected for our last year’s newsletter: they all had a positive outlook on the job search. I realize now that while envisaging scary moments, I had forgotten all about the good side of going on the job market. Just like Frédérique Grim and Geneviève Maheux-Pelletier, who now have tenure-track positions in Colorado and Ontario, I enjoyed learning more about who I am and who I want to be. I admired the professors’ devotion to my success as they spent countless hours advising me, as they do every year with each new candidate. I was also proud to see their work and mine concretize into two phone interviews and one at the MLA convention, two of which turned into campus visits.

In my mind, not only has it been a positive experience, but it has also been successful. Receiving a job offer would be the cherry on the cake, but if I do not, it will never undermine my feeling of accomplishment. Being able to put my assets forward in front of search committees and being satisfied with each performance, regardless of whether I am among those selected, was the goal I had set for myself and feel that I have achieved. To all future academic job seekers, I would advise to make the most of the research and preparation tools available, without forgetting to enjoy every moment of the process as a chance to learn more about oneself, acquire lifelong skills, and meet new people on the way!

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**GSF Officers 2005-2006**

President: Tricia McLeroy  
Vice-President: Laura Fisher  
Secretary/Treasurer: Laura Spear

The graduate students of French enjoyed a busy and successful year, which included a series of well-attended events: a weekly pause café, a monthly ciné club, fall and spring bake sales, a holiday party, ice skating, Chicago trips, and a happy hour.

**French Forum**

The department hosted a series of talks by our own graduate students and visiting scholars, including Patrick Bray, Jérôme Brillaud, Juliette Dade, Lizzie Black Owens, and Michael Mulryan.

**Dissertation Travel**

Congratulations to Jessica Miller for receiving a $2,000 Dissertation Travel Grant Award from the Graduate College to collect speech data from Swiss French speakers in the Vaud canton. This work is part of her doctoral research on Swiss French intonation, and will contribute to the documentation and analysis of endangered Western Romance language varieties in Europe.

Congratulations to Laura Spear, who has been awarded the Phi Beta Kappa Walter J. Jensen Fellowship for French Language, Literature and Culture for six months of study in France. She will be doing research on her dissertation, entitled “Vanishing Vectors: Trains and Speed in 19th and 20th Century French Crime Fiction and Film.”

**MA Exams**

Congratulations to Lizzie Black Owens, Nicola Dach, Audrey Evrard, and Leila En-Naili, who successfully completed the MA written and oral exams in French Studies—all in February 2006!

**PhD Defenses**

Congratulations to the following students, who successfully defended their dissertations in Fall 2005:

- **Laura Fyfe,** “Ken Bugul née M’Baye: Stylistic and Theoretical Expressions of Bugulian Feminism.” Director, Professor Evelyne Accad. Laura is currently French language coordinator at George Mason University, Virginia.
- **Samira Hassa,** “De la Medina à la Ville Nouvelle: Études ethnolinguistiques des choix codiques dans l’espace urbain de Fes (Morocco).” Director, Professor Suzanna Fagyal. Samira is an assistant professor of French at Rockford College.
- **Viviane Ruellot,** “French Pronunciation Learning and Computer-Mediated Visual Feedback.” Director, Professor Peter Golato. Viviane is an assistant professor of French at Western Michigan University.

**Editor’s Update:**

Jessica Miller has accepted a tenure-track position with the Department of Foreign Languages at the University of Wisconsin–Eau Claire. Congratulations!
“What is cinema?” The title of André Bazin’s famous collection of essays, this question underpins much of Professor Maggie Flinn’s work on French film theory and history. In the 1920s, the French ciné-club movement was instrumental in establishing that film was an art form comparable to dance, music, painting, photography, and literature—and especially theater. Then social tensions in France throughout the 1930s gave particular significance to cinema’s relation to architecture: both were imagined as mass media with the potential for unprecedented social impact. Film was a privileged site for the representation of lived spaces, but also one that created a new imagination of spaces, and indeed new places. This interaction, culminating in the idealism of militant filmmaking during the Popular Front, is at the heart of Professor Flinn’s dissertation, “Architectures of Social Being” (Harvard, 2005).

Flinn has continued to work on the interwar period and is particularly delighted with the graduate seminar she currently teaches on the film and cultural history of 1930s France. “The students at U. of I. have been great interlocutors. I have begun the process of revising the dissertation into a book manuscript, and not a week goes by where I don’t walk out of class with new ideas. It’s really very exciting and inspiring.”

Meanwhile, she has started to lay the groundwork for a second major project on contemporary digital filmmaking and its relationship to new media art. “I came upon this new project as a way to have an excuse to write on Agnès Varda, who is my favorite filmmaker of all time. Living in Paris during the late ’90s and early ’00s, I was acutely aware of the renaissance underway in the French film industry. Some of it seems driven by anxieties about change, both social and aesthetic, but for whatever reason, the French industry is producing some of its best work since the New Wave.”

No newcomer to the Midwest, Flinn grew up in Dearborn, Mich. Her parents fortuitously enrolled her in an exchange program that sent fifth graders from her school district to St. Germain-en-Laye. "Nathalie, my correspondante, had managed to come to Dearborn without learning much English, but even though I had made some progress with French before my departure, my 11-year-old brain was not at all ready to process jet-lag. The day of my arrival, my host family had cucumber salad for the entrée. After a few failed attempts to communicate, I was sure it was all they were going to give me to eat and I burst out crying. But 25 years later, we’re still close!” Circumstances helped foster that closeness—less than a year later, Flinn’s father (an engineer at Ford Motor

![Image](image-url)
Company) was involved with the transfer of a major transmission production line from Livonia, Michigan, to Bordeaux. “My parents met Nathalie’s family—they exchange letters to this day (which I have to translate in both thème and version).”

In college, Flinn quickly settled on a major in French literature and concentration in women’s studies, graduating summa cum laude from Cornell University in 1994. After graduation, she stayed in Ithaca, N.Y., teaching backpacking and flatwater canoeing, as well as working in the outfitting center and climbing wall of the Cornell Outdoor Education program. “I knew I’d eventually go to graduate school, but I wanted some time off first. Ithaca is an idyllic place and I had already been working for the outdoor education program while I was in school, so it made sense to stay on.”

Graduate school turned Flinn from cinephile to film scholar. She began her studies at Harvard expecting to specialize in nineteenth or twentieth century literature. “I had also worked in a movie theater and a video store while I was in college (yes, I had a lot of part-time jobs), but although I had read a great deal of feminist film theory in various literature classes, it just wasn’t really on my screen—so to speak—as a field of specialization.” A series of serendipitous faculty arrivals and departures at Harvard led to the change of focus: “I had been doing a lot of research throughout my coursework and exams on intersections of literature and visual culture (cartography, guidebooks, art and architecture, as well as film). The transition seemed quite natural. I had enthusiastic support from my department, which was very open to dissertations about topics that were not strictly literary.” Meanwhile, Harvard was in the midst of a concerted effort to consolidate and expand its film studies program, so Flinn benefited from an energetic intellectual atmosphere.

In 2004, Flinn joined the French and cinema studies faculty at the University of Illinois. “It was basically my dream job—to have serious research support while teaching both French film and literature/cultural history. Within the history of French cinematographic theory, film has often been thought of as a language. Moreover, the greatest French directors and film theorists have been completely absorbed by literature as well as art and philosophy—think of Antoine Doinel reading Balzac in Truffaut’s Les 400 coups. Film and French studies are a natural mix.”

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**2005-2006 FACULTY AND ALUMNI BOOK NEWS**


**Peter Golato**, *Processing French: A Psycholinguistic Perspective* (Yale University Press, 2006).


