GUIDELINES FOR WRITERS OF SENIOR THESES AND SENIOR HONORS THESES
DEPARTMENT OF FRENCH AND FRANCOPHONE STUDIES

General comments
As you have probably discovered during your time at Davidson College, different academic disciplines use different methods of documenting and citing sources in a research paper. The Department of French and Francophone asks that you use the elements of style formulated by the Modern Language Association (MLA) in preparing your senior thesis or senior honors thesis.

The following principles are fundamental to MLA documentation style:

- Placing brief parenthetical references within the text rather than using footnotes
- Limiting references to the bare minimum necessary to help your reader find the source
- Including the page number in the cited work within your parenthetical reference
- Keying your citations to an alphabetical works cited list that appears at the end of the paper and which contains full publication data for all of your sources
- Avoiding distracting or superfluous abbreviations such as ibid.

Widely used in the humanities, MLA style is designed to make the finished paper as easy to read as possible by inserting a minimum number of disruptions. The reasons for observing the principles listed above make sense in the broader context of humanities scholarship:

- Like footnotes, in-text citations can distract the reader; yours should be brief enough to limit the distraction but as complete as necessary to take readers to the source.
- The natural and social sciences understandably stress how up-to-date information may be. Scholarship done in the humanities tends not have the same kind of expiration date, so publication dates are typically not necessary in the text of the research paper.
- Traditional abbreviations, often of Latin words, make research projects appear less accessible to ordinary readers and more the exclusive property of a particular community.
- Presenting full publication data for all sources at the end of your paper is in keeping with the general principle of creating a text that flows smoothly and is easy to read. In French, your alphabetical list of works cited will be called Références rather than Bibliographie.

Before starting to type your paper, please read the appropriate sections of the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers (7th edition, 2009). A few paper copies of the handbook are available in the Bookstore for under $20. In addition, there are 1-2 hard copies of the most current edition available in Little Library at the desk.

Ready to write?
The MLA Handbook is a 300-page manual. Below you will find handy references to those sections in the 7th edition most likely to help you write your senior thesis or honors thesis in French. There are also some guidelines not discussed by the folks at the MLA. These pertain to differences in writing style between American English and French language texts.

The MLA recognizes two widely accepted approaches to capitalizing French titles and subtitles of works, neither of which involves capitalizing every word in a title. For your thesis project, you are being asked to capitalize the first word in titles and subtitles and all proper nouns therein (Handbook, 107). This includes titles of series and periodicals.

Publications of the Modern Language Association use this system, applied in the following examples: La chambre claire: Note sur la photographie, Nouvelle revue d’onomastique, La guerre de Troie n’aura pas lieu, and Le premier jardin.


Please pay close attention to placement of punctuation marks in your citations. In preparing parenthetical citations, please think about the following elements:

- **Quotations.** All quotations from a text must be followed by a page reference.
- **Readability.** See section 6.3, pp. 216-219, on brevity, clarity and accuracy.
- **Subsequent References.** See 6.3, p. 218.

3. Endnotes (in French, Notes): section 6.5 (6.5.1 and 6.5.2), pp. 230-231

Section 6.5 of the manual presents the two kinds of notes associated with MLA style parenthetical documentation: content notes (6.5.1) and bibliographical notes (6.5.2). While MLA style allows both footnotes and endnotes, the Department of French and Francophone Studies asks that you present supplementary information at the end of the text (as an endnote). Examples are provided on pp. 230-231 of the manual. Use endnotes sparingly, as a way to provide explanation or clarification that would otherwise disrupt the flow of your text. Do not use your endnotes to give a page number (this should be documented in the text) or to repeat complete bibliographical information (this should be in your list of works cited, or Références).

4. Bibliography or Works Cited Page (in French, Références).

As mentioned above, the list of works cited, or bibliography, carries the title “Références” in French. Before you start preparing your list, please consult Section 5 of the MLA manual, which provides extensive guidance and examples for citing both print and non-print sources. See pp. 123-24 for a list of the types of sources that are often cited in research papers, along with the corresponding sub-section where you’ll find examples. Key sub-sections are:

- **The List of Works Cited** (the components of your citation): 5.3.1-5.3.6
- **Citing Periodical Print Publications:** sections 5.4.1-5.4.13
- **Citing Nonperiodical Print Publications:** sections 5.5.1-5.5.26
- **Citing Web Publications:** sections 5.6.1 – 5.6.4
- **Citing Additional Common Sources:** 5.7.1-5.7.18
- **Citing a Work in More Than One Publication Medium:** section 5.8
- **Sample of Works Cited Page (Références):** see pp. 229-231 for a few examples
5. Punctuation with quotations in French. This information is not treated by the MLA, since the Handbook is not designed for scholars writing research papers in French or à la française. Please note the following differences in placement of periods and commas.

5A. Using quotation marks within a sentence in French: “citation”. and “citation”, In English, periods and commas go inside quotation marks. In French, periods and commas go outside the quotation marks (there is no need to use French guillemets in place of quotation marks). Quotes are set off differently as well. Please study the following examples:

- Il a écrit: (colon rather than comma) “L’enfer, c’est les autres”. (period after quotes)
- Il a écrit que (no comma) “l’enfer, c’est les autres”.

5B. Using ellipses in French: […] In English, an ellipsis is designated by three periods with a space in between each period. In French, use the following form for an ellipse, even if you are quoting a critic who writes in English: […] (a set of brackets enclosing three periods with no spaces in between). For example:

- “Les hommes? […] Le vent les promène. Ils manquent de racines, ça les gêne beaucoup”.

5C. Quoting from secondary sources written in English In a thesis or research paper written in French, all complete quotations remain in the original language of the text cited. If you are quoting a critic who wrote in English, then reproduce the original English-language wording. If the quotation in question is lengthy or too cumbersome to reproduce in its entirety, you should summarize the quote by paraphrasing in French.

Some final instructions

1. Please use a 12 point font when preparing your senior thesis. Suggested fonts:
   - This is a line written in Times New Roman
   - This is a line written in Arial
   - This is a line written in Cambria

2. Finished senior theses will be 5,000 - 6,000 words in length (20-30 pages, double-spaced), while finished Honors theses will be 10,000 - 12,000 words long (40-60 pages, double-spaced). Page numbers should be inserted in the upper right-hand corner of each page.

3. Following the oral presentation/ defense of your project – details to follow -- be sure to leave with the Department a final, clean copy of your thesis containing any last-minute minor changes. Please send a copy to the Chair as an email attachment.

4. You will be provided with font and spacing requirements for your title page.

Document originally prepared in 2001 by Professors Carole Kruger and Catherine Slawy-Sutton, with comments and suggestions from Shireen Campbell (English), Vivien Dietz (History), and Hansford Epes (Humanities). Revised edition 21 Jan 2014 by Drs. Kruger and Slawy-Sutton.