FREN 701: History of the French Language Professor Kim Swanson

T/Th 2:30-3:45

This course will introduce students to the development of the French language, from its origins in Popular Latin, through Old and Middle French, to the present. The focus is on a linguistic examination of diachronic change in French or the "internal history", that is, the evolution of phonology, morphology and syntax (sounds, word formation, and word order). We’ll explore the evolution of French through the study of texts. We will also study the "external history" or sociolinguistic history, such as the effects of contact with other languages, political and social pressures, changing patterns of language use, etc.

Class work will consist of preparing readings and commentaries for in-class discussion, some short assignments analyzing certain linguistic features, an oral and written report that explores one particular aspect of the history of the language in more depth (e.g., Germanic influence, orthography & pronunciation, dictionaries, impact of Latin in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, vocabulary development, etc.), and a final exam. Preparation for and participation in class discussions is a very important part of the course. Previous training in linguistics and Latin are not assumed. The language of instruction will depend upon enrollment.

Most readings will be taken from the texts below; most will be available on reserve and/or on Blackboard.