**Diversity Statement**

While Quebec Studies remains my primary specialization at the University of Michigan, I am affiliated with the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures and am conducting a research project on the Volkswagen Beetle’s representation in German-, French- and English-language literature and culture since 1949. In Michigan, my work on car culture has led to several collaborations beyond the academic community that are expressly designed to address and promote issues of diversity and interculturality. In 2020, I reached out to the MotorCities National Heritage Area Partnership*,* a nonprofit corporation affiliated with the National Park Service and dedicated to explaining, preserving, and disseminating the important role southeast and central Michigan, and especially its residents, played in the development of the automotive industry. My partnership with MotorCities involves helping the organization reach out to a wide range of communities whose essential contribution to the history of the automotive industry has not yet been properly recognized.

I am involved in the creation and conceptualization of the “Making Tracks II” website, a follow-up to the already existing *Making Tracks: The African American Experience in the Auto Industry* (<https://www.motorcities.org/making-tracks>). Making Tracks was founded approximately 10 years ago in a partnership between MotorCities, the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History in Detroit, and the Ford Motor Company. This site presents a series of audio clips profiling African Americans who became leaders in the automotive industry, tracing their migration journeys north to settle in Detroit, and describing the many hurdles they had to overcome, as black people, to establish themselves in an industry in which they had played a seminal part.

TheMaking Tracks I website deals with material up to the end of the 1940s but, in the summer of 2020, with the Black Lives Matter movement having gained such momentum, MotorCities decided to develop a new website to cover the period from 1948 to the present day. Since the end of April 2021, I have been the primary researcher responsible for selecting the content for the period 1948-1980. I am also a full member of the MotorCities Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee, which includes members of the organization’s board of directors. The committee has identified a number of minority groups whose contribution to the development of Michigan’s auto industry has been insufficiently acknowledged in MotorCities’ preservation work. I lead the MotorCities’ liaison with French-language communities in the region that aims to initiate dialogue with key contacts within these groups to better understand how we can showcase their contribution to automotive history and thus make that historical account more inclusive. In collaboration with the Haitian Network Group of Detroit, I recorded oral histories at Real Times Media’s studio of Detroit in September 2021 with Haitian-American engineers with whom I had connected and who had agreed to share their personal experiences and journeys. These will be uploaded to the MotorCities’ website in February 2022. Furthermore, the interview I conducted with Mary-France Oudin, a French American senior program manager at MAHLE-Behr USA whom I was able to contact with the help of a board member of the Alliance Française de Détroit, was uploaded to MotorCities’ YouTube page this summer (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ovrasmb6DNU). The third project I am involved in is called the “Southwest Detroit Auto Heritage Guide”(https://www.motorcities.org/southwest-main). Just published on the MotorCities website, it traces a century of contributions to the automotive industry by workers, businesses, and unions in the Southwest Detroit neighborhood. More content needs adding on the particular contribution of Mexican, Polish, Irish, Maltese, and Arab Americans to the automotive industry. I collaborate very closely with Ron Alpern, one of the main authors of the guide and an expert in the history of labor movements in Detroit and we are aiming to complete the sections relating to the contribution of cultural communities in the form of short essays. The research and writing will be conducted in a series of well-defined stages collaboratively with the relevant communities and a number of Michigan universities. This approach will encourage members of these communities, mostly young activists and seniors, to take up archival and historical research and enable these communities to direct the choice of materials that will appear in the guide.

As a scholar whose research focuses on theories of cross-cultural communication and the “empowerment” of immigrant, asylum-seeker, and refugee characters in recent comics and graphic novels from Quebec, France, and Germany, I am keenly aware of the ways that power, misunderstanding, and exclusion have often shaped the curriculum in French and German Studies departments in North America. I am thus especially interested in selecting course materials that confront exclusionary narratives about Quebec culture and history. My research draws on works that encourage a reassessment of the alleged openness of Canada as the ideal “welcoming land” for immigrants and of other positive stereotypes related, for example, to Canadian multiculturalism. I am especially interested in works that seek to empower immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers by illuminating their cross-cultural competence (often in daily conversations with characters presented as citizens of Canada). Employing theories of cross-cultural communication (Volker Hinnenkamp, Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink, Bernd Müller-Jacquier), I examine how the authors organize and develop conversations between those characters who are citizens of Canada and those who are not.

In the context of Quebec culture, the issue of empowering the voices of the marginalized could also be reflected through offering a course on Canadian French-language indigenous literature and culture from the perspective of “resistance” to the European colonization of the Americas. This would draw on works and artifacts that directly address the vigor of current indigenous resistance movements in Canada, or, for example, highlight indigenous warriors’ most important victories against invading European troops, rather than a narrative of assimilation. I would also be interested in developing a course presenting an overview of Quebec history from LGBTQ perspectives. Within this, I would, for example, teach on the *révolution tranquille,* the period of rapid social and political change in the 1960s, through the homosexual coming-of-age film “C.R.A.Z.Y.” I would encourage students to discover a narrative in which the queer subject, unlike other contemporaries, is not invested in “building” the Quebec nation at this key moment in its entry into modernity. The queer subject, in fact, is obliged to flee Quebec to constitute himself as such. At James Madison University, I would also be disposed to become a faculty ally in the “Safe Zone”.

I would very much welcome the opportunity to taking an active lead in mentoring students in their community outreach projects, something very appealing to me. I would look forward, for example, to designing a translation course for advanced students of French related to community engagement. This could be done, for example, through a collaboration with a non-profit organization in Virginia or a neighboring state offering shelter and legal services to asylum seekers from Francophone Africa. Students would take on supervised translation work while learning about the US asylum process and the countries from which the asylum seekers come. Mentoring international students is also something very close to my heart. As someone who lived as an undergraduate student in France and then as a graduate student in Germany, I am familiar with the many challenges studying abroad inevitably entails and the difficulty of finding a sense of belonging as an international student, even when the conditions are very favorable.