February 11, 2021

Professor Briana Lewis

Department of World Languages & Cultures

520 N. Main St., Meadville, PA 16335

Dear Professor Lewis and Members of the Search Committee:

I am writing to apply for the position of Assistant Professor of French and German in the Department of World Languages and Cultures at Allegheny College. I graduated *Summa Cum Laude* in May 2017 from a PhD program in Literary Studies jointly convened by the Université du Québec à Montréal and the Universität des Saarlandes, receiving both Canadian and German qualifications. I am currently a lecturer of French at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. I work in the Residential College (RC): a semi-independent liberal arts living-learning community within the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts at the University of Michigan. I am also currently a postdoctoral fellow in the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures at the same college.

I started at Ann Arbor with a postdoctoral fellowship from the *Fonds de recherche du Québec – Société et Culture* (2018-2021). During my time at the University of Michigan, I was able to complete my first monograph: *Les usages littéraires de Thomas Bernhard et de Peter Handke au Québec. Les modalités d’une affiliation interculturelle*.It was published on February 3, 2021 by Éditions Nota benein Montreal. The book draws on a representative corpus of Québécois novels, short stories, and collections of poems published between 1989 and 2011. The works chosen all exhibit substantial intertextual dialogue with the works of Austrian writers Thomas Bernhard and Peter Handke, winner of the2019 Nobel Prize for literature. Based on the concept of “affiliation”, my book presents a typology of appropriated foreign literary traditions found in contemporary Francophone literature.

In the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures at the University of Michigan, I am currently working on another book project on the principal fictional representations of the Volkswagen Beetle in German-Language and English-Language Literatures (1949-2011). In this project I analyze these representations as the development of new transnational avenues in the field of material culture studies. By means of literary analysis, I theorize the role of iconic objects as transnational and transcultural mediators of identity, while paradoxically also serving as sites of “indigenous” memory.

My early graduate studies concerned modern and contemporary Franco-German cultural and literary relations while always maintaining an active research focus in Québec studies. My primary fields of specialization are 20th and 21stcentury Québécois and French Literatures and Cultures. My research and teaching focusses on cross-cultural issues, including migration narratives; theories of cross-cultural communication, intertextuality, and reception; and comparative studies (with German-language literatures and cultures). My German studies interests include: sports and leisure culture in the Weimar Republic; issues around affect and affective communities (among others, historians’ attempts to establish a German vocabulary of emotions) and Germany’s historical relationship between consumption and economizing. With my specific background, working in both French and German Studies, and at their intersection, I am confident in my ability to make important contributions to your major in French, and to your minors in French, French Studies and German. Some of my recent work on comics and graphic novels could also lead to an interesting collaboration with Professor Julia Ludewig, especially where transnational perspectives are concerned.

Some of my recent articles concern contemporary Québécois *Bildung* or coming-of-age narratives in which the German language appears as a theme, and an analysis of Helmut Wietz’ graphic novel *Verlorene Illusionen* (2017), which is loosely based on Balzac’s *Illusions perdues* but relocates the latter’s famous satire of Parisian literary and journalistic circles to divided Germany, developing a rewriting of the history of the media in West and East Germany. My research has appeared in French, English and German language peer-reviewed journals: *Littératures*, *Voix et Images*; *Eurostudia - Transatlantic*Journal*for European Studies; Revue d’Allemagne et des pays de langue allemande*; *Zeitschrift für Kanada Studien (ZKS)*; *Seminar: A Journal of Germanic Studies*, as well as in different collections in Germany, including the recent *Klassik als kulturelle Praxis. Funktional, intermedial, transkulturell* (De Gruyter: 2019)*.*

As a Canadian native speaker of French, I was educated in the French-language education system, but I grew up in a bilingual environment in Montreal. I am therefore completely fluent in English, French and German, making me an ideal candidate for this position. I have successfully taught French language courses to non-native speakers at all levels in Germany and in the United States; advanced undergraduate cultural and literary studies courses of my own design in Germany and in the United States, as well as a survey course of my own design to French native speakers in the Literary Studies B.A. program at the Université du Québec à Montréal. Other teaching experience, and how it might contribute to a position in both French and German, is detailed in my teaching dossier.

Since last September, my experience as a lecturer at the University of Michigan’s Residential College has made me realize that the liberal arts educational model is fully consonant with my view of what higher education should be. I believe deeply in the role of the professor as teacher-scholar. I particularly appreciate the close supervision and authentically individualized feedback I am able to offer my students in such an environment, not only in the classroom, but also in the context of feedback on assessments. At the Residential College, I teach classes of fewer than 15 students as part of a truly intensive and semi-immersive language program. Much like your department, we offer French tables which students must attend 3 times a week in their first year of study and once a week in their second year.

The flexibility and genuine interdisciplinarity of the Allegheny “model” with its major *and* minor programs is also very appealing to me. Undergraduate education in French-speaking Canada generally requires students to choose their major *before* beginning their program of study. Such a model certainly has its advantages – during my B.A. in French-language literatures at the Université de Montréal (which included a one-year stay abroad program at the Université Paris 7 Denis-Diderot) I was comprehensively exposed to French-language literatures from every century. However, at graduate level, it was also important for me to work, in a more interdisciplinary manner. I was able to achieve this at Professor Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink’s Chair of Intercultural Communication and Romance Cultural Studies within the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures at the Universität des Saarlandes.

After my PhD, I had the chance to spend an additional year at the Universität des Saarlandes as a visiting scholar and lecturer (2017-2018). In this capacity, I designed and taught both French-language courses and more advanced undergraduate seminars in French (“*L’écriture migrante au Québec*”) and in French/German (“*De la bande dessinée au roman graphique. Interculturalité et ethnicité/ Vom Comic zum Graphic Novel. Interkulturalität und Ethnizität*”). These advanced undergraduate literary and cultural studies courses attracted a broad range of students. These included students with Cultural Studies profiles; Intercultural Communication and Franco-German studies majors who were particularly interested in the economic aspects of France-Germany relations; future teachers of French as a foreign language in Germany; students of Romance languages and cultures specializing in both French and Spanish, as well as students of Comparative Literature. I drew constantly on my students’ prior knowledge of a variety of disciplines to establish meaningful links to subjects and theories that were at times completely new to them. I believe that the exposure to cross-cultural communication theories, and more broadly to cross-cultural understanding and comparison I was able to acquire in Saarbrücken would be extremely useful in a language curriculum such as yours. This is because your curriculum integrates both language and culture at *all* levels of instruction – which is much rarer than one might think. For example, this experience would allow me to give a specific shape and color to a course such as your FRNCH 301 – French Society and Culture.

Your institution’s acknowledgment of the importance of study abroad programs directly aligns with my vision of eye-opening undergraduate studies. I maintain an active network of contacts in both Canada and Germany and would be interested in developing partnerships allowing your students to pursue coursework or internships in either country. For students who cannot afford your existing programs in Rennes or Dakar, for instance, an internship in Québec could prove an interesting option. Other aspects of Allegheny College’s statement of purpose that resonate with me are: the focus on lifelong learning, the importance of civic education and community service, and the substantial research experience afforded to undergraduate students.

In conclusion, on the basis of my training and professional experience as a teacher, researcher, and colleague, I am confident in my ability to make important contributions to Allegheny College’s French and German programs. I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to allay any doubts you may have in an interview. My curriculum vitae, a teaching dossier, a diversity statement as well as 3 letters of application, are included in my application. Dr. Florian Henke and Dr. Elissa Bell Bayraktar have also agreed to be available for additional information and letters of recommendation pertaining specifically to my foreign language teaching skills. I would be happy to provide any additional materials. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Louise-Hélène Filion