December 8, 2020

Department of World Languages

219 Alexander Hall

Ypsilanti, MI 48197

Dear Members of the Search Committee:

I am writing to apply for the position of Assistant Professor in French at Eastern Michigan University. As a literary and cultural studies scholar specializing in 20th- and 21st-century Québec and French Literatures, I focus my teaching and research on cross-cultural issues, including migration narratives; theories of cross-cultural communication, intertextuality, and reception; and comparative studies (mostly with German-language literatures and cultures). As a Canadian native speaker of French, I have successfully taught beginning and intermediate French language courses to non-native speakers in the United States and in Germany; advanced undergraduate cultural and literary studies courses of my own design in Germany; and a lecture-based/survey-type course of my own design to French native speakers in the Literary Studies B.A. program at the Université du Québec à Montréal. Currently, at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, I am both a lecturer of French in the Residential College (RC), a liberal arts learning community within the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, and a postdoctoral fellow in the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures.

For my doctoral studies, I was trained both at the Université du Québec à Montréal and at the Universität des Saarlandes, receiving my joint Canadian-German PhD in Literary Studies in May 2017. Before coming to the University of Michigan, I spent a year at the Universität des Saarlandes as a visiting scholar and lecturer in the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures. I worked with the Chair of Intercultural Communication and Romance Cultural Studies, Distinguished Senior Professor Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink, to design and teach French-language courses and advanced undergraduate seminars in French and French/German, including *L’écriture migrante au Québec* (“Migrant Writing in Québec”) and *De la bande dessinée au roman graphique: Interculturalité et ethnicité* (“From Comics to Graphic Novels: Interculturality and Ethnicity”). These advanced undergraduate literary and cultural studies courses attracted a broad range of students: those 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; and students of Romance languages and cultures specializing in both French and Spanish. 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 am committed to adapting my teaching methods to the particular needs of my classroom.

My teaching experience and my training as a Ph.D. student with Professor Lüsebrink within a very interdisciplinary group of graduate students have prepared me to make solid contributions to both concentrations of your Bachelor of Arts in French. Indeed, Professor Lüsebrink and one of his closest collaborators, Dr. Christoph Vatter, are specialists in cross-cultural training in Franco-German contexts: they have published extensively on French mentalities in the business world and on intercultural learning in school and university exchanges between Germany and France. At the Universität des Saarlandes, I designed courses which were offered, among others, in the binational French-German Bachelor of Arts program *Études franco-allemandes: communication et coopération transfrontalière/Deutsch-Französische Studien. Grenzüberschreitende Kommunikation und Kooperation.* Each year, a selected cohort of both French and German students are admitted: the German-speaking students spend the first year of study in Saarbrücken while the French-speaking students study at the Université de Lorraine in Metz; in the second year, all students are together in Metz; and in the final year of study all students pursue their coursework together in Saarbrücken. I thus had both French and German students in my courses: while anchored in the specific Franco-German context, this program shares similarities and goals with your concentration in “Languages and International Careers,” including courses similar to your “FRNH 361L5 – French for International Trade.”

I believe deeply in the role of the professor as a teacher-scholar and, in the context of foreign language education, I am interested in teaching language courses at all levels as well as more advanced literary and cultural studies courses and various types of courses including “French for Business” or “French for Professions” courses. In Canada, I was educated in the French-language educational system, but I grew up in a bilingual environment in Montréal; I feel at ease in all levels of instruction in both French and English. In addition to having worked in Germany and the United States, I also studied for one year as an undergraduate student at the Université Paris VII Denis Diderot. Studying in France helped me when I was designing French language courses at the Universität des Saarlandes on contemporary issues in the French-speaking world, such as “*inégalités territoriales*” (territorial inequalities) and “*économie collaborative*” (shared economy). In format, these courses are similar to your “Advanced French Conversation” (FRNH444L5) course. Focusing on the notion of territorial inequalities, for example, proved to be an excellent way to introduce students to the various injustices suffered by inhabitants of Overseas France.

While my primary background is in French Studies, I also have an active research agenda in Contemporary German Literature and Culture. At Eastern Michigan University I would welcome the opportunity to contribute to your German program as well. My teaching has been informed by a variety of pedagogical workshops at the Universität des Saarlandes and at the University of Michigan, including “Specificities of Higher Education Pedagogy for Teaching in the Humanities.” My teaching evaluations, which I would be happy to provide, testify to the efficacy of my pedagogy.

My research has appeared in the peer-reviewed journals *Voix et Images*, *Littératures*, *Revue d’Allemagne et des pays de langue allemande*, *Eurostudia. Transatlantic*Journal*for European Studies*, *Zeitschrift für Kanada-Studien* and *Seminar. A Journal of Germanic Studies* as well as in different collective works in Germany, including the recent *Klassik als kulturelle Praxis. Funktional, intermedial, transkulturell* (De Gruyter: 2019)*.* Derived from my dissertation, my first monograph *Les usages littéraires de Thomas Bernhard et de Peter Handke au Québec. Les modalités d’une affiliation interculturelle*, will be published in February 2021 with Les Éditions Nota bene in Montréal. The book proposes, through the concept of “affiliation,” a typology of appropriated foreign literary traditions in contemporary Francophone literature. It draws on a representative corpus of Québec novels, short stories, and collections of poems published between 1989 and 2011, all of which include an extensive intertextual dialogue with the works of Austrian writers Thomas Bernhard and 2019 Nobel Prize winner Peter Handke. In my assessment of contemporary Francophone literature, I show how the affiliative tendency strengthens in surprising ways the authorship and authority of contemporary writers (“*signature d’auteur*”). I also engage with postcolonial theory, as any critical reflection on writing “against” or “with” the literary canon almost always entails. In the context of Québec Literature, I think about the complex effects of colonialism on the cultural sphere; however, I am primarily interested in establishing a dialogue between postcolonial theory and notions such as “*héritage*” (“legacy”) or “filiation,” which have been at the core of French and Francophone literary criticism over the past twenty years.

Since September 2019 my experience as an instructor in the Residential College’s French program at the University of Michigan has made me realize how comfortable I feel in the American higher education system and confirmed how much I enjoy teaching literature, media, and culture to non-native speakers of the tradition in question. 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 Eastern Michigan University’s French program that reflect the department’s educational and international mission. I would very much appreciate the opportunity to convince you of this in an interview. My curriculum vitae, undergraduate and graduate transcripts, as well as three letters of recommendation are included in my application. Dr. Elissa Bell Bayraktar and Dr. Florian Henke have also agreed to be contacted for additional letters of recommendation; their contact information is on the last page of my CV. I would be happy to provide any additional materials. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Your sincerely,



Louise-Hélène Filion