Alongside my work on the imaginary Germanies of Franco-Canadian Cultures, I am broadly interested in contemporary French-language and German-language fictional texts that foreground cross-cultural issues. One of my current research projects focuses on the representations of cross-cultural encounters, and especially, of situations of communicative dysfunctionality or misunderstanding that arise from the latter, in recent graphic novels and comics published in Québec, France, and Germany. Focusing on cartoonists such as Yasmine and Djibril Phan-Morissette, Nacha Vollenweider, and Paula Bulling, I am especially interested in works that seek to empower expatriates, immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers by illuminating their cross-cultural competence, often in daily conversations with characters presented as citizens of Canada or Germany. Employing theories of cross-cultural communication, especially those of Volker Hinnenkamp, Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink, and Bernd Müller-Jacquier, I examine how the authors organize and develop conversations between those characters who are citizens and those who are not. I am particularly committed to such a project because only few large-scale worsks by literary scholars, at least in the German-,English-, and French-speaking world, have attempted to reflect on the merits of comics as a medium to represent cross-cultural encounters. Furthermore, when recent interventions in comic studies have indeed focused on such a topic, they have often done so by relying on concepts such as “multiculturalism,” or “transnationalism”. Without thinking to deny here the merits of the few existing works, I prefer to rely on notions such as “intercultural dialogue,” or “cross-cultural communication,” which immediately point to a research focus in which circumscribed exchanges between characters from different cultural backgrounds are foregrounded.

In the particular Québécois context, much more attention has been given to how film or television series represent or, as the case often is, fail to represent cultural diversity. Thus, at St. Francis Xavier, I would be eager to integrate data science tool techniques into my research on Quebecois comics and graphic novels, something that would allow me to establish a quantitatively as well as qualitatively accurate picture of diversity and cross-cultural relations portrayal within them. This if, of course, a project that I would like to expand throughout to years to encompass comics emanating from other francophone literatures in Canada. I feel that such a Digital Humanities project would be appealing to undergraduate students, including those studying a foreign language, which I why I would love to include interested students as research assistants. Because I deeply believe in the merits of comics for foreign language instruction, I would also be delighted to offer a course on comics within your French program – I noticed that no course is offered on comics at this time. I have myself designed a course in 2018, “De la bande dessinée au roman graphique. Interculturalité et ethnicité,” which could meet any requirements you have for a 300- or 400- level course in French. This course is highly related to my research since it examines graphic narratives with a strong focus on intercultural relations. The course not only draws on theories of cross-cultural communication, but also introduces students to the scholarly study of comics (for example, how to study the construction of space and rhythm in comics, the use of colors, the relation between text and image, etc.) In this course, among other comics, we study *Pyongyang. A Journey in North Korea,* a black-and-white graphic novel published in 2004 by the Québécois author Guy Delisle which details the author’s own stay in Pyongyang. Indeed, he was sent by a French animation studio to work there as an overseas supervisor at Scientific and Educational Film Studio of Korea. He describes his experiences at the studio there, but also his adventures outside the studio, when traveling in the country. The page I have included here takes place at the studio, and depicts a situation of cross-cultural misunderstanding between Guy and his North Korean guide. Guy is at work but decides to put music on. Since he decided to put some Acid Jazz on, he unintentionally worries his guide who, thinking that jazz could have a bad influence on their coworkers, repeatedly comes to Guy’s office door to close it withtout explaining to him why he does so; since Guy is feeling warm that day, he repeatedly stands up from his office chair to reopen the door and, as one can guess, becomes increasingly irritated by his guide’s behavior, before his guide finally explains, in a speech bubble at the end of the page, why he acts this way. Beyond representing in an interesting way Guy’s encounter with the North Korean regime’s denigration of many foreign musical genres, this passage relies on usages of the ressources of the medium of comics that are noteworthy. In my course, we reflect on Delisle’s uses of these resources to depict cross-cultural misunderstanding, asking questions such as: why does only one speech bubble refer to the conversation between Guy and his guide while the page relies on a widespread use of narratory blocks? Or, what could explain the author’s choice to not visually represent some of the characters’ movements that are explicitly presented in the narratory blocks, thus creating a contradiction between text and image? Those are only two of the questions that I would ask, and I can only hope that they have given you the wish to dive into intercultural comics. Thank you for your attention.