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National Center for Institutional Diversity

University of Michigan

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**Subject: Application for the LSA Senior Collegiate Fellowship**

Dear Members of the Search Committee,

I am delighted to apply for the LSA Senior Collegiate Fellowship in the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures. I would bring to the position expertise in Québec Literature and research interests in other minority Francophone Literatures in North America beyond Québec, including Louisiana Literature; a breadth of teaching experience in Francophone Literatures and French as a second language at all levels at various types of universities in Germany, Canada, and the United States since 2013; a record of engagement in public scholarship that benefits underrepresented communities outside the academic world; and a strong familiarity with U-M students as I am currently beginning my fifth year as a faculty member in the Residential College.

Before coming to Ann Arbor in 2018 thanks to a postdoctoral fellowship from the *Fonds de recherche du Québec – Société et Culture* in the course of which I landed the position in the Residential College’s French Program, I graduated *summa cum laude* from a PhD program in literary studies convened jointly by the Université du Québec à Montréal and the Universität des Saarlandes, receiving both Canadian and German qualifications. The skills and experience I have acquired through my training and teaching experience at both these institutions are directly in line with the LSA Senior Collegiate Fellowship program’s stated goals. The Université du Québec à Montréal, a French-language public university, is part of the wider Université du Québec network, which was created in 1968 by the Quebec government to improve access to higher education for French Canadians, especially those from a working class and nontraditional background – indeed, in 1964, the Royal Commission of Inquiry on Education in the Province of Quebec had established that only 4 % of Francophone Quebecers attended university at the time, whereas 11% of Anglophone Quebecers did. The Université du Québec network has expanded in the 1960s and 1970s as other establishments were created in remote areas in Quebec in order to permit access to “decentralize higher education in favoring access to indiviuals that are geographically or sociologally distant[[1]](#footnote-1)”. My teaching statement describes my teaching experience with Francophone Canadian students from underrepresented backgrounds, as a PhD student at the Montréal constituent of this network which now comprises 10 institutions. During my time as a PhD student at the Universität des Saarlandes (Saarland University), and then following my PhD as a visiting scholar (2017-2018) in the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures, where I served as a substitute for Associate Professor Mechthild Gilzmer, I have developed courses that were offered, among other places, in the binational French-German Bachelor of Arts program, “Franco-German Studies: Cross-border communication and cooperation” (B.A.) Each year, a cohort of both French and German students are admitted, so that both French and German students studied in my courses. This program is only one among others that testify to the decisively cross-cultural focus of the department of R**omance Cultural Studies** and Intercultural Communication I trained in as a PhD student. My training under the supervision of Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink, a theoretician of cross-cultural communication, has enriched in many ways both my research and teaching, as evident in my research and teaching statements; I am confident that it has prepared me well to contribute to both the DEI objectives of the LSA Senior Collegaite Program and some of the self-avowed priorities of the U-M RLL department, among others, its signature research cluster “Migration, Diaspora, Globalization. At **Saarland University, among other courses, I designed an advanced, seminar-style undergraduate class, “From Comics to Graphic Novels: Interculturality and Ethnicity,”** This course, which exemplifies my commitment to addressing classroom diversity and inclusion issues, examines graphic narratives with a strong focus on intercultural relations. Class discussions center on how these graphic narratives depict intercultural encounters and reflect on transcultural and ethnic issues through reflections on comics as a medium. This course could meet any requirements the Romance Languages and Literatures Department has for a 300-level course in French.

Since arriving at the University of Michigan, I have continued to design courses around such culturally diverse topics as “The Road Trip in North American Minority Literature and Film,” and demonstrated my flexible attitude toward changing institutional and student needs – for example, in the winter of 2021, I adapted my course on “Migrant Writing in Quebec” from earlier incarnations of it to align with the objectives of a third-year seminar in the context of an intensive and semi-immersive language program such as the Residential College’s. I have also completed my postdoctoral training in the Department of Germanic Languages and Literature while always maintaining and refining my primary expertise in Québec Literature.

My research on modern and contemporary Quebec literature and culture focuses on intercultural issues, including imagology, theories of cross-cultural communication and of cross-cultural intertextuality, theories of cultural transfer, and reception studies. My first monograph, based on my doctoral dissertation, *Les usages littéraires de Thomas Bernhard et de Peter Handke au Québec: Les modalités d’une affiliation interculturelle* was published in February 2021 by Éditions Nota Beneof Montreal. It explores the utility of “affiliation” as a concept in intercultural analysis of contemporary Quebec literature and draws on a representative corpus of poetry and prose works that conduct intertextual dialogue with Thomas Bernhard and Peter Handke’s works. Findings from my research on contemporary intercultural literature from Quebec and Germany have been published in French, English, and German in peer-reviewed journals such as: *Littératures*; *Voix et Images*; *Eurostudia*; *Zeitschrift für Kanada Studien*; and *Seminar*.They have also appearedin German collections, such as *Klassik als kulturelle Praxis: Funktional, intermedial, transkulturell* (De Gruyter, 2019). As a scholar with interests in the theory of parody, and the study of perceptions of Nazi Germany in Francophone Literatures, I would especially look forward to the chance of collaborating with colleagues in U-M's Romance Languages and Literatures Department and believe that there are significant prospects for synergies with the work of David Caron and Michèle Hannoosh, among others.

In addition, allow me to note my steadfast commitment to the circulation of knowledge outside the academic community, which I believe would serve both the University of Michigan’s research programs and community outreach initiatives. As a postdoctoral fellow in Michigan, I expanded my interests to historical preservation research. I led a liaison with French-language communities on behalf of the MotorCities National Heritage Area Partnership, a US Congress-funded nonprofit corporation where I have been both a researcher and member of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion committee. The MotorCities partnership is dedicated to preserving and explaining the historic role southeast and central Michigan communities played in the development of the automotive industry. I have been responsible for initiating dialogue with key contacts within the French-language groups to better understand how our organization could showcase their contribution and thereby make that historical account more inclusive. For example, in collaboration with the Haitian Network Group of Detroit, I recorded oral histories in Detroit in September 2021 of the personal experiences and journeys of Haitian-American engineers with whom I had forged links. These were published on MotorCities’ website in February 2022. I was also involved in the planning of outreach activities with Latin American communities in the neighbourhood of Southwest Detroit and in the conceptualization and creation of the “Making Tracks II. The African American Experience in the Auto Industry” website. At U-M, I would relish the opportunity to further develop similar lines of interests and new learning experiences for your students geared toward immigrants and diaspora networks, especially around car culture. I would work with dedication to create such forms of mentorship, and would be especially interested in creating new opportunities for graduate students through programs such as the Dean’s Strategic Initiatives I (DSI-I) Fund. These experiences would, in turn, enhance U-M’s links with the wider community.

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As I look ahead, I especially relish the idea of joining the RLL community in a role that is in the continuity of my current teaching practice at U-M but also allows for more resources and support for research – research in a field that appears currently widely underrepresented in the United States. Indeed, since I have arrived in the US in 2018, among all tenure-track jobs that have opened up in Francophones Literatures, I can recall only one tenure-track position which was open specifically in the field of “Quebec and / or North American Francophone Literatures.”

I woukld love the chance to develp courses at Michigan that I strongly believe would enhance your isntitution’s offering and prompt new research opportunities, including ones on Representations of LGBTQ+ identities in French Canadian children’s and youth’s literature, and Canadian French-language indigenous literature and culture from the perspective of “resistance” to European colonization. I would greatly appreciate the opportuynity to discuss at interview the additional courses I could offer that would best complement your undergraduate and graduate programs. The materials you have requested, including three writing samples, are attached. I would be happy to provide any additional materials you might require and thank you for considering my application.

Yours sincerely,

Louise-Hélène Filion

1. <https://reseau.uquebec.ca/fr/a-propos/presentation-generale/50-ans-de-luniversite-du-quebec/chroniques-sur-le-50e-anniversaire-de-luq/la-fondation-de-luniversite-du-quebec> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)