

**SOVEREIGNTY AND QUÉBEC:
A LITERARY AND CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE**

FRENCH LITERATURE IN TRANSLATION (FRLT) 52

Professor David Powell
327 Calkins Hall
3-5485
david.powell@hofstra.edu

Fall 2003
TR 11:10-12:35
100 Heger
Office hours: TR 3-4:15, or by app't

“Sovereignty and Québec” will give you another perspective of North America. In the United States, we have a tendency to think of the English-speaking presence and more recently of the presence of Spanish-speakers. Yet, there is a long history of French-speakers in North America. One detail will demonstrate that French is still a strong presence on this continent: after Paris, Montréal has the largest French-speaking population of any city in the world. To be a well-informed citizen of North America, it behooves you to know something about this important presence to the north.

The title of the course, however, suggests something more than just an awareness of French presence in North America. For what is most interesting is that few of us are aware of the importance of French on this continent. The history of New France, as the French colony was called in the 17th and early 18th centuries, and of its secession to England in 1760 and the subsequent repression of French will supply many details about that reality. Nonetheless, it is specifically the recent struggle of French-speakers in Canada—and you will learn the significance in the mutation of terms, from “habitants,” to French, to French-Canadians, to Quebecers, and finally to Québécois—that will teach us about the current state of affairs for ??million French-speakers in North America. Will they or will they not break away from English-speaking Canada in an effort to maintain their identity? Will they insist on their sovereignty? What moves have been taken so far, and what do they mean?

There are many ways to approach this knowledge. But since the strongest argument for Québécois sovereignty is the cultural identity of a people who feel in many ways disenfranchised, I have chosen a cultural approach. To study the culture of a people is to examine what makes them who they are. One of the best ways to do that is to find the intersections of that people’s political and social history, their religion, their commercial endeavors, and the manifestation of all this in their literature. Through literature, we will be able to locate evidence of a Québécois identity in a variety of forms. We must not fall into the trap of assuming that all Québécois are indistinguishable; but we can identify similarities that make them different from English-speaking Canadians, different from Americans, and different from the French.

You have noticed my use of the term “Québécois,” which is a French word. It is the adjectival form of Québec, and it is today the term most people living in Québec use for themselves. I will consistently use this term, just as I will consistently spell the name of the province with an accent: “é” → Québec. You are encouraged to do the same.

We will be examining multiple aspects of Québec in this course, including: geography; history of Québec, 16th to 20th centuries; the language question: history, law, and sociology; parallels with American history and sociology; cultural, linguistic, and socio-political identity; the question of sovereignty; the literary expression of a displaced community. You will be shown maps and expected to gain a rudimentary knowledge of Québécois geography; you will be given an outline of historical events and dates, which you will be expected to learn and understand; you will be given readings about the sociological changes among Québécois people in the past 50 years specifically, which you will be expected to understand. All this information will be applied to the literary texts we will read. The literature and film we study will be our workshop; we will exploit these texts as testimonies of a struggle for identity. You will accrue a familiarity with the current situation of Québec, which presupposes an appreciation of its past, and be able to tease out evidence of that situation in the texts we study.

Course work

I cannot stress enough how important it is for you to read all the assignments completely before coming to class. Not only should you read, but you should take notes on your reading. These notes will help you in class discussion, but they will be invaluable in preparing for papers and exams. You can never remember all the details of our reading,

especially with all the other classes you're taking; so, please take notes while you read. The way you perform in class will tell me how well you have read; this will count for 15% of your grade.

There will be two short essay questions on texts we are reading. These will be assigned 2-3 class periods before they are due. The nature of these assignments will be discussed in class according to the direction class discussion has taken. For written assignments, only typed papers, with 1-inch margins all around, size 12 font, and numbered pages will be accepted. On the other hand, all written work can always be revised for a better grade. The short written assignments all together will count for 30% of your grade-15% each.

We will view portions of the film in class.

There will be a mid-term and a final exam.

To summarize, your course grade will be calculated as follows:

preparedness & participation	15%
2 written assignments	30%
mid-term exam	25%
final exam	<u>30%</u>
Total	100%

Book List

- Collection of passages, excerpted from various books on Québécois history, sociology, politics, and culture.
- Hébert, Anne. *Kamouraska*.
- Huston, Nancy. *Prodige*
- *Quebec Suite: Poems for and About Quebec*. Ed., Endre Farkas
- Chen, Ying. *Ingratitude*
- Tremblay, Michel. *The Fat Woman Next Door Is Pregnant*.
- Film (to be announced).
- There will also be some documents on electronic reserve. This is an easy and convenient tool, since you can access the documents at home, in your room, or in a lab at any time; you can read them on-line, download them, or print them out. Simply go to: <http://eres.hofstra.edu/> and click on “find your course,” then choose “search by professor’s last name,” then choose FRLT 52. The code to get into the documents is “frlt52” (lowercase and no spaces). You can then click on the appropriate document.

General comments

Do not hesitate to contact if you are having problems in the class. I check my e-mail regularly at home and in the office. This is the surest way to get in touch with me. I can help you with study techniques as well as vocabulary at other precise details.

While you may bring drinks to class, make sure you dispose of any waste and clean up any clutter you might make. No eating of any sort will be tolerated!

NB: no class on October 23rd.