

Distinct lack of "national patois" in courses

OTTAWA (CUP) — A survey of 24 Canadian universities, including two bilingual ones, reveals an appalling lack of French-Canadian content in English-language university French courses.

The survey, entitled "French-Canadian Studies and their place in University French Departments: A Critique and Model for Change in English Canada", was released recently by three Carleton University professors — Sinclair Robinson (assistant professor of French) and Robin Matthews (associate professor of English) and federal government researcher Joyce Wayne.

The report criticizes the demeaning attitude most English-language university French departments take towards the teaching of French-Canadian language, culture and literature.

"In general, French departments seem to consider French-Canadian literature and civilization marginal, and French-Canadian language an unfortunate corruption of a pure tongue," the report says.

Like studies of English-Canadian language and literature, French-Canadian studies are not considered worthwhile. "An attitude of intellectual colonialism, both conscious and unconscious, has pervaded Canadian universities", the report says, this discouraging all but the hardy from persevering to find and understand something of the Canadian (and French Canadian) identity.

The report also criticizes French departments for teaching 19th and 20th century literature mainly, as if Canada doesn't exist. "Such courses prepare students, by major omission, to believe that work done in Canada is not serious work especially when French-Canadian literature is barely offered or limited."

Courses in language and linguistics are seriously limited both in number and scope, the report adds. In most cases, French departments are heavily oriented towards literature; where language courses do exist, the language taught is "international" and not Quebecois French. Thus students are ill-prepared both on the linguistic and cultural level "for any real contact with their French-speaking neighbors."

French departments were also taken to task for limiting French-Canadian literature studies to honors and/or senior undergraduate students, "preventing many Canadian students from access to material of their own country."

The survey of courses — French and French-Canadian — did not include those offered by other departments because most students seldom have the freedom to take course in other disciplines, and those courses are rarely given in French.

The highest percentage of offerings devoted to French-Canadian studies was 25 percent, the lowest four percent and the average was 14 percent; the professors' model calls for 46 percent.

The University of Alberta is lauded for its program in French-Canadian language and literature which is separate from French language and literature. This unique English-Canadian university program allows students to specialize in French-Canadian literature and language, although the program does not treat the studies as fully as it could, the report says. However, the report adds, it is by far the best solution yet seen in an English-Canadian university.

Only two universities of those surveyed "offer a significantly different pattern in French-Canadian studies in French departments." They are the University of Ottawa and the University of Saskatchewan, Regina campus. The Regina campus offers about one-third of its French department courses in French-Canadian materials, the highest proportion in any university outside Quebec.

The University of Ottawa, a bilingual institution, shows a good proportion in its "Francais" section with 17 or 57 courses listed in the 1972-73 calendar involving French-Canadian studies. But the French section for English-speaking students has only three of 23 courses offered, this reflecting "the deficiencies of French-Canadian studies prevalent in most English-Canadian universities."

The following is a list of the universities and the results. Reading courses and qualifying years are not included, and the calendar year is shown.

UBC - two courses of 27, not counting two open courses; 1972-73

Brock - two of 14; 1972-73

McMaster University - five of 52; 72-73

University of Calgary - one of 22, not counting one open topic course 1972-73

Carleton University - four of 43; 1972-73

Dalhousie University - one of 25, not counting one open topic course 1972-73

Glendon College, York University - five of 26, not counting one open course; 1972-73

University of Guelph - four of 32; 1971-72

Laurentian University (bilingual) - French department one of 17; "Departement de Francais" seven of 44, not counting one open course; 1972-73

McGill University ("College" and university levels) - 21 of 88, not counting one open topic course; 1972-73

Memorial University - three of 21; 1972-73

University of New Brunswick - two of 19; 1972-73

Queen's University - three of 27; 1972-73

University of Saskatchewan (Saskatoon campus) - three of 22; 1972-73

University of Toronto - Erindale Campus - two of 16, not counting two open topic courses; 1971-72

Scarborough College - three of 15; 1972

St. George campus - four of 45, not counting three open topic courses; 1971-72

University of Victoria - three of 21, not counting four open topic courses; 1971-72

University of Windsor - seven of 38; 1972-73.

The researchers' model of course offerings for English-language university French departments has three basic areas of concern. In each area, majoring students would take a minimum of courses; French-Canadian literary studies, French literary studies and studies in language and linguistics. Students then would be able to specialize in one of the areas, the report says.

The model language courses would try to develop the students' linguistic competence to the same

level as their French-Canadian counterparts.

St. Francis Xavier - two of 10; 1972-73

Simon Fraser University - four of 35, not counting four open topic courses; 1972-73

Trent University - three of 19; 1972-73

University of Western Ontario - three of 20, not including two "selected topic" courses. 1972-73

York University - "French Literature" and "French language training" courses - three of 28, not counting three open topic courses; 1971-72

The model's French-Canadian literary studies have a maximum of thirteen courses, French literary studies a maximum of sixteen courses and studies in language and linguistics have a maximum sixteen courses, not including the auxiliary or peripheral courses.

The report admits "the total number of courses offered in each area would depend upon the resources of individual universities but a ratio close to the one presented here (46 percent) should be retained in order to provide a full and open program of offerings that is fair to the integrity of each area."



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