



The PhD in Interdisciplinary Humanities and the Modern Languages, Literatures, and Cultures department present the public talk:

Simone de Beauvoir

#MeToo

Dr. Yan Hamel (TELUQ, Montreal)

Monday April 2nd, 15:30 – 17:00

Room: WH 204

Abstract: The main volumes of Simone de Beauvoir's memoirs recount several moments when the author went hiking. It would be a mistake to think that these passages offer nothing more than great descriptions of landscapes or complacent depictions of a meaningless hobby Beauvoir was indulging in as a tourist on holiday. Far from being unrelated to her works' essential literary and philosophical ambitions, these pages achieve one of the primary goals Beauvoir set for herself as an intellectual and as an artist. At twenty, she decided to dedicate her "conscience to the multiple splendors of life"; she had to write "to save it from time and nothingness." While hiking, Beauvoir was no longer "a vacuous conscience, an abstract look, but the black wheat's stormy scent, the heather's intimate scent, the midday's thick warmth or the dusk's chill; [she] felt [she] weighed heavily; and yet [she] vanished into the azure sky, [she] had no boundaries." This is undoubtedly, among others, the fundamental kind of existential experience that Beauvoir intended to understand and communicate through the written recollection of her life story.

Furthermore, to walk along paths, out in the wind and in the rough conditions of wilderness, especially when the writer was alone — free from male protection or supervision — was a way to conquer her individual freedom as a woman and as an intellectual, rejecting what her conservative background and catholic upbringing had laid out for her : to be a confined bourgeois housewife and mother. For her, hiking was exactly like reading "true books", a way to live "out in the open" as did the men around her. However, Beauvoir was threatened many times while hiking by truck drivers, a pushy salesman, a couple of young guys with dubious desires, an old bum who assaulted her with a knife, etc. This conference will be about the difficulties encountered by women who like to walk alone and about the specific writing challenges a female author had to meet, well before the #MeToo movement, when she was concerned with crafting a good image of herself in her life story.

Bio: Yan Hamel is professor at TELUQ University in Montreal. He teaches creative writing, French literature and Quebec's culture. He is the Past President of the North American Sartre Society and a member of the Groupe d'études sartriennes. He has published three books: *La Bataille des mémoires: la Seconde Guerre mondiale et le roman français*, *L'amérique selon Sartre* and *Le Cétacé et le corbeau : de Jean-Paul Sartre à Victor-Lévy Beaulieu*. He is now working on a new book, titled *En randonnée avec Simone de Beauvoir*.