University of Waterloo
Department of English

English 315: Canadian Prose Since 1920
Spring 1992

Instructor: Donna Palmateer Pennee 
Office: HH268  
Office Hours: Wednesdays 5:30-6:45 pm  
Ext.: 2415 (or leave a message with the departmental secretaries; I will be on campus on Wednesdays only)

Course Description: This course surveys representative Canadian prose fiction (with a brief consideration of the essay), published in English since 1920, in such prose "styles" and "forms" as romance, realism, modernism, mythopoesis, allegory, picaresque, tall tale, metafiction, and postmodernism; the course also considers the multiple relations between text and contexts; the differences between past and present reception of canonical texts in Canadian literary history, and current changes to the dominant narrative of "CanLit"; the difficulties, pleasures in, and recent problematizing of the general activity of reading fiction and the particular activity of specifying the "Canadian" dimensions of "CanLit." We will study eight novels, eleven short stories, and five essays. Classes will be conducted by lectures and discussion, with an increased emphasis on discussion as the course proceeds.

Method of Evaluation:
30% Two in-class examinations (short answer questions on material covered in class; these exams are designed to take no more than the first 30 minutes of class time)
Mid-term examination (15%): Week 6, June 10 (on material read for/covered in class from Weeks 1 through 5)
End-of-term examination (15%): Week 13, July 29 (on material read for/covered in class from Weeks 6 through 12)

Objective: to help to ensure comprehensive coverage of the reading materials (in the absence of a final examination); to enable you to make a substantial portion of your grade without extensive out-of-class writing (in a sense, you are being rewarded for keeping up with the reading list and attending classes regularly)

30% Term paper (a 5-page analysis of one of the novels) due in class, Week 11, July 15
Topics will be assigned not later than Week 4. You are encouraged to form your own essay topic, but are required to discuss your essay with the instructor not later than Week 9 (July 1); the purpose of this "clearance" exercise is to ensure that your topic is manageable within the 5-page limit.
Objective: to fulfill the traditional institutional imperative in the study of literature (the production of an analytical essay); to allow you to pursue an indepth analysis of one of the novels, and to demonstrate your reading practices and the assumptions which underwrite those practices.

40% Weekly one-paragraph responses to the assigned readings, due at the beginning of each class (total of 9 as per class schedule; no written response is required in Weeks 6, 11, and 13)

You are required to submit at the beginning of each class a one-paragraph response to the text being discussed in that class (see the study questions for instructions for classes in which we will cover more than one text). The content of your responses will be determined for the most part by the study questions attached to the course syllabus. You may choose to respond directly to individual study questions, or use the study questions as general stimuli that lead you to consider more particular questions than those posed by the instructor. Your paragraphs will be marked for writing skills (correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, diction, syntax as well as clear, unified, and coherent paragraph development) and for degree and complexity of analysis of the text at hand. A paragraph is not much space in which to display your critical acumen: do yourself the favour of formulating a very specific focus for each paragraph.

Note: All of your responses will be read and returned to you promptly; not all of your responses will be commented on in detail; and only 4 of your responses will constitute the numerical grade of 40% (4 X 10%). These four will be chosen at random by the instructor; you will not know which four will count towards the 40% until your paragraphs are returned to you. The penalty for not submitting these assignments is 10% of 40% (4 marks) per paragraph not submitted.

Objective: to encourage you to concentrate on your writing and critical skills; to help to ensure comprehensive coverage of the course materials (in the absence of a final examination); and most importantly, to ensure that everyone comes to class having read and contemplated each text in some detail (because we meet only once a week and are discussing [on average] a book a week, it is imperative that you come to class prepared)

All out-of-class assignments must be typewritten, doublespaced, with 1" margins for commentary. Staple work in top left corner (no binders, folders, or covers, please). Keep copies of all work that you submit. Be prepared to resubmit graded work upon request. Consideration for late and missed assignments will be
granted at the instructor's discretion and in conjunction with the necessary medical and administrative documentation.

Required Reading: All items marked with an asterisk are on reserve in the library; all of the novels are available in the book store; the short story anthology Frictions, from which we will discuss six stories, is available in the bookstore (45 copies) and on reserve in the library; the anthology All My Relations, from which we will discuss three stories, is available in the bookstore (20 copies) and on reserve in the library.

**Essays**


**Stories**

*Morley Callaghan, "Guilty Woman" (reprinted in Now That April's Here and Other Stories. New York: Random, 1936. pp. 77-82).*


*from Frictions, stories by Beth Brant, Claire Harris, Jan Bauer, Clare Braux, Gertrude Story, and Sara McDonald (Frictions is available in the bookstore and on reserve)*

*from All My Relations, stories by Jordan Wheeler, Thomas King, and Jeannette Armstrong (All My Relations is available in the bookstore and on reserve)*

**Novels**

Frederick Philip Grove, *Settlers of the Marsh*

Howard O'Hagan, *Tay John*

John Marlyn, *Under the Ribs of Death*
Sheila Watson, The Double Hook
Margaret Laurence, The Stone Angel
Robert Kroetsch, The Studhorse Man
Timothy Findley, The Wars
Joy Kogawa, Obasan

Recommended Reading:
*Linda Hutcheon, The Canadian Postmodern, especially the first chapter and the Appendix (to give you a survey the many, many contemporary texts that we do not have time to cover in this course)
Arnold E. Davidson, ed. Studies in Canadian Literature: Introductory and Critical Essays (general, up-to-date background information on the history of Canadian Literature and criticism)
(these last three items represent a debate about what constitutes CanLit and how CanLit is constituted in the academy)
---, Surviving the Paraphrase
---, Reading Canadian Reading
Arnold Itwaru, The Invention of Canada
T. D. MacLulich, Between Europe and America
W. H. New, A New Literary History of Canada
---, ed. Native Writers and Canadian Writing (spec. iss. of Canadian Literature)
Shirley Neuman and Smaro Kambourelli, eds. A Mazing Space: Writing Canadian Women Writing
### Class Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>May 6</th>
<th>Introduction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>May 13</td>
<td>Callaghan, Metcalf, Levine; Frye, McLuhan, Mandel, Kroetsch (essay)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>May 20</td>
<td>Grove, <em>Settlers of the Marsh</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 4</td>
<td>May 27</td>
<td>O'Hagan, <em>Tay John</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 5</td>
<td>June 3</td>
<td>Watson, <em>The Double Hook</em>; reread Mandel (essay)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Week 6 | June 10 | **Mid-term examination (15%) in first 30 minutes of class**  
No written response to study questions is required this week  
Laurence, *The Stone Angel* |
| Week 7 | June 17 | Marlyn, *Under the Ribs of Death* |
| Week 8 | June 24 | Kroetsch, *The Studhorse Man* |
| Week 9 | July 1 | Findley, *The Wars* |
| Week 10 | July 8 | Kogawa, *Obasan* |
| Week 11 | July 15 | Selected stories from *Frictions* (Braux, Story, McDonald)  
No written response to study questions is required this week  
5-Page Term Paper (30%) due in class |
| Week 12 | July 22 | Selected stories from *Frictions* continued (Brant, Harris, Bauer) |
| Week 13 | July 29 | **End-of-term examination (15%) in first 30 minutes of class**  
No written response to study questions is required this week  
Selections from *All My Relations* (Wheeler, Thomas King, Armstrong) |
Study Questions

For discussion in class, Week 2
(Your one-paragraph response due in Week 2 should be written on any one of the essays or stories read for this class.)

Frye, McLuhan, Mandel, and Kroetsch (essay):
Examine the ways in which each essayist defines the specificity of Canadian culture (culture may be used in these essays in both its aesthetic and anthropological [social] senses). What are the essayists' assumptions about the relations between the world and art?
Examine the attitudes to history and geography, and the roles these play in specifying/constituting Canadian culture in these essays.
Examine the essayists' uses of traditional rhetorical patterns and devices (e.g., comparison and contrast, extended analogy, juxtaposition, definition, emphasis by arrangement of information, narration, persuasion, repetition of key terms or phrases, appeals to authority).
Examine the essayists' uses of figures of speech (e.g., metaphor, simile, personification, allusion, irony, paradox--any uses of language which indicate a shift in registers of meaning or usage from the literal to something more evocative or connotative).
Examine Kroetsch's use of neologisms (e.g., "centripetal") and cliches.

Callaghan, Metcalf (essay) and Levine:
What is Callaghan's story "about"? What is Levine's story "about"? How did you respond to the endings of each story? How are the effects of these endings created?
How do Metcalf's assumptions differ from those of the other essayists read for this week (his assumptions about the relations between the world and art, about Canadian culture and Canadian literary culture in particular, etc.)?
Given Metcalf's comments on modernism and literary excellence, could you explain why (how) he would regard Levine as a "true" modernist and a brilliant writer, but regard Callaghan as neither modernist nor brilliant (perhaps not even a writer?)?

For discussion in class, Week 3
Grove
The early twentieth-century popular romance novels of the Canadian West (written, for example, by Ralph Connor, Arthur Stringer, and Nellie McClung) tended to represent the unsettled landscape not as a wilderness to be tamed but as a version of the Garden of Eden, a place supplied by God's plan for the sustenance, shelter, and regeneration of settlers. The typical heroes of these romances were mounties, schoolteachers, and ministers; the typical values inscribed in these romances were sobriety, piety, thrift, and hard work, and subscribing to these values solved the problems of settlement in these romances. What are the signs in Grove's novel of a critique (or ironic
treatment) of these romance ideals? What are the signs of Grove's simultaneous adherence to romance stereotypes, especially where "villainy" and corruption are concerned? Is this a romance novel? a realist novel? a naturalist novel? Compare the two "bower" scenes in the text. Compare family structures in the text; how are family structures and processes of settlement (colonizing the land) imbricated in the text? Consider how "proving up" and successfully settling are specifically gendered in this text. To what degree does feminine sexuality disrupt the process of settlement? Consider the ending of the novel: is it, for example, a "happy" ending? Does the rest of the text work against this ending, and against reading it as a happy ending?

For discussion in class, Week 4
O'Hagan
Consider the ways in which this novel is not a "typical" novel in either the realist or modernist traditions; consider the ways in which the novel defies your expectations. Consider the implications for Canadian cultural history of a novel entitled Tay John in which the titular "hero" is so often absent. The novel treats the telling of a story and the exploration and settlement of the land as analogous: what story does this text tell of Canada, then, and how settled is it (country and story)? Examine the ways in which the politics of empire, commerce, race, and religion are inscribed in the text. What happens when women enter the narrative? How do "women" enter the narrative?

For discussion in class, Week 5
Watson
What is this novel "about"? Consider the effects of its style (elliptical phrasings, fragmented sentences, lack of dialogue indicators, etc.). Look for the traces of family, communal, and colonial history in the text. Look up an anthologized edition of T.S. Eliot's The Wasteland (e.g., in The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Vol. II), and read the anthologist's introductory remarks. Read the poem, too, if you have time. Also consult one of the Christian gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John).

For discussion in class, Week 6 (no written response required this week)
Laurence
Read Coventry Patmore's poem, "The Angel in the House" (consult volumes of his poetry or anthologies of Victorian poetry). How might this poem help you to interpret the novel? Consider the absence of the mother and the prominence of the father from the opening page of the novel.
Consider the inscription of colonial values in the text; examine in particular the imperial measures used in the family structure. Identify and consider the literal and metaphorical instances of incontinence in the text.
Consider the function of Mr. Oatley’s house in the text; of Murray F. Lees’s story; of the ‘nursery’ of old women.

**For discussion in class, Week 7**

**Marilyn**
Consult an encyclopedia on "Spencer, Huxley, Darwin" (p.18): how are the philosophies of these three (Victorian) figures inscribed in the text?
Consider the ways in which the text suggests that language creates or constitutes the world and the self in the world.
Consider the inscription of the body, bodily functions, and gender constructions in the representation of ethnicity in the text.
Josef’s idealism is counterposed to Sandor’s materialism: how might these attitudes complicate your response to issues of ethnicity in the text?

**For discussion in class, Week 8**

**Kroetsch**
In what ways is the novel similar to *Tay John*?
Consider the traces of Canadian history in the text.
Identify ways in which this text could be read as a feminist novel.
Look up "Poseidon" (in a Reader's Encyclopedia, for example, or in a dictionary of Greek and Roman mythology); consider the possible functions of the blue stallion's multiple names.
Consider other names in the text as well.
Consider the possible significations of "la mer sera votre meurtriere."
What are the effects on your reception of the novel of Demeter's self-referential remarks? of his insanity? of his insertion of himself into Hazard’s story?

**For discussion in class, Week 9**

**Findley**
How does the novel disrupt your expectations of a "novel"? How does its manipulation of the reader differ from *The Studhorse Man’s*?
In what ways and why does the novel privilege women's voices? How is homosexuality inscribed in this text? Is it part of the rhetoric of war or part of a rhetoric counter to war?
Consider the traces of Canadian history in the text.

**For discussion in class, Week 10**

**Kogawa**
As in *The Wars*, "public" and "private" histories are intertwined in *Obasan*: consider the means Kogawa uses to reconstruct the past.
Consider how the text creates an ambivalent response to silence. What is the function of the "poetic" passages in the novel? Trace the use of "chicken" (and related) imagery in the text. Consider the function of the dreams in the novel. What is the connection between the stone in the novel's epigraph and the peach in the story of Momotara?

For discussion in class, Week 11 (No written response required this week)
(Selections from Frictions: in general, consider the revisionist dimensions of these stories [re-vision is defined by Adrienne Rich as the act of looking back at an old text from a new critical direction])

Braux
Consider the implications of the story's title: consider the specific ways in which this story re-visions the original fairy tale. Why does the story insist on returning to Joseph's past?

Story
What is the relationship between saving, spending, and freedom for the protagonist? What is your response to the ending of the story?

McDonald
How does this story disrupt your notions of what constitutes "Literature"? Does this story disrupt your notions of what constitutes "Literature"?
Do you think this story is in some way a rejoinder to certain forms of radical feminism?

For discussion in class, Week 12 (your written response should be on any one of the stories to be discussed in this class)
(Selections from Frictions continued)

Brant
Consider the narrative's structure and its effects. Consider the very precise similarities between the two women's stories; consider the precise differences which emerge by the story's end.

Harris
Consider the different narrative voices in the text; attend in particular to the voice of the Aunt; what is her function? What does this story have to say about the use of words? about the relations between language and the world? about the power of fictions? about appropriation of voice?

Bauer
Consider the significance and function of the desanctified church in the text and such women's names as "Maria" and "Ursula." Of what does the burning and 'scapegoating' of women in this text remind you?
For discussion in class, Week 13 (no written response is required this week)

(Selections from All My Relations: consider in general the ways in which these texts do and do not meet your expectations; consider the ways in which they require you to look critically at the 'old text' of what constitutes "Literature")

Wheeler
How does this story treat/inscribe Native issues? Would you detect such issues if you were not directed to do so by the context of this question, or by the context of the anthology itself?

(Thomas) King and Armstrong
Compare the figures and functions of Coyote/Kyoti is these tales. Compare the inscription of history in these two texts. Consider the titles of these tales and how they might function.