University of Waterloo
Department of English

English 315: Canadian Prose Since 1920
Spring 1997

Instructor: Professor L. Warley
Office: HH 251 ext. 5379
e-mail: lwarley@watarts.uwaterloo.ca
Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:30 - 4:00 p.m.

Course description
In this course we will consider the development of Canadian prose from the early decades of the twentieth century to the present. We will read selected prose texts (five novels and three collections of short stories) by writers from various backgrounds in order to identify some key issues in Canadian writing of this century. These issues include: the relationship between Canadian literature and other literatures, especially European, American, and aboriginal; the uses of myth and history in literary writing; the building of communities through storytelling; and the tension between national identity and other group identities including region, race, and gender. Early in the course, some attention will be paid to the processes of canonization and the establishment of “Canadian Literature” as an institutionalized field of cultural and scholarly work.

Text list (to be read in this order)
Ross, Sinclair. As For Me and My House (NCL)
Roy, Gabrielle. The Cashier (NCL)
O’Hagan, Howard. Tay John (NCL)
MacLeod, Alistair. The Lost Salt Gift of Blood (NCL)
Munro, Alice. The Progress of Love (Penguin)
King, Thomas. One Good Story, That One (HarperCollins)
Kogawa, Joy. Obasan (Penguin)
Ondaatje, Michael. In the Skin of a Lion (Random)

Required reference work
Gibaldi, Joseph, MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Essays or any writing handbook which includes an explanation of the MLA citation format.

Method of instruction
The course will be taught as a combination of lecture, seminar presentation, and general class discussion. Most weeks there will be a group seminar presentation. Students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the assigned readings and to engage with the questions raised both by the seminar presenters and by me.
Note: This course represents an intellectual enterprise. Its success depends on everyone's active participation in that enterprise. Although I do not give marks for attendance or speaking in class, I do expect you to be present and ready to engage with the course material.

Assignments

I. Group Seminar presentations
This assignment is designed to give you an opportunity to work together with your peers in order to prepare a presentation in which you are responsible for teaching other members of the class something about a literary text. Your main task is to engage the class as a whole in productive discussion about the literary text studied, as well as the larger issues already under consideration in the course. You will work in small groups (numbers depend on class size) in order to design and present a list of five or six questions for discussion. You will distribute these questions to the class (please provide photocopies or prepare an overhead). It is the whole group’s responsibility to both initiate and mediate the class discussion. You may be as creative as you wish in determining how to get things going. For example, you might present a short introductory lecture; you might stage a debate; you might present one or more critics’ arguments and then ask questions that derive from those arguments; you might dramatize an interview with the author and then invite the class to comment on both the interviewer’s questions and the interviewee’s responses. Your presentation should last about an hour, and each member of the group is expected to play a productive role in leading discussion. Each member of the group will receive the same grade.

Evaluation: Presentations will be evaluated in terms of the following criteria: enthusiasm and commitment of the group to the project; background preparation; coherence of the presentation (i.e. you must demonstrate that you have worked together as a group and that you have thought about how you will integrate your material); interest, relevance and challenge of the questions; ability to lead discussion and respond to comments from the class a whole; ability to link a discussion of the primary text with some of the more general issues pursued in the course.

II. Annotated bibliography and essay plan
This assignment is designed to get you started on your research essays which will be based on topics of your own imagining and design. The assignment consists of two parts: an essay plan—in which you describe a topic, state a thesis, and describe an outline—and an annotated bibliography of five critical sources. We will devote one class early in the term to a library seminar which will assist you in conducting research. We will devote another class to an “essay workshop” in which you will have the opportunity to discuss and refine your essay plans and bibliographies.
An annotated bibliography is a list of critical works relevant to your chosen essay topic, which includes a synthesis of the critic's argument. You will be required to find and annotate five critical works (books, essays in edited collections, essays in academic journals or other periodicals, reviews, etc.). These critical works may be focussed on a specific writer or primary text, or they may be on more general issues (e.g. Canadian modernism, Canadian literary regionalism, issues of race or gender in the Canadian literary context, etc.). The bibliographic citations must conform to the format outlined and explained in the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Essays. Annotations, 1-2 paragraphs in length, should follow individual bibliographic citations.

Evaluation: The assignment will be marked according to the following criteria: challenge and specificity of the essay topic and thesis; development of the essay outline; accuracy of the bibliographic citations (MLA format); accuracy, efficiency, and coherence of the annotations; relevance of the critical works to the essay topic.

III. Research essay
In preparing your essay, you are to make use of at least three critical works from your annotated bibliography. The purpose of this assignment is for you to learn how to situate your own interpretation of a text in relation to arguments made by other critics. It is not enough to string together other critics’ words and views; your own ideas and your own voice must remain primary. Use critical sources as starting points, but do not rely on other critics to do the interpretive work for you. The research essay should be 2500 word (10 double-spaced pages) long.

Evaluation: The research essay will be graded according to the following criteria: the interest and persuasiveness of the argument; the integration, relevance and analysis of the evidence presented (both from the primary text/s and from secondary sources); the logic and coherence of the discussion; mechanics (organization, sentence structure, grammar, punctuation, etc.).

Here are some general grading standards set by the Department of English:

“A” essays distinguish themselves by discovering original approaches to the topic and by developing them in engaging and well-written prose; “B” essays satisfy assignment requirements in an effective manner, both in building and developing arguments and in writing performance; “C” essays do adequate jobs, but have demonstrable weaknesses in formulating arguments, developing evidence, or in written expression—or they may be overly dependent on secondary sources; “D” essays are barely adequate, with muddled ideas, or with careless use of evidence (including secondary sources); “F” grades usually involve some obvious lapse—the student didn’t read the texts, did not interpret the assignment in a meaningful way, misused secondary sources, or wrote in a hopelessly illogical, incoherent, and ungrammatical fashion.
Note 1: If you are having difficulty designing a suitable essay topic and extrapolating a thesis from it, please consult with me early in the process of working on your bibliographies and essays.

Note 2: If you are uncertain how to use secondary sources in your research papers please ask for extra instruction. Incorrect or sloppy documentation could result in academic penalty (see also section on "Plagiarism" below).

IV. Final examination
The final exam will cover the work of the course as a whole. It will consist of two essay questions, and you will be asked to discuss the work of at least four different authors. You will not be able to extensively repeat material that you have already discussed in your seminar presentations and essays. There will be choice of questions.

**Assignment grades**
Seminar presentation 20%
Annotated bibliography and essay plan 20%
Research essay 30%
Final examination 30%

**Assignment due dates**
Seminar presentations sign up on sheet
Annotated bibliography and essay plan June 26, 1997
Research essay date July 10, 1997
Final examination Spring exam period

**Late policy**
Your peers are counting on your to show up for your group seminar presentation; do not let them down. If an emergency arises, be sure to contact both me and your co-presenters as soon as possible. Depending on the circumstances, we will either reschedule the presentation or rethink the way in which your grade for the presentation will be determined. In either case, you will be required to provide documentation to explain and justify your absence.

Because you are only required to write one essay, and because you will be working on it throughout the term, I will not be granting any extensions. Late essays will be penalized 3% per day, beginning at 5:00 p.m. on the due date and including weekends. Emergencies (usually medical) will be fairly dealt with, but you will be required to provide documentation to substantiate your incapacity.

**Note:** I will not accept any essays at all after the last day of classes.
Plagiarism
Presenting the words, ideas, or other intellectual property of someone else as your own is plagiarism. All direct quotations from texts (primary or secondary), all paraphrases of another's words, and all presentations of another's ideas must be properly documented. For a detailed description of how to handle borrowed material, refer to The MLA Handbook. Plagiarism is a serious academic offense, and it will be punished most harshly. You are advised to refer to the University of Waterloo's Policy #71 (in the Undergraduate calendar 1:10) for a complete statement of the meaning of plagiarism and other academic offenses and their consequences. Again, be sure to ask me if you are uncertain how to handle borrowed material.

Schedule of classes

May
6  Introduction and seminar assignment
8  The institutionalization and canonization of Canadian literature
13  Canadian modernism: Sinclair Ross, *As For Me and My House*
15  Seminar: *As For Me and My House*
20  *As For Me and My House*
27  Seminar: *The Cashier*
29  Library seminar

June
3  New world myth?: Howard O'Hagan, *Tay John*
5  Seminar: *Tay John*
10  Regionalism: Alistair MacLeod, *The Lost Salt Gift of Blood*
12  Seminar: *The Lost Salt Gift of Blood*
17  Storytelling: Alice Munro, *The Progress of Love*
19  Essay workshop
24  Seminar: *The Progress of Love*
26  *The Progress of Love*
Annotated bibliographies and essay plans due

July
1  University Holiday
3  Storytelling and the Native oral tradition: Thomas King, *One Good Story, That One*
8  Seminar: *One Good Story, That One*
10  *One Good Story, That One*
Research essays due
15  Documentary fiction: Joy Kogawa, *Obasan*
17  Seminar: *Obasan*

22  History, myth, fiction: Michael Ondaatje, *In the Skin of a Lion*
24  Seminar: *In the Skin of a Lion*

29  *In the Skin of a Lion*
31  Review and exam preparation