University of Waterloo
Department of English

English 315: Canadian Prose Since 1920
Winter 1997

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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 1990’s. We will read selected prose texts (five novels, two collections of short stories, and one autobiography) by writers from various regional and cultural backgrounds in order to identify some key issues in Canadian writing of this century. Some attention will also 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)
Campbell, Maria. Halfbreed (Goodread Biographies)
Munro, Alice. The Progress of Love (Penguin)
King, Thomas. One Good Story, That One (HarperCollins)
Kogawa, Joy. Obasan (Penguin)
Bernice Morgan. Random Passage (Breakwater)

Supplementary texts
MacLeod, Alistair. The Lost Salt Gift of Blood (NCL)
Ondaatje, Michael. In the Skin of a Lion (Penguin)

Required reference work
MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Essays

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.
Assignment grades
Seminar presentation 20%
Annotated bibliography 20%
Research essay 30%
Final examination 30%

Assignment due dates
Seminar presentations sign up on sheet
Research essay topic end of class, Feb 13, 1997
Annotated bibliography February 27, 1997
Research essay date March 20, 1997
Final examination winter 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 will be fairly dealt with, but you will be required to provide documentation to substantiate your incapacity.

Seminar presentations
This assignment is designed to give you an opportunity to teach 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 (you can make 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 40 minutes, 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.
Presentations will be evaluated in terms of the following criteria: enthusiasm and commitment of the group; background preparation; interest, relevance and challenge of the questions; ability to lead discussion and respond to comments from the class a whole; ability to link general discussion with the primary text.

**Annotated bibliography**
This assignment is designed to get you started on your research essay. An annotated bibliography is a list and a short (1-2 paragraphs) synopsis of critical works relevant to your chosen essay topic. The idea is not only to find critical works but also to synthesize the arguments presented in them. You will be required to find and annotate five critical works (books, chapters in books, essays in anthologies, 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, 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 should follow individual bibliographic citations. We will devote one class early in the term to a library seminar designed to assist you in conducting research.

The assignment will be marked according to the following criteria: accuracy of the bibliographic citation (MLA format); accuracy, efficiency, and coherence of the annotation; relevance of the critical work to the essay topic.

**Research essay**
You are required to write a 2500 word (10 double-spaced pages) research essay on a topic of your choice. You will design a topic; write it up along with a thesis statement and a brief essay plan; discuss your topic, thesis, and essay plan with your peers in the class devoted to “essay workshop,” and hand the topic and essay plan in to me at the end of that class.

In preparing your essay, you are to make use of at least three critical works. These works may or may not appear on your annotated bibliography (sometimes we decide in the process of research and writing that a particular critical work is not all that helpful to our argument after all).

The research essay will be graded according to the following criteria: the interest and persuasiveness of the argument; the 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.

**Final examination**
The final exam will cover the work of the course as a whole. It will consist of three essay questions. There will be choice of questions.

**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 grave 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.

**Schedule of classes**

| Jan. | 7   | Introduction and seminar assignment |
|      | 9   | The institutionalization and canonization of Canadian literature |
|      | 14  | Canadian modernism: Sinclair Ross, *As For Me and My House* |
|      | 16  | Seminar: *As For Me and My House* |
|      | 21  | *As For Me and My House* |
|      | 28  | Seminar: *The Cashier* |
|      | 30  | New world myth?: Howard O’Hagan, *Tay John* |

| Feb. | 4   | Seminar: *Tay John* |
|      | 6   | Library seminar |
|      | 11  | Contemporary Native life-writing: Maria Campbell, *Halfbreed* |
|      | 13  | Essay workshop |
|      |     | Essay topics and plan due end of class |
| 17-21|     | Reading Week |
25 Seminar: Halfbreed  
27 Halfbreed  
Annotated bibliographies due

Mar.  4 Storytelling: Alice Munro, The Progress of Love  
6 Seminar: The Progress of Love

11 The Progress of Love  
13 Storytelling and the Native oral tradition: Thomas King, One Good Story, That One

18 Seminar: One Good Story, That One  
20 Documentary fiction: Joy Kogawa, Obasan  
Research essays due

25 Seminar: Obasan  
27 Obasan

Apr.  1 Historical fiction: Bernice Morgan, Random Passage  
3 Seminar: Random Passage

8 Review and exam preparation