Department of English, University of Waterloo
English 318: Canadian Literature Since 1967

Winter 1996

Instructor: Linda Warley
Office: HH 251 ext. 5379
Class meetings: Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:30-1:00, MC 4064
Office Hours: Tuesdays 1:30-3:00

Course Description
If the centennial year marked a high point in Canadian nationalism where writers were
called upon to participate in defining and celebrating a Canadian identity, the three
decades since 1967 have been less salutary, and writing of this period often marks a
distrust of any unified formulations of Canadianness. In this course we will investigate
how contemporary Canadian writing in English reflects, constructs, and challenges ideas
of the nation. We will also investigate concepts such as "postmodernism" and
"postcolonialism" as these apply to the Canadian context. We will consider both cultural
and aesthetic factors in our readings of a selected body of contemporary Canadian texts,
including prose, poetry, and drama. Selected critical readings will inform our
discussions.

Method of Instruction
The course will be taught as a combination of lecture and class discussion. Students are
expected to come to class prepared to discuss the assigned readings, both the primary
works and the critical texts which have been placed on reserve in the Dana Porter library.
The questions on the class schedule are intended to help you focus your thoughts about
the issues raised by the texts and will act as a catalyst to discussion.

Text List
Margaret Atwood. Surfacting (McClelland and Stewart, NCL)
Jane Urquhart. Away (McClelland and Stewart)
Michael Ondaatje. The Collected Works of Billy the Kid (Anansi)
George Elliott Clarke. Whylah Falls (Polestar)
Bronwen Wallace. Common Magic (Oberon)
Margaret Laurence. The Diviners (McClelland and Stewart, NCL)
Sky Lee. Disappearing Moon Cafe (Douglas & McIntyre)
Rohinton Mistry. Tales From Firozsha Baag (McClelland and Stewart)
Louise Harfe. Bear Bones & Feathers (Coteau)
Tomson Highway. The Rez Sisters (Fifth House)

Highly Recommended
MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers
Assignments

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<th>Assignment</th>
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<tr>
<td>In-class test</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td>Research essay</td>
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The in-class test will consist of a sight poem (i.e. one that we have not studied in class) which you will be asked to analyze. The essay (topics and instructions are attached) is a research paper of 2000-2500 words (8-10 typed pages). The final examination will cover the whole course and will be in two parts: passage identification & analysis and essay questions.

Grading

"A" papers distinguish themselves by discovering original approaches to the topic and by developing them in engaging and well-written prose; "B" papers satisfy assignment requirements in an effective manner, both in building and developing arguments and in writing performance; "C" papers 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" papers 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.

Late Policy

Since you are only required to write one essay for this course, and since you are given topics and guidelines for completing this assignment on the first day of class, extensions will not be granted. If you have a serious reason for requesting an extension (for example a medical or personal emergency), you must contact me immediately. You will be required to produce documentation to substantiate your incapacity. I will accept late essays; however a late penalty will be levied at the rate of 3 percentage points per day, beginning at 5:00 p.m. on the due date and including Saturdays and Sundays.

Plagiarism

Presenting the words, ideas, or other intellectual property of someone else as your own is plagiarism. 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 I:9) for a complete statement of how this and other academic offenses will be dealt with. In written assignments, 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, which is the standard style guide used in the Department of English. Although other citation styles may also be correct, you are required to learn and to use MLA.
Schedule of Classes


9  Introduction II: The institutionalization of Canadian literature.  
Readings: Northrop Frye, “Conclusion” to the *Literary History of Canada* in *The Bush Garden* (on reserve)  
Questions: What is Frye's sense of the "state of the art" concerning Canadian literature at the beginning of the period we are studying? Frye posits some definitive characteristics of Canadian literature: what are these?

11  Readings: Margaret Atwood, *Surfacing*; Margaret Atwood, chapter one of *Survival* (on reserve)  
Questions: How does Atwood's novel conform to and/or depart from her own thematic criticism? How does the novel evoke a sense of place?

16  Readings: Margaret Atwood, *Surfacing*  
Questions: How does Atwood employ the quest motif? What ideological function(s) does Atwood's evocation of Native culture serve?

18  Readings: Jane Urquhart, *Away*; Frank Davey, essay "Surviving the Paraphrase" in *Surviving the Paraphrase* (on reserve)  
Questions: What is the relationship between the "old world" and the "new world" in this novel? What are the significant relationships of power with which Urquhart seems to be concerned?

23  Readings: Jane Urquhart, *Away*  
Questions: What is the function of storytelling in the novel?

Questions: What is the relationship between technique and subject in this text?

Questions: How might we understand the concept of the hero in this work? How does Ondaatje make use of history?

Feb. 1  Readings: George Elliott Clarke, *Whylah Falls*  
Questions: How would you describe the narrative perspective?
6  **Readings:** George Elliott Clarke, *Whylah Falls*  
**Questions:** How do individual poems relate to and interact with other poems or textual features? What is the effect of the many references to different genres and media in this text (e.g. photography, music, sermons)?

8  **Readings:** Bronwen Wallace, *Common Magic*  
**Questions:** How do you understand the notion of "common magic"?

13  **Readings:** Bronwen Wallace, *Common Magic*  
**Questions:** How does Wallace use poetic devices (diction, imagery, sound, etc.) to shape meaning in her poetry?

15  **In-class test (sight poem)**

19-23  **Reading Week**

27  **Readings:** Margaret Laurence, *The Diviners*  
**Questions:** How is time handled in the novel? What is the relationship between structure and theme?

29  **Readings:** Margaret Laurence, *The Diviners*; Margery Fee, “Romantic Nationalism and the Image of Native People in English-Canadian Literature” in *The Native in Literature* (on reserve)  
**Questions:** How do you understand the relationship between Jules and Morag? What is Piquette's role in the novel?

Mar. 5  **Readings:** Sky Lee, *Disappearing Moon Cafe*; Sky Lee, "Yelling It: Women and Anger Across Cultures" in *Telling It* (on reserve)  
**Questions:** How does gender inform the meaning of this novel?

7  **Readings:** Sky Lee, *Disappearing Moon Cafe*  
**Questions:** How does Lee represent Chinatown? What is the ideological function of Chinatown in the novel?

12  **Readings:** Rohinton Mistry, *Tales From Firozsha Baag*; Interview with Rohinton Mistry in *Other Solitudes* (on reserve)  
**Questions:** Does any single story stand out for you? Why?

14  **Readings:** Rohinton Mistry, *Tales From Firozsha Baag*  
**Questions:** What is the relationship between the individual and the community in these stories? What is the function of tradition?

Questions: Analyze your own reading experience of this text. What attitudes and assumptions about Native writing, Native cultures, and/or Native people did you bring to your reading? Did they change at all during the process of reading?

Questions: How does the Cree language function in this text?

21 Research essay due

26 Readings: Tomson Highway, *The Rez Sisters*; Marilyn Dumont, “Popular Images of Nativeness” in *Looking at the Words of Our People* (on reserve)
Questions: How and why does Highway make use of conventionalized stereotypes of Native women? What is the role of humour in the text?

28 Readings: Tomson Highway, *The Rez Sisters*
Questions: What is the role and function of Nanabush?

Apr. 2 Review
English 318: Canadian Literature Since 1967

Research Essay Topics

Instructor: Linda Warley
Due date: March 21, 1996
Length: 2000-2500 words (8-10 typed pages)
Value: 40%

This assignment will give you the opportunity to write about some of the critical and theoretical issues raised by the course. As such, you must posit and develop a clear argument in relation to the topic and situate your argument and approach in relation to relevant critical work on the author, text, or subject. You must consult and make use of at least three secondary sources in the preparation of your essay. You may refer to the secondary source material listed on the course syllabus, but you must also look further afield, including at least two references on your Works Cited list which are not on reserve at the library. To help you locate critical material, I have compiled a bibliography of book-length studies or collections of essays and interviews which should act as a starting point for your research. But you should also consult articles in periodicals and journals. More assistance with the latter will be made available to you during the course.

In preparing your essay, you may choose to look at one or more literary texts; however, be wary of trying to deal with too many primary works. A good essay is always tightly focused with the argument supported by sufficient and appropriate textual evidence. Avoid writing an essay that is characterized by broad generalizations and cursory readings of the primary material. All quotations and borrowings from secondary sources must be properly documented and conform to the MLA citation format.

Note: For your own protection, keep a copy of your essay.

1. The Trinidadian-born lesbian feminist writer Dionne Brand remarks in an interview that “Twenty years ago there was a national wave of Canadian writing which set itself up against American writing and the deluge of American culture in Canada. We are the new wave of Canadian writing. We will write about the internal contradictions” (Other Solitudes). How do texts written by Canadians who belong to non-dominant groups expose and explore the “internal contradictions” of Canadian literature and/or culture?

2. Although none of the texts on the course is, strictly-speaking, an autobiography, many of the writers studied make use of strategies of autobiography in their work. Explore the relationships between autobiography, history, and fiction (or poetry).

3. Consider the relationship between forgetting and remembering. How does the writer make use of historical or personal memory? Which stories have been told? Which stories have been silenced or forgotten by the text? Do any repressed stories threaten to interrupt and subvert the main narrative?
4. Critics Ashcroft, Giffiths, and Tiffin argue that "The dialectic of place and displacement is always a feature of post-colonial societies whether these have been created by a process of settlement, intervention, or a mixture of the two" (The Empire Writes Back 9). Explore how literary text(s) articulate the dialectic of place and displacement and consider how this phenomenon is related to colonialism.

5. Discuss the relationship between landscape and gender and evaluate the importance of this relationship to the overall meaning of the literary work(s).