I. Course Description
This course represents a study of contemporary Canadian literature read through the analytical lens of postcolonial theory. The question of whether or not Canadian literature can be read as “postcolonial” currently energizes many Canadian literary scholars, and we will enter into this debate through our readings and discussions. Colonialism is rooted in specific economic and political relations; however, it is also experienced symbolically through language and other semiotic systems. While Canada has long been a postcolonial nation politically, the legacy of our collective colonial experience, as well as our ongoing struggle not to be swallowed by a neo-colonial United States, continue to influence the Canadian literary imagination. For aboriginal people, living under the political structure of colonialism is an everyday reality, and their literature exists in an uneasy relation to mainstream “CanLit.” In this course, we will study how contemporary aboriginal and non-aboriginal Canadian writers engage with colonialism and its multiple effects. We will learn some key concepts from postcolonial theory that will inform our readings throughout the course.

II. Resources

A. Primary texts (to be read in this order)
Margaret Atwood. The Journals of Susanna Moodie (Oxford UP)
Margaret Laurence. The Diviners (New Canadian Library)
Tomson Highway. The Rez Sisters (Fifth House)
Lee Maracle. Ravensong (Press Gang)
George Elliott Clarke. Beatrice Chancy (Polestar)
Rohinton Mistry Tales From Firozsha Baag (McClelland and Stewart)
Michael Ondaatje. Running in the Family (New Canadian Library)
Guy Vanderhaeghe. The Englishman’s Boy (McClelland and Stewart)
B. Other resources

1. The following theoretical essays are required reading and are on one-hour reserve at the Dana Porter Library.


[Originally published in the journal World Literature Written in English 30.2 (1990).]


[Originally published in the journal World Literature Written in English 30.2 (1990).]


2. These essays and books are also on reserve as supplementary reading:


3. The following web sites might also prove useful:

David Arnason and Dennis Cooley’s The Canadian Literature Archive at The University of Manitoba
http://canlit.st-john.umanitoba.ca/Canlitx/Canlit_homepage.html

Deepika Bahri’s page on Postcolonial Studies at Emory University
http://www.emory.edu/ENGLISH/Bahri/index.html

George Landow’s page on Contemporary Postcolonial and Postimperial Literature in English at Brown University
http://landow.stg.brown.edu/post/misc/postov.html

The John’s Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism
http://www.press.jhu.edu/books/hopkins_guide_to_literary_theory/

4. *The Little, Brown Compact Handbook* is recommended by the Department of English Language and Literature as a good guide to accurate and effective academic writing. It also includes instruction on MLA style. More complete instruction on how to cite sources can be found in the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. The MLA web site (http://www.mla.org) also includes a note on how to cite electronic documents.

Note: All royalties earned from the sale of *The Little, Brown Compact Handbook* go to the department’s scholarship fund.

III. Assignments

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seminar presentation</td>
<td>Sign up</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essay interview</td>
<td>Before March 2, 2000</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research essay</td>
<td>March 21, 2000</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final examination</td>
<td>TBA</td>
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1. **Group Seminar Presentation**
This assignment will provide you with an opportunity to work with your peers as a team and to develop your oral presentation skills.

**Task:** Drawing on whatever theoretical and critical readings you find most relevant, present a postcolonial analysis of the chosen primary work. Your presentation should last for the duration of the class and must include the active participation of every group member. You are also required to prepare one page of notes to your seminar that you will distribute to all class members.

Here are some strategies that ensure a good presentation:
- Be well prepared. Hastily cobbled-together presentations are often incoherent (i.e. the parts don’t work very well together). In practical terms, this means that your group should meet and work together on several occasions prior to presentation day. Exchange e-mail addresses and phone numbers early in the course.
- Be focussed. Think of your presentation as an orally presented group essay: that is, you should define a main topic and each part of the presentation should somehow develop and relate to that topic.
• Too much lecturing is dull. Every teacher quickly learns that simply talking at people limits, rather than fosters, their active learning. Part of your job is to find ways of facilitating the interest and intellectual involvement of class members.

• Be creative. You may invent any number of ways to present your material. Let me know well ahead of time if you need any A-V equipment, and I will make the necessary arrangements to make it available for your presentation.

• Think about the design of your notes. Give others a way of remembering the substance of your presentation. The notes should be substantial enough that they can serve as study notes, but they do not have to record every detail of your presentation.

• Have fun! Enthusiasm is infectious.

**Evaluation:** Each member of the group will receive the same mark; therefore, it is up to you to ensure that each member of the group contributes equally. I will evaluate your presentations according to the following criteria: the intellectual challenge of the issues raised; enthusiasm and commitment of the group to the project; background preparation; coherence of the presentation; ability to respond to comments from other members of the class; ability to link a discussion of the primary text to the broader theoretical issues pursued in the course.

2. **Research essay**

The purpose of this assignment is for you to engage more fully with the primary texts and theoretical materials studied in the course and to develop your critical reading and writing skills.

Choose one of the following key terms important to postcolonial studies as the starting point for your essay: marginality, othering, race, ambivalence, hybridity, native, settler, resistance, counter-discourse, place

The assignment has two components:

1) Design an original essay topic based on a key term chosen from the list above; extrapolate a thesis from the topic; and design an essay plan in which you show how you will structure the essay through an analysis of evidence drawn from both primary and secondary sources. You may choose to discuss more than one primary text. You must include at least three secondary sources in your paper. Present the topic, thesis, and essay plan to me in a 10-minute oral interview.

2) Write the essay. Remember that this is a research paper. You may draw on the theoretical resources we are studying in the class, as well as other secondary source material that is related to your particular essay topic. Make sure that you discuss the relevance of the arguments made by other critics, but that your own views remain central.

**Logistics:** The essay should be about 2500 words long (10 double-spaced pages, 10-12 point font, 1-1 ½ inch margins). Give your paper a descriptive title that includes the title of the literary work or works analyzed. A separate title page is not necessary; however, a works cited page, properly formatted according to MLA style, is. Please remember to
number the pages and include your name and the course number on the first page. Please keep a copy of your essay for your own protection.

**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 texts and from secondary sources); the logic and coherence of the discussion; mechanics (organization, sentence structure, grammar, punctuation, etc.).

**Note:** Please refer to the attached page for an explanation of the Faculty of Arts policy on plagiarism and other academic offenses. If you are uncertain how to use secondary sources in your essays, and if you are still confused after consulting a handbook, please ask me for clarification and instruction. Incorrect or careless documentation is a form of plagiarism and could result in academic penalty.

**Late policy:** Your peers are counting on you to show up for your group seminar presentation; do not let them down. If an emergency arises, be sure to contact both your co-presenters and me 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 official documentation to explain and justify your absence.

**I will not be granting extensions.** Late essays will be penalized 3% per day, including weekends. Emergencies (usually medical) will be fairly dealt with, but you will be required to provide documentation to substantiate your incapacity. Computer problems, while enormously frustrating, do not count as emergencies.

**NB:** I will not accept any essays at all after the last day of classes.

3. **Final examination**
The final exam will cover the work of the course as a whole and will be scheduled during the exam period. You will not be able to extensively repeat material that you have already discussed in your seminar presentations and essays. There will be some choice of questions.

**IV. Schedule of Classes**

Jan 4  Introduction and seminar assignment
6  **Lecture:** Postcolonial theory and what it can do
**Reading:** Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin “Introduction” to *The Empire Writes Back*

11  **Lecture:** Postcolonial studies and debates within the field
**Reading:** Slemen “Unsettling the Empire: Resistance Theory for the Second World”

13  **Lecture:** Canadian postcolonialism
Reading: Lawson “Postcolonial Theory and the ‘Settler’ Subject”

18 Lecture: Margaret Atwood, *The Journals of Susanna Moodie*
20 Atwood

25 Seminar: Margaret Laurence, *The Diviners*
27 Laurence

Feb 1 Lecture: Native literatures
Reading: King “Godzilla vs. Post-Colonial”
3 Seminar: Tomson Highway, *The Rez Sisters*

8 Highway
10 Seminar: Lee Maracle, *Ravensong*

15 Maracle
17 Lecture: Other Settler Histories
Reading: Hutcheon “Circling the Downspout of Empire”

Winter break February 21-25

Mar 29 Seminar: George Elliott Clarke, *Beatrice Chancy*
Mar 2 Clarke
* Last day for essay interviews

7 Lecture: Postcolonialism and Multiculturalism
9 Seminar: Rohinton Mistry, *Tales From Firoszha Baag*

14 Mistry
16 Seminar: Michael Ondaatje, *Running in the Family*

21 Ondaatje
* Research essay due
23 Lecture: Neo-colonialism

28 Seminar: Guy Vanderhaeghe, *The Englishman’s Boy*
30 Vanderhaeghe

Apr 4 Review and exam preparation
Department of English Contacts and Resources

Contacts:

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Resources:

English Reading Room – HH 232, open 8:30 to 4:30 Monday to Friday
- Reference texts, student work term reports, and other resources available for in-room consultation.

English Society Office – PAS 1087, ext. 2339
- Come out and get involved with your English student society.

English Mail Room – HH 229 open 8:30 to 4:30 Monday to Friday
- Faculty mail boxes and course boxes are located here.

The Faculty of Arts requires that we notify you of the following:

"Note on avoidance of academic offenses: All students registered in the courses of the Faculty of Arts are expected to know what constitutes an academic offense, to avoid committing academic offenses, and to take responsibility for their academic actions. When the commission of an offense is established, disciplinary penalties will be imposed in accord with Policy #71 (Student Academic Discipline). For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students are directed to consult the summary of Policy #71 (Student Academic Discipline) which is supplied in the Undergraduate Calendar (p.1:11). If you need help in learning how to avoid offenses such as plagiarism, cheating, and double submission, or if you need clarification of aspects of the discipline policy, ask your course instructor for guidance. Other resources regarding the discipline policy are your academic advisor and the Undergraduate Associate Dean."

Dean of Arts: 
Robert R. Kerton
ML 236 ext.2217

Associate Dean of Arts, Undergraduate Affairs:
Mary Gerhardstein
ML 254 ext.3554

Layout and Design by Laurene Dong