DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE & LITERATURE

English 318: Contemporary Canadian Literature
Winter 2010

Professor Linda Warley
Classroom: PAS 1241
Class time: M, W 10:00 – 11:20

Office: HH 270 ex. 35379
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Office hours: M, W 12:00 – 1:00 (or by appointment)

Note: this course is managed through UW-ACE: please get into the habit of checking there for announcements and have your UW-ACE mail forwarded to the email account you use most often.

Course description
Contemporary Canadian writers frequently deal with the past: through literary re-imaginings of historical figures or events, through memory work articulated in memoir, biography, or family histories, and through artistic engagement with collective or communal legacies. In this course we will consider the following questions:

- Why are contemporary Canadian authors so interested in representing the past?
- Whose “past” are they writing about?
- What aesthetic and formal strategies do they employ in treating their topics?
- Why does the past matter?
- What is the relationship between past, present and future as articulated through contemporary Canadian literature?

Objectives
- To gain a sense of the relationship between contemporary Canadian writing and Canadian history, including literary history
- To situate works of contemporary Canadian literature in relation to contemporary political and social issues
- To enhance students’ research and critical analytical skills
- To enhance students’ oral and written presentation skills

Book list
John Steffler *The Afterlife of George Cartwright*
Joseph Boyden *Three Day Road*
Armand Garnet Ruffo *Grey Owl: The Mystery of Archie Belaney*
Lawrence Hill *The Book of Negroes*
George Elliott Clarke *Execution Poems*
SKY Lee *Disappearing Moon Café*
Fred Wah *Diamond Grill*
Bernice Eisenstein *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors*
Dionne Brand *Inventory*
I also recommend that you obtain copies of these reference works, especially if you plan to go on to advanced English study.

Any good writing handbook; the bookstore has copies of *The Little Brown Compact Handbook.*
A very good online resource about all aspects of academic writing can be found here: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/

Students will find useful two reference works in Canadian literary studies (shelved in the reference section of the Dana Porter Library):

W.H. New, ed. *Encyclopedia of Literature in Canada*
Eva-Marie Kröller, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Canadian Literature*

**Schedule of Classes**

| Jan.  | 4   | Welcome and orientation to the course |
|      | 6   | Lecture: The state of contemporary Canadian writing |
|      | 11  | Lecture: Postcolonial approaches to Canadian literature |
|      | 13  | Steffler, *The Afterlife of George Cartwright* |
|      | 18  | Steffler |
|      | 20  | Lecture: Native literature in Canada |
|      | Boyden, *Three Day Road* |
|      | 25  | Boyden |
|      | 27  | Seminar: Cree people and their cultures (in Northern Ontario) |
|      |      | Ruffo, *Grey Owl: The Mystery of Archie Belaney* |
|      |      | 27   | Ruffo |
|      |      | Seminar: “Wannabe Indians” |

| Feb.  | 1   | Clarke, *Execution Poems* |
|      | 3   | Clarke |
|      |      | Seminar: African Canadian literary history |
|      | 8   | Lecture: Life Writing in Canada |
|      | Eisenstein *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors* |
|      | 10  | Eisenstein |
|      |      | Seminar: Jewish Canadian literary history |

FEB 15 – 19 READING WEEK
Lecture: One book one community
Hill *The Book of Negroes*

24 Hill

Mar.

1 Hill

3 Film: *In the Shadow of Gold Mountain* (NFB 2004)
ESSAYS DUE

8 Lee *Disappearing Moon Café*

10 Lee
Seminar: Chinese Canadian literary history

15 Film: *Living in the Hyphen* (NFB 2003)

17 Wah *Diamond Grill*

22 Wah

24 Brand *Inventory*
Seminar: A book project of your own

29 Brand

31 Concluding thoughts

**Assignments**

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tr>
<td>Seminar presentation</td>
<td>Sign up by Jan 11</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>Sign up Jan 25-Feb 24</td>
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<td>Term essay</td>
<td>March 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final examination</td>
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1. **Group seminar**
This assignment will give you an opportunity to meet each other and to work together as a team. You will choose one of the topics below and work outside of class on your research and on seminar design. The purpose of the seminar is to present to the class important critical, cultural, and historical materials that will provide a broader context through which the literature we are studying can be understood. Your seminar must be analytical (i.e. not just present facts) and it should connect in meaningful ways with the topics, writers and texts we are studying in the course. The seminar should last 30-40 minutes.

**Handout:** You are also responsible for providing each member of the class with one piece of paper that represents notes to your seminar. These notes can take any form you like, but they should be substantial enough that students could later use them as study notes for the final exam. They must also include all works cited in correct MLA format.
Equipment available: There is no need to make an audiovisual presentation (e.g. PowerPoint) unless you want to. Please know that the classroom is supplied with a PC, data projector, DVD and VCR players, overhead projector, and screen. If you want to bring your own laptop, be sure that you have the correct connector for the data projector and that you have your presentation backed up on a memory stick, as well as emailed to yourself. NB: If you would like to show any part of a film it is imperative that you check with me first to make sure that it clears copyright restrictions.

Evaluation: Each member of the group will receive the same mark; thus, it is up to you to ensure that the work of the group is shared equally. I will evaluate your presentations according to the following criteria: the intellectual rigour of the presentation; the commitment and preparation of the group; the 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 and share the labour—in terms of both preparation and presentation); your ability to generate and respond to comments and questions from other members of the class.

Advice: On UW-ACE you will find a downloadable document that gives you practical advice on how to prepare good seminar presentations.

Seminar Topics

Your task is to connect your research findings with the issues and the materials that we are studying in the course. Depending on the topic, you will study audio/visual materials, as well as books and scholarly journal articles. Please use library resources to the fullest extent possible and enlist the help of the librarians, who will be delighted to help you with your research. Do not rely only on Internet sources. Please keep in mind that we have to ensure that we have copyright permission to show films or some other audio-visual materials to members of the class.

Note: the questions around each topic given below are intended to be generative, not definitive or exhaustive.

Seminar Topic: Cree people and their cultures (in Northern Ontario)
What aspects of Cree history and culture do we need more information about in order to fully appreciate Boyden’s novel? Why is that historical and cultural information important?

Seminar Topic: “Wannabe Indians”
There is quite a long history of non-Native people (especially white people) pretending to be Native or of non-Native people appropriating aspects of Native identity—for instance, religious ceremonies, taking “Indian” names, smudging and building sweat lodges. Research these practices and present the political issues that they raise.
Seminar Topic: African Canadian literary history
Research the history of African Canadian literature. What are the temporal parameters of this literature? Who are some of the major figures? What are some of the major themes, concerns, critical issues that shape this literature?

Seminar Topic: Jewish Canadian literary history
Research the history of Jewish Canadian literature. What are the temporal parameters of this literature? Who are some of the major figures? What are some of the major themes, concerns, critical issues that shape this literature?

Seminar Topic: Chinese Canadian literary history
Research the history of Chinese Canadian literature. What are the temporal parameters of this literature? Who are some of the major figures? What are some of the major themes, concerns, critical issues that shape this literature?

Seminar Topic: A book project of your own
Assume that you are writing a literary work (a collection of poetry, a novel, or a work of life writing) that engages with "the past" in some way. Make a pitch to a publisher (i.e. us!) about why your work should be published. Depending on the number of students in this group, you could imagine more than one project. Make sure that you describe what the text(s) will be about, what form it will take, and why it is important.

2. Term essay
The purpose of this assignment is for you to study in depth a limited number of the primary texts studied in the course by writing about those texts in relation to a topic of your choice. You must choose texts that are on the course syllabus or obtain prior permission from me. The best essays will also be researched, so spend some time reading literary critical sources about your topic, and incorporate well-chosen sources into your essay. You do not have to be exhaustive, but a minimum of THREE relevant scholarly articles or books will enhance and contextualize your analysis. All sources (primary and secondary) must be fully acknowledged, whether you have paraphrased or quoted someone else’s ideas and words, and every source must be properly cited on a “Works Cited” page at the end of the essay. Failure to do so will result in penalty, the severity of which depends on the gravity of the infraction. Avoiding plagiarism is your responsibility.

Note: Make sure that you research articles published in scholarly journals as well as book and Internet sources. The most useful electronic databases that index articles on Canadian literary topics are the Canadian Periodical Index, the MLA International Bibliography, and Web of Science. Access them through the “Research databases” section of the University of Waterloo library web site. You could also try Google Scholar and Google Books, though these often turn up sources that are either tangential or not peer-reviewed.
There are three parts to the term essay assignment:

1) **Topic, thesis and essay plan**: Design an original essay topic, extrapolate a thesis from the topic, and compose an essay plan in which you structure the discussion and briefly indicate the kind of textual evidence (from both primary and secondary sources) that you will use to support your argument.

2) **Interview**: Schedule a ten-minute appointment with me during my office hours (if possible) to take place between Jan 25 – Feb 4. During the interview, you will orally present to me your topic, thesis, and essay plan, and I will evaluate your oral presentation, as well as give you immediate feedback as to how you might refine or improve your essay. It is not necessary to hand anything in for this interview: I will take notes as we talk.

3) **Writing**: Based on your essay plan and our interview, write an analytical essay of 10 pages—double-spaced, in 10-12 point font, and with no more than 1 inch margins. Give your paper a descriptive title that includes the title or titles of the literary work or works analyzed. DO NOT make a separate title page. DO include a works cited page. Your essay must conform in EVERY way to MLA format. **The essay is due March 3rd. Hand in a hard copy of your paper and ALSO upload a digital copy of it to the drop box on UW-ACE.**

**Advice**: On UW-ACE you will find a downloadable document that gives you practical advice on how to write good essays.

3. **Final examination**
The final exam will cover the work of the course as a whole and will take place during the examination period. You will be required to write your answers in essay form.

**Course Policies**

**Classroom work**
Attendance is required, and you are expected to arrive in class well prepared, having read and thought carefully about the material to be discussed that day. Most of the classes will be a combination of lecture, seminar presentation, and open discussion. Much of the success of the course depends on your full participation in it.

**Late essays and missed assignments**
You have to be there for your group seminar presentation. The only exception would be for medical or other emergencies. In that case, contact me and group members immediately to make alternative arrangements. You will have to provide official documentation to substantiate your incapacity and you will be required to do make up work.
All essays must be handed in on the due date. I do not grant extensions except in emergency circumstances (computer problems do not count as emergencies). Again, official documentation will be required. If you decide to hand in your essay after the due date, the late penalty is 3% per day, including weekends.

**UNBREAKABLE RULE: I do not accept any essays at all after the last day of classes.**

**University Policies**

**Academic Integrity:** In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. For more information please see [http://uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/Academic_Integrity/index.html](http://uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/Academic_Integrity/index.html). Please read this very clear and helpful document: “Avoiding Academic Offences: [http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/ugrad/academic_responsibility.html](http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/ugrad/academic_responsibility.html).

**Discipline:** A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offenses, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offense, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offenses (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 – Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71 – Student Discipline, [http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm](http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm).

**Grievance:** A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4, [http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy70.htm](http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy70.htm).

**Appeals:** A student may appeal the finding and/or penalty in a decision made under Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances (other than regarding a petition) or Policy 71 - Student Discipline if a ground for an appeal can be established. Read Policy 72 - Student Appeals, [http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy72.htm](http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy72.htm).

**Note for students with disabilities:** The Office for Persons with Disabilities (OPD), located in Needles Hall Room 1132, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with OPD at the beginning of each academic term. For more information, see [http://www.studentservices.uwaterloo.ca/disabilities](http://www.studentservices.uwaterloo.ca/disabilities).