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?
- What does haunting or ghosting mean in contemporary Canadian literatures?
- What aesthetic and formal strategies do authors employ in treating their topics?
- What are the relationships 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
Joseph Boyden *Three Day Road*
Dionne Brand *Inventory*
David Chariandy *Soucouyant*
Patrick de Witt *The Sisters Brothers*
Marilyn Dumont *that tongued belonging*
Esi Edugyan *Half-Blood Blues*
Bernice Eisenstein *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors*
Lisa Moore *February*
Fred Wah *Diamond Grill*

I also recommend that you obtain copies of these reference works, especially if you plan to go on to advanced English study.
M.H. Abrams *A Glossary of Literary Terms, 9th* ed.  
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/](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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan 3</td>
<td>Welcome and introduction to the course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan 5</td>
<td>Lecture: Critical approaches to Canadian literature</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Jan 10 | Documentary series (APTN): “Did you know?”  
Lecture: Native literature in Canada |
| Jan 12 | Joseph Boyden *Three Day Road* |
| Jan 17 | Boyden contd.  
Seminar: the Oji-Cree |
| Jan 19 | Lecture: The Western  
Patrick de Witt *The Sisters Brothers* |
| Jan 24 | de Witt contd.  
Seminar: Is the western a Canadian genre? |
| Jan 26 | YouTube short film: “Metis Nation”  
Marilyn Dumont *that tongued belonging* |
| Jan 31 | Dumont contd.  
Seminar: First Nations and Metis poetry |
| Feb 2 | Lecture: What is going on in Newfoundland?  
Lisa Moore *February* |
| Feb 7 | Moore contd.  
Seminar: Atlantic Canadian literature |
| Feb 9 | Lecture: Vampires and Ghosts  
David Chariandy *Soucouyant* |
| Feb 14 | Chariandy contd.  
Seminar: Black Canadian Literature |
| Feb 16 | Catch up day |
| Feb 20-24 | Reading week |
| Feb 28 | Esi Edugyan *Half-Blood Blues* |
| Mar 1 | Edugyan contd. |
| Mar 6 | NFB Film: *Between: Living in the Hyphen*  
Fred Wah *Diamond Grill* |
| Mar 8 | ESSAYS DUE  
Wah, contd. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mar 13</td>
<td>Lecture: Graphic novels in Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bernice Eisenstein <em>I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar 15</td>
<td>Eisenstein contd.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seminar: Jewish Canadian Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar 20</td>
<td>Dionne Brand <em>Inventory</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar 22</td>
<td>Brand contd.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seminar: A book project of your own</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar 27</td>
<td>Wrap up; final thoughts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Assignments:**

- Seminar 30%
- Essay interview 10%
- Term essay 30%
- Final exam 30%

1. **Seminar**
   
   You will choose one of the topics below and work outside of class on research and 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:** I will evaluate your presentations according to the following criteria: the intellectual rigour of the presentation; the commitment and preparation of the presenter/s; the structure and coherence of the presentation; your ability to generate and respond to comments and questions from other members of the class.

   **Advice:** On LEARN you will find a downloadable document that gives you practical advice on how to prepare good seminar presentations.
Seminar topics:

Research the people and communities depicted in Boyden’s novel, the Oji-Cree in Northern Ontario. Who are they? Where are they? What important cultural traditions, beliefs and practices inform their identities and experiences?

Is the western a Canadian genre? What are other texts that would count? Who are the authors? Is there a difference between Canadian and American westerns?

Regionalism in Canadian literary studies. Research Atlantic Canadian literary history, noting major figures, trends, themes, etc. Why is regionalism important in Canadian literary studies?

Research First Nations and Metis poetry. How important is poetry in this literary field? What are some important critical approaches? Who are some of the other important poets?

Research Black Canadian literature, noting major authors, trends, themes, etc. Why is it important to read works of literature in relation to particular ethnic contexts such as “Black” or “African Canadian” or “Caribbean Canadian”?

Research Jewish Canadian literature. How is ethnicity marked in Jewish Canadian literature? Who are the major authors? How long has there been a recognizable Jewish Canadian literature?

A book project of your own. You are making a pitch to a publisher to publish your new book. It’s a work of contemporary literature, but it deals with some aspect of the past. Why should a publisher publish your book? Why did you write about this particular topic? Why did you choose this particular genre?
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. Please note that the University of Waterloo has a site license for Turnitin.com, a plagiarism detection web service.

**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 January 31 – February 13. 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 on March 8th. Upload a digital copy to LEARN. Hand in a paper copy either to the English department drop box or to me in class or during my office hours.**
Advice: On LEARN 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

Please read this very clear and helpful document: “Avoiding Academic Offences: 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/)