

Department of English & Writing Studies

**Canadian Literature Survey
English 2501E (001)**

(1.0 credits)

Fall/Winter 2017-18

Preliminary Course Outline (full syllabus will be available closer to September)

There is no exam in December 2017 for this section

Western University is located on the traditional lands of the Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabek, Lenape, Huron-Wendat, and Attawandaron peoples. Acknowledge and respect.

Instructor: Donna Palmateer Pennee, PhD
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consultation with the class
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(e-mail is preferred)

Course Location: KB K103

Course Date/Time: Mondays 1:30-3:30pm
and Wednesdays 1:30-2:30pm

Antirequisite(s): English 2354E, 2356F/G and 3774E, or the former English 2309E, 2351E, 2352F/G, 2353F/G, 2355F/G.

Prerequisite(s): At least 60% in 1.0 of English 1020E or 1022E or 1024E or 1035E or 1036E or 1042E or both of English 1027F/G and 1028F/G, or permission of the Department.

ENGL 2501E provides a solid foundation from which to pursue more specialized studies in Canadian literature and culture, while also cultivating skills, methods, and aptitudes for studying literature in other courses in the English program. Many of these skills, methods, and aptitudes are portable to other disciplines in the humanities and social sciences as well as to inquiry and practice outside of university course work. This course frequently attracts and benefits students from other disciplines, especially Political Science, History, Women's Studies, Visual Arts, and Music. The instructor often hears from former students about how they are using their knowledge and skills from this course in their post-graduate careers.

Course Description

How many works of Canadian literature have you read? How many writers of Canadian literature can you name? Have you thought about why there are things about Canadian literature—and Canada—that you *don't* know? And are you curious to find out and know more? Welcome to English 2501E!

This course examines selected examples of Canada's vibrant literary culture and the contexts in which they were written. Our readings will be selected from a range of periods: from early exploration and settlement to Confederation, from the resurgence of late-nineteenth-century imperialist loyalty to Britain to the questioning *angst* but aesthetic freedom of Modernism, and from postmodern skepticism about official narratives to the increasing diversity of forms, issues, and positions on "be/longing" in Canada that characterize the "CanLit" today.

We will read a wide range of novels, poetry, short stories, essays, contextual documents, and a play in our study of how literary culture reflects and refracts not only the past and the present, but the past *in* the present. In the process we will consider how literature can be a resource for the future as well.

This course, then, will provide many opportunities both to build your knowledge of Canadian literature written (primarily) in English and to begin to learn how to understand and develop your own writing on literary texts as part of a wider scholarly conversation.

To that end, we will also study selected examples of literary criticism to help you to develop a stronger sense of *how to think and write analytically, how to understand the assumptions and methods of the disciplines of literary and cultural studies*, in this case within the context of studying a national literature.

Three questions in particular will help to anchor our engagement, discovery, and analysis throughout the year:

- 1) When we put “Canadian” in front of the word “Literature” how might our perspective and understanding of both terms be changed?
- 2) What—and *how*—might literary texts tell us about Canada, about the making of a nation and about citizenship?
- 3) Why do the answers to these questions, and the process of arriving at and writing about them, matter?

Although no survey course can claim to provide a “complete” picture of the topic at hand, a “survey” course of a national literature nevertheless requires us to read for breadth. At the same time, this survey course is, like the other 2000-level surveys in the English honors curriculum, foundational within your degree program. This course, then, requires the teaching and learning of methods for reading, writing, and research that are applicable across other courses in our degree programs of study, such as

- reading closely for detail and patterns,
- making and thinking through lateral connections between texts while also recognizing distinctions between texts, and
- writing concisely and analytically, using detailed evidence, abstract concepts, secondary research, draft work, and MLA format.

Class activities will vary between active listening, note-taking, informed discussion, and thoughtful application of what we are studying, sometimes in the form of work in small groups in class, and always in out-of-class written assignments.

Learning from such activities is maximized when everyone comes to class prepared. From time to time, study questions (usually for the longer texts) will be provided via OWL, though if you prefer to read without interference from someone else’s cues, you are always free not to consult the study questions in advance of reading! (The daily schedule may, from time to time, indicate that the study questions will form the basis of an in-class activity, in which case you will need to consult them in advance of class).

Course Materials

Required Reading (note: the order of these books in our weekly schedule of readings may not follow the chronological order in which they are listed below: the course schedule will be available closer to September 2017 ☺)

L.M. Montgomery, *Rilla of Ingleside* (1921)

Frederick Philip Grove, *Settlers of the Marsh* (1925)

John Marlyn, *Under the Ribs of Death* (1957)

Sheila Watson, *The Double Hook* (1959)

Margaret Atwood, *Surfacing* (1972)

Timothy Findley, *The Wars* (1977)

Joy Kogawa, *Obasan* (1981)

Michael Crummey, *River Thieves* (2001)

Jeff Lemire, *Collected Essex County* (2009) (graphic novels)

One play [still to be determined ☺]

Other required readings (by various writers and public figures, of historical and contemporary poetry, short fiction and non-fiction prose, literary criticism, as well as excerpts from various government documents) will be identified in the full course outline and schedule, and available via the OWL course site. (Part of the fees you pay to attend Western University enables Western Libraries to provide educational access to copyright required course materials at no additional cost.)

Examples of other writers to be studied include: Jacques Cartier, George Cartwright, John Franklin, Oliver Goldsmith, Susanna Moodie, Catharine Parr Traill, the Confederation Poets, A.J.M. Smith, Dorothy Livesay, P.K. Page, Margaret Laurence, Robert Kroetsch, Alice Munro, Thomas King, Jeannette Armstrong, Austin Clarke, Marlene NourbeSe Philip, Dionne Brand, George Elliott Clarke, Shani Mootoo, and Madeleine Thien.

Methods of Evaluation

Fall term:

5% Short Book Review

10% Short analytical essay (does not require research)

15% Quiz (on fall term materials, to test knowledge of the readings and to reinforce that knowledge for mnemonic purposes before we launch into the winter term's reading list)

Winter term:

35% Research Paper of 2,000 to 2,500 words, with multiple components in the research and writing process such as: identification and refinement of a research question; a preliminary bibliography; critical annotations of a few selected items from your preliminary bibliography; draft work; and the final paper

35% Final Examination (comprehensive) to be scheduled by the Registrar's office

I look forward to studying with you in 2017-18! If you have questions prior to September, please do not hesitate to e-mail dpennee@uwo.ca