

Department of English & Writing Studies

REVISED

**Black Writing in Canada
(Topics in Canadian Literature)**

English 3579F (001)

Fall/Winter 2021-22

Instructor: Professor D. Palmateer Pennee
dpennee@uwo.ca

Course Day/Time: T 11:30-1:30; Th 11:30-12:30

Course Location: TC-342

Delivery Type: Lecture (if online, synchronous)

Antirequisites: at Main campus, [English 3775E](#)

Prerequisites: At least 60% in 1.0 of English 1020-1999 or permission of the Department

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Course Description

In this iteration of Topics in Canadian Literature, we will study selected examples of Black writing in Canada, including poetry, short stories, novels, a play, a documentary film, and non-fiction prose by both award-winning and lesser-known writers. Our study will be framed primarily by the terms of creative writer and professor David Chariandy, who writes of two prominent and intermingling 'schools' of analysis that have shaped academic discussions of the category and field ["Black Canadian Literature"]—an emphasis on diasporic routes, and an emphasis on historic Canadian roots—before advancing the idea that Black Canadian literature has also been shaped powerfully by the long-standing idea that Canada is a land of genuine liberation and equality for peoples of African descent. Black Canadian literature's heightened critical confrontation of both the dream and delusion of what we might now cautiously term 'post-race' makes this emergent field of newfound global importance regarding the ongoing yet contradictory cultural politics of race today. ("Black Canadian Literature: Fieldwork and 'Post-Race,'" *The Oxford Handbook of Canadian Literature*, ed. Cynthia Sugars, Dec 2015, DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199941865.013.30)

In-class teaching and learning will proceed through combined short lectures and engaged discussion; out-of-class teaching and learning will proceed through the instructor's provision of study questions, recommended readings, and students' reading and research for preparedness for class and completion of other course work.

Objectives:

By the end of the course, successful students will be able to:

- Appreciate a variety of forms of contemporary writing by people of Black African descent in Canada

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- Appreciate a variety of experiences of Blackness in Canada as represented by Black writers (creative and scholarly) themselves
- Analyze relationships between form and content
- Understand how representation produces meaning and other effects
- Think critically about forms of being and knowing in Canada
- Think critically about the mythology of Canada's "moral superiority" over the United States on matters of race and racism
- Reflect on the relationships between the reading of creative works, research, and knowledge production more broadly
- Write with improved brevity of style and clarity, detail, and depth of analysis
- Undertake research with improved search skills

Course Materials

Required Texts: (may be subject to change by September 2021)

Dionne Brand, *No Language is Neutral* (1990) (poetry)

David Chariandy, *Soucouyant* (2007) (novel)

Cheryl Foggo *John Ware Reclaimed* (National Film Board 2019) (documentary; freestreamed)

Whitney French, editor, *Black Writers Matter* (2019) (creative non-fiction)

Lorena Gale, *Angélique* (1998) (play)

Hassan Ghedi Santur, *The Youth of God* (2019) (novel)

Zalika Reid-Benta, *Frying Plantain* (2019) (linked short stories)

Poetry, selected scholarship, and non-fiction prose by George Elliott Clarke, Wayde Compton, M. NourbeSe Philip, Rinaldo Walcott, et al., available via Western Libraries Course Readings and/or Western Libraries catalogue

Methods of Evaluation

The grade for the course will be arrived at as follows:

15% Essay One (close reading, no research required, 750-1000 words), due Week 5

35% Essay Two (research essay 2,500 words), due Week 9

20% Informed participation (to be measured through evidence of preparedness for class in contributions to class discussions and written responses to study questions in OWL forums)

30% Sample comprehensive exam question with an afterword that accounts for why it is an effective exam question *and* a model answer (this assignment is in place of a final examination), due Week 12

Students are fully responsible for looking at and being familiar with the information posted on the department website at <http://www.uwo.ca/english/undergraduate/Student%20Information.html>.

Attendance

Department policy: Attendance is mandatory in all classes and tutorials. In cases of excessive absenteeism (i.e., more than 9 unexcused hours for a half course, 18 for a full course), which are not accounted for by either academic consideration or accommodation, students may be debarred from

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taking the final examination, and will receive an official warning to this effect by or before the course drop date (see Senate policy). In classes with or without final exams, students who do not attend class will receive 0% for course participation grades. Unless other policies dictate a different set of penalties in specific English and Writing Studies programs, this will apply to all department programs.

COVID Course Policies:

Students will be expected to wear triple layer non-medical masks at all times in the classroom as per Western policy and public health directives. Students who are unable to wear a mask for medical or religious reasons must seek formal accommodation through Accessible Education at aew@uwo.ca.

Students are expected not to eat or drink while in class to ensure masks stay in place. Students will be able to eat and drink outside of the classroom during scheduled breaks.

Students unwilling to wear a mask as stipulated by Western policy and public health directives will be referred to the Dean's office; failure to wear a mask (except with formal accommodation) will be considered a violation of the student Code of Conduct.

Intellectual Property/Copyright

All instructor-written materials (e.g. PowerPoints, lecture notes, oral lectures) for this course are created solely for students' personal use within the course, and remain the instructor's intellectual property. Further reproduction, fixation, distribution, transmission, dissemination, communication, or any other uses, without securing the consent of the copyright owner (the course instructor) may be an infringement of copyright. You may not distribute, email, or otherwise communicate these materials to any other person. These limitations extend to recording, photographing, or sharing lectures (online or in-person) and lecture material without permission. Posting the instructor's content from this course to online course sharing sites like OneClass or Course Hero without permission is both an infringement of intellectual property law and a violation of academic integrity guidelines. The instructor will pass these cases on to the Western University Ombudsperson or their Department Chair as appropriate.

Additional Information

Late penalties will be assessed at the rate of 10% of the value of the assignment per day late, including weekend days (e.g., an assignment valued at 25% would be penalized 2.5 marks out of 25 marks per day late; an assignment valued at 10% would be penalized 1 mark out of 10 marks per day late; etc.).

You are free to use laptops, tablets, or other devices for taking notes during class and for accessing reading materials during class.

You are encouraged to study with classmates; at the very least, develop an academic friendship with one or two people with whom you can be mutually supportive through provision of notes for missed classes and for out-of-class conversations about the course.

The OWL course site will be the instructor's primary means of just-in-time (and outside-of-class-time) communication with everyone enrolled in the course. When you receive e-mails from the OWL site, please read them in a timely way.

The OWL course site must also be used for submission of all out-of-class work. Students are responsible for learning how to use the OWL site's features through the support provided by OWL and ITS (i.e., the instructor won't solve your OWL issues for you).

Accommodation Policies

Students with disabilities work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#).

Academic Consideration for Student Absence:

Students will have up to two (2) opportunities during the regular academic year to use an on-line portal to self-report an absence during the term, provided the following conditions are met: the absence is no more than 48 hours in duration, and the assessment for which consideration is being sought is worth 30% or less of the student's final grade. Students are expected to contact their instructors within 24 hours of the end of the period of the self-reported absence, unless noted on the syllabus. Students are not able to use the self-reporting option in the following circumstances:

- for exams scheduled by the Office of the Registrar (e.g., December and April exams)
- absence of a duration greater than 48 hours,

- assessments worth more than 30% of the student's final grade,
- if a student has already used the self-reporting portal twice during the academic year

If the conditions for a Self-Reported Absence are *not* met, students will need to provide a Student Medical Certificate if the absence is medical, or provide appropriate documentation if there are compassionate grounds for the absence in question. Students are encouraged to contact their Faculty academic counselling office to obtain more information about the relevant documentation.

Students should also note that individual instructors are not permitted to receive documentation directly from a student, whether in support of an application for consideration on medical grounds, or for other reasons. **All documentation required for absences that are not covered by the Self-Reported Absence Policy must be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student's Home Faculty.**

For Western University policy on Consideration for Student Absence, see:

[Policy on Academic Consideration for Student Absences - Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs](#)

For the **Student Medical Certificate (SMC)**, see:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf

Religious Accommodation:

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the [Western Multicultural Calendar](#).

Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Plagiarism:

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence.

Plagiarism Checking:

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>.

All instances of plagiarism will be reported to the Chair of Undergraduate Studies. Proven cases of plagiarism will result in a grade of zero for the assignment. Subsequent offences will result in failure for the course.

Support Services

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>
Academic Support & Engagement <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western:
<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Timetable

Essay One due Week 5

Essay Two due Week 9

Sample comprehensive Exam Question, Preface, and Model Answer due Week 12

Responses to Study Questions (“Informed Participation” component of Method of Evaluation) due periodically to OWL Forums