

Indigenous Futurisms
English 4580G, Winter 2026
Department of English and Writing Studies
Western University

Contact Information:

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Prerequisite(s): 1.0 from English 3000-3999 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:

What role does Indigenous storytelling play in envisioning—and building—futures beyond colonization? Guided by this question, our course will engage with a range of literary and filmic depictions of futurity by Indigenous artists across Turtle Island (North America) and beyond. While the field of Indigenous speculative storytelling and science fiction has grown exponentially in recent decades, such artistic visions of the future are not an entirely new phenomenon; rather, they have deep roots in Indigenous ways of knowing. As Anishinaabe scholar Grace Dillon avers, “incorporating time travel, alternate realities, parallel universes and multiverses, and alternative histories is a hallmark of Native storytelling tradition[s], while viewing time as pasts, presents, and futures that flow together like currents in a navigable stream is central to Native epistemologies” (“Native Slipstream”). In this way, Indigenous futurisms build upon the longstanding knowledges, stories, and creative brilliance of Indigenous nations to inspire resurgence. While learning from and with Indigenous futurist art, our course will attend to the nation-specific epistemologies and storytelling traditions represented in each work. At the same time, we will also consider points of connection amongst diverse Indigenous artists who are drawing upon their nations’ philosophies to envision sovereign Indigenous futures.

Land Acknowledgement

Western University and London, Ontario are located on the territory of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, and Lūnaapéewak, and the traditional homelands of the Chonnonton (Neutral) peoples. Prior to the arrival of Europeans, these lands were part of the Dish with One Spoon Covenant. That Covenant continues today, guiding good relations between peoples and all living beings. This land is also connected to the London Township and Sombra Treaties of 1796.

Western’s Office of Indigenous Initiatives offers more detailed information about acknowledging the land [here](#).

Course Objectives:

4000-level seminars are the highest level of undergraduate study for honours students specializing in English for their Bachelor of Arts degree. For this reason, this course requires a significant commitment of time and intellectual effort. Students are expected to engage deeply with scholarship and theory regarding Indigenous futurisms as well as literary and cultural works in the field.

The course learning objectives include the following:

- To introduce students to and/or enrich their knowledge of Indigenous literary and cultural production on Turtle Island and beyond. In particular, this course provides students with a detailed understanding of the field of Indigenous futurisms and its key concepts and debates.
- To consider how the study of Indigenous literary and cultural production is enhanced by an attention to Indigenous ways of knowing and, in particular, nation-specific practices of storytelling and their vital importance to Indigenous communities.
- To critically re-consider conventional literary categories and genres in light of Indigenous scholars', artists', and knowledge keepers' insights regarding Indigenous epistemologies and practices of storytelling.
- To foster self-reflexivity about positionality, privilege, and relationships to the course subject matter as part of ethical engagements with Indigenous knowledges and arts.
- To hone critical thinking and oral communication skills through substantial in-class discussion and dialogue.
- To develop advanced undergraduate skills in reading and synthesizing theory and secondary scholarship and considering its connections to literary and filmic works.
- To hone students' scholarly written skills through scaffolded writing and critical thinking assignments that encourage planning, preparation, and revision throughout the writing process.
- To foster the development of students' distinctive intellectual voices through the practice of engaged listening, thoughtful class participation, and leadership of seminar presentations.

Course Texts

Cherie Dimaline, *The Marrow Thieves* (\$19.95 at University Bookstore. Used copies of this novel are acceptable)

Waubgeshing Rice, *Moon of the Crusted Snow* (\$22.95 at University Bookstore. Used copies of this novel are acceptable)

All other readings are available via Western Libraries and/or the course OWL site.

Statement on ChatGPT and all Artificial Intelligence Technologies:

While ChatGPT may have salient learning purposes in some courses and in many real-world applications, in this course, ChatGPT and any and all other AI technologies are not compatible with the learning objectives, which include personal reflection,

intellectual independence, and critical thinking and writing skills conducted via each students' own individual skill sets and independent thinking processes.

For these reasons, in this course, the use of AI (ChatGPT, etc...) is prohibited. The use of AI for writing phrases, whole sentences, or entire assignments, or for summarizing readings and secondary scholarship is prohibited. If AI use in these and other ways are suspected, the Professor will ask for research notes, rough drafts, essay outlines, and other materials used in preparing assignments. Students' inability to provide these materials promptly may weigh heavily against them. Students are expected to retain these materials until after final grades for the course have been officially submitted.

For all assignments completed outside of class time, the Professor may require students to either answer follow-up questions via email or to attend an in-person interview to discuss your work before the mark is finalized.

Brightspace OWL

- Students are responsible for checking the course OWL site as well as their UWO email addresses on a regular basis for news and updates. These are the primary methods by which information will be disseminated to all students in the class.
- If students need assistance with the course OWL site, they can seek support on the OWL Help page. Alternatively, they can contact the Western Technology Services Helpdesk. They can be contacted by phone at 519-661-3800 or ext. 83800.

Methods of Evaluation

Assignment	% of Grade	Length	Due Date
Participation	5%	N/A	Ongoing
Seminar Presentation	20%	20 minutes	TBD
In-Class Test	15%	70 minutes	February 25 th
Response Paper	15%	4 pages double-spaced, plus Works Cited	Students' choice until March 4 th . No response papers will be accepted after that date.
In-Class Writing Assignment: introductory paragraph with thesis statement, and 2 body	15%	2 hours / minimum 1000 words	March 18 th

paragraphs towards final essay.			
Final Essay	30%	9 pages, double-spaced, plus Works Cited	April 8 th

Final Grades: The Department of English & Writing Studies does not release final grades. All undergraduate grade reports will be available online from the Office of the Registrar.

Students are fully responsible for being familiar with the information posted on the English Department website at
<http://www.uwo.ca/english/undergraduate/info%20for%20students.html#grade>.

Assignment Descriptions

- For each assignment marked with an asterisk (*) below, a longer assignment description will be provided to students via the course OWL site.

a.) Class Participation

- The participation grade will take into account attendance and attentiveness in class meetings, evidence of preparedness for class (i.e. demonstrated detailed engagement with the readings, questions about readings brought to class), as well as the quality of verbal contributions to class discussion.
- Students should have carefully read and thoughtfully engaged with the assigned readings prior to class.
- At the 4000 level, students are encouraged to assume the stance of professional learners—ones who have the scholarly maturity to be open to broadening their intellectual horizons and to engaging with a diverse range of scholarship.
- Effective participation in a seminar involves being open to asking questions about things one doesn't understand, thoughtfully engaging with the course readings, remaining attentive to the comments of other class participants, and debating ideas with respect and sensitivity to both the subject matter and all members of the class.
- The quality of a student's contributions is more important than sheer quantity, though speaking regularly in class is a goal for this course. At the same time, effective participation in a seminar course also sometimes means learning when one has contributed enough to a particular discussion and providing opportunities for others to share their thoughts.

b.) In-Class Test

- During the last 70 minutes of class on February 25th, students will write a test.
- The test will involve short answer written responses (1-2 paragraphs) for two types of questions: (1) close reading and analyses of excerpts from course readings; and (2) definitions and discussions of key concepts drawn from course readings.

- Please note that this assessment is central to the learning objectives for this course. Accordingly, **students seeking academic consideration for this assessment will be required to provide formal supporting documentation**. Students who are granted academic consideration for this assessment will be provided with the following opportunity to make up this work: a make-up test scheduled at a time outside of class hours.

c.) Seminar Presentations (20 minute oral presentation)

- Seminar presentations should succinctly and briefly outline the arguments / central concepts and points developed in the critical essays and analyze key themes and concepts discussed in the readings assigned for the day. A strong presentation, however, should go much further than rehearsing the articles' arguments or the plot of a cultural or literary text. Seminar presentations should engage analytically with the readings, drawing out connections and differences between them. Linking the readings to previous readings and/or class discussions—as well as the key questions shaping our course—is also important.

- Seminar presentations should also engage with the literary or cultural works for the week in ways that consider the relation between form (i.e. the representational techniques and aesthetics of the works) and content (i.e. the key messages the works are conveying). In other words, in literary studies, one of our key goals is to consider not only *what* a work of literature says but also *how* it conveys that message through aesthetic techniques.

- Lastly, presentations should conclude with at least two thoughtful and engaging questions for class discussion.

- Please also note that your presentations will be timed and should not exceed 20 minutes.

- Students will be asked to submit a hard copy version of their seminar presentation notes (whether they be just point-form notes or a scripted paper (if you like to talk without a set script, that is certainly fine and can make for a very engaging seminar) to the Professor on the same day that their presentation is given orally.

- Please note that plagiarism rules apply to oral presentations. Oral presentations should clearly signal when a speaker is quoting someone else's words. The majority of a presentation should be offered in the speaker's own words.

- Please also refer to the "Tips for Effective Seminar Presentations" document on the course Brightspace site.

e.) Response Paper (4 pages, double-spaced)

- Students are required to write one response paper for the assigned readings for one week of the course. Students may choose which week they would like to submit their response paper, up to and including March 4th. Please note that students are not eligible to submit a written response paper on the same week in which they present a seminar.

- Response papers should be submitted via email directly to the Professor (as Microsoft Word attachments) no later than **24 hours** prior to the class in which the texts will be discussed. In other words, they are due on Tuesdays by 3:30 p.m. **Response papers for the assigned readings for the week will not be accepted after this deadline.**

- The response papers should discuss **at least two** assigned readings for the week (1 literary/cultural text and 1 scholarly/theoretical reading). Papers should include the following components:

- An introductory paragraph that introduces the readings you will be discussing (author and nation(s), titles, genre(s), date created) and that identifies the key concept(s) / questions /theme you will be focusing on in your response paper.
- Subsequent body paragraphs that engage with the readings in detail and put them into conversation with each other. Remember to have a clear focus for your discussion (i.e. you are not expected to summarize everything about both texts but, rather, to focus on a key topic/theme/concept and consider it in detail). Body paragraphs should also quote judiciously from the texts and provide other examples/textual details to support your analysis. Please remember to attend to the relationship between form and content in your discussion of the literary/cultural text.
- A concluding paragraph that brings your discussion to a close without being overly repetitive of previously-discussed content. Perhaps end with questions for further consideration.
- A Works Cited in MLA should be included at the end of the paper.

f.) In-Class Writing Assignment*

- This assignment is designed to encourage students to approach their writing as a process rather than something they do the night before an essay is due. The assignment also provides students with an opportunity to receive feedback on an early draft of their final essay with a view towards generating a strong final paper.

- During the in-class writing of this assignment, students may bring and refer to hard copies of the readings they will be using for their final essay. Students are also able to bring 1 single-sided page of point-form notes / an essay outline with them while they write this assignment. The page of point-form notes will be handed in along with the writing at the end of the session.

- During this in-class writing session, students should complete the writing of an introductory paragraph that includes a thesis statement, as well as at least 2 body paragraphs for their final essay. These written paragraphs should include quotations from the literary/cultural text discussed in the essay as well as course readings along with the appropriate parenthetical references.

g.) Final Essay (9 Pages Double-Spaced, plus Works Cited):

- This assignment involves conceptualizing and writing an analytic scholarly essay that demonstrates strong critical thinking skills, the development of an original argument, and the careful mobilization of textual details or “evidence” to support the contentions made in the thesis statement. Essays should include a clear and focused thesis statement followed by the sustained development of the argument throughout the paper.

- The essay must also incorporate meaningful references to at least **three** of the critical readings/essays we have studied throughout the course.

- Essays should address more than the plot of the literary work when developing an analysis. Please consider the form of the story or text as well.
- Students are not required to consult secondary sources for this paper but they are welcome to do so should they wish. If secondary sources are consulted, however, all ideas and phrasing from those sources must be acknowledged and cited properly.
- A proper Works Cited in MLA should be included at the end of the paper.

Deadlines

- Learning to organize your work and life schedule to meet deadlines is an essential skill for both university and future employment. Always budget more time for assignments than you think you will need. Start assignments ahead of time and break them down into smaller chunks to enable academic success.
- Assignments submitted after the due date will be assessed a late penalty (2% per day, including weekends). **University policy stipulates that all course assignments must be submitted by the final day of classes.**

Important Information Regarding All Assignments

- Assignments must be submitted as Microsoft Word documents.
- All written assignments should be formatted with 1" margins, double-spaced, and in Times New Roman 12-point font. Please do not use extra spaces between each paragraph.
- All bibliographic notations should follow the MLA method of citation.
- Please retain at least one electronic copy of every assignment you submit. As well, please retain all marked assignments until you receive your final grade for the course.
- Students are required to retain all research notes, rough drafts, essay outlines, and other materials used in preparing assignments. The Professor reserves the right to request and review these materials from students prior to finalizing a mark on a particular assignment.
- For all assignments, the Professor may require students to either answer follow-up questions about the assignment via email or to attend an in-person interview to discuss their work before the mark is finalized.

Additional Western University Policies

Academic Consideration - Students must familiarize themselves with the University Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs posted on the Academic

Calendar: <https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academicpolicies/appeals/academicconsiderationSep24.pdf>

- For procedures on how to submit Academic Consideration requests, please see the information posted on the Office of the Registrar's webpage: <https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/academicconsiderations/>
- All requests for Academic Consideration must be made within 48 hours after the assessment date or submission deadline.

- Students may request academic consideration in cases of extenuating circumstances – that is, personal circumstances beyond the student's control that have a substantial but temporary impact on the student's ability to meet essential academic requirements.

- 1.) Requests for academic consideration are made to the Academic Advising office of the student's Faculty of Registration.
- 2.) Requests for academic consideration include the following components:
 - a. Self-attestation signed by the student;
 - b. Indication of the course(s) and assessment(s) relevant to the request;
 - c. Supporting documentation as relevant.

- Requests without supporting documentation are limited to one per term per course.

- Instructors may designate one assignment or assessment as exempt from this allowance. **In this course, requests for academic consideration for the following assignments must be accompanied by supporting documentation: In-Class Test.**

- Assignments with flexible deadlines and any term work that does not count towards the course grade are not eligible for additional consideration. **In this course, because the response paper assignment has a flexible deadline (i.e. students are able to choose which week to submit their response paper), this assignment is not eligible for additional academic consideration.**

- Documentation for medical illness, when required, includes the completion of a [Western Student Medical Certificate \(SMC\)](#) or, where that is not possible, equivalent documentation, by a health care practitioner.

- Requests linked to examinations scheduled by the Office of the Registrar during official examination periods as well as practice laboratory and performance tests typically scheduled in the last week of term always require formal supporting documentation.

Evaluation Scheme for Missed Assessments

- If a student misses the date of their seminar presentation, they will be required to submit documentation to academic counselling. The student will then present their seminar in class the following week.
- If a student misses the In-Class Test, they will be required to submit documentation to academic counselling. The student will then write a make-up test outside of class time.
- If a student misses the In-Class Writing Assignment, they will be required to submit documentation to academic counselling. The student will then write a make-up test outside of class time.

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.

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_and_erg_rad.pdf

Plagiarism

- It is crucial that students create all assignments (both written and oral) using their own ideas and their own words. If you use a concept, idea, or phrasing from another source, it is imperative to signal the direct borrowing of words with quotation marks and to register the borrowing of ideas and concepts via the use of explanatory footnotes and parenthetical citations. When in doubt, please cite your source rather than leaving it out! 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.

Academic Accommodation and Accessible Education

- Academic Accommodation is “a means of adjusting the academic activities associated with a course or program of student in order to permit students with disabilities to participate in those activities at the University and to fulfill the essential requirements of a course or program.”

<https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academicpolicies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodationdisabilities.pdf>. Students with disabilities are encouraged to register with Accessible Education at the earliest opportunity. “Accessible Education plays a central role in Western's efforts to ensure that its academic programs are accessible for all students” <http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessibleeducation/index.html>

Support Services

Academic Advising

Your Home Faculty's Academic Advising Office will support or refer whenever you have an issue that is affecting your studies, including information on adding/dropping courses, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters. Do not hesitate to reach out to them if you are struggling and unsure where to go for help. Contact info for all Faculties is here:

<https://registrar.uwo.ca/facultyacademiccounselling.html>

Mental Health Support

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western (<https://uwo.ca/health/>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Gender-based and sexual violence

Western University [is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence](#) (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website: <https://www.uwo.ca/health/studentsupport/survivorsupport/get-help.html>. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Policy on Accommodation for Religious Holidays

- Students should review the [policy for Accommodation for Religious Holidays](#). Where a student will be unable to write examinations and term tests due to a conflicting religious holiday, they should inform their instructors as soon as possible but not later than two weeks prior to writing the examination/term test. In the case of conflict with a midterm test, students should inform their instructor as soon as possible but not later than one week prior to the midterm.
- Religious Accommodation requests for final exams should be submitted via the Student Absence Portal.

Learning Development and Success

- Counsellors at the [Learning Development and Success Centre](#) are ready to help you improve your learning skills. They offer presentations on strategies for improving time management, multiple-choice exam preparation/writing, textbook reading, and more. - Individual support is offered throughout the Fall/Winter terms in the drop-in Learning Help Centre, and year-round through individual counselling.
- The [Writing Support Centre](#) at Western is also available to help students learn to edit and improve their scholarly writing.

Schedule of Readings

January 7: Introductions

- Greg Younging, “Chapter 6: Terminology” (Please skim this chapter about appropriate and inappropriate terminology regarding Indigenous peoples).

January 14: Indigenous Futurisms: The Ethics of Engagement

- Daniel Heath Justice, “Introduction: Stories That Wound, Stories That Heal” and “Chapter 3: How Do We Become Good Ancestors?” (pp. 113-16 and 139-156 only)
- Métis in Space Podcast, Season 1, Episode 5, “Montreal ComicCon Special”

January 21: Indigenous Futurisms: Decolonizing Genre, Re-Claiming History

- Grace Dillon, “Imagining Indigenous Futurisms”
- Blaire Morseau, “Bkanathmownen: Indigenous Science Fiction and Neshnabé Futurity”
- Drew Hayden Taylor, “I Am...Am I”

January 28: Defamiliarizing History through Speculative Cinema

Content Advisory: The readings and viewings for this week engage with details regarding the residential school system, including sexual and physical abuse.

- Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future*, “The History” (pages 50-63, 71-99)
- Danis Goulet, dir., *Night Raiders*

February 4th: Defamiliarizing History, Writing Futures of Resurgence

Content Advisory: The novel for this week references the residential school system. As well, there is a section of the novel that addresses a sexual assault.

- Cherie Dimaline, *The Marrow Thieves*
- Leanne Simpson, “Nishnaabeg Resurgence: Stories from Within”

February 11th: Worldmaking After “The End of the World as We Know It”

- Waubgeshig Rice, *Moon of the Crusted Snow*
- Kyle Powless Whyte, “Indigenous (science) fiction for the Anthropocene: Ancestral dystopias and fantasies of climate change crises”

February 18th: Class Cancelled for Reading Week

February 25th: Indigenous Women and Futurity: Gender and Genre

- Danika Medak-Saltzman, “Coming to You from the Indigenous Future: Native Women, Speculative Film Shorts, and the Art of the Possible”
- Nanobah Becker, dir., *The Sixth World*
- Helen Haig-Brown, *The Cave*

March 4th: Sexualities and Solidarities: Indigenous LGBTQ2S Speculative Fiction

- Niigaan Sinclair, “Returning to Ourselves: Two Spirit Futures and the Now”

- Alex Wilson, “Our Coming In Stories: Cree Identity, Body Sovereignty and Gender Self- Determination”
- Kai Minosh Pyle, “How to Survive the Apocalypse for Native Girls”
- Chelsea Vowel, “Âniskôhôcikan”

March 11th: Métis Futurisms and Expanded Kinship

- Chelsea Vowel, “Preface” to *Buffalo is the New Buffalo*
- Matt Wildcat and Daniel Voth, “Indigenous relationality: definitions and methods”
- Chelsea Vowel, “kitaskînaw 2350” (A copy of this story is available in the “Course Readings” folder in the “Resources” section of the course OWL site.)
- Please also listen to the audio version / podcast of “kitaskînaw 2350”

March 18th: In-Class Writing Assignment**March 25th: Black and Indigenous Solidarities: Afrofuturisms and Indigenous Futurisms**

- Lou Cornum, “Seizing the Alterity of Futures: Toward a Philosophy of History Across Afrofuturism and Indigenous Futurism”
- Pauline Johnson, “The Lost Island”
- Wayde Compton, “The Lost Island” and “The Boom”

April 1st: Mununjali Futurisms

- Mykaela Saunders, “Overture”
- Ellen Van Neerven, “Water”

April 8th: Maori Futurisms

- Hana Burgess and Te Kahuratai Painting, “Onamata, anamata: A whakapapa perspective of Māori futurisms”
- *Anamata Future News*