English 9172: Contemporary Canadian Literature in Cross-Border Contexts

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Office hours: Tuesday and Thursday 10-11 am or by appointment

Course Description

What does it mean to read "from the nation's edge"? In this course we will consider a selection of contemporary Canadian fiction and film in the light of recent critical and theoretical work in the interdisciplinary field of Border Studies, in order to explore the horizons and limits of our national literature. We will analyze the ways in which Canadian fiction, poetry, and drama represents movement across geo-political lines, including the US-Canada border, Indigenous territorial boundaries, ecosystems, and other trans-national spaces. In the works we examine, cultural and political, and ecological boundaries are negotiated and re-defined by immigrants, migrant workers, refugees, homeless people, cultural movements, settlers, migratory species, media and technologies.

Land Acknowledgment

The land on which we meet is situated on the traditional territories of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Lunaapeewak and Attawandaron peoples, who have longstanding relationships to the land and region of southwestern Ontario and the City of London. The local First Nation communities of this area include Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Oneida Nation of the Thames, and Munsee Delaware Nation. In the region, there are eleven First Nation communities and a growing Indigenous urban population. Western values the significant historical and contemporary contributions of local and regional First Nations and all of the Original peoples of Turtle Island (North America).

Required Fiction Texts (short stories, plays, novels, film, television)

Badami, Anita Rau.	*Can You Hear the Night Bird Call?* (novel)	Vintage	2007[k]
Benaway, Gwen.	*Passage*. (poetry)	Kedonce	2016
Brant, Beth.	"Food and Spirits" from *Food and Spirits* (ss)	Firebrand	1991*
Canuel, Erik.	*Bon Cop, Bad Cop*	Tierney	2006[+]
Compton, Wayde.	*49th Parallel Psalm*. (poetry, selections)	Arsenal	2011
Engel, Howard.	*Murder on Location*. (novel)	M&S	1981[k]
Hospital, J. Turner.	*Borderline*. (novel)	M&S	1985[k]
Hunt, Courtney (dir.)	*Frozen River*. (film)	Cohen Media	2008[+]
King, Thomas.	"Borders," from *One Good Story, That One*. (ss)	Harper	1993*
King, Thomas.	*Truth and Bright Water*. (novel)	Harper	2000[k]
Lynch, Jim.	*Border Songs*. (novel)	Vintage	2010[k]
Mulcahy, Gloria A.	*Borderlands and Bloodlines*. (poetry)	Kedonce	2009
Munro, Alice.	"Miles City, Montana," from *Progress of Love.* (ss)	Penguin	1986*
Pollock, Sharon.	*The Kogmagata Maru Incident.* (play)	Playwrights Canada	1978*
Silvera, Makeda.	"Caribbean Chameleon," *Her Head a Village*. (ss)	Press Gang	1994*
Urquhart, Jane.	*Sanctuary Line.* (novel)	M & S	2010[k]
Verdecchia, G.	*Fronteras Americanas*. (play)	Talonbooks	1997[k]

*=available on course OWL site under "Resources" ss=short story
[K]=available on Kindle or other reader
[+]=screened in class

Methods of Evaluation

Assignment	Length	Value
Participation & Attendance	n/a	10%
Map-Calendar-Clock 1	10-15 minutes	10%
Seminar	1 hour	25%
Map-Calendar-Clock 2	10-15 minutes	10%
Article Discussion	30 minutes	15%
Final Paper	4,500-5,000 words	30%
Due: August 8th		

Participation & Attendance: Attendance is a mandatory part of this course. In class, you are expected to demonstrate familiarity and critical engagement with the assigned readings, participate in class discussion, ask and answer questions, and support the day's presenters.

Map-Calendar-Clock Presentation: You are required to give two (2) short map-calendar-clock context presentations. These are very short, factual notes on geographical context (map: what geographical/spatial knowledge would support our understanding of the text?), historical context (calendar: what historical or biographical events inform the work?) or connection between the assigned text and a current event (clock: how does the relate to recent events?).

Class seminar: You will give a presentation on one literary text during class time. While the list above says the length of your presentation should be "approx. 1 hour," don't think you have to talk non-stop for that whole time. Your seminar need not have a perfectly cogent argument (though that's certainly not a deficiency!): it may be exploratory, but it should have a coherent trajectory and be motivated by a clear set of questions oriented around the conceptualization of borders.

The seminar is not a polished paper presentation, but a a pedagogical exercise, an intellectual dialogue with your colleagues, and a map of possible research directions, their possibilities and limits. You may want to think of your seminar as the process of "testing out a hypothesis" or set of tactics to a friendly audience who will contribute to your thinking. Consider it your task to introduce the work to the class, offer relevant information and resources, present and develop a critical idea with close reflection on the text, directing us to elements of the text you find provocative or problematic in relation to the course topic, and prompting further discussion. As part of your presentation, you should include a group activity (e.g., a topic for small group discussion, a passage to analyse, an exercise in response to the text, a set of questions to stimulate reflection and feedback).

Your seminar must be accompanied by a PowerPoint or some other presentation tool (you may discuss alternatives with me), which you will submit electronically. Your seminar presentation may (but need not) form the basis of your final paper for the course.

Your presentation tool should include:

- your name, a title, and the date of the seminar
- a point-form summary of your presentation
- a list of discussion questions
- quotations, maps, diagrams, charts, illustrations: whatever you think would be illuminating and engaging to others in the class
- a bibliography of resources and works cited: you will, naturally, have surveyed the critical literature specifically on your literary text/author, and researched concepts key to your discussion.

Article presentation: This assignment asks you to develop and perform, with the participation of your classmates, your critical engagement with a scholarly text relevant to the course theme. You may use the essay listed on the course syllabus, or, if you choose, you may present another essay or textual excerpt that you think provides productive points of departure for our discussions. This latter option opens up the possibility of sharing your own interests, investments, and experiences with the class. Articles will be made available on OWL. If you choose your own selection, please provide a pdf copy for sharing on OWL.

This assignment's function is in part to convey the information, arguments, methodologies, and analyses of the

assigned essay, but it is also to model the ways in which you can position your own disciplinary investments, and make the research of others *generative*, i.e., how you can put it to work in productive ways. Consider the essay not the be-all-and-end-all (i.e., you don't have to "cover" it comprehensively), then, but a point of departure for discussion. For the purposes of your presentation, this may include

- contextualizing the article
- briefly summarizing its argument
- identifying its methodology and goals
- defining salient terms and concepts
- locating influences or teasing out controversies
- selecting and exploring points of departure, offering alternative perspectives
- suggesting some ways in which the essay might be relevant to literary studies and/or particular texts on the course
- developing three or four questions to prompt discussion

Within a week of your presentation, you will hand in a 1000-word paper that summarizes your presentation and accounts for class discussion on the day. This paper need not be written in formal essay style.

Final paper discussion: On the last day of class, each student will informally present some potential topics or research questions for final papers. This suggestion will take the form of a topic/title, and a few sentences of elaboration, rationale, or research suggestions. This exercise is meant to allow members of the course to develop some options for their final paper, and to generate research ideas collaboratively. As part of this discussion, you will be expected to provide supplementary contributions in support of other people's topics. This might involve recommending a suitable text (or passage), a research aid, a term or method, a refinement, an appropriate venue for delivery (journal, conference), etc. You would be well-advised to note and develop your questions and responses over the entire course of the term. Obviously, if you choose to advance another student's suggestion, you will acknowledge their contribution in an endnote.

Final paper: While I expect all students to submit a rigourously researched, intellectually sound paper, the paper may take a number of different forms. You should think through and discuss with me what format will best serve your individual interests, career goals, and academic strengths. The important thing is to recognize that different formats have different conventions, expectations, and audiences. Here are some suggestions as to what you might want to undertake, but you are welcome to consider others:

- an academic research paper
- a critical dialogue on a topic or term, in collaboration with another student (with length and assessment criteria to be discussed)
- a critically-framed lesson plan for a particular specified constituency, including pedagogical reflection
- a guide to research and critical commentary on a single literary text, oriented around course concerns
- a review essay on a recent border studies book, considering its implications for Canadian literary studies: I can provide suggestions
- a "critical term paper" in which you research and define a key term and consider its relevance to one (or more) texts on the course
- I'm happy to discuss other options

Please submit your paper electronically, preferably in MS Word: I'll return it to you electronically, with my comments.

accessibility.uwo.ca

I am committed to creating a learning environment that meets the needs of all students. Please consult the university accessibility web site for general information, and don't hesitate to let me know if you have concerns.

P.S. I have a hearing impairment. If you speak directly to me, so that I can see your face, I will be better able to understand you. Please be aware of this in our class meetings, and be patient with my requests for repetition: I want to hear everyone!

Statement on 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 the following Web site: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf

turnitin.com

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).

Graduate Course Health and Wellness:

As part of a successful graduate student experience at Western, we encourage students to make their health and wellness a priority. As part of this endeavor, we may integrate discussions about making the most of graduate student life and mindfulness exercises into the class setting. In addition, Western provides several on campus health-related services to help you achieve optimum health and engage in healthy living while pursuing your graduate degree. For example, to support physical activity, all students, as part of their registration, receive membership in Western's Campus Recreation Centre. Numerous cultural events are offered throughout the year. Information regarding health- and wellness-related services available to students may be found at http://www.health.uwo.ca/. Students seeking help regarding mental health concerns are advised to speak to someone they feel comfortable confiding in, such as their faculty supervisor, their program director (graduate chair), or other relevant administrators in their unit. Campus mental health resources may be found at http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental_health/resources.html.

Student Support Services

Accessibility at Western https://accessibility.uwo.ca/
Registrarial Services http://www.registrar.uwo.ca
Student Support Services https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login
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.