

Department of English & Writing Studies
Film Studies Program

Film 2258G (001)
Canadian Cinema: Documents, Storytelling, Experiments
Winter 2026

Instructor: Dr. Terrance H. McDonald

Prerequisites: At least 60% in [Film Studies 1020E](#) or [Film Studies 1022](#), or 1.0 of English 1000-1999 plus [English 2112F/G](#), Film 2212F/G, or [Theatre Studies 2212F/G](#), 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

This course looks at Canadian cinema in relation to the category label, national cinema. What is the value of a national cinema? What is the popular imagination? How do the films speak to us about Canada, its history, its people and its politics? Examining Canadian cinemas, from 1895 to the present, students will explore these questions through the screening and analysis of selected films. Beginning with an introduction to the foundations of the Canadian industry (primarily the National Film Board and some early features), the course examines the history of film in Canada with a focus on the post-1960s period. Through approaches to national cinema, feminism, critical race theory, diaspora, film genre, and auteurism, students will encounter a range of fiction films made in Canada from English, French, Indigenous, women, queer, and diasporic filmmakers. By foregrounding questions and myths that are prevalent in the scholarly discourse around Canadian cinemas, we will investigate issues related to the realist tradition, identities, nation, geography, landscape, the fantastic, ethnicity, race, diaspora, social justice, gender, and sexuality. Throughout the semester, students will gain the knowledge necessary to critique popular misconceptions of Canadian national cinema to reveal the diversity and heterogeneity of Canadian cinemas.

Objectives

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

- to develop a critical understanding of key concepts related to Canadian cinema
- to apply diverse methodological approaches to the study of Canadian cinemas, including the critical analysis of history, language, environment, realism, genre, art cinema, gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, diaspora, and national identity
- to become familiar with Canadian films from distinct periods, regions, and industries
- to introduce Inuit and First Nations cinemas as well as critical Indigenous perspectives
- to improve skills related to the stylistic and narrative analysis of moving images
- to enhance the skills of students in critical reading, thinking, and writing, as well as research techniques appropriate to the second-year undergraduate level
- to learn diverse methodologies for approaching moving images that can be applied to other films and periods within the field of film studies

Course Materials

- Readings - linked or posted to OWL.
- Films - screened online (asynchronous) linked to OWL.
- There are no additional costs required for course materials.

Methods of Evaluation

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

Participation (10%): Students will be evaluated through contributions made to lecture discussions each Tuesday. To achieve an above average participation mark, students: participate each week; actively engage in the lecture discussion; volunteer questions about or points of interest from films and assigned readings; offer ideas willingly and make thoughtful contributions during the lecture discussion; respond to the ideas of other students by asking questions or building on their points. In addition, students will have the opportunity to contribute to the participation component through the submission of written comments at the end of lecture. This ensures that all students have the ability to gain participation marks regardless of any difficulties that they may have with public speaking. See the detailed assignment outline available online for more information. Important: there are no opportunities to complete this component outside of lecture each Tuesday.

Discussion questions (20%): This component will be evaluated through discussion posts in response to questions posted each Tuesday (beginning 13 January 2026). Students will have the opportunity to answer questions each week online within the "Discussions" section following the lecture discussion each Tuesday (posts are due by 5:00pm on Sunday following each lecture discussion). Questions will be presented by the instructor and there will be opportunities to work on these questions during lecture (individually or in small groups – please list all student participants in a group when posting online). These assignments will be graded out of 2.0 (i.e., 2.0, 1.0, or 0.0 out of 2.0). Discussion questions should be 200 to 250 words in length and focus on a specific scene from the assigned film from the lecture discussion each week. There will be 8 opportunities to complete these assignments and the best 7 will be used to calculate this component (dropping the lowest grades for one week). See the detailed assignment outline available on MyLS for more information. Important: there are no opportunities to make-up these assignments once the deadline has passed.

Scene analysis (3 x 10% = 30%): There will be three in-person written assignments to be completed within lecture on select Tuesdays throughout the semester (*Maelström* on 3 February 2026, *Night Raiders* on 3 March 2026, and *The Grand Seduction* on 24 March 2026). Students will be asked to write an extended analysis of a specific scene (there will be several options) from the film screened for the module. The three scene analysis assignments will replace the discussion question post for select modules and each scene analysis will be worth 10% (for a total of 30%). Each scene analysis must be completed individually and students will be given a total of 30 minutes to complete each of the assignments within this component – additional time will be available for students with accommodations. To prepare for this assignment, students should watch the film assigned for the module, complete assigned readings, and attend the corresponding lecture on Tuesday. Note: an assignment outline and marking rubric will be posted online. Important: there are no opportunities to make-up these assignments outside of lecture.

Research paper proposal (10% - 1 March 2026 - flexible deadline = 4 March 2026): Students may choose to opt out of the research paper proposal and have the 10% from this component added to the weight of the research paper which would be worth 40% in lieu of a proposal (not available for students that wish to complete a creative assignment – see below). The research paper proposal will focus on an issue related to Canadian Cinema and should be composed of an abstract of approximately 500 words and an annotated bibliography (approximately 150 to 200 words for each entry) consisting of three sources – two of which must be from outside of our assigned readings (double-spaced and 12-point font). Students may choose to focus on films from the course or explore other films (approval must be sought to include films from outside the syllabus in the proposal). As opposed to a research paper, students may opt to outline a creative assignment (such as a film, a film script, or video essay) in the proposal – approval for a creative assignment must be received through a proposal. Research for a creative assignment will still be required and students will need to complete an artistic statement to accompany the submission of a creative assignment (see research paper component below). If students choose the creative assignment option, the 500-word abstract will focus on the creative work and the subsequent annotated entries will relate to the artistic statement that outlines the theoretical or critical concepts to be mobilized by the creative work. The proposal is due to be uploaded online by 1 March 2026 (5:00pm deadline) with a flexible deadline of 4 March 2026 (5:00pm deadline). Students may wish to submit their proposals in-advance of the deadline and may do so as soon as the submission folder is open online. Note: an assignment outline and marking rubric will be posted online.

Research paper (30% - 10 April 2026 - flexible deadline = 13 April 2026): Students are asked to write an essay (1500 to 2000 words, 12-point font, double-spaced, 2.5cm margins) that examines an issue related to Canadian Cinema, which may focus on course themes or extend our discussion to a consideration of related issues. Students wishing to analyze films from beyond the course must get approval from the instructor. Alternatively, students may complete a creative assignment (such as a film, a film script, or a video essay) after receiving approval through the submission of a research paper proposal – see above. For students completing the creative assignment option, there must be an artistic statement that accompanies the submission of the creative work (800 to 1000 words, 12-point font, double-spaced, 2.5cm margins) which outlines the theoretical or critical concepts to be mobilized by the creative work (the same conditions apply for secondary sources). The research paper will require students to conduct research on their selected subject and incorporate at least three secondary sources into their paper (beyond required course readings, which should also be referenced). Students will also need to take a position in order to demonstrate, support, and clarify their argument. Students are encouraged to follow the suggestions received from the evaluation of their research paper proposal. The research paper is due online by 10 April 2026 (5:00pm deadline) with a flexible deadline of 13 April 2026 (5:00pm). Note: an assignment outline and marking rubric will be posted online.

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>.

Additional Information

Late penalties: course work must be submitted by the assigned date (or flexible deadline). A penalty of 2% per day for lateness up to and including work submitted on the last day of the term will be applied by the instructor. Work will not be accepted beyond one week after the due date (unless granted an extension due to special considerations). All such requests must be

submitted to the instructor within 48 hours from the date of the missed assignment.

Submitting assignments: students are responsible for submitting readable copies of files. Please check to ensure documents uploaded are readable. Any unreadable copies submitted will be deemed incomplete submissions with late penalties applied until a readable copy is received.

Statements

Academic Consideration

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 pertaining to the scene analysis, research paper proposal, film reflection, and research paper **must** be accompanied by supporting documentation.

Assignments with flexible deadlines and any term work that does not count towards the course grade are **not** eligible for additional 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.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory in all classes and tutorials. In cases of excessive absenteeism (e.g. 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 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.

Gender-Based and Sexual Violence

Western 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/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

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.

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.

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.

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence

The use of generative AI is not permitted in this course.

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.

Schedule of Classes and Assignments

Week One: Canadian Cinematic Beginnings - Early History, the NFB, a Realist Tradition **6 January 2026**

Read: Jim Leach, "The National-Realist Tradition"
Christopher E. Gittings, "Producing National Cinema"

Watch: *Back to God's Country* (Hartford 1919)
Goin' Down the Road (Shebib 1970)

Recommended films: *Nobody Waved Good-bye* (Owen 1964), *Le chat dans le sac* (Groulx 1964), & *Dreamland: A History of Early Canadian Movies 1895-1939* (Brittain 1974)

Week Two: Foundations of Québécois Cinema - A Nation within a Nation **13 January 2026**

Read: Bill Marshall, "Foundational Fictions"
Jerry White, "Pierre Falardeau and Michel Brault"

Watch: *Les ordres* (Brault 1974)

Recommended films: *La vie heureuse de Léopold Z* (Carle 1965), *Mon Oncle Antoine* (Jutra 1971), *Elvis Gratton* (Falardeau 1985), & *Le Déclin de l'empire américain* (Arcand 1986)

Assignment: discussion question one due online (by Sunday at 5:00pm)

Week Three: English Feature Films, David Cronenberg, and the Tax-Shelter Years **20 January 2026**

Read: Jennifer Vanderburgh, "Ghostbusted!"
George Melnyk, "English-Canadian Auteurs"

Watch: *Videodrome* (Cronenberg 1983)

Recommended films: *Shivers* (Cronenberg 1975), *Meatballs* (Reitman 1979), *Black Robe* (Beresford 1991), *Exotica* (Egoyan 1994), & *The Sweet Hereafter* (Egoyan 1997)

Assignment: discussion question two due online (by Sunday at 5:00pm)

Week Four: Telefilm and Diasporic Cinemas

27 January 2026

Read: Lily Cho, "The Turn to Diaspora"

Brenda Austin-Smith, "Women, Liminality, and 'Unhomeliness'"

Watch: *Double Happiness* (Shum 1994)

Recommended films: *Masala* (Krishna 1991), *Long Life, Happiness & Prosperity* (Shum 2002), *Bollywood/Hollywood* (Mehta 2002), *Heaven on Earth* (Mehta 2008), *Meditation Park* (Shum 2017), *Queen of the Morning Calm* (Kim 2019), & *Riceboy Sleeps* (Shim 2022)

Assignment: discussion question three due online (by Sunday at 5:00pm)

Week Five: Contemporary Québécois Cinema - Smart Films and Stupid Films

3 February 2026

Read: André Loiselle "Subtly Subversive or Simply Stupid"

Amy J. Ransom, "Deterritorialization and the Crisis of Recognition"

Watch: *Maelström* (Villeneuve 2000)

Recommended films: *Léolo* (Lauzon 1992), *Les Boys* (Saia 1997), *Un crabe dans la tête* (Turpin 2001), *Les invasions barbares* (Arcand 2003), & *Bon Cop Bad Cop* (Canuel 2006)

Assignment: scene analysis one written in lecture

Week Six: Nationalism and Women Filmmakers in Quebec

10 February 2026

Read: Chantal Nadeau "Barbaras en Quebec: Variations on Identity"

Jerry White "Les Québécoises"

Watch: *Emporte-moi* (Pool 1999)

Recommended films: *Les filles du roy* (Poirier 1974), *La turbulence des fluides* (Briand 2002), *Ma vie en cinémascope* (Filiatrault 2004), & *Maman est chez le coiffeur* (Pool 2008)

Assignment: discussion question four due online (by Sunday at 5:00pm)

Week Seven: Reading Week

16 February 2026 to 20 February 2026

Week Eight: Queer Cinemas and Canadian Contexts

24 February 2026

Read: Thomas Waugh, "How to Queer Sexualities, Nations, and Cinemas"

Liz Czach, "Xavier Dolan's *J'ai tué ma mère* and Québec's New Cinema"

Watch: *J'ai tué ma mère* (Dolan 2009)

Recommended films: *I've Heard the Mermaids Singing* (Rozema 1987), *When Night is Falling* (Rozema 1995), *Mambo Italiano* (Gaudreault 2003), *Tom à la ferme* (Dolan 2013), *Fire Song* (Jones 2015), *This Place* (Nayani 2022), & *The Queen of My Dreams* (Mirza 2023)

Assignment: research paper proposal due online (1 March 2026)

Assignment: discussion question five due online (by Sunday at 5:00pm)

Week Nine: Indigenous Cinemas and Visual Sovereignty

3 March 2026

Read: Christopher E. Gittings, "Indigenous Canadian Cinemas"

Missy Molloy, "Indigenous Futurist and Women-Centered Dystopian Film"

Watch: *Night Raiders* (Goulet 2021)

Recommended films: *Atanarjuat* (Kunuk 2001), *Every Emotion Costs* (Naponse 2010), *Rhymes for Young Ghouls* (Barnaby 2013), *SGaawaay K'uuna* (Edenshaw & Haig-Brown 2018), *Blood Quantum* (Barnaby 2019), *Rustic Oracle* (Boileau 2019), & *Beans* (Deer 2020)

Assignment: scene analysis two written in lecture

Week Ten: Black Canadian Film - Confronting Systemic Racism

10 March 2026

Read: Kass Banning, "Conjugating Three Moments in Black Canadian Cinema"

Robyn Maynard, "Arrested (In)Justice: From the Streets to the Prison"

Watch: *Black Cop* (Bowles 2017)

Recommended films: *Rude* (Virgo 1995), *Sortie 67* (Jephté 2010), *Scratch* (Godron 2015), *Across the Line* (Director X 2015), *Brown Girl Begins* (Lewis 2017), & *Brother* (Virgo 2022)

Assignment: discussion question six due online (by Sunday at 5:00pm)

Week Eleven: Western Canada - Cityscapes, Rural Images, and Costal Narratives

17 March 2026

Read: George Melnyk, "The City of Transgressive Desires"

Watch: *My Winnipeg* (Maddin 2007)

Recommended films: *waydowntown* (Burns 2000), *Last Wedding* (Sweeney 2001), *Fubar* (Dowse 2002), *The Saddest Music in the World* (Maddin 2003), & *Beeba Boys* (Mehta 2015)

Assignment: discussion question seven due online (by Sunday at 5:00pm)

Week Twelve: Images of Atlantic Canada - Regional Films and Global Perspectives

24 March 2026

Read: Darrell Varga, "Regional Scenes and Canadian Screens"

Watch: *The Grand Seduction* (McKellar 2013)

Recommended films: *Marion Bridge* (Von Carolsfeld 2002), *Wilby Wonderful* (MacIvor 2004), *The Disappeared* (Mitchell 2012), *Werewolf* (McKenzie 2016), & *Wildhood* (Hannam 2021)

Assignment: scene analysis three written in lecture

Week Thirteen: Canadian Cinemas - Past, Present Future (Course Review)

31 March 2026

Watch (select one film): *Slash/Back* (Innuksuk 2022)

This Place (Nayani 2022)

Brother (Virgo 2022)

Riceboy Sleeps (Shim 2022)

I Like Movies (Levack 2022)

23 décembre (Bouchard 2022)

Assignment: discussion question eight due online (by Sunday at 5:00pm)

Assignment: research paper due online (10 April 2026)