

17.4710/6

**TOPICS IN CANADIAN LITERATURE**  
**English-Canadian Reading Publics**

Term: FW 2007-2008  
Time and Time Slot: T 2:30-5:15pm  
Room: 3C33

Professor: Dr. Candida Rifkind  
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Office Hours: TR 10:30-11:15am or by appointment

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

How do texts shape their audiences and how do audiences shape their texts? This course begins with this question to launch an inquiry into a diversity of English-Canadian reading publics since the beginning of the twentieth century. Close readings of literary and cultural texts will allow us to consider the ways in which specific uses of language, imagery, structure, and generic conventions attempt to shape communities of readers. This will combine with an exploration of how print cultures, popular cultures, and official cultures work to organize individual readers into different kinds of reading communities, frequently determined by such factors as region, class, ideology, ethnicity, race, gender, sexuality, and education.

In the Fall term we will study English-Canadian poetry, from modernism to postmodernism, postcolonialism and beyond. We will investigate the shifting position of poetry in Canadian culture through such topics as nationalism, public performance, avant-gardes and literary elites, political activism, broadcasting and mass media, music and celebrity, working-class culture, feminism, regional identities, immigrant and diasporic communities, and globalization.

In the Winter term we will read primarily fiction, including the short story cycle, historical fiction, and auto/biography. We will begin by studying the CBC Canada Reads program. In addition to reading the five books from the first 2002 Canada Reads competition, we will discuss the phenomenon of mass reading events and the role of state institutions in shaping both Canadian literature and Canadian reading publics. In the second half of the term we will study an emerging reading public (or perhaps 'counterpublic' or subcultural reading public) organized by the recent growth in Canadian graphic novels. Starting with the historical contexts of Canadian comics, we will look at examples of the proliferation and gentrification of Canadian graphic novels over the past decade. Evaluation will consist of essays, seminar reports, and a final exam.

**REQUIRED TEXTS (in order of reading)**

Francis, Daniel. *National Dreams: Myth, Memory and Canadian History*. Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp, 1997.

Geddes, Gary, ed. *Fifteen Canadian Poets* x 3. 4<sup>th</sup> Ed. Toronto: Oxford UP, 2001.

Compton, Wayde. 49<sup>th</sup> *Parallel Psalm*. Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp, 1999.

Wong, Rita. *Monkeypuzzle*. Vancouver: Press Gang, 1998.

Laurence, Margaret. *The Stone Angel*. 1964. New Canadian Library. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1988.

Mistry, Rohinton. *A Fine Balance*. 1995. New Canadian Library. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 2002.

Atwood, Margaret. *The Handmaid's Tale*. 1985. Toronto: Seal, 1998.

Clarke, George Elliott. *Whyah Falls*. 1990. Vancouver: Polestar, 2000.

Ondaatje, Michael. *In the Skin of a Lion*. 1987. Toronto: Vintage, 1996.

McCloud, Scott. *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*. New York: Harpercollins, 1994.

Brown, Chester. *Louis Riel: A Comic Strip Biography*. Montreal: Drawn & Quarterly, 2003.

Seth, *It's a Good Life, If You Don't Weaken*. Montreal: Drawn & Quarterly, 2004.

Doucet, Julie. *My Most Secret Desire*. 1995. New ed. Montreal: Drawn & Quarterly, 2006.

### **RECOMMENDED TEXT(S)**

Students should have access to a good English dictionary, an MLA style writing guide, and a recent dictionary of literary terms, such as those published by Oxford and Penguin.

### **ASSIGNMENTS (more info about assignments and presentations will be provided in class)**

**First Term Essay** (2000-2500 words, due on December 1st ) **15%**

**Second Term Essay** (3000-3250 words, due on April 2nd) **20%**

*Note: Peer editing workshops have been scheduled one week before both essays are due.*

*Students who do not arrive with an essay draft in a form that can be edited or who miss the peer editing session altogether will be deducted 5% of their essay grade.*

**Reading Publics Journal** (due on Nov. 20 and March 19th) **2x10% = 20%**  
\*specific journal entry topics provided in class

**Presentations** **2x5%= 10%**  
The first term grade will be for an individual report presentation.  
The second term grade will be an individual mark for a group presentation.

**Participation** **2x5%= 10%**  
The participation grade will be marked out of 5% each term. Basis of grade in Fall term is the short seminar report and productive contributions to class discussions. Basis of grade in Winter term is participation in two scheduled roundtables and productive contributions to class discussions.

**Final Exam** (3 hours on April 9, 2007, at 1:30pm in 2L17) **25%**  
**=100%**

**Note on attendance:** This is a course about reading as a public act and writing as community process. The very premise of this course rejects traditional notions of the reader as a private sovereign individual and of the writer as a solitary genius working through mystical divination. We begin, then, with the assumption that reading and writing are social acts. As students of these social acts, we will need to work together to develop a dynamic of intellectual inquiry and tone of discussion that rejects the restraints and competitiveness of conventional academic hierarchies.

At the most basic level, this course can only work if all participants are willing to work collaboratively and cooperatively to build new knowledge. The tone of this seminar will be that of a workshop or laboratory rather than a series of individual performances. Students need to arrive having done the assigned reading and with something to say about it to each other. Arrive with questions, notes, doodles, and diagrams to spark conversation. This course is an opportunity to

risk venturing new ideas and to recognize, support, and encourage intellectual and creative risk-taking in each other.

If you have to miss a class please let me know in advance. If anything arises during the year that may interrupt or impede your success in this course please speak to me as soon as possible.

### **GRADING SCALE**

A+	90 - 100%	GPA 4.50	C+	65 - 69%	GPA 2.5
A	85 - 89%	GPA 4.25	C	60 - 64%	GPA 2.0
A-	80 - 84%	GPA 4.0	D	50 - 59%	GPA 1.0
B+	75 - 79%	GPA 3.5	F	Below 50%	GPA 0
B	70 - 74%	GPA 3.0			

### **NOTES**

1. This course outline should be considered a guideline only. Time constraints and other unforeseen factors may require that some of the above topics be omitted or covered in less detail than indicated.
2. Work submitted for evaluation must be either typed or text processed.
3. Cellular phones **MUST** be turned off during classes.
4. It is the student's responsibility to retain a photocopy or computer disk copy of **ALL** assignments submitted for grading; in the event of loss or theft, a duplicate copy is required.
5. Students are advised to read the pertinent pages of the 2006/2007 Calendar for the rules regarding Registration, Voluntary Withdrawals, Academic Misconduct including plagiarism, and Appeals. **Concerning plagiarism, please note** that as a general rule, an F in the course will be the penalty, recommended by the English Departmental Review Committee to the Senate Committee on Academic Misconduct, for plagiarism on major assignments in English Department courses.
6. Services for Students with Disabilities:  
Students with documented disabilities requiring academic accommodations for tests/exams (e.g., private space) or during lectures/laboratories (e.g., access to volunteer note-takers) are encouraged to contact Heather Myers, Acting Coordinator of Disability Services (DS) at 786-9771 or [h.myers@uwinnipeg.ca](mailto:h.myers@uwinnipeg.ca), to discuss appropriate options. Specific information about DS is available on-line at <http://www.uwinnipeg.ca/index/services-disability>. All information about disability is confidential.
7. Please note that registering in this course commits you to the date and time of the course final examination. If you are aware of possible conflicts with that date, please see me immediately during the first week of the course, in case you need to register in another course to accommodate the conflict. For appeals for deferred exams, please see the Calendar.
8. **January 19, 2007** is the final date to withdraw without academic penalty from courses that begin in September, 2006 and end in April, 2007.
9. **Late Assignment Penalties:** I encourage you to speak with me (in person, not over email) in advance if you anticipate handing an assignment in late due to extenuating circumstances, such as illness or a personal/family emergency. **Note that having a lot**

**of work to do for your other courses is not a reasonable excuse for a late assignment in this course.** Unless prior arrangements have been made or you present a medical/legal note explaining why your assignment has been handed in late, the penalty for a late assignment is: 10% off immediately when it is not submitted on the due date and 2% off each extra day it is late. No unexplained late assignments will be accepted after they are 7 days late.

10. The English Department wishes to ensure that your right to privacy regarding handing in and getting back assignments is protected. Most assignments will be handed in and handed back in class or at the Instructor's office. If assignments are to be handled in another way and you are concerned about others having access to your work, you should attach to your assignment a self-addressed envelope that can be sealed. If this is not done, it is assumed that you have waived your concerns in this area.
11. Students will not be asked for identification when writing a test or examination.
12. No unauthorized material or equipment may be brought with you to the final exam.

**FALL TERM READING SCHEDULE**  
**(any changes will be announced well in advance)**

**\*\* = journal question will be distributed for that week's entry**

<b>Date/Topic</b>	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Report Topics</b>
Sep. 11	Introductions; distribution of readings; reading survey	
Sep.18 Performing Aboriginality**	Poems by E. Pauline Johnson; Strong-Boag, "A Red Girl's Reasoning"	1. Visual art: Paul Kane's paintings of Aboriginal peoples
Sep. 25 Songs of the North and Ballads of Labour	Poems by Robert Service; Poems by Dawn Fraser; Francis, Introduction and Chapters 1-3	2. Poetic form: The ballad 3. Literary context: Scotland's Robert Burns
Oct.2 Breakfast Class and Millennium Library Tour**	Long, "On the Social Nature of Reading"; Lamonde et al., "Public Libraries and the Emergence of a Public Culture"	No seminars – field trip!
Oct. 16 Making Modern Canada	Poems by A.J.M. Smith, F.R. Scott, E.J. Pratt, and Dorothy Livesay (handout); Kertzer, Intro. to <u>Worrying the Nation</u> ; Francis, Chapter 6.	4. Visual art: The Group of Seven and Canadian modernism 5. Poetic form: free verse
Oct. 23 Folk Music and 1960s Counterculture**	Davey, "Leonard Cohen and Bob Dylan: Poetry and the Popular Song" (on-line); <u>The Years of Protest</u> (on 4hr reserve)	Group presentations on songs by Gordon Lightfoot, Buffy Saint Marie, Leonard Cohen, Joni Mitchell, and Neil Young.
Oct. 30** The avant-garde	bp Nichol, <u>The Martyrology Books 1&amp;2</u>  Davey, "Exegesis/Eggs a Jesus: The Martyrology as a Text in Crisis"	6. Literary context: Nichol at <a href="http://www.ubu.com">http://www.ubu.com</a> 7. Poetic form: sound poetry
Nov.6 Reading/Writing Lesbian	Daphne Marlatt poems from <u>Salvage</u> and essays from <u>Readings from the Labyrinth</u> Screening: <u>Fragments of a Conversation on Language</u>	8. Literary context: Marlatt's <u>Steveston</u> 9. Theoretical context: écriture féminine
Nov.13** Writing Diaspora/Sampling Canadas	Wayde Compton, <u>49<sup>th</sup> Parallel Psalm</u>  DJ Spooky, excerpt from <u>Rhythm Science</u>	10. Literary Context: African Canadian online <a href="http://www.yorku.ca/aconline">http://www.yorku.ca/aconline</a> 11. Poetic form: blues 12. Poetic form: dub poetry ( <a href="http://www.dubpoetscollective.com">www.dubpoetscollective.com</a> )
Nov.20 Community and Voice	Dionne Brand, <u>Thirsty</u>  Rinaldo Walcott, "No Language is Neutral"	13. Poetic form: the long poem <b>JOURNALS DUE</b>
Nov.27 Small presses/small publics/small poems	Souvankham Thammavongsa, <u>Small Arguments</u>  Cain, "Modes of the Micropress"	14. Poetic form: the chapbook 15. Historical context: Coach House Press and Turnstone Press <i>PEER EDITING (1 HOUR)</i>
Nov.29 Globalization	Jeff Derksen, <u>Transnational Muscle Cars</u>	<b>FIRST TERM ESSAY DUE DEC. 1st</b>

**WINTER TERM READING SCHEDULE**  
**(any changes will be announced well in advance)**

**\*\* = journal question will be distributed for that week's entry**

<b>Date/Topic</b>	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Presentations/Discussions</b>
Jan.8	Joseph Boyden, <u>Three Day Road</u> Francis, Ch. 5	Group 1 presentation
Jan.15**	Mordecai Richler, <u>Cocksure</u>	Group 2 presentation
Jan.22	Frances Itani, <u>Deafening</u>	Group 3 presentation
Jan.29	Al Purdy, <u>Rooms for Rent in the Outer Planets</u>	Group 4 presentation
Feb.5**	Miriam Toews, <u>A Complicated Kindness</u>	Group 5 presentation
Feb. 19**	Canada Reads Debate Analysis  Davey, "Writers and Publishers in English-Canadian Literature"; Berland, "Nationalism and the Modernist Legacy" in <u>Capital Culture</u> (on reserve); Bennett, "Conflicted Vision" in <u>Canadian Canons</u> (on reserve)	<b>CBC Canada Reads analysis Roundtable</b>
Feb.26**	Scott McCloud, <u>Understanding Comics</u>	<b>Comics Roundtable</b>
Mar.5	Chester Brown, <u>Louis Riel</u>  Intro. and Ch. 1 in Braz, <u>The False Traitor: Louis Riel in Canadian Culture</u> (on reserve)	Discussion topic: a different kind of hero? (part I)
Mar.12**	Seth, <u>It's a Good Life, If You Don't Weaken</u>  Stuart Tannock, "Nostalgia Critique" Edwardson, "The Many Lives of Captain Canuck"	Discussion topic: a different kind of hero? (part II)
Mar.19	Marc Tessier, ed. <u>Cyclops: Contemporary Canadian Narrative Art</u> .  Hatfield, chs. 1 and 2 of <u>Alternative Comics</u> (on reserve)	Discussion topic: reading a community <b>JOURNALS DUE</b>
Mar.26**	Julie Doucet, <u>My New York Diary</u>  Frank, "Why Am I so Anal?" and ch. 4 of Hatfield's <u>Alternative Comics</u> (on reserve)	Discussion topic: punk publics <i>PEER EDITING (1 HOUR)</i>
Apr. 2	Richard Ohmann, <u>The Big Book of Wag</u> Final exam prep.	Discussion topic: zine culture <b>SECOND TERM ESSAY DUE APRIL 2nd</b>

**FINAL EXAM WILL BE HELD ON APRIL 19<sup>TH</sup> 2007, FROM 9:00am-12:00pm**