

THE UNIVERSITY OF WINNIPEG

ENGL-(3)-3713 (W)

**Contexts in Canadian Literature and Culture:  
Twenty-First Century Women Writers**

Term: Winter 2012  
Time and Time Slot: T/Th 1:00-2:15pm  
Room: 3M65

Professor: Dr. Candida Rifkind  
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Office Hours: T/Th 2:30-3:30pm

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course focuses on a selection of prose, poetry, and visual works (paintings, photography, film) by English-Canadian women working since 2000. Some of the writers and artists are internationally recognized prize-winners, while others are at the emerging and early career stage. What unites all of them is their gender, although one of the main explorations of this course is the degree to which the categories of “women writers” or “women artists” matters to Canadian literature and culture in the 21st century. Do women cultural producers in Canada today have enough in common for us to group them together? Is gender more important than other factors, such as race, ethnicity, sexuality, age, region, or class? Is gender important to these writers’ relationships to genre, literary history, popular culture, and aesthetic experimentation? How does this selection of works write and re-write tradition and myth, family and community, marriage and motherhood, domesticity and wilderness, politics and power, popular culture and globalization? What kinds of voices, discourses, styles, and subjects do this selection of contemporary women writers and artists mobilize in their writing?

In addition to close readings of the texts, we will consider the larger field of contemporary Canadian literature and such phenomena as the CBC Canada Reads competition, book clubs, and major literary prizes in conferring prestige and popularity on certain authors and books. Students will be required to undertake secondary critical and theoretical readings in addition to reading novels and poetry collections. Students will also be expected to navigate online sources to read and watch materials related to the texts, authors, and artists. Evaluation will be based on a short essay, a longer research essay, class participation, and a final exam.

**REQUIRED TEXT(S)**

Robinson, Eden. *Monkey Beach*. Toronto: Vintage, 2001.  
Toews, Miriam. *A Complicated Kindness*. Toronto: Vintage, 2004.  
Brand, Dionne. *Inventory*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 2006.  
Atwood, Margaret. *Oryx and Crake*. Toronto: McLelland and Stewart, 2003.  
Fleming, Ann-Marie. *The Magical Life of Long Tack Sam*. Toronto: Riverhead, 2007.

Other required readings have been placed on e-reserve and are available online (see attached schedule).

**RECOMMENDED TEXT(S)**

There are many websites dedicated to writing and research skills but not all of them are appropriate for academic writing. The following provide excellent information and help:

1. The University of Toronto Advice on Academic Writing website (especially good for getting started, understanding essay requirements, planning and writing the first draft):  
<http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice>
2. Purdue University has one of the largest websites dedicated to writing skills (good for specific information about grammar and style – use this to understand the

comments you get back on your papers and to correct writing errors).

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/sitemap.html>

3. On using the MLA style to cite and document sources in a research paper:

<http://library.concordia.ca/help/howto/mla.php>

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

**Short Essay (1500-1800 words due on Feb. 7<sup>th</sup>) 20%**

**Research Essay (2500-3000 words due on April 3<sup>rd</sup>) 40%**

A peer editing hour is scheduled for Tuesday, March 27<sup>th</sup>. Students who do not attend, or who attend but with an essay that is not ready to be peer edited, will have 5% deducted from the grade of their essay.

**Final Exam (3 hours on April 19<sup>th</sup>) 25%**

**Participation, reading quizzes, and artist workshops 15%**

Reading Quizzes: There will be four Pass/Fail reading quizzes on Jan. 12, Jan. 24, Feb. 28, and Mar. 29. Students who Pass (7/10 or higher) will earn 2 participation points per quiz (2%). Students who fail will earn 0 points per quiz. Students who miss the quiz will not have an opportunity to make it up without a medical note.

Artist Workshops: Each student will be assigned one of the four visual artists we are studying in this course and will be expected to come to class on that day prepared to discuss 2-3 of their works available for viewing online. Students who contribute significantly to the discussion on the day of their workshop will earn 2% of the participation mark.

The remaining 5% of the participation mark is based on active participation and productive contributions to class discussions, which starts with regular attendance.

## **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 and other electronic devices **MUST** be turned off during classes.
4. It is the student's responsibility to retain a photocopy or digitized 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 current course 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 Andrea Johnston, Coordinator of Disability Services (DS) at 786-9771 or [a.johnston@uwinnipeg.ca](mailto:a.johnston@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. **Wednesday, February 29<sup>th</sup>, 2012** is the final date to withdraw without academic penalty from courses that begin in January 2012 and end in April 2012 in the 2012 Winter term.
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 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. Students are advised that the UW Bookstore may run out of textbooks early in the term. Also, the bookstore always ships textbooks back to the publisher if they are not purchased within the first few weeks of term. Students are responsible for communicating directly with the bookstore if they need to order texts or ask for texts to be held for them.
13. No unauthorized material or equipment may be brought with you to the final exam.
14. For more information regarding the English Department, please refer to our website at <http://english.uwinnipeg.ca>

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

<b>Class Dates</b>	<b>Reading (all readings must be completed before class)</b>	<b>Assignments</b>
Jan. 5	Introductions	
Jan. 10&12	Tues = poetry handout, "Repairing the Octave" by Anne Michaels  Thurs = Miriam Toews, <i>A Complicated Kindness</i>	<u>Reading quiz 1</u>
Jan. 17&19	1. Miriam Toews, <i>A Complicated Kindness</i> 2. online: listen to 15min. interview with Miriam Toews at National Public Radio (US) website: <a href="http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4265055">http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4265055</a>	
Jan. 24&26	Robinson, Eden. <i>Monkey Beach</i>	<u>Reading quiz 2</u>
Jan.31& Feb.2	Eden Robinson, excerpt from <i>The Sasquatch at Home</i> (e-reserve)	

Feb. 7&9 <b>Annie Pootogook and Diana Thorneycroft</b>	<p><u>Tuesday = Visual artist 1: Annie Pootogook</u></p> <p>Look through the following online resources on Annie Pootogook</p> <p>a. Fehely Fine Arts Gallery <a href="http://feheleyfinearts.com/gallery/exhibitions/pootogook/annie.shtml">http://feheleyfinearts.com/gallery/exhibitions/pootogook/annie.shtml</a></p> <p>b. CBC essay: "Culture Clash: Annie Pootogook Captures Canada's North-South Divide": <a href="http://www.cbc.ca/arts/photoessay/pootogook/">http://www.cbc.ca/arts/photoessay/pootogook/</a></p> <p><u>Thursday = Visual artist 2: Diana Thorneycroft</u></p> <p>View the online gallery of Diana Thorneycroft's art (especially "A People's History" and "Group of Seven Awkward Moments") at: <a href="http://dianathorneycroft.com/">http://dianathorneycroft.com/</a></p> <p>If you are unfamiliar with the Group of Seven, you will need to learn about them at the McMichael Gallery website: <a href="http://www.mcmichael.com/collection/seven/index.cfm">http://www.mcmichael.com/collection/seven/index.cfm</a></p>	<b>Tues = Short Essay due</b>
Feb. 14&16 <b>Alice Munro</b>	<p>Short fiction by Alice Munro from <i>The New Yorker</i> (online)</p> <p>a. "Gravel" (Jun. 27, 2011) <a href="http://www.newyorker.com/fiction/features/2011/06/27/110627fi_fiction_munro">http://www.newyorker.com/fiction/features/2011/06/27/110627fi_fiction_munro</a></p> <p>b. "Face" (Sep. 8, 2008) <a href="http://www.newyorker.com/fiction/features/2008/09/08/080908fi_fiction_munro">http://www.newyorker.com/fiction/features/2008/09/08/080908fi_fiction_munro</a></p> <p>c. "Deep Holes" (Jun. 20, 2008) <a href="http://www.newyorker.com/fiction/features/2008/06/30/080630fi_fiction_munro">http://www.newyorker.com/fiction/features/2008/06/30/080630fi_fiction_munro</a></p> <p>d. "Dimension" (Jun. 5, 2006) <a href="http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2006/06/05/060605fi_fiction">http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2006/06/05/060605fi_fiction</a></p>	
Feb.28 &Mar.1 <b>Margaret Atwood</b>	Margaret Atwood, <i>Oryx and Crake</i>	<u>Reading quiz 3</u>
Mar. 6&8 <b>Margaret Atwood</b>	Margaret Atwood, <i>Oryx and Crake</i> online: View the 2004 Abramowitz Memorial Lecture at MIT by Margaret Atwood (59mins) <a href="http://mitworld.mit.edu/video/196/">http://mitworld.mit.edu/video/196/</a>	

Mar. 13&15 <b>Dionne Brand</b>	Brand, Dionne. <i>Inventory</i>	
Mar. 20&22 <b>Sarah Anne Johnson and Andrea Dorfman</b>	<p><u>Tuesday = Visual artist 3: Sarah Anne Johnson</u></p> <p>online: View the works by Sarah Anne Johnson at these two sites:            Bulger Gallery: <a href="http://www.bulgergallery.com/dynamic/fr_artist.asp?ArtistID=72">http://www.bulgergallery.com/dynamic/fr_artist.asp?ArtistID=72</a>            CBC Arts: <a href="http://www.cbc.ca/arts/photogallery/galleries/index.html?gallery=AnneJohnson">http://www.cbc.ca/arts/photogallery/galleries/index.html?gallery=AnneJohnson</a></p> <p><u>Thursday = Visual artist 4: Andrea Dorfman</u></p> <p>online: Watch the short films by Andrea Dorfman posted at her website:  <a href="http://www.andreadorfman.com/">http://www.andreadorfman.com/</a></p>	
Mar. 27&29 <b>Ann-Marie Fleming</b>	<p><b>Tuesday = PEER EDITING</b></p> <p>Thursday = Fleming, Ann-Marie. <i>The Magical Life ...</i></p>	<u>Reading quiz 4</u>
Apr.3 <b>Ann-Marie Fleming</b>	Fleming, Ann-Marie. <i>The Magical Life ...</i>	<b><u>Tues = Essay 2 due</u></b>

**FINAL EXAM IS ON APRIL 19<sup>TH</sup> FROM 9:00am-12:00pm in 3M65**