**ENGLISH 5804**

Winter 2012

Wednesdays 2:30 – 5:30, Dunton Tower 1816

Professor Jennifer Henderson

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Office hours: Thursdays 1:30 – 3:30

**Historical Injury and the ‘intimate public sphere’ in recent Canadian literature**

This course turns to recent Canadian fiction with a set of questions concerning the genres, tropes, and motifs which currently organize our thinking about historicity. We address literature’s relation to public spheres and in particular to what the cultural theorist Lauren Berlant calls the “intimate public sphere.” We will ask how concepts of memory, historical injury, trauma, haunting, testimony, apology, and recovery illuminate recent Canadian fiction. Our discussions will deal with questions about the usefulness of therapeutic models of trauma and recovery as modes of historicization, especially for a politics of decolonization and in the context of neoliberalism’s emphasis on the individual and the private sphere. We will examine narratives engaged with memory and haunting as modes of thinking about non-linear relations between past, present, and future, taking the form of recurrence and sedimentation. We will also consider texts which connect themselves to the global trend of state apologies and reconciliation initiatives. Here we will attempt to grasp the newness and contingency of state-driven apology, forgiveness, and reconciliation, as relatively new projects and modes of historical understanding. Related questions concern the politics and performativity of historical closure. Our reading will be capped off with some consideration of an attempt to name and critique “late liberal ‘tense’” (Elizabeth Povinelli) as the hegemonic model of historical understanding today. We will consider whether current neoconservative pressures on the idea of Canada as a multicultural beacon, in the form of a new rhetoric of militarization and sacrifice, form part of that hegemonic ‘tense.’

**Primary texts:** all available now at Octopus Books

Joy Kogawa, *Obasan*

Kerri Sakamoto, *The Electrical Field*

John Steffler, *The Afterlife of George Cartwright*

Robert Arthur Alexie, *Porcupines and China Dolls*

Gail Jones, *Sorry*

Gail Scott, *The Obituary*

Joseph Boyden , *Three Day Road*

**Assignments and evaluation:**

Participation, including 3 responses to others’ secondary

reading presentations 15%

Presentation on a novel 25%

Two presentations on secondary readings 30%

Conference-length paper 30%

**Details**

* **Participation (15%):** Having read the week’s materials carefully, you should come with some ideas and questions. The success of our seminar will depend upon your commitment to being prepared for class, your willingness to share ideas, listen attentively, and respond to others. Note: participation grade also includes your 3 responses to other students’ presentations on secondary readings, see below.
* **Presentation on a novel (25%)**  A 20-30 minute presentation on the novel. Have a clear thesis. It is helpful to make your interpretation pivot on a close reading of one or two passages. Take us right into the details and structure of a particular passage or section, to present us with a thesis about it that speaks to its significance to the work as a whole (and to your way of reading the novel as a whole). If you can incorporate some discussion during the presentation or following it, with some questions that stem from what you have presented, all the better. Part of your job is to set a discussion in motion, with the particular frame, angle, questions, passage(s) you have focused on in your presentation. I will ask you to hand in a formal write-up of your presentation, in paragraph form, MLA style, with a title, the following week. For the write-up, you should feel free to incorporate new insights gleaned from class discussion. Your write-up should be approximately 7 pages, double spaced. The grade for this assignment is based on both the in-class portion and the write-up.
* **Two presentations on secondary readings (2 x 15% = 30%)** These are 10 minute presentations. Introduce the text: what is it, what context does it come out of? What is its thesis? Identify the crux of the argument, its key moments. What is the author’s methodology? In other words, what materials does s/he use, how does s/he approach them? What are the rhetorical strategies used by the author? Discuss the way the argument proceeds--in other words, not just what is said but also *how* it is presented, form, strategies of persuasion, figures, modes of address, etc. Do you see any moves the writer makes that seem surprising, or important, or questionable, and why? What might be the significance of this chapter or article from our perspective, or in relation to other texts that week? What is the angle this reading opens up on our primary text? What might be problematic about it? Do you think that there is anything about the primary text that poses a resistance to this critic’s reading or theory, or complicates it? Feel free to make linkages to other texts (primary or secondary) on the course, if this seems helpful. Feel free as well, if you’ve come up against a problem or puzzle, or you are left with a question, to incorporate it into your presentation and lay it out for the class to consider. The week following your presentation, please hand in a write-up of your presentation. This should be about 5 pages, double-spaced.
* **Three responses to others’ presentations on secondary readings (contribute to your participation grade of 15%)** You will sign up for three of these. Read the secondary reading carefully, and digest it in the ways above. You will be asked to note any differences between your take on the article or chapter, and the presenter’s—a difference of emphasis, a different evaluation of the significance or usefulness of the piece. You’ll be given 3-5 minutes to take the floor when the presenter has finished.
* **Conference-length paper** (**30%** 10-12 pages maximum, due date **Wed April 17th, 9 AM, no exceptions** ) On a primary text and topic of your choosing, addressing themes within the parameters of this course. Essays should show your familiarity with the relevant critical critical/theoretical literature. All essays must be in MLA forma. Please deliver your essay to the drop-box at the English Department office by 9am. (Do not email me the essay.)

**Reading Schedule:**

**Jan 9th**  Introduction

Stephen Harper apology

**Jan 16th Memory**

Joy Kogawa,**Obasan**

* Susannah Radstone and Katharine Hodgkin, “Regimes of Memory: An Introduction” AND Part 1, “Believing the Body: An Introduction,” from *Regimes of Memory,* eds. Susannah Radstone and Katharine Hodgkin (book available online through library)
* Scott McFarlane “Covering *Obasan* and the Narrative of Internment” from *Privileging Positions: The Sites of Asian American Studies,* eds. Gary Y. Okihiro et. al (WebCT)

**Jan 23rd**  **Post-traumatic affect**

Kerri Sakamoto, **The Electrical Field**

* Roy Miki, “Unclassified Subjects: Question Marking ‘Japanese Canadian Identity’,” from *Broken Entries: Race, Subjectivity, Writing* (WebCT)
* Marlene Goldman, “A Dangerous Circuit: Loss and the Boundaries of Racialized Subjectivity in Joy Kogawa’s Obasan and Kerri Sakamoto’s The Electrical Field,” *Modern Fiction Studies* 48.2 (Summer 2002) (available online through library)

**Jan 30th Pain and publics**

* Michael Warner, excerpt from *Publics and Counterpublics* (WebCT)
* Wendy Brown, “Wounded Attachments” from *States of Injury* (WebCT)
* Lauren Berlant, “The Subject of True Feeling: Pain, Privacy, and Politics” from

*Left Legalism/Left Critique*, eds. Wendy Brown and Janet Halley (WebCT)

* Jennifer Henderson and Pauline Wakeham, “Introduction,” from *Reconciling Canada: Critical Perspectives on the Culture of Redress* (WebCT)

**Feb 6th Haunting**

John Steffler,**The Afterlife of George Cartwright**

* Marlene Goldman, **“**Introduction: DisPossession and Haunting in Canadian

Fiction,” from *DisPossession: Haunting in Canadian Fiction* (WebCT)

* Cynthia Sugars, “The Impossible Afterlife of George Cartwright: Settler Melancholy and Postcolonial Desire,” *University of Toronto Quarterly* 75.2 (Spring 2006) (available online through library)

**Feb 13th (Post)colonial apology**

Gail Jones,**Sorry**

* Gail Jones, “Sorry-in-the-Sky: Empathetic Unsettlement, Mourning, and the Stolen Generations,” in *Imagining Australia,* eds. Judith Ryan and Chris Wallace-Crabbe (WebCT)
* Haydie Gooder and Jane M. Jacobs, “‘On the Border of the UnSayable’: The Apology in Postcolonizing Australia,” *Interventions* 2.2 (2000) (journal available online through library)

**Feb 20th Trauma and testimony**

Truth and Reconciliation Commission website [www.trc.ca](http://www.trc.ca)

TRC event “Concept Papers” (see links below for papers related to national events)

Inuvik : <http://www.trcnationalevents.ca/websites/Northern/File/pdf/Concept%20Paper_NNE.pdf>

Atlantic Canada: <http://www.myrobust.com/websites/atlantic/File/Concept%20Paper%20atlantic%20august%2010%20km_cp%20_3_.pdf>

* David Lloyd, “Colonial Trauma/Postcolonial Recovery? *Interventions* 2.2 (2000)

(journal available online through library)

* Roger Luckhurst, “Traumaculture,” *New Formations* 50 (2003) (journal available online through library)
* Dian Million, “Trauma, Power and the Therapeutic: Speaking Psychotherapeutic Narratives in an Era of Indigenous Human Rights” from *Reconciling Canada,* eds. Henderson and Wakeham (WebCT)
* Roger Simon, “Towards a Hopeful Practice of Worrying: The Problematics of Listening and the Educative Responsibilities of the IRSTRC” from *Reconciling Canada*, eds. Henderson and Wakeham (WebCT)

**Mar 6th The teleology of recovery**

Robert Arthur Alexie, **Porcupines and China Dolls**

* Keavy Martin, “Truth, Reconciliation, and Amnesia: *Porcupines and China Dolls* and the Canadian Conscience,”*English Studies in Canada* 35.1 (2009) (available online through library)

**Mar 13th Materialist historiography**

Gail Scott, **The Obituary**

* Walter Benjamin, “These on the Philosophy of History,” from *Illuminations* (WebCT)
* Susan Buck-Morss, excerpts from *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (WebCT)

**Mar 20th Imagining alternative publics**

Scott, **The Obituary**

* + - Laurent Berlant and Michael Warner, “Sex in Public,” from Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (WebCT)

**Mar 27th War and national memory**

Joseph Boyden, **Three Day Road**

* + - Herb Wyile, “*Windigo* Killing: Joseph Boyden’s *Three Day Road*,” from *National Plots: Historical Fiction and Changing Ideas of Canada*, eds. Andrea Cabajsky and Brett Joseph Grubisic (WebCT)
    - Graham Carr, “War, History, and the Education of (Canadian) Memory,” from *Contested Pasts: the Politics of Memory,* eds. Susannah Radstone and Katharine Hodgkin (book available electronically through library)

**Apr 3rd Injury and state recognition**

* + - Community Historical Recognition Program

http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/multiculturalism/programs/community.asp

* + - *Redress Remixed* project [www.redressremix.ca](http://www.redressremix.ca)
    - Matt James, “Neoliberal Heritage Redress,” from *Reconciling Canada*, eds. Jennifer Henderson and Pauline Wakeham (WebCT)
    - Ian McKay, excerpts from *Warrior Nation: Rebranding Canada in an Age of*

*Anxiety* (WebCT)

Suggested optional background readings on liberal recognition:

Charles Taylor, “The Politics of Recognition,” from *New Contexts of Canadian Criticism*, eds. Ajay Heble et al. (WebCT)

Elizabeth Povinelli, “Introduction: Critical Common Sense,” from *The Cunning of Recognition*

**Apr 10th Late liberal tense**

* + - Elizabeth Povinelli, excerpts from *Economies of Abandonment: Social Belonging and Endurance in Late Liberalism*

**University regulations:**

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism or unacknowledgement borrowing of another person’s scholarship is a serious offence. It is defined as “us[ing] and pass[ing] off as one’s own idea or product work of another without expressly giving credit to another” (*Carleton Undergraduate Calendar* 2004/2005, 52). This includes material from the web. If you have any questions about when and how to cite reference sources, do not hesitate to ask me. Plagiarism is a serious academic offence.

## Academic accommodations

Students with disabilities requiring academic accommodations should contact the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities to complete the necessary letters of accommodation. After registering with the PMC, make an appointment to meet and discuss your needs with me at least two weeks prior to the first relevant assignment or test.

For Religious Observance:

Students requesting academic accommodation on the basis of religious observance should make a formal, written request to their instructors for alternate dates and/or means of satisfying academic requirements. Such requests should be made during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist, but no later than two weeks before the compulsory academic event. Accommodation is to be worked out directly and on an individual basis between the student and the instructor(s) involved. Instructors will make accommodations in a way that avoids academic disadvantage to the student.

Students or instructors who have questions or want to confirm accommodation eligibility of a religious event or practice may refer to the Equity Services website for a list of holy days and Carleton’s Academic Accommodation policies, or may contact an Equity Services Advisor in the Equity Services Department for assistance.

For Pregnancy:

Pregnant students requiring academic accommodations are encouraged to contact an Equity Advisor in Equity Services to complete a *letter of accommodation*. The student must then make an appointment to discuss her needs with the instructor at least two weeks prior to the first academic event in which it is anticipated the accommodation will be required.