

Carleton University
Winter 2014
Department of English

ENGL 4961A
Aboriginal Literature II: Contemporary Aboriginal Literature

Time:	Wednesday, 2:30 – 5:30
Location:	114 PA (Please confirm location on Carleton Central)
Prerequisite:	Fourth-year standing in Honours English
Instructor:	Professor A. G. Ruffo
Office Hours:	Wednesday 11:00 – 12:00 pm; Wed. 2:30 – 4:00, or by appointment
Office:	1918 Dunton Tower
Email:	armand_ruffo@carleton.ca

Course Description:

This seminar will examine a wide range of literary texts, which will include storytelling, fiction and poetry, as well as other forms of creative expression, such as film and music, produced by Indigenous writers nationally and internationally. In looking at these various forms of cultural production, we will consider their role in creating a sense of identity and belonging, as well as a vehicle for speaking back to both the colonizer and the colonized themselves. For example, what can the oral tradition tell us about the epistemology of a people? What can colonized peoples hope to achieve in re-imagining their experiences. Can a creative work serve as an effective vehicle for attaining redress? In order to gain a broader understanding of the ongoing anti-colonial discourse which is the hallmark of current cultural production, we will consider socio-political and historical influences; we will also draw on the critical work of Indigenous traditionalists and scholars for culturally specific perspectives. Recent work in such areas as diaspora, healing, reconciliation, self-determination and resistance will be considered. Because this is a seminar, students are expected to participate actively in class discussion and be prepared to present their work in class.

Evaluation:

One Seminar:	25% (Total time: 45 minutes. 30 minutes for the presentation and 15 minutes to facilitate class discussion; to be written up formally and handed in.)
One Report:	10% (15 - 20 minutes; formally written up and handed in, approx. 5 pages.)
One Essay:	40% (13 - 15 pages)

Textual Responses: 10% All one page responses are to be handed in directly after class. Late responses will not be accepted. If they are on your computer but you did not have time to print them out then they will be considered late.

Participation: 15% A successful seminar depends on students actively engaging with the material.

Seminar: It is essential that students keep up with seminar readings and contribute to class discussion; students will conduct one seminar and will be responsible for allowing time to pose and answer questions; students will read assigned critical essays for their report; students may choose to be 'creative' in their seminars and use visual or auditory aids. However, please be aware of the time constraint and let me know your approach beforehand.

Report: Students will do one report on a couple of critical essays assigned beforehand. The objective is to relate these critical works to the material being studied. Students will present these essays in a concise, clear manner and relate them to the texts studied on the course, making reference to the themes and issues discussed. Students will adhere to the time allotted.

Ten Textual Responses: These one page responses are not simply summaries or précis's of the material examined for which you will receive zero. You are expected to think about the material and engage critically -- and even emotionally with it. What do you think about it in the context of the course? How do you feel about it?

Participation: For a successful seminar, it is essential that students read all the material on the course and not just the texts for their seminars. It is also essential that students actively engage with the material and the ideas presented in class. Failure to engage with each text will be noted. Students who miss more than two classes (9 hrs) will receive a failing grade for participation.

Essays: General topics will be handed out in class. Students will be expected to develop their own thesis. Academic standards are expected. The paper should be thoroughly documented and free of grammatical, spelling, and punctuation errors. Otherwise papers will be penalized. Papers will not be accepted after the due date without a medical certificate. Late papers will be marked without constructive criticism and penalized. Do not e-mail essays. Internet sources must be documented thoroughly. I suggest you do not use Wikipedia as it is an unregulated source. For writing, research and documentation the MLA style is mandatory. Essays should be handed to me personally on the assigned due date, or dropped off at the English Department office located at 1812 Dunton Tower. When the office is closed, use the mail slot beside the office counter. Those essays are date-stamped the next morning and put in my mailbox.

Plagiarism: See the statement on Instructional Offences in the Undergraduate Calendar. There is no excuse for academic dishonesty.

Texts (Subject to Change): available from Haven Books, 43 Seneca St. 613-730-9888.

1. Mat Dembicki, ed. *Trickster, Native American Tales, A Graphic Collection*.
2. Thomas King, *A Short History of Indians In Canada*, Harper-Perennial.
3. Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony*, Penguin.
4. Kim Scott, *True Country*, Fremantle Press
5. Marilyn Dumont, *A Really Good Brown Girl*, Brick.
6. Joseph Boyden, *Through Black Spruce*, Penguin.
7. Joy Harjo, *The Woman Who Fell From the Sky*, Norton.

In addition to the above texts, students will be assigned theoretical readings related to Aboriginal literature, which will serve to provide a framework for studying the texts on the course. Although there is no prerequisite, it would serve students well to familiarize themselves with the general history of Aboriginal peoples in the Americas and Australia.