

ENGL 5804 Longing for (Dis)Location: The Contemporary Canadian Long Poem

This course investigates the contemporary Canadian long poem, a generous and flexible form celebrated for its interweaving of diverse literary and non-literary genres. These include the classical epic, imagist lyric, the verse play, the novel, autobiography, biography, history, photographs, newspaper articles, seed catalogues, maps, and field notes. Our study of the long poem will offer readers critical opportunities to engage genre studies, gender and queer studies, trans- and post-national studies, postcolonial studies, critical race and ethnicity studies, indigenous studies, and environmental studies. While the contemporary long poem may be seen to refuse the colonial logic of claiming territory and asserting the European self in a New World as displayed in the nineteenth-century narrative poem, it is still profoundly concerned with questions of location and dislocation. The long poem emits a tremendous energy and achieves a kind of luxury of space as it extends itself through juxtaposition, serializing, sequencing, and interrogative recontextualization of voices, intertexts, and discourses. How might its capacious form and archeological depth prove especially suited to opportunities for tenuous (dis)locations in and (re)negotiations of self, body, family, language, memory, history, ecosystem, community, nation, and complex social identities? What kinds of consolidations and/or transgressions of identity, agency, and ideology are performed by the long poem? How does the contemporary long poem work against the epic impulse to sing the “tale of the tribe,” a singular story of national identity? What are the temporal and spatial consequences of structures of extension, expansion, accumulation, association, and juxtaposition? What are the myriad forms of desire and longing manifest in the structures of elongation, delay, anticipation, and prolongation? How is desire for (dis)location rendered complex by variable structures of layering, palimpsest, accumulation, simultaneity, disjuncture, and rupture? When is the mixing of forms, discourses, and voices related to the postcolonial mixing of languages, cultures, and ethnic/racial identities? What do Canadian long poems ultimately say about being at home or unhomeliness in (trans)national space?

Course Texts: (Available at Octopus Books, 3rd Avenue in the Glebe):

Thesen, Sharon, ed. *The New Long Poem Anthology*. 2nd ed. Vancouver: Talonbooks, 2001.

Additional book-length long poems:

Marlatt, Daphne. *Steveston*. 2nd ed. Ronsdale: 1974, 2001.

McInnis, Nadine. *Two Hemispheres*. Brick: 2007.

Lilburn, Tim. *To the River*. M & S: 1999.

Halfe, Louise. *Blue Marrow*. 2nd ed. Coteau: 1994, 2004

Clarke, George Elliott. *Whylah Falls*. 3rd ed. Gaspereau: 1990, 2010.

Course Assignments:

3 Short Response Papers – 30%

Article Critique – 15%

Seminar - 25%

Essay - 30%