

## **Department of English**

**ENGL 5804G: Reading Old Age in Contemporary Canadian Literature  
Winter 2015**

**Wednesdays, 6:05-8:55**

**Instructor: Sara Jamieson**

**Office Hours: Tuesdays, Thursdays 1-2, or by appt.**

**Dunton Tower 1819**

**Office Phone: (613) 520-2600, ex. 2431**

**e-mail: sara\_jamieson@carleton.ca**

The rapid aging of the population has been characterized as a phenomenon whose effects on our world will be of a magnitude on a par with climate change and peak oil. In the midst of this rhetoric of crisis, it is especially important that we examine very closely the ways in which we view the aging process and older persons, and this course considers how literary texts can help us to do this. The course will examine a selection of novels, short stories, poems, and films that explore the social, psychological, and political complexities of growing old in Canada in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. In reading these texts, we will take up such questions as how they engage with conceptions of “successful” aging circulating in contemporary culture, what narrative strategies they utilize to represent aging subjectivities in the context of dementia and memory loss, and how they represent the politics of caregiving within the family and also within the various kinds of institutional environments that have been built, destroyed, adapted, and re-built in order to house older people in need of care. More broadly, the course will introduce students to the full range of theoretical and methodological issues current in the dynamic new field of literary age studies, inviting them to add age to the forms of difference such as disability, gender, sexuality, class, race, and ethnicity, that animate the field of Canadian literary and cultural studies.

**Required Texts (available at Haven Books, 43 Seneca St., [613] 730-9888)**

**Margaret Laurence, *The Stone Angel***

**Joan Barfoot, *Exit Lines***

**Jenna Butler, *Wells***

**Janet Hepburn, *Flee, Fly, Flown***

**Paul Quarrington, *King Leary***

**Mordecai Richler, *Barney's Version***

**Lola Lemire Tostevin, *The Other Sister***

**Sarah Polley, *Away From Her* (film to be screened in class)**

**Other required readings, including short stories and secondary source materials will be placed on reserve at McOdrum Library.**

### **Evaluation**

Seminar presentation: 20%

Final Research Essay: 30% Due April 1

Annotated Bibliography: 10% Due March 4

Discussion Questions: 5%

Two Response Papers: 5% each

Final Test: 20%

Class Contribution: 5%

### **Assignment Guidelines and Objectives:**

**Seminar Presentation: (a sign-up sheet will be posted on my office door after the first class; presentation dates will be available on a first-come, first-served basis)**

This assignment requires you to make a polished 20-minute presentation to the class. The evaluation criteria for your presentation are in some ways similar to those for an essay: I expect a coherent and significant thesis that is developed into a convincing argument about an aspect of the text(s), rather than a series of random observations. Think of yourself in this assignment as teaching an aspect of the text to the rest of the class: keep in mind what it is you want us to learn and why you think it is important. Grading will also take into account your public-speaking demeanor: a relaxed, rehearsed, and engaging delivery is the most effective way to communicate your ideas. One purpose of seminar presentations is to stimulate class discussion, so end your presentation with two or three intelligent and thoughtful questions about the text(s) you have discussed.

**You are required to submit your presentation notes for grading after your presentation.**

**Objectives:** development of editing and organizational skills, teaching skills, public speaking skills, fluency in class discussion

### **Research Essay: 15-20 pages, due April 1**

In a research essay, I expect a significant and engaging thesis statement that is developed into a coherent argument, supported by direct quotations from the primary text and intelligent use of secondary source materials. There is no required number of secondary sources, but you are encouraged to be as comprehensive as possible.

**It is acceptable to develop your seminar presentation into a research paper, but you are not required to do this.**

Correct punctuation, grammar, and adherence to MLA style are required.

**Objectives:** finding and assessing secondary source materials, close reading skills, writing skills

**Papers are due in class on the due date. The drop box in the English dept. office (DT 1812) may also be used to submit work on the due date, but the drop box is to be used at your own risk. In the unlikely event that a paper submitted to the drop box does not reach my mailbox, you must produce a copy of the paper immediately when this is brought to your attention. Do not use Web CT for the submission of class work.**

**Annotated Bibliography:**

This assignment is designed to assist you in carrying out your research for your final essay. The bibliography should include five entries, and can include theoretical and historical sources about aging, literary criticism and theory related to your topic, and secondary source materials on the primary text or author under discussion. Please list each citation in MLA format followed by a brief summary of its content.

**Discussion Questions:**

For each week (ideally, depending on numbers) I would like someone in the class to lead a discussion on the secondary reading(s) assigned for that day by coming to class with 3 prepared questions on the content of those readings. Questions should be fairly specific (i.e. not “What did you all think of this reading?”). More successful approaches might include asking students for their take on issues raised that you might have found problematic or confusing, or asking about how the readings in question relate to the issues raised in the primary texts, or speak to or depart from ideas presented in other secondary readings that have already been discussed. Grading will be based on the incisiveness of your questions, and how they reflect your own reading of the texts in question, rather than on how other students answer them.

**Objectives: develop teaching skills, discussion skills**

**Response Papers:**

You are required to submit two 2-3 page double-spaced response papers over the course of the term. Each is worth 5% of the total grade for the course, so the response papers count for 10% of the total grade. These papers represent an opportunity for you to record your responses to and questions

about the assigned readings for a particular class, and to issues that arise more generally in the course. You are free to write on any aspect of the texts that you choose, but I do expect a polished, coherent writing style (i.e. no point form).

**Objectives:** demonstrate knowledge about required texts, focus ideas for class discussion, develop writing and analytical skills

### **Attendance and Class Contribution:**

Attendance is essential to a positive seminar experience, and will be taken each class. The best seminars are the ones with lots of lively discussion. Come to class prepared to discuss and ask questions about the assigned readings. This is a courtesy to your fellow students, as you will be responding to their seminar questions, just as they will be responding to yours. Remember: in this class there is no such thing as a stupid question!

**Objectives: develop confidence and articulacy in discussions**

### **Late Penalty**

Extensions can be negotiated in cases of documented accommodation, illness, or family crisis. If you know that you will have a legitimate problem meeting the deadline, please arrange an extension with me as soon as possible, at least 24 hours before the due date.

Late essays will lose two marks per day and may be returned without written feedback.

**NOTE: Please keep a backup electronic and/or hard copy of your essay. You are responsible for keeping these backups and submitting them upon request.**

### **Academic Integrity**

“The University states unequivocally that it demands academic integrity from all its members. Academic dishonesty, in whatever form, is ultimately destructive to the values of the University. Furthermore, it is unfair and discouraging to those students who pursue their studies honestly. The integrity of academic life and the degrees conferred by the university [are] dependent upon the honesty and soundness of scholarship. Conduct by any person that adversely affects this process is a serious matter. Students who violate the principles of academic integrity through dishonest practices undermine the value of the Carleton degree. Dishonesty in scholarly activity cannot be tolerated. Any student who violates the standards of academic

integrity will be subject to appropriate sanctions.” –Carleton University  
Academic Integrity Policy

Academic integrity violations will not be tolerated. All suspected cases will be reported to the dean’s office at once and prosecuted to the fullest extent possible, from failure of this course at the least to expulsion from the University. No piece of work written for another course may be submitted for credit in this one.

Before completing any assignment, it is your responsibility to ensure that you understand what plagiarism is and how to cite sources properly.

### **Academic Accommodation**

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term because of disability, pregnancy or religious obligations. Please review the course outline promptly and write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist.

Students with disabilities requiring academic accommodations in this course must register with the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) for a formal evaluation of disability-related needs. Documented disabilities could include but are not limited to mobility/physical impairments, specific Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/psychological disabilities, sensory disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and chronic medical conditions. Registered PMC students are required to contact the PMC, 613-520-6608, every term to ensure that your Instructor receives your Letter of Accommodation, no later than two weeks before the first assignment is due or the first in-class test/midterm requiring accommodations. If you only require accommodations for your formally scheduled exam(s) in this course, please submit your request for accommodations to PMC by Nov. 11, 2011 for the Fall term and March 7, 2012 for the Winter term.

You can visit the Equity Services website to view the policies and to obtain more detailed information on academic accommodation at <http://carleton.ca/equity/accommodation>.

**Students with disabilities:** contact Paul Menton Centre (6608) to obtain letters of accommodation.

**For Religious Observance:** To be worked out on individual basis with instructor. Contact Equity Services Website or an Equity Advisor (5622) for Policy and list of Holy Days.  
([www.carleton.ca/equity](http://www.carleton.ca/equity))

**For Pregnancy:** Contact Equity Services (5622) to obtain letters of accommodation.

**Class Schedule:**

**Wed. Jan. 7:** Welcome and Introduction

**Wed. Jan. 14:** *The Stone Angel*

Robert Butler, "The Life Review: An Interpretation of Reminiscence in the Aged," *Psychiatry* 26 (1963) pp. 65-76 (on reserve [Ares])  
Amelia DeFalco, *Uncanny Subjects* (Introduction, Ch. 1 [pp. 1-52]) (on reserve)

**Wed. Jan. 21:** *The Stone Angel*

Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny" (on reserve [Ares])  
Kathleen Woodward, *Aging and Its Discontents* ch. 3: The Mirror Stage of Old Age, pp. 53-71 (on reserve)

**Wed. Jan 28:** *Exit Lines*

Stephen Katz, *Disciplining Old Age* ch. 2: "The Elderly Population and the Modern Life Course," pp. 49-76 (on reserve)  
Stephen Katz, *Cultural Aging* ch. 7: "Busy Bodies: Activity, Aging, and the Management of Everyday Life," pp. 121-139 (e-book available through library website)

**Wed. Feb. 4:** *Wells*

Secondary reading TBA

**Wed. Feb. 11:** *Barney's Version*

Pia Kontos, "Alzheimer Expressions or Expressions Despite Alzheimer's?: Philosophical Reflections on Selfhood and Embodiment" (pdf download available at: <http://arcade.stanford.edu/journals/occasion/issues/volume-4/issue->)

**Feb. 16-20 ☺ Reading Week ☺**

**Wed. Feb. 25:** *Flee, Fly, Flown*

Anne Davis Basting, "Dementia and the Performance of Self," pp. 202-13 (in *Bodies in Commotion: Disability and Performance*) (on reserve)

**Wed. March 4:** *King Leary*

Sally Chivers, *The Silvering Screen*, Introduction, Ch. 5 (on reserve)

**Annotated Bibliography Due**

**Wed. March 11:** Film Screening: *Away From Her* (dir. Sarah Polley)

**Wed. March 18:** "The Bear Came Over the Mountain" (in *Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage*)

"Mrs. Cross and Mrs. Kidd" (in *The Moons of Jupiter*)

"Powers" (in *Runaway*)

(all stories on reserve)

Kathleen Woodward: "From Virtual Cyborgs to Biological Time Bombs: Technocriticism and the Material Body," *Culture on the Brink: Ideologies of Technology* pp. 25-37

Mary Russo: "Aging and the Scandal of Anachronism," *Figuring Age: Women, Bodies, Generations* pp. 20-33

(all secondary materials on reserve)

**Wed. March 25:** *The Other Sister*

Secondary reading TBA

**Wed. April 1:** Wrap-Up, Final Essay Due

**Wed. April 8:** Test

