

Carleton University  
Early Summer 2014  
Department of English

**ENGL 5806S: The Canadian Historical Novel**

**Mondays and Wednesdays 11:30-2:30**  
**Location: *Please confirm location on Carleton Central***

**Instructor: Dr M. Susan Birkwood**  
**Office: 1928 Dunton Tower**  
**Phone: 520-2600 ext. 2302**  
**email: [Susan.Birkwood@carleton.ca](mailto:Susan.Birkwood@carleton.ca)**  
**Office Hours: Wednesdays 2:45-4:30 and by appointment**

**Course Description:**

In 1902, Jonathan Nield writes, “The spirit of a period is like the selfhood of a human being—something that cannot be handed on; try as we may, it is impossible for us to breathe the atmosphere of a bygone time, since all those thousand-and-one details which went to the building up of both individual and general experience, can never be reproduced.” In 2010, Jerome de Groot suggests that “fictionalising about history is a more honest way of creating a narrative about something which is essentially unknowable.” During this course we will discuss the genre of historical fiction (with some reference to studies such as those by Georg Lukàcs, de Groot, and Herb Wyile), and we will examine twentieth- and twenty-first-century texts that seek to bring particular regions, peoples, and moments in Canada’s history to imaginative expression.

Literary explorations of this country’s official and unofficial histories often employ late eighteenth and nineteenth century non-fiction texts as intertexts, as they review and revise past events and historical figures. Some chart the continuing legacy of cultural contact and of imperialism on colonised peoples and immigrant populations, while constructing alternative perspectives on key events in our history. As de Groot points out, “A historical novel might consider the articulation of nationhood via the past, highlight the subjectivism of narratives of History, underline the importance of the realist mode of writing to notions of authenticity, question writing itself, and attack historiographic convention.” It is not surprising, then, that historical fiction often incorporates the conventions of other genres—most notably of the *Bildungsroman* and the Gothic—and we will consider such generic intersections.

**Course Objectives:**

- To consider these texts’ relationship to literary and national history
- To discuss the relationship between history and fiction
- To examine the construction of region, ethnicity, and gender within these texts
- To engage with theoretical and critical works relevant to these texts
- To develop further students’ critical reading, writing, research, and oral presentation skills

**Required Texts:**

- Books are available at **Haven Books** 43 Seneca Street, Ottawa (at Sunnyside, one block from campus)
- <<http://www.havenbooks.ca/carletonsite/carletonhome-e.php>>

Howard O'Hagan, *Tay John*

Michael Ondaatje, *In the Skin of a Lion*

Timothy Findley, *The Wars*

Joseph Boyden, *Three Day Road*

Jane Urqhart, *Away*

Margaret Sweatman, *When Alice Lay Down with Peter*

**Evaluation:**

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Seminar on course text                   | 25% |
| Oral report on secondary source          | 10% |
| Written analyses of course texts (2x10%) | 20% |
| Participation                            | 15% |
| Research Essay (due June 23)             | 30% |

***Please note:***

- You must complete all of the term work to be eligible to pass the course.
- **You will be required to submit print copies of your assignments for marking and to provide electronic back-ups in cuLearn. However, you should still keep a copy of each assignment until the original has been returned, and be prepared to submit a copy immediately if need be.**
- Do not slide assignments under my office door. There is a drop-off slot outside of the English Department office (DT 1812).
- ❖ There are policies in place to support students who require academic accommodation (see below). Should you, though, find yourself in circumstances that threaten to preclude your successful completion of an assignment, please contact me before the particular deadline. I would much rather work with you to find a solution than have you face the possibility of failing the course.
- ❖ “Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.” (FASS Teaching Regulations)

**Academic Accommodation:**

- ❖ You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows:
- ❖ **Pregnancy obligation:** 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. For more details visit the Equity Services website: <http://www2.carleton.ca/equity/>
- ❖ **Religious obligation:** 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. For more details visit the Equity Services website: <http://www2.carleton.ca/equity/>
- ❖ **Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:** The **Paul Menton Centre** for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD),

psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or [pmc@carleton.ca](mailto:pmc@carleton.ca) for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send me your **Letter of Accommodation** at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (*if applicable*). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam (*if applicable*) at <http://www2.carleton.ca/pmc/new-and-current-students/dates-and-deadlines/>

- ❖ You can visit the Equity Services website to view the policies and to obtain more detailed information on academic accommodation at <http://www2.carleton.ca/equity/>

**Definition and examples of plagiarism excerpted from Carleton's Academic Integrity Policy:**  
[http://www1.carleton.ca/studentaffairs/ccms/wp-content/ccms-files/academic\\_integrity\\_policy.pdf](http://www1.carleton.ca/studentaffairs/ccms/wp-content/ccms-files/academic_integrity_policy.pdf)

Plagiarism is presenting, whether intentional or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one's own.

- Plagiarism includes **reproducing or paraphrasing** portions of someone else's published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one's own without proper citation or reference to the original source. Examples of sources from which the ideas, expressions of ideas or works of others may be drawn from include but are not limited to: books, articles, papers, literary compositions and phrases, performance compositions, chemical compounds, art works, laboratory reports, research results, calculations and the results of calculations, diagrams, constructions, computer reports, computer code/software, and material on the internet.

Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, paraphrased material, algorithms, formulae, scientific or mathematical concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another's data or research findings;
- submitting a computer program developed in whole or in part by someone else, with or without modifications, as one's own;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another's works and/or failing to use quotation marks.

**Written Analyses** (of course texts):

**Length:** approx. 4 pages (typed, double-spaced, 12-point font) \*quotations do not figure in this count.

**Subject matter:** any 2 course texts **other than** the one that is the subject of your **seminar** presentation.

Choose from the list of topics, or consult with me about your own topic(s).

**Due:** **during the classes on the novel that is the subject of your written analysis\*\***

- These short analyses are meant to be original work. Please do not consult published or internet commentaries on the texts in question for these short analyses. If you do need to look something up, make sure that you document any sources cited or consulted. **You should include**

**specific, documented references to the texts in question to support your points, using the MLA format for punctuating and documenting quotations.**

- Analyses should have a **clear thesis** and be **grammatically correct**. (Get to the point quickly; don't waste time on vague preamble.)
- **\*\*You will receive a 2% bonus for each written analysis you submit during the first of the two classes on the particular novel.**

### **Seminar Presentations:**

Length: approx. 20-25 minutes + 5-10 minutes of discussion (during or at the end of the seminar)

Requirements:

- **The week prior** to the presentation: A statement of topic and brief outline of what your main concerns will be in the seminar. (You may simply tell me what you are planning to do, or you may e-mail me.) I will then post the information in cuLearn.
- **On the day** of the presentation:
  - 1) A copy of your Works Cited list made available in print or electronic form for each class member. (I can facilitate the distribution of the electronic list.)
  - 2) A copy of your seminar notes and Works Cited to hand in to me. (Seminar notes need to be legible, but they are just to help me when I am composing my comments on your oral presentation.)

General Guidelines: Choose one from the list of topics, or formulate your own in consultation with me. *Please keep the following guidelines in mind as you prepare your seminar presentations. They relate to aspects of the presentations that will be evaluated.*

- **Thesis**: Formulate a thesis for the seminar and integrate any background information or description into your overall argument.
- **Clarity**: Clearly introduce the topic and do your best to demonstrate a clear understanding of the material. Introduce secondary sources that you use—with a signal phrase, at least.
- **Organisation**: Organise your seminar in a coherent manner, with clear transitions and connections between parts.
- **Interest**: Present your material in a manner that reflects your interest and holds the listeners' interest. (Eye contact with the audience is important.)
- **Concision**: Make sure that you work effectively within the time constraints.
- **Audio/Visual component**: You may make use of the computer in the media cabinet for PowerPoint presentations or access to the internet. Bring in a flash drive or e-mail yourself the presentation—whatever works. Just allow for software differences. **\*\*If you use a Mac and want to use your own laptop for the presentation, you may need an adapter and cable to use your laptop with the Carleton equipment. I can sign them out from IMS if you give me some notice.**
- **Acknowledgement of sources and Works Cited list**: All primary and secondary sources should be acknowledged during the seminar—this includes photo credits.
- **Facilitation of discussion**

### **Oral Reports:**

The reports are meant to introduce secondary sources to the class, so the reports do need to be informative as well as evaluative. Consequently, the length of the reports may vary somewhat, depending on the work selected; however, try to stay within 10 minutes.

Subject matter: one of the supplementary readings in the list provided related to the novel assigned the week of your report. If you find an article that you wish to present on that is not in the list, you need to consult with me one week in advance.

Objectives: to provide your classmates with an overview of the article and its critical orientation, its main arguments and proofs, along with your assessment of the material.

**Research Essay** (I will distribute a separate assignment sheet later in the term)

Length: 14-16 pages. Indented quotations do not figure in this count.

Subject matter: any of the novels **other than** the one on which you presented for your seminar, **unless** you wish to engage in a comparison / contrast of your seminar text and another course text.

- **You are expected to know the University's policy and procedures regarding plagiarism. (See the section on "Academic Integrity Standards" in the University Calendar.) Unacceptable paraphrasing does count as a form of plagiarism. Be particularly careful in your use and documentation of internet sources. I shall report cases of unacknowledged use of sources to the Chair of the English Department.**
- Essays are to conform to MLA format. Errors in documentation and formatting will cost you marks.

**Late Penalty**: 5% per business day. Please keep in mind, however, that I have deadline for the submission of final grades.

**Participation and Peer-Support Components:**

- Attendance: Absence from 2 or more classes will result in a participation grade of 0, unless you are able to provide supporting documentation. (Please arrive promptly.)
- Active participation in discussion, including questions for presenters.

**cuLearn**

**Course Materials and Grades**: I will post course materials (e.g. the syllabus, web links) and any PowerPoint slides that I use in class to the cuLearn site for this course, and I will update the Grades report periodically. Please do compare my records to yours before the end of the course, and let me know if you discover any errors or omissions.

**News Forum and Assignments**: If I need to send a message to the class, I will post it to the News Forum.

- I will create assignments within cuLearn in order to facilitate the submission of electronic back-ups of assignments.
- I will post selected seminar and report topics as soon as presenters tell me which topics they have chosen. Please consult cuLearn prior to class so that you can better formulate questions for presenters.

**Schedule** (subject to change, if necessary)

| Dates     | Monday   | Wednesday   |
|-----------|--|---|
| May 5, 7  | Introduction<br>Seminar scheduling   | Jerome De Groot, <i>The Historical Novel: Chapter 2, "Origins"</i><br>Herb Wyile, <i>Speculative Fictions: Chapter 1, "History, Theory, and the Contemporary Canadian Historical Novel"</i> (e-book available)<br>• see Ares Reserves information in cuLearn<br>Howard O'Hagan, <i>Tay John</i><br><i>Analysis 1a</i> |
| 12, 14    | <i>Tay John</i><br><i>Analysis 1b</i>  | Michael Ondaatje, <i>In the Skin of a Lion</i><br><i>Analysis 2a</i>  |
| 19, 21    | VICTORIA DAY—NO CLASS  | <i>In the Skin of a Lion</i><br><i>Analysis 2b</i>  |
| 26, 28    | Jane Urquhart, <i>Away</i><br><i>Analysis 3a</i>                               | <i>Away</i><br><i>Analysis 3b</i>   |
| June 2, 4 | Margaret Sweatman, <i>When Alice Lay Down with Peter</i><br><i>Analysis 4a</i> | <i>When Alice Lay Down with Peter</i><br><i>Analysis 4b</i>   |
| 9, 11     | Timothy Findley, <i>The Wars</i><br><i>Analysis 5a</i>                         | <i>The Wars</i><br><i>Analysis 5a</i><br>Joseph Boyden, <i>Three Day Road</i><br><i>Analysis 6b</i>   |
| 16, 18    | <i>Three Day Road</i><br><i>Analysis 6b</i>                                    | Office hours for essay consultation   |

- If there is interest, we could plan a tour of the Ottawa Jail Hostel at 75 Nicholas Street