

**Carleton University
Fall/Winter 2013-2014
Department of English**

**FYSM 1004G: Writers and Writing in Canada
Mondays and Wednesdays, 4:05 pm – 5:25 pm**

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This course will engage students with issues of what constitutes “writing,” particularly from a Canadian point of view. Questions we will consider include the following: What influences authors as they write? Are those influences important in studying their work? What experiences do various authors have as they attempt to write? What does it take to be considered a Canadian author? What makes a text Canadian? What stories can be told and by whom? What issues exist in getting texts published and by whom? What is the difference between a small press and a traditional one?

At the same time, we will work on learning how to deconstruct texts, to analyze and understand how to approach and analyze them critically. To facilitate this type of learning, several guest speakers, both writers and publishers, have agreed to visit our classroom in order to offer workshops and lectures. In addition, we will have several class outings to events including poetry readings, the writer’s festival, dramatic performances, as well as to the National Library and Archives of Canada, among others.

Students will be exposed to series of National Film Board documentaries that offer biographies of such authors as Timothy Findlay, Margaret Laurence, etc., so that they can learn who these authors are, from a human point of view.

We will also view films that challenge ideas of literature and what writing means in terms of recording memory and the real life stories of various ethnic groups in Canada. These will include, for example, “Voices of the Dead”, a documentary that begins and ends in a graveyard just north of Collingwood, Ontario, where gravestones reveal a literary story of domination and subjugation of black people who escaped slavery and came to Canada seeking freedom and community.

In relation to these ideas, we will also question how history, education, language and politics have, and continue to, silence various groups of people and different ethnicities. We will consider, for example, how reading and writing was, historically, available only to a few – and how that has impacted the history and stories of such groups of individuals as loggers, voyageurs, farmers and blue-collar workers. We will apply these same questions to the way in which, historically, Seiks, Japanese, Irish and other immigrant groups have been treated and how that has affected the way in which their stories have been brought forward. We will discuss ideas of who has the right to tell whose stories -- particularly from the perspective of our First Nation’s peoples.

In addition to issues of writing, students will explore the problems of readership in Canada. They will learn about the problems of getting published in this country, and the importance of keeping books in print (and why this is not happening). We will learn about publishing companies and the way in which they are organized. We will explore different avenues for, and forms of, publishing.

Assignments:

Throughout the course students will be required to keep a journal in which they record their reactions and reflections on and about writing, as well as new insights on the power of language and literature first and foremost, as a writer and as a reader, but also as it relates to Canadian history and identity. They will also develop their own creative literary pieces, which will be workshopped on an ongoing basis, and ultimately shared with their peers.

At the end of the class, the students will have an opportunity to participate in a publishing venture, with the goal of advancing the first year creative and literary magazine which has been designed by, and aimed at, first year students. In it, all the creative pieces my students have developed over the course, will be published and shared with other FYSM students.

Summary:

The intrinsic goal of this course is to “make it real” in terms of exposing students to various types of literature and a wide variety of authors, while developing their own creative writing. The purpose is to elevate students’ belief in the power of literature and promote their involvement in it as authors.

Required texts (tentative):

Cost of a ticket to attend a play (to be announced – generally less than \$20)

L.M. Montgomery, *The Blue Castle*

G. Roy, *The Road Past Altamont*

H. MacLennan, *The Watch that Ends the Night*

T. Findley, *Not Wanted on the Voyage*

Y. Martel, *Life of Pi*

M. Richler, *Barney’s Version*

M. Atwood, *Alias Grace*

G. Geddes, *15 Canadian Poets x 3*

(Note: all of the above texts can be located fairly easily at second hand book stores around town. They will also be available at the University book store. One particular edition is not required.)

Evaluation:

Creative writing assignment	25%
Publishing assignment	25%
Seminar	15%
Workshops	20%
Attendance and participation	15%

General Expectations, Course Policies and Classroom Etiquette:

Students are expected to:

- attend all classes, showing up on time and staying for the duration of the class and bringing with them the text(s) assigned for that day's class. If you miss a class it is the student's responsibility to get notes from another student.
- have read the assigned material for that day.
- be prepared to discuss the texts in a thoughtful manner. Critical reading, writing and analytical skills cannot be learned from a book alone, and asking questions about the readings and contributing to class discussions will undoubtedly help you to better understand the material, hone your critical reading and interpretative skills, and prepare you well for upper-year classes where participation will account for part of your final grade.
- participate in workshops, class discussions and outings..
- use WebCT on a regular basis so that you are up to date with any readings, assignments, handouts, or announcements that are posted.
- **(I strongly recommend you familiarize yourself with this policy):** Please ensure that you turn off all cell phones, mp3 players, and other electronic equipment **BEFORE** class begins. It is incredibly disrespectful, distracting and frustrating for professors to watch students send and receive text messages during lectures, and students who are caught using their cell phones will be asked to leave class. Laptop computers are to be used **ONLY** to take lecture notes or to share assignments. Any student who uses his/her computer to play games, go on Facebook, watch videos on youtube, check email, surf the internet, and/or any other activity that is not related to class will be asked to leave.
- Attendance will be taken periodically and absences will be noted. Students who miss **6 or more classes per term will not be able to pass the course**, as all requirements must be fulfilled in order to successfully complete the course.
- The best way to get in contact with me is by email at ctracey@connect.carleton.ca. I will respond to emails in a timely fashion (usually within 24 hours, though it could be longer on weekends) and especially to those that ask clear, precise and specific questions.
- I am also available to meet with students to discuss any aspect of the course during my office hours, and if you are unable to make it to my office hours, we can reschedule a time to meet that is convenient to both of us.
- In the unlikely event that I need to cancel a class due to illness, personal/family emergency, etc., I will do my best to post an announcement as soon as possible to WebCT. It's a good idea to check WebCT for such announcements before coming to class.

******Please Note:** All assignments must be submitted in order to fulfill the course requirements (read: in order to pass the course)