

Department of English, Carleton University

ENGL 5002F

Fall 2012

\*\*\* Preliminary Course Outline / Subject to Change

**Studies in Theory: Contemporary Literary Theory: Biopolitics and Thanatopolitics (X with CLMD 6903F)**

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**Course description:**

In recent scholarship, there has been a turn to the *bios*: biocapital, biovalue, biobanking, bioinformatics, biometrics, biosociality, biopedagogy, biocitizenship, biomedicine, and biosciences, to name just a few. This course begins with Michel Foucault's understanding of biopolitics and proceeds to investigate the ways that "life" circulates discursively today – "life" subject to governmental control, surveillance, regulation, segregation, health and welfare schemes, pro-life policies and improvement programmes, through forecasts, education, medicine, and statistical measures, among others. In tandem with the rise of the *bios*, however, there has been a gradual disqualification of death: while the modern state "makes live," it also "lets die": disposable life, the convicted criminal on death row, the refugee, the enemy combatant at Abu Ghraib or Guantánamo Bay, the Jew in the concentration camp, the African-American body of Katrina's New Orleans, the "living dead" awaiting organ harvesting, and countless other lives swept aside as "collateral damage," through modern wars, the onward march of globalizing capital. In the same breath, we might also speak of Attawapiskat, of quotidian (normalized) "deaths" in the postcolony, of the prisoner, the mentally ill, the disabled, the queer, and a host of others whose bodies are increasingly co-opted by identitarian and neoliberal rights (This course is cross-listed with CLMD 6903F.)