

**Carleton University
Fall 2023 Preliminary Course Outline
Department of English**

**ENGL 4135A: Studies in Publishing
The Canadian Modernist Poetry Project: Little Magazines and Presses**

Prerequisites: fourth year standing or permission from the department

**Tuesdays 6:05-8:55pm
Format: In-person, not suitable for online students**

**Instructor: Professor Collett Tracey
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******This is a preliminary syllabus only—texts and assignments are subject to change.
A complete version will be available closer to the start of the term.******

Questioning boundaries and breaking away from the past are fundamental to the spirit of modernism. In order to do this, not only do the barriers to change have to be overcome, but vehicles of expression have to be found in order to draw like-minded people together who can build the momentum required to make a new vision reality. As John Sutherland, Louis Dudek, Raymond Souster, Michael Gnarowski and others have shown, during the modernist movement in Canada it was little magazines and little presses that provided that impetus and published often unknown poets who were experimenting with new techniques and forms.

In Montreal, three important little presses were founded that span and reflect the changing spirit of modernism from the 1940's in First Statement Press, the 1950's, in Contact Press and the 1960's, in Delta Canada. They were followed by the Vehicule poets who took over in the 1970's. These little presses and the movement they inspired played a significant role in the development of Canadian poetry.

The advantage of the little press was that it brought like-minded poets together who were equally committed to a greater cause, which was moving poetry forward. The little magazine and, by extension, the little press, was a form of resistance against the conservative, commercially-driven publishing practices demonstrated by large, depersonalized organizations that have controlled the publishing industry in Canada since the 1920's. Being self-financed and non-profit entities, the little presses were able to stand on the front lines of Canadian poetry and publish the vanguard, the experimental, the young. Made up of poets who had a personal commitment to the presses and to the poets and books they published, the presses were

rebellious, ambitious and intellectually intense. With these qualities, they were able to serve as a barometer of the social and literary climate in their closeness to the pulse of the times.

In this seminar course we will consider the history and context of First Statement, Contact and Delta Canada, specifically, with interviews with two of the Vehicule poets. We will examine how they began, who began them, and how they contributed to the development of modernist poetry in Canada.

Required Texts: (Available in the bookstore)

Norris, Ken. *Hotel Montreal*. Vancouver: Talon Books. 2001.

Norris, Ken. *The Little Magazine in Canada 1925-1980*. (Available in class).

Tracey, Collett. *Montreal Modernisms*. Toronto: Cormorant Books. Forthcoming (Relevant chapters available in class).

Evaluation:

Attendance & Participation: 30%; Seminar Presentation: 30%; Final Essay: 40%

Grades for term work will be based on insightfulness, originality, focus, organization of ideas, clarity of expression, scholarly rigor, correct use of MLA style, spelling, and grammar.

Note: 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.

Class Participation/Attendance:

Critical reading, writing and analytical skills cannot be learned from books alone. Asking questions about the readings and contributing to class discussions will help you better understand the material, hone your critical and interpretive skills. Therefore, you are expected to attend all classes. Attendance will be taken on a random basis and absences will be noted. **Students who miss four or more classes per term will not be able to pass the course.** You are also expected to bring the assigned text having read it and being prepared for discussion. If you do have to miss a class, it is your responsibility to get notes from another student. **Unless absolutely necessary due to a disability, cellphones and laptops must be turned off during class time.** To promote active reading, I encourage you, though, to take notes by writing in the margins of your books and poems, and by marking off key passages that stimulate thought or discussion.

Seminars:

You will be divided into small groups to facilitate more in-depth discussions about various texts. For the novels, you will be required to do an in-class seminar in which you share, as a group,

your collective understanding and research of a theme or issue. This can be done from a creative or academic point of view. With the understanding that some students are more extroverted or introverted than others, you will be able to participate in a way that is comfortable for you. However, whether or not you are actually presenting on the day of the seminar, you will be required to attend class and respond to questions from other class members. Each member of the seminar group will be asked to grade their peers on their contributions to the seminar, and themselves. The final grade, assigned by me, will take these evaluations into account.

The Essay:

You will be encouraged to devise your own essay topic in consultation with me. It should reflect ideas and material relevant to the issues that we will be discussing. You can base your essay on the works of a particular writer, which might be an in-depth study of a single text or a thematic exploration across more than one text. The usual essay rules apply: you will be expected to demonstrate a level of engagement and research that goes beyond the content covered in seminars, and the essay must be presented in correct MLA scholarly format. The essay must be typed and paginated and accompanied with a complete cover page. You should always keep a digital copy of your essay.