

**Carleton University  
Winter 2020  
Department of English**

**ENGL 4802A: *Race, Ethnicity, and Canadian Literatures*  
*Appropriation Debates and Contemporary Canadian and Indigenous Literatures***

**Prerequisite(s): fourth-year standing or permission of the department  
Seminar 3 hours/week**

**Thursdays, 11:35am-2:25pm  
Location: *Please confirm location on Carleton Central***

**Instructor: Professor Jody Mason  
Email: [jody.mason@carleton.ca](mailto:jody.mason@carleton.ca)  
Office: 1903 Dunton Tower  
Phone: 613.520.2600 x2367 x8907  
Office Hours: Thursdays, 2:30-4:30pm**

## **I. Course Description**

The literary field in Canada experienced a particularly controversy-filled year in 2017, especially in relation to issues of ethnicity, cultural identity, and Indigeneity. The debates provoked by Joseph Boyden's identity and the so-called "Appropriation Prize" are only the most prominent instances of more general discussions in the nation's many literary communities regarding what writer Jen Sookfong Lee called, in a widely circulated 2017 essay, the "racism and entitlement at the heart of CanLit." This course will explore these debates as a jumping-off point, but will cast a wider net in order to examine: conceptions of appropriation in postcolonial theory and Indigenous knowledges; the longer history of how cultural appropriation as a practice has shaped the literary field in Canada; and the ways that Indigenous literatures, which have now carved out their own spaces within, against, and alongside "CanLit," urge readers to move past the appropriation debates, not because a victory has been won, but because the debates are, in Anishinaabe writer and publisher Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm's words, a "distraction" from the real work of "working within our communities to strengthen, empower, and build each other up."

## **II. Texts**

All course texts can be purchased at Octopus Books, which is located at 116 Third Ave. Their phone number is 613-233-2589, and they are open Monday to Saturday, 10am-6pm and Sunday, 12-5pm. You may purchase older editions of any of the course texts, but keep in mind that pagination may be different. All other course readings can be found through ARES or through links posted in the syllabus and/or CU Learn.

Abdou, Angie. *In Case I Go*. (Arsenal Pulp Press, 2017) ISBN: 9781551527031

Belcourt, Billy-Ray. *This Wound is a World* (Frontenac House, 2017) ISBN: 978-1-927823-64-4

Betasamosake Simpson, Leanne. *Islands of Decolonial Love* (ARP Books, 2013) ISBN: 189403788X

Johnson, Yvonne, with Rudy Wiebe. *Stolen Life: The Journey of a Cree Woman* (Vintage Canada, 1999) ISBN: 9780676971965

Younging, Gregory. *Elements of Indigenous Style* (Brush Education, 2018) ISBN: 978-1-55059-716-5

### **III. Course Requirements and Assignments**

(Please note that grades for assignments will appear as percentages and will only be available to those who collect their marked assignments from me or the TA. Final grades will be appear as alphabetical grades following the percentage equivalents described in the Undergraduate Calendar.)

**Diversity Debates Blog Post: 10%**

**Activities for Collaborative Indigenous Learning Bundle: 5%**

**Seminar: 25%**

**Final Research Essay: 35%**

**Participation: 25%**

#### Diversity Debates Blog Post 10% varying due dates

Each student will choose one article / posting / review / discussion that deals with diversity debates in Canada (these are social media posts, newspaper and magazine articles, blogs, etc.). These materials are marked with asterisks in the syllabus. You are then responsible for writing a 500-word blog post that responds to the text in question: what is the debate; how is it framed; how is it relevant to the other readings for the class in question? Other students in the class may not have read the article you are writing about but will benefit from your summary of it, so be sure to outline the terms of the debate as clearly as possible. This post must be submitted to CU Learn before class on the day it is due. You should be prepared to discuss your post during that class (5-7 minutes, not more).

#### Activities for Collaborative Indigenous Learning Bundle: “Decolonization Is for Everyone: Identity Formation in the Canadian Context” 5% Thurs., Jan. 30

Please complete the pre-bundle activities before the beginning of class on Jan. 30<sup>th</sup>. After we work with the bundle in class on Jan. 30<sup>th</sup>, you will be required to respond to the questions posted on CU Learn. These responses are due before the beginning of the next class (Feb. 6<sup>th</sup>).

#### Presentation and Seminar Facilitation 25% varying due dates

On the first day of class, each student will sign up for a seminar presentation. For the seminar, you will present a pre-selected text from the week’s readings (see the sign-up sheet) (approximately 15 minutes) and then facilitate discussion questions (approximately 15 minutes). No secondary research is required.

To facilitate discussion:

- a) If it’s a secondary reading, help the class to identify the main argument, as well as the problems and questions it raises. If it’s a primary reading (novel, poems, etc.), identify salient themes and formal qualities and their relationship to the problem of appropriation.
- b) develop questions that isolate particular passages or contentious issues

- c) help the class to formulate comparisons and connections between the assigned reading and other texts we've considered in class

Remember that you are facilitating a discussion and not delivering a conference paper; *please don't read a paper*. On the day of your presentation, you are responsible for handing in a four-page (1000 words in MLA style / format, with Works Cited) summary of the seminar facilitation (its main points, its principal questions).

Final Research Essay (5% for Research Forum on Apr. 2nd and 30% for essay due Thurs., Apr. 9th=35%)

Ideally, this paper will build on your seminar. The research paper should have a clear thesis, provide evidence of independent critical thinking, and it should be 4,000 words / roughly 16 pages. This is a research paper: you must use a minimum of three appropriate secondary sources; two of these must be sources not on the syllabus. Each student is strongly encouraged consult with me (before or after class, during my office hours) in order to determine what is the relevant scholarship. The essay must conform to academic conventions: i.e., it must use MLA style and formatting, and documentation, and have correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation. On Apr. 2nd, you will submit a two-page proposal for your essay: identify the main topic and (tentative) thesis; the secondary sources you plan to consult; and any research difficulties you are encountering. We will share these proposals in the Research Forum on Apr. 2nd.

Participation 25%

This is a discussion-based seminar; accordingly, you must be present and active. Students who have more than two undocumented absences will receive a grade of 0 for participation. In order to contribute meaningfully to each seminar discussion (and to thus gain full marks for participation), you must be prepared to share your ideas about the readings with the class, to pose questions for the seminar facilitators, to participate in class activities, and to otherwise actively contribute to classroom discussion. This last includes attentive listening to others.

#### **IV. Expectations and Regulations**

**Attendance and participation:** This is a seminar and not a lecture-style class: attendance and participation in discussion are mandatory. More than two undocumented absences will result in a grade of 0 for participation. Come to class with the assigned readings done in advance and in hand. As you read, underline striking features or make notes—this will help you to be an effective participant in class.

**Classroom etiquette:** All cell phones must be put away. Laptops are permitted for note-taking only (no browsing, no social media, etc.) and any student found to be using a laptop for another other purpose will lose the privilege of bringing the laptop to class for the rest of the year. Listen attentively to the lecture and to the observations made by other students. Have a sense of taking turns when it comes to contributing to discussion: don't rely on others to carry the conversation, and if you enjoy contributing, be careful not to dominate.

**Email etiquette:** The best way to speak with me is in person during office hours or right after class. Email may be used for brief messages. If you have a substantive question about an

assignment or the course material, please see me during office hours (see header on this course outline). It may be possible to arrange an appointment for another time if you are unavailable during the office hours.

**Submission of assignments and penalties for late assignments:** All assignments must be submitted electronically on CULearn *\*before\** class on the day they are due. Late assignments may be submitted via CULearn up to five days late. There is a penalty of 1% per weekday (this includes the day they are due if they are submitted after the start of class) and a grace period over the weekend. The maximum penalty is 5%. Essays will *\*not\** be accepted after this five day/-5% period unless proper medical documentation is provided. Please keep a backup copy of all your assignments.

**Grades:** Grades for written work will be based on insightfulness, presentation of focused ideas supported by textual evidence, effective organization of ideas, clarity of expression, correct use of MLA style, spelling and grammar. The following percentage equivalents will be used when calculating your final grade for this class:

A+=90; A/A+=88; A=85; A-/A=83; A-=80

B+/A-=79; B+=77; B/B+=75; B=73; B-/B=72; B-=70

C+/B-=69; C+=67; C/C+=65; C=63; C-/C=62; C-=60

D+/C-=59; D+=57; D/D+=55; D=53; D-/D=52; D-=50

F=0-49 (a numerical grade will be assigned for any paper receiving an F)

**Note on Final Grades:** 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.

**Plagiarism:** The University Senate defines plagiarism as *“presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.”* This can include:

- 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;
- 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, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another’s data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s works and/or failing to use quotation marks;

□ handing in "substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs."

Plagiarism is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly by the course's instructor. The Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include a final grade of "F" for the course. The university's Academic Integrity Policy can be found at: <https://carleton.ca/secretariat/wp-content/uploads/Academic-Integrity-Policy.pdf>

**Writing Tutorial Service:** Students requiring assistance with their writing should contact the Writing Tutorial Service at 411 MacOdrum Library (613-520-6632, <[www.carleton.ca/wts](http://www.carleton.ca/wts)>).

**Student Academic Success Centre:** Questions about academic rules and regulations, selecting a major, and other matters relating to academic planning should be directed to the Student Academic Success Centre at 302 Tory Building (613-520-7850, <[www.carleton.ca/sasc](http://www.carleton.ca/sasc)>).

## **V. Academic Accommodation**

### **REQUEST FOR 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**

Please contact your instructor 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: <https://carleton.ca/equity/contact/form-pregnancy-accommodation/>

#### **Religious obligation**

Please contact your instructor 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: <https://carleton.ca/equity/focus/discrimination-harassment/religious-spiritual-observances/>

#### **Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

If you have a documented disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) at 613-520-6608 or [pmc@carleton.ca](mailto:pmc@carleton.ca) for a formal evaluation or contact your PMC coordinator to send your instructor your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term. You must also contact the PMC 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 your instructor as soon as possible to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. For more details, visit the Paul Menton Centre Website: [carleton.ca/pmc](http://carleton.ca/pmc)

#### **Survivors of Sexual Violence**

As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and its survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: <https://carleton.ca/equity/focus/sexual-violence-prevention-survivor-support/>

### **Accommodation for Student Activities**

Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor 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. <https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>

## **VI. Seminar Schedule**

**Please bring the relevant readings with you to every class. Diversity Debates readings (marked with \*) are optional, unless you are signed up to write a post for the day in question.**

### **Week 1 (Jan 9)**

#### **Introduction**

Sign up for seminars and blog posts

### **Week 2 (Jan 16)**

#### **Framing Appropriation Debates I**

Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (*Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory*, edited by Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, Columbia UP, 1994, pp. 66-111)

### **Week 3 (Jan. 23)**

#### **"Whose Voice Is It, Anyway?"**

Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (*Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory*, edited by Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, Columbia UP, 1994, pp. 66-111)

\*"Whose Voice Is It, Anyway? A Symposium on Who Should Be Speaking for Whom" (*Books In Canada*, Vol. 20, No. 1, 1991, pp. 11-17)

[http://www.booksincanada.com/article\\_view.asp?id=2281](http://www.booksincanada.com/article_view.asp?id=2281)

\*Fung, "Working Through Appropriation"

<http://www.richardfung.ca/index.php/?/articles/working-through-appropriation-1993/>

\*Godfrey, "Canada Council Asks Whose Voice Is It Anyway?" (*Globe and Mail*, 21 March 1992, pp. C1, C15)

\*Gzowski et al., "The Public Face of the Cultural Appropriation Debate: Who Speaks for Whom?" (*Textual Studies in Canada*, vol. 2, 1992, pp. 126-40)

### **Week 4 (Jan 30)**

#### **Framing Appropriation Debates II**

Lowman and Barker, (from) *Settler Identity and Colonialism in the Twenty-First Century* (Chapter 2, “Canada and Settler Colonialism,” pp. 24-47)

Collaborative Indigenous Learning Bundle: “Decolonization Is for Everyone: Identity Formation in the Canadian Context” (on CU Learn; we will experience this bundle in class together—before class, please answer questions in the Pre-Bundle Activity; after class, please complete Reading Questions for Bundle. These responses are due before the beginning of class on Feb. 6<sup>th</sup>.)

### **Week 5 (Feb. 6)**

#### **Indigenous Decolonization and Critique of Appropriation I**

Younging, *Elements of Indigenous Style* (Chapters 1-5, pp. 1-49)

### **Week 6 (Feb. 13)**

#### **Collaborative Autobiography and Indigenous Critique of Appropriation**

Johnson, Yvonne, with Rudy Wiebe, *Stolen Life: The Journey of a Cree Woman*

Jones, “Stolen Life?: Reading Through Two I’s in Postcolonial Collaborative Autobiography” (*Is Canada Postcolonial?*, edited by Laura Moss, Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2003, pp. 207-22)

\*McGoogan, “Fighting Words: Wiebe vs. Kinsella Battle Raises Questions About Racism and Censorship in Literature” (*Calgary Herald*, 10 Feb. 1990, p. C1)

### **Winter Break (no classes): Feb. 17-21**

### **Week 7 (Feb. 27)**

#### **Collaborative Autobiography and Indigenous Critique of Appropriation**

Johnson, Yvonne, with Rudy Wiebe, *Stolen Life: The Journey of a Cree Woman*

McCall, (from) *First-Person Plural: Aboriginal Storytelling and the Ethics of Collaborative Authorship* (Chapter 1, “Where Is the Voice Coming From?: Appropriations and Subversions of the Native Voice,” pp. 17-42)

\*Armstrong, “The Disempowerment of First North American Native Peoples and Empowerment Through Their Writing” (*Canadian Literature in English: Texts and Contexts*, Vol. 2, edited by Cynthia Sugars and Laura Moss, Pearson Longman, 2009, pp. 599-602)

\*Keeshig-Tobias, “Stop Stealing Native Stories”

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/cultural-appropriation-stop-stealing-native-stories/article35066040/>

### **Week 8 (March 5)**

#### **Indigenous Decolonization and Critique of Appropriation II**

Abdou, *In Case I Go*

\*Sebastian, “Misrepresentation and the Truth of Ktunaxa Consent”

<https://quillandquire.com/omni/misrepresentation-and-the-truth-of-ktunaxa-consent-a-response-from-ktunaxa-nation-council/>

\*Abdou, “Angie Abdou on Seeking Permission to Use a First Nations Character”

<https://quillandquire.com/omni/angie-abdou-on-seeking-permission-to-use-first-nations-stories/>

\*Kay, “‘Canada Has Gone Mad’: Indigenous Representation and the Hounding of Angie Abdou”

<http://quilllette.com/2018/01/10/canada-gone-mad-indigenous-representation-hounding-angie-abdou/>

## **Week 9 (March 12)**

### **Indigenous Decolonization and the Critique of Appropriation III**

Belcourt, *This Wound is a World* (“The Cree Word for a Body Like Mine...”; “Gay Incantations”; “Wihtikowak Means ‘Men Who...’”; “The Rez Sisters II”; “Sacred”; “The Creator Is Trans”; “Colonialism: A Love Story”; “The Oxford Journal”; “Epilogue”)

Whitehead, “Writing as a Rupture: A Breakup Note to CanLit” (from McGregor, Rak, and Wunker, eds., *Refuse: Can Lit in Ruins*, pp. 191-98)

\*Niedzviecki, “Winning the Appropriation Prize”

<http://www.cbc.ca/radio/thecurrent/the-current-for-may-15-2017-1.4112604/i-invoked-cultural-appropriation-in-the-context-of-literature-and-writing-only-hal-niedzviecki-1.4112618>

\*Akiwenzie-Damm, “The Cultural Appropriation Debate Is Over”

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/the-cultural-appropriation-debate-is-over-its-time-for-action/article35072670/>

You might also want to look at the Emerging Indigenous Voices Prize

<http://www.indigenoussliterarystudies.org/-indigenous-voices-award/>

## **Week 10 (March 19)**

### **“The Cultural Appropriation Debate Is Over”: Indigenous Literatures and Decolonial Love**

Leanne Simpson, *Islands of Decolonial Love* (first half)

\*Elliott, “Can Lit is a Raging Dumpster Fire”

<http://open-book.ca/Columnists/CanLit-is-a-Raging-Dumpster-Fire>

## **Week 11 (March 26)**

### **“The Cultural Appropriation Debate Is Over”: Indigenous Literatures and Decolonial Love**

Leanne Simpson, *Islands of Decolonial Love* (second half)

\*Moya, “The Search for Decolonial Love: An Interview with Junot Diaz”

<http://bostonreview.net/books-ideas/paula-ml-moya-decolonial-love-interview-junot-d%C3%ADaz>

## **Week 12 (Apr 2)**

### **Research Forum 5%**

**Final Essay due Thurs., April 9th**