

Carleton University
Summer 2021
Department of English

ENGL 4961A / ENGL 5007S: Indigenous Literatures II

“The door to personal and magical transformation is darkness”: the work of Eden Robinson

Prerequisites: Fourth-year standing or permission of the department

Recommended: Experience in university-level literary analysis

Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:35 am-2:25 pm

Location: *Online*

Format: Blended*

Instructor: M. S. Birkwood

Email: susan.birkwood@carleton.ca

Office Hours: after class or by appointment via Zoom or Teams

*Carleton University is located on the traditional and unceded territory of the
Algonquin Anishinaabe Nation*

***Carleton Online’s definition of a blended course:** “An online course where there is a mixture of synchronous meetings and asynchronous activities. This means students need to be prepared to meet some of the time online via web conferencing tools at scheduled days and times. The specific dates will be communicated by the instructor in the course outline. The asynchronous activities are intended to provide flexibility to students when the class is not meeting synchronously. Students are expected to remain up to date with the deadlines and due dates provided by the instructor. These courses require **reliable high-speed Internet access and a computer (ideally with a webcam), and a headset with a microphone.**”

Synchronous meeting times: Tuesdays: 11:35-12:55 and Thursdays: 11:35-1:25 (Thursday = panel discussion class)

Asynchronous components: short lecture videos and / or other components will be assigned each week to complement the synchronous meetings and to fit into the 6 hours per week of class time.

Course Description: Given the recent publication of *Return of the Trickster*—some thirty years after the short story “Traplins” first appeared in *Prism International*—this seems like a good time to engage in a study of selected works by Eden Robinson. In *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*, Daniel Heath Justice includes the example of Robinson’s “classic *Monkey Beach*” in a discussion of “wonderworks,” highlighting Indigenous epistemologies and histories but also

matters of genre and the resistance to, and subversion or revision of, categories associated with European forms, traditions, and worldviews. Justice writes,

Indigenous wonderworks are neither strictly ‘fantasy’ nor ‘realism,’ but they may be both at once, or something else entirely. . . . They’re rooted in the specificity of peoples to their histories and embodied experiences. They make space for meaningful engagements and encounters that are . . . central to cultural resurgence and the recovery of other ways of knowing, being, and abiding. They insist on possibilities beyond cynicism and despair. (154)

In studying these narratives whose publication dates range from the 1991 to 2021, we can also consider matters of reception and promotion, along with the changes in critical approaches to Robinson’s work within the wider context of Indigenous Literatures.

General Learning Objectives

Through this course, students will develop their ability to do the following:

- Recognize alternate Indigenous mappings of Turtle Island and some of the land-language relationships specific to these geographies
- Recognize the specific status and function of Indigenous storytelling as a place-based practice of articulating and reinforcing relationships and responsibilities
- Read literary texts in terms of both their formal features and their signification within historical, political, legal, literary, and cultural contexts (including Indigenous epistemologies)
- Analyse cultural interaction and literary relations in the context of settler-colonialism
- Discern and discuss literary encodings of ideology, strategies of resistance, complexity and ambiguity in signification, and ethical issues in interpretation

Required Texts

- Available through [Octopus Books](#)
- Octopus Books is offering a bundle price for the *Trickster* trilogy

Eden Robinson, *Monkey Beach*

---. *Son of a Trickster*

---. *Trickster Drift*

---. *Return of the Trickster*

- Additional readings will be available via ARES

Evaluation

Individual presentation for panel discussion* (synchronous):	20%
Post-panel reflection	5%
Discussion forum posts	15%
Short analyses (2 @ 10%; or best 2 of 3, plus bonus)	20%
Participation / Peer Support	10%
Final paper / project (due August 16)	30%

*There may be 3 people on a panel, with each person giving a 10-minute presentation on that week's short stories / novel, and then we can have a friendly Q&A session

- ❖ “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 Accommodations

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 click [here](#).

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 click [here](#).

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 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).

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 where 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/sexual-assault-support-services>

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. 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. <https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>

Assignment Descriptions

Individual presentation for panel discussion [20%]: Depending on the final enrolment in the course, we may be able to have 3 panel members each week who will each present on a different aspect of the week's reading(s). A friendly Q and A period will follow.

- Length of individual presentations: minimum 10 minutes (maximum 12 minutes)
 - Make your Works Cited list available to the class through a slide or forum post
 - I will need a copy of your notes / script / PPT—on the morning of your presentation would be great, but later that day would be fine, too
- Q & A: Please prepare a couple of questions for your audience. (If your classmates have lots of their own questions, and you don't have the opportunity to ask yours, just make sure your questions are in the notes you send me.)
- Subject matter: Choose from the list of options or create your own topic in consultation with me
 - To ensure that there is no obvious, significant overlap in topics, I will check in with panelists the week before their presentations about the topic they are planning to explore

Post-panel reflection [5%]: Due one week after your presentation

- Submit a one-page reflection on the presentation and panel discussion

Written analyses (of required course texts) [2 @ 10%]: The due dates will depend on which texts you choose to discuss.

- Length: 2-3 pages (typed, double-spaced, 12-point font) *Indented passages (long quotations) do not figure in this count, so make sure to provide a minimum of 2 full pages of analysis. (You won't be penalized for going over 3 pages.)
- Subject matter: You may NOT write one of the analyses on the text that is the subject of your panel presentation. Otherwise, it is up to you to decide which of the remaining texts that you want to write on, but I strongly recommend that you submit one analysis in the first half of the term. Choose from the list of topics or consult with me about your own topic.
- Due: Analyses are due during the weeks in which we are scheduled to study the respective works—e.g., if you want to write a short analysis on *Monkey Beach*, be prepared to submit it by July 23.

Bonus: If you write three analyses, then I will take the best two and add bonus marks as follows for the third: 1% for a grade of 70% or higher or 2% for 80% or higher to the overall close-reading assignment grade (20% of the final grade). [e.g., 2 @ 80% = 16/20 + 1 analysis @ 70% = 17/20 (85%)]

- These short analyses are meant to be original work. There is no need to consult commentaries on the story / novel in question. If you do need to look something up, such as an historical context or cultural reference, make sure that you document any sources cited or consulted. You should include specific, documented references to the primary texts (by Robinson) in question to support your points, using the MLA format for punctuating and documenting quotations.
- Analyses should have a clear argument and be written in grammatically correct prose. (Get to the point quickly; don't waste time on vague preamble.)

Discussion forum posts [15%]: The grade will be based on a minimum of 4 posts assessed on a 3-point scale (12% of the 15%), plus additional shorter posts—e.g., observations, comments, replies. The minimum 4 posts need to be on different texts and submitted in the relevant weeks.

Participation and Peer Support [10%]: Attendance at the synchronous sessions will count towards this mark, but some active participation—whether via your microphone or via the Chat box—is expected, especially if you opt to leave your camera off. That peer support can take the form of questions / thoughtful comments for the participants in the weekly panels.

Final Paper / Project [30%]

Research Essay (I will post a set of instructions later in the term)

- Length: Undergraduate students: 8-10 pages (Consider 8 to be a minimum); Graduate students: 10-12 pages (Consider 10 to be a minimum). Indented quotations do not figure in this count.
- Sources beyond the primary text(s): Undergraduate: 2-4; Graduate: 3-5
 - Your analysis needs to be prominent in the paper, so be careful not to let other voices take over
- Format: MLA

Subject matter restriction: You may not focus solely on the text that you worked on for the panel discussion presentation. You may engage in a comparison / contrast of your panel text and another course text, but do NOT repeat material from the presentation. You may work with texts on which you wrote analyses; again, though, do not repeat material from earlier assignments.

Alternative Format: If you wish to communicate your research and analysis through a podcast or other alternative format, you may; however, I do ask that you consult with me about the format. Carleton students do have access to [Kaltura Capture](#) and [MediaSpace](#).

General Policy on *Written* Assignments

Requests for extensions should be made BEFORE the due date. A penalty of 5% per business day will be applied to late assignments.

- You are expected to know the University's policy and procedures regarding plagiarism. (See the section on "Academic Integrity Standards" in the University Calendar and the definition of plagiarism below.)
- Unacceptable paraphrasing does count as a form of plagiarism, so make sure to introduce paraphrases with signal phrases identifying the relevant source(s) and to provide page numbers if available. 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 may cost you marks.

PLAGIARISM

The University Senate defines plagiarism as "presenting, whether intentional or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one's own." This can include the following:

- 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 form of intellectual theft. It is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly with the course's instructor. The Associate Deans of the Faculty conduct 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 failure of the assignment, failure of the entire course, or suspension from a program. For more information please go to: <https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-integrity/>

- You are expected to know the University's policy and procedures regarding plagiarism. (See the explanation above and the section on "Academic Integrity" in the University Calendar.) Unacceptable paraphrasing does count as a form of plagiarism. I shall report cases of unacknowledged use of sources to the Chair of the English Department.

Netiquette and Discussion Post Guidelines: *Please see guidelines in [Carleton Online](#)*

- Netiquette: <https://carleton.ca/online/online-learning-resources/netiquette/>
- Guidelines for discussion posts: <https://carleton.ca/online/online-learning-resources/online-discussion-tips/>

Note on e-mail communications: I will check e-mail daily during the week. If you send a message on Friday evening, be aware that I may not reply to it until Monday morning.

- University policy prohibits me from sending information about grades over e-mail if the request comes from any non-Carleton e-mail address.

Schedule (subject to change, if necessary)

Synchronous meeting times

- Tuesdays: 11:35-12:55
- Thursdays: 11:35-1:25

Date	Tuesday	Thursday
July 6, 8	<p>Introductions—to the course, to each other</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Panel presentation schedule <p>View on your own: Indigenous Learning Bundles (Brightspace): “Indigenous-Canada Relations”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This Bundle may constitute review for anyone with a background in this area <p>“Contemporary Indigenous Arts in the Gallery”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific to visual arts but raises matters of identity, aesthetics, interpretation 	<p>Contextual readings (see ARES): Daniel Heath Justice, Introduction. <i>Why Indigenous Literatures Matter</i>, pp. 2-32; Simpson, “Land as Pedagogy,” <i>As We Have Always Done</i>, pp. 145-66 (but feel free to finish the chapter, which ends on p. 173)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of readings Justice and Simpson • Relation (relatedness / relationality), reciprocity, responsibility • Broad sketch of historical and literary contexts of Robinson’s work
13, 15	Short stories: “Traplines,” “Dogs in Winter,” “Terminal Avenue” (ARES)	Panel discussion of short stories
20, 22	<i>Monkey Beach</i>	Panel discussion of <i>Monkey Beach</i>
27, 29	<i>Son of a Trickster</i>	Panel discussion of <i>Son of a Trickster</i>
August 3, 5	<i>Trickster Drift</i>	Panel discussion of <i>Trickster Drift</i>
10, 12	<i>Return of the Trickster</i>	Panel discussion of <i>Return of the Trickster</i>

- The short story “Traplines” is also available through *HathiTrust*: “Traplines.” *Prism International*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (Fall 1991), pp. 33-54

<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015067527708&view=image&seq=11>