

**Carleton University
Fall 2023
Department of English**

**ENGL 5120F: Book Arts Workshop
Small-Press Publishing in Canada**

Tuesdays / 11:35 am-2:25 pm

**Instructors: Prof. Jody Mason, with Larry Thompson (Master Printer)
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Office Hours: Thursdays, 11:30 am-1:30 pm

I. Course Description

This course takes twentieth- and early twenty-first-century small-press publishing in Canada as its focus. A book arts workshop that will be taught with the assistance of Master Printer Larry Thompson, the course brings together the history and theory of small-press activity in Canada with experiential learning activities that will help us to think in material terms about small-press objects and their production processes.



Our experiential work will include encounters with small-press publishers; interaction with small-press texts from the university's Archives and Special Collections; and book arts demonstrations / activities, culminating in a letterpress printing project.

The history/theory component of the course will unfold in relation to a series of small-press case studies. We'll be theorizing small-press activity through questions such as the following:

- What is small-press publishing? How did it come to exist, and how might it be distinguished from other publishing practices?

- Does small-press publishing rely on a concept of independence, and, if so, what kind of independence does it claim (aesthetic, political, economic)? How and in what conditions are these claims made and sustained?
- What production practices, literary forms, and genres are distinct to small-press publishing and how do these relate to the practices, forms, and genres of large-scale publishing?
- Why did small-press publishing expand so dramatically in late twentieth-century Canada? What forms of state support have enabled small-press book publishing to flourish in Canada? Have these been constant? What challenges do these forms of support bring?
- What are the gender and race politics of Canada's small-press cultures? Why has the modernist, masculinist (and very white) concept of the small press been so influential on small-press activity in Canada? How have publishers and writers of the later twentieth and early twenty-first centuries contested and revised this concept?
- How might we theorize the function of the small press in the context of a contemporary global literary field dominated by a handful of media corporations? (e.g., Does the dominance of the "large" engender a particular kind of position-taking among small presses? If this position-taking is sometimes attached to ideas about unalienated labour, or about overcoming the contradiction between capital and culture, why does this matter?)

II. Texts

The books below can be purchased from [Octopus Books](#) in Ottawa. These can be ordered [online](#), if you prefer. Octopus has bundled the books together at a discount (total \$88.20).

Armstrong, Jeannette. *Slash*, 1986 (Theytus Books, 1995, ISBN 9781894778459)

Lee, Dennis. *Civil Elegies*, 1972 (House of Anansi Press, 2012, ISBN 9781770892491)

McKay, Don. *All New Animal Acts: Essays, Stretchers, Poems* (Gaspereau Press, 2020, ISBN 9781554472154)

Skibsrud, Joanna, *The Sentimentalists* is available as a reprint (Penguin Canada, 2016, ISBN 9780735233195) from Octopus. Alternatively, you could attempt to procure a copy of the now out-of-print trade paperback published by either Gaspereau or Douglas and McIntyre (ISBN: 9781554470785 / 9781553658955) through [abebooks.ca](#) or a local second-hand book dealer.

Younging, Greg. *Elements of Indigenous Style* (Brush Education, 2018, ISBN 9781550597165)

Additional course readings can be found through ARES, via the links provided in the syllabus, or directly from me. To access ARES (electronic reserve), see the "Tools" tab in Brightspace.

III. Evaluation

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.

Discussion Forum Contributions: 20%

Seminar Facilitation: 25%

Research Essay Proposal, Research Essay + Letterpress Project: 55%

Discussion Forum Contributions: (5 x 4%) 20%, varying due dates

You must be present and active for our weekly meetings. Students who have more than two undocumented absences from these sessions will not pass the course.

Five times per term, each student is required to submit a 250-word post to the weekly Discussion Forums on Bright Space. Posts submitted late will not be counted. I'll try to read each of these before class—please give me time to do so! I'll post discussion prompts each Friday for the following Tuesday (you aren't required to use them.) Be prepared to discuss your forum contribution in class. You'll find fuller instructions for the Discussion Forum Contributions in each forum in the Brightspace modules.

Seminar Facilitation + Summary (25%): varying due dates

~~In the first week of classes, each student will choose one small-press case study as the topic~~ for their Seminar Facilitation. This case study will form the basis of both your Research Essay and your Letterpress Project. You'll find fuller instructions for the Seminar Facilitation + Summary in the Week One module on Brightspace.

Research Essay Proposal (5%): due Nov. 26th on or before 11:59 pm

On Nov. 26th (on or before 11:59 pm), you'll submit a three-page proposal for your essay: identify the topic, the main research questions, and (tentative) thesis; the secondary sources you plan to consult; and any research difficulties you are encountering. We'll share these proposals in class on Nov. 28th. Further instructions for the proposal and its accompanying essay can be found in the Week Eleven and Twelve modules on Brightspace.

Research Essay (35%) + Letterpress Project (15%): 50% due Dec. 8th on or before 11:59 pm

Building from your seminar, you'll develop an analysis of a small-press publisher in Canada. The essay should be 4000 words (about 16 pages in MLA format), and it should have a clear thesis and provide evidence of independent critical thinking. This is a research paper: you must demonstrate that you have consulted the relevant scholarship (the proposal stage will help you determine what the relevant scholarship is). The essay must conform to academic conventions: i.e., it must follow MLA format and documentation rules and have correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

To accompany the essay, you'll produce a hand-printed letterpress project in a small run (under 50). This may be a broadside or another kind of printed object. The letterpress project should attempt to exemplify the argument you're making about your small press (its politics, its literary / cultural aesthetics, and its position-taking in the field of cultural production). There will be lab time available outside of class hours for the completion of this project.

Further instructions on both the Research Essay and the Letterpress Project can be found in the week Eleven and Twelve modules on Brightspace.

If class members are interested, we'll organize a public broadside exhibition where you can present your projects and their accompanying research essays.

IV. Expectations

Email and Office Hours: I encourage you to use my online office hours for questions relating to lectures, readings, and assignments. I have two office hours—please see the header on this document. **Please make an appointment by emailing me.** You may also use email for questions requiring brief responses. Larry Thompson will hold lab hours outside of class time to facilitate work on the letterpress projects.

Assignments and Late Policy: (This policy doesn't apply to Discussion Posts, which are due at the beginning of each class, or to the Research Proposal, which must be submitted on time.) Assignments (seminar, research essay) must be submitted to Brightspace the day they are due by 11:59 pm. *Please submit your assignments as Word documents.* Late assignments may be handed in up to five days late with a penalty of 1% per day; the maximum penalty is 5%. Assignments will not be accepted after this period unless proper medical or other documentation is provided. *Please keep a backup copy of all your assignments.*

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;
- any submission prepared in whole or in part, by someone else, including the unauthorized use of generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT)
- 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;

- 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>

VI. Student Services

Centre for Student Academic Support: Students requiring assistance with their writing should visit the website of this centre, which offers various kinds of writing-related assistance: <https://carleton.ca/csas/writing-services/> They are located on the fourth floor of MacOdrum Library.

Statement on Student Mental Health

As a University student you may experience a range of mental health challenges that significantly impact your academic success and overall well-being. If you need help, please speak to someone. There are numerous resources available both on- and off-campus to support you.

Emergency Resources (on and off campus): <https://carleton.ca/health/emergencies-and-crisis/emergency-numbers/>

Carleton Resources:

- Mental Health and Wellbeing: <https://carleton.ca/wellness/>
- Health & Counselling Services: <https://carleton.ca/health/>
- Paul Menton Centre: <https://carleton.ca/pmc/>
- Academic Advising Centre (AAC): <https://carleton.ca/academicadvising/>
- Centre for Student Academic Support (CSAS): <https://carleton.ca/csas/>
- Equity & Inclusivity Communities: <https://carleton.ca/equity/>

Off Campus Resources:

- Distress Centre of Ottawa and Region: (613) 238-3311 or TEXT: 343-306-5550, <https://www.dcottawa.on.ca/>
- Mental Health Crisis Service: (613) 722-6914, 1-866-996-0991, <http://www.crisisline.ca/>
- Empower Me: 1-844-741-6389, <https://students.carleton.ca/services/empower-me-counselling-services/>
- Good2Talk: 1-866-925-5454, <https://good2talk.ca/>
- The Walk-In Counselling Clinic: <https://walkincounselling.com>

VII. 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: 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 accommodation regarding a formally scheduled final exam, you must complete the [Pregnancy Accommodation Form](#).

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, please request your accommodations for this course through the Ventus Student Portal 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). Requests made within two weeks will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. For final exams, the deadlines to request accommodations are published in the University Academic Calendars. 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 will 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>

VIII. Tentative Syllabus

Week 1: Introduction to the Course

- Reading

- course outline and syllabus (Brightspace)

- Seminar (11:35 am-12:35 pm) / Workshop (1-2 pm or so)

- Tues., Sept. 12th: Introduction to the Course; Sign up for Seminar Facilitations / Safety in the Book Arts Lab; Book Arts Lab Tour

Week 2: Theorizing the Small Press

If David McKnight defines small-press publishing as “the non-commercial production of books and periodicals with a literary orientation, issued in limited runs for specialized readerships, and often dedicated to experimental writing or identity-based perspectives” (“Small Press Publishing” 310), how might we theorize the function of such agents in the larger literary field?

In workshop, students will: survey small-press books and broadsides.

- Reading

- Bourdieu, “The Field of Cultural Production; or, the Economic World Reversed” (*The Field of Cultural Production*, pp. 29-73) (Ares)

- Seminar (11:35 am-1:30 pm) / Workshop (1:45-2:25 pm)

- Tues., Sept. 19th: Theorizing the Small Press / Surveying Small-Press Books and Broadsides

Week 3: Historicizing the Small Press (UK and North America)

If Bourdieu offers us a sociological model for theorizing position takings in the field of cultural production, it’s also helpful to turn to histories of publishing, which attempt to account for the temporally specific emergence of particular publishing practices. Our focus is on Canada, but there are broader forces at work that have shaped publishing activity in this national context. What economic forces have shaped the emergence and existence of small press publishing in the second half of the twentieth century in both the UK and North America, a period that also witnessed the consolidation of ownership in the now global field of English-language trade publishing?

In workshop, students will: collaborate in setting a single line of a sonnet (introduction to typesetting).

- Reading

- Thompson, (from) *The Merchants of Culture* (chapter 4, “The Polarization of the Field,” pp. 147-87) (Ares)

- Seminar (11:35 am-1:30 pm) / Workshop (1:45-2:25 pm)

- Tues., Sept. 26th: Historicizing the Small Press / Intro to Printing

Week 4: Historicizing the Small Press (Canada)

If Bourdieu offers us a sociological model for theorizing position takings in the field of cultural production, it's also helpful to turn to histories of publishing, which attempt to account for the temporally specific emergence of particular publishing practices. Since our focus is publishing in Canada, our readings will focus on this context.

In workshop, students will: collaborate in printing a single line of a sonnet (introduction to printing).

•Reading

- Parker, "The Agency System" (*HBiC* 3, pp. 163-168) (Ares)
- Litt, "The State and the Book" (*HBiC* 3, pp. 34-44) (Ares)
- McKnight, "Small Press Publishing" (*HBiC* 3, pp. 308-318) (Ares)
- Edwardson, (from) *Caadian Content: Culture and the Quest for Nationhood* (chapter 5, "Creating the Peaceable Kingdom," pp. 135-59) (Ares)

•Seminar (11:35 am-1:25 pm) / Workshop (1:45-2:25 pm)

- Tues., Oct. 3rd: Historicizing the Small Press / Intro to Typesetting

Week 5: The Modernist Little Magazine

In Canada, as in the United States and England, an important site for the emergence of literary modernism was the "little magazine"—defined by Dean Irvine as "those non-commercial literary, arts, and cultural-interest magazines whose editors facilitated and participated in the construction of a magazine culture for their contributors and readers—but not, primarily, for profit" (*Editing Modernity* 16). Imagining themselves as situated at what Bourdieu calls the autonomous pole, producers of these little magazines were writing for other modernist poets. What kinds of position-takings do we find in the little magazine movement and how do they operate?

In workshop, students will: do a quick survey of illustrative techniques, and practice relief printing in its most simple form.

•Reading

- (from) *The Making of Modern Poetry in Canada* (Dudek, "The Role of Little Magazines in Canada," pp. 205-12; Gnarowski, "The Role of 'Little Magazines' in the Development of Poetry in English in Montreal," pp. 212-22) (Ares)
- (from) *The McGill Fortnightly Review*: Smith, "Contemporary Poetry" (Dec. 15, 1926 / vol. 2, no. 4); Smith, "The Lonely Land" (Jan. 9, 1926 / vol. 1, no. 4); Scott, "The Canadian Authors Meet" (Apr. 27, 1927, vol. 2, no. 9-10) (Ares)
- (from) *Preview*: Anderson, "Statement" (no. 1, March 1942, p. 1); Anderson, "Dramatic Monologue" (no. 4, June 1942, pp. 5-7); Anderson, "Ourselves" (no. 11, Feb. 1943, pp. 10-11) (Ares)
- (from) *First Statement*: Sutherland, "The Writing of Patrick Anderson" (vol. 1, no. 19, 1943, pp. 3-6) (Ares); Layton, "First Statement Opinions" (vol. 1, no. 16, 1943, pp. 7-8) (Ares)
- additional resources: ["The Small Presses and Little Magazines: Montreal, Quebec."](#) *Archives and Research Collections*, Carleton University; [The Canadian Modernist Magazines Project](#) (for full issues of both *Preview* and *First Statement*)

- Seminar (11:35 am-1:30 pm) / Workshop (1:45-2:25 pm)
-Tues., Oct. 10th: The Modernist Little Magazine / Intro to Illustrative Techniques

Week 6: Small Press Publishing in 1960s and 70s' Toronto (House of Anansi Press)

Fuelled in part by new forms of public financial support, the small-press movement of this period marks a departure from the self-publishing environment that poets faced in interwar Canada. What does this era's small-press movement inherit from its progenitors—the modernist little magazine movement, in particular? What does it reject in these earlier movements?

In workshop, students will: practice relief printing in its most simple form.

- Reading

- Mount, (from) *Arrival* (Chapter 10, pp. 147-62) (Ares)
- Atwood, (from) *Survival* (pp. 27-43) (Ares)
- Lee, *Civil Elegies*
- additional resources: [“The Small Presses and Little Magazines: Toronto, Ontario.” Archives and Research Collections, Carleton University](#); LAC's online exhibition, [“New Wave Canada: Coach House Press and the Small Press Movement in Canada in the 1960s”](#)

- Seminar (11:35 am-1:30 pm) / Workshop (1:45-2:25 pm)
-Tues., Oct. 17th: House of Anansi Press / Practice Relief Printing

(Oct. 23rd-27th: Fall Break—no classes)

Week 7: Breaking Open Small-Press Publishing (Theytus Books)

What structures enable Indigenous-owned small publishers to survive in the age of polarization? How does a press like Theytus position itself in the field of cultural production?

In workshop, students will: begin the process of designing the letterpress project

- Reading

- Younging, *Elements of Indigenous Style*
- Armstrong, *Slash*
- Akiwenzie-Damm, [“Publisher Greg Younging Nurtured Indigenous Voices in Canada”](#) (*The Globe and Mail*, 28 May 2019)
- Akiwenzie-Damm, ““We think differently. We have a different understanding’: Editing Indigenous Texts as an Indigenous Editor” (*Editing as Cultural Practice in Canada*, pp. 29-39) (Ares)

- Seminar (11:35 am-1:30 pm) / Workshop (1:45-2:25 pm)
-Tues., Oct. 31st: Theytus Books / Designing Letterpress Project

Week 8: Breaking Open Small-Press Publishing (Sister Vision Press)

Partners Makeda Silvera and Stephanie Martin founded and ran the Toronto-based Sister Vision Press between 1985 and 2001. This feminist press was the first in Canada to be exclusively dedicated to publishing works by and for women of colour. As we'll see, the dearth of diversity in publishing that Silvera and Martin were responding to in the late 80s and 90s was a structural feature of the North American publishing industry in this period.

In workshop, students will: begin setting type and / or working on illustrations for letterpress projects.

•Reading

- Silvera, "Black Women and Women of Colour Press" (*Black Writers Matter*, pp. 147-51) (Ares)
- Cooper, "'Out of a cardboard box beside our bed like a baby': The Founders of Sister Vision Press" (*Great Dames*, pp. 291-306) (Ares)
- Silvera, "The Story of Sister Vision Press: Black Women and Women of Colour Press" (*Harriet's Legacies*, pp. 323-42) (Ares)
- Silvera, (from) *Silenced* (Introduction to the Revised Edition) (Ares)
- additional resource: So and Wezerek, "[Just How White Is the Book Industry?](#)" (*The New York Times*, Dec. 11, 2020)

•Seminar (11:35 am-1:30 pm) / Workshop (1:45-2:25 pm)

- Tues., Nov. 7th: Sister Vision Press / Setting Type or Illustrations for Letterpress Projects

Week 9: The Contemporary Small Press (Gaspereau Press)

Founded in 1997 by Gary Dunfield & Andrew Steeves, Gaspereau Press of Kentville, Nova Scotia describes itself as "one of Canada's most innovative and tenacious literary publishers."

The press "employs an unusual mixture of techniques & technologies in its book production, ranging from traditional letterpress printing using metal type and photopolymer plates to modern offset lithographic printing using customized digital type."

In workshop, students will: begin setting type and / or working on illustrations for letterpress projects.

•Reading / Listening / Watching

- podcast with Andrew Steeves, "[Andrew Steeves: A Giant in Canada's Printer / Trade Publisher Pantheon](#)"
- McKay, *All New Animal Acts*
- additional resource: [@gaspereaupress](#)

•Seminar (11:35 am-1:30 pm) / Workshop (1:45-2:25 pm)

- Tues., Nov. 14th: Gaspereau Press / Setting Type or Illustrations for Letterpress Projects

Week 10: The Contemporary Small Press and Cultures of the Artisanal (Gaspereau Press)

Founded in 1997 by Gary Dunfield & Andrew Steeves, Gaspereau Press of Kentville, Nova Scotia describes itself as “one of Canada’s most innovative and tenacious literary publishers.” If the contemporary small press in Canada, as elsewhere, has been cultivated in opposition to the consolidation of global publishing in the last fifty years, what are the market pressures that come to bear on small-press activity in the present? Alongside this question, we’ll be thinking this week about the challenges and opportunities that digital publishing offers to artisanal small presses that depend on the physical quality of their books as a means of differentiating their products from those of the mainstream publishers.

In workshop: the Lab will be open and available for work on the letterpress project.

- Reading

- Galey, “The Enkindling Reciter: E-Books in the Bibliographical Imagination” (Ares)
- Skibsrud, *The Sentimentalists*

- Seminar (11:35 am-1:30 pm) / Workshop (1:45-2:25 pm)

- Tues., Nov. 21st: Gaspereau Press / Open Workshop

Week 11: Research Essay Proposals

- Reading

- Research Proposals on Brightspace (you must comment on one of your classmates’ proposals before class on the 28th—see the Research Essay Proposal assignment posted in the Week 12 module)

- Seminar (11:35 am-2:25 pm) / No Workshop

- Tues., Nov. 28th: Research Essay Proposal workshop (Research Proposals due Nov. 26th on or before 11:59 pm—to give everyone a chance to read before class)

Week 12: The Local Micropress (Apt. 9 Press)

Since 2009, poet and scholar Cameron Anstee has been publishing poetry chapbooks at his Ottawa-based micropress, [Apt. 9 Press](#). The press’s output includes chapbooks, broadsides, and small press ephemera. What is the relation of the micropress to small press publishing more generally? How does it position itself in the field of cultural production? What permits it to survive? NB: Cameron Anstee will be joining our seminar discussion.

In workshop: the Lab will be open and available for work on the letterpress project.

- Reading

- Ladouceur, “[The Same Aspirations Persist](#)” (interview with Cameron Anstee, *Open Book*, 22 Feb. 2017)
- Sinaee, *Keys to the Idiot* (provided in Brightspace)
- Hogg, *Apothegms* (provided in Brightspace + I will provide a hard copy to each of you, as well)
- Ball, *Small Waterways* and *A Letter to Amanda Bernstein* (provided in Brightspace)
- additional resource: [@smallpress bookshelf](#)

- Seminar (11:35 am-1:30 pm) / Workshop (1:45-2:25 pm)
-Tues., Dec. 5th: Apt. 9 Press / Open workshop

NB: Research Essay + Letterpress Project are due Dec. 8th on or before 11:59 pm