

Carleton University
Fall 2026 Preliminary Course Outline
Department of English

ENGL 3960A: Studies in Indigenous Literature

Prerequisites: third-year standing or permission of the department

Preclusions: none

Location: Please consult Carleton Central for classroom information

Instructor: Dr S. Birkwood

E-mail: Susan.Birkwood@carleton.ca

Office hours: TBA

***** 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. *****

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

Course description

This course will focus on texts by Indigenous writers from the continent that is known as Turtle Island within Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee communities—more specifically, from territories located across its northern half. We will engage with works of prose, graphic fiction, and film and in doing so consider topics related to Indigenous epistemologies, histories, lands and waters, as well as matters related to form. Along the way, there will be opportunities to consider the different ways of mapping places / regions that are represented in these works. We will likely spend one class in the Carleton University Art Gallery to see an exhibition of Joi Arcand's work.

General learning outcomes

This course will support the development of informed and ethical approaches to interpretation and analysis through the discussion of specific texts and broader considerations of the following:

- Indigenous mappings of the part of the continent known as Canada
- Land-language relationships
- Representations in Indigenous storytelling of land-based ethical frameworks and concepts of relationality, reciprocity, and responsibility

- Matters of literary form and their signification within historical, political, legal, literary, and cultural contexts (including Indigenous epistemologies)
- Resistance, survivance, and resurgence in the contexts of settler-colonialism
 - Forms of activism, language revitalization, artistic practices

We will engage in the close-reading of texts, and assessments will require the analysis of direct textual evidence (e.g., quotations). General resources will be available in Brightspace; however, I encourage anyone taking the course who does not have a background in ENGL (literature) courses to consult with me regarding course expectations and assignment instructions. I will post information about office hours at the beginning of the term.

Required texts ***subject to change***

Copies of the novels will be ordered for purchase at a local bookstore. (Details to be announced closer to the start of the term.) The links to publisher websites below will provide current pricing. (Used copies would likely be fine. Just be aware that the pagination may vary.)

Richard Wagamese, *Keeper'n Me* (first published in 1994)

- [Keeper'n Me, Penguin Random House](#)

Conor Kerr, *Prairie Edge* (first published in 2024)

- [Prairie Edge, Penguin Random House](#)

Jessica Johns, *Bad Cree* (first published in 2023)

- [Bad Cree, HarperCollins](#)

- A copy of each novel will be placed on reserve in MacOdrum Library.
- Additional required texts (including films) will be available through Brightspace / ARES.

Evaluation ***subject to change***

In-class work (e.g., passage analysis, CUAG response)	15%
In-class midterm test	20%
Literary and visual mapping (incl. scaffolding components)	25%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The assignment may employ ArcGIS StoryMaps</i> 	
Engagement (e.g., attendance, discussion)	10%
Formally scheduled in-person final exam	30%

Please note the following:

- You must complete **the term work and the final exam** to be eligible to pass the course.