

Carleton University
Winter 2027 Preliminary Course Outline
Department of English

ENGL 4961A: Indigenous Literatures II

Prerequisites: fourth-year standing or permission of the department

Preclusions: none

Location: Please consult Carleton Central for classroom information

Instructor: Dr S. Birkwood

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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

Within a discussion of “wonderworks” that considers Indigenous epistemologies and histories but also matters of genre and the resistance to / subversion or revision of, categories associated with European forms, traditions, and worldviews, Daniel Heath 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. (*Why Indigenous Literatures Matter* 154)

In this course, we will discuss works (prose and film) by writers who create such spaces and draw upon stories of ancestors and of other-than-human beings, as they weave their own narratives.

General Learning Objectives

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, community care, language revitalization, artistic practices
- ❖ Essential to the capstone seminar experience is the in-class (in-person) discussion, as class members can draw not only upon their close reading of course texts but also the knowledge gained from the array of courses that they have taken during their undergraduate studies.

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.)

Eden Robinson, *Monkey Beach* (first published in 2000)

- [Monkey Beach by Eden Robinson | Penguin Random House Canada](#)

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

- [Bad Cree, HarperCollins](#)

Alicia Elliott, *And Then She Fell* (first published in 2023)

- [And Then She Fell by Alicia Elliott | Penguin Random House Canada](#)

- 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***

Individual seminar	20%
In-class test	20%
Collaborative project	30%
Reflection assignment	10%
In-class work, peer support	10%
Engagement (e.g., attendance, discussion)	10%