

Carleton University
 Fall 2026/Winter 2027
 Department of English Language and Literature

FYSM 1004B: Reading Literatures & Cultures

Topic: *On Reading*

Precludes additional credit for ENGL 1000 (no longer offered)

[ENGL 1100](#), [ENGL 1200](#), [ENGL 1300](#), [ENGL 1400](#), [ENGL 1600](#), [ENGL 1700](#).

You cannot get credit for (and should not register in) both our course and one of these courses

Prerequisite(s): Normally restricted to students entering the first year of a B.A., B.Cog.Sc., C.Co.M.S., B.Econ. or B.G.In.S. program

Brightspace Course Link: TBD

Format: In-person, not suitable for online students. The format emphasizes peer learning and requires committed in-person attendance.

Instructor: Jodie Medd  [hear my name](#)

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Carleton University is located on the traditional, unceded and un-surrendered Territory of the Anishinaabe Algonquin Nation, the customary keepers and defenders of the Kichi Sibi (Ottawa River) watershed. Carleton occupies this land as a settler institution, a result of an economy of property and allocation of public space facilitated by the nation-state of Canada. As a settler whose ancestors came as uninvited visitors, my responsibility is to work to develop right relationship to this land, including the earth, water, and non-human plants and animals, and to the Indigenous peoples who are the original and ongoing stewards of this land.

***** 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. ****

Welcome to our Seminar!

Course Description

Topic: On Reading

As a course that studies diverse literatures in English at the university level, FYSM 1004 *presumes* the inherent value of reading and writing. Our specific class section, however, will *actively explore* questions about the role and relevance of reading to human experience, not only in the past but also—and perhaps more pressingly—in our volatile present and uncertain future. We will approach this broad issue by centring work that has been historically marginalized in English literary traditions, as these voices bring a closely observed understanding of how reading, writing, and books shape culture. As such, our readings and discussion will attend to a range of embodied experiences and social positionings, including intersections of gender, sexuality, racialization, systemic white supremacy, colonialism, slavery and its legacies, migration and immigration, Indigeneity, the Black Diaspora, 2SLGBTQIA+ experience, war, psychiatry, trauma, historical memory, and more. Our primary literary readings will draw primarily from work of the last 100 years. **This course is for students who are willing to read, and especially willing to read, think, talk, and write about reading.**

Topics may include, but are not limited to:

- Close Reading, Slow Looking, & the Arts of Noticing
- Your Brain on Reading
- Reading and Writing for Survival & Liberation
- Histories of Reading, and Reading Communities

- Reading & Colonization
- Can You Read Me?: Reading Cultural Identities
- We Can Read Hard Things
- You Can't Read That!: Censorship and the Right to Read
- Writing as Revision, Reading as Resistance

Class time will be dedicated to sharing and learning from our responses to the literature; developing skills in analysis, close reading, critical thinking, and self-reflection; acquiring a vocabulary of terms for literary analysis; developing research skills; considering the historical, social, and intellectual contexts in which the literary works were produced while reflecting on their relevance now; developing strategies for effective writing; honing your own writing voice; and self-reflecting on processes of reading and writing. These practices will help you read, think, and write more effectively about anything. The seminar emphasizes class discussion and peer learning, student participation, regular writing and reflection (including in-class writing), embodied hands-on activities, and the value and pleasures of learning in community.

As much as possible, our section will also introduce first-year students to cool places and people on campus through field trips and special guests, including the Book Arts Lab, Carleton University Art Gallery, Ojigkwanong Indigenous Student Centre, select guest speakers, literary events, extracurricular opportunities and more!

Authors *may* include (but are not limited to): Frederick Douglass, Malcolm X, Virginia Woolf, Nella Larsen, Kiese Laymon, Ocean Vuong, Dionne Brand, and more.

Required Texts

Book list will be available closer to the start of term. They will be available at the [Carleton University Bookstore](#). You may also find used editions. Additional readings (poetry, essays, selections) available on Brightspace and/or ARES. **IMPORANT: Hard copy will be required**

Course Requirements & Assessments (provisional; will be finalized closer to start of term)

In-Class Quizzes: 15%
 In-Class Writing: 10%
 Fall Mid-Term Assignment: 5%
 Fall & Winter Essays: 25%
 Fall & Winter Essay Process: 10%
 Fall & Winter Exams: 25%
 Attendance, Participation, Self-Reflection: 10%

Course Intentions & Learning Outcomes

FYSM 1004 as a Writing Attentive English Course:

A FYSM is intended to develop writing skills for a university context. This course is also recommended for English majors and is designated a writing attentive course by the English Department. As such, students will spend a significant amount of class time learning and improving university-level forms of thinking and writing, particularly essay-writing skills. These skills concentrate on the following:

- establishment of university-level expectations for grammar and syntax
- establishment and refinement of literary-critical skills through close analysis of texts from a variety of genres
- generation and proof of an argumentative thesis across an essay

- establishment and refinement of arguments and opinions using persuasive, clear and grammatically correct English
- use and citation of primary literary texts in appropriate and convincing ways
- introduction to the fundamentals of secondary research (including critical evaluation, use, and citation of academic sources)
- completion of a number of writing assignments, including at least one formal scholarly essay
- writing at least one formally scheduled examination or a culminating reflective assignment

FYSM 1004 Section B Learning Outcomes:

In addition to the standard FYSM outcomes above, our course section has its own (related) outcomes. This course aims to help you:

Read literary texts slowly and closely, respond emotionally, and think critically and creatively: you will **pay attention** to primary literary texts in order to analyze and interpret the text in a sophisticated way that is meaningful, convincing, subtle, and insightful. This requires being open to your own experience of reading (including emotional and visceral responses), and practicing careful observation and self-reflection to develop thoughtful, clear and complex ideas about the course materials. We will consistently attend to the relationships among content (what a text is about), form (how it is written), and context (when/where/by and for whom a text is written).

Communicate effectively: you will practice formulating clear, grammatically correct, expressive, well-structured writing that conveys thoughtful ideas with good style, to achieve university-level academic writing while developing your own writing voice and gaining strategies that will improve any kind of writing you do. You will also engage regularly in small group discussions, peer workshops, informal presentations, and individual conferences, to practice oral communication in low-stress contexts.

Make connections: we will relate, compare/contrast, and connect ideas, points of view, and texts. You will have the chance to explore connections within a text (between parts, or between parts and the whole), across texts, between the literature and your world, between different historical and social contexts, between primary and secondary materials (putting your ideas in conversation with other scholars), and between different points of view in the seminar. You will be encouraged to connect small details with big ideas, consider multiple perspectives, and challenge your own ideas, assumptions, first impressions, and comfort level.

Reflect on your own thinking and learning so that you can keep growing as a student.

Enjoy and benefit from being part of a learning community. We are living in difficult times and first-year university is a huge adjustment. This course aims to co-create a supportive environment for interaction, learning, and meaningful connection among all members of the class. This includes active participation and thoughtful listening.

Course Policies

Policies on Mandatory & Incomplete Coursework

The two essays, the mid-term learning reflection, and the two exams are **mandatory requirements** of the course. *If you do not complete them, you risk failing the course:* Failure to complete any of the remaining coursework will result in 0 for each missing element.

Coursework Submission Policies

Submit work to Brightspace by the due date indicated on the Course Schedule & Brightspace Weekly Module. Find details and submission portal in 1) “Assignments” under Tools on NavBar or 2) the Weekly Module when the coursework is due.

We will discuss Academic Integrity and plagiarism early in our course. Even if you miss those class discussions, submission of your written work constitutes your assurance that:

- 1) You are aware of and understand [Carleton's Academic Integrity Policy](#) including its policy on plagiarism.
- 2) Your writing complies with these standards (see more below, “Academic Integrity & Plagiarism”)
- 3) You understand **that there will be no acceptable excuse for plagiarism in your work.**

Please keep a backup copy of all your assignments. Please name assignment e-documents with the format YourLastname_Assignment: e.g. Medd_MidTermLearningReflection.

Late Assignments & Grace Days

Find assignment due dates on the “Reading and Assignment Schedule” below and on each Brightspace Assignment (including exact time). Given the frequency and scaffolding of assignments, there is little margin for late work; however, everyone gets a bank of 3 penalty-free days of extension (“grace days”) *per term* for submitting formal essays/assignments no questions asked. Unused Fall grace days do not carry over to Winter term. Treat grace days as a failsafe rather than planning to use them. “Grace days” are measured in 24-hour units calculated by submission to Brightspace in relation to the due date time of the assignment. For example:

- Frederick submits Mid-Term Learning Reflection less than 24 hours after the time it was due = 1 grace day.
- Audre submits the Fall Essay more than 48 hours but less than 72 hours after it was due = 3 grace days.
- Nella does not submit the Fall Essay by the 11 pm deadline, but posts it the next morning at 8 am = 1 grace day.

As a courtesy, if possible **please inform me if you intend to use a grace day for a late submission.** Your use of grace days will be noted on essay feedback when applicable; you can also check with me. Once a student uses all 3 grace days in a term, late work may be penalized up to 5% late per day (including Sat & Sun), and may not be accepted after two weeks late. Special consideration may be given to students dealing with a protracted medical issue or other emergencies. As with absences, ***please communicate with me about late assignments*** (jodie.medd@carleton.ca). Late submissions may be returned later and receive minimal feedback. If you expect to be absent the day an assignment is due, please submit your work on time to Brightspace.

Contacting Me

See page 1 for in-person Student Meeting availability (TBD) and contact information. I am also happy to schedule an online appointment. Virtual appointments will use the Zoom appointment link on Brightspace (Course Details & Communications).

If you have general questions about the course that are not addressed in this Course Outline, please post them to “Course Q&A” on Brightspace (Course Details & Communications Module or Discussions on NavBar) so all students can benefit. If you have a personal or specific question, please e-mail me and I will respond in good time: jodie.medd@carleton.ca. Please use common sense when e-mailing. I will not respond to major issues with an assignment 24 hrs before it is due! In fact, if you wish to discuss an assignment, it is best to contact me to arrange an appointment. Carleton offers helpful etiquette advice on [emailing your instructor](#).

Content and Language

Harmful Language: Some texts on our course may make for uncomfortable reading. They may ask us to grapple with difficult material and face traumatic cultural histories; they may reproduce language or ideas that are offensive and culturally harmful, often to expose and critique them. While it is important to grapple with the messy complexities of texts and histories, we know that dehumanizing language *hurts*. If your written work cites a section of text that uses hateful or dehumanizing language, please omit that phrase, using a few dashes [-

---] or another means to signal the alteration. Harmful language is often—but not always—obvious. Some of us, myself included, will inevitably make mistakes or cause unintended harm. Your feedback is welcome and I'll do my best to address my own missteps. Mistakes are learning opportunities; let's (un)learn together in a spirit of mutual generosity and respect. See more below on “Inclusive, Adventurous, and Respectful Participation.”

Content warnings: In class and on Brightspace I will offer some content warnings for select course material, but any of the material may represent personal and collective experiences and histories of harm and pain that may impact you in ways specific to your own identity positioning and personal/cultural histories. I ask, then, that you take care of yourself and take the space you need if you find any of the material activating. You might need to step away, take some time, or put down a book. You decide. If you need to take a break during class (e.g. step out of the room to regroup), feel free to do so. Please consider checking in with me afterwards, just so I know you are ok and if you need further support.

Use of Technology in Class

Digital devices may help to access course materials. However, our focus is on listening to and learning from each other and the primary texts. Class time prioritizes attentive in-person conversations; as such, you will often be asked to put away all screens. **For focused reading and discussion, students are required to have hard copies of all readings with them in class.** Quizzes and in-class writing will be device-free, with notebooks and test paper provided. I recommend the technology of a pen/pencil and dedicated notebook: annotate hard copy readings and note down thoughts, ideas, and responses both in class while actively listening and outside of class while reading or reflecting. This will support your success and pleasure in the course. For those concerned about capturing class notes without a device, we'll have a designated note-taker who will post class notes to Brightspace. I will address students if their screen use detracts from our class focus.

Inclusive, Adventurous, and Respectful Participation

I hope we will co-create an inclusive and equitable learning environment that is enriched and enhanced by many dimensions of human experience including race, ethnicity and culture, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, ability, age, class, religion, and life experience. Together we can work to support diversity of experience, thought, and perspective, while treating each other with empathy and respect. While striving for inclusivity, I also recognize that danger and safety are integral to education. Our authors call upon us to pay attention to and re-examine our established ways of thinking, and the systems and hierarchies that shape our lives—this process of un/learning can be “uncomfortable” in a productive way. Together, we can support and encourage one another to feel brave enough to take risks, to think differently, and make room for new perspectives. Don't be afraid to disagree with the readings, with me, or with your classmates, while maintaining an attitude of respect, care, and curiosity. We can also work to be aware of the histories and systems that may make learning environments unsafe for many and to be mindful of our own biases and their impact. As we share this class, I hope we can be both brave and compassionate together.

I also acknowledge that the course readings were created in specific histories and cultural contexts, reflecting particular points of view; we will strive to be mindful of these specific perspectives, including recognizing the contexts and lived experiences out of which our literary authors are writing, while also being aware that the theory and research used to address these authors and their contexts may have limited terms, frameworks, and definitions. The study of English literature has its own history of exclusions, limitations, and hierarchies of value. We will work to be aware of the assumptions, limitations, and biases of the material we read.

Carleton's [Human Rights Policies and Procedures](#) affirms that university members share responsibilities to “provide a safe environment, conducive to personal and intellectual growth, which is not only free of discrimination, injustice, and violence but is also characterized by understanding, respect, peace, trust openness and fairness.” The university “promotes equity and fairness” and affirms that “Every member of the University community has a right to study, work and live in a safe environment free of discrimination or harassment” (2).

With these responsibilities and commitments in mind, early in the course, we address:

- How we can promote an environment of supportive and inclusive intellectual exchange, where we can share ideas (including disagreements) and feelings with an attitude of respect, courage, and compassion.
- How we can co-create an environment that encourages class members to take risks in sharing their ideas—to move up and speak up; how we can make space for everyone to contribute—including knowing when to move back and practice active and respectful listening. *Let's learn together.*

Mindful Dialogue & Addressing Harm: I'll offer some guidelines and protocols for interactions in class. You are welcome to contact me in person, by email, or anonymously (Course Q&A on Brightspace) if a class experience lands in a harmful way. I appreciate your feedback as we strive to co-create an inclusive learning environment. Early communications will invite you to share your name and pronoun, and you are welcome to inform me of changes to that information at any time.

Mental Health Acknowledgement

Ongoing world events make for stressful and challenging times. While encouraging focused and engaged academic work in this class, I am mindful of your health and wellbeing and the need to balance academic commitments with other responsibilities. My hope is that the literature on the course will be engaging to read and discuss, and that we can nurture a supportive and low-stress learning environment together. Please reach out if you are encountering difficult circumstances, struggling with the class, or if you would like help connecting with academic support or health resources. There are numerous resources available both on- and off-campus to support you. For more information, please consult <https://wellness.carleton.ca/>. A full list of services and resources is provided at the end of this course outline.

Portions of the Inclusivity and Language Statements and Mental Health Acknowledgement are adapted from:

Carleton's Office of Equity and Inclusive Communities

Jennifer Hardwick. "A Safe Space for Dangerous Ideas; a Dangerous Space for Safe Thinking." *Hybrid Pedagogy*, August 13, 2014

Carleton course outlines by Dr. Brian Johnson (English), Dr. Laura Horak (Film), and Dr. Sarah Casteel (English)

University Policies

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. The letter grades assigned in this course follow [Carleton's Grading System](#).

Deferred Final Exams

[Deferred final exams](#), which must be applied for at the Registration Office, are available ONLY if the student is in good standing in the course. To be "in good standing," a student must have completed required mandatory required coursework and fulfilled attendance requirements.

Intellectual Property

My lectures and course materials, including presentations, posted notes, assignments and exams remain my intellectual property and are protected by copyright. They are intended for your personal use and study and may not be reproduced or redistributed without my prior written consent. This is also true for student work.

Occasionally I may use brief anonymous student examples to address writing issues. I seek consent to use a longer sample and give the option of anonymity. Samples of previous student work are used with permission.

To respect confidentiality, no video or audio recording of in-class lectures or discussions is allowed.

Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI): Policy for Our Course

Students may use AI tools for basic word processing and formatting functions, including:

- Grammar and spell checking (e.g., Grammarly, Microsoft Word Editor).
- Basic formatting and design suggestions (e.g., Microsoft Word's formatting tools, PowerPoint Design editor).

Documenting AI use: It is not necessary to document the use of AI for the permitted purposes listed above. **No other use of AI is permitted or appropriate for this course.** If you are struggling with course expectations, please see me—do not resort to AI.

Why have I adopted this policy? This course expects you to read the course material for yourself, to engage with it directly, and to hold conversations with class members. The limited-use AI policy ensures that student voices and ideas are prioritized and authentically represented, maintaining the integrity of the work produced by students while allowing basic support to enhance clarity, correctness, layout, and flow of ideas. The goal of adopting a limited use of AI is to support student learning to develop foundational skills in reading, writing, in-person discussion, and critical thinking by practicing substantive content creation without relying on AI support. Furthermore, Gen-AI/LLMs involve environmental, ethical, social, cognitive, and mental health harms and risk, which undermine the values and intentions of this course. In our course, students will have the opportunity to workshop stages of their formal writing with members of the class and the instructor we are thinking, learning, and collaborating with each other in our class community, not with auto-generated language. ***I reserve the right to make an assignment assessment contingent on an in-person meeting to discuss the writing and ideas in any submitted assignments. Any assignment with blatantly inaccurate or fraudulent citations (quotations) and/or references will automatically receive 0 for failing to meet minimal standards of appropriate citation.***

Academic Integrity & Plagiarism

Carleton University has a clear policy on academic integrity, including procedures to address academic misconduct. The University's Academic Integrity Policy is available here: <https://carleton.ca/secretariat/wp-content/uploads/Academic-Integrity-Policy-2021.pdf>

It is important that students understand and meet academic integrity standards, and are sure they do not violate these standards through 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.*” According to the Department of English, examples of plagiarism include but are not limited to the following:

- any submission prepared in whole or in part, by someone else, including the unauthorized use of generative AI tools (e.g. ChatGPT)
- 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
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, paraphrased material, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment
- using another's data or research findings without appropriate acknowledgement
- 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 re-submission occurs.

Plagiarism is a form of intellectual theft, a breach of basic ethics, and counter to the learning goals of a university course. It is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly by 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. Find more information here: <https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-integrity/>. ***I reserve the right to make an assignment assessment contingent on an in-person meeting to discuss the writing and ideas in any submitted assignments.***

Academic Integrity Expectations and Requirements for FYSM1004B:

Convincing and meaningful literary interpretation and analysis requires the support of sufficient specific, documented, direct textual citation and analysis that illustrates attentive **reading** of the text(s) in question:

1. While accurate paraphrases that are clearly introduced and documented may be part of the analysis, they must not function as the main or sole form of evidence. **Any assignment that does not include direct citations (quotations) may receive an F for failing to meet minimal standards of citation.** Claims regarding the texts must be supported by direct citation as your evidence.
2. You must document your citations: this means direct quotations with page/line/time-stamp references. Following MLA format, and included in Works Cited.
3. Any assignment **with blatantly inaccurate or fraudulent citations (quotations), paraphrases, and/or references will receive 0 for failing to meet minimal standards of appropriate citation, and for misrepresentation (falsifying content). This is also grounds for an academic integrity violation**
4. Any assignment with citations that are used **without appropriate attention to context risks receiving an F for failing to cite accurately and appropriately.** (Recognizing there may be unintentional mis-readings/misunderstandings of context, which are different from misrepresentation or lack of context)

Academic Accommodation

Carleton is committed to providing academic accessibility for all individuals. You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. The accommodation request processes, including information about the *Academic Consideration Policy for Students in Medical and Other Extenuating Circumstances*, are outlined on the Academic Accommodations website (students.carleton.ca/course-outline).

Informal Accommodation Due to Short-term Incapacitation & Academic Consideration for Medical or Other Extenuating Circumstances

Our course “grace day” policy on submitting work is intended to provide accommodation for short-term issues. If serious illness or other extenuating circumstances impact your ability to submit course work and attend class, contact me in writing as soon as possible, and no later than 24 hours after any missed deadlines for coursework. I may ask you to meet with me and complete an “Academic Consideration for Coursework Form” <https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-consideration-coursework-form/>. As our course relies on students completing work on time to the best of their ability, it is important to keep up with coursework. Remember there are mandatory coursework requirements for passing the course. *In all cases, clear, timely, ethical, and transparent communication is key.*

Emergency Resources (on and off campus)

- Crisis/Urgent Counselling Support: 613-520-6674 (Mon-Fri, 8:30-4:30)
- Suicide Crisis Helpline: call or text 9-8-8, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- For immediate danger or urgent medical support: call 9-1-1

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 & Inclusive Communities: <https://carleton.ca/equity/>
- International Student Services Office: (<http://www.carleton.ca/isso/>) offers services and programs that contribute to positive international experiences for all Carleton students, including helping international and exchange students adjust to life in Canada and get the most out of their student experience. 128 Nideyinàn
- The Centre for Indigenous Support & Community Engagement (<https://carleton.ca/indigenous/cisce/students/>) supports students, staff and faculty at Carleton by providing culturally safe spaces for dialogue and learning. It nurtures a sense of belonging for Indigenous students, and offers resources and training to educate the Carleton community about the experiences, histories and worldviews of Indigenous peoples. Centre Resources may be

found here: <https://carleton.ca/indigenous/cisce/students/>, including information about programs and events for students, access to the [Ojigkwanong Indigenous Student Centre](#), and [culturally-centred individual counselling](#).

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/>
- Good2Talk: 1-866-925-5454, <https://good2talk.ca/>
- The Walk-In Counselling Clinic: <https://walkincounselling.com>