

English 115: Introduction to Canadian Literature Spring, 2015

Instructor Information

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Office Hours: Fridays 9:30-11:30, or by appointment

Course Description

This course introduces you to great, contemporary Canadian novels through the national lens of the Canada Reads competition run annually by the CBC. The course picks up five of the winning texts from across the history of the competition and reads them alongside one another to develop a critical understanding of what it means to characterize a piece of literature as “prize-worthy” and “Canadian”. This course will explore the social and cultural contexts, as well as the various formal and stylistic features of each novel, in order to develop an understanding of the novel’s significance to the transforming landscape of Canadian literature. This course will also take the opportunity to leverage the Canada Reads championed-debate model by conducting activities and facilitating moments in tutorial for you to critically discuss the elements and merits of the selection of texts.

Course Learning Objectives

Analytic Skills

- Ability to understand and engage in close reading practices
- Ability to identify and discuss the function of literary devices
- Ability to identify and communicate literary themes, especially those related to the broad umbrella of Canadian literature
- Ability to identify and discuss different modes of narration or points-of-view
- Ability to identify key ways literature addresses specific historical, cultural, and/or social contexts
- Ability to identify what classifies a work as “Canadian” and to critically assess to construct of Canada Reads

Composition Skills

- Develop the skills to create a strong thesis statement and argumentative structure
- Develop the vocabulary to express ideas as arguments and not just opinions
- Develop an understanding of English grammar and its fundamental importance in expressing thoughts clearly
- Develop a strong grasp of proper citation techniques according to MLA guidelines

Required Course Texts

Michael Ondaatje, *In the Skin of a Lion* (Vintage Canada)

Miriam Toews, *A Complicated Kindness* (Vintage Canada)

Carmen Aguirre, *Something Fierce: Memoirs of a Revolutionary Daughter* (Vintage Canada)

Lawrence Hill, *The Book of Negroes* (Harper Collins)
Joseph Boyden, *The Orenda* (Hamish Hamilton)
Academic Writing Essentials (Pearson)

All of these texts are available at the university bookstore or online from Amazon. It is critical that you use the specific editions listed above in order to correctly complete the assignments.

Required Assignments & Grading Scheme

Assignment	Weight	Due Date
Participation	5%	
Close Reading #1	5%	January 16
Close Reading #2	10%	February 6
Essay Proposal	10%	February 20
Peer-Review Worksheet	5%	February 20*
Critical Journal Response	15%	March 13
Final Essay	25%	April 3
Final Examination	25%	T.B.A.

*in class assignment

Brief Assignment Descriptions

These assignment descriptions are purposefully brief and void of details. Rigorous instructions and guidelines will be provided for each assignment prior to its due date.

Close Reading #1 (300 words): This assignment requires that you draft a substantial paragraph that launches an argument about a selected passage of text from *In the Skin of a Lion*. This paragraph should be closely and directly reflective of the given passage and should include ample quotation or paraphrasing from that passage to support your argument.

Close Reading #2 (500 words): This assignment requires that you draft a substantial paragraph (or two) that launches an argument about a selected passage of text from either *A Complicated Kindness* or *Something Fierce*. This paragraph should be closely and directly reflective of the given passage and should include ample quotation or paraphrasing from that passage to support your argument.

Essay Proposal (500 words): This assignment requires that you outline your argument and approach to the final essay. This essay proposal should be structured similar to an introductory paragraph and, therefore, should include a strong thesis and an outline of the paper's approach to the text. This essay proposal will be used for the in-class peer-review workshop and will be handed in (accompanied by the peer-review worksheet) at the end of class.

Peer-Review Worksheet: This assignment will be conducted in class and requires that you carefully, respectfully, and critically assess *three* of your classmates' essay proposals. Your peer-review worksheet will be handed in (accompanied by your essay proposal) at the end of class.

Critical Journal Response (1000 words): This assignment requires that you develop a clear and convincing response to the following question: if these five texts were selected for Canada Reads 2015, which novel would be the most deserving of the award and why? This assignment necessitates that you consider what it means for a novel to be considered “Canadian” and what the implications of the Canada Reads competition are.

Final Essay (1400 words): This assignment requires that you draft an organized, compelling, and original response to one of three essay prompts. The prompts will be thematically driven and the choice of the text you work on is entirely up to you.

Final Examination: the final examination covers all five of the required texts assigned in this course. The examination is composed of three parts: four passage identifications, two short answer questions, and a single essay.

Grading

The assignments in this course will be evaluated according to the Department of English’s grading standards for first-year writing, which provide detailed criteria for each letter grade. The grading standards are available at http://english.uvic.ca/undergrad/grading_standards/html. Your work will also be evaluated in terms of how well it fulfills the specific requirements of the assignment and your achievement of the learning objectives of the course.

The following table illustrates how each letter grade and percentage score corresponds to the university’s standard grading system:

Letter Grade	%	Description (from the University of Victoria Undergraduate Calendar)
A+	90-100	Exceptional (A+), outstanding (A), and excellent (A-) performance. These grades indicate a student who is self-initiating, exceeds expectations, and has an insightful grasp of the subject matter.
A	85-89	
A-	80-84	
B+	77-79	Very good (B+), good (B), and solid (B-) performance. These grades indicate a good grasp of the subject matter or an excellent grasp in one area balanced with a satisfactory grasp in other area(s).
B	73-76	
B-	70-72	
C+	65-69	Satisfactory (C+) or minimally satisfactory (C) performance. These grades indicate a satisfactory performance and knowledge of the subject matter.
C	60-64	
D	50-59	Marginal performance. This grade indicates a superficial grasp of the subject matter.
F	0-49	Unsatisfactory performance

Course Policies & Expectations

Mutual Obligations

You can expect me to:

- Be on time and prepared for class

- Teach to the course goals and description
- Give clear instructions for assignments
- Advise and support you with your course work
- Treat you with respect
- Be available during my specified office hours and, if necessary, at an alternately agreed upon time
- Evaluate your work fairly, carefully, and constructively, based on the criteria made clear to you beforehand
- Return assignments in a timely manner

I expect you to:

- Attend all classes, except in the case of severe illness or emergency
- Prepare for class by completing the assigned readings and work
- Participate in classroom activities
- Ask questions – either in class or in office hours – if you do not understand
- Submit all assignments according to the instructions, complete and on time
- Use my comments and feedback on your assignments to improve future work
- Cooperate with and act respectfully towards your fellow classmates and myself
- Communicate with me about problems or concerns
- Put forth a focused and disciplined effort when completing any of the course requirements

E-Mail and Office Hours

Questions, concerns, and lively discussions are always welcome. If you have a brief query, please feel free to send me an e-mail. I will answer within 24 hours on business days or 48 hours on the weekend. If you have a more complex question, wish to discuss course material, or wish to receive assistance with an assignment, please come and see me during office hours or e-mail me to set up an appointment.

Attendance

The university expects students to attend all classes in which they are enrolled. If you do miss class, you are responsible for the catching up on the covered material. You may wish to collaborate with one or more classmates to share notes or you are welcome to come and see me during my office hours. Due to my personal time constraints, I am not able to offer lecture summaries or to reteach tutorial material. Attendance will be taken in your Friday tutorials and is evaluated as part of your overall participation grade. You are given two ‘freebies’ over the thirteen weeks of this course. This means that you can miss two tutorials – for whatever reasons – without receiving any grade deductions. However, missing more than two tutorials (that are not excused by a doctor’s note or serious personal emergency) will result in you forfeiting the 5% allotted for class participation, thereby receiving a 0.

Late Assignments

All assignments are due in hardcopy at the beginning of class on the date indicated on the syllabus. Extensions will be granted only in extenuating circumstances and, when appropriate,

with documentation. When possible, extensions should be discussed with me well in advance of the due date. Late assignments will receive a penalty of 3% per day. Late work will not receive substantive feedback.

The ‘N’ Grade

Students fail to complete one or more of the assignments before the end of the course will automatically receive an ‘N’ grade, which is associated with a final grade of no more than 49%.

Grade Appeals

In handling grade appeals, this course follows the university-wide policies. If you feel that an assignment has been unfairly assessed, your first step is to discuss your concerns with me. Be prepared to illustrate how your work matches the standards for the letter grade you feel the assignment deserves. If you are not satisfied with the outcome of our discussion, you may apply for a formal grade review, which is discussed in detail in the University of Victoria academic calendar.

Academic Integrity

University of Victoria Policy on Academic Integrity: *“Academic integrity requires commitment to the values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. It is expected that students, faculty members and staff at the University of Victoria, as members of an intellectual community, will adhere to these ethical values in all activities related to learning, teaching, research and service. Any action that contravenes this standard, including misrepresentation, falsification or deception, undermines the intention and work of scholarly work and violates the fundamental academic rights of member of our community”*. Students are responsible for upholding the university’s standards for academic integrity. Failure to do so could result in failure of the course, as well as other academic penalties.

Classroom Diversity

Our classroom openly welcomes students with diverse learning styles and needs. If you have a disability or health consideration that may require accommodations, please approach me and/or the Resource Centre for Students with Disabilities (RCSd, <http://rcsd.uvic.ca>) as soon as possible. The RCSd staff members are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals, and arrange appropriate course accommodations.

Campus Resources

- *The Writing Centre*: The Writing Centre provides free one-on-one tutorial to help students develop their writing skills and proficiency in English. The centre also runs workshops that address common problems in academic writing. You can book appointments online or visit on a drop-in basis. The Writing Centre is located in Room 135F of the Learning Commons, in McPherson Library.
- *University of Victoria Libraries*: The Research Help link at the University of Victoria Libraries Gateway offers students help with their research, writing papers, locating resources, and identifying people to ask for more help. The Research Help section also includes links to eTutorials on basic research skills.

- *CALL Facility*: The CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) facility offers software, audio, and video resources for language learners, including EAL learners. Resources are available on an individual drop-in basis. The CALL facility is located in A012 of the Clearihue building. You can contact the CALL facility by e-mail calllab@uvic.ca.

Class Schedule

	Date	Literary Text	AWE Reading	Due Dates
1	Tuesday, 6 January	Introduction	“Reading Actively”, “Reading Critically” & “Keeping Track of What You Read” (p. 22-26)	
	Wednesday, 7 January	<i>In the Skin of a Lion</i>		
	Friday, 9 January	<i>In the Skin of a Lion</i>		
2	Tuesday, 13 January	<i>In the Skin of a Lion</i>	“Preparing a Close Reading” (p. 112-113)	
	Wednesday, 14 January	<i>In the Skin of a Lion</i>		
	Friday 16, January	<i>In the Skin of a Lion</i>		Close Reading #1
3	Tuesday, 20 January	<i>A Complicated Kindness</i>	“Documentation Styles: MLA” (p. 59)	
	Wednesday, 21 January	<i>A Complicated Kindness</i>		
	Friday, 23 January	<i>A Complicated Kindness</i>		
4	Tuesday, 27 January	<i>A Complicated Kindness</i>	“Quoting, Paraphrasing, and Summarizing” (p. 41-48)	
	Wednesday, 28 January	<i>A Complicated Kindness</i>		
	Friday, 30 January	<i>A Complicated Kindness</i>		
5	Tuesday, 3 February	<i>Something</i>	“Developing a	

		<i>Fierce</i>	Thesis” (p. 82-83)	
	Wednesday, 4 February	<i>Something Fierce</i>		
	Friday, 6 February	<i>Something Fierce</i>		Close Reading #2
6	READING BREAK			
7	Tuesday, 17 February	<i>Something Fierce</i>	“Writing Strong Paragraphs” (p. 62-67)	
	Wednesday, 18 February	<i>Something Fierce</i>		
	Friday, 20 February	Peer Review		Essay Proposal
8	Tuesday, 24 February	<i>The Book of Negroes</i>	“Writing Strong Sentences” (p. 67-71)	
	Wednesday, 25 February	<i>The Book of Negroes</i>		
	Friday, 27 February	<i>The Book of Negroes</i>		
9	Tuesday, 3 March	<i>The Book of Negroes</i>	“Common Errors in Grammar” (p. 134-139)	
	Wednesday, 4 March	<i>The Book of Negroes</i>		
	Friday, 6 March	<i>The Book of Negroes</i>		
10	Tuesday, 9 March	<i>The Orenda</i> (Part One)	“Common Confusables” (p. 154-166)	
	Wednesday, 10 March	<i>The Orenda</i> (Part One)		
	Friday, 13 March	<i>The Orenda</i> (Part One)		Critical Journal Response
11	Tuesday, 17 March	<i>The Orenda</i> (Part Two)	“Writing an Essay” (p. 84-89)	
	Wednesday, 18 March	<i>The Orenda</i> (Part Two)		
	Friday, 20 March	<i>The Orenda</i> (Part Two)		
12	Tuesday, 24 March	<i>The Orenda</i> (Part Three)	“Academic Writing Process”	

			(p. 14-21)	
	Wednesday, 25 March	<i>The Orenda</i> (Part Three)		
	Friday, 27 March	<i>The Orenda</i> (Part Three)		
13	Tuesday, 31 March	<i>The Orenda</i>	“Preparing for an Exam” (p. 120-121)	
	Wednesday, 1 April	Exam Review		
	Friday, 3 April	Exam Review		Final Essay