

English 270: Canadian Literature
Section 1 (January-April 2003)
Instructor: Dr. Candace Fertile
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Office Hours: MW 11:30-12:30; T Th 3:00-4:00 or by appointment

Description: This course offers students the opportunity to explore the vastness of Canadian literature through an examination of stories, novels, poems, and drama. Each work is examined both individually and in the broader context of Canadian literature and other literature. Prerequisite: English 160.

Texts:

English 270 Coursepack: Short Stories
15 Canadian Poets X 3 edited by Gary Geddes, Oxford UP, 2001
The Stone Diaries by Carol Shields
The Englishman's Boy by Guy Vanderhaeghe
The Shape of a Girl by Joan MacLeod

Assignments:

20% essay on the short story (1000-1200 words; due February 6)
20% essay on poetry (1000-1200 words; due March 6)
25% essay on the novel (1000-1200 words; due April 5)
35% final examination (during examination period in April)

Notes:

1. Students are expected to read the material, attend class, and participate in discussions. Essays must be handed in on time (at the beginning of the class on the due date).
2. Students must follow the MLA system for in-text citations. Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Any ideas or words borrowed from someone else must be attributed. Ask if in doubt.
3. Students must keep a folder of all rough work (no matter how messy) used in the preparation of the essays. If asked, a student must produce this folder or the essay will be given a grade of zero. Keep a copy of your work. Keep your marked essays.
4. The class will be a mixture of lecture, discussion, small group discussion and presentation, and occasional in-class writing.

Evaluation Guide:

A+ 95-100; A 90-94; A- 85-89; B+ 80-84; B 75-79; B- 70-74; C+ 65-69; C 60-64; D 50-59;
F 0-49

Schedule (subject to change)

January 7 Introduction

January 9-30 The Short Story (all in coursepack)

9 "A Field of Wheat" Sinclair Ross

"The Ice Wagon Going Down the Street" Mavis Gallant

14 "To Set Our House in Order" Margaret Laurence

"Stones" Timothy Findlay

16 "Simple Recipes" Madeleine Thien

sample essay

21 "How I Met My Husband" Alice Munro

"The Resplendant Quetzal" Margaret Atwood

23 "Borders" Thomas King

28 "A Man Away from Home Has No Neighbours" Steven Heighton

"The Boat" Alistair MacLeod

30 "Antigone" Sheila Watson

"Swimming Lessons" Rohinton Mistry

February 4-27 Poetry (in *15 Canadian Poets X 3*)

February 4

"Whatever Else Poetry Is Freedom" Layton 109

"Inventing the Hawk" Crozier 449

"The Bird" Lane 303

"The Three Emilys" Livesay 21

February 6

"Britain Street" Nowlan 180

"Heirloom" Klein 37

"Keine Lazarovitch: 1870-1959" Layton 111

"Warren Pryor" Nowlan 177

"A Kind of Love" Crozier 456

February 11

"Bushed" Birney 60

"In the Yukon" Gustafson

"Progressive Insanities of a Pioneer" Atwood 288

"Ride Off Any Horizon" Newlove 229

"Laurentian Shield" Scott 96

February 13 No Class: Reading Break

February 18

"Ypres: 1915" Nowlan 182

"Death of a Young Son by Drowning" Atwood 291

"Death" Bowering 267

"Sandra Lee Scheuer" Geddes 378

"Letters & Other Worlds" Ondaatje 341

February 20

"The Cariboo Horses" Purdy 70

"Sea-Gulls" Pratt 6

"The Animals in That Country" Atwood 286

"Octopus" Lowther 354

"Animals" Thesen 509

February 25

"Lament for the Dorsets" Purdy 73

"Bartok and the Geranium" Livesay 23

"The Stenographers" Page 117

"Girls" Waddington 82

"The Six-Quart Basket" Souster 135

"Blues" nichol 314

February 27

"Poem Improvised Around a First Line" MacEwen 215

"God Is Alive" Cohen 159

"Meditation on Tom Thomson" Kroetsch 426

"Body Politics" Halfe 603

"Booking Passage" Marlatt 373

March 4-13 *The Englishman's Boy*

March 18-April 1 *The Stone Diaries*

April 3-8 *The Shape of a Girl*

April 10 Review

Assignments

Essays must be handed in on time, and they must be properly formatted. Use the MLA system of in-text citations with a Works Cited list at the end of the essay. If you use secondary material (the piece of literature is the primary source), you must examine more than one critical work. It is not necessary to use secondary critical sources for the first paper. In all the essays you should think of yourself as the critic—a person who is creating an argument about works of literature using the best evidence possible—the literature itself. It is crucial to be clear and concise. In effect you are teaching the reader, so communicate as effectively as you can. Also keep in mind that a single correct interpretation is unlikely. I expect a reasonable argument backed up with evidence (quotations) from the literature. Any essay lacking quotations (excluding the examination) will automatically fail. You should also be selective in your choice of thesis: it should be of a level of complexity that can be handled in the assigned length. Making a few points in depth is preferable to making many superficial comments. Try to stick to the word length, and put the word count at the end of your essay. The bulk of the essay should be comprised of your words, not quotations. Use standard manuscript format: leave one inch margins on all sides, double-space, use a title page, use an ordinary font of at least size 10, do not use headers with your name on each page, number the pages in the upper right hand corner, and staple the pages together in the upper left hand corner. No folders or covers, please.

Poetry Essay (due February 4 at the beginning of class)

Your task is to choose two poems from the book (they may be poems we discuss in class), and write a comparison-contrast essay on the two poems. A good way to approach this topic is to find two poems on the same topic (love, death, nature, poetry, and culture, for example) and examine the similarities and differences between the theme(s) of the poems and the way in which the themes are developed. In this essay you must include commentary on theme and some aspect(s) of structure or technique. For example, you could examine the use of symbolism, metaphor, simile, personification, sound techniques, or some combination of these (and this list is merely a suggestion) and the themes. Your other option is to choose a poem from the text that we are not discussing in class and write an analysis of it. In this analysis, please explain the form and content of the poem

and the connection between the two. As it is impossible to say everything there is to say about a poem in a short essay, you need to make choices about your topic. You will need to discuss theme(s) and technique(s).

Short Story Essay (due March 4 at the beginning of class)

The first choice is a comparison of two short stories. You may choose the two stories (and again they may be ones we discuss in class) and the particular focus you wish you take. Choosing one of the elements of fiction such as character, setting, or narrative point of view in conjunction with theme is a reasonable approach. For example you could compare and contrast two characters. Keep in mind that the point of comparison and contrast is to illuminate both parts of the subject. The second choice is to select one story (not discussed in class) and write an analysis of some element(s) of fiction.

Essay on a Novel (due April 8 at the beginning of class)

Once again you may devise your own topic, but you must submit your idea for approval by March 25. Here are some suggestions:

1. Trace a particular pattern of imagery and explain its significance to the novel.
2. Explain the significance of setting, symbolism, or irony.
3. You might find something to compare between the novels, such as a form of prejudice.
4. You could examine the use of language.
5. You could examine the role of love or sex or friendship.

In all cases, your essay will be more effective if you choose to tackle something you have an interest in. The essay should be the culmination of your thought on the particular topic. Often you won't know what you think about a topic until you start to write because the process of writing is a process of discovery. And writing involves thinking and rewriting and rewriting and rewriting. And all of it is a creative process. Your essay reflects part of you. And you choose how you are being reflected. Give your work respect and it's much more likely the reader will do the same. In a sense the essay is personal in that it's an individual argument made by one person. So the use of I is permitted, but remember that I know the essay is what you think. You don't have to keep saying it. Stay away from using you because you run the risk of sounding bossy or making assumptions about the reader. And one gets tiresomely pretentious rather quickly. Just say what you have to say in a balanced tone, backed up with evidence.