

CAMOSUN COLLEGE - COURSE OUTLINE WINTER 2005

Course:	English 270 (02)	Canadian Literature
Instructor:	Gordon Alexander Phone: 370-3345 (24-hour)	322 Paul Building (e-mail) alexander@camosun.bc.ca
Office Hours:	Tuesday and Thursday	10:15-11:15 and by appointment
Prerequisites:	Two 100-level English courses	
Workload:	3 hours in class, 6 hours out of class, per week	
Texts:	<i>A New Anthology of Canadian Literature</i> , Eds. D. Brown and R. Bennett, Toronto: Oxford, 2002 One of several novels to be assigned	
Performances:	Attend one Canadian play; and/or one poetry reading; and/or one Canadian film or attend one "serious" Canadian art exhibit or hear one "serious" Canadian musical composition	

Course Description:

"Through a study of various authors, this course investigates Canadian literature from the late nineteenth century to the present day. Readings, which may include the short story, poetry, drama, the essay, and the novel, are presented in a variety of contexts, including historical and geographical. Critical essays and a final examination are required. Finished assignments total approximately 5000 words and range from 500 to 2500 words."

The course would be entirely successful if, in five years' time, the students were able to make reasonable critical statements about the authors and works read for the course based on their own experience, and if they had continued to read a broad range of Canadian literature. If, in ten years' time, any student had found a unifying principle or pattern in Canadian literature, I would be delighted.

My assumptions are several, and have necessarily influenced the course design. First, second-year courses are extensive; that is, they require students to read widely and integrate large quantities of material, not all in great detail. Second, knowledge of basic, college writing conventions allows essay assignments to be reduced in number, and instruction to be directed to the course material. Third, students have begun to develop effective study-skills, enabling greater responsibility for preparation, contribution, and examination performance. Finally, classroom activities can be quick and flexible, involving the instructor, individuals and groups in a shared attempt to understand the material at hand.

One further assumption needs to be mentioned. My experience suggests that a thematic approach makes more sense for most students than a genre-based sequence of readings. Furthermore, I believe that the reading and thinking skills required for understanding poetry and fiction are more similar than different. At the same time, chronology and geography are perhaps equally important. Thus this course will examine four topics: arrival and naming, indigenous people and other races, love, and artistic forms. These topics will guide

discussion of the works chronologically (about one half will be pre-1970, and one half post-1970). A separate schedule/reading list for each half of the course will be available.

Throughout the course, M. Atwood's argument that survival (hanging on, staying alive) is the central theme of Canadian Literature will be examined. More specifically, we will test her contention that survivors in Canada fall into four groups: victims who deny they are victims, victims who blame fate, victims who question their fate, and creative non-victims. We will also attend to Frank Davey's view presented in *Surviving the Paraphrase* that such approaches to criticism are fundamentally misguided.

Outcomes:

When reading Canadian literature, students will be encouraged to make connections, evaluate works based on established critical criteria, and recognize both the general characteristics of Canadian literature as well as those of individual authors.

Students will

- Analyze Canadian literature from the nineteenth century to the present, with emphasis on post 1950 works and the rich diversity of authors and works.
- Evaluate a variety of genres, which may include poetry, short fiction, novels, drama, and essays, according to critical precepts appropriate to the specific genre.
- Compare works such as those from E.J. Pratt, Earle Birney, Dorothy Livesey, P.K. Page, Al Purdy, Margaret Laurence, Margaret Atwood, Alice Munro, Timothy Findley, Thomas King, and Rohinton Mistry while applying concepts that demonstrate the development of Canadian literature. Individual instructors may choose from this list and add to it.

When discussing Canadian literature, students will be encouraged to develop their own interpretations of the works using a variety of critical methods and resources.

Students will

- Identify the socio-historical context of the works and relate the works to others as part of a literary continuum.
- Identify and account for recurring themes in Canadian Literature.
- Compare and contrast various works, authors, and styles within the context of the overall development of Canadian literature.
- Distinguish between the subjective and objective aspects of works in order to formulate informed judgments about the works being discussed.
- Identify the influence of dominant critical theories or movements in the contexts of the literature studied.

When writing about the literature, students will be expected to demonstrate their understanding of the above issues and to explain, support, and illustrate their interpretations of literature in essays and a final examination.

Students will

- Support their work with relevant textual evidence.
- Document sources using MLA conventions.

Students' Responsibilities and Preparation:

1. Attend class regularly (phoning or relaying a message if unable to be present). Attendance will be recorded each class.
2. Contribute to class discussion; request assistance; and encourage and assist other students.
3. Read all assigned readings from the text *before* class. The reading need not be thorough, but should be thoughtful. Students should know who is talking to whom about what, be aware of the progression of ideas and images in each piece, and have posed some questions about the work.
4. Complete all assignments *before* class (as they are due at the beginning of each class).
5. **All major assignments must be completed for credit in this course.**
6. Hand work in on time (at the beginning of class on the due date). Late submissions must be negotiated and will be penalized 5% per weekday, up to a maximum of 5 weekdays, after which they will not be accepted.
7. Demonstrate a knowledge of MLA documentation. Plagiarism is a violation of academic ethics which results in serious penalties; therefore, it is vital to give credit where credit is due. Use research/reference materials to support ideas, not replace developing them, and make sure documentation is accurate. For College policies regarding plagiarism, see Student Conduct Policy, "Academic Misconduct," in the Camosun College Calendar.

Instructor's Responsibilities:

The instructor will adapt the course appropriately, function as a senior learner, share his ideas and writing, stimulate and support the learning of others, give every opportunity for success, provide knowledge as needed, facilitate cooperation and community, provide clear instructions for assignments, describe examinations in advance with examples of questions, comment helpfully (perhaps legibly), return work promptly, and treat students with respect, fairness, and honesty.

Assignments:

1. Midterm:	Factual knowledge of author, titles, dates, etc. Recognition of passages Demonstration of extensive reading Paragraph question(s) on selected topics	15
2. Essay One:	During class-time: Explain the view of humans' place in nature revealed in one poem	10
3. Essay Two:	During class-time: Explain one fiction writer's views on what the past offers the present reflected in the excerpted passage	10
4. Essay Three:	Explain in some detail your findings regarding several pieces by one assigned author, and support your analysis with several critical sources. (subject to change) Discuss topics and theses with me. (2500 words)	30
5. Final Examination in Exam Period	Questions as for midterm and an integration task	25
6. Term Work:	Various tasks assigned as preparation and/or done in-class, including 2 reviews, and class contribution	<u>10</u>
		100

Grades:

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

Evaluation: Students will be expected to attend classes regularly (over 75%). To be eligible for a final grade, each student must complete all of the above major assignments.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is a serious offence in which students, intentionally or in ignorance, present someone else's prose or ideas as their own. Plagiarized papers will receive a grade of zero and students may be asked to leave the course.