



Sex, Death and Snow: An Introduction to Canadian Literature

Spring 2012

English 294. SLN. 20041

LL 107. T. Th. 1.30 - 2.45

Professor Rosalynn Voaden

Office: LL 214 D

Office hours: W. 1.15 - 3.15; and by appointment

email: Rosalynn.Voaden@asu.edu. I do not check my email on Friday, Saturday or Sunday

Course Description

Canada is often depicted as boring - though it's hard to see how the country that legalized gay marriage and marijuana can be boring. It's also produced some of the most exciting literature in the world today. Yes, Canadian authors write about sex, death and snow - but also about life, love, families, making money, making out, growing up, growing old, and surviving in the wilderness, on the prairie, in small towns, and in sophisticated cities. It's all there, in some of the best writing you will ever read.

The course will include works from the early-nineteenth century to the present. It will begin with a brief introduction to Canada, its geography, history, and culture. We will read then novels, short stories, and poetry and discuss these literary creations in relation to their cultural context. Much of the class time will be devoted to discussion, so be prepared to think, talk, write - and discover the vital, fascinating literature of that not-so-frozen land to the north.

Required Texts

Margaret Atwood, *The Blind Assassin*

—, *Survival*

Joseph Boyden, *Through Black Spruce*

Frederick Philip Grove, *Settlers of the Marsh*

Margaret Laurence, *The Diviners*

Eden Robinson, *Monkey Beach*

Jane Urquhart, *Away*

Short stories, poems, song lyrics and sections of other works will be supplied throughout the course, either through Blackboard or as handouts.

You must bring the novel or work we are discussing to each class.

Important Note: Some of these works include descriptions of explicit sexuality and/or strong language. If you are not comfortable reading and discussing such material, please do not take this course.

This course fulfills the curriculum requirement for Literature and Culture post-1800 and/or for Transnational, Postcolonial and Global Literatures.

Assignments

Apart from acquiring a knowledge of Canadian literature, the focus of this course is to develop your skills in critical thinking, critical reading, writing and oral expression. The assignments are designed to help do this, and we will spend time in class working on these skills.

Even though we will generally spend three classes on each novel, you are expected to read the entire novel before we start to discuss it.

1) At the beginning of the first class on each novel, you will hand in a one-page response to the work. This should record your own reaction to the entire work

- what you liked, what you hated, what you thought was good, interesting, exciting, novel, lousy, awkward, incredible, captivating, original etc. etc. Please do not write a synopsis of the work - I have read them all! Your response can be quite informal, though it should be typed. Late reader responses will not be accepted.

2) There will be two papers required. The first paper will be 5-6 pages, on a topic that you choose in consultation with me; the final research paper (10-12 pages) will be an expanded version of the first paper, taking into account my comments and those of your classmates who are working on similar topics.

You should refer to at least two outside sources in your final paper.

3) The final exam will consist largely of essay-style questions, though it will also test your factual knowledge.

4) Class participation is an extremely important aspect of this course, as the proportion of the grade assigned to it indicates. You should come to each class with two substantive questions prepared (i.e. written down) to contribute to the discussion. I expect you to be fully and vigorously engaged in whatever is going on. If you don't contribute to the discussions, you won't get the mark.

Distribution

Reader responses (6)	20%
Short paper	15%
Long paper	25%
Final exam	25%

Class participation

15%

The grading scale for this class is: 95+ = A+; 90-94 = A; 85-89 = A-; 80-84 = B+; 75-79 = B; 70-74 = B-; 65-69 = C+; 55-64 = C; 50-54 = D; less than 50 = E.

Attendance

Attendance affects all aspects of the learning experience; this course will cover a very large amount of material and in-class discussion will be a major aspect of the course; consequently students who do not attend will be at a severe disadvantage. Students who miss more than three classes without a documented excuse will lose 5% off their final grade for each subsequent class missed. Students who miss more than fifteen classes for any reason (including medical absence) will not be permitted to write the final exam.

Please make every effort to be on time for classes. Please turn off all cell phones. Students using any function of a cell phone in a test or exam will automatically receive zero on that test or exam, and there may be other serious consequences. You may use a laptop to take notes; if you are found using it for any other purpose you will be counted absent for that class and not be allowed to continue to use your laptop in class.

I would like to encourage you to attend the various special lectures offered by the department, the college and the university, especially those related to Canadian literature. Students who do attend such events and report on them will receive credit, which will be reflected in their class participation mark.

If you have a registered disability, please arrange to see me during office hours at the beginning of the semester so that we can discuss the accommodation you require. It is better for both of us if I know how best to help you right from the start.

Papers

Writing a good paper can be a real challenge and offer a great sense of achievement. While our talents as stylists vary, we can all avoid making mistakes in grammar and spelling. The format of your papers should conform to *The MLA Handbook*, available on-line at:

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/557/01/#Works-Cited>

You will also be given a checklist of common errors for which you will lose marks if I find them in your paper. You can always ask me for guidance before you hand in a paper. You can also get help at the Writing Center. Just don't

leave these remedies to the last minute. All papers must be typed, double spaced, and pages must be numbered.

All required work must be completed to pass the course. Papers should be handed in by the beginning of the class in which they are due. Late papers must be handed in at the Department Office and date stamped. They will be marked down 5% each day late. Final papers will not be accepted after the due date.

If you quote directly or indirectly from any secondary source or critical work (this includes, but is not limited to, the notes in the texts, articles in the newspaper or journals, or information gathered through the Internet), you must attribute your source in parenthesis or in a footnote or endnote. If you use someone else's words - even just a phrase - you must enclose those words in quotation marks, and attribute the source. If you're not sure whether you are doing it correctly, ask me.

Passing off someone else's words or ideas as your own, whether you take them from a book or journal, another student's paper, off the Internet, or buy an essay from some scummy agency, is PLAGIARISM, one of the gravest academic offences. Plagiarism will not be tolerated. It is very easy to catch plagiarism by scanning suspect papers. Students found plagiarizing will fail the course, not just the paper, and receive XE (failure for academic dishonesty) on their transcripts. I have no mercy with plagiarizers, so don't even think about it.

Email Etiquette

I offer the following suggestions:

-Start your message with Dear (or Hello) Professor (or Doctor) Voaden.

“Hi Prof.” just doesn’t make it.

-Identify yourself clearly, either in the message or in your signature.

-Put English 294 in the subject line, so that your message isn’t mistaken for spam.

If you want to discuss an essay topic, a problem with a paper, or your progress in class, please come to see me during office hours. I will not deal with these or similar issues by email. I will not read drafts of papers sent by email, or comment on papers by email. Face-to-face discussion is much more rewarding, and I would enjoy the opportunity to get to know you better.

Schedule of Reading and Assignments

Week One - January 5

Th. Introduction

Week Two - January 10

T. “The Painted Door” (Blackboard). *Survival* pp. 1-54

Th. *The Diviners* (Reader Response due). *Survival* pp. 54-81

Week Three - January 17

T. *The Diviners*. *Survival* pp. 83-103.

Th. *The Diviners*. *Survival* pp.105-128

Week Four -January 24

T. *Settlers of the Marsh* (Reader Response due). *Survival* pp. 131-151

Th. *Settlers of the Marsh*. *Survival* pp. 153-174

Week Five -January 31

T. *Settlers of the Marsh*. *Survival* pp. 175-192.

Th. Short story: (Blackboard) "Boys and Girls" by Alice Munro

Week Six - February 7

T. Short Story (Blackboard) "A Wilderness Station " by Alice Munro. *Survival* pp. 233-253.

Th. Documentary film: *Land of Oil and Water*. *Survival* pp. 277-293

Thesis statements for papers due

Week Seven - February 14

T. *Monkey Beach* (Reader Response due).

Th. *Monkey Beach*

Week Eight - February 21

T. *Monkey Beach*

Th. *The Blind Assassin* (Reader Response due).

Week Nine - February 28

T. *The Blind Assassin*

Th. *The Blind Assassin*

Week Ten - March 6

T. Short Story "The Boat" by Alistair MacLeod (Blackboard). Poem "The Red Wool Shirt" (Blackboard)

Short papers due (hard copy and to Discussion Board)

Th. Short Story, Title TBA, by Alistair MacLeod (Blackboard)

Week Eleven - March 13

T. Excerpt from *Roughing it in the Bush* (Blackboard). Poem "The Country North of Belleville" (Blackboard)

Th. Research Day

Week Twelve - March 20 - Spring Break

Week Thirteen - March 27

T. *Away* (Reader Response due).

Th. *Away*

Week Fourteen - April 3

T. *Away*

Th. Essay Workshop

Week Fifteen - April 10

T. Video of Reading by Joseph Boyden

Th. *Through Black Spruce* (Reader Response due).

Week Sixteen - April 17

T. *Through Black Spruce*

Th. *Through Black Spruce*

final papers due (hard copy and to Discussion Board)

Week Seventeen - April 24

T. Final Exam in class.