

## First Nations Studies Program and Department of English &amp; Writing Studies

**First Nations Literatures**  
**English/First Nations Studies 3880G (001)**  
Winter 2017

**Instructor:** Dr. Pauline Wakeham  
3G10 Arts and Humanities Building  
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519.661.2111 x85815

**Class Location:** Health Sciences Building 9

**Class Date/Time:** Tuesdays 1:30-3:20 pm,  
Thursdays 1:30-2:20 pm

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays from 11:00 a.m. –  
1:00 p.m. and Thursdays from 2:45 – 3:45  
p.m.

**Prerequisites for FNS 3880G:**

Antirequisite(s): English 3880F/G.

Prerequisite(s): 1000-level English or First Nations Studies 1020E.

**Prerequisites for English 3880G:**

Antirequisite(s): First Nations Studies 3880F/G.

Prerequisite(s): At least 60% in 1.0 of English 1020E or 1022E or 1024E or 1035E or 1036E or both English 1027F/G and 1028F/G, or permission of the Department, or First Nations Studies 1020E.

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enrol in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

**Course Description:**

*Welcome to First Nations Literature!* This course will provide students with an opportunity to engage with Indigenous concepts and practices of storytelling and to consider the many shapes that Indigenous storytelling takes, including oral narratives, writings, songs, and visual and performance arts. Studying the work of Indigenous artists from across Turtle Island (North America), we will learn about the diversity of Indigenous communities and cultures as well as the particular lands and socio-historical contexts that inform their work. In so doing, we will consider how Indigenous artistic practices express the complexity and vitality of First Peoples' cultural imaginations and ways of knowing.

**Course Objectives:**

- To introduce students to and/or enrich their knowledge of Indigenous literary and cultural production on Turtle Island.
- To consider how the study of Indigenous literary and cultural production is enhanced by an attention to Indigenous ways of knowing and, in particular, Indigenous practices of storytelling and their vital importance to many Indigenous communities.
- To consider the relationship between socio-historical contexts and Indigenous literary and cultural production.

- To assist students in honing their critical thinking skills through in-class application of such skills to readings of literary and cultural texts.
- To foster the development and honing of students' academic writing skills through the provision of feedback on the writing process as well as the finished product.
- To foster the development of students' distinctive intellectual voices through the practice of engaged listening and thoughtful class participation as well as through the provision of feedback on written work.

**Course Materials:**

Eden Robinson, *Monkey Beach*

Katherena Vermette, *The Break*

Richard Van Camp, *Three Feathers*

Custom Course Book (Available at the University Bookstore)

Please note that all texts listed on the syllabus with weblinks are not included in the Course Book. Texts listed with URLs may be accessed directly online.

**Methods of Evaluation:**

Assignment	% of Grade	Due Date	Length
Response Paper	20%	February 9th	4 pages
Final Essay	35%	TBA	8 pages
Participation	10%	Ongoing	
Final Exam	35%	TBA	3 hours

**Final Grades:**

A student must receive a passing grade for both term work and the final examination in order to receive a passing grade for the course. This applies to all courses in all programs offered by the department. Students whose term and final exam grades average 50% or above, even though one of the two is a failure, shall receive a default grade of 48%. Please note: The department of English & Writing Studies does not release final grades. All undergraduate grade reports will be available online from the Office of the Registrar.

Students are fully responsible for looking at and being familiar with the information posted on the department website at <http://www.uwo.ca/english/undergraduate/info%20for%20students.html#grade>.

**A Note on Class Participation:**

- Attendance is required at all lectures. Repeated absences from class may result in a formal request to be debarred from writing the final exam, as set out in the Western Academic Calendar: "Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class . . . will be reported to the Dean (after due warning has been given). On the recommendation of the Department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination." Debarment from writing the final exam automatically results in failure of the course.
- The course participation mark will be based on students' attendance and punctuality, thoughtful engagement with course readings, relevant and insightful contributions to class discussion, and respectful engagement with the ideas of other classmates. Adequate preparation for each class involves reading all assigned materials *at least* once and *preferably twice* before class, making notes about these texts (underlining or

marking key passages, reflecting on your responses to the texts, etc.), and preparing potential questions or comments to raise in class.

- A key part of being prepared for and ready to participate in class is bringing hard copies of the assigned readings for the week. We will be working with these texts closely in class discussion, so please bring them with you.
- From time to time, the Professor may ask students to briefly “free write” (writing thoughts without concern for grammar or style) in class about a particular question or topic related to one of the course readings. Students will be asked to hand in the writing and the Professor will read the responses, which will count toward the participation grade.

### **Response Paper Assignment:**

**This assignment can be submitted to the Professor at any time during the semester, up until February 9<sup>th</sup>, 2017. After that date, late assignments will be assessed the standard late penalties outlined on this syllabus.**

- In order to provide students with feedback on their written work prior to the formal essay assignment for the course, students are asked to write a 4-page response to a text of their choosing from the course readings.
- This assignment is also designed to provide students with the opportunity to practice the skills of close reading and critical analysis that are central to the final essay assignment for the course. Students are allowed to build upon their response paper—to revise, hone, and extend it—for their final paper for the course. In other words, this response paper assignment can be a starting point or a first draft for the final essay. That said, if students opt to build upon their response paper work for their final essay assignment, they must substantially work with the feedback they have received on the response paper assignment. Failure to address the feedback offered on the response paper could result in a lower grade on the final essay.
- The response paper may be thought of as laying the groundwork for a longer, more detailed essay on the same topic.
- If students wish to pursue a new topic distinct from their response papers for their final essay, that is also acceptable.

### **Key components of the assignment:**

- The response paper should be written in proper paragraph form. An introductory paragraph should identify the text being studied as well as the central topic for the paper. Then, the paper should move to a few “body paragraphs” that engage in close readings of at least one substantial passage from the text. The final paragraph of the response paper should be a brief conclusion that addresses why the chosen topic for the paper is important to the literary text being studied. The conclusion can also gesture toward further questions about this same topic.
- The response paper does not need to have a thesis statement (although that is welcome), but it should have a **clear statement identifying the one key topic or theme about a text** that will be discussed in detail in the paper.
- The response paper **must also devote at least one full page to performing a close reading of a single selected passage from the text** that relates to the key topic for the response paper. The passage should be photocopied, highlighted, and appended to the end of the assignment for grading clarity. As a result, the passage need not be quoted in full in the body of the response paper.

- Students are welcome to refer to more than one passage from the text, but they should **focus on one primary, substantial passage and devote at least one page to discussion of that passage alone.**
- The close reading should connect the analysis of textual details (word choice, literary devices, narrative framing, etc.) to the overarching topic you have identified as your focus for the paper. Explain what this passage suggests about the topic you are interested in and formulate an interpretation of the passage substantiated by textual evidence.
- Effective close readings should quote from the text to identify particular words or phrases that are significant and explain why. Close readings can also identify literary devices (i.e. metaphor, onomatopoeia, anaphora, etc.) and consider how these devices help shape the meaning of the passage.

### **Final Essay Assignment:**

- This assignment must be an argumentative and analytic scholarly essay that demonstrates strong critical thinking skills, the development of an original argument, and the careful utilization of textual details or “evidence” to support the contentions made in the thesis statement. Essays should include a clear and focused thesis statement followed by the coherent and sustained development of the argument throughout the paper.
- Students are not required to consult secondary sources for this paper but they are welcome to do so should they want to. If secondary sources are consulted, however, they must be acknowledged and cited properly and a Works Cited must accompany the essay. For further details regarding formatting and correct citation, please refer to the instructions listed in the following section of this syllabus. **Creative Assignment Option:**
- Please note that students have the opportunity to pursue a creative writing option for both written assignments in the course. This could be a personal essay, a short story, a scene from a play, etc. The same page lengths apply as for the response paper and final essay (i.e. 4 pages for the first assignment and 8 pages for the second assignment). The same due dates also apply. Students will also be required to engage in a revision process based on feedback from their first assignment.
- In order to be able to exercise this option, students must write a 250-word proposal/plan for the creative option that is due on **February 2, 2017** at the beginning of class. This proposal should clearly specify what type of creative option the student wishes to pursue, a rationale for why the student wants to do this, and a brief discussion of how the student will implement the plan.

### **Important Information Regarding Assignments:**

- All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the scheduled due date. Assignments handed in after the commencement of class on the scheduled due date will be assessed a late penalty of 1%. Any assignments submitted after the due date will be assessed a late penalty (2% per day, including weekends). Assignments must be submitted either directly to the Professor at the beginning of class or submitted as late and handed in to the secure essay drop-off box outside the English Department office (Arts and Humanities Building Room 2G02).
- Extensions will only be granted with medical certification or under other extenuating circumstances and should, when possible, be arranged with the Professor in advance. For further information, please see the section on “Academic Accommodation” in this syllabus.

- All assignments should be submitted on 8.5 x 11" paper, with 1" margins, double-spaced, and in Times New Roman 12-point font. Please do not use extra spaces between each paragraph. Please staple your essay pages together rather than using binders or plastic report covers. Essays must be submitted in paper copy. Email, computer disks, and faxes will not be accepted.
- For all students enrolled in English 3880, all bibliographic notations should follow the MLA method of parenthetical citation. All assignments that use secondary sources should be accompanied with a "Works Cited" page. For information regarding correct MLA formatting, please consult the Power Point Presentation placed on the course WebCT site. As well, students may consult *The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, which is available in the reference section of the DB Weldon Library.
- For all students enrolled in FNS 3880, students may use a bibliographic citation method approved for their particular discipline. Students must inform the instructor what method they are using (i.e. Chicago Manual of Style, American Psychological Association format, etc.) and students must adhere to those conventions.
- Please retain one hard copy and one electronic version of every assignment you submit. As well, please retain all marked assignments until you receive your final grade for the course.

**Final Examination:**

The final exam will feature two types of questions:

- 1) **Identifying Quotations:** Students will be asked to identify short quotations excerpted from texts studied throughout the term. In proper paragraph form, students should provide the title of the text as well as the full name of the author. Following that, the written response should explain the significance of the particular quotation to the key themes, concepts, and/or arguments developed in the text. Marks will be assigned for the clarity, detail, and insight of the response, as well as attention to spelling and grammar.
- 2) **Formal Essay Responses:** Essays must have a clear thesis statement and structure consisting of an introduction, multiple body paragraphs, and a conclusion. Marks will be awarded for the strength and originality of the argument; for the ability to mobilize textual evidence to support the argument; and for clarity, coherence, style, and grammar.

**Timetable:**

Please note that the Professor reserves the right to make minor changes to the class schedule during the semester. Any changes at this point would involve only the deletion of a reading from the schedule or a change of date. All changes will be announced in class ahead of the scheduled date where a change would take place.

**January 5: Welcome and Introduction**

**January 10: Indigenous Cultures of Storytelling**

Brian Maracle, "The First Words"

Thomas King, "'You'll Never Believe What Happened' is Always a Great Way to Start" (from *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative*)

Note: You can also listen to an audio recording of King telling this story on the CBC's website (select "Part 1": <http://www.cbc.ca/ideas/massey-archives/2003/11/07/massey-lectures-2003-the-truth-about-stories-a-native-narrative/>)

**January 12: Indigenous Cultures of Storytelling (continued)**

Thomas King, "'You'll Never Believe What Happened' is Always a Great Way to Start" (from *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative*)

**January 17: In What Languages Can Stories be Told?**

Neal McLeod, "Cree Poetic Discourse"

Maria Campbell, "Jacob"

**January 19: In What Languages Can Stories be Told? (continued)**

Gregory Scofield, "Prayer Song for the Returning of Names and Sons"

**January 24: Writing Workshop: The Art of Close Reading**

We will also begin our discussion of Eden Robinson's *Monkey Beach* during the second half of class, so come prepared with the novel

**January 26: Narrating Kinship and Community**

Eden Robinson, *Monkey Beach*

Eden Robinson, Chapter One from *The Sasquatch At Home: Traditional Protocols and Modern Storytelling*

**January 31: Storytelling and Memory**

Eden Robinson, *Monkey Beach*

**February 2: Storytelling and Memory (continued)**

Eden Robinson, *Monkey Beach*

**February 7: Re-Writing Gender**

From *The Indian Act*

Lenore Keeshig-Tobias, "(a found poem)"

**February 9: Remembering the Disappeared**

Rebecca Belmore, "Vigil" (this performance art piece can be viewed online at:

<http://www.rebeccabelmore.com/video/Vigil.html>)

The Reddress Project (this art installation can be viewed online at:

<http://www.cbc.ca/8thfire/2011/12/reddress-project.html>)

**February 14: Indigeneity and Sexuality**

Cortney Dakin, "Hearing Two Spirits" (<http://briarpatchmagazine.com/articles/view/hearing-two-spirits>)  
Billy Ray Belcourt, "Sacred" (poem available as a blog post on Belcourt's blog:  
<https://nakinisowin.wordpress.com/author/billyray94/>)

**February 16: Class Cancelled**

Professor at another university to present a lecture

**February 21 and 23: Reading Week, No Classes**

**February 28: Indigeneity and Sexuality**

Sam McKegney and Tomson Highway, "Repairing the Circle"

**March 2: Urban Indigeneity**

Katherena Vermette, *The Break*

**March 7: Urban Indigeneity (continued)**

Katherena Vermette, *The Break*

**March 9: Intergenerational Trauma, Intergenerational Healing**

Katherena Vermette, *The Break*

**March 14: Intergenerational Trauma, Intergenerational Healing (continued)**

Katherena Vermette, *The Break*

**March 16: Writing Workshop: The Revision Process**

**March 21: Graphic Novels and Indigenous Storytelling**

Richard Van Camp, *Three Feathers*

**March 23: Graphic Novels and Indigenous Storytelling (continued)**

Richard Van Camp, *Three Feathers*

**March 28: The Residential School System in Canada and the Question of Reconciliation**

Visit the website for Truth and Reconciliation Canada at <http://www.trc.ca/>

J.R. Miller, "Residential Schools and Reconciliation" (available at:

<http://activehistory.ca/papers/history-papers-13/>)

Roland Chrisjohn and Tanya Wasacase, "Half-Truths and Whole Lies: Rhetoric in the 'Apology' and The Truth and Reconciliation Commission"

**March 30: Residential Schools: Writing as Resurgence**

Rita Joe, "I Lost My Talk"

**April 4: Class Review and Exam Preparation**

**April 6: Class Review and Exam Preparation**

**Accommodation:**

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. The UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness and further information regarding this policy can be found at [http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/accommodation\\_medical.pdf](http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf).

**Downloadable Student Medical Certificate (SMC):**

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf)

**Academic Offences:**

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at [http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

**Plagiarism:**

It is crucial that students create all assignments (both written and oral) using their own ideas and their own words. If you use a concept, idea, or phrasing from another source, it is imperative to signal the direct borrowing of words with quotation marks and to register the borrowing of ideas and concepts via the use of explanatory footnotes and parenthetical citations. When in doubt, please cite your source rather than leaving it out! Please also note that the same standards of proper crediting of sources apply to oral presentations. Plagiarism is a serious academic offence.

**Plagiarism Checking:**

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>.

All instances of plagiarism will be reported to the Chair of Undergraduate Studies. Proven cases of plagiarism will result in a grade of zero for the assignment. Subsequent offences will result in failure for the course.

For English Department regulations regarding term work, exams, faculty office hours, academic relief (appeals, petitions, complaints), and other matters, please refer to the "Information for Students" on the departmental website at <http://www.uwo.ca/english/undergrd/info.html>.



**Support Services:**

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Student Development Centre <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western:  
<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

**Accessibility Options:**

Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 661-2111 x82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation. Information regarding accommodation of exams is available on the Registrar's website: [http://www.registrar.uwo.ca/examinations/accommodated\\_exams.html](http://www.registrar.uwo.ca/examinations/accommodated_exams.html)