

**ENSH503 - Special Studies in Lit and/or Media, Summer 2024**  
**Approaches to Reading Indigenous Literature**

**Meetings:** Tuesdays and Thursdays, 18:00 – 20:50 PDT

**Facilitator:** Dr. Carla Osborne

**Office Hours:** Online

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**Description:**

In 1973, Maria Campbell's book *Halfbreed* overturned mainstream assumptions about Indigenous life in Canada, and catalyzed an extraordinary resurgence of Indigenous writing across North America. Among the works the general public have found most accessible are memoirs and especially novels, such as those by Leslie Marmon Silko, Louise Erdrich, Eden Robinson, and Daniel Heath Justice. However, mainstream audiences have struggled to engage with Indigenous creative non-fiction writing and historical works. More people are asking how to read Indigenous writing effectively and respectfully when it is not so easily categorized as fiction or non-fiction, and wondering if or what they are missing when reading familiar novels and memoirs. This course will help students answer their own versions of these questions by learning approaches to reading Indigenous literature based in Indigenous epistemologies, Indigenous critical theory, decolonial theory, and best of all, the practical models from the essays and works of Indigenous authors themselves.

**Learning Objectives:**

English courses at the graduate level assist students in building their analytical, research, and writing skills as they prepare to plan and complete their capstone essay, project, or thesis. This course will assist students as they pursue the following items from the English Department defined learning objectives:

- evaluate and employ theoretical, methodological, material, generic, historical, and thematic approaches to literature, culture, and media in English;
- conduct sophisticated critical analysis that demonstrate advanced research skills;
- construct complex arguments and express them persuasively;
- evaluate colonial and post-colonial dimensions of English as a discipline; and
- demonstrate practical and analytical skills needed for higher levels of employment and doctoral programs.

**Readings:**

In addition to the chapters and articles listed in the Course Schedule, we will be reading 4 books together during this course. Those in print are available from the university bookstore or online. The chapters and articles will be available via the University Library catalogue. Any exceptions were published before 1923, and may now be accessed in electronic form via the Internet Archive and/or the Canadiana text collection.

- Campbell, Marie. *Stories of the Road Allowance People: The Revised Edition*. GDI, 2011.
- King, Thomas. *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative*. House of Anansi Press, 2003.
- Payment, Diane Paulette. *"The Free People – Li Gens Libres: History of the Métis Community of Batoche, Saskatchewan"*. University of Calgary Press, 2009.
- Rice, Brian. *The Rotinoshonni: A Traditional Iroquoian History Through the Eyes of Teharonhia:wako and Sawiskera*. University of Syracuse Press, 2013.

### ***Readings and Class Discussion:***

Since this is an online compressed course, we will be combining virtual synchronous sessions with some asynchronous discussion each week. The sessions will be devoted to discussion of the assigned readings and the theory and method questions they raise. Each student must prepare at least two questions inspired by the readings, separate from clarification questions or requests for additional information. Discussion questions should reflect analysis of the reading, such as considering common themes or attempts to apply the reading techniques introduced in the first week of class. It will not always be possible to engage with all the discussion questions, but these are required as part of the class participation mark.

The asynchronous discussion will be on Brightspace. In the first week it will be devoted to follow up on the synchronous portion and any questions related to the course itself (i.e. clarifications of the syllabus or reading schedule).

For weeks 2 to 6 the asynchronous session will be seeded by a topic sentence or question for reflection. Each student must provide a maximum 500 word response. Don't overthink this part! Additional research or highly detailed references are not expected.

For week 7, students will take part in the Class Presentation Round Table (described below).

### ***Written Work:***

All written work and any recorded projects will be marked for grammar, organization, clarity, content, and analysis. Generally late submissions will lose 2% per day, unless students have solid reasons for needing more time. It is important to get in touch as soon as possible via email should such solid reasons arise.

The assignments must be original submissions for this course, and as always students are expected to abide by UVic's academic integrity policies.

#### **• Short Papers**

Students will be required to write two short papers, one in the first week, and one in the last week, each 3 – 5 pages, double-spaced. In the first week, the topic of the 3 – 5 pages is initial thoughts on Indigenous literature. For the last week, to reflect on Indigenous literature again in light of the new information and recent focussed engagement with selected readings equipped with different techniques and modes of analysis than before. Additional research for these papers is not expected, but citations for any specific books or articles referenced are.

### ***Class Presentation Round Table:***

Each student will prepare a 15 – 20 minute presentation for delivery in week 7, supported by a 1 – 2 page handout. The presentation may explore the theory and methodology aspects of the course, or an application of the theory and methods to a selected Indigenous work. Students will be expected to schedule a brief meeting to discuss their potential topic for no later than week 4.

### ***Deadlines (PDT):***

- Asynchronous Discussion Responses: 23:59 Wednesdays and Fridays
- Short Papers: Week 1, 23:59 Friday; Week 7, 23:59 Sunday
- Class Presentation Hand Out: Week 7
  - For Tuesday Presenters: Monday, 23:59
  - For Thursday Presenters: Wednesday, 23:59

**Grade Breakdown:**

Class Participation	30%
Short Papers	25%
Class Presentation Roundtable	45%

**Grading Scale:**

The first four columns of the Faculty of Graduate Studies' Grading scale are reproduced below. For the complete table and further details, see the Graduate Calendar online at <https://www.uvic.ca/calendar/grad/index.php#/home> (it is quickest to search for "grading scale").

Grade	Grade Point Value	Percentage	Description
A+	9	90 – 100	Exceptional Work
A	8	85 – 89	Outstanding Work
A-	7	80 – 84	Excellent Work
B+	6	77 – 79	Very good work
B	5	73 – 76	Acceptable work that fulfills the expectations of the course
B-	4	70 – 72	Unacceptable work revealing some deficiencies in knowledge, understanding, or techniques
C+	3	65 – 69	
C	2	60 – 64	
D	1	50 – 59	
COM	N/A	N/A	Complete
CTN	Excluded Grade	N/A	Continuing
FNC	Excluded Grade	0 - 100	For No Credit

**Weekly Topic Schedule:**

- Week 1 (May 13 – 17) : Course Introduction; Wilkes Technique
- Week 2 (May 20 – 24) : The Truth About Stories; Wísahkêcâhk Goes Visiting
- Week 3 (May 27 – 31) : Indigenous Literary Genres; Written Indigenous Intellectual Tradition
- Week 4 (June 3 – 7) : Haudenosaunee Histories Part One; Haudenosaunee Histories Part Two
- Week 5 (June 10 – 14) : Emergent Indigenous Literatures; Northwest Métis Example
- Week 6 (June 17 – 21) : Memoir and Biography; Resisting the Easy Reading
- Week 7 (June 24 – 28) : Course Outroduction; Class Presentation Roundtable