

Course Description Form

Course number and section: English 473 / Cultural Studies 450 -101

Course Topic: Studies in Indigenous Literature and Criticism

Credits: 3

Term: 2

Instructor: Dr. Allison Hargreaves

Course Description (aim for no more than 80 – 100 words for your course description):

This course explores the primacy of place in contemporary Indigenous literatures and theory. Beginning with the premise that “Stories take place,” (Womack, *Art as Performance* 44), the course approaches place not from a thematic or setting-based perspective, but as a methodological precept and philosophical underpinning of Indigenous literary arts. Vanessa Watts (Mohawk/Anishinaabe) employs the concept of “Place-Thought” as a way to describe this “theoretical understanding of the world”—one in which “land is alive and thinking and [where] humans and non-humans derive agency through the extensions of these thoughts” (“Indigenous Place-thought” 21). Our task is to be curious about how literature represents and practices this aliveness—this agency—as a core mediating presence in relations between humans, land, and other non-human people. To that end, we will ask: how might literature help us to hear the thoughts that place is thinking? By what methods—literary and otherwise—might we best train our listening skills? What are the implications of this approach for our relationships with the non-human world? And what does place ask of us as readers, writers, storytellers, students, and dreamers?

Tentative Reading List:

A Short history of the Blockade: Giant Beavers Diplomacy, and Regeneration in Nishnaabewin (narrative essays by Leanne Simpson)

Stars (illustrated prose-poems by Lucy Haché and Micheal Joyal)

The Sasquatch at Home: Traditional Protocols and Modern Storytelling (narrative essays by Eden Robinson)

Dreamtime Reading Cards (oracle cards and guidebook by Lauren Bowen)

Burning Vision (play by Marie Clements)

river woman (poems by Katherena Vermette)

* Some of these texts may be assigned in excerpted form. Course readings will also include articles, talks, videos, images, and podcasts made accessible on Canvas.

Other: