English 2903: Introduction to Literary Theory

Course Location: OA 2010
Class Times: Wednesday & Friday 10:00 – 11:30 a.m.
Prerequisites: English 1111 and 1112, or permission of the Department

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Instructor Information:
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Calendar Description
A survey of contemporary theories concerning authors, texts, readers, codes and contexts and an introduction to the critical practices associated with these theories.

Course Description/Overview
The word “theory” comes from the root “theo,” meaning “I see.” What we see in literature depends on our ways of seeing, which are shaped by our theoretical lenses, whether we are aware of them or not. This course provides various lenses, permitting
us to see a work of literature in many ways, thus enriching our knowledge and experience, not only of literary texts but also of human nature, culture, politics, and the environment. We will begin by looking at theories concerning the author, the text, and the reader, and gradually move toward more contextual theories of linguistic codes, history, gender, and ideology.

Part of our exploration will be practical: we will discern the methods associated with each of these theories, perceive how they have been applied, and apply them to assigned texts. The other part of our exploration will be reflective, establishing ways in which the theories resonate or clash with our own experiences of literature and the world. We will be communicating our reflections in class but also in notebook entries during the fall term and in online discussion posts during the winter term, the premise being that it is easiest to write about theory when there is a stimulating context of opinions that differ from our own. We will read and discuss various theoretical conflicts as well as explore ways in which these conflicts affect and enrich practice. By the end of the course, we will be able to identify and explain basic theoretical concepts, understand their relationship to relevant schools of theory, and use them to interpret texts and their significance in society.

Course Objectives and/or Learner Outcomes

The goal of this course is to ensure that you become familiar with various literary theories and critical practices (methods) and know how and when to use them. Your experience in subsequent English courses will be greatly enhanced by the skills learned in this class for thinking critically about literature using literary theory.

By the end of this course you will be able to:

1. **Know & Understand Literary Theory**
   - Demonstrate that you can read and research difficult theoretical texts;
   - Show that you understand a range of theorists, theoretical approaches, and concepts important in these approaches;
   - Express critical reflections about literature using literary theory;
   - Identify the theoretical perspective of scholarly journal articles.

2. **Apply theoretical concepts in the analysis of literature and other cultural texts**
   - Formulate and support a complex argument in a written paper;
   - Organize and structure an academic paper, beyond the three-paragraph essay format;
   - Explain a theorist’s key concept or cluster of concepts;
   - Use or apply a theoretical approach;
   - Compare two or more theoretical approaches;
   - Use MLA format effectively in written papers.

3. **Synthesize & Transform using literary theory**
   - Articulate critical perspectives using literary theory, with respect to various themes including language, history, race, class, gender, sexuality, imperialism, nation, ethnicity, etc.;
• Evaluate language and representation in real life in terms of responsibility and accountability to friends, family, community, and society in general;
• Discuss issues of social justice and transformation in relation to texts and everyday life;
• Engage complex theoretical concepts and ideas with respect to literature, current issues and events, the environment, and the global community.

Course Resources:

Required Course Texts
Literary Theory Course Pack (CP) including poetry, short stories, and theory articles.

Course Website
• Desire2Learn

Course Schedule (subject to change if necessary – check “News” in Desire2Learn for occasional updates)

Sept.  10 What Is Literary Theory and How Do We Engage Critical Practice?
During class read Shakespeare Sonnet 18 (CP 1).

12 The Text: What Is Literature?
Before class read Rivkin and Ryan “Language and Action” RR 127-130; Eagleton, “Introduction: What Is Literature?” 1-14 (CP 2-8). Bring to class a text that you consider to be “literature.”

17 Textual Formalism: What Makes a Text “Literary”?
Before class read Rivkin and Ryan, Formalisms” RR 3-6; Corbett “Classical Rhetoric” RR 142-44; Maracle, Ravensong Chap 1.

19 The Reader: How Does One Interpret Texts or Situations?
Before class read Brooks, “The Formalist Critics” 22-27; Fish, “Interpretive Communities” RR 217-21; Maracle, Ravensong Chap 2-3.

24 Reader Response: How Do Readers Negotiate Difference(s)?
Before class read Hoy, “‘Because You Aren’t Indian’: Lee Maracle’s Ravensong” 127-36 (CP 9-13); Maracle, Ravensong Chap 4-5.
The Author: Why/How Does the Author Matter?
Before class read Fee and Gunew, “From Discomfort to Enlightenment: An Interview with Lee Maracle” 206-21 (CP 23-30); Ravensong Chap 6-7.

Oct. 1 (Post)Structuralism: What Is the Author Function?

3 Psychoanalysis: How is Fiction Like the Language of a Dream?
Before class read Freud, “The Interpretation of Dreams” RR 400-07, 410-14; Freud, “Creative Writers and Daydreaming” 483-88 (CP 40-45); Ravensong Chap 8.

8 Structuralism: What Do Similarities and Contiguities Show Us?
Before class read Propp, “Morphology of the Folk-tale” RR 72-75; Jakobsen “Two Aspects of Language” RR 76-80; Ravensong Chap 9-10.

10 Structuralism/Semiotics: How Does the System of Language Work?
Before class read Culler, “The Linguistic Foundation” RR 56-58; Saussure, “Course in General Linguistics” RR 59-71; Atwood, “You Fit into Me” (CP 46).

15 Structuralism/Semiotics: What do Cultural Signs Signify?
Before class read Barthes, “Mythologies” RR 81-84; Fiske, “Television Culture” 1275-80. Bring to class a full-page magazine advertisement; Ravensong Chap 11.

17 Lacanian Psychoanalysis: How Does Lack Inform Meaning?

22 Deconstruction: Can Meaning Ever Be Present in a Text?
Before class read Nietzsche, “The Will to Power” RR 266-70; Derrida, “Difference” RR 278-87; Williams “The Red Wheelbarrow” (CP 46).

24 Postmodernism: What Replaces the Master Narrative?

29 Postmodernism: How Does Dialogism Work in Ravensong?

31 Postmodernism: What Becomes of the Original?
Nov.  5  Marxism: What Is the Material Base of Literary Consciousness?
Before class read Rivkin and Ryan, “Starting with Zero” RR 643-46; Marx, “The German Ideology” RR 656-58; Ravensong Chap 12.

7  Marxism: What Are the Social Relations of Literary Production?
Before class read Marx, “Wage Labor and Capital” RR659-64; Marx, “Capital” 665-67; Ravensong Chap 13.

12  Marxism: What is the Process of Ideological Production?
Before class read Gramsci, “Hegemony” RR673; Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses” RR693-702.

14  New Historicism: How Is Power Associated with Knowledge?

19  Cultural Materialism: How Can Literature Express Dissidence?
Before class read Sinfield, “Cultural Materialism, Othello, and the Politics of Plausibility” RR 743-62; Ravensong Chap 14.

21  Cultural Studies: Does Literature Reinforce Mass Capitalism?
Third Reflective Notebook Submissions due.

26  Cultural Studies: Which Tactics Elude Social Determination?
Before class read Certeau, “The Practice of Everyday Life” RR 1247-57; Ravensong Chap 15 & Epilogue.

28  Cultural Studies: How Can Ideological Affiliations Be Realigned?
Before class read Fiske, “Television Culture” RR 1280-84; Hoy, “‘Because You Aren’t Indian’: Lee Maracle’s Ravensong” 142-52 (CP 16-22)

December  Midterm Exam (as scheduled by Registrar)
During holidays, read short stories by Gilman (CP 73) and Hemingway (CP 88).

Jan  7  Introduction to Winter term: What Theories Will We Study?
During class discuss Wayman, “Wayman in Love” 111 (CP 59); Lalonde, “Speak White” 152-54 (CP 60-61); Armstrong, “History Lesson” 228-29 (CP 62).

9  First Wave Feminism: How Are Women Othered?
14 Anglo-American & French Feminism: How Do We Exchange Women?
Before class read Rubin, “The Traffic in Women” RR 776-87, Irigaray, “Women on the Market” RR 800; video clips from The Tudors: Marriage of Margaret (online); The Tudors: Anne of Cleves (online).

16 Second Wave Feminism: How Do We Read Women’s Experience?

21 Second Wave Feminism: Is the Writer an Angel or Monster?
Before class read Gilman, “The Yellow Wallpaper” 60-70 (CP 73-79); Haney-Peritz, “Monumental Feminism and Literature’s Ancestral House: Another Look at ‘The Yellow Wallpaper’” 113-28 (CP 80-87).

23 French Feminism: How Do We Deconstruct Gendered Desire?
Essay proposal due.

28 French Feminism: How is Communication Gendered?
Before class read Hemingway, “Hills Like White Elephants” 69-77 (CP 88-92); Smiley, “Gender-linked Miscommunication in ‘Hills Like White Elephants’” 2-12 (CP 93-103).

30 Third Wave Feminism: How Do We Respect Difference?
Before class read Lorde, “Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference” RR 854-60; Heng, “A Great Way to Fly” RR 861-64. Submit online discussion post if you haven’t already done so.

Feb. 4 Gender/Queer Studies: How Is Sex Transformed into Discourse?

6 Gender/Queer Studies: How is Gender Constructed?
Last Day to Withdraw (without academic penalty).

11 Gender/Queer Studies: Can We Deconstruct Sexual Dichotomies?

13 Masculinity Studies: What Is Hegemonic Masculinity?
Before class read Halberstam, “Female Masculinity” RR 935-56; Katz, “Advertising and the Construction of Violent White Masculinity” 349-52 (CP 104-09). Submit online discussion post if you haven’t already done so.
17-20 Reading Week: What Shall We Read?
Consider reading stories by Carver (CP 128) and Baldwin (CP 151).

25 Masculinity Studies: How Do We Perform Homophobic Masculinity?

27 Masculinity Studies: How Do We Interpret Masculinity?
Before class read Carver, “Cathedral” 266-79 (CP 128-34); Benson, “Masculinity as Homosocial Enactment in Three Stories by Raymond Carver” 81-95 (CP 135-48). Submit online discussion post if you haven’t.

Mar. 4 Critical Race Studies: How Do Social Differences Become Racial?

6 Critical Race Studies: How Does Literary Theory Combat Racism?
Before class read Fishkin “Interrogating Whiteness” RR 975-86; Gates, “The Blackness of Blackness” RR 987-1004; Soyinka, “Telephone Conversation” 415-16 (CP 150).

11 Critical Race Studies: How Do We Interrogate Cultural Assumptions?

13 Critical Race Studies: How Does One Resist Cultural Tyranny?
Before class read Anzaldua, “Borderlands/La Frontera” RR 1017-30.

18 Post-colonialism: What Are the Boundaries of Colonial Positionality?
Before class read Bhabha, “Signs Taken for Wonders” RR 1167-84. Research Essay due.

20 Post-colonialism: Did Colonies Sustain or Destabilize the Empire?
Before class read Said “Jane Austen and Empire” RR 1112-25. View Mansfield Park trailer (online), scene: “Living off the Profits” (online), scene: “Tom’s Notebook” (online).

25 Post-colonialism: What are Alternatives to Colonization?
Before class read Thiong’o, “Decolonizing the Mind” RR 1126-37.

27 Post-colonialism: How Do We Transform the Imagination?
Before class read Kincaid, “A Small Place” RR 1224-1229; Alessandrini, “Small Places, Then and Now: Frantz Fanon, Jamaica Kincaid, and the Futures of Postcolonial Criticism” (online). Submit online discussion post if you haven’t already done so.
Apr. 1 Post-colonialism: What Are the Politics of Decolonization?
Loomba, “Situating Colonial and Postcolonial Studies” RR 1100-11;
Casey, “A review of Lee Maracle’s Ravensong: Queering Decolonization,
Decolonizing Queerness” 1-3 (CP 186-88).

7 Theory Review: What Have We Learned?
Before class read Hall, “Old and New Identities: Old and New Ethnicities”
335-45 (CP 189-94).

Assignments and Evaluation

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment/Test</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Length</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preparation &amp; Class participation</td>
<td>Throughout year</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Reflective Notebook</td>
<td>October 1, 31, Nov 28</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>1–2 pages</td>
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<tr>
<td>Online Discussions</td>
<td>Winter 2x month</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>2-3 paragraphs</td>
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<tr>
<td>December Midterm Exam</td>
<td>TBA by Registrar</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>3 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Proposal</td>
<td>January 23</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>3-4 pages</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Essay</td>
<td>March 18</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>5-7 pages</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>TBA by Registrar</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>3 hours</td>
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Assignment Policies
- Submission for grades must always represent independent work prepared for this
course. Highly similar (or identical) assignments will receive a grade of zero. An
assignment may not be submitted for credit in more than one course without the
written permission of all instructors involved. Collaboration on assignments is only
allowed with prior permission of the instructor.
- Assignments are due by class time on the dates indicated. If you do not hand in
your paper in class, send it as an email attachment to adenotte@lakeheadu.ca and
then hand in a paper copy as soon as possible to the instructor’s office (OA 3011).
Marking will not begin until the paper copy has been submitted. Keep a copy of all
papers you submit in case of accidental loss before they are marked. No plastic
covers please.
- If you require an extension, you must ask for one BEFORE the due date. Without an
extension, late assignments will be marked down half a letter grade each day they
are late without permission; that is, an "A" quality paper due on Tuesday will receive
an "A-" on Wednesday, a "B+" on Thursday, etc. Plan ahead, and let your instructor
know if time conflicts arise so that we can negotiate a more workable deadline.
- All assignments must be in MLA format, double spaced, with 1" margins, and in 12
point font, printed on single sided or double sided white paper.
- If you use internet sources, they should be from academic journals (listed in
academic databases, such as MLA Bibliography or JSTOR). (If you want to use a
non-academic source, please discuss this with your instructor.) Articles must be accompanied by the author’s name(s) and a bibliography. Such sources must be cited and must include the date of publication as well as the date accessed by you. For background information about a particular theory, use M.H. Abrams’ *Glossary of Literary Terms* or other materials available on reserve at the library for this course.

- To avoid plagiarism, make sure that you give credit to ALL sources (including lecture notes, notes from other classes, or internet sources) that you use for an assignment (including notebook entries and exams), even if you paraphrase them. All direct material quoted from a text, even a single sentence or phrase, MUST be placed in quotation marks, followed by the source reference in parentheses. This is especially important for literary theory. You must cite the use of specific words or phraseologies from theorists the first time you use them, especially when they have coined term or phrase and/or imbued it with new meaning(s) specific to literary theory. Paraphrases should be followed with parenthetical references. See the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, which is well summarized in grammar handbooks or online at [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/). Failure to properly document sources constitutes plagiarism and is an extremely serious academic offense (see Collaboration/Plagiarism Rules below). Please see your instructor for help if you are uncertain as to whether or not you are giving credit to sources properly.

- The midterm and final exam must be written on the date scheduled, so do not make travel plans for the exam periods until the exam schedule is posted.

- Exceptions to these policies are allowed only with a doctor’s note or other appropriate documentation.

**Assignments**

**Preparation and Oral Participation 10%**

Although this is a lecture course, your full involvement is required, including active listening, questioning, and engaged discussion in small or large groups. It is impossible to be involved without having read the required readings before class. If for some reason you are unable to complete the reading for a particular day, please let your instructor know and ATTEND CLASS anyway. Naturally, simply talking a lot in class or dominating the discussion does not necessarily constitute quality participation. Discussion needs to be on topic, thoughtful, and responsive to others in the class. Moreover, stimulating questions can be as valuable as knowledgeable answers.

**Reflective Notebook (Fall Term) 15%**

For each week during the fall term, you will be responsible to write one (1) to two (2) typed, double spaced (12 point font), numbered pages of reflections on the theory readings, handing them in at the end of each month. An ideal entry will dialogue perceptively with the readings, differentiate your ideas from those of other writers and speakers, and show some progression in theoretical awareness. Each entry will have a distinct focus, engaging a specific issue raised by the text, perhaps in response to class discussion. Your claims must include quotations from the reading (using parenthetical
citation) and should be supported by examples from your own experience of literature and/or culture. In any case, the idea is to show YOUR active ponderings, questionings, and confrontations with the theories, using first person singular (“I” as subject, “me” as object of action). Do not simply paraphrase what you have read. And please do not try to write what you think I want you to think. This is a conversation not a recital. Feel free to disagree with the readings. Due in three installments: October 1, October 31, and November 28. Entries will be evaluated for relevance, specificity, clarity, and perception.

**Online Discussion Posts (Winter Term) 10%**

During the winter term, you must participate in the online discussion via the Desire 2 Learn website once every two weeks, but preferably more often. Each entry will be 2-3 typed, double-spaced (12 point font) paragraphs long. Like the Reflective Notebook entries, these discussions will be relatively informal reflections on the reading material, making connections between the theory and literary texts you have read or are reading (even in other classes), or between the theory and linguistic/social practices in everyday life. At least one entry per month must be a response to someone else’s posting. More particularly, each entry must include at least one quote from one of the theory articles studied that week plus at least one example from a relevant literary or cultural “text.” Sometimes the online discussion will be a continuation of class discussion. At other times we will be commenting on or clarifying issues in class that were raised online. Please don’t clog the lines with irrelevant discussion or with rehashing the same point over and over. Sometimes it is good to remain in disagreement and move on. Ad hominem attacks are not permitted. Overlaps are fine: if you’ve spent two hours preparing a message only to discover, just as you are about to send it, that someone else has just posted the same idea, SEND YOURS ANYWAY. It can be interesting to see the slight variations between like-minded messages. Posts will be evaluated monthly for relevance (including responses to others), specificity, clarity, and perception. The lowest of 6 marks will be dropped from the register.

**Midterm and Final Exam  20% each**

Although the December Midterm and April Final exams require you to prove your mastery of each term’s material, you will be given potential examination questions in advance, from which three or four will appear on the exam, and from which you will be required to answer one or two (to be specified prior to the exam). You will be allowed to take one 8 ½ x 11 inch paper into the examination room, filled (handwritten or typed) both sides with a brief outline and quotations from assigned texts. Margins and font have no restrictions. On this paper, you may **not** write your answers in advance. Include the author of a quotation (not the editor but the person who wrote the words), title, and page numbers for each one. Up to 5 quotations from secondary sources may be included, but are not required. If you choose to include them, include full bibliographical information. Each exam is worth 20%. Be as specific as possible. The Final exam will cover winter term material only.

**Final Research Proposal (5%) and Essay (20%)**

During the winter term you will research and write an essay applying one of the theoretical terms studied in this course to a poem or short story of your choosing. You
must attach the text to both the proposal and the essay. If the text has been thoroughly discussed by critics from many angles, pick a theoretical angle that has not yet been discussed or apply it to a character or detail that has not yet been discussed so as to yield a new insight into the text.

For your proposal, please include the following aspects:

1. Write a paragraph explaining which poem or short story you would like to focus on for your essay and why you like it. Be as specific as you can.
2. List in full MLA format five recent academic articles discussing this text. If the text is recent, you may need to expand your search to include articles about its author, the period (e.g. romanticism) or the genre (e.g. the slave narrative). To find academic articles, consult the MLA Bibliography (found at LU Library Article Databases). Please see your instructor if you can’t find enough articles.
3. After each item in this list of articles, indicate which theoretical approach the critic is using, explaining how you know.
4. At the end of your proposal, brainstorm about a “new” theoretical approach that might yield fresh and interesting insight to your chosen text. (In other words, aim for a theoretical approach that has not yet been used by other critics. For example, if all of the critics use a feminist approach, consider taking a queer or postcolonial approach instead.) Specifically mention one theoretical article from this approach that we studied and that you think could work well with this text.
5. Sketch out a potential thesis claim for your essay with three or four aspects to support that claim.

The proposal is due January 23. Length: 3-4 numbered pages, typed, double-spaced, 12 pt. font, normal margins. Worth 5%.

For your essay, apply your chosen theory to the text. In your first paragraph, introduce the text and briefly summarize the various perspectives that have already been explored by critics (including a few direct quotations if possible). If the text has not yet been discussed by critics, explain why the text is intriguing and warrants attention. Then articulate your fresh approach, mentioning your chosen theoretical perspective and the thesis that this perspective enables you to support. Your second paragraph should summarize your theoretical perspective, defining the key term you have chosen, tracing its theoretical development, showing how the theorist(s) we studied uses it. Use specific quotes to support your summary. The body paragraphs should show how this theoretical perspective assists in shedding light on the text, explicating the text in detail with regular quotes from the text (as well as from the theory when needed). Within your conclusion, remind the reader of what the theory enables one to see with respect to this text and why that is important. Perhaps include a recommendation for future readers to consider. Remember that all words and ideas that are borrowed from elsewhere (including websites and class lectures) MUST be documented using MLA documentation format.

The essay is due March 18, 2015. Length: 5-7 numbered pages, typed, double-spaced, 12 pt. font, normal margins. Worth 20%. 
Marking Standards

Preparation and oral participation (10%) will be marked not only for quantity but also for quality (relevant, thoughtful, and responsive to others in the class). Obviously when you are absent you will lose marks, even if your participation when present is excellent.

Reflective Notebook entries (15%) during the fall term will be worth 5% each (x3) and will be evaluated for relevance, specificity, clarity, and perception.

Online discussion posts (10%) will be evaluated monthly for relevance (including responses to others), specificity, clarity, and perception. Each entry will be worth 2% and the lowest of 6 marks will be dropped from the register (total: 5x2%).

Midterm and Final Exams (20% each) will be marked for insight, accuracy, and relevant specific detail.

The proposal (5%) will be marked for adherence to instructions, insight, grammatical clarity, accuracy, and relevant specificity. One mark will be given to each of the required components: 1. personal reflection, 2. list of 5 academic articles, 3. assessment of theoretical approach of articles, 4. brainstorming about your proposed theoretical approach, 5. potential thesis.

The research essay (20%) will be marked in accordance with the English Department Marking Standards: https://www.lakeheadu.ca/academics/departments/english/mark-standards.

Collaboration/Plagiarism Rules

As stated in the English Department Marking Standards, “Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of someone else’s words and/or ideas. Not acknowledging your debt to the ideas of a secondary source, failing to use quotation marks when you are quoting directly, buying essays from essay banks, copying another student’s work, or working together on an individual assignment, all constitute plagiarism. Resubmitting material you’ve submitted to another course is also academic dishonesty. All plagiarized work (in whole or in part) and other forms of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Dean, who is responsible for judging academic misconduct and imposing penalties. The minimum penalty for academic misconduct is a 0 on the assignment in question. It might also be subject to more severe academic penalties. See the Code of Student Behaviour for more details.”

Course Policies

1. Undue absence will seriously affect both your achievement and your enjoyment in this course. If you have transportation difficulties, please talk to your instructor about the potential to join class via skype. If you find yourself struggling in the course, please see your instructor before February 6, which is the last day to drop the course without academic penalty.
2. It is imperative that you read the assigned readings before the class in which it is being discussed. If for some reason you are unable to prepare for a particular class, please let your instructor know and COME TO CLASS ANYWAY.

3. The university expects you to treat your fellow students and instructors with mutual respect and fairness. Differences of opinion are what fuel interesting debate in a classroom, which is strongly encouraged in this course. However, oppressive statements or behaviour based on race, class, gender, sexual orientation, nation of origin, (dis)ability, religion, or any other identity marker are clearly not appropriate and will be dealt with accordingly.

4. Please refrain from using cell phones, MP3 players, or other electronic devices during class. Laptops may be used occasionally for group work, but are discouraged on a regular basis. Please see your instructor if that poses a problem for you.

University Policies
- Students in this course are expected to conform to the Code of Student Behaviour: https://www.lakeheadu.ca/faculty-and-staff/policies/student-related/code-of-student-behaviour-and-disciplinary-procedures
- Lakehead University provides academic accommodations for students with disabilities in accordance with the terms of the Ontario Human Rights Code. This occurs through a collaborative process that acknowledges a collective obligation to develop an accessible learning environment that both meets the needs of students and preserves the essential academic requirements of the course.

This course outline is available online through the English Department homepage and the Desire2Learn site for the course.