

Grande Prairie Regional College
Dept. of Arts & Education: Course Outline

English 2100 Reading Histories: Histories in Texts
pending

Credits: 3(3-0-0)UT

Instructor: Dr. Elroy Deimert, PhD, M.A., B.A. Office C426 ph#539-2984

Email: edeimert@gprc.ab.ca

Prerequisite: 6 credits of University Transfer junior English that fulfill the requirements of a U of Alberta B.A. program.

Calendar Description: An introduction to the critical concepts and methods for reading literary texts historically that emphasize the relationship between representation and history.

Course Description: The relationship between “history” and literary texts is profoundly complicated. Even if we leave to one side the tricky matter of distinguishing between the ways in which “history” and “fiction” use narrative, or the ways in which “non-fiction” literary forms like biography use both novelistic and historical techniques, we are still left with some very difficult issues. These include the following:

- How literary texts represent “real” historical events or people and the ethics of including real people as characters in works of fiction.
- How literary texts themselves exist as part of history and that it is important to understand the socio-economic, political and cultural conditions surrounding production and distribution of literary texts. We attempt to recover some of the ways in which a text would have been read or understood at the time of its publication. We will try to discover who the audience was and how they would approach the text.
- We will also look at related questions like the following: what is literary history? What is a canon? What is the function of literary history? What is the relationship between literary history and cultural studies?

We will take up these questions through a course of reading which may include literary, critical, theoretical, and historical material. As a way of focusing our discussions, most of the literary texts we read will focus on representations of Western colonial history, Canadian history (as part of that), and romanticized versus realistic representation of war in such history.

Methodology: Students in this course will acquire skills in literary historical methodologies including new historicism, cultural materialism, and various schools of literary history. Students will gain experience in various kinds of literary research, as well as some close reading and application of critical methods. These skills will be acquired through a combination of reading, class discussion, lecture, group work, and independent research.

Required Reading: Required reading assignments vary depending on the instructor. Some texts will be available on-line; others will be distributed in class. The following is an example of some required texts:

Some Required Readings (Texts vary each year. Not all are required in any given year):

Beloved (Toni Morrison)
The Colony of Unrequited Dreams (Wayne Johnston)
Heart of Darkness (Conrad) & “Apocalypse Now” (Coppola)
The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry, 2nd ed.
Regeneration (Pat Barker) & “Regeneration” (MacKinnon) the 1997 movie
The Scorched-Wood People (Rudy Wiebe)
The Seven Pillars of Wisdom (T.E. Lawrence) “Laurence of Arabia” (Lean)

Some historically researched passages and historical interpretation from the following books will be discussed:

The Englishman’s Boy & The Last Crossing (Vanderhaeghe)
The Grapes of Wrath (Steinbeck)
In the Skin of a Lion (Ondaatje)
Preface to *Literary Women: The Great Writers* (1977). Ellen Moers.
Preface to *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women* (1985). Sandra Gilbert and S. Gubar.
The Russlander (Sandra Birdsell)
Tay John (O’Hagan)

Requirements & Assessment:

1. Attendance, participation and preparation for all classes is mandatory; preparation, participation and seminar presentation will comprise 30% of the grade, 20% of which is on the seminar presentation.
2. Two researched essays are required work 25% each. An initial 10% will also be given for the research proposal, outline and bibliography for each essay.

Student Conduct: Grande Prairie Regional college is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the College in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the policies on Student Conduct in the College Calendar (i.e. academic dishonesty, plagiarism, cheating, disruptive conduct, participation in such, and the penalties). Such misconduct can be a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the College. By registering for the course students agree to allow passages from their work to be submitted to Internet search engines for checks on plagiarism.