



**FACULTY OF ARTS
Department Of English**

COURSE OUTLINE

**ENGL 509: Posthumanism and Poetics in Canada
Winter 2023: Block Week
Class Schedule: TWRFS 9:00-17:00, Taylor Institute 118**

Instructor	Dr. Kit Dobson
Email:	christopher.dobson@ucalgary.ca
Web Page:	D2L (access via MyUofC portal)
Office Hours:	By request during lunch breaks

Course description (calendar):

An in-depth examination of a topic in Canadian literature in its critical context. Students will learn to development research questions and conduct original research.

Prerequisite(s): 6 units of English at the 400 level.

Course description (course-specific):

“[W]e need to devise new social, ethical and discursive schemes of subject formation to match the profound transformations we are undergoing. That means that we need to learn to think differently about ourselves.”

– Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (12)

In her 2013 book *The Posthuman*, Rosi Braidotti argues that the category of the human no longer serves our social, political, and cultural ends. Braidotti decisively problematizes and unsettles our understandings by identifying a range of problems with how the human has thus far been understood. It is a term that she shows to be inextricable from European humanism and humanism’s legacies of imperialism, racism, sexism, speciesism, and more. What becomes possible in the wake of the liberal humanist subject that she critiques? The “new social, ethical and discursive schemes” that Braidotti invokes in the epigraph above suggest new possibilities, and do so specifically in a twenty-first century context, one in which significant technological and societal changes are afoot. This course argues that poets may be among of the vanguard of these new formations. It examines contemporary poetic practices in Canada in order to witness and

understand how this argument might help us to grasp these important new changes and the potential therein.

Welcome to English 509: Posthumanism and Poetics in Canada! I am looking forward to our brief time together. As a block week course, we meet intensively, from 9-5, for five consecutive days, Tuesday through Saturday. In this time, I will endeavour to bring to you a conversation about posthumanism, poetics, and a range of contemporary texts produced in the place known as Canada that can support us in developing our thinking. What we will do with the texts themselves will be up to us to determine, but, as we do so, we will be guided by the following questions: what is posthumanism? How might it inform the ways in which we exist in the world? What poetic practices in Canada might reflect or inform this thinking?

Let me say, right away, that in my own thinking I am moving away from talking about “Canadian literature” and instead tend to use the phrase “literatures in Canada” wherever possible. As a unit, the Department of English is in the process of renaming many of our courses as such. The reasons have to do with current debates in the field about the literatures produced in the state currently called Canada. Does Canada own the literatures produced here? That is, are they necessarily “Canadian”? There is no consensus on this view, and my own phrasing intends to recognize the openness of the debate. I will signal, too, that I am of the view that the historical evolution of a thing – like literatures created in Canada – comes from multiple, competing, and intersecting genealogies. Single or simple origins are, in other words, something that we can always question, as we will do in this course.

English 509 takes place at the University of Calgary. The University’s main campus is situated in the city of Calgary, which is known as Mohkintsis in the Blackfoot language. The University is situated in Treaty 7 territory, a treaty signed in 1877 between representatives of the British Crown and the Blackfoot or Niitsitapi Confederacy (Siksika, Pikani, and Kainai Nations), the Stoney Nakoda Nations (Wesley, Bearspaw, and Chiniki), and the Tsuut’ina Nation. Calgary is also home to the Métis Nation of Alberta, region 3. The University is only here, then, due to treaty relationships established in 1877. This fact alone shapes the learning that takes place in this course, in that this is a place of ongoing Indigenous presence. It is a place marked by story long before the state of Canada was created, let alone anything like “Canadian literature.”

As we get down to work on these questions and issues, I want to note that the texts that we examine in this course are sometimes challenging ones. The writers whom we study take on difficult issues and are negotiating historical and contemporary problems. The texts are also experimental in nature and are structurally complex ones too. This course will be demanding, but brief. I look forward to working together to make it be the best possible experience for us all!

Course learning outcomes:

Upon successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the theoretical field of posthumanism and its current debates;
2. Show an awareness of contemporary poetic practices in a range of texts produced in Canada;
3. Understand how approaches to literary studies can produce multiple readings of a text;
4. Analyze how intersections of race, gender, class, sexuality, and national, or worldwide history can shape literary studies in Canada;
5. Formulate and defend significant arguments in which you analyze, evaluate, and synthesize material effectively;
6. Work collaboratively with others in developing an argument related to a text's historical and contemporary importance;
7. Structure a complex and engaging argument; and
8. Present your own analysis of a text within the context of literary studies in Canada.

Texts and readings:

Abel, Jordan. *The Place of Scraps*. Talonbooks, 2013.

Avasilichioaei, Oana. *Eight Track*. Talonbooks, 2019.

Belcourt, Billy-Ray. *NDN Coping Mechanisms*. Anansi, 2019.

Braidotti, Rosi. *The Posthuman*. Polity, 2013.

Brand, Dionne. *Nomenclature: New and Collected Poems*. McClelland and Stewart, 2022.

Dickinson, Adam. *Anatomic*. Coach House Books, 2018.

Major, Alice. *Welcome to the Anthropocene*. U Alberta P, 2017.

Stewart, Christine. *Treaty 6 Deixis*. Talonbooks, 2018.

Wah, Fred, and Rita Wong. *Beholden: A Poem as Long as the River*. Talonbooks, 2018.

Supplementary reading: I always recommend knowing the *MLA Handbook* thoroughly in its current edition.

Please also consult the bibliography of "Additional Reading" posted to our course's D2L site for more resources on posthumanism.

Learning technology requirements:

There is a D2L site for this course which contains key class resources and materials (see d2L.ucalgary.ca).

Assessments and Evaluation:

Student results for this iteration of English 509 will be determined via the following assessments:

1. Epigraph: 5%
2. Daily Reflections: 25%
3. Seminar Facilitation: 30%
4. Final Essay or Project Proposal: 5%
5. Final Essay: or Project 35%

Epigraph (5%): By the end of the first day of class, please identify a single, well-chosen quotation from Rosi Braidotti's *The Posthuman* that you find useful, provocative, or significant. Please gloss this epigraph with a brief statement about why this quotation is important or what it might mean to your work. (Note: the beginning of the course description is simultaneously a demonstration of this assignment.) Expected length: up to 250 words. **Due date: January 3.**

Daily Reflections (25%): We meet five times. I ask that, at the end of each day, you complete a written reflection on our day's work. This reflection may take any form that serves you well. These reflections may inform our conversations on our subsequent days of class. Expected length: up to 250 words per reflection. **Due date: January 9.**

Seminar Facilitation (30%): Working in small groups or individually depending on our final numbers, you will be responsible for facilitating a portion of class. Each facilitation will work with one of the books of poetry. **Due date: sign up on day one for either January 4, 5, 6, or 7.**

Final Essay or Project Proposal (5%): While the material for the course is fresh, I will ask you to complete a brief proposal for the final essay or project assignment. Expected length: up to 250 words. **Due date: January 9.**

Final Essay or Project (35%): Prepared after our time together, you will complete a well-researched final essay or project that addresses the theories, texts, and / or themes of our course. A research-creation option is available for this assignment. Please see the detailed assignment guidelines. Expected length: 2000 to 3000 words. **Due date: February 27.**

Late assignments: Assignments submitted after the deadline will be penalized with the loss of a 3% for each calendar day (not class meeting) that the assignment is overdue. No assignments will be accepted one week past the assignment deadline without prior consent.

Additional notes: Please see the detailed assignment guidelines for each assignment for additional details and explanations (posted to D2L). Note that there is no registrar-scheduled

final exam for this course. Students should submit their work electronically via D2L's dropbox in .docx format unless the form of project dictates otherwise.

Attendance and participation expectations:

Please plan to attend class; block week courses simply cannot work otherwise. We will develop a series of interconnected discussions over the course of the week, and missing any of these discussions will negatively impact your understanding of the material that we are studying. While there is no formal participation grade, do know that attendance is a basic expectation of this course. Should you miss class, too, please note that I will not be able to catch you up to our conversations either during office hours or via email.

Conduct:

Students, employees, and academic staff are expected to demonstrate behaviour in class that promotes and maintains a positive and productive learning environment. As members of the University community, students, employees, and academic staff are expected to demonstrate conduct that is consistent with the University of Calgary Calendar, the Code of Conduct and Non-Academic Misconduct policy and procedures, which can be found at:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

Policy on use of electronic devices:

The use of laptop and mobile devices in class is acceptable when used in a manner appropriate to the course and classroom activities. Please refrain from accessing websites and resources that may be distracting to you or to other learners during class time. Students are responsible for being aware of the University's [Internet and email use policy](#).

Grading System:

This course uses the following standard grading scale:

90 + %	A+	4.0	67 – 69 %	C+	2.3
85 – 89 %	A	4.0	64 – 66 %	C	2.0
80 – 84 %	A–	3.7	60 – 63 %	C–	1.7
77 – 79 %	B+	3.3	55 – 59 %	D+	1.3
74 – 76 %	B	3.0	50 – 54 %	D	1.0
70 – 73 %	B–	2.7	0 – 49 %	F	0

Please note the following:

- Although the A+ is solely an honorific that entails no additional points in the four-point system, I will employ this mark to distinguish superlative work that far exceeds expectations in style, correctness, intellectual depth and breadth, sophistication, and originality.
- The interpretation of the undergraduate university grading system can be found at <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/f-1-1.html>
- There is no registrar-scheduled final examination for this course.
- There is no D- grade.
- There are no extra credit assignments available in this course.
- Students need not pass any particular assessment in order to pass this course.
- In calculating final grades, students must have surpassed the minimum grade threshold to qualify for any letter grade — that is, grades will never be rounded up into the nearest grade category even if very close to that minimum threshold.

Academic Integrity:

This course, like all courses at the University of Calgary, holds students to high standards of honest and responsible scholarship. Please consult the [Academic Integrity website](#) for a detailed description of university policies, which will be enforced in this course. Cases of suspected academic misconduct will be referred to the Associate Dean of Arts for a ruling.

Plagiarism is a type of academic misconduct. Plagiarism occurs when a student presents the ideas, expression of ideas, or work of another person as their own. Another equally serious form of plagiarism occurs when a student submits something they have written themselves for credit in two or more courses without first securing written permission from all those course instructors. Consequences for plagiarism include failure on the assignment, failure in the course, and possible suspension or expulsion from the university. Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense.

Deferral of term work and final examinations:

Should you require an extension for completion of term papers or assignments beyond the deadline of five days after the end of lectures, an [Application of Deferment of Term Work](#) must be completed. It is the student's responsibility to initiate this process with the instructor. The University also has regulations governing the [deferral of final examinations](#).

Grade appeals:

To pursue a Reassessment of Graded Term Work or a Reappraisal of an Academic Assessment,

Consult the [University Calendar](#) and request advice from the English Department at engl@ucalgary.ca. Please note that mere dissatisfaction with a grade is not sufficient grounds for an appeal.

[English Department Website:](#)

For more information about courses, programs, policies, events and contacts in the Department of English.

Scribe and Muse Club for English Students:

The [Scribe and Muse Reading and Writing Club](#) fosters and champions reading and writing through community service, leadership, and engagement. Our email address is smecuofc@gmail.com.

Writing support:

[The Student Success Centre](#) offers both online and workshop writing support for U of C students.

[Academic regulations and schedules.](#)

Student Academic Accommodations:

The Student Accessibility Services website is available [here](#). University accommodation policies can be found at the following links:

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/b-6-1.html>

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/b-6.html>

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/b-6-2.html>

Program Advising and Student Information Resources is done through the Faculty of Arts Students' Centre. Office location: SS102; phone: 403-220-3580; email: ascarts@ucalgary.ca
Website: <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/undergraduate>

Instructor's Intellectual Property:

Course materials created by instructors, including presentations, posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments, and exams, remain the intellectual property of the instructor. These materials may not be reproduced, redistributed or copied without the explicit consent of the instructor. The

posting of course materials to third party websites such as note-sharing sites without permission is prohibited. Sharing of extracts of these course materials with other students enrolled in the course at the same time may be allowed under fair dealing.

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy:

Student information will be collected in accordance with usual classroom practice. Students' assignments will be accessible only by the authorized course faculty and teaching assistants. Private information related to the individual student is treated with the utmost regard by the faculty at the University of Calgary.

Sexual violence policy:

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/sites/default/files/teams/1/Policies-Sexual-and-Gender-Based-Violence-Policy.pdf>

Other important information:

- [Wellness and Mental Health Resources](#)
- [Student Success](#)
- [Student Ombuds Office](#)
- [Student Union \(SU\) Information](#)
- [Graduate Students' Association \(GSA\) Information](#)
- [Emergency Evacuation/Assembly Points](#)
- [Safewalk](#)

Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI):

Please participate in [USRI Surveys](#) toward the end of the course. The feedback they provide helps us evaluate teaching, enhance student learning, and guide students as they select courses.

COVID-19:

The ongoing global pandemic remains in a fluid situation as the semester begins. Please note that this course will adhere to the University of Calgary's COVID-19's policies and practices throughout the semester. In this context, it is important for us to take care of ourselves and of one another. Please do not hesitate to be in touch should COVID-19 or illness impact your studies and I will do my best to ensure that your progress in our course is not hindered.