

Department of English & Writing Studies

English 3573G (001)
Black Writing in Canada
Winter 2024

Antirequisites: English 3579F/G if taken in 2021-22.

Prerequisites: At least 60% in 1.0 English courses from 1020-1999, or permission of the Department.

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Course Description

This course will study selected examples of Black writing in Canada, including poetry, short stories, novels, a play, a documentary film, and non-fiction prose by both award-winning and lesser-known writers. Our study will be framed primarily by the terms of creative writer and professor David Chariandy, who writes of

two prominent and intermingling ‘schools’ of analysis that have shaped academic discussions of the category and field [“Black Canadian Literature”]—an emphasis on diasporic routes, and an emphasis on historic Canadian roots—before advancing the idea that Black Canadian literature has also been shaped powerfully by the long-standing idea that Canada is a land of genuine liberation and equality for peoples of African descent. Black Canadian literature’s heightened critical confrontation of both the dream and delusion of what we might now cautiously term ‘post-race’ makes this emergent field of newfound global importance regarding the ongoing yet contradictory cultural politics of race today. (“Black Canadian Literature: Fieldwork and ‘Post-Race,’” *The Oxford Handbook of Canadian Literature*, ed. Cynthia Sugars, Dec 2015, DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199941865.013.30)

Analysis of the required readings will be combined with appreciation and celebration of their artistry and creativity.

In-class teaching and learning will proceed through combined short lectures and informed discussion (that is, discussion informed by everyone’s preparedness for class); out-of-class teaching and learning will be facilitated by everyone’s engagement with study questions, recommended readings, timely preparation of the required readings for class, and completion of other course work.

Objectives:

By the end of the course, successful students will be able to:

- Appreciate a variety of forms of contemporary writing by people of Black African descent in Canada
- Appreciate a variety of experiences of being Black in Canada as represented by creative and scholarly Black writers themselves
- Analyze relationships between form and content
- Understand how representation produces meaning and other effects
- Think critically about forms of being and knowing in Canada
- Think critically about the mythology of Canada’s “moral superiority” over the United

States on matters of race and racism

- Reflect on the relationships between the reading of creative works, research, and knowledge production more broadly
- Write with improved brevity and clarity of style, with detail and depth of analysis
- Undertake research with improved search skills

See also the learning objectives for third-year study in the English program at:

[https://www.uwo.ca/english/english_studies/courses/english_learning_outcomes.html - threethousand](https://www.uwo.ca/english/english_studies/courses/english_learning_outcomes.html-threethousand)

Course Materials

Required Texts:

- Lorena Gale, *Angélique* (1998) (play)
- David Chariandy, *Soucouyant* (2007) (novel)
- Cheryl Foggo *John Ware Reclaimed* (National Film Board 2020) (documentary; free to view from NFB)
- Whitney French, editor, *Black Writers Matter* (2019; Rev. ed. 2021) (creative non-fiction)
- Hassan Ghedi Santur, *The Youth of God* (2019) (novel)
- Zalika Reid-Benta, *Frying Plantain* (2019) (linked short stories)
- Téa Mutonji, *Shut Up You're Pretty* (2019) (linked short stories)

Poetry, selected scholarship, and non-fiction prose by George Elliott Clarke, Wayde Compton, M. NourbeSe Philip, Rinaldo Walcott, et al., available via Western Libraries Course Readings and/or Western Libraries catalogue

Methods of Evaluation

The grade for the course will be arrived at as follows:

- ◇ **30%:** 3 x 1.5 to 2-page (double-spaced) Analyses of selected required readings (non-fiction prose) for ideas and concepts applicable to required creative readings
- ◇ **10%:** F2F (face-to-face) Consultations with instructor about your research essay plans and progress: 1) discussion of chosen text and topic, anticipated search terms and search strategies; 2) follow-up consultation with a record of your search strategies and selected results in the form of a paper copy of your Preliminary Bibliography of 8 to 10 sources for your research essay
- ◇ **35%:** Research Essay of 2,500 to 3,000 words (including Works Cited) in MLA 9th edition format, double-spaced.
- ◇ **25%:** Preparation of a sample final exam question, rationale for the question (why is it a good question for what has been studied in this course), and an essay answer to your question.

Everyone's sample exam questions will be anonymized and circulated in our final class for discussion and ranking of best questions. Book prizes will be distributed for best questions (though classmates' determination of best questions has no bearing on instructor's evaluation of everyone's work). This assignment takes the place of an actual final examination for the course, while also functioning as a thorough review and self-assessment exercise (how would you do faced with these exam questions if you had to answer them in an exam?!).

Students are fully responsible for looking at and being familiar with the information posted on the department website at <http://www.uwo.ca/english/undergraduate/Student%20Information.html>.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory in all classes and tutorials. In cases of excessive absenteeism (e.g. more than 9 unexcused hours for a half course, 18 for a full course), which are not accounted for by either academic consideration or accommodation, students may be debarred from taking the final examination, and will receive an official warning to this effect by or before the course drop date (see Senate policy). In classes with or without final exams, students who do not attend class will receive 0% for course participation grades. Unless other policies dictate a different set of penalties in specific English and Writing Studies programs, this will apply to all department programs.

Intellectual Property/Copyright

All instructor-written materials (e.g. PowerPoints, lecture notes, oral lectures) for this course are created solely for students' personal use within the course, and remain the instructor's intellectual property. Further reproduction, fixation, distribution, transmission, dissemination, communication, or any other uses, without securing the consent of the copyright owner (the course instructor) may be an infringement of copyright. You may not distribute, email, or otherwise communicate these materials to any other person. These limitations extend to recording, photographing, or sharing lectures (online or in-person) and lecture material without permission. Posting the instructor's content from this course to online course sharing sites like OneClass or Course Hero without permission is both an infringement of intellectual property law and a violation of academic integrity guidelines. The instructor will pass these cases on to the Western University Ombudsperson or their Department Chair as appropriate.

OWL course site

We will use an OWL course site for the management of course materials (syllabus, weekly schedule, announcements, resources), submission and return of graded assignments (unless otherwise noted), and communication with the class as a whole during the term. Your instructor does not use the Assignments function in OWL: please submit all out-of-class written assignments to the Drop Box located within our OWL course site (you do not need to purchase or download any commercially available "Dropbox").

E-mails from instructor/GTA

Students are responsible for reading all e-mail messages from the instructor and/or GTA, including any messages that come from the OWL course site's e-mail account). The instructor regularly uses OWL for important communications to the class as a whole (e.g., new resources added to the site; slight change to schedule, such as an extension to a due date; etc.).

MLA (9th edition) format and submissions of assignments

Unless otherwise noted, all assignments are to be submitted in Word documents to your OWL Drop Box in the OWL English 3573G Course Site and formatted according to the MLA 9th edition. Please name your assignment documents by your "last name, assignment type." For example, my first of the 3 short Analyses would be named "Pennee Analysis 1"; my research essay would be named "Pennee Research Essay." Accessible instructions for MLA 9th edition format can be found at the following website (please ask if you can't find an answer here): https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_formatting_and_style_guide/mla_formatting_and_style_guide.html

Scroll down the menu bar on the left of the screen for instructions and examples of particular components of MLA formatting (e.g., MLA Works Cited Page: Basics; MLA Formatting Quotations; MLA Sample Works Cited Page; MLA Works Cited: Electronic Sources (Web Publications), etc.)

E-mail outside of Monday-to-Friday “business” hours

Be aware that e-mails may not be answered after 5pm on weeknights or at any hour on weekends. Try to think of this policy as follows: you would not phone your instructor at home at any time, would you? No. E-mails can be *sent* whenever you wish, but you might not get an answer to e-mails outside of “business” hours. E-mail nevertheless is the best way to reach the instructor to book an appointment, should you have a scheduling conflict with office hours. Face-to-face conversations about the course are always preferable to e-mail. Additional office hours will be posted for the heaviest consultation times in the course (i.e., during the development of ideas for your research essay and the drafting of your critical annotations, etc.).

Considerations for Attendance for this course (see also the University Policy on Attendance above)

While attendance will not be taken in this course, the instructor reminds everyone that regular attendance, preparedness for class, active listening, active note-taking, and engaged contributions to class discussion will improve your overall learning experience. How? Through

- better comprehension of the readings, class lectures, and discussion;
- improved retention of course materials for quicker recognition of analytical connections between the readings (= more “A-ha!” moments);
- greater enjoyment of the relevance and value of the readings and assignments in relation to this and your other course work and to other aspects of an informed life.

Anyone who is frequently absent from class may be asked not to attend the final class in which sample exam questions are discussed and ranked (though you will be permitted to complete the sample final exam assignment).

Late policy

If you anticipate you will need an extension, ask for one in advance. Otherwise, late work will be penalized at the rate of 10% (of the value of the assignment) per day late (i.e., a paper worth 10% that is late 2 days would automatically become worth a maximum of 8%).

Use of Laptops

Given that attendance will not be taken in class, the working assumption will be that students are in the classroom because they want to learn the course materials and develop their knowledge and skills in relation to them. Thus, students may use laptops to take notes, look up materials pertinent to class content during class, and access online readings and other resources to be used during class time. But if during class time you find yourself using your laptop (or other devices) for social media and other activities unrelated to the course, then you should perhaps consider that your time might be better spent elsewhere than enrolled in this course.

Accommodation Policies

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities:

Students with disabilities work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#).

Accommodation for Students on Medical Grounds:

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth (either alone or in combination) 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department.

Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. The Student Medical Certificate (SMC) can be found at https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf.

The full policy is set out here:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf.

Religious Accommodation:

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the [Western Multicultural Calendar](#).

Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Plagiarism:

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence.

Plagiarism Checking:

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>.

All instances of plagiarism will be reported to the Chair of Undergraduate Studies. Proven cases of plagiarism will result in a grade of zero for the assignment. Subsequent offences will result in failure for the course.

Statement on Gender-Based and Sexual Violence

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced gender-based or sexual violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts, [here](#). To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Support Services

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Academic Support & Engagement <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western:
<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Timetable

30%: 3 x 1.5 to 2-page (double-spaced) Analyses of selected required readings (non-fiction prose) for ideas and concepts applicable to required creative readings

- Due dates will depend on when your chosen readings are to be discussed in class: each analysis will be due before class on the day the reading is to be discussed (though you can submit the work earlier than that if you wish: inform the instructor that you have done so)

10%: F2F (face-to-face) Consultations with instructor about your research essay plans and progress: 1) discussion of chosen text and topic, anticipated search terms and search strategies; 2) follow-up consultation with a record of your search strategies and selected results in the form of a paper copy of your Preliminary Bibliography of 8 to 10 sources for your research essay

- Due dates will be identified in the Research Essay handout in OWL Resources to fall within a reasonable range of when you can be expected to have read enough of the course materials to make an informed choice but also still have time to do research and writing (so consultations will occur between mid-February and early-March, with the greatest number of extra office hours occurring in Weeks 7, 8, i.e., immediately after Winter Break week)

35%: Research Essay of 2,500 to 3,000 words (including Works Cited) in MLA 9th edition format, double-spaced.

- Due at the end of Week 9, not later than Saturday 16 March at 12pm (noon)

25%: Preparation of a sample final exam question, rationale for the question (how and why is it a good question for what has been studied in this course), and an essay answer to your question.

- Due Monday 1 April, not later than 6:00pm: the instructor will collate anonymized questions for everyone to discuss and rank in class on Tuesday 2 April