ENGLISH MINORITY CULTURES

Year IV, Fall Semester 2008
Dr Eugenia Sojka
Office: Room 3.55 (Canadian Studies Centre)
Email: esojka2000@yahoo.ca

MEETING TIMES AND THE VENUE

Our weekly meetings will be held on Thursdays in room 2.1
Lecture: 12:05 -12:50
Class: 13:00-14:30

OFFICE HOURS

Thursdays: 14:40:00 -16:00 or by appointment
Should need be, you can contact me via email: esojka2000@yahoo.ca

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Theme: Minority cultural and literary discourses.
Constructing/ deconstructing Canadianness

The course examines literary and cultural texts (film and other visual arts) of several minority groups in Canada with reference to the problem of de/constructing Canadianness. It focuses on the poetics of minority discourses and on complex relationships between dominant and minority cultures. It explores concepts of nationhood, citizenship, identity, diaspora, multiculturality, transculturality, ethnicization and racialization and various strategies used by both the visible and invisible minority writers and artists in Canada.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>EVALUATION</th>
<th>NUMBER OF POINTS</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Group presentation</td>
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<td>Class Participation</td>
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PRESENTATION (GROUP WORK) – (no more than 30 minutes) - it will be based on a selected text / texts from a list of obligatory texts. Please submit in writing (one text for the whole group) a summary of the presentation: general introduction to the topic, major points and problems discussed, conclusions). All students assigned a particular reading receive the same mark. It is your responsibility to make sure that every member of the group does his / her fair share of preparation. Groups of students take responsibility for the particular primary readings; they report, analyze their findings for the class, and initiate discussion.

Inviting participation is vital. To ensure that the class enters into a dialogue with the presenter/s the following strategies can be used:

- handouts
- diagrams or illustrations
- a list of key terms
- an overhead outlining key points or key phrases / or powerpoint presentation
- questions for participants
- a writing exercise for participants

ACTIVITIES

You are expected to complete "hands-on" activities for which you will be asked to complete an exercise and turn in a brief, 2-3 page printed report (500 -750 words) which should be related to the ideas discussed in class. You will be graded on the quality of your work.

ACTIVITY 1 : CANADIAN MINORITY GROUPS IN A TV AND RADIO SERIES ON CANADIAN HERITAGE (also in cyberspace)

Deadline: October 30, 2008

Heritage minutes

[Link to Heritage Minutes]

Analyze the construction of Canadianness on the basis of this multimedia project. Focus on the representation and the role of minority cultures in the series. You are expected to critique the project / to evaluate the representation of the selected event/s
within a bigger framework of constructing nationhood (think of biases, problems, etc.). Notice what kind of events / heroes/ minority groups, etc. were selected to represent Canadian heritage; what do you think determined the choice and why? what kind of events /people were omitted in this representation of Canadianness? This critique will naturally lead to a broader / more comprehensive image of Canadianness.

Select two categories from the list below and write a 300-400 word commentary on the topic of constructing Canadianness as represented in the project. Use some of the knowledge from critical texts suggested for this course (e.g. Katarzyna Rukszto, “Up for Sale: The Commodification of Canadian Culture “, (De)Constructing Canadianness Myth of the Nation and Its Discontents. Ed. Eugenia Sojka. Katowice: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Śląsk, 2007.

Categories:
- The Arts
- Building Democracy
- Canada and the World
- Canadian Symbols
- Commerce
- Exploration
- First Nations
- Heroes
- Innovators
- Military
- Settling Canada
- Sports
- Women

ACTIVITY 2: CANADIAN MINORITY GROUPS IN LITERATURE

Select a text/ texts (if poetry or short story) by a representative of one minority group.

In your analysis show how the selected text/s inscribe/s themselves into various models of Canadianness or how they challenge such models.

Write a brief essay/ commentary (500 – 750 words).
Deadline: January 8, 2009

ACTIVITY 3: CANADIAN MINORITY GROUPS IN CANADIAN FILM

Select and watch one film about one minority group, e.g. Canadian Native peoples, Chinese Canadians, etc. [Deepa Mehta, Mina Shum, Zacharias Kunuk, Alanis Obomsawin]. See a list of films available for viewing. You can also rent a film from local video stores. Write your report about your response to these questions:
• What is the basic production information? (company/distributor, producer, director, main cast, length, awards, etc.)
• Do minority people have roles in the film? Who? What roles? Are they lead characters?
• Do minority people have a role in creation, production or financing of the film?
• What are the major problems / issues dramatized in the film?
• How are the minority people represented in the films?
• What images or stereotypes of minority people are apparent in the story?
• If the story involves minority and dominant culture interaction, how is the interaction portrayed? One-sided? Negative? Positive? Reconciled by the end?
• If the story portrays an historical event or character, is it historically accurate?

Write a brief essay / commentary (500-750 words).

**Deadline**: January 15, 2009

**ACTIVITY 4: CANADIAN MINORITY GROUPS and CANADIAN VISUAL ARTS**

Review websites (e.g. Canadian native arts, Asian (Jin me-Yoon), African Canadian, Arabic Canadian (Jamelie Hassan) Eastern Europeans (Canadian Artists of Eastern European Origin):

http://art-history.concordia.ca/eea/index.htm ) [Vera Frenkel, Kinga Araya, Nataalka Husar, Jana Sterbak etc.] and show how their work differs from the traditional narratives of Canadian national artistic discourses (e.g. Group of Seven). What are the major themes and techniques of their art? Select two artists for your analysis.

**Write a brief essay /commentary (500-750 words).**

**Deadline**: any time (before January 15, 2009)

**TERM PAPER** - an option for students who wish to improve their final grade.

You will write a paper on the problem of constructing and/or (de)constructing of the concept of Canadianness with reference to selected literary or visual discourses. You will also be expected to consult critical/theoretical texts from the Canadian Studies Reader (also in the Reading Room).

**Suggested length of term paper**: 7-8 pages (1750-2000 words; 30 lines to a page)

Double space your work in 12 point type (Times New Roman) and include a bibliography (MLA style sheet). Students should retain a copy of all submitted assignments (in case of loss).

Grading will be based on the following elements:

1. research
2. thoroughness of approach
3. depth of thought and insight
4. originality,
5. organization
ATTENDANCE

It is **imperative** that students come to class with the readings done. Since the class meets once a week, **missing more than two classes**, even with a doctor’s note provided, will entail consequences: the student will be required to write a paper on a topic related to the missed classes.

PLAGIARISM AND COLLUSION

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. You must document not only direct quotations but also paraphrases and ideas where they appear in your text. A reference list at the end is insufficient by itself. Plagiarism is a very serious offence that can involve penalties from failing the paper to failing the course. Any other form of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated: using online essay writing services, resubmitting your own previous work for another assignment (self-plagiarism), or collusion:

- “if a student gets someone else to compose the whole or part of any piece of work
- If a student copies the whole or part of someone else's piece of work with the knowledge and consent of the latter
- If a student allows another student to copy material, knowing that it will subsequently be presented as that student's own work “

Unfortunately, we live in a culture that promotes a cheating mentality. Please do note, however, that cheating is not a survival tactic in our increasingly competitive world. It is a serious offence! Ultimately, you cheat yourself! It is a question of personal integrity and ethics!
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Theme of the meeting</th>
<th>Texts to read</th>
<th>Issues to focus on</th>
<th>Lecture topic</th>
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<td>• Survival (la Survivance) / Victimhood</td>
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<td>-nature, wilderness, landscape, progress, stereotypical images of the French, Mounties and Indigenous peoples</td>
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<td>-romanticization</td>
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<td>-exotification</td>
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<td>the Mountie, a sign of racist nation building and a national icon</td>
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<td>-mythologization of Canada in media</td>
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<td>Documentary realist tradition of the National Filmboard</td>
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<td>-Goin’ Down the Road (1970) (Donald Shebib)</td>
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<td>-combining social commentary, the travel narrative and documentary realism</td>
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**POETICS OF MINORITY CULTURES**

- identity (national, language, ethnic, racial, gender, class)
- Otherness, hybridity, nomadism, multiculturalism, transculturalism, diasporic imagination, carnivalesque, dialogism, verbal and visual rhetoric

**Minority Poetics**

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20.11.2008 | Minority Voices in literary discourses - various strategies | Fred Wah, *The Diamond Grill* (1996), See podcast: Minority writing strategies (aesthetics and politics of literary discourses)

**Minority Voices in literary discourses:**

- Polish Canadian
Read also texts (poetry) to be discussed in lecture – Smaro Kamboureli, ed. Making Difference. Canadian Multicultural Literature (1996):

Cyril Dabydeen (b. 1945, Berbice, Guyana): “Lady Icarus” (248-9) “Multiculturalism” (249-250)

Claire Harris (b. 1937, Port of Spain, Trinidad): “Black Sisyphus” (141-143); From Drawing Down a Daughter (144-147)

Jamila Ismail (b.1940, Honk Kong)’ From Scared Texts (172-176)

Himani Bannerji (b.1942, Bangladesh): “Paki Go Home” (183-184); “Apart-Hate” (187-)

Marlene Nourbese Philip (b.1947, Moriah, Tobago): Discourse on the Logic of Language” (273, 276-279)

Corinne Allyson Lee (b.1950, Calgary, Alberta): “Recipe” (339-342)

diaspora:


Other voices: (Cyril Dabydeen, Claire Harris, Jamila Ismail, Himani Bannerji, Marlene Nourbese Philip)

27.11.2008

Transcultural filmmaking – Chinese Canadian diaspora

Mina Shum

Double Happiness (1995) d. Mina Shum


Transcultural strategies in filmmaking Chinese Canadian diaspora

Transcultural filmmaking

Accented cinema / minority filmmaking / transcultural cinematic discourse

Fire (1997) d. Deepa Mehta

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<td>Multiculturalism / Transculturalism and Quebec</td>
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<td>Drama: Tomson Highway: The Rez Sisters</td>
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**Notes:**
- George Elliott Clarke, Quebeckite. A Jazz Fantasia in Three Cantos (2003)
- Multiculturalism / Transculturalism and Quebec
- Multicultural vision of Canadianness / deconstruction of early Canadian film aesthetics
- Indigenous identity
- Multicultural vision of Canadianness / deconstruction of early Canadian film aesthetics
- First Nations literary discourses - strategies and techniques
- First Nations literary discourses
- Drama: Tomson Highway: The Rez Sisters
- Poetry : Chrystos...
- Fiction: Lee Maracle: Ravensong

**Additional References:**
- Monique Mojica: Princess Pocahontas and Blue Spots (1991)
- Read also poems: to be discussed in lecture, from Daniel David Moses and Terry Goldie, eds., An Anthology of Canadian Native Literature in English (1998):
  - Rita Joe, b. 1932: (Micmac): “I Lost My Talk” (113-114)
  - “Micmacs Hieroglyphics” (114)
  - Annharte b.1942 (Anishnabe): “Raced Out to Write This Up” (189-190)
  - “One Way to Keep Track of Who is Talking” (190-191)
  - “Coyote Columbus Café” (191-196)
  - Harold Cardinal , b.1945
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<th>(Cree):</th>
<th>“A Canadian What the Hell It’s All About.” (211-217)</th>
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<td>Jeannette C. Armstrong b. 1948 (Okanagan):</td>
<td>“History Lesson” (226-228)</td>
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<td>“The Disempowerment of First North American Native Peoples and Empowerment Through Their Writing,” (239-242)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Merilyn Dumont b.1955 (Cree /Metis):</td>
<td>“Letter to Sir John A. Macdonald” (390-391)</td>
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<td>“The Devil’s Language” (391-392)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Connie File b.1961 (Cree):</td>
<td>“Communications Class” (431)</td>
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**HOLIDAYS – CHRISTMAS**

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**8.01. 2009**

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<tr>
<th>Minority discourses in arts</th>
<th><strong>Native arts</strong>: Work by Bill Reid, Rebecca Belmore, and Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun.</th>
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<td>Strategies and techniques in indigenous arts</td>
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**Minority discourses in arts (including multimedia)**

| | Work of Dana Claxton and Shelley Niro |
| | Life discourse and multimedia arts Yin-me Yoon and Kinga Araya |
15.01. 2009  First Nations filmmaking  

First Nations filmmaking

Alanis Obomsawin


Strategies and techniques in First Nations filmmaking

First Nations filmmaking

22.01. 2009  Signifiers of Canadian identity again.

Transcultural vision of Canadian culture/s

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY


• Donna Bennett, “English Canada’s Postcolonial Complexities.” Essays


• Fred Wah: “A Poetics of Ethnicity” (51-66)

• Fred Wah: “Half-Bred Poetics” (71-96)


