

**School of English, Film and Media Studies**

**ENGL 445**

**Contemporary Canadian and New Zealand Fiction**

**Trimester 2 2008**

**Venue:** This is a second trimester course. Seminar classes will be held in von Zedlitz 808 every Tuesday between 1.10 and 4.00 p.m.

**Course convenor:** Mark Williams, room 911; tel. ext.: 6810; home ph.: 9733802; mobile: 0210690434; email: mark.williams@vuw.ac.nz.

Office hours: Monday 2.00-3.00 p.m. and Tuesday 11.00-12.00 p.m.

**Course aims:**

This is a seminar course in which students are expected to present to the class their researches into a selection of fiction from Canada and New Zealand. In the course of the year students will be encouraged to:

consider a range of fictional kinds including historical fiction, the graphic novel, a short story sequence,

ask what it means to talk about literature in national terms and consider the global and local contexts of literature

ask whether the different cultural models multiculturalism and biculturalism have any bearing on the production of literature

consider the critical contexts in which those texts have been interpreted and adopt their own critical stances towards the texts and towards existing criticism

**Texts:**

Michael Ondaatje, **Anil's Ghost**; Carol Shields, **Unless**; Margaret Atwood, **Alias Grace**; Alice Munro, **Lives of Girls and Women**; Elizabeth Knox, **The Vintner's Luck**; Damien Wilkins, **Chemistry**; Patricia Grace, **Cousins**; Dylan Horrocks, **Hicksville**

A course reader containing selected critical articles will be available from Student Notes.

**Assessment:**

Students will do two essays for 25 marks each. There will be a final three-hour examination for 40 marks in the period 17 October – 8 November. Students should note that they will be

expected to deliver one in-class seminar for 10%; they may opt to do two seminars of which the better will be graded. Students will be expected to write essays, answer test questions or deliver seminar presentations on at least **four** texts during the course. Students will not be allowed to take books into the in-class test, but will be allowed to take in one A4 sheet with notes on both sides. Please note: copies of all marked essays and seminar presentations should be retained by students and must be given to the lecturer by the date of the final test; all grades are provisional; all written work must be handed in by the last day of the semester.

### **Expected workload:**

You should expect to spend, **on average**, about 15 hours per week on work for this course (**apart** from time in class). **Please note that this is a rough guideline only.** Some students might have to put in more time, others less. The time commitment will be greatest in the weeks immediately prior to essay submission dates.

### **Grade Scale:**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>A-</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>B-</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>C-</b>	<b>D</b>
100	90	85	80	75	70	65	60	50	49	40

### **Research and Plagiarism:**

One of the challenges of university level writing is learning how to incorporate views, information, ideas, and perhaps even a few sentences from other writers into the argument of your own essay. Especially in upper-level English courses you will be expected to write on a topic a way that shows some awareness of current critical thinking about that topic. You will need to research the topic and incorporate relevant information and perspectives into your own work. However, you will need to fully reference the sources of all views, information, ideas, and phrases that you acquire from other writers in order to avoid plagiarism.

The *Modern Language Association Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (6th ed.) points out that plagiarism actually is an umbrella term that covers two wrongful acts: “Using another person’s ideas, information, or expressions without acknowledging that person’s work constitutes intellectual *theft*. Passing off another person’s ideas, information, or expressions as your own to get a better grade or gain some other advantage constitutes *fraud*” (2.1, emphases added).

In order to avoid what is called “unintentional plagiarism,” you must become familiar with the conventions of academic citation. The English programme follows those conventions formulated in the *MLA Handbook*. Your lecturers and tutors will specify the nature of the research you need to undertake in any class and will explain the principles of citation that you will need to reference that research.

In cases of intentional plagiarism, the English programme, in conjunction with the University Proctors and the Discipline Committee, will take appropriate punitive action.

## Seminar Schedule

**Note:** Students should indicate their preferred authors and dates for seminars and indicate these to the convenor by July 11.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Seminar Topic</b>	<b>Seminar Presenter</b>
Jul 8	Intro	
Jul 15	The Vintner's Luck	
Jul 22	The Vintner's Luck	
Jul 29	Cousins	
Aug 5	Chemistry	
Aug 12	Hicksville	
<b>Mid-trimester break</b>		
Sept 2	Lives of Girls and Women	
Sept 9	Alias Grace	
Sept 16	Alias Grace	
Sept 23	Unless	
Sept 30	Anil's Ghost	
Oct 7	Anil's Ghost	

## SEMINAR PRINCIPLES

- 1) As a very general guide, seminars should be between twenty and thirty minutes long, not counting time for questions and discussion. Obviously, there must be flexibility here. You do not have to stop speaking exactly thirty minutes after you begin. However, it will be useful to *aim* to cover the ground within that time. You should indicate in advance whether you wish to speak uninterruptedly for the duration of your presentation or whether you would welcome interjections, queries and comments from the class as you proceed. If the latter, the 20-30 minute guideline does not, of course, apply.
- 2) You should think of a title of the seminar in advance and let me know what it is so I can let the class know. A very brief indication of the approach you intend to take would be useful for the class before the seminar.
- 3) The seminar presentation should contain three main elements:
  - You should be able to articulate an interpretation of the text or an aspect of the text which involves critical consideration of other readings. It is helpful to indicate the different interpretive possibilities and approaches.
  - You should raise problems that you have encountered in the course of considering the text as the basis for discussion.
  - You should provide a select bibliography and indicate a few examples of the useful and, if required, the less useful criticism you have encountered in preparing the seminar. I shall build any useful texts I have missed in the reading guide into a later version of the guide.
- 4) Seminars may be used as the basis of your essays. They should not, however, be merely notes towards an essay. In the seminar, you will be able to express your uncertainties about the text and explore them more extensively than you will in an essay. Seminars need not be written up in polished prose, as essays will be. However, they should be considered and well prepared.
- 5) The pace of delivery is very important. Try to speak slowly and clearly.
- 6) It is helpful to prepare a brief list of questions for class discussion in advance.
- 7) During your seminar presentation, I shall take notes. These will allow me to ask questions after the presentation. They will also provide the basis of a written report that I shall make about each seminar and deliver, with a grade, to each student in the next class after their presentation.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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