

FACULTY OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

ENGLISH 509

Spring 2016

COURSE TITLE: Vimy and Beyond: The “No Man’s Land” of Canadian Literature of the First World War

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Donna Coates

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OFFICE HOURS: Monday 12:00-1:00

PREREQUISITE: 2 previous 400-level courses in ENGLISH or permission of the instructor

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

In his Introduction to *Vimy* (2007), a play set in a field hospital shortly after the Canadian assault on the German-held ridge in April 1917, Edmonton-based playwright Vern Thiessen claims his work is “not about war. It does not ask whether war is right or wrong, nor does it criticize or defend war, past or present. It does not ask whether a battle like the one fought at Vimy Ridge is worth the tremendous commitment and profound sacrifices made by the men and women involved.” Rather, Thiessen claims, in the process of “conceiving” *Vimy*, he sought “to discover how small actions can define us as individuals and as a nation.” He also sought answers to a number of questions such as “Why do we pass over some moments in our history yet mythologize others? Why do we suppress some events while others scorch themselves into our minds? Is there a gap between our memory as a country and our recollection as individuals? What is the No Man’s Land between reality and memory, truth and dream, history and mythology?”

These questions are among those which this course, which examines both the literature produced either during or shortly after the war, as well as the literature produced by contemporary writers imaginatively reconstructing and re-visioning the events of World War One from a temporal distance, will seek to answer. But it will also query to what extent literature produced at the time forged values such as a sense of duty to the just cause; or expressed a disinterest, perhaps even disdain, for brazen personal heroism; or felt a sense of pride that Canadian soldiers distinguished themselves on the battlefield even though morally committed to peace and conciliation. The course will examine what effect the literature, produced by the dominant “white” stream, which omitted stories by indigenous and multicultural writers who had been systematically excluded by poverty and discrimination from making public their (mostly losing) side of the war, had on the formation of national identity? It will question whether contemporary works, which often revise or reshape traditional war narratives and reveal the kinds of power relations which have formed the complex history of colonization, challenged or bolstered conceptions of national identity forged during the war years? Given that 2017 will be the one-hundredth anniversary of the Canadian soldiers’ storming of Vimy Ridge, it also seems appropriate to examine Canadian

literature of the First World War in order to determine why Vimy Ridge has been vigorously declared—by historians and ordinary Canadians—as the symbolic birth, or the coming of age of Canada as a nation, when fewer than thirty-six percent can identify which war it was fought in or its significance as a military victory. In their examination of this growing body of war literature, students will draw upon theories of masculinities, feminism, gender studies, post-colonial theories, as well as memory and post-memory studies.

#### TEXTS AND READINGS:

*Rilla of Ingleside*, L. M. Montgomery (1920)  
*God's Sparrows*, Philip Child (1937)  
*Aleta Dey*, Francis Marion Beynon (1919)  
*The Stone Carvers*, Jane Urquhart (2000)  
*Tell*, Francis Itani, 2015  
*No Man's Land*, Kevin Major (1995)  
*Three Day Road*, Joseph Boyden (2005)  
*Billy Bishop Goes to War, A Play*, John Gray and Eric Peterson (1981)  
*Canada and the Theatre of War, Volume 1*. Eds. Donna Coates and Sherrill Grace (2008)

#### ADDITIONAL READINGS:

Neta Gordon, *Catching the Torch: Contemporary Canadian Literary Responses to World War One* (2014)  
Jonathan Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War* (1997)  
Sherrill Grace, *Landscape of War and Memory: The Two World Wars in Literature and the Arts* (2015)

#### ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION:

Oral presentation on one text	25%
Oral presentation on pedagogical strategies for teaching one text	25%
Submission of official response questions for one text	10%
Submission of questions for each text students are neither presenting on nor officially responding to	10%
Submission of a final paper (10 pages) on two texts students have not presented on	30%

\*Please note that instructions for assignments will be handed out at the first class.

Please note there is no final examination in this course. Students must complete all assignments in order to receive a passing grade on the course. Electronic submissions are not accepted. Please hand in all assignments at the beginning of class. Assignments submitted after the deadline will be penalized with the loss of one letter grade per (business) day that the assignment is overdue.

Please make every effort to take assignments directly to the instructor. If it is not possible to do so, take your assignment to SS 1152 and put it in the dropbox. Your assignment will be date-stamped

and placed in the instructor's mailbox. It is your responsibility to keep a copy of all assignments in case of loss by any cause. Assignments cannot be returned by staff in the Department office.

Grading system: I will utilize the University of Calgary's four-point Undergraduate Grading System, as described in the Calendar (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/f-2.html>), will be used in this course.

☐A+/A (4.0); A- (3.7); B+ (3.3); B (3.0); B- (2.7); C+ (2.3); C (2.0); C- (1.7); D+ (1.3); D (1.0); F (0)

Please note that, according to the University Calendar (F.1), instructors may use their discretion when rounding upwards or downwards when the average of term work and exams is between two letter grades.

Although the A+ is solely an honorific that entails no additional points in the four-point system, the course instructor will employ this mark to distinguish superlative work that exceeds expectations in style, correctness, intellectual depth and breadth, sophistication, and originality. Please note there is no D- grade.

### **Plagiarism:**

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possible suspension or expulsion from the university. Please refer to the following information and make sure you are familiar with the statement below on plagiarism.

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k-2-1.html>

### **Scribe and Muse Club for English Students:**

The Scribe and Muse Reading and Writing Club (SMRWC) fosters and champions reading and writing through community service, leadership, and engagement. We strive to enhance the academic and social experience of undergraduate students by promoting academic excellence and interaction between students, faculty, and the community, through social, cultural, and academic events

<http://english.ucalgary.ca/scribe-and-muse-english-club>.

Our email address is [smecuofc@gmail.com](mailto:smecuofc@gmail.com).

### **English Department Website:**

For more information about courses, programs, policies, events and contacts in the Department of English, please go to our website at <http://english.ucalgary.ca>. Please note that the course outlines posted on the English Department website constitute the official course outline for purposes of appeals. Students should verify any hard copies against this posted version. For courses which employ numerical grades, the official departmental percentage to letter grade conversion scale is also posted on the department website.

### **Writing support:**

The Student Success Centre offers both online and workshop writing support for U of C students.

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

### **Guidelines on e-mail Etiquette:**

<http://www.enough.utoronto.ca/computeruse/eetiquette.htm>

**Library and Research Support:**

Melanie Boyd, Librarian for English, offers research support to students, including strategies for finding articles, books, and other library materials. Contact: [maboym@ucalgary.ca](mailto:maboym@ucalgary.ca)  
Find The English Pages research guide here: <http://libguides.ucalgary.ca/english>

**Follow the Department of English on Facebook & Twitter:****Academic regulations and schedules:**

Consult the Calendar for course information, university and faculty regulations, dates, deadlines and schedules, student, faculty and university rights and responsibilities. The homepage for the University Calendar is

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/index.htm>

**Grade appeals:**

Consult the following University Calendar link and request advice from the English Department office, SS 1152. Please note that “mere dissatisfaction with a decision is not sufficient grounds for the appeal of a grade or other academic decision.”

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

**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 form must be completed. The University also has regulations governing the deferral of final examinations. See Calendar:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-6.html>, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html>.

**Student Accommodations:**

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services; SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For additional information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit [www.ucalgary.ca/access/](http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/).

Students who require an accommodation in relation to their coursework based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor.

The full policy on Student Accommodations is available at [http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy\\_0.pdf](http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy_0.pdf).

**Emergency Evacuation/Assembly Points:** <http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>;

**Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act:** <http://www.ucalgary.ca/legalservices/foip/>

### **“Safewalk” Program:**

Campus Security will escort individuals day or night: call 220-5333 for assistance. Use any campus phone, emergency phone or the yellow phone located at most parking lot pay booths.

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/safewalk/>

### **Faculty of Arts Program Advising and Student Information Resources:**

Have a question, but not sure where to start? The new Arts Students’ Centre (ASC) is your information resource for everything in Arts! Drop in at SS102, call us at 403-220-3580 or email us at

[ascarts@ucalgary.ca](mailto:ascarts@ucalgary.ca). You can also visit the Faculty of Arts website at

<http://arts.ucalgary.ca/undergraduate> which has detailed information on common academic concerns.

For program planning and advice, contact the Student Success Centre (formerly the Undergraduate programs Office) at (403) 220-5881 or visit them in their new space on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor of the Taylor Family Digital Library.

For registration (add/drop/swap), paying fees and assistance with your Student Centre, contact Enrolment Services at (403) 210-ROCK [7625] or visit them at the MacKimmie Library Block.

### **Contact for Students Union Representatives for the Faculty of Arts:**

[arts1@su.ucalgary.ca](mailto:arts1@su.ucalgary.ca), [arts2@su.ucalgary.ca](mailto:arts2@su.ucalgary.ca), [arts3@su.ucalgary.ca](mailto:arts3@su.ucalgary.ca), [arts4@su.ucalgary.ca](mailto:arts4@su.ucalgary.ca)

**Contact for Students Ombudsman’s Office:** <http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds>

### **Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI):**

"At the University of Calgary, feedback provided by students through the Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI) survey provides valuable information to help with evaluating instruction, enhancing learning and teaching, and selecting courses ([www.ucalgary.ca/usri](http://www.ucalgary.ca/usri)). Your responses make a difference - please participate in USRI Surveys."

### **PLAGIARISM**

Plagiarism is an extremely serious offence. Please read the following information carefully. The penalty routinely recommended by the English Department for documented plagiarism is failure of the course in which the offence occurred; academic probation is also routinely applied at the Faculty level. Suspension or expulsion can result from severe or repeated plagiarism.

The University Calendar states:

1. Plagiarism - Essentially plagiarism involves submitting or presenting work in a course as if it were the student's own work done expressly for that particular course when, in fact, it is not. Most commonly plagiarism exists when:

- (a) the work submitted or presented was done, in whole or in part, by an individual other than the one submitting or presenting the work (this includes having another impersonate the student or otherwise substituting the work of another for one's own in an examination or test),
- (b) parts of the work are taken from another source without reference to the original author,
- (c) the whole work (e.g., an essay) is copied from another source, and/or,
- (d) a student submits or presents work in one course which has also been submitted in another course (although it may be completely original with that student) without the knowledge of or prior agreement of the instructor involved.

While it is recognized that scholarly work often involves reference to the ideas, data and conclusions of other scholars, intellectual honesty requires that such references be explicitly and clearly noted.

Plagiarism occurs when direct quotations are taken from a source without specific acknowledgement, or when original ideas or data from the source are not acknowledged. Citing your sources in a bibliography is not enough, because a bibliography does not establish which parts of a student's work are taken from other sources. MLA (Modern Language Association) documentation or other recognized forms of citation must be used for this purpose. Advice on adequate documentation can be found at the following web sites:

<http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/>

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

### **DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH STATEMENT ON PRINCIPLES OF CONDUCT**

According to the University Calendar, (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/j.html>)

“The University of Calgary community has undertaken to be guided by the following statements of purpose and values: to promote free inquiry and debate, to act as a community of scholars, . . . , to respect, appreciate, and encourage diversity, [and] to display care and concern for community”. The Department of English, like the university as a whole, is committed to a “positive and productive learning and working environment.” This environment is characterized by appreciation and encouragement of diversity and respect for the dignity of all persons: students, support staff, and faculty. The department will not tolerate unacceptable behaviour, such as threatening gestures, threatening or abusive verbal or written communication (including e-mails), or any conduct that “seriously disrupts the lawful education and related activities of students and/or university staff”. Any cases of such misconduct should be reported immediately to the department Head, who, depending on the nature and severity of the incident, may then take further appropriate action.