

FACULTY OF ARTS
 DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
 Fall 2013
 (Tuesday: 11:00-13:45 SS 1015)
 English 603.20-02
Studies in Genres:
 Canadian Literary Humour

COURSE OUTLINE

Instructor: Dr. Victor J. Ramraj
Telephone: 220-4664 (voice-mail for messages)
 Office hours: Tuesday 10:00-11:00 and by appointment.

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course examines the nature of Canadian literary humour questioning whether there are distinct aspects to Canadian literary writers' use of humour. Do practitioners of humour such as Stephen Leacock, Mordecai Richler, Robertson Davies, Earle Birney (in *Turvey*), and Tomson Highway have particularly Canadian "humour roots" or particularly Canadian hallmarks? We begin with some assumptions about the uses of humour in literature as postulated by various critics and theorists (Kant, Henri Bergson, Leacock, Davies). If we accept the distinction that satire uses humor to mock, ridicule, and condemn with the intention of initiating reform, while comedy adopts it empathetically with an awareness of the sad undercurrents of life, and farce employs it with no intention other than to elicit purposeless laughter, desiring only to provide fun and merriment, is Canadian humour more partial to comedy with its accommodating tone (even in such a text as Richler's *Cocksure*, where moral censure is dissipated by the author both admiring and despising his protagonist)? Can we account for the Canadian less-satirical tone (if indeed it is so) in such sociohistorical and sociocultural factors as Canada's tendency to ambivalence and compromise (originating, for instance, in having, to keep one foot on each bank of the Ottawa River, etc)?

TEXTS:

Stephen Leacock's *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*
 Robertson Davies's *Tempest-Tost*
 Paul Hiebert's *Sarah Binks*
 Earle Birney's *Turvey* (try for the original text)
 Mordecai Richler's *The Incomparable Atuk* and *Cocksure*
 Michael Ondaatje *Running in the Family*
 Tom King's *Medicine River*
 Susan Swan's *The Biggest Modern Woman in the World*
 Tomson Highway's *The Rez Sisters*
 COURSE PACK: Shorter selections by Thomas McCulloch, Margaret Atwood, W.P. Kinsella, Samuel Selvon, Austin Clarke, etc.
Dictionary of Literary Biography DLB 362: Canadian Literary Humorists. Ed. Paul St Pierre, 2011. (Reference text)

SEMINAR (25%):

You will be asked to give one seminar presentation (worth 25%) on an assigned novel.

NATURE AND CONDUCT OF SEMINARS

1. Your seminar presentation should be between 30-60 minutes. You could speak from brief or extended notes (but don't just read these to us). You should be prepared to answer questions and initiate discussions.
2. You should provide the class with an outline of your presentation (see sample outline distributed earlier).
3. You are free to take whatever approach you wish, keeping in mind the course description (see above). You could analyse any aspects or issues of the texts (film and novel) related to humour. You should establish briefly your theoretical position if relevant. Try to incorporate basic terms applicable to the study of humour. You could make allusions or comparative references to what was said in previous seminars. You should analyse closely particular sections of novels that support your contentions and claims.
4. Your presentation(s) would constitute the first part of our 2½ hour seminar, the second part of which will be given over to further class discussion and to my comments that will fill in gaps and complement what was said in the first part.

GRADING OF SEMINAR PRESENTATION

Your seminar presentation is worth 25% of your final grade. You will be graded for the scope, originality, and development of your argument/thesis and for the effectiveness of your underpinning and bolstering this argument/thesis with articulation of your theoretical position and with analysis of and insight into the texts; and for the adequacy of your preparation, organization, and stimulation of and response to questions and comments.

TERM PAPERS (25% & 50%)

Two term papers are required. Late papers will be penalized grades and will be graded only, not marked. You are advised to retain copies of all papers submitted to your instructors. They should adhere to the format and documentation outlined in the *MLA Handbook*, or in Department of English's *A Student's Guide to the Presentation of Essays* (available on the Department's web page (<www.ucalgary.ca/UofC/eduweb/grammar/guide.htm>). Papers showing evidence of plagiarism will be given an F grade (see statement on plagiarism below).

FIRST TERM PAPER (25%)

Your first term paper, worth 25% of your final grade, is due the week after Reading Days, on Nov. 19th. You are required to write an essay of 10-12 pages, comparing the treatment and function of humour in any two or three short pieces (poems, stories, essays, memoirs).

SECOND TERM PAPER (50%)

The second term paper, worth 50% of the final grade, is due in the last week of the semester on Dec. 6th. Your paper must be about 20-25 pages. It should be a comparative paper, addressing the treatment and function of humour in any two novels. It could incorporate your seminar presentation. You are to choose your own topic. I will suggest topics in class or in meetings with individual

students.

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.

NOTE: Students must give the seminar presentations (25%) and submit the two term paper (25% and 50%) to qualify for a passing grade.

Grading system:

Grades are calculated according to the 4 point scale used in the *Graduate Calendar*:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/grad/current/gs-e-1.html>

Grade	Grade Point Value	Graduate Description
A+	4.00	Outstanding
A	4.00	Excellent-superior performance showing comprehensive understanding of the subject matter
A-	3.70	Very good performance
B+	3.30	Good performance
B	3.00	Satisfactory performance
B-	2.70	Minimum pass for students in Faculty of Graduate Studies
C+	2.30	All grades below B- are indicative of failure at the graduate level and cannot be counted towards Faculty of Graduate Studies course requirements.
C	2.00	
C-	1.70	
D+	1.30	
D	1.00	
F	0.00	

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.

LATE ASSIGNMENT POLICY:

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of a third of grade (for example: A- to B+) for each day late (exemption in extenuating circumstances.)

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>

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/graduate>. 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>

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

Consult the Department of English's graduate website for courses, departmental deadlines, and other related program information at <http://english.ucalgary.ca/node/245>. Consult the Faculty of Graduate Studies Calendar for university and faculty regulations, dates, deadline, fees, and schedules, student, faculty and university rights and responsibilities. The homepage for the Faculty of Graduate Studies Calendar is <http://grad.ucalgary.ca>.

For registration (add/drop/swap), paying fees and assistance with your Student Centre, contact Barbara Howe at 403 220 5484 or visit her in Social Sciences Tower 1148 in the first instance.

For program planning and advice, contact Barbara Howe at howe@ucalgary.ca to make an appointment with Dr. Jacqueline Jenkins, Graduate Program Director.

Guidelines on e-mail Etiquette:

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/it/help/articles/email/etiquette>

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>.

Academic Accommodation:

It is the students' responsibility to request academic accommodations. If you are a student with a documented disability who may require academic accommodations and have not registered with Student Accessibility Services, please contact them at 403-220-6019. Students who have not registered with Student Accessibility Services are not eligible for formal academic accommodations. More information about academic accommodations can be found at www.ucalgary.ca/access.

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/>

Contact for the Graduate Student Association: <http://gsa.ucalgary.ca/>

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

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.

SEMINAR SCHEDULE (Tentative –to be filled in after first class)

September	10	Introduction to theory/praxis of humour and laughter
	17	Introduction continued
	24	
October	01	
	08	
	15	(Monday 14 th Thanksgiving)
	22	
	29	
November	05	
	12	No lecture on 12 th (09-12 th Reading Days)
	19	
	26	
December	03	(6 th - last day of classes; Exam Period 09 th -19 th)

