

FACULTY OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

ENGLISH 605.44-01

Spring 2016

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

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Office hours: Monday 12:00-1:00

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 Reading

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 (15 pages) on three 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 scheme: Please note that I follow the University of Calgary's standard grading system for graduate courses. Please refer to the Graduate Grading System at the following link:

<https://www.calgary.ca/pubs/calendar/grad/current/gs-g-l.html>

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>

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>

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: maboyle@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 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 the Graduate Office at 403 220 5484 or visit us in Social Sciences Tower 1148 in the first instance.

For program planning and advice, contact the Graduate Program Administrator at enggrad@ucalgary.ca to make an appointment with Dr. Aruna Srivastava, Graduate Program Director.

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/.

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.

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>