

INDIG ST 4B03 Indigenous Literary Governance & Resistance

Winter 2021: Monday 11:30am-2:20pm, emergency remote classroom

Dr. Kaitlin Debicki

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Office hours: by appointment only

Course Description:

Through an examination of non-fiction Indigenous writings, this course will focus on Trans-Indigenous practices of governance, diplomacy, advocacy, and resistance to settler colonialism through literary means. Students will engage both historic and contemporary examples of politicized writings by Indigenous peoples who insist upon and fight for the sovereignty of their nations.

Course objectives and learning outcomes to be decided together in class.

Required Readings:

Readings will be made available online through A2L.

Evaluation:

Participation

20%

You will help guide 1 discussion over the course of the term (a sign-up sheet will go around in the first class). I will model what I expect from discussion leaders when we discuss the story of the Peacemaker in the first class. Please prepare a 1-2 page review of the text assigned. Your writeup should include a list of 3-4 key concepts with accompanying definitions, a brief summary of the text's thesis, in your own words, and a question or critique intended to spur discussion.

Non-Alphabetic Governance

20%

Find an example of non-alphabetic recording method used by an Indigenous nation (e.g., sucker fish writing, winter counts, wampum, birch bark scrolls, etc.). Pick a specific example that uses this method and do the following: 1) summarize the document; 2) explain how the document traditionally defines, constructs, maintains, and guides Indigenous self-determined governance; 3) how does the Indigenous nation in question use this example of material culture currently to organize their society and uphold their sovereignty; and 4) using a specific example, discuss how your chosen document of non-alphabetic governance has been received, refused, or changed through settler colonial interaction (in other words, what does the Canadian government do when their jurisdiction runs headlong into the jurisdiction of the Two Row Wampum, for example?). Create a file that includes images of the material cultural artifact in question and your written responses and upload it to MS Teams where it can be viewed by the professor and other students. Due **February 22nd** on A2L.

Literary Activism

20%

Choose 1:

- 1) Individual assignment: please write either one 4 page letter or two 1-2 page letters that are activist in nature and in defense of the rights of an Indigenous nation or community. Address it to the appropriate settler political figure. Explain your position, the infraction as you see it, the context of the situation, the activist organizing of the Indigenous nation in question, and make a clear list of demands/deliverables (e.g., we demand clean water, the removal of man camps, policy change, etc.). As this is asking you to engage a real-life injustice, please make sure you provide specifics and use accuracy. It is your choice whether you choose to send these letters or not.
- 2) Group assignment: create a zine or newsletter that champions an Indigenous political cause (e.g., land back, defund police, clean water, no pipelines, no hunting, fishing rights, etc.). Clearly explain how this issue relates to a specific Indigenous nation's sovereignty. Include background information, current data, competing viewpoints, and suggestions for organized resistance and/or solutions. Consider audience, accessibility, aesthetic, and dissemination. Further instruction to follow. Due **March 29th** on A2L.

Final Research Essay

40%

Please prepare a research essay of 10-12 pages that offers a focused, analytical treatment of one of the course topics, supported by close reading and scholarly critique. Further instruction to follow. Due **April 19th** on A2L.

Important Notes:

Accessibility Statement:

We may all need some form of accommodation in this class because we all learn differently, and we are all subject to emergencies of various kinds and degree. Your ability to engage and participate fully in this course is important to me. If there are circumstances that may affect your ability to meet certain requirements as assigned in the course and/or if you have had specific accommodations approved by Student Accessibility Services, please let me know as soon as possible so that we can work together to develop strategies for adapting assignments to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. Whether or not you have a documented disability, resources exist on campus to support your learning; please let me know how I can help direct you to them.

Covid-19 & The Emergency Remote Classroom:

The pandemic has hit us all in varying ways. I recognize that covid-19 may be causing undue hardship for many of us in ways that may be visible or invisible. I want you to know that I am here to support you in whatever ways that I am able. Part of the difficulty of this moment in history is that we will be learning together how to do graduate work virtually. I hope we can develop and maintain open communication around our needs in order to mitigate the negative impact of these changes. If the technology used for this class pose any barriers to your education

– for example, if you have unstable internet, or limited access to a computer – I would ask you to please let me know and we will make alternate arrangements.

University Policies:

- In the event of class cancellations, students will be notified on Avenue to Learn and via email. It is your responsibility to check these sites regularly for any such announcements.
- Email Policy: It is the policy of the Faculty of Humanities that all email communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student's own McMaster University email account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. Instructors will delete emails that do not originate from a McMaster email account.

Policies for this course:

- Submitting work: please submit your work to the designated section and assignment folder on Avenue to Learn.
- Late assignment policy: do your best to keep up with the readings and written work. Shit does happen, however; sometimes your brain and body aren't able to get you where you need to be in the time allotted. If so, please get in touch with Dr. Debicki so we can make a plan: in most cases it will be possible to arrange for a new timeframe that will enable you to complete your work to the best of your ability.
- Accessibility Statement: we may all need some form of accommodation in this class, because we all learn differently, and we are all subject to emergencies of various kinds and degree. Your ability to engage and participate fully in this course is important to me. If there are circumstances that may affect your ability to meet certain requirements as assigned in the course and/or if you have had specific accommodations approved by Student Accessibility Services, please let me know as soon as possible so that we can work together to develop strategies for adapting assignments to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. Whether or not you have a documented disability, resources exist on campus to support your learning; please let me know how I can help direct you to them.
- Covid-19 & The Online Classroom: the pandemic has hit us all in varying ways. I recognize that covid-19 may be causing undue hardship for many of us in ways that may be visible or invisible. I want you to know that I am here to support you in whatever ways that I am able. Part of the difficulty of this moment in history is that we will be learning together how to do coursework virtually. I hope we can develop and maintain open communication around our needs in order to mitigate the negative impact of these changes. If the technology used for this class pose any barriers to your education – for example, if you have unstable internet, or limited access to a computer – I would ask you to please let me know and we will make alternate arrangements.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS

At certain points in the course it may make good sense to modify the schedule outlined below. The instructor reserves the right to modify elements of the course and will notify students accordingly. Please ensure you have completed the assigned readings before each class.

Monday January 11th

Hodinohso:ni Governance & the Great Law of Peace - Conversations in Cultural Fluency #4

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0DaNMtVANsA&ab_channel=SixNationsPolytechnic

Monday January 18th

Treaty Relations and Two Row Companion - Conversations in Cultural Fluency #5

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OwTIjDzodi4&t=225s&ab_channel=SixNationsPolytechnic

Monday January 25th

Joseph Brant. "Letter to Captain Green."

Redjacket. "Reply to David Ogden at Buffalo Creek July 7-9, 1819."

George Copway. "Address before the Legislature of Pennsylvania."

Monday February 1st

Claudia Haake. "Chapter 3: Ideas of Law in a New Age of Letter-Writing Diplomacy." 85-128.

Monday February 8th

Cheryl Suzack. "Introduction: Indigenous Women's Writing, Storytelling, and Law." *Indigenous Women's Writing and the Cultural Study of Law*. 3-16.

Monday February 22nd

Borrows. *Drawing Out Law*. "Scroll 1: Daebaujimoot."

Monday March 1st

Qwo-Li Driskill. "Decolonial Skillshares: Indigenous Rhetorics as Radical Practice." In *Survivance, Sovereignty, and Story: Teaching American Indian Rhetorics*.

Monday March 8th

Margery Fee. "Introduction." In *Literary Land Claims: the "Indian land question" from Pontiac's war to Attawapiskat*. 1-16.

Monday March 15th

Selections from Haisla: We Are Our History. 2005.

Monday March 22nd

Robert Warrior. "Democratic Vistas of the Osage Constitutional Crisis." In *The People and the Word*. 49-93.

Monday March 29th

Arrows to Freedom. Voice of the Drumheller Native Brotherhood Society. 1996 Summer Edition.

Monday April 5th

Allison Hargreaves. "Chapter Two: Narrative Appeals: The Stolen Sisters Report and Storytelling in Activist Discourse and Poetry." In *Violence Against Indigenous Women: Literature, Activism, Resistance*.

Monday April 12th

Pam Palmater. Warrior Life Podcast. Episode tbd.

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