

ENGL 844
STUDIES IN ABORIGINAL LITERATURE
FALL 2020 – TERM 1207

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

When Leanne Betasamosake Simpson asked her Elder, Doug Williams, about what words or concepts in Anishinaabemowin best capture the idea of “nation,” “sovereignty,” or “self-determination,” he stated, “the place where we all live and work together.” This description highlights the importance of place, while at its core, the statement is “about relationships—relationships with each other and with plant and animal nations, with our lands and waters and with the spiritual world” (18). Simpson is talking about Anishinaabe-centred relationships primarily. But how might such a focus on place and relationships help us imagine relations of affiliation between and among different communities, all the while putting Indigenous sovereignty at the centre? The challenge to build viable comparative frameworks that reflect shared histories of resistance, and that capture the complexities of urban, unceded, Coast Salish ancestral territories like those in Vancouver, remains an urgently needed and relatively underthematized thread in critical discussions. This course will examine several stories, both written and oral, contemporary and historical, represented through a variety of genres and artistic disciplines, set at the complex meeting-points of river, sea, and land at this delta we now call Vancouver. What does it mean to live and work on unceded, ancestral Coast Salish Territories of the *xʷməθkʷəy̓əm* (Musqueam), *Səl̓ílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh* (Tsleil-Waututh), *Kwikwitlem* (Coquitlam), and *Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw* (Squamish) peoples, and how can we meaningfully acknowledge these responsibilities through our practices of research, writing, and reading? Acknowledging the land we stand on as the basis of how we build understanding, as well as an acknowledgement of one’s positionality, are key tenements of Indigenous studies.

REQUIRED TEXT(S)/READINGS

TEXTS:

- Marie Clements, *The Unnatural and Accidental Women*
- Wayne Compton, *The Outer Harbour*
- E Pauline Johnson, *Legends of the Capilano*. Ed Alix Shields (forthcoming)
- Eden Robinson, *Stories from Traplines and Blood Sports*
- Carleigh Baker, *Bad Endings*
- Gord Hill. *500 Years of Resistance*
- Jordan Abel, *Nishga* (forthcoming)
- Garry Thomas Morse, *Discovery Passages*
- Smokii Sumac, *You are Enough*

FILMS:

- Tailfeathers, Elle-Máíjá (dir). *c’əsnaʔəm: the city before the city*. (Film)
- Episode #1 of *Wild Archaeology* with Yumks (Dr. Rudy Reimer): <https://aptn.ca/wildarchaeology/>
- Alejandro Yoshizawa (dir), *All our Father’s Relations*

ASSIGNMENTS/EVALUATION

- Position paper + 2 page write up **20%**
- Seminar Presentations + 4-5 page write up **30%**
- Final Paper (4000 words) **40%**
- Participation **10%**