

Preliminary Web Course Description

*Please note: This is a preliminary web course description only. The department reserves the right to change without notice any information in this description. The final, binding course outline will be distributed in the first class of the semester.

School of English and Theatre Studies

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| Course Code: ENGL*3960 | Course Title: Literature and History | Semester and Year of Offering: W25 |
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| Course Instructor: Julie Cairnie | Course Format: Seminar |
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Brief Course Synopsis:

Calendar Description

This variable-content course explores the processes by which specific texts or genres are imbedded in their time. Seminars may focus on such topics as the archive surrounding one text, memory writing, or emergent genres in order to negotiate theoretical problems pertaining to historicization, rhetorical reading, narratology, gender/sexuality studies or the racialization of national fantasy. (Choice of period and texts will be determined by individual instructors.) Writing- and presentation-intensive course.

Course Description

In this section of ENGL*3960 we engage with the relationship between “history” and “childhood.” While history is typically associated with public and political narratives, childhood is often understood as private and personal stories and memories. Stories (histories) of childhood, however, can upset this opposition and point to the ways in which reflections on childhood capture significant historical moments. In her memoir, *Under My Skin*, the Nobel Laureate Doris Lessing explains, “One reason for writing this autobiography is that more and more I realize I was part of an extraordinary time, the end of the British Empire in Africa.”

We will read two books (a novel and a memoir) from Zimbabwe and two books (a novel and a memoir) from Canada. Despite differences in geography, genre, and generation, all four texts engage with the *bildungsroman* – the novel/narrative of development and progress. “History” and “childhood” carry assumptions of development and progress, assumptions we will interrogate and trouble in ENGL*3960. We begin our course by setting up a theoretical framework that engages with “history,” “child,” and “*bildungsroman*.” Next, we turn to our primary texts.

Methods of Evaluation and Weight:

| <i>Component</i> | <i>Weight (%)</i> |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Participation | 15% |
| Midterm (in person) | 20% |
| In-class writing exercises | 20% |
| Seminar Discussion (collaborative) | 20% |
| Final Project | 25% |
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Texts and/or Resources Required (e.g. Internet access, specific textbook title, lab kit, etc.):

Tsitsi Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* (1988)

Alexandra Fuller, *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight* (2001)

Anne Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces* (1996)

Tomson Highway, *Permanent Astonishment* (2021)

A selection of online resources (CourseLink)

Information about mode of delivery:

This is an in-person class. Attendance is essential for academic success, as always, and for our collective sense of well-being. It is imperative that we engage with others in a warm, thoughtful, intelligent, and creative conversation about our course readings and the questions/concerns that arise from them.

Final Exam information:

No final exam