

DEPARTMENT OF MODERN LANGUAGES AND CULTURAL STUDIES
<https://ualberta.ca/modern-languages-and-cultural-studies>

2020-2021 C LIT 359: Great Themes in Art and Literature: Nonfictional Identities in Tension
(B1 Winter)

Note: Remote delivery

Instructor: Russell Cobb

Time: 9:30-10:50 TR

Office: Remote

Place: Remote

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Office Hours: Thursday, 3:00-5:00

E-mail: rcobb@ualberta.ca

or by appointment

Bachelor of Arts / Major in Modern Languages and Cultural Studies:

<https://www.ualberta.ca/modern-languages-and-cultural-studies/undergraduate-program-information/prospective-undergraduate-students>

Course Prerequisite: N/A

Technology requirements (minimum): You will need a device capable of video streaming. You will also need access to books and a word processor to type and submit written assignments. It is your responsibility as a student to ensure that you have the appropriate technology for the course.

Course-based Ethics Approval in place regarding all research projects that involve human testing, questionnaires, etc.?

Yes No, not needed, no such projects approved

Community Service Learning Component:

None

Past or Representative Evaluative Course Material Available

Exam registry – Students' Union

<http://www.su.ualberta.ca/services/infolink/exams>

See explanations below

Document distributed in class

Other (please specify)

NA

Additional mandatory Instructional fees (approved by Board of Governors)

Yes No

Course Description and Objectives:

It is a universal desire for humans across cultures to narrativize their identities. We tell stories about our ancestors, our nations, and our traditions across generations and cultures to explain who we are as individuals. Sometimes all these identities fit together like fingers in a glove, and sometimes they rub

against one another, creating tension and outright conflict. This course examines works of literary nonfiction in which two or more identities clash within one author in a narrative structure. In the works we will study, nation butts up against race, sexuality conflicts with religion, and political idealism conflicts with individual desires. The texts represent a way to, if not resolve these conflicts, at least give us readers a way to think through them and discuss how conflicted identities impact our own personal narratives.

Objectives. Successful students will be able to do the following:

- Define and discuss key terms and concepts in literary theory as it relates to nonfiction. (Terms such as bildungsroman, postcolonialism, critical race theory, etc.)
- Recognize the stylistic differences between different genres of life writing: memoir, autobiography, autoethnography, epistolary, testimonio, reportage, etc.
- Improve writing and research skills in scholarly and popular modes of writing
- Produce a work of depth that showcases a student's creative production in literary nonfiction

Texts (all required):

Richard Rodriguez, *Hunger for Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez*.

Mary Carr, *Liar's Club*

James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time*.

Eula Biss, *On Immunity*,

Victor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*

George Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia*

All other secondary readings will be scanned and held in a Google Drive folder.

Important Dates: [See Academic Schedule in current Calendar](#)

First Day of Class: January 11, 2021

Add/Delete Date: January 22, 2021

50% Withdrawal Date: February 10, 2021

Winter Term Reading Week: February 16-19, 2021

Withdrawal Date: April 9, 2021

Last Day of Class: April 16, 2021

Grade Distribution (see "Explanatory Notes"):

Term Work 100% No final exam

- Six short essays (60%)
- Presentation in pairs (10%)
- Creative nonfiction narrative (20%)
- Participation (10%)

Explanatory Notes on Assignments:

Six short essays (60% total)

Each book studied will conclude with a short essay (500-600 words) on a discussion question selected by the instructor. The question will arise from a combination of class discussion, thematic textual material, and critical analysis. Responses must be concise, pointed, and based on textual evidence.

Creative nonfiction narrative (20%)

Creative nonfiction with critical reflection. In this paper, students will adopt the style (not the words) of an author studied to narrate their own “identities in tension.” (1600 word max.) This will be accompanied by a (500 word) critical reflection on the author’s paper using the concepts developed in class.

Due April 16

Presentation (10%) For the presentation, students will pair up to discuss a how a reading or readings relate to a pointed question detailed in the daily work schedule. You need to think creatively about how to bring the concepts to life and foster discussion!

Class Participation (10%)

This grade evaluates physical presence in class as well as engagement with discussion and lecture. For example, if you don’t even bother to bring our texts to class, this grade will suffer. Students will evaluate their performance on the last day of class. “80% of life is showing up”

Required Notes:

Policy about course outlines can be found in the [Evaluation Procedures and Grading System](#) of the University Calendar.

Student Responsibilities:

Academic Integrity:

The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the [Code of Student Behaviour](#) and avoid any behaviour that could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University.

All students should consult [the Academic Integrity website](#). If you have any questions, ask your instructor.

An instructor or coordinator who is convinced that a student has handed in work that he or she could not possibly reproduce without outside assistance is obliged, out of consideration of fairness to other students, to report the case to the Associate Dean of the Faculty. See the [Academic Discipline Process](#).

Learning and Working Environment:

The Faculty of Arts is committed to ensuring all students, faculty and staff are able to work and study in an environment that is safe and free from discrimination and harassment. It does not tolerate behaviour that undermines that environment. The Department urges anyone who feels

that this policy is being violated to:

- Discuss the matter with the person whose behaviour is causing concern; or
- If that discussion is unsatisfactory, or there is concern that direct discussion is inappropriate or threatening, discuss it with the Chair of the Department.

For additional advice or assistance regarding this policy you may contact the [Office of the Student Ombuds](#). Information about the [University of Alberta Discrimination and Harassment Policy and Procedures](#) is described in [UAPPOL](#).

Sexual Violence Policy:

It is the policy of the University of Alberta that sexual violence committed by any member of the University community is prohibited and constitutes misconduct. Resources and more information can be found at <https://www.ualberta.ca/campus-life/sexual-violence>

Territorial Statement:

“The University of Alberta acknowledges that we are located on Treaty 6 territory, and respects the histories, languages, and cultures of the First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and all First Peoples of Canada, whose presence continues to enrich our vibrant community.” (from the beginning of the Calendar).

Recording of Lectures:

Audio or video recording, digital or otherwise, of lectures, labs, seminars or any other teaching environment by students is allowed only with the prior written consent of the instructor or as a part of an approved accommodation plan. Student or instructor content, digital or otherwise, created and/or used within the context of the course is to be used solely for personal study, and is not to be used or distributed for any other purpose without prior written consent from the content author(s).

Attendance, Absences, and Missed Grade Components:

Regular attendance is essential for optimal performance in any course. In cases of potentially excusable absences due to illness or domestic affliction, notify your instructor as soon as possible. Regarding absences that may be excusable and procedures for addressing course components missed as a result, consult sections [Attendance](#) and [Examinations](#) of the University Calendar. Be aware that unexcused absences will result in partial or total loss of the grade for the “attendance and participation” component(s) of a course, as well as for any assignments that are not handed-in or completed as a result.

Deferral of term work is a privilege and not a right; there is no guarantee that a deferral will be granted. Misrepresentation of facts to gain a deferral is a serious breach of the Code of Student Behaviour.

In this course, attendance is evaluated by your presence in the classroom, your active participation in classroom discussions. Every absence after two unexcused absences results in a 10% reduction of the class participation segment of the course. Participation will also be assessed by preparation for discussion and will be self-assessed at the end of the course.

Policy for Late Assignments:

Students who consult in advance with an instructor regarding contingencies preventing the

timely completion of an assignment may, at the discretion of the instructor, be granted an extension once throughout the course with no penalty. **Late excuses will not be accepted for any reason. Assignments handed in late will be deducted 10% per each working day they are handed in late.** For example, if a paper is due at 9:30am on Tuesday, but you hand it in at 11:59pm on Thursday, that will incur a 20% deduction.

Disclaimer:

Any typographical errors in this syllabus are subject to change and will be announced in class and posted on eClass.

Student Resources:

The best all-purpose website for student services is: <https://www.ualberta.ca/current-students>.

Accessibility Resources: (1 – 80 SUB)

The University of Alberta is committed to creating work and learning communities that inspire and enable all people to reach their full potential. Accessibility Resources promotes an accessible, inclusive, and universally designed environment. For general information to register for services visit the [Accessibility Resources](#) webpage.

The Academic Success Centre: (1-80 SUB)

[The Academic Success Centre](#) offers a variety of workshops on effective study and exam strategies. There are in-person and online sessions available for a modest fee.

The Centre for Writers: (1-42 Assiniboia Hall)

The [Centre for Writers](#) offers free one-on-one writing support to students, faculty, and staff. Students can request consultation for a writing project at any stage of development. Instructors can request class visits and presentations.

Health and Wellness Support: There are many health and community services available to current students. For more information visit the [Health and Wellness Support](#) webpage.

Office of the Student Ombuds:

The [Office of the Student Ombuds](#) offers confidential interviews, advice and support to students facing academic, discipline, interpersonal and financial difficulties.

Grading:

Assessment of the individual course components may be in the form of numerical marks or letter grades. The final letter grade will be based on "a combination of absolute achievement and relative performance in a class" (University Calendar, [Evaluation Procedures and Grading System](#)). The University Grading Procedure mandates that "a student's level of achievement of the goals/outcomes of a course, their grade, and the descriptor of that grade must be aligned" (<https://policiesonline.ualberta.ca/>). The following guidelines have been adopted by the Department of Modern Languages and Cultural Studies:

“MLCS Undergraduate Grading Scale”

Descriptor	Letter Grade	Grade Point Value	%
<p>Excellent. A+, A or A- is earned by work which is superior in content and form and demonstrates an exceptional grasp of the subject matter. The grade of A+ designates work that far exceeds course expectations.</p> <p>Grades in the A range are normally achieved by a small number of students.</p>	A+	4.0	97-100
	A A-	4.0	93-96
		3.7	90-92
<p>Good. B+, B or B- is earned by work that demonstrates a thorough comprehension of the course material and a good command of relevant skills. Grades in the B range are normally achieved by the largest number of students.</p>	B+	3.3	87-89
	B B-	3.0	83-86
		2.7	80-82
<p>Satisfactory. C+, C or C- is earned by work that demonstrates an adequate grasp of the course material and relevant skills. Grades in the C range designate work that has met the basic requirements of the course.</p>	C+	2.3	77-79
	C C-	2.0	73-76
		1.7	70-72
<p>Poor/Minimal Pass. D+ or D is earned by work that demonstrates minimal familiarity with the course material. Grades in the D range generally indicate insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the subject matter.</p>	D+	1.3	65-69
	D	1.0	60-64
<p>Failure.</p>	F	0.0	0-59