

**English 190-01 and -02: Introductory Topics in Literature –
Borderlands: Contemporary American and Canadian Fiction**

CRN 24292/24293

Professor J. Brady
Palmer 305 (office)
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Spring, 2014
Palmer 210
MWF: 9:00-9:50 a.m. and
11:00-11:50 a.m.

Reading List:

Russell Banks, *Affliction*
Joan Didion, *A Book of Common Prayer*
William Gass, *The Pedersen Kid*
Alice Munro, *Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You*
Margaret Atwood, *Alias Grace*
Mordecai Richler, *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*

Office Hours:

Monday, Wednesday, Friday: 10:00-10:45, Tuesday and Thursday, 11:00-12:00, or by appointment over the week

Course Description:

This course is a study of contemporary American and Canadian fiction, much of it written in the realist mode and much of it centered on the topic of trauma – psychological and physical, individual and familial, economic and political – and on the emotions of shame, rage, and guilt. Many of these texts are autobiographical in form. The locales are, in the words of Russell Banks, “on both sides of the long, porous border between our two nations,” and, as he observes of both the psychic and geographical terrain of most of these works, “darkness comes early and stays late; summer is not a condition, it’s an all-too-brief holiday. Cities are gray, skies are mauve or milky, and there are always wet boots slumped in doorways.” Not all of these novels and short story collections have these locales, of course, but, as a group of texts, they explore similar and interconnected themes.

This course carries both F2 (Writing Intensive) and F4 (Literary Texts) credit. Members of the class will workshop samples of the first three essays, focusing on issues of revision, on improving clarity of argument, and on uses of textual evidence in formal essay writing, in addition to more technical aspects, including punctuation and grammar. Students may rewrite one essay, after consulting with the instructor and the Writing Center.

Attendance Policy:

Late arrivals to class will be counted as an absence and any student who misses or comes late to class more than **four** times in the semester will be asked to withdraw from the course. Please see the English department policies on attendance, deadlines, intellectual honesty and plagiarism, attached to this document as an appendix, below.

Schedule:

Jan. 8	Introductory remarks
Jan. 10, 13, 15, 17, 22	<i>Affliction</i>
Friday, January 24	First Essay Due
Jan. 27, 29, 31, Feb. 3	<i>A Book of Common Prayer</i>
Feb. 5 and 7	Workshops of First Essay
Feb. 10, 12, 14, 17, 19, 21	<i>The Pedersen Kid</i>
Friday, February 21	Second Essay Due
Feb. 24, 26, February 28	<i>Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You</i>
March 3, 5, 7	Workshops of Second Essay
SPRING BREAK	
March 17, 19, 21	<i>Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You</i>
Mar. 24, 26, 28, Apr. 2	<i>The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz</i>
Friday, April 4	Third Essay Due

April 7, 9, 11	<i>Alias Grace</i>
April 14, 16	Workshops of Third Essay
April 21, 23	<i>Alias Grace</i>
Thursday, April 24	Fourth Essay Due

Method of Evaluation:

Banks essay (4 pages)	20%
Didion or Gass essay (4 pages)	20%
In-class question*	10%
In-class grade	10%
Munro essay (4 pages)	20%
Richler or Atwood essay (4 pages)	20%

* Each student will pose one formal question to the class during the semester, speaking from notes only. Your question should be focused, given a context, and its potential significance made clear to your classmates. The question should explore a fresh aspect of the text that you think important to our understanding of the work. Having posed your question, you will then guide class discussion.

** All late essays will be penalized by at least a letter grade and excessive lateness may lead to failure in the course.