

## Course Description Form

Course number and section: English 473/ Cultural Studies 450

Course Topic: Studies in Indigenous Literature and Criticism

Credits: 3

Term: 2

Instructor: Dr. Allison Hargreaves

### Course Description:

This course explores the primacy of place in contemporary Indigenous literatures and theory. Beginning with the premise that “Stories *take place*,” (Womack, *Art as Performance* 44), the course approaches place not from a thematic or setting-based perspective, but as a methodological precept and philosophical underpinning of Indigenous literary arts. Vanessa Watts (Mohawk/Anishinaabe) employs the concept of “Place-Thought” as a way to describe this “theoretical understanding of the world”—one in which “land is alive and thinking and [where] humans and non-humans derive agency through the extensions of these thoughts” (“Indigenous Place-thought” 21). Our task is to be curious about how literature represents and practices this aliveness—this agency—as a core mediating presence in relations between humans, land, and other non-human people. To that end, we will ask the following questions: how might literature help us to hear the thoughts that place is thinking? By what methods—literary and otherwise—might we best train our listening skills? What are the implications of this approach for our relationships with the non-human world? And what does place ask of us as readers, writers, storytellers, students, and dreamers?

### Tentative Reading List:

*Burning Vision* (play by Métis playwright Marie Clements)

*Crazy Brave* (memoir by Muscogee/Creek writer Joy Harjo)

*river woman* (poems by Métis writer Katherena Vermette)

*Split Tooth* (novel by Inuk singer and composer Tanya Tagaq)

*The Sasquatch at Home* (narrative essays by Haisla and Heiltsuk writer Eden Robinson)

*The Gift is in the Making* (stories retold by Anishinaabe writer Leanne Simpson)

*Whispering in Shadows* (novel by Syilx writer Jeannette Armstrong)

*Write It On Your Heart* (stories by Syilx storyteller Harry Robinson)

\* Some of these texts may be assigned in excerpted form. Course readings will also include articles, talks, videos, images, podcasts, and other texts made accessible on Canvas.