



a place of mind
THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

FACULTY OF CREATIVE AND CRITICAL STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND CULTURAL STUDIES
2021 Winter Term 1

Readings in Narrative
English 153 005 (3 Credits)

The Faculty of Creative and Critical Studies acknowledges that the land on which we are situated is the unceded territory of the Syilx (Okanagan) People.

Instructor: Brandon Taylor
Online Office Hours: by appointment
Email: brandon.taylor@ubc.ca

Course Description

This course has three key components. It introduces practices of analysis by examining a variety of written and visual narratives, including short stories, poetry, a graphic novel, a film, podcasts, music, and music videos. Significant time and attention will be given to developing successful and sophisticated university-level writing and argumentation, skills that will be an asset to you for your entire university career. Emphasis will also be placed upon developing an understanding of theory and methods useful for the study of narratives.

Academic Calendar Entry

Study of narrative forms such as life-writing, films, histories, myths, narrative poems, novels, short stories, and songs. At least 35% of class time involves practice-based instruction in essay writing and research. *Prerequisite:* Students must have one of a) 70% in English 12 or English 12 First Peoples; b) a 5 on the LPI; c) a passing grade in ENGL 009; d) or an acceptable equivalent. For a list of equivalency options consult the Current Students website at <http://students.ok.ubc.ca/enrolment-services/course-registration/first-year-english.html>

Course Format

This course will be conducted in-person with the proper precautions taken for in-person learning, which will include mandatory mask-wearing during class time while abiding any possible further advisories from health officials. If any of these conditions are subject to change, students will be informed prior to class.

Much of our course materials will be coordinated via Canvas, which hosts some lecture content, course readings and resources, and assignments: <https://canvas.ubc.ca/>

Class will be Tuesdays and Thursdays, from 2:00pm-3:30pm in SCI 236.



Attendance

I expect you to be present during our scheduled classes. If you are not able to do so, please let me know with at least 12-24 hours notice.

Discussion Practices

Those who desire to speak in class are encouraged to do so. Please raise a hand and wait for me to identify the next speaker who can then share their thoughts.

Asking Questions

Please check our Discussion Board on Canvas regularly. Unless you are contacting me to address a personal matter or seeking individual assistance, please post your question in the “Q & A” discussion so that everyone can benefit from the answer to your question. If you are unsure of something, I can guarantee you are not alone and this means that everyone can receive answers and clarification at once rather than only those who write to me. In most instances, I will respond to questions posed on the Discussion Board within 24-48 hours.

“Office Hours”

If you would like to chat with me directly, please contact me via email and I will arrange a phone call or Zoom video chat.

Course Overview, Content and Objectives

Narratives shape our lives. Human beings tell stories and reflect on stories. We make sense of our lives and the world around us by telling and receiving stories. This course seeks to understand how narratives function and why they matter. The course takes as one of its abiding principles that cultural narratives are fundamentally social: they can impact our everyday lives and are not simply entertaining diversions from reality. We will consider how they help to create, reinforce, and challenge how we perceive and understand the world around us. This course will consider the following questions: How do narratives reflect the social norms that surround us? How do they shape perceptions and human activity? How do the stories we tell, the images we share, and all the narratives that surround us help to define the world and our place within it? Why might we want to change those stories or their effects?

Learning Outcomes

After completing this course, students will have had the opportunity to:

- analyze writing by identifying the ideas it conveys, as well as its tone and context
- employ a university-level writing process involving planning, multiple drafting, multiple editing, revising, and editing with a focus on grammatically correct and appropriate style
- develop and practice university-level writing and communication skills
- understand how narratives shape social life and perceptions
- identify and use varied styles purposefully by manipulating sentence rhythms, sentence variety structure, vocabulary, and figurative language
- conduct university library research
- develop habits of organization and time-management crucial to university success
- grasp and appreciate complexity in terms of form and content in a variety of narratives



- write essays that have a thesis or controlling idea and relevant evidence, alongside research and analysis appropriate for audience and purpose
- independently theorize and interpret narratives
- recognize the value of, and practice and promote, cross-cultural communication.

Required Texts

1. King, Thomas. *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative*. Anansi, 2003.
2. Satrapi, Marjane. *Persepolis Part One: The Story of a Childhood*. Pantheon, 2004.
3. Whitehead, Colson. *The Nickel Boys*. Anchor, 2019.

Email Policy

I will make every effort to respond to emails within 24hrs. While I do not like to think it happens often, I know I have missed some messages due to the sheer volume of emails I receive. If I do not respond to your message within 24hrs, please send a follow up message, forwarding your first one. I sincerely appreciate it.

Evaluation Criteria and Grading

Students will be offered numerical grades for all assignments in this course. You will be given commentary on most assignments and that commentary will explain the grade and highlight ways to improve on future assignments. A grade of 50 or more is required to pass the course.

Assignments

Short Essay (October 4 th)	15
Midterm Assignment (October 25 th)	20
Final Essay/Creative Project (December 8 th)	30
Participation & Weekly Discussions (Monday Evenings)	15
Final Exam (December 19 th)	20

Complete assignment information will be made available on Canvas and will be discussed in interactive classes.

Short Essay (Due by the end of October 4th)

A 750-word formal essay analyzing a narrative from the opening weeks of the course. Full assignment details will be posted to Canvas. The essay will be submitted on Canvas.

Midterm Assignment (Due by the end of October 25th)

The 750-word midterm exam will be a research-focused assignment meant to exercise skills related to detailed scholarly research. Full assignment details will be posted to Canvas closer to the due date. The exam will be submitted on Canvas.



Final Essay/Creative Project (Due by the end of December 8th)

This assignment can take whatever form you choose. Whatever you produce, it should explore the relevance of at least 1 of our readings and not more than 3 of them for contemporary social, political, and cultural matters. Be creative! All assignments should identify how and why narratives from our course speak to the present by suggesting how they do so and what sorts of questions they raise. Maybe a narrative we have read can provide a new perspective on a pressing topic, for example. Or, maybe a narrative reminds us of the importance of a given social topic. Discuss something that matters to you and explore it in ways that make it matter to your readers! Assignments should be substantial but their word count may not be; public scholarship often requires more invisible labour than other forms of scholarship. Your labour on this assignment should be equivalent to a 1250-word argumentative essay. Full assignment details will be posted to Canvas closer to the due date. The essay will be submitted on Canvas.

Final Exam (Due by the end of December 19th)

This 800-1000-word final exam will draw upon the skills we have acquired from class discussions and lectures in order to establish the originality of your perspective as well as employing the skills of analysis and effective communication we are learning. Full assignment details will be posted to Canvas at the beginning of the exam period. The exam will be submitted on Canvas.

Participation and Weekly Discussions

Participation is inclusive of the weekly discussions, synchronous class attendance, and some general short assignments that may be posted to Canvas throughout the semester.

For the weekly discussions, write 200-500 words each week in response to the relevant prompts found on the Canvas modules. I offer that loose range because some weeks will likely require more and others less. Responding meaningfully and thoughtfully is preferred ahead of trying to write to a specific length. Please submit these via Canvas in the Assignments section by 9pm on Monday of the week they are scheduled unless otherwise indicated.

Late Assignments

Assignments are due on the date specified and should be submitted in the formats indicated. Late assignments will not be accepted without a ten percent per day penalty unless you make prior arrangement due to a serious circumstance or illness. Active and early communication with me about any challenges you are facing that might delay your completion of an assignment demonstrates responsibility and care on your part. Computer problems are not accepted as excuses for avoiding a penalty; therefore, always save working drafts of your work. You should always back up vital work on another device or a desired cloud drive.

Grade Assessment Norms for Essay Assignments

A 80-100

The “A” paper is intelligent and thoughtful and consistently clear. It develops and the topic and advances an original thesis and argument. It is well structured and is persuasive



throughout. It fully meets the unique and explicit instructions of the assignment. It reflects the essay writing instruction given in the course. It is properly formatted and follows MLA style.

The “A” paper has an effective introduction and paragraphs that proceed according to the claim-evidence-analysis structure. It demonstrates excellent knowledge of the materials it cites. Its flow is logical and effective and one can readily see how ideas connect. It uses terminology appropriately and effectively. It is written in a manner that is always precise with next to no grammatical errors or lapses in clarity. Overall, this paper demonstrates sophisticated and polished writing and analysis that is considered and original.

B 68-79

The “B” paper ranges from good to very good but is never quite spectacular. Sometimes the “B” paper features an identifiable flaw in an otherwise effective essay or simply never quite delivers an argument that is as persuasive or effective as an “A” paper. It might have lapses in clarity or argument that make the argument less effective. The “B” paper advances an effective thesis. It adequately follows the unique and explicit instructions of the assignment. It largely reflects the essay writing instruction given in the course, but it has not fully mastered these techniques. It might have some minor flaws in formatting and MLA style.

The “B” paper has a proper introduction and paragraphs that proceed according to claim-evidence-analysis. It might not have sufficient quoted evidence or it might fail to fully analyze that evidence. It demonstrates good knowledge of the material it cites. It is polished but may have missed some opportunities to unfold key parts of its argument. It is generally well written but can be sometimes unclear, lack careful precision, and may have some grammatical mistakes. Its use of terminology is good but lacks the mastery of an A paper. Overall, this paper demonstrates above average work and is a thoroughly competent essay, but is not persuasive enough to merit a higher grade.

C 55-67

The “C” paper ranges from marginally effective to satisfactory but is held back by particular deficiencies that prevent it from reaching the status of a “B” paper. Usually a “C” paper is effective but features several identifiable flaws or one quite significant flaw. The “C” paper shows clear engagement with course writing principles but has failed to fully master these techniques in a significant fashion. A “C” paper is satisfactory, in other words, but may need improvement. It may have moments of great insight while also missing key details or making unclear statements. The hallmark of many “C” papers is inconsistency.

A “C” paper might have ongoing lapses in clarity or argument that make the argument only minimally effective. The “C” paper shows signs of appropriate structure throughout and advances a thesis, but the writing generally lacks precision. It adequately follows the unique and explicit instructions of the assignment. It might have flaws in formatting and MLA style.

The “C” paper has an introduction and paragraphs that proceed largely according to claim-evidence-analysis. It might be deficient in one of these areas: for example, it might not provide sufficient direct evidence from the narrative or it might forget to analyze that evidence adequately. It might demonstrate only an acceptable knowledge of the material it cites. It may be regularly unclear and have grammatical mistakes. The writing may sometimes be characterized



by haste, vagueness, and a lack of attention to detail. Overall, this paper demonstrates passable work but it has readily identifiable deficiencies.

D 50-54

The “D” essay is barely effective. What distinguishes it from an “F” paper is that it shows clear engagement with course writing principles, but is nonetheless a substandard essay. A “D” paper is addressing our writing expectations, but it is struggling to master them. It may have moments of insight that are overshadowed by very significant flaws in writing or argumentation. “D” papers show promise; but they are almost always missing a key component of the assignment or are consistently unclear, vague, and confusing.

A “D” paper may fulfill some expectations and not others. It might, for example, have appropriate structure throughout and advance a thesis, but it significantly lacks clarity throughout or it might be well written but advance an argument characterized by an inadequate knowledge of the material it cites. A “D” paper usually fails to follow all of the unique and explicit instructions of the assignment. It might have flaws in formatting and MLA style. Overall, this paper demonstrates unsatisfactory work that still shows enough promise to pass.

F 0-49

The “F” essay is ineffective. It is significantly out of step with assignment expectations. It does not reflect a clear engagement with course writing principles. It may have moments of insight that are overshadowed by very significant flaws in writing or argumentation. “F” papers are almost always missing a key component of the assignment; are consistently unclear, vague, and confusing; are marked by a high degree of carelessness; or do not advance an argument appropriate to the assignment.

“F” papers might appear as if they were not written for this course. Plagiarism will always lead to a failing grade; this includes self-plagiarism, which is the act of submitting the same or largely the same work for more than one course.

An “F” paper reflects a substandard grasp of course content, cited materials, essay writing techniques, and communication. Or they may be far too short, reflecting an aborted effort to complete the assignment. An “F” paper may show signs of effective structure but be so deficient in other areas that the paper is a failure. It likely does not demonstrate an effective application of a critical approach or its terminology. An “F” paper is generally characterized by a lack of precision or ongoing problems in communicating effectively and clearly, as well as a lack of attention to detail. Overall, this paper demonstrates inadequate work.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Plagiarism in any assignment will lead to a mark of zero and will be recorded by the university. Students who commit plagiarism may be asked to leave the university. I believe strongly believe that the value of your degree is diminished greatly by those who seek to obtain one without putting in the requisite intellectual labour.



Schedule of Readings

This schedule lets you know when we will address course material. You should complete readings prior to attending the relevant lectures. For example, the first lecture for Thomas King's *The Truth About Stories* will be on September 14th and you should (1) read the text in full, (2) respond to the discussion post, and (3) be prepared to discuss the text on Tuesday and Thursday's lectures.

This course is not designed to tell you what to think. It is designed to help you think for yourself and do so with and against others. I welcome debate and I expect you to develop your own perspective. I would encourage you to reflect on what you have read prior to our discussions.

LOCR refers to the Library Online Course Reserves. LOCR hosts a number of our readings and is accessible via Canvas or here: <https://courses.library.ubc.ca/c.R6MVvW>

Introductions

- Week 1 September 7th
Introduction to Course and Syllabus
- September 9th
The Fundamentals of Storytelling

Why do we tell stories?

- Week 2 September 14th
Thomas King, *The Truth About Stories*
- September 16th
Thomas King, *The Truth About Stories*

Stories in Miniature

- Week 3 September 21st
Roberto Bolaño, "The Colonel's Son" (Canvas)
Lydia Davis, "Passing Wind" (Canvas)
- September 23rd
Alice Munro, "Bear Came Over the Mountain" (Canvas)

Poetry and the English Canon

- Week 4 September 28th
Aemelia Lanyer, "The Description of Cooke-Ham" (Canvas)
George Herbert, "The Collar" (Canvas)



September 30th
Dorothea Lasky, “Ars Poetica” (Canvas)
Rita Wong, “Open the Brutal” (Canvas)
First Essay Due (Due by the end of October 4th)

Visual and Aesthetic Storytelling

Week 5 October 5th
Vampire Weekend, “Oxford Comma” (Music Video) (LOCR)
Childish Gambino, “This is America” (Music Video) (LOCR)
Beyonce, “If I Were A Boy” (Music Video) (LOCR)
Kendrick Lamar, “Humble” (Music Video) (LOCR)

October 7th
The 10-Step Writing Process

Memoir from the Margins

Week 6 October 12th
Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood*

October 14th
Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood*

Research and Writing Instruction

Week 7 October 19th
Rocio Davis “A Graphic Self” (Canvas)
Naghbi and O’Malley “Estranging the Familiar” (Canvas)
Golnar Nabizadeh “Vision and Precarity” (Canvas)

October 21st
Expanding on Step 7 of The 10-Step Writing Process
Midterm Assignment Due (Due by the end of October 25th)

Telling Tall Tales and Memory

Week 8 October 26th
99% Invisible, “On Average” (Podcast) (LOCR)
Reply-All, “The Case of the Missing Hit” (Podcast) (LOCR)

October 28th
Spike Jonze, *Adaptation* (Film) (LOCR)



Journalism and Reporting

- Week 9 November 2nd
David Carr, “Me and My Girls” (LOCR)
Sharon Lerner, “The Teflon Toxin” (Parts 1, 2, and 3)
- November 4th
Ta-Nehisi Coates, “The Case for Reparations” (The Atlantic)
David Grann, “The White Darkness” (New Yorker)
- Week 10 November 9th
Essay Writing Workshop and Forum (non-mandatory)
- November 11th
Reading Break.

Telling Stories About Each Other (and Ourselves)

- Week 11 November 16th
Colson Whitehead, *The Nickel Boys*
- November 18th
Colson Whitehead, *The Nickel Boys*
- Week 12 November 23rd
Colson Whitehead, *The Nickel Boys*
- November 25th
Colson Whitehead, *The Nickel Boys*

Storytelling in Folk Music (That’s All, Folks!)

- Week 13 November 30th
Buffy Sainte-Marie, “[The Universal Soldier](#)”,
Pete Seeger, “[King Henry](#)”, “[The Draft Dodger Rag](#)”, “[Beans in my Ears](#)”, “[Waist Deep in the Big Muddy](#)”
Phil Ochs, “[Draft Dodger Rag](#)”, “[I Ain’t Marching Anymore](#)”, “[Here’s to the State of Mississippi](#)”
- December 2nd
Leonard Cohen, “[Suzanne](#)”
Nina Simone, “[Mississippi Goddam](#)”, “[Old Jim Crow](#)”, “[Suzanne](#)”
Elizabeth Cotten, “[Freight Train](#)”, “[Going Down the Road Feeling Bad](#)”
Woody Guthrie, “[Going Down the Road Feeling Bad](#)”, “[This Land is Your Land](#)”



Week 14 December 8th
Our last class! We will recap and prep for the exam.
Final Essay Due (Due by the end of December 8th)
Final Exam Due (by the end of December 19th)

Final Examinations:

The examination period for Term 1 of Winter 2021 is December 11th to December 22nd inclusively. Except in the case of examination clashes and hardships (three or more formal examinations scheduled within a 24-hour period) or unforeseen events, students will be permitted to apply for out-of-time final examinations only if they are representing the University, the province, or the country in a competition or performance; serving in the Canadian military; observing a religious rite; working to support themselves or their family; or caring for a family member. Unforeseen events include (but may not be limited to) the following: ill health or other personal challenges that arise during a term and changes in the requirements of an ongoing job. Further information on Academic Concession can be found under Policies and Regulation in the *Okanagan Academic Calendar* <http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/okanagan/index.cfm?tree=3,48,0,0>.

Aboriginal Programs and Services

The primary goal of the Aboriginal Programs and Services is to provide culturally appropriate services and support to First Nation, Metis and Inuit students. In response to COVID-19, the Aboriginal Programs and Services team is working remotely and can be reached by email (see website); please contact us if you have any questions or inquiries.

Web: <http://students.ok.ubc.ca/aboriginal/welcome.html>

International Programs and Services

International Programs and Services (IPS) provides advising, transition services and programs for international students, and IPS works to foster an intercultural campus community where differences are embraced and respected and adapting is multidirectional. In response to COVID-19, International Program and Services have put together a page with important resources and frequently asked questions regarding immigration and health insurance.

Web: <http://students.ok.ubc.ca/international/welcome.html>

Studying Abroad Information

During this pandemic, the shift to online learning has greatly altered teaching and studying at UBC, including changes to health and safety considerations. Keep in mind that some UBC courses might cover topics that are censored or considered illegal by non-Canadian governments. This may include, but is not limited to, human rights, representative government, defamation, obscenity, gender or sexuality, and historical or current geopolitical controversies. If you are a student living abroad, you will be subject to the laws of your local jurisdiction, and your local authorities might limit your access to course material or take punitive action against you. UBC is strongly committed to academic freedom, but has no control over foreign authorities (please visit <http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,33,86,0> for an articulation of the values of the University conveyed in the Senate Statement on Academic Freedom). Thus, we recognize that students will have legitimate reason to exercise caution in studying certain subjects. If you have concerns regarding your personal situation, consider postponing taking a course with manifest risks, until you are back on campus or reach out to your academic advisor to find substitute courses. For further information and support, please visit: <http://academic.ubc.ca/support-resources/freedom-expression>



Academic Integrity Matters (AIM) Program

The academic enterprise is founded on honesty, civility, and integrity. As members of this enterprise, all students are expected to know, understand, and follow the codes of conduct regarding academic integrity. At the most basic level, this means submitting only original work done by you and acknowledging all sources of information or ideas and attributing them to others as required. This also means you should not cheat, copy, or mislead others about what is your work. Violations of academic integrity (i.e., misconduct) lead to the breakdown of the academic enterprise, and therefore serious consequences arise and harsh sanctions are imposed. For example, incidences of plagiarism or cheating may result in a mark of zero on the assignment or exam and more serious consequences may apply if the matter is referred to the President's Advisory Committee on Student Discipline. Careful records are kept in order to monitor and prevent recurrences.

A more detailed description of academic integrity, including the University's policies and procedures, may be found in the Academic Calendar at:

<http://okanagan.students.ubc.ca/calendar/index.cfm?tree=3,54,111,0>.

And on the FCCS site here: <https://fccs.ok.ubc.ca/student-resources/academic-integrity/>

Student Learning Hub: Writing and Research Assistance

Support for your writing and research is available through the **Student Learning Hub**.

Undergraduate students from every discipline, working on any type of written course assignment (or presentation), are welcome. For more information, please visit the Hub's website

(<https://students.ok.ubc.ca/student-learning-hub/>) or call 250-807-9185. See as well

<http://library.ok.ubc.ca/wrs/wrc/>

Online resources and tutorial appointments during COVID-19 are available.

Library Information

The **Library** is available for research support and can be accessed [here](#). The subject librarian for English is Sajni Lacey who can be contacted for one-on-one research help appointments at sajni.lacey@ubc.ca.

UBC Okanagan Disability Resource Centre

All Disability Resource Centre services are being provided remotely. Students should book their exams in the accommodation portal as usual to request their accommodations in the online exam environment. See the Exam Accommodations During COVID-19 page for more information. Students seeking assistance who are already affiliated with the DRC should contact their advisor directly. See our contacts page for staff direct emails. Advisors are meeting with students using Zoom, Skype, and phone.

General inquiries or students new to the DRC can reach us by emailing drc.questions@ubc.ca

Web: <http://students.ok.ubc.ca/drc/welcome.html>

UBC Okanagan Equity and Inclusion Office

Through leadership, vision, and collaborative action, the Equity & Inclusion Office (EIO) develops action strategies in support of efforts to embed equity and inclusion in the daily operations across the campus. The EIO provides education and training from cultivating respectful, inclusive spaces and communities to understanding unconscious/implicit bias and its operation within in campus environments. UBC Policy 3 prohibits discrimination and harassment on the basis of BC's Human Rights Code. If you require assistance related to an issue of equity, educational programs, discrimination or harassment please contact the EIO (UNC 216).



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THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Phone: 250.807.9291

Email: equity.ubco@ubc.ca

Web: <https://equity.ok.ubc.ca/>

FCCS Communications Portal

Consider signing up for our FCCS Communications portal for students in our undergraduate and graduate programs in Canvas. This one-stop space will be used to keep students informed and up to date with important information related to your academic matters as well as updated on FCCS and campus events.

Self enrol: <https://canvas.ubc.ca/enroll/3KBYFY>

Health & Wellness

Health and Wellness offers a range of student health and wellness services, including a health clinic, counsellors, and health promotion programs. Students are encouraged to stay at home if they have a minor or communicable illness (such as flu-like symptoms) to prevent further spread of illness to other students, staff, or faculty. If students are too ill to attend class, the student should contact the instructor immediately and submit a “Self Declaration of Absence Due to Illness or Injury” form: [Student Declaration of Absence Due to Illness or Injury \(PDF\)](#)

Please note: Use of the self-declaration form during the final exam period is not accepted—students are advised to communicate directly with their instructor if they are sick and unable to write final examinations. This declaration is not an exemption from any exams, papers, or projects that were missed during the time of absence and does not modify any academic obligations.

If students would like to access a UBC physician, nurse or counsellor, please call our office at 250 807-9270 or visit our website: <https://students.ok.ubc.ca/health-wellness/>

The UBC Student Assistance Program (SAP) is a free, 24/7 wellness resource for students. Services include personal counselling, life coaching, group programs and more, based on your needs: <https://students.ok.ubc.ca/health-wellness/student-assistance-program/>

SAFEWALK

Don't want to walk alone at night? Not too sure how to get somewhere on campus? Call Safewalk at 250.807.8076. For more information, visit: <http://security.ok.ubc.ca/welcome.html>