



English (ENGL) 308

Indigenous Literature in Canada (Revision 5)

Status: Replaced with new revision, see the [course listing](#) for the current revision ❌

Delivery mode: [Individualized study online](#). Delivered via Brightspace.

Credits: 3

Areas of study: Arts or Humanities

Prerequisites: [ENGL 211](#) and [ENGL 212](#) or equivalent first year English course(s).

Precluded: None

Challenge: ENGL 308 has a challenge for credit option.

Faculty: [Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences](#) 

Overview

English 308: Indigenous Literature in Canada begins with the origins of Indigenous literature in the oral tradition and leads to contemporary Indigenous writing in English. The course also examines related areas such as the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), released in 2015. Assigned readings from the TRC will inform many of the topics and themes found in Indigenous literature.

English 308 is designed to provide you with the basis for a deeper understanding of the literature of Indigenous nations in Canada. The course is divided into eight units and progresses from orature and stories from the oral tradition; through written poems, stories, and drama; to two novels.

Outline

- **Unit 1:** Introduction to Indigenous Literature
- **Unit 2:** Family Stories and the Oral Tradition—*Earth Elder Stories*
- **Unit 3:** Myths, Legends, and Trickster Stories

- **Unit 4:** *The Rez Sisters* by Tomson Highway
- **Unit 5:** Culture, History, and Politics in Modern and Contemporary Poetry
- **Unit 6:** The Legacy of Residential Schools
- **Unit 7:** The Contemporary Novel in Depth—Eden Robinson's *Monkey Beach*
- **Unit 8:** Fusion Fiction—Thomas King's *Green Grass, Running Water*

Learning outcomes

After completing ENGL 308, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate familiarity with Indigenous literature in Canada, including its origins, diversity, and contemporary forms.
- Examine the cultural aesthetics surrounding the tradition of oral storytelling and its connection to contemporary Indigenous literature.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the legacy of the residential school system and its expression in literature.
- Analyze the values, politics, and concerns addressed in works of Indigenous literature.
- Assess the use of literary elements such as theme, symbolism, and poetic devices in the assigned works.


Evaluation

To receive **credit**  for ENGL 308, students must complete and submit all three written assignments and write a final exam. Students must achieve a minimum grade of **D (50 percent)**  on the final

exam and an overall grade of at least D (50 percent) for the course. Note, however, that other postsecondary institutions might require a higher average grade for the purposes of transfer credit.

Students will be evaluated on their understanding of the concepts presented in the course and on their ability to apply those concepts. The final grade in the course will be based on the marks achieved for the following activities.

Activity	Weight
Essay 1	10%
Essay 2	25%
Essay 3	25%
Final Exam	40%
Total	100%

The **final examination** for this course must be requested in advance and written under the supervision of an AU-approved exam invigilator. Invigilators include either ProctorU or an approved in-person invigilation centre that can accommodate online exams. Students are responsible for payment of any invigilation fees. Information on exam request deadlines, invigilators, and other exam-related questions, can be found at the [Exams and grades](#)  section of the Calendar.

Materials

Digital course materials

Links to the following course materials will be made available in the course:

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*. 2015. (Available through the ENGL 308 Digital Reading Room.)

Physical course materials

The following course materials are included in a course package that will be shipped to your home prior to your course's start date:

King, Thomas. *Green Grass, Running Water*. HarperCollins, 1993.

Robinson, Eden. *Monkey Beach*. Vintage, 2001.

Ruffo, Armand Garnet, Katherena Vermette, Daniel David Moses, and Terry Goldie, editors. *An Anthology of Indigenous Literatures in English: Voices from Canada*. 5th edition. Oxford University Press, 2020.

Wolfe, Alexander. *Earth Elder Stories: The Pinayzitt Path*. Fifth House, 1988.

Other Materials

All other course materials can be found online.

Content Warning

Topics in this course include racism; physical and cultural genocide; residential schools; Missing Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit People (MMIWG2S+); the *Indian Act* and the TRC; violence (including sexual and domestic); exploitation and injustice; systems of power and agency; as well as kinship, belonging, and resurgence.

If you have any concerns about this, do not hesitate to contact your tutor before starting the course. They can help you navigate the reading schedule (including alerting you to page numbers where difficult materials are depicted in the texts).

Author Thomas King recently announced that a genealogical investigation has revealed that he does not have Indigenous ancestry. For many years, King had been known as one of the most acclaimed Indigenous writers in Canada, so this news will be painful for many people and will have long-lasting repercussions for readers, students, scholars, and especially members of Indigenous communities who have been affected.

We incorporated King's work into English 308 when we believed that he had Cherokee ancestry. We are now working to revise the course materials to remove his work. This syllabus page will be updated once the revised course materials are ready. In the meantime, English 308 remains open for registrations; the course still assigns work from many Indigenous writers. We are grateful for your understanding on this difficult issue. Please contact the course coordinator (currently Paul Huebener) if you would like to discuss these concerns in more detail.

Challenge for credit

Overview

The challenge for credit process allows you to demonstrate that you have acquired a command of the general subject matter, knowledge, intellectual and/or other skills that would normally be found in a university-level course.

Full information about [challenge for credit](#) can be found in the Undergraduate Calendar.

Evaluation

To receive [credit](#) for the ENGL 308 challenge registration, students must achieve a grade of at least 50 percent on the exam, and a grade of at least **D (50 percent)** overall.

Activity	Weight
Research Essay	50%
Exam	50%
Total	100%

 [Challenge for credit course registration form](#)

Important links

- › [Academic advising](#)
- › [Program planning](#)
- › [Request assistance](#)

> [Support services at AU](#) 

Athabasca University reserves the right to amend course outlines occasionally and without notice. Courses offered by other delivery modes may vary from their individualized study counterparts.

Opened in Revision 5, May 16, 2024

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View [previous revision](#) 
