

ENGL 373:

Indigenous Speculative Fiction

#ENGL373

Instructor Information:

Instructor	Email	Office and office hours (Buch D175)
Dr. David Gaertner (he/his/him)	david.gaertner@ubc.ca	T/Th 2:30-3:30pm or by appointment

Course Description:

In *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*, Cherokee author and literary critic, Daniel Heath Justice argues that “we can’t possibly live otherwise until we first *imagine* otherwise (156, original emphasis). The power and art of speculative fiction (SF), a genre encompassing creative works that articulate a reality other than our own, is located in the ways in which it expands and tests our ability to imagine—and perhaps live—otherwise. In its attention to alternate realities, SF is often framed as a “world-building” genre. However, for SF authors such as Cherie Dimaline and Waubgeshig Rice, SF can also be about world-reclaiming. It can be about imagining and building dystopic space for BIPOC, queer, and non-gender conforming folks in the wake of the apocalypse. In the novel *The Marrow Thieves*, for instance, Dimaline articulates the reclamation achieved via speculative fiction as “an echo turned inside out” (230): a colonial narrative reflected and undone to imagine decolonial futures. Indeed, for Indigenous SF authors such as Dimaline, the genre offers powerful glimpses outside of oppressive sociopolitical structures (settler colonialism, capitalism, heteropatriarchy, etc.) and towards alternative ways of relating to the land and one another.

In this course, we will read, play, and experience a diversity of short- and long-form SF from within the contexts of critical Indigenous studies and engage that work through in-class discussions, presentations and writing assignments. Our objective will be to

unpack, analyze, and interrogate the aesthetics and politics of “imagining otherwise” in Indigenous SF. In completing this course, you will be conversant in the general discourses of SF and the specific interventions that Indigenous authors and filmmakers have made into the dystopic fiction and cyberpunk via themes such as decolonization, sovereignty, and self-determination. You will demonstrate your understanding of the material through discussion, engagement online, group work, and a final research paper.

Learning Objectives:

By the end of ENGL 373 you will be able to:

- Assess and critique major themes in SF generally and Indigenous SF specifically;
- Apply contemporary themes in Indigenous studies to literary analysis;
- Develop a focused abstract and annotated bibliography;
- Conceptualize and develop a critical essay on Indigenous literature using primary and secondary sources;
- Learn to read, critique, and write a university strategic plan;
- Develop arguments about Indigenous SF based in close reading and secondary research;
- Confidently and effectively share your own scholarly knowledge.

In addition, throughout the course, students will be able to hone the following skills:

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|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| • Close reading | • Library research | • Writing and argumentation |
| • VR critique | • Project planning | • Critical Thinking |
| • Collaboration | • Presentation. | • Social media |

Evaluation

Participation (in class and online)	15%
Strategic Plan (groups of 4-5)	25%
Research Essay Proposal	20%
Research Essay	40%

Readings

Primary Texts (unless otherwise noted, all primary texts are available at the UBC bookstore. You are welcome to purchase or borrow these texts elsewhere if possible)

Dimaline, Cherie. *The Marrow Thieves*. Toronto: DCB, 2017.

Harjo, Joy. "Perhaps the World ends Here." *The Woman Who Fell from the Sky*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1994. Also available online:

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/49622/perhaps-the-world-ends-here>

Hausman, Blake M. *Riding the Trail of Tears*. Winnipeg: Bison Books, 2011.

Jackson, Lisa. *Biidaaban: First Light*. 2018. (no purchase necessary; made available thanks to the National Film Board [NFB] and the Emerging Media Lab [EML])

Longboat, Maize. *Terra Nova*. 2019. (no purchase necessary; made available thanks to Maize Longboat)

Misha. *Red Spider, White Web*. La Grande: Woodcraft of Oregon, 1999. (reprinted for ENGL 373 thanks to UBC Bookstore, Mischa and Woodcraft of Oregon.

Rice, Waubgeshig. *Moon of Crusted Snow*. Toronto: ECB, 2018.

Roanhorse, Rebecca. "Welcome to your Authentic Indigenous Experience." Apex Magazine. Available online. <https://www.apex-magazine.com/welcome-to-your-authentic-indian-experience/>

Whitehead, Joshua. *full-metal indigiqueer*. Vancouver: Talonbooks, 2017.

Secondary Texts (unless otherwise noted, all secondary texts are available via the UBC library)

Delany, Paul. "Racism and Science Fiction." *Dark Matter: A Century of Speculative Fiction from the African Diaspora*. Sheree R. Thomas, ed. Aspect, 2000. 383-397.

Available online: <https://www.nyrsf.com/racism-and-science-fiction-.html>

Hunt, Dallas. "In search of our better selves": Totem Transfer Narratives and Indigenous Futurities." *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 42.1 (2018) 71-90.

Tuck, Eve. "Suspending Damage: A Letter to Communities." *Harvard Educational Review: September* 79.3 (2009): 409-428. http://pages.ucsd.edu/~rfrank/class_web/ES-114A/Week%204/TuckHEdR79-3.pdf

UBC Strategic Plan. <https://strategicplan.ubc.ca/>

Recommended Reading (we just don't have time to read everything I want to!; these are great books if you are looking to extend your reading in Indigenous SF)

Hopkinson, Nalo. *Brown Girl in the Ring*.

Jones, Stephen Graham. *Mapping the Interior*

Nicholson, Hope (ed), *Love Beyond Body Space and Time*

Deliverables

Participation 15% (in class and online):

Fifteen percent of your grade will be based on your demonstrated attendance and the *quality* of your participation **online** and in **class discussions**.

1) Twitter participation: On the class schedule (below) you will also note a Twitter prompt for each week. You are responsible for populating the class Twitter feed following these prompts OR with your own ideas/research relevant to the class. Use the hashtag **#ENGL373** to archive your tweets in our timeline. **The Twitter prompts are also great places to start conversation in class.**

Tweets relative to ENGL 373 allow me to gauge student interaction with the material and provide blended support targeted at student needs and wants for the course. Twitter also provides a secondary environment for classroom discourse—where we can continue conversations, expand on ideas, and share resources.

I encourage you to move beyond text in your tweets: share/create memes, gifs, links, hashtags, as long as they are relevant to course content, I am happy to see them.

2) In class participation: When in the classroom, it is absolutely essential that you arrive prepared to discuss the course material in detail. All readings must therefore be read prior to each session and must be brought to class for discussion purposes. Be prepared to share your ideas and to work in small groups. There will also be some, short in-class assignments to complete. I encourage a lot discourse in this class, so be ready to talk books and sf theory!

Note: If you are uncomfortable speaking in class, or using Twitter, please come and speak to me within the first month and we can arrange alternative assignments.

Marrow Thieves Strategic Plan (groups of 4)-5:

With your group, imagine yourself as one of the (Indigenous or allied) survivors of the apocalypse depicted in Cherie Dimaline's *The Marrow Thieves*. In helping to rebuild your diverse community, you and your group have been tasked with drafting a strategic plan

for the new university your community will create and nurture. A strategic plan is an overarching framework outlining clear pathways, including values and fundamental principles, that a university will follow towards achieving a shared vision. For our purposes, we will use the UBC Strategic Plan as a starting place and reference point (<https://strategicplan.ubc.ca>). Your strategic plan should build out of the lessons depicted in the *The Marrow Thieves* to craft a vision for learning that responds to the hopes and desires of the novel's Indigenous characters.

Your Strategic (5-year) Plan should:

- Have a title (and your university should have a name);
- Have a clear and succinct introductory paragraph;
- Succinctly identify each of the following: 1) vision; 2) purpose; and 3) values;
- Identify and explicate 5 goals/objectives key to your university's plan;
- Be laid out in an accessible, easy-to-read format (you are free to use word processing and layout software of your choice). Images are welcome;
- Be between 800-1200 words.

Strategic plans will be graded for:

- Fidelity to the *The Marrow Thieves* (does it match the tone, plot, setting, character development, etc. of Dimaline's book? Strategically quoting the novel will help here) **20 points**
- Originality and fidelity to SF **20 points**
- Clarity of feasibility of plan and ideas **20 points**
- Clarity of prose **20 points**
- Professionalism (is the plan laid out well, is it free from errors, do the authors follow instructions?) **20 points**

Learning Outcomes: The goal of this assignment is to critically engage and expand upon *The Marrow Thieves* while challenging and decolonizing institutional practice. With many thanks to **Dr. Jes Battis (@jesBattis)** for sharing this idea and allowing me to adapt it.

Research Essay Abstract and Annotated Bibliography:

An abstract is a one-paragraph summary of a research project that outlines the author's research question, methodology and/or theoretical approach to a given topic. An annotated bibliography is a list of sources (in our case, formatted in MLA) relevant to a

specific research question and methodology. The abstract and annotated bibliography you create for this assignment will serve as the basis for your research paper. Therefore, building out of the research paper instructions (see below) craft the following:

1) Abstract

Your **abstract** should clearly state a) your research question b) the methods used to address this question (sources used, theoretical approach, etc.) and c) the significance of the research (the “so what” of the thesis?). Concise, clear language is a necessity for an abstract, so you will need to be extra attentive to sentence structure and word choice. Be economical and cut any unnecessary information. Particular attention in grading will be paid to sentence and paragraph development, including grammar and syntax. **Word count: 300.**

Your **annotated bibliography** must include 5 secondary sources relevant to your research question. On a page separate from the abstract list the 5 sources using the MLA style guide and include a brief summary of the work (50 words) and a brief explanation of how it connects to your research question (30 words). At least 3 of your sources must be **peer-reviewed** (ask me or a librarian if you are unsure if an article meets this requirement). The remaining two may be from alternative sources (newspapers, websites, blogs films, etc). You may **not** include sources from this syllabus.

More information on the abstract assignment will be made available in class closer to the due date.

Research Paper (2000 words)

Building from your abstract and annotated bibliography, the research essay is intended to give you the opportunity to explore more deeply **ONE** of the texts we have studied in class while providing experience in academic research. For this assignment, you must compose an 8-page (2000-word) essay analyzing the representation of Indigenous peoples, ideas, culture, or politics in one of the creative pieces we have studied this term (e.g. novel, poem, videogame, short story, or VR install). Using direct citations from your primary text and argumentative support from at least 3 secondary texts from your annotated bibliography (2 of which must be peer-reviewed), your paper should carefully unpack the nuanced and complicated ways in which Indigenous authors and media makers represent themselves in speculative fiction.

Potential essay topics will be discussed in class. Ultimately, you should choose a piece and a topic that interests you and that you want to learn more about. You will be graded on the originality of your ideas, the focus and clarity of your thesis statement and guiding ideas (e.g. topic sentences), your ability to organize and support an argument using primary and secondary sources, and your overall writing ability. I will provide assistance along the way and extra office hours will be made available closer to the assignment, during which I encourage you to workshop your thesis or get feedback on a draft.

A separate handout on tips for writing a research essay will be made available later in the term.

Note: You must submit your abstract and annotated bib, along with my feedback, with your final research paper. So take good care of those!

Course Schedule

Below is the tentative schedule for ENGL 373. Content is subject to change. Readings are listed in the left column, guest lectures, workshops, assignment due dates are listed in the right.

For all classes, please have all the readings easily accessible (printed out or saved to a laptop, with your notes readily available (e.g., in the margins) so that we can readily refer to them. Due dates are *your* responsibility. See below the schedule for late penalties.

Section I: Towards a (Decolonial) Theory of the Future	
Readings	Activities and Assignments
September 3: UBC Orientation, No Class	
N/A	N/A
September 5: Introductions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Syllabus • Joy Harjo, "Perhaps the World Ends Here" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Close reading refresher • Code of conduct
September 10: Responsible and Ethical Approaches to Indigenous Literature	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eve Tuck, "Suspending Damage" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finish code of conduct • <i>Twitter topic: How do you think Tuck's definition of desire can be articulated in speculative fiction?</i>
September 12: Racism and Science Fiction	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paul Delany, "Racism and Science Fiction" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Twitter topic: share a favourite quotation or book cover from a non-white science fiction author.</i>
September 17: Indigenous Futurities	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dallas Hunt, "In search of our better selves": Totem Transfer Narratives and Indigenous Futurities" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Twitter topic: share an example of a futurist narrative (film, novel, video game) that contributes to the erasure of Indigenous peoples.</i>
September 19: Field Trip!	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lisa Jackson, <i>Transmissions</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet at: Fei & Milton Wong Experimental Theatre SFU Woodward's, 149 West Hastings <i>Twitter topic: share a reflection of your experience at the Transmissions exhibit.</i>
Section II: Welcome to the Apocalypse	
Readings	Activities and Assignments
September 24: <i>The Marrow Thieves</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The Marrow Thieves</i> pp. 1-51 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Twitter topic: Tweet an image or meme that you think best captures the idea of dystopia</i>
September 26: <i>The Marrow Thieves</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The Marrow Thieves</i> pp. 52-138 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sign up for <i>Biidaaban</i> viewings <i>Twitter topic: why is it significant (metaphorically) that settlers lose the ability to dream?</i>
October 1: <i>The Marrow Thieves</i>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Marrow Thieves</i> pp. 139-231 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize Groups for Strategic Plan Assignment • <i>Twitter topic: tweet your favourite quotation from The Marrow Thieves.</i>
October 3: Strategic Plan	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UBC Strategic Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-class workshop on strat plan • <i>Twitter topic: what did you find most surprising about UBC's strat plan?</i>
October 8: Biidaaban	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of Lisa Jackson, <i>Biidaaban</i> • <i>Twitter topic: share your experience in Biidaaban VR</i>
October 10: Moon of the Crusted Snow	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waubgeshig Rice, <i>Moon of the Crusted Snow</i> pp. 1-64 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Twitter topic: how does Rice's dystopic landscape (setting) differ from Dimaline's?</i>
October 15: Terranova	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guest Lecture from Maize Longboat, demo of his videogame <i>Terra Nova</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Twitter topic: tweet a thanks to @maizelongboat for sharing his game. Tell him what you liked about it.</i>
October 17: Moon of the Crusted Snow	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waubgeshig Rice, <i>Moon of the Crusted Snow</i> pp. 63-141 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strat plan check in • <i>Twitter topic: what does land-based knowledge mean in terms of Rice's apocalypse?</i>

October 22: <i>Moon of the Crusted Snow</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Waubgeshig Rice, <i>Moon of the Crusted Snow</i> pp. 141-213 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic Plan due in class <i>Twitter topic: According to Rice, “A lot of post apocalyptic stories are about despair and anguish with the most desperate scenarios... I wanted to offer up the perspective of people who had experienced apocalypse already.” How does the author’s perspective on the apocalypse frame your understanding of his novel, and dystopic literature more generally?</i>
Section III: Cyberpunk Isn’t Dead	
Readings	Assignments and Activities
October 24: <i>Full Metal Indigiqueer</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joshua Whitehead, <i>Full Metal Indigiqueer</i> (full text) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Twitter topic: write a tweet in the style of Whitehead’s narrator</i>
October 24: <i>Full Metal Indigiqueer</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Full Metal Indigiqueer</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare for abstract and annotated bib <i>Twitter topic: where does poetry and technology intersect in full metal indigiqueer?</i>
October 29, “Welcome to your Authentic Indigenous Experience”	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rebecca Roanhorse, “Welcome to your Authentic Indigenous Experience” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Twitter topic: what qualifies as “authentic” in Roanhorse’s story?</i>

October 31: <i>Riding the Trail of Tears</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blake Hausman, <i>Riding the Trail of Tears</i> pp. 1-43 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Twitter Topic: what echoes do you read across Roanhorse and Hausman?</i>
November 5: <i>Peer Review</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abstract and annotated bib peer review. Bring 3 printed copies of your assignment to class
November 7: <i>Riding the Trail of Tears</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blake Hausman, <i>Riding the Trail of Tears</i> pp. 43-259 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abstract and annotated bib due in class.
November 12: <i>Riding the Trail of Tears</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blake Hausman, <i>Riding the Trail of Tears</i> pp. 260-370 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Twitter topic: who is the chef? What is his significance?</i>
November 14: <i>Red Spider, White Web</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mischa, <i>Red Spider, White Web</i> pp. TBA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Twitter topic: what is different about the genre of Red Spider, compared to other texts we have read?</i>
November 19: <i>Research Essay Workshop</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A 	Research Essay workshop
November 21: <i>Red Spider, White Web</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mischa, <i>Red Spider, White Web</i> pp. TBA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Twitter topic: what is significant/interesting to you about how Misha portrays technology?</i>
November 26: <i>Red Spider, White Web</i>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mischa, <i>Red Spider, White Web</i> pp. TBA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Twitter topic: tweet a final comment or question about Indigenous speculative fiction. What excited you most? What would you like to read more of? What inspired you to imagine otherwise? We will share these questions and comments in the final class.</i>
November 28: Wrap up & Review	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research Paper Due

Class Policies

Code of Conduct: We will collectively author a code of conduct in class in the first week.

Attendance: Attendance is mandatory and important in order for us to fulfil our responsibilities to one another. Students who plan to be absent for athletics, creative endeavours, family obligations, travel, work, or other similar commitments cannot assume they will be accommodated, and **should discuss their commitments with me**. If you've been unavoidably absent, it is your responsibility to ensure you are caught up on notes, announcements, etc.

Take down the email of classmate that you can ask for notes in the case of an absence. Students missing more than 3 classes without excuse may fail the course.

Late assignments face a 5% penalty for each day late (including weekends and holidays) until one week (7 days) after the deadline, I will not accept the assignment without official documentation. If you anticipate difficulties meeting a deadline, be sure to speak with me in advance.

Academic accommodation: UBC accommodates students whose religious obligations conflict with attendance, submitting assignments, or completing scheduled tests and

examinations. Please let me know at least one week in advance if you require any accommodation on these grounds.

The University supports students with a disability or ongoing medical condition by addressing barriers may affect their academic success. Types of conditions supported by UBC's Access & Diversity team include (but are not limited to) mental health conditions, neurological disabilities, chronic health conditions, and physical disabilities. Please contact an Access & Diversity advisor to request a letter of accommodation, and then come see me to discuss how best to meet your needs throughout the course.

<https://students.ubc.ca/enrolment/academic-learning-resources/academic-accommodations-disabilities>

Academic integrity: Academic integrity refers to the ethical and respectful conduct expected of every member of the University community, in our work and in our workplaces. More narrowly, academic integrity refers to presenting ideas that are our own and giving proper credit when we engage the ideas of others. Learning these practices is crucial for your work here at university, as failing to give others credit constitutes plagiarism. Submitting work other than your own, whether the plagiarism is intended or unintended, will result at the very minimum in a zero for the assignment, and can result in your expulsion from the university. Please consult the Learning Commons for more information: <https://learningcommons.ubc.ca/academic-integrity/> which is also a useful resource for tips and tutorials on how to correctly cite your sources. If you have any questions about how to engage the work of others while citing them appropriately, please ask me!

Statement of respect and inclusion:* Diversity is an intellectual asset that can benefit from common principles of critical thinking and academic guidelines in evaluation procedures in ENGL 373. Sexist, racist, homophobic, transphobic and heterosexist language will not be tolerated in class or in written assignments

ENGL 373 is inclusive of gender identity, gender expression, sex, race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, ability, age, etc. Students, instructors, visitors and readings/media in ENGL 373 can raise controversial issues. Learners and educators expect to be treated

* Adapted from the UBC Social Justice Institute (GRSJ)

respectfully at all times and in all interactions. Disagreements can occur among course participants without being disagreeable and offensive. I will not tolerate hate speech of any sort in this class, whether in writing or in class conversation.

Please e-mail me your name and pronoun and how you would like these to be used.

Contacting me: During the term, I typically check email once a day, and aim to respond within 24 hours, Monday to Friday, during business hours (9am-5pm). Messages sent at night, on weekends, and on holidays may not be read until the next business day. Please give emails a specific, clear subject line, starting with “[ENGL 373]” and keep the tone and style consistent with genres of professional correspondence.

Some (of the many) UBC Student Resources

UBC is a large university with many offices and people dedicated to supporting you during your time here as a student. Sometimes, because the university is so large, it can be confusing to know who can help you with what. Here are a few key resources that you may find helpful. If you need more information, then please do not hesitate to ask the Dual Degree Office (DualDegree.SP@ubc.ca) or me (david.gaertner@ubc.ca). We are happy to help.

Arts Academic Advising

<<http://students.arts.ubc.ca/advising/>>

Please contact the office of Arts Academic Advising if you have questions about a course, want help planning your degree, or are experiencing a difficult time academically or personally.

Aboriginal Academic Advising

<<https://aboriginal.ubc.ca/students/academic-advising/>>

Most faculties have their own academic advising offices to help students plan their course timetables and make sure they meet their program requirements. In addition, many faculties have specialized advisors who are available to work with Aboriginal students

UBC Counselling Services

<<http://www.students.ubc.ca/livewelllearnwell/counselling-services/>>

Counselling Services is open to and free for all admitted and registered UBC students. Counselling Services provides a variety of services to help you live well, feel good, and achieve your goals. They can help you manage challenges related to mental health and mental illness so that you're able to have the best university experience possible. Their office is 1040 Brock Hall, 1874 East Mall.

Enrolment Service Professionals

<<http://students.ubc.ca/about/esp>>

Each UBC student has a dedicated Enrolment Service Professional. Your ESP is the person who you contact for help with anything from paying tuition or making a budget to requesting a transcript. They can also guide you through UBC regulations and processes to make sure you get the support you need, when you need it. If you're not sure who your ESP is, then contact the main office: 604.822.9836.

Chapman Learning Commons

<<http://learningcommons.ubc.ca/>>

Located in the Irving K. Barber Learning Centre (IBLC), the Chapman Learning Commons (CLC) supports student learning in many ways, including peer academic coaching, online student toolkits (e.g., citation, plagiarism, group work, assignment planning), research support, and equipment loans—you can use their scanners and printers, but you can also sign out video cameras and other technology plus charge your laptop if you forgot a power cord. (<http://hours.library.ubc.ca/#view-chapman>).