

Department of English & Writing Studies
Film Studies Program

Film Studies 2259F (001)
Indigenous Cinema
Fall 2024

Instructor: Theo Cuthand
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Prerequisites: At least 60% in [Film Studies 1020E](#) or [Film Studies 1022](#) or [Indigenous Studies 1020E](#); or 1.0 of English 1000-1999 plus [English 2112F/G](#), [Film Studies 2212F/G](#), or [Theatre Studies 2212F/G](#), or permission of the department.

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Course Description

Indigenous Cinema has been creating Visual Sovereignty, resisting colonialism, revealing strategies for survival, and carving out a space in global cinema to speak to other Indigenous viewers and find the similarities between us. In this course we will reflect on Indigenous representations from outsiders, and the subsequent development of Indigenous Cinema by Indigenous people around the world. Through screenings, readings, discussions, and writing assignments, the students will gain an understanding of the unique histories and films of Indigenous people from North and South America, Australia, New Zealand, and Northern Europe. By the end of this course students will be able to articulate the similar ways colonization has affected Indigenous people, and the unique ways Indigenous filmmakers represent resistance, resurgence and resilience.

Objectives:

By the end of the course, successful students will be able to:

- Recognize and analyze Visual Sovereignty and Fourth World concepts in Indigenous films
- Be able to read Indigenous films and understand where they stand in Indigenous cinema history
- Understand the ways Indigenous languages have been reclaimed within contemporary filmmaking and how filmmakers approach language.
- Discuss concepts and theories behind films and their meaning
- Communicate with other scholars about Indigenous cinema
- Write effectively about Indigenous cinema
- Verbalize their understanding of a film and reading
- Work collaboratively with other students

Course Materials

Readings available on the course OWL page under Resources and PDF Course Readings

Methods of Evaluation

The grade for the course will be arrived at as follows:

- Participation 10%
- Group Presentation (10 min between Sept 23 and Dec 9) 15%
- Film Response Assignment due Oct 7-10th (500 words) 15%
- Thesis statement due Oct 21st – 25th 5%
- Research Essay due Nov 25th - 29th by 11:55pm (2000 words) 20%
- Final Exam 35%

Students are fully responsible for looking at and being familiar with the information posted on the department website at <http://www.uwo.ca/english/undergraduate/Student%20Information.html>.

Late assignments will be penalized at a rate of 2% per academic day, unless academic accommodation is approved by your faculty.

Electronics Policy: Computers and tablets are allowed in class for notetaking only. Phones are not allowed during class time.

Academic Consideration

Students may request academic consideration in cases of extenuating circumstances – that is, personal circumstances beyond the student's control that have a **substantial but temporary** impact on the student's ability to meet essential academic requirements.

1. Requests for academic consideration are made to the Academic Advising office of the student's Faculty of Registration.
2. Requests for academic consideration include the following components:
 - a. Self-attestation signed by the student;
 - b. Indication of the course(s) and assessment(s) relevant to the request;
 - c. Supporting documentation as relevant.

Requests without supporting documentation are **limited to one per term per course**.

Instructors may designate one assignment or assessment as exempt from this allowance. In this course, requests for academic consideration pertaining to Group Presentation **must** be accompanied by supporting documentation.

Assignments with flexible deadlines and any term work that does not count towards the course grade are **not** eligible for additional consideration.

Documentation for medical illness, when required, includes the completion of a [Western Student Medical Certificate \(SMC\)](#) or, where that is not possible, equivalent documentation, by a health care practitioner.

Requests linked to examinations scheduled by the Office of the Registrar during official examination periods as well as practice laboratory and performance tests typically scheduled in the last week of term **always** require formal supporting documentation.

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#).

Statements

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory in all classes and tutorials. In cases of excessive absenteeism (e.g. more than 9 unexcused hours for a half course, 18 for a full course), which are not accounted for by either academic consideration or accommodation, students may be debarred from taking the final examination, and will receive an official warning to this effect by or before the course drop date (see Senate policy). In classes with or without final exams, students who do not attend class will receive 0% for course participation grades. Unless other policies dictate a different set of penalties in specific English and Writing Studies programs, this will apply to all department programs.

Gender-Based and Sexual Violence

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website: https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Intellectual Property/Copyright

All instructor-written materials (e.g. PowerPoints, lecture notes, oral lectures) for this course are created solely for students' personal use within the course, and remain the instructor's intellectual property. Further reproduction, fixation, distribution, transmission, dissemination, communication, or any other uses, without securing the consent of the copyright owner (the course instructor) may be an infringement of copyright. You may not distribute, email, or otherwise communicate these materials to any other person. These limitations extend to recording, photographing, or sharing lectures (online or in-person) and lecture material without permission. Posting the instructor's content from this course to online course sharing sites like OneClass or Course Hero without permission is both an infringement of intellectual property law and a violation of academic integrity guidelines. The instructor will pass these cases on to the Western University Ombudsperson or their Department Chair as appropriate.

Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the [Western Multicultural Calendar](#).

Support Services

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Academic Support & Engagement <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western:
<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence

AI/Chat GPT is not acceptable: Keep notes and rough drafts saved. If AI-related submissions are suspected, you will be asked to orally explain your argument/essay/exam answer, etc. You will also be required to submit drafts.

Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Plagiarism

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence.

Plagiarism Checking

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>.

All instances of plagiarism will be reported to the Chair of Undergraduate Studies. Proven cases of plagiarism will result in a grade of zero for the assignment. Subsequent offences will result in failure for the course.

Schedule of Classes and Assignments

- Group Presentation (10 min between Sept 23 and Dec 9)
- Film Response Assignment due Oct 7 (500 words)
- Thesis statement due Oct 21st
- Research Essay due Nov 25th by 11:55pm (2000 words)

TUTORIAL SCHEDULE

Week 1, Sept 9

Screenings:

- *Honey Moccasin* Dir. Shelley Niro 1998 47 min
- *The Red Paper* Dir. Dana Claxton 1996 14 min

Readings:

- Knopf, Kerstin. "Dramatic Film: Honey Moccasin" *Decolonizing the Lens of Power: Indigenous Films in North America*. Cross/Cultures Volume 100. Pp208-237 (2008)

Week 2, Sept 16

Screenings:

- *Boy Dir.* Taika Waititi 2010 88 min

Readings:

- Children, Affect, and National Feelings: Shame in Taika Waititi's *Boy* (2010) by Smith, Angela Marie. *Antipodes; Brooklyn* Vol 34. Iss.2 (2020)

Week 3, Sept 23

Screenings:

- *Drunktown's Finest* Dir. Sydney Freeland 2014 93 min
- *Woman Dress* Dir. Theo Cuthand 2019 7 min

Readings:

Watchman, Renae. "Reel Restoration in *Drunktown's Finest*." *Native American and Indigenous Studies*, vol. 7 no. 2, 2020, p. 29-54. *Project MUSE*, <https://doi.org/10.1353/nai.2020.a765054>.

Week 4, Sept 30

National Day of Truth and Reconciliation

NO CLASS but please watch the screening to be included in discussion next class

Screenings:

- *Night Raiders* Dir. Danis Goulet 2021 101 min
- *Reclamation* Dir. Theo Cuthand 2018 13 min

Readings:

- Gorber, Jason. "Night Raiders: Danis Goulet on Crafting a Distinct Dystopian Vision." *Toronto Film Critics*, Feb 28, 2022. <https://torontofilmcritics.com/features/night-raiders-danis-goulet-on-crafting-a-distinct-dystopian-vision/>

(please watch videos in article)

Week 5, Oct 7

Film Response Assignment due Oct 7th – 10th (500 words)

Screenings:

- *Sweet Country* Dir. Warwick Thornton 2017 113 min

Readings:

- Ross, E. (2018). Landscape of silence: Sound design in the films of Warwick Thornton. In *Metro (Melbourne)* (Number 197, pp. 108–115). Australian Teachers of Media Inc. (ATOM).

READING WEEK

Week 6, Oct 21

Thesis statement due Oct 21st – 25th

Screenings:

- *Beans* Dir. Tracey Deer 2020 92min

Readings:

- Channeling Childhood Trauma into Cinema: An Interview with Tracey Deer. Hogg, Trevor; Deer, Tracey. *Cinéaste* (New York, N.Y.), 2021-06, Vol. 46(3), p.22-25
- (In)visible Borders in *Beans* by Tracey Deer. Smith, Kirsten, *Québec Studies*, Volume 75, Number 1: pp109-130. <https://doi-org.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/10.3828/qs.2023.8>

Week 7, Oct 28

Screenings:

- *La Llorona* Dir. Jayro Bustamante 2019 97min

Readings:

- The true story behind the legend of “La Llorona.” CE Noticias Financieras, 2019
- Jayro Bustamante on infusing the history of Guatemala in *La Llorona* and making every shot count by Dan Mecca. The Film Stage. August 6, 2020. <https://thefilmstage.com/jayro-bustamante-on-infusing-the-history-of-guatemala-in-la-llorona-and-making-every-shot-count/>
- See Powerpoint

Week 8, Nov 4

Screenings:

- *Angry Inuk* Dir. Alethea Arnaquq-Baril 2016 82 min

Readings:

- Vanstone, Gail, Brian Winston. “‘This would be scary to any other culture...but to us it’s so cute!’ The radicalism of Fourth Cinema from Tangata Whenua to *Angry Inuk*.” Sept 2019, Volume 13 Issue 3 Pages p 233 to 249. *Studies in Documentary Film*.

Week 9, Nov 11

Screenings:

- *Forgotten Warriors* Dir. Loretta Todd 1997 51 min

Readings:

- Silverman, Jason. “Uncommon Visions: The Films of Loretta Todd.” *Senses of Cinema*, Oct 2002, Issue 22. <https://www.sensesofcinema.com/2002/filmmaker-profiles/todd/>
- Gauthier, Jennifer L. “Dismantling the master’s house: the feminist fourth cinema documentaries of Alanis Obomsawin and Loretta Todd.” *Post script*, 2010-06, Vol.29 (3), p27

Week 10, Nov 18

Screenings:

- *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner* Dir. 2001 Zacharias Kunuk 172 min

Readings:

- Raheja, Michelle. “Reading Nanook’s Smile: Visual Sovereignty, Indigenous Revisions of Ethnography, and *Atanarjuat (The Fast Runner)*.” *American Quarterly* Vol. 59, No. 4 (Dec 2007), pp. 1159-1185 (27 pages)
- Hopkins, Candice. “Making Things Our Own: The Indigenous Aesthetic in Digital Storytelling.” *Leonardo*, vol. 39, no. 4, 2006, pp. 341–44.

Week 11, Nov 25

Research Essay due (2000 words) Nov 25th – Nov 29th

Screenings:

- *Edge of the Knife* Dir. Gwaii Edenshaw & Helen Haig-Brown 2018 100 min

Readings:

- Sandals, Leah. “The Haida Language on Film, in Depth and at Last.” *Canadian Art*, Sept 13, 2018. <https://canadianart.ca/features/gwaii-edenshaw-edge-of-the-knife/>

Week 12, Dec 2

Screenings:

- *Sami Blood* Dir. Amanda Kernell 2016 110 min

Readings:

- Sand, Stine. (2022). Dealing with racism: Colonial history and colonization of the mind in the autoethnographic and Indigenous film *Sami Blood*. *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication*, 16(3), 209–223.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17513057.2022.2052156>

Week 13, Dec 9

Screenings:

- *Rocks At Whiskey Trench* Dir. Alanis Obomsawin 2000 116 min
- *Dislocation Blues* Dir. Sky Hopinka 2017 17 min

Readings:

- Cummings-Lambert. "Fifty years of resistance on film." *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, 2023, Vol.13 (3), p.721-729