

**ENG 4200-01: Topics in British Lit**  
**Margaret Atwood: Poetry & Fiction**  
**Fall 2018, MW 4:40-6:00 p.m.**  
**402 Millett Hall**



**Professor:** Dr. Jennings  
**Office Hours:** MW 3:30-4:30 pm  
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### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

In this course we will explore the works of Anglo-Canadian author, Margaret Atwood (1939–), whose literary influence continues to be of significant interest. In 2017, numerous media, literary, and cultural critics called it “[The Year of Atwood](#),” as two of her novels, *The Handmaid’s Tale* (1986) and *Alias Grace* (1996), aired as critically praised television series on Hulu and Netflix, respectively. Atwood is a vocal activist within the realms of political, feminist, and environmental issues, and throughout her long and distinguished career, her creative output engages numerous genres, themes, and critical approaches. We will be reading and discussing a broadly representative range of the Atwood “canon,” including her poetry, short fiction, and novels, as well as the sub-genres of fairy tale, myth, speculative, and historical fiction. The course will be organized around a range of themes and motifs that can be found across Atwood’s work: national identity, wilderness spaces, post/colonialism, language, gender, class, age, sexual politics, vision, survival, violence, trauma, war, environmentalism, and posthumanism. Students should complete this course with not only a grounded knowledge in the extent of Atwood’s creative diversity but also the depth of her political, cultural, and ecological investments.

### **COURSE OUTCOMES**

*As indicators of successful achievement of the course content and objectives, students will:*

1. demonstrate, through oral and written responses, their ability to understand and close-read various genres, themes, and motifs present in the works of a significant literary author;
2. demonstrate, through oral and written responses, their understanding of and ability to apply critical vocabulary and concepts in the interpretations of literary texts;
3. demonstrate, through oral and written responses, their engagement with interpretive approaches and important critical trends used in the analysis of literary texts;
4. produce papers that appropriately incorporate and respond to secondary as well as primary sources, and are properly formatted and correctly cited according to MLA style.

### **WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM OUTCOMES**

This is an **Integrated Writing** course for English and Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies majors, which requires *at least* 5000 words of writing, *at least* half of which will be evaluated formally and *all* of which will count as part of students' performance in the course. Writing assignments will be evaluated for content, form, style, and overall writing proficiency. Students are expected to produce writing that:

- Demonstrates their understanding of course content,
- Is appropriate for the audience and purpose of a particular writing task,
- Demonstrates the degree of mastery of disciplinary writing conventions appropriate to the course (including documentation conventions), and
- Shows competency in standard edited American English.

### MARGARET ATWOOD REQUIRED TEXTS

- *The Journals of Susanna Moodie*. Oxford University Press, 1970. ISBN-13: 9780195401691
- *The Robber Bride*. 1993. Anchor, 1998. ISBN-13: 9780385491037
- *The Blind Assassin*. 2000. Anchor, 2003. ISBN-13: 9780385720953
- *Oryx and Crake*. 2003. Anchor, 2004. ISBN-13: 9780385721677
- *The Penelopiad*. 2005. Canongate, 2006. ISBN-13: 9781841957982

**NB:** Additional assigned readings by Atwood are available through the “Content” section in Pilot.

### COURSE EVALUATION:

Grades are based on the following points (1,000 total)

<b>Critical Responses (3)</b>	300
<b>Research Essay</b>	300
<b>Final Exam</b>	250
<b>Participation</b>	150

Grading Scale:	
90-100%	A
80-89%	B
70-79%	C
60-69%	D
0-59%	F

**Critical Responses (10% each = 30%):** Students will produce three critical response essays to texts covered in the first three units. Responses should demonstrate close-reading skills and provide analysis of a text by Atwood through attention to a key passage or theme. Each response must be a minimum of 800-1,000 words (approx. 3-4 pages each). You may revise and further develop any of your responses as part of the longer research essay. See guidelines and rubric in Pilot.

**Research Essay (30%):** For this essay you may write on any of the assigned novels, short stories, or poems. Essays require critical analysis of your selected text(s) in connection to one or more of the thematic elements discussed in this class and must develop a persuasive arguable thesis. Papers should be a minimum of 1,800-2,000 words (approx. 7-8 pages) and incorporate at least five to seven secondary sources of literary criticism and/or theory and at least one non-fiction primary source or essay by Atwood, as it pertains to your selected text(s). You are free to revise and develop any of your critical responses into your research essay. See guidelines, rubric, and student sample in Pilot.

**Final Exam (25%):** The final exam is cumulative; it will consist of multiple-choice and short-answer questions on Atwood’s novels, and two essay questions on her poetry and short fiction. The exam will be given during exam week and must be taken at its scheduled day and time, no exceptions.

**Participation (15%):** Your participation is assessed based on your contributions to discussion, class preparation, and engagement in group activities. I expect you to read and think about the material before you come to class. Contributions should reflect thoughtful reading and consideration of the work’s details. For each class meeting you will be graded on a √, √+, or √- basis. If you meet the minimum requirements, as described above, you will receive a √ (85). If you exceed the requirements by engaging in the discussion/exercises with especial enthusiasm, originality or critical insight, you will receive a √+ (100). If you show only minimal effort with little to no contribution towards discussion or group activities, then you will receive a √- (70). If you engage in distracting, disruptive, or disrespectful behavior and/or miss class, you will receive no credit (X).

## SUBMISSION GUIDELINES FOR WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

All papers must be formatted according to the most recent MLA style guidelines, using Times New Roman 12-point font, and the word count indicated at the end of the paper (e.g. "WC: 2,500"). Critical Response essays are due in hard copy (printed in black ink that is legible) at the start of class on the dates indicated in the class calendar. You must submit electronic copies of all essays to the Pilot dropbox in a Word attachment (.doc, .docx, or .rtf); if you do not submit a copy to the dropbox or submit your paper in a format that cannot be opened, it will not be graded. If you are absent from class on the day an assignment is due, you only need to submit an electronic copy to Pilot.

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## GENERAL EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR ALL WRITTEN WORK

- A = Demonstrates advanced critical thinking skills and outstanding knowledge of the readings and course content. Ideas are original and depth of analysis is excellent. Writing is clear, concise, free of basic errors, easy to follow **and** shows excellent command of language and disciplinary style.
  - B = Demonstrates critical thinking and familiarity with readings and course content; provides relevant examples. Writing is coherent, concise, easy to follow, and **nearly** free of basic errors.
  - C = Demonstrates basic understanding of the readings and other course content and can provide a good summary of material but only provides superficial analysis and support for issues raised. Writing is coherent and easy to follow but wordy, repetitious and/or marred by numerous errors.
  - D = Demonstrates minimal understanding of readings and course content; ideas are vague or not supported by any analysis and shows overall lack of effort. Writing lacks general coherence and shows little to no command of the English language.
  - F = Demonstrates serious lack of understanding of readings and other course content; serious lack of analysis and/or effort. Writing is incoherent and impossible to follow
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## ACADEMIC HONESTY GUIDELINES & POLICY

Penalties for academic dishonesty and student procedure in academic dishonesty prosecution are clarified in the *Wright State University Student Handbook* and on the Office of Community Standards & Student Conduct website at: <http://www.wright.edu/students/judicial/integrity.html>. Plagiarism is using other people's ideas and/or words without crediting them, and is considered intellectual theft; paraphrasing also requires citations and page numbers. For further information about plagiarism, refer to: <http://www.wright.edu/academics/writingctr/resources/plagiarism.html>.

**INSTRUCTOR POLICY ON PLAGIARISM:** If any portion of submitted work is plagiarized, you will receive a "0" on that assignment; if you commit a second offense, regardless of circumstances, you will receive an F for the entire course and may be subject to disciplinary action.

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## ATTENDANCE POLICY

Since attending higher education is voluntary, then it is your choice whether you show up for class and participate. If you choose to use the time of the class meeting to do something else, that is your decision. However, students who regularly attend class typically earn higher grades than those who do not, and will do better on the participation grade, which can make a crucial difference in the final letter grade. Please note that you are responsible for understanding the material done in class during your absence, and I will grade your work in the course under the assumption that you have learned that material. Missing class is not an excuse for missing assignments or submitting things late. If you miss class for any undocumented reason, there is no need to email me to explain why you are missing class, and in all instances, you should refer to the syllabus, class calendar, and/or a classmate for information about what was covered on that day. Do not expect me to do this work for you.

## GENERAL CONDUCT & COURSE POLICIES

**NB:** Failure to follow these guidelines may lead to dismissal from the class.

- You are expected to compose yourself as if in a professional environment. This includes attending class regularly and on time, being prepared for each class session, and contributing to course requirements as if you were in a workplace. Unprofessional behavior will imperil your ability to get a good grade, but also your ability to receive a letter of recommendation from me should the need arise. I request that you address me as Dr. Jennings and not by first name. For some of the contexts and reasons behind this general preference and standard of professional etiquette, I recommend reading this *New York Times* essay: [“U Can’t Talk to Ur Professor Like This”](#).
- Cell phones must be turned off and put away. Unless given prior approval, laptops, tablets, and recording of class discussions are not permitted. If you are using a digital text or require use of an electronic device due to a disability, please let me know at the start of the semester.
- Respect toward peers and the instructor includes active listening, even if your views differ, and refraining from bigotry and intolerance toward others. Although your individual opinions about the texts and issues explored in this class are encouraged, you must be able to present your interpretations or stance through an informed lens, using critical thinking and/or verifiable evidence beyond personal beliefs or anecdotal experiences (such as reference to textual examples, reliable secondary sources, or socio-cultural, historical, and political contexts).
- You are expected to follow the class calendar and assignment guidelines. If you are confused about any of these it is your responsibility to ask for clarification, and NOT the night before something is due. I do not accept late submissions and any missing assignment will receive a zero. All submission deadlines are posted in the class calendar below as well as in Pilot.
- Extensions are granted ONLY in extreme cases of illness or emergency, which must be documented and, if possible, communicated to me *before* the due date and not after the missed deadline. Regardless of circumstances, I reserve the right to deny any requests for extensions and will only grant incompletes to students who have consistently attended class and are missing no more than 1-2 assignments. I do not offer individual extra credit opportunities; extra credit assignments are only provided as an option available to the entire class.
- Raider Mail is the best way to communicate with me. You can expect to receive a reply within a 24-hour period on weekdays; I normally do not respond to e-mail on weekends. Check the newsfeed on the course homepage in Pilot for any class updates or info. If I make changes to the syllabus or class calendar, I explain these in class and post them in Pilot.

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## MARGARET ATWOOD RESOURCES

(click on the site name for hyperlink)

- [Margaret Atwood's Website](#) — provides full bibliography, selected interviews, links to book reviews, updates from Atwood, and other resources.
- [The Margaret Atwood Society](#) — an international association of scholars, teachers, and students; promotes scholarly exchange of Atwood’s works and cultural contributions; houses the *Margaret Atwood Studies Journal*; provides useful links and holds an annual contest for the best scholarship on Atwood, including student essays.
- [Luminarium](#) and [Poetry Foundation](#) — both sites provide extensive resources for Atwood, including selected texts.

## USEFUL CAMPUS & ONLINE RESOURCES

**University Writing Center:** The Writing Center (031 Library) provides individualized writing consultation at no cost to students. If you meet with a writing tutor, be sure to bring a copy of your assignment with you. For more information, call 775-4186. Or visit the Writing Center's Web page: <http://www.wright.edu/uc/success/services/writing-center.html>

**University Libraries:** The University Libraries are the scholarly information center for the University. In support of the University's mission of educational excellence, the Libraries collect, organize, preserve, and facilitate access to scholarly resources in all formats; support teaching, learning, and research in an intellectually open environment; and provide instruction in the use of traditional and new information resources and technologies. The libraries' online catalog, databases, and interlibrary loan service is essential for conducting research. Web page: <https://www.libraries.wright.edu/>

**OWL at Purdue:** The Online Writing Lab (OWL) at Purdue University houses writing resources and instructional material, and provides these as a free service to assist with many writing projects. Resources include teaching and tutoring, guidelines on general and subject-specific writing tips, and how to conduct, use, and cite research. Web page: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/> and MLA Style guidelines: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

**Counseling and Wellness Services:** If you are suffering from depression or have any other mental health concerns, please be aware that counseling services are available on campus. Counseling and Wellness offers a wide range of services to the Wright State University community, including the following: group, individual, couples, and family counseling, crisis intervention, and outreach. They offer specialized services on a variety of mental health, multicultural, diversity, and wellness issues. Location: the bottom level of the Student Union off the Atrium and below the Admissions Office in suite 053. Hours: 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Call 775-3407 or stop by to set an appointment. Web page: <http://www.wright-counseling.com/>

**Disability Services:** If you require course accommodations due to a disability, please inform me so we can make arrangements early in the quarter. For more information about support services offered by Disability Services (E186 Student Union), call 775-5680; TTY: 775-5844. Or visit their Web page: [http://www.wright.edu/students/dis\\_services/](http://www.wright.edu/students/dis_services/)

**CATS:** Faculty are not experts in trouble shooting Pilot or computer programs of any type. The quickest way to resolve technical issues is by using the resources at the HELP Desk: 937-775-4827 or 1-888-775-4827.

## Class Calendar

NB: This schedule is subject to changes; all assignments due on the dates listed here.

WEEK	DATE	Class Topics, Assigned Readings & Assignment Due Dates
ONE	8/27	<b>Introduction to the Class:</b> Overview of Syllabus & Course Goals
	8/29	<b>UNIT ONE: National Identity, Survival, and the “Wilderness” in Postcolonial Writing</b>
TWO	9/3	<b>Labor Day Holiday:</b> University Closed
	9/5	“Migration: C.P.R.,” “Journey to the Interior,” “The Explorers,” and “The Settlers” (PDF)
THREE	9/10	<i>The Journals of Susanna Moodie</i> , Journal I
	9/12	<i>The Journals of Susanna Moodie</i> , Journals II & III
FOUR	9/17	“Two-Headed Poems,” “Procedures for Underground,” “Progressive Insanities of a Pioneer,” “For Archeologists,” and “The Surveyors” (PDF)
	9/19	“Wilderness Tips” and “Death by Landscape” (PDF)
FIVE	9/24	<b>UNIT TWO: Gender, War, and Sexual Politics in Myth and Fairy Tale [DUE: CR 1]</b>
	9/26	“Pig Song,” “Siren Song” and “Circe/Mud Poems” (PDF)
SIX	10/1	<i>The Penelopiad</i> (pp. 1-98)
	10/3	<i>The Penelopiad</i> (pp. 99-198)
SEVEN	10/8	<i>The Robber Bride</i> (Ch. 1-16, pp. 1-117)
	10/10	<i>The Robber Bride</i> (Ch. 17-32, pp. 118-256)
EIGHT	10/15	<i>The Robber Bride</i> (Ch. 33-44, pp. 257-383)
	10/17	<i>The Robber Bride</i> (Ch. 45-57, pp. 384-520)
NINE	10/22	<b>UNIT THREE: Trauma and Perspective in Historical Fiction [DUE: CR 2]</b>
	10/24	“This is a Photograph of Me” and “The Right Hand Fights the Left” (PDF)
TEN	10/29	<i>The Blind Assassin</i> (Ch. I-IV)
	10/31	<i>The Blind Assassin</i> (Ch. V-VII)
ELEVEN	11/5	<i>The Blind Assassin</i> (Ch. VII-XI)
	11/7	<i>The Blind Assassin</i> (Ch. XII-XV)
TWELVE	11/12	<b>Veteran’s Day Holiday:</b> University Closed
	11/14	<b>UNIT FOUR: Environmentalism and Posthumanism in Speculative Fiction [DUE: CR 3]</b>
THIRTEEN	11/19	“Thylacine Ragout,” “The Animals Reject Their Names and Things Return to Their Origins,” and “Three Novels I Won’t Write Soon” (PDF)
	11/21	<b>Thanksgiving Break:</b> University closed
FOURTEEN	11/26	<i>Oryx and Crake</i> (Ch. 1-4, pp. 3-92)
	11/28	<i>Oryx and Crake</i> (Ch. 5-7, pp. 95-169);
FIFTEEN	12/3	<i>Oryx and Crake</i> (Ch. 8-11, pp. 173-280)
	12/5	<i>Oryx and Crake</i> (Ch. 12-15, pp. 283-374)
EXAM WK	12/10	<b>Final Exam:</b> 5:45 p.m. – 7:45 p.m.
	12/14	<b>DUE:</b> Research Essay (Friday 6:00 pm)