Lecture: Tuesday and Thursday, 1:05-1:50 pm, Arts W-215 (Lectures will be recorded on Zoom and posted after)

Instructor: Dr. Gloria Bell
   Email: Gloria.bell@mcgill.ca
   Office Hours: Mondays 1:40 pm – 2:40pm. Tuesdays 2:30pm – 3:30 pm.

Teaching Assistant: Rach Klein
   Email: tbd*
   Office Hours: (will be posted on MyCourses)

Course Description:
This course will examine the production of contemporary First Nations, Métis and Inuit artists in Canada from the 1990s to the present. A diverse range of contemporary art practices – including painting, drawing, photography, film, performance, installation and new media art – will be considered in relation to key aspects of the cultural, political and social life of Indigenous peoples in Canada. Much of the work examined reflects and responds to the continuing legacy of colonization and successive Canadian governments’ policies of assimilation and segregation. Artists, artworks and exhibitions examined will therefore be both historically and contemporarily contextualized. We will discuss the impact of the Indian Act, the establishment of Reserves and conflicts surrounding sovereignty and status, as well as the portrayal of Indigenous identity in art, popular culture and news media. Additionally, we will engage with the recent scholarship in Indigenous studies and material culture, and current events related to the theme of the course. The course is divided thematically, rather than chronologically, with weekly topics addressing significant aspects of Indigenous art and culture in Canada today.

Objectives and Expectations:
This course offers students the opportunity to critically engage with key themes in contemporary Indigenous art and culture. Students are required to attend all lectures and participate in class discussion. All required readings should be completed before each class. Lectures and readings do not necessarily cover the same material and students will be expected to reference both in assignments. Students are encouraged to attend exhibitions and other events throughout the city that relate to the themes of the course.

Required Readings
Required readings for this course will be available on MyCourses either as PDFs or as links to online articles. Students may also be asked to visit specific websites and/or watch films available online that relate to topics covered in the course.


Evaluation
Midterm Exam 30%
The midterm will be based on lectures and assigned readings up until the midterm. The midterm will be a compare and contrast essay. Incorporate at least three readings into your response.
Midterm: Midterm Distributed: October 8th at 2pm and due October 16th at 2pm on MyCourses – Note Use October 13th and October 15th class time to work on the midterm

Research Paper Proposal, 10%
Upload a copy of your research proposal by November 5th (1pm) for an e-class peer-review activity. PeerGrade will be used by your peers to add respectful commentary and criticism of your research in progress. Please add commentary for two of your peers using the PeerGrade system on MyCourses. Guidelines will be provided.
Following the peer-review activity, Students will submit a 350 word abstract for the research paper proposal, and a one-page bibliography (typed, double-spaced, 12 point font) on MyCourses. **Final Research Proposal due November 10th** on MyCourses at 2pm.

The abstract must include a thesis statement or hypothesis and a brief outline of the intended argument. The proposal must include a bibliography of at least **five to eight** academic sources. Students are welcome and encouraged to discuss potential topics with the instructor prior to submitting their paper proposal. The paper proposal will be returned with feedback the following week.

Possible research paper proposal topics:


Beadwork, Tufting and Quillwork: Examine the work of at least two contemporary artists that use “traditional” techniques and explore the resurgence of Indigenous methods and knowledges.

Queering the Canon: How and why are Indigenous artists queering the canon of art history? Examine the work of at least two artists.

The Imaginary Indian: How are contemporary curators and artists critiquing the Imaginary Indian in their work? Examine the work of at least two artists.

Unsettling the Archive: How are Indigenous artists responding to the colonial archive and why? Examine the work of at least two artists.

Indigenous Comics and Alternative Histories: How are Indigenous artists using comics and illustrated books to present Indigenous-centered histories? (see for example Louis Riel by Chester Brown)

**Knowledge Checks: 20%**

Students will complete knowledge checks during weeks listed on syllabus. The assignment will check your knowledge of the course content up to the time before the given knowledge check. They will be composed of true and false questions and multiple choice. (The knowledge checks will be available for one week from their posting and can be completed at any time that works for you. Make sure to check the calendar on MyCourses to see when they are – WEEK 4, WEEK 8, WEEK 12)

You can prepare for these by completing all the mandatory readings, listening to class lectures and viewing digital content. 3 knowledge checks in total. Your lowest score will be dropped.

**Research Paper, 40%**

The final research paper should demonstrate the ability to think creatively and critically about contemporary Indigenous Art and engage with the themes and debates central to the course.

An effective research paper will have a clear thesis statement and engage in visual analysis of two to three artworks.

**Visual analysis:** I recommend selecting **two to three works of art** and describing them in detail. You might choose to think about the artist and artworks in relation to **Discourses of Sovereignty, Decolonizing Methods, Indigenous Visibility, Exhibition history of Indigenous Arts in Canada, Queering the Canon, Indigenous beadwork, quillwork, tufting and materiality studies, Indigenous Archives** or another issue we have discussed in class or of your own initiative.

To inspire your research paper, I recommend reading contemporary scholarship in art journals **Art History, Journal of Material Culture Studies and American Indian Culture and Research Journal.** Look at the course outline.

Please also consult Sylvan Barnet’s **A Short Guide to Writing About Art (8th edition)** for a succinct overview on writing about art.
Late Policy:
Digital copies of all assignments must be submitted on the dates that they are due. Late assignments will be penalized by 5% per day (from the 100% value of the assignment). Any assignments not submitted on MyCourses on due date will be considered late. Assignments will not be accepted if more than four days late.

Late assignments due to medical conditions must be supported by documentation. Extensions will be given only in the case of serious medical illness or serious personal problems and will require the provision of a doctor’s note. Arrangements for an extension must be made personally with the professor as soon as possible prior to the deadline.

Grade Appeal Policy:
If a student chooses to appeal a grade given for any assignment, he or she must present the instructor with a written document outlining the reasons within 48 hours of receiving the grade. Students must be aware that reevaluation following a disputed grade could result in their grade remaining the same, being raised OR being reduced.

Website
Readings will be available on MyCourses as PDFs or as links to online articles.

Class Conduct:
This e-classroom is intended to be a safe, respectful and comfortable learning environment for everyone in attendance. If a student’s behaviour is deemed to be offensive or distracting to others by the instructor or TA, they will be asked to leave the e-classroom.

Class Content:
Some of the films may include graphic scenes. Please note the disclaimer during selected weeks. Regarding readings, some of the material may reference the ongoing traumatic legacy of residential schools, the impact of the Indian Act and other historical and lived realities. Please be respectful of the course content, yourself, the student body and the instructor, if you need to speak with someone regarding anything covered in class there are counselling services available for all students. https://www.mcgill.ca/studentservices/

Policies, Resources and Academic Integrity

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheaiting, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures -- see http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/

L’université McGill attache une haute importance à l’honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l’on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l’étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/).

In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded. (Approved by Senate on 21 January 2009).

Conformément à la Charte des droits de l’étudiant de l’Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l’un des objets est la maîtrise d’une langue).

As the instructor of this course I endeavour to provide an inclusive learning environment. However, if you experience barriers to learning in this course, do not hesitate to discuss them with me and the Office for Students with Disabilities, 514-398-6009, http://www.mcgill.ca/osd/).

Students looking for additional assistance with academic reading, study, research and writing skills should consult the McGill academic resources website at www.mcgill.ca/students/academicresources/.
The Counseling Service provides personal, academic, and career counseling to undergraduate and graduate students. They also offer workshops on study skills, multiple choice exams, test anxiety/stress management. The service is located at suite 4200 Brown Student Services Bldg, 398-3601 www.mcgill.ca/counselling/. A list of groups and workshops can be found at: www.mcgill.ca/counselling/groups/

According to Senate regulations, instructors are not permitted to make special arrangements for final exams. Please consult the Calendar, section 4.7.2.1, General University Information and Regulations at http://www.mcgill.ca/

In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University’s control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.

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COURSE OUTLINE

Class Schedule and Weekly Readings:
(The list of artists included in class discussions is preliminary, incomplete and is subject to change. Assigned readings are also subject to change, in which case students will be made aware with at least one week’s notice.)

WEEK 1 (Thursday September 3rd): Introduction: Settler Colonialism, the Indian Act and Indigenous Art Histories

This class will serve as an introduction to some dominant terms and themes covered over the course of the semester, with a focus on settler colonialism, decolonization and the state of the field of art history. We will discuss the impact of the Indian Act on the lives and rights of Indigenous peoples in Canada and examine the document’s centrality in two contemporary art case studies.

Readings:  


Suggested:  


Artists: Nadia Myre, Angel De Cora, Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun

WEEK 2 (September 8th and 10th): The Evolution of the “Imaginary Indian”: Popular Culture and the Production of Authenticity

This week will concern media representation and the perpetuation of stereotypes in popular culture. We will discuss the portrayal of Indigenous people in film, television, media and advertising.

Listen to this Podcast: https://www.cbc.ca/radio/unreserved/lights-camera-oscars-meet-the-creators-decolonizing-hollywood-1.5450603
Readings:


Suggested:


WEEK 3 (September 15th and 17th): The Métis, Flower Beadwork People

In this class, we will engage in a more in-depth discussion of the Indian Act and it’s regulation of Indigenous identity, focusing on the position of the Métis and other “non-status” Indigenous peoples. Discussing the work of contemporary and historical artists, we will consider issues around art, identity and the importance of material culture for Indigenous artwork.

Readings:


Suggested:


Artists: David Garneau, Christi Belcourt, Bob Boyer, Jim Logan
WEEK 4 (September 22nd and 24th): Northern Exposure: Arctic Sovereignty and Contemporary Inuit Art

COMPLETE KNOWLEDGE CHECK 1

E-Visit with librarian David Greene September 22 – best practices for a research paper

This week will examine the ways in which the North has been mythologized in specifically racial terms and how such conceptions function politically for the Indigenous peoples living in the area. We will examine the work of a number of contemporary Inuit artists as well as considering the ways in which Inuit art has been marketed both nationally and globally over the past few decades. We will begin a screening of the film Atanarjuat to be completed in the following week’s class.

Watch this film: Atanarjuat (Dir. Zacharias Kunuk, 2001) (2 h 52 minutes) https://mcgill.on.worldcat.org/oclc/990038932

disclaimer: graphic sexual scenes, violence


Suggested:


Artists: Johnny Inukpuk, Osuitok Ipeelee, Karoo Ashvak, Helen Kalvak, Kenojuak Ashevak, Jessie Oonark, Annie Pootoogook, David Ruben Piqtoukun, Oviloo Tunnillie

WEEK 5 (September 29th and October 1st): Inuit Art Continued: Atanarjuat

This week will be taken up by a film screening of Atanarjuat, directed by Inuit filmmaker Zacharias Kunuk.

Film Screening: Atanarjuat (Dir. Zacharias Kunuk, 2001) (2 h 52 minutes) (continuation)


Listen to this podcast: Rosanna Deerchild, “Greetings from Iqaluit: Exploring the Strength of Inuit Culture.” Unreserved, May 12, 2019.

https://www.cbc.ca/listen/live-radio/1-105-unreserved/clip/15697720-greetings-iqaluit-exploring-strength-inuit-culture
WEEK 6 (October 6\textsuperscript{th} and 8\textsuperscript{th}): Colonial Representation and the Construction of the Imaginary Indian

**Guest Speaker TBD***

**October 8\textsuperscript{th} – Midterm Distributed on MyCourses**

This week will consider the colonial construction of “authentic Indians” and the strategic tendency – in history painting, anthropology and ethnography – to relegate Indigenous peoples to the past and deny their contemporary existence. We will look at a number of contemporary artists who challenge this form of representation in painting, drawing, photography and performance.

**Readings:**

**Suggested:**


[https://gem.cbc.ca/media/in-the-making/season-1/episode-6/38e815a-00f679f979a](https://gem.cbc.ca/media/in-the-making/season-1/episode-6/38e815a-00f679f979a)

**Artists:** Edward S. Curtis, Jeffrey Thomas, Dana Claxton, Kent Monkman, Shelley Niro, Arthur Renwick, Will Wilson, Frederick Alexsee

WEEK 7 (October 13\textsuperscript{th} and 15\textsuperscript{th}): Work on Midterm

Use this week to complete your midterm

*****DUE: MIDTERM TAKEHOME October 16\textsuperscript{th}*****
WEEK 8 (October 20th and 22nd): Museums, Commodification and Institutional Critique

COMPLETE KNOWLEDGE CHECK 2

This week, we will discuss the politics of museum display and the exhibiting of Indigenous art and culture. We will look at historical exhibition practices and their critique by contemporary artists and curators.


Peter Morin’s museum: read online at https://moa.ubc.ca/exhibition/peter-morins-museum/


Artists: James Luna, Brian Jungen, Kent Monkman, Rebecca Belmore, Peter Morin

Week 9 (October 27th and October 29th): Living Archives and Indigenous Futurity

In this week, we will continue our discussion of resilience within Indigenous communities with particular attention on material culture histories, focusing on grassroots community action on the ground, in the arts and online.


Listen to this podcast: Thistle, Jessie. “Cree Star Knowledge Keeper, Wilfred Buck! With Special Guest Host Rosanna Deerchild.” Homies Chatting.

https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=582630572443327&ref=watch_permalink
Artists: Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun, Skawennati, Sonny Assu

WEEK 10 (November 3rd and November 5th): Inversion, Humour and Irony

***DUE: PEER PAPER PROPOSAL***November 5th for Peer Review

Peer Review Activity of Research Proposal on November 5th: On November 5th, we will not have a formal lecture, we will do a peer-review activity. Please upload a copy of your research proposal to MyCourses and be prepared to discuss your work with your peers. Provide constructive feedback for two of your peers using Peer Grade. Guidelines to be provided.

This week will consider the appropriation and commodification of Indigenous identity and culture, as well as tactics of ironic reversal employed by contemporary artists. We will look closely at a number of case studies that attest to the centrality of humour, irony and “tricksterism” in Indigenous art.


Artists: Terrance Houle, Adrian Stimson, Lori Blondeau, Kent Monkman, Brian Jungen, Sonny Assu


WEEK 11 (November 10th and 12th): Indigenous Materialities: Cultural Belongings and Hands of History

***DUE: FINAL RESEARCH PROPOSAL DUE***November 10th: November 12: Visit an online gallery – (details TBD)

This week we will concentrate on Indigenous materialities. In response to a film screening of the documentary Hands of History, we will examine the interrelations between artists, materials and making.

Watch this Film: Hands of History (Dir. Loretta Todd, 1994) (51 minutes) https://www.nfb.ca/film/hands_of_history/


Artists: Rebecca Belmore, Christi Belcourt, Dana Claxton

WEEK 12 (November 17th and 19th): Gender and Sexuality
COMPLETE KNOWLEDGE CHECK 3

This week we will discuss the effects of the Indian Act, settler colonialism and the Residential School System on the regulation of Indigenous gender and sexuality. We will examine the intersection of queer theory and Indigenous identity politics, specifically in the reclamation of Two-Spirit identification, as well as discussing the social and political consequences of sustained gendered stereotypes.


Artists: Adrian Stimson, Lori Blondeau, Kent Monkman, Shelly Niro, Erica Lord

WEEK 13 (November 24th and 26th): Activism, Resilience and Decolonization

This week, we will examine issues of sovereignty, self-determination and decolonization by focusing on art and activism surrounding land and treaty rights. In response to a film screening of Beau Dick: Revolutionary Spirit we will take the work of Beau Dick as primary case study.


Watch this film Film: Beau Dick: Maker of Monsters- Revolutionary Spirit https://gem.cbc.ca/media/films/maker-of-monsters-the-extraordinary-life-of-beau-dick/38e815a-00ebd987a27


Artists: Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun, Rebecca Belmore, Beau Dick
