



One Year of #MeToo, *The New Yorker*

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
Winter 2022**

ENG 417: Special Topics in American Literature—Sex, Power, and #MeToo

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This is a Professional elective available to English majors (BA English and Double Majors) and ACS English Option students. It is also available as a Professionally Related or Open Elective course to certain programs (please check your program's elective tables to ensure you can take this course for credit). This is NOT a Liberal Studies credit.

The Faculty Course Survey will be administered between: March 19 to 29, 2021 [TBC]

Lecture/seminar schedule

Tuesday 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM Zoom <https://ryerson.zoom.us/j/96148639732>

On-site: ENG106

NB: Students **must** attend their RAMSS-assigned lectures (and seminars/tutorials).

Special Notice Winter 2022: Students are responsible for checking D2L frequently, keeping up with assigned readings and lecture and discussion notes, and submitting assignments on designated dates.

Students are expected to regularly refer to the Ryerson COVID-19

<https://www.ryerson.ca/covid-19/> page for updates on the University's response to COVID-19 and how it impacts their studies.

Zoom, Video, and Recording: Lectures and discussions may be delivered via Zoom or other video formats. The Student Code of Non-Academic Conduct reflects the expectation that students will conduct themselves in a manner consistent with generally accepted standards of behaviour, University regulations and policies, departmental policies, and in compliance with federal, provincial, and municipal laws, as well as professional standards and codes of ethics.

It is important to follow your instructor's instructions about remote course delivery decorum; they will advise you about when to turn your camera and microphone on or off, how to ask questions, and so on. Inappropriate or disrespectful language will not be tolerated. The host/co-hosts (TA/GA, Faculty, or Instructor) reserve the right to remove anyone from university digital spaces who does not behave appropriately.

Online sessions may be recorded. If you do not wish to be seen or heard, keep cameras or microphones turned off, or use an avatar. Participants joining by phone will have their phone numbers masked for privacy. Consult your instructor if you have any questions or concerns.

Academic Integrity and Remote Learning: Course material, including original materials posted on D2L or delivered through video conferencing, are subject to copyright legislation as well as Ryerson's [Senate Policy 60 - Academic Integrity](#). Any attempt to share course materials with third parties outside of the course may be subject to disciplinary measures.

Calendar Description

In this course, students engage an intensive study of a particular topic in American literature organized around a major author or work (e.g., Toni Morrison, *Moby Dick*), an idea (e.g., realism, cultural memory, feminism), genre (e.g., crime fiction, the slave narrative), historical period (e.g., the Civil War, the Beat generation), a region (e.g., Southern literature, New York City), or a literary movement (e.g., Transcendentalism, the Harlem Renaissance, the Black Mountain School).

Detailed Description

In this course, students study American literatures related to the #MeToo Movement, which has had a profound impact in the United States and beyond, with memoirs and non-fiction books and stories able to effect social change. Works to be read include Susan Choi's novel *Trust Exercise* (2019), Ronan Farrow's *Catch and Kill* (2020), Chanel Miller's memoir *Know My Name* (2019), and Kate Elizabeth Russell's *My Dark Vanessa* (2020), which are concerned with harassment and sexual assault, as well as dating, sexuality, and power in contemporary American society. The course also studies some earlier American literatures such as Theodore Dreiser's *The Financier* (1912) to explore historical literary representations of the intersections of sex and power and reveal the inscription of

predatory behavior in literature. To contextualize this literature, students consider the intersection of sex and power in cultural narratives. In addition to class discussions, this course includes guest lectures by and discussions with #MeToo authors.

Delivery Mode

3-hour seminar with the following components: lecture, discussion, colloquia, written reflections, and preparatory workshops.

Course Goal

In engaged discussion, colloquia, and critical response papers, students demonstrate proficiency in the discipline of English studies by applying advanced research methods, critical thinking, and persuasive communication skills to a specialized topic of study.

Student Learning Outcomes

- **Outcome 1.** Students listen and respond to the critical interpretations and positions of others, and clearly articulate their own interpretive positions in effective discussions and debates concerning competing readings, issues, interpretations, and methodologies.
- **Outcome 2.** Students engage critical questions on a specialized topic that allows them to produce convincing analyses of literary form, meaning, and context.
- **Outcome 3.** Students deliver their findings in well-organized, clearly articulated, and engaging oral colloquia and critically engage guest speakers through questions and discussions.
- **Outcome 4.** Students gain critical knowledge on the narratives of the #MeToo movement, discerning the narrative, cultural, legal, and gendered dynamics of this genre.
- **Outcome 5.** Demonstrating in-depth knowledge of a specialized topic, critical thinking, and advanced presenting/writing skills, students write response papers in MLA style, engaging the thematic and the narratives of the #MeToo movement.

Required Texts

Texts are available online at the Ryerson bookstore, or at Chapters/Indigo and Amazon.com/ca.

Susan Choi, *Trust Exercise*. New York: Henry Holt, 2019.

Theodore Dreiser, *The Financier*. New York: Penguin Book, 2008.

Ronan Farrow, *Catch and Kill: Lies, Spies, and Conspiracy to Protect Predators*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2019.

Chanel Miller, *Know My Name: A Memoir*. New York: Penguin, 2019.

Russel, Kate Elizabeth, *My Dark Vanessa*. New York: William Morrow, 2020.

Additional primary and secondary readings, as set out in the Reading Schedule, are available as PDFs on D2L and/or in the library on reserve.

D2L Brightspace

Students are expected to consult the course pages on my.ryerson.ca (D2L Brightspace) for scheduling changes, relevant assigned readings and assignments pertaining to the lecture on a weekly basis.

Assessment

Assignment	Due Date	Value
Colloquium (5 students with 6-7 minutes presentation time each + plus discussion) (colloquium presentation plan is required to be submitted 1 day before the in-class colloquium preparation session)	Varies as set out in schedule	30%
Response Paper 1 on Non-Fiction (1500 words)	By March 1, 2021	20%
Response Paper 2 on Fiction (2000 words)	By April 12, 2021	30%
Participation (in-class + online engagement with reflections and weekly questions for guest speakers)	Ongoing	20%

Please note: Students are encouraged to organize their schedules to submit their assignments **on or before** the due dates. There are no extensions except for extraordinary circumstances or as set out through Academic Accommodations.

Description of Assignments/Assessments**1. Colloquium | *Due date: varies as set out in schedule***

Consists of: Presentation plan and preparation session; colloquium; facilitated discussion.

Each student will participate in one colloquium, responding with a small group of peers to one of the week's assigned readings. Each colloquium participant is responsible for a short presentation (6-7 minutes), which must be coordinated with the rest of the group, and the ensuing discussion (10-15 minutes). The presentation should not summarize the plot or provide extensive background/historical information; *instead, it should make a focused argument about a particular aspect of the reading assignment. Your focus should be on bringing out particularly interesting facets of the text that are not obvious at first reading.* The expectation is that you research your week's reading(s) and develop an angle for talking about them critically/theoretically – in other words, an argument is necessary. Introduce your theoretical frame (gender, feminist, race-theory, socio-

economic, body-theory, etc, or intersections thereof) and use them as a “jump-off” point. You can involve additional secondary readings or theories as the basis of your argument and for your analysis. For more clarity, you are encouraged to use additional theories and works in addition to the week’s readings but must address the week’s readings.

In working with your colloquium colleagues, make your presentation interesting and rhetorically strong. You can use PowerPoint to enhance your presentation visually, though PowerPoint is not mandatory. If you use PowerPoint, make sure it’s not too text heavy. For example, it not advisable to put your thesis or argument on a slide; focus on interesting visuals instead and be sure to give them a source caption in MLA style.

Each colloquium should conclude with some thoughts on the significance of the collective research before opening discussion to the class by first inviting feedback and questions from the class and instructor/s. In addition, colloquium presenters should come prepared with discussion questions arising from the colloquium to smoothly continue and deepen the discussion.

Your grade will be based on your colloquium plan, workshop preparation session (one week prior to the colloquium), and your “live” performance: the presentation’s clarity, coherence, depth of argument, and ability to engage your classmates as well as the overall coherence with the colloquium.

Presentation Plan: *The week before (no later than Monday 4 PM) your assigned colloquium workshop date, your colloquium team must turn in a 1-page plan (via email) for your colloquium, specifying which themes and approaches you will use and what your main arguments about the primary text will be. The plan is worth 5% of your total grade for this assignment; late plans will be accepted but penalized as per the course policies.*

2. A Series of 2 Response Papers | Due dates: March 1 (On Non-Fiction) and April 12 (On Fiction) at the beginning of class

Consists of: 1,500-word and 2,000-word papers written in MLA style, the shorter one responding to 1-2 non-fiction texts and the longer one to 1-2 works of fiction

The Response Papers present in-depth reflections on a pertinent topic or question with respect to the #MeToo literature. Please refer to the topics and questions listed below in this syllabus, under Topics and Questions, on pp. 8-9. You can choose one singular topic and question or combine a couple of topics and questions, ensuring the essay’s cohesion with a clear argument/thesis and evidence.

The Response Papers must be double-spaced with standard margins. Use **12 Times New Roman font** and format your paper using the MLA style. For examples, please refer to the Purdue Online Writing Lab at: <https://bit.ly/3qCpxTG>

3. Participation | Due date: Ongoing**Consists of: in-class discussion and online engagement**

Participation consists of attendance, in-class discussion, as well as weekly written reflections and weekly preparation of written questions. Participation and engagement of in-class discussion are essential to this course, as are attendance and preparedness.

This class does not operate on a drop-in basis, so please do not arrive late, or leave early, and do not schedule outside appointments during class time.

Course Schedule

*Asterisk signifies optional readings

Week	Date	Topic	Readings
1	Tu, Jan 18	Introduction to Course	Overview of Syllabus
2	Tu, Jan 25	Predators in American Literature	Theodore Dreiser, <i>The Financier</i> , pp. 1-155.
3	Tu, Feb 1	#MeToo, Predators, and the American Media <i>Guest: Jennifer L. Airey, University of Tulsa</i>	Ronan Farrow, <i>Catch and Kill</i> Jennifer L. Airey, “#MeToo”
4	Tu, Feb 8	#MeToo, Memoir, and American Justice <i>Guests: Deborah J. Cohan, University of South Carolina Beaufort and Basuli Deb, Columbia University</i>	Chanel Miller, <i>Know My Name</i> Deborah J. Cohan, <i>Welcome to Wherever We Are: A Memoir of Family, Caregiving, and Redemption</i> , excerpt https://bit.ly/3JX87IU
5	Tu, Feb 15	#MeToo and Digital Activism <i>Guest: Victoria Hetherington, Toronto</i>	Chanel Miller, <i>Know My Name</i> Kasey Jones-Matrona, “From #MMIW to #NotInvisible: Indigenous Women in the #MeToo Era,” 83-97. *Paromita Pain, “‘It took me Quite a Long Time to Develop a Voice’: Digital Activism in the Indian #MeToo Movement,” 3139-3155.
6	Tu, Feb 22	Reading Week No Classes	

7	Tu, Mar 1	<p>#MeToo, Autofiction, and Growing Up</p> <p><i>Guest: Breanne Fahs, Arizona State University</i></p> <p>*DUE*: Response Paper on Non-Fiction</p>	<p>Kate Russell, <i>My Dark Vanessa</i></p> <p>Breanne Fahs, "The Politics of Turning Rape into 'Non-consensual Sex'"</p>
8	Tu, Mar 8	<p>#MeToo, Autofiction, and Growing Up</p>	<p>Kate Russell, <i>My Dark Vanessa</i></p>
9	Tu, Mar 15	<p>#MeToo, Memory, and Performance</p> <p><i>Guest: Heather R. Hlavka, Marquette University</i></p>	<p>Susan Choi, <i>Trust Exercise</i></p> <p>Heather R. Hlavka, "Youth and Sexual Harassment: From #MeToo to #MeTooK12"</p>
10	Tu, Mar 22	<p>#MeToo, Memory, and Performance</p> <p><i>Guest: Susan Choi, Yale University, Author of Trust Exercise</i></p>	<p>Susan Choi, <i>Trust Exercise</i></p>
11	Tu, Mar 29	<p>#MeToo, Visual Art, and Healing</p> <p><i>Guest: Kathy Kranias, Toronto #MeToo artist</i></p>	<p>Kathy Kranias, "Making, Material and Orientation: My Process in Clay" and "A Passionate Career" https://www.kathykranias.com/writing</p> <p>Irina Aristarkhova, "#MeTo in the Art World: Genius Should Not Excuse Sexual Harassment." <i>The Conversation</i> 3 May 2018. https://bit.ly/3HUK2Wd</p> <p>*Bennett, Jill. "The Aesthetics of Sense-Memory: Theorising Trauma through the Visual Arts." <i>Regimes of Memory</i>, pp. 27-39.</p>
12	Tu, April 5	<p>Class Learning Reflection and Workshop for Papers</p>	
13	Tu, April 12	<p>*DUE*: Response Paper on Fiction</p>	

Topics and Questions for Response Papers

How reliable is memory? How does the author deal with the question of credibility? Who is believable in the text and why?

What did she wear? Consider sexual assault and the role of fashion, clothing, textiles. To what extent does fashion dis/empower and restore?

How does temporality figure in the text? Is there a seasonal rhythm? Does time speed up and contract in ways that impact the narrative and the fate of the protagonist?

What is the role between gender roles and sexual assault? How is gender constructed and disrupted?

What is the impact of race and class in the treatment of survivors of sexual assault? How does the text draw attention to an intersectional problematic?

What is the role of the law? To what extent does the law help construct justice and to what extent does it create barriers? Does the text offer ways of overcoming barriers?

What is the relationship between silence and speaking also in relation to the existing social norms? Does speaking automatically effect social change? See Sunstein's book *How Change Happens* (2019).

How does the text encode injustices using symbolic language? How does the text experiment rhetorically to express injustice?

How does the memoir narrative construct the narrating I? How is this first-person I constructed as a shifting, fragmented and yet cohesive narrator?

How is the body (e.g., hair, limbs) framed in the narration of the sexual assault (or the narration of the so-called "grooming" process of children and teens)? What role does the wounded body play? Consider incorporating body theory.

In *Know My Name*, the therapist tells the protagonist to "hold your wounded self." How is trauma represented? What are the strategies of self/healing?

The media has played a huge role in the #MeToo movement. Consider the role of the media including social media in framing of survivors and perpetrators.

What is the role of intertextuality, or the cross-referencing of the American literary tradition in the literatures of the #MeToo movement?

How is violence represented in the text? Does the text use graphic representation or strategies of indirection? How does an author-survivor revisit a traumatic event?

Other? Pitch your own topic and questions.

University Policies

Students are reminded that they are required to adhere to all relevant university policies found in their online course shell in D2L and/or on the following URL:

<http://ryerson.ca/senate/course-outline-policies>

English Department Policies

The following Department policies may no longer apply during winter 2021 remote teaching. Please refer to instructor adaptations and comments related to participation and technology for online teaching under Other Course/Instructor Policies.

Attendance and Participation:

Seminars and in-class activities provide the foundation for all coursework. Regular attendance is expected of all students.

A core objective of the BA Honours English degree and English courses is to develop a sophisticated ability to communicate information, arguments, and analyses in oral format. Participation marks measure students' ability to articulate well-reasoned and well-supported analysis of reading materials and respond meaningfully and considerately to the ideas of their classmates. Students cannot earn participation marks for classes from which they are absent.

Use of Technology in Classroom:

The misuse of technology, which includes texting, web browsing, online gaming, video and movie watching, will not be permitted in any English Department courses. If approved by individual instructors, electronic devices may be used during lectures or seminars (tutorials) strictly for course-related purposes — note-taking, online reading, and assignments/exercises. Refusal to comply with this policy may result in the loss of electronic privileges for the term and the dismissal of a student from a lecture. Mobile phones and tablets must be fully turned off for the duration of each class.

Late Policy:

The penalty for late submission in the Department of English is 5% per day up to a maximum of seven days. Assignments submitted more than seven days after the due date will not be reviewed and will receive a grade of zero, unless there is a documented medical reason or an extension has been granted on the basis of documented compassionate grounds. Academic consideration for late or missed assignments must be requested as outlined in the Senate Academic Consideration Policy:

<https://www.ryerson.ca/content/dam/senate/policies/pol167.pdf>

Other Course/Instructor Policies

Student Resources

Academic Integrity <http://www.ryerson.ca/academicintegrity/>

Academic Accommodation Support

<http://www.ryerson.ca/studentlearningsupport/academic-accommodation-support>

Personal counselling (free + confidential) <http://www.ryerson.ca/counselling/index.html>

Financial Assistance <https://www.ryerson.ca/sfa/>

Learning Support <http://www.ryerson.ca/studentlearningsupport/index.html>

Medical Centre <http://www.ryerson.ca/healthandwellness/medicalcentre/>

Ryerson Student Union <http://www.rsuonline.ca/index.php>

Student Affairs <http://www.ryerson.ca/studentaffairs//index.html>

Writing Support <http://www.ryerson.ca/studentlearningsupport/writing-support/index.html>

Ryerson Library RULA <https://library.ryerson.ca/>

Ryerson calendar and student guide <https://www.ryerson.ca/calendar/>