



English 4871G (570)
Winter 2026
Seminar in Literary Studies

Course Information:

Calendar Description: Topics will vary from year to year. Please consult Department for current offerings.

Prerequisite(s): 1.0 from English 3000-3999 or permission of the Department.

Anti-requisite(s):

Extra Information: 3 hours.

Course Weight: 0.50 **Breadth:** Category B

Subject Code: ENGLISH

Notice: Unless you have either the requisites for this course (fulfilment of pre-requisites, no anti-requisite conflicts), or 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 pre-requisites.

ENGLISH 4871G (570): (auto)affective (dis)order(s)

Department of English, French & Writing
King's University College
Winter 2025

Section: 570
Instructor: Coby Dowdell
Meetings: Mondays, 2:30-5:20 pm

Virtual Office Hours: Tuesdays, 9:00 am- 12 pm,
or by appointment
Email: cdowdel2@uwo.ca

COURSE PREREQUISITES

1.0 from English 2200-2250, English 3200-3210, [Theatre Studies 3205F/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

In 1899, Sigmund Freud published *The Interpretation of Dreams*, introducing the West to, what Carolyn Laubender calls a mode of self-analysis characterized by the "deconstruction of self-narration" (40). Since World War II, public interest in self-narratives, autobiographies, and personal memoirs has only increased; but what do contemporary readers seek in the tell-all memoir? Is it even possible to tell everything? What does it mean to capture in writing the "essence" or "truth" (whatever that might mean) of the individual Self? Counterintuitively, how might life-writing challenge the humanist insistence on a coherent, fully narratable individual Life? This seminar considers various kinds of (auto)affective writing (e.g., creative nonfiction, lyric memoir, fictocriticism, etc.). Traditionally a forum for self-expression within female, queer, disabled, and/or racialized communities, (auto)affective narratives challenge the social, cultural and narrative assumptions of traditional auto/biographical writing, revealing the inability of the supposedly "right" kinds of "human" stories to account for the affective plurality of diverse lifeworlds.

Brian Massumi insists that "affect is intensity" and that "intensity is the unassimilable" (*Parables of the Virtual* 41, 27). As a consequence of its unassimilable nature, affect resists capture from "meaningful sequencing, from narration" (*Parables* 25); it is, by its very nature, supplementary, that which eludes, that which slips through our grasp. As Jennifer Duggan and Libe García Zarranz put it, affect is "a reverberation, a resonance, a wavering voice" ("Affect and/as Pedagogy"). It is that which passes between; affect refuses to be localized in *that* space or *this* instance. Accumulating in nonlinear movements, affect luxuriates in circularity and feedback loops. And yet, as Tyrone S. Palmer argues, if affect directs us to the "connective thread between bodies and worlds...[as] defined by the grammars of relation and becoming," affect theory "has yet to substantially account for ... the particular affective dispositions that emerge in reaction to processes of racialization and racial subjugation, or the ways in which affect serves as an exploitable tool of racial domination and anti-blackness" ("What Feels More than Feeling?" 35).

Using relevant concepts from psychoanalytic, feminist/queer/trans*, critical race, and narrative theory, we will assess the extent to which the consumption of (auto)affective writings constitutes an ethical relation to stories we cannot share? If literature, as Eileen John insists, "seems to be rather persuasively in the empathy business"(306), what does it mean to consume and be consumed by the lived experiences of

others, lived experiences we can neither know nor imagine? How do we negotiate the "privilege" of vicarious suffering? "What are the social conditions," Keith Berry asks, "that make [the affective] performance of the consumed self possible, or even necessary?" (21). What might we say about the performance of being affected by the trauma of the Other, of inserting ourselves "in" their stories? To what degree does the consumption of other peoples' self-narratives threaten to appropriate the Other's lived experiences as fodder for the reader's own affective performance?

REQUIRED READINGS

N.B. The appended list represents a short list of possible sources, from which we will collectively develop our study schedule during the first couple of weeks. In anticipation, I have ordered copies of each book; however, the finalized list will be guided by student interest and will be significantly shorter.

- Roland Barthes, Roland Barthes (Routledge). (\$22)
- Maggie Nelson, The Argonauts (Graywolf). (\$23)
- Sedgwick, A Dialogue on Love (\$26)
- Dionne Brand, A Map to the Door of No Return (Vintage). (\$22)
- Billy Ray Belcourt, The History of My Brief Body (Penguin). (\$19.95)
- Alice Wong, The Year of the Tiger: An Activist's Life (Vintage). (\$23)
- Carmen Machado, In a Dream House (Strange Light). (\$24.95)
- Kate Bornstein, Gender Outlaw (\$23)
- Ander Monson. Predator: A Memoir, a Movie, an Obsession (Greywolf). (\$22)

+ supplementary works, to be made available via OWL.

COURSE-LEVEL LEARNING OUTCOMES

- To identify and analyze various kinds of (auto)affective writing (e.g., autotheory, creative nonfiction, lyric memoir, fictocriticism, etc.) by examining works from a variety of cultural traditions.
- To appreciate how various forms of life-writing theorize their own practices, and deconstruct humanist insistences on a coherent, fully narratable individual Life.
- To create an infrastructure for actively dismantling racism, homo/transphobia, misogyny, gender-based discrimination/violence, linguicism, and ableism through the questions we ask, the answers we pose, and the work we do as scholars and academics.
- To approach critical thinking as both an academic and personal/experiential practice, establishing an original voice in dialogue both with a larger community of thinkers and with their own lived experience.
- To further develop critical thinking and writing skills, particularly how to contextualize literature and effectively integrate critical theory and analytical practice. We will focus on (i) linking individual textual passages to larger themes and ideas; (ii) creating complex arguments or sustained claims; (iii) developing our research skills and information literacy, with attention to the politics of citation practices; (iv) forging an academic style; (v) and learning to revise and edit our work.

- To further develop research skills such as assessing, synthesizing and effectively communicating your knowledge in discussion and in writing, with the goal of modelling an academic dialogue that recognizes diversity in intellectual traditions, cognitive styles, and epistemic frameworks.

METHOD OF EVALUATION

ASSIGNMENT	WEIGHT	DUE DATE
Discussion Posts	30%	Weeks 2-12
Participation	10%	Weeks 2-12
Project Proposal	15%	Tba, Week 2
Moderation	10%	Individual student sign-up
Seminar Presentation	20%	Individual student sign-up
Response Presentation	15%	Individual student sign-up

KING'S UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
GENERAL COURSE POLICIES
2025-2026

1. Academic Accommodations, Consideration for Absences

Academic Accommodation (Accessibility)

Accessibility Services works to ensure that academic programs are accessible to all students, and supports students who may have a condition related to, but not limited to, vision, hearing, mobility, different ways of learning, mental health, chronic illnesses, chronic pain, autism spectrum disorder, ADD/ADHD, and temporary conditions (beyond short-term academic consideration). Accessibility Services provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive assessment. The accommodation policy can be found here [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#). Information on Accessibility Services at King's can be found [here](#).

Academic Consideration for Student Absence

If a student is unable to meet a course requirement due to substantial but temporary extenuating circumstances (medical or compassionate), they should follow the procedures below.

In some cases, where instructors have built flexibility into their assessments, this flexibility will already address consideration needs.

Requests for academic consideration should be directed to the Academic Advising Office of your faculty/college of registration. Requests must be made as soon as possible and no later than 48 hours after the missed assessment.

As a rule, documentation is required for academic consideration. For academic consideration requests on medical grounds, the Student Medical Certificate is available at https://www.kings.uwo.ca/kings/assets/File/currentStudents/courses_enrollment/exams_and_tests/SMC-Feb-2025.pdf.

Students are permitted one academic consideration request without supporting documentation per term per course.

Instructors may designate one assessment per half-course weight as requiring formal supporting documentation. Please refer to the course outline for each course.

Please note that Friday Make-Up Exams may only be written with the instructor's consent.

For further information, please see:

https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf

Absences from Final Examinations

If you miss the Final Exam, contact the Academic Advising Office of your faculty/college of registration as soon as you are able to do so. They will assess your eligibility to write the Special Examination (the name given by the University to a makeup Final Exam).

You may also be eligible to write the Special Exam if you are in a “Multiple Exam Situation” (e.g., more than 2 exams in 23-hour period, or more than 3 exams in a 47-hour period).

If a student fails to write a scheduled Special Examination, the date of the next Special Examination (if granted) normally will be the scheduled date for the final exam the next time this course is offered. The maximum course load for that term will be reduced by the credit of the course(s) for which the final examination has been deferred. See the Academic Calendar for details (under [Special Examinations](#)).

Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give notice in writing to the instructor and Academic Advising Office if a course requirement will be affected by a religious holiday/observance. Notice must be given as early as possible, and no later than two weeks prior to an examination, and one week prior to a midterm test date. It is the responsibility of such students to inform themselves concerning the work done in classes from which they are absent and to take appropriate action.

2. Support Services

Accessibility, Counselling and Student Development at King’s University College:

<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/student-services/>

Students experiencing emotional or mental health distress can access services at King’s University College: <http://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/campus-services/student-support-services/personal-counselling/>

Good2talk is a good online and phone 24/7 resource for students and is available in English, Mandarin, and French: <https://good2talk.ca>, 1-866-925-5454

MentalHealth@Western provides a complete list of options about how to obtain help:

https://www.uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/

Academic Support Services at King’s University College:

<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/academic-resources/>

GBSV Support:

King’s is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at:

<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/about-kings/safe-campus/gender-and-sexual-violence/>

You can reach someone supports at Kings by emailing Care@kings.uwo.ca or calling 519-930-4640 to reach a social worker who can offer help.

You can also reach Western's Gender-Based Violence & Survivor Support Case Manager by [email](#) or by calling 519-661-3568.

Further supports can be found on this website: <https://www.kings.uwo.ca/about-kings/safe-campus/gender-and-sexual-violence/>

See also https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html

University Students' Council offers many valuable support services for students, including the health insurance plan: <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

3. Statement on Use of Electronic Devices

Use of Electronic Devices: Unless explicitly stated otherwise, you are not allowed to have a cell phone, or any other electronic device, with you during tests or examinations. Unauthorized possession of such a device during a test or examination constitutes an academic offence.

Use of Laptops, Tablets, and Smartphones in the Classroom: King's University College at Western University acknowledges the integration of new technologies and learning methods into the curriculum. The use of electronic devices such as laptop computers, tablets, or smartphones can contribute to student engagement and effective learning. At the same time, King's recognizes that instructors and students share jointly the responsibility to establish and maintain a respectful classroom environment conducive to learning.

The use of electronic devices by students during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., shall be for matters related to the course at hand only. Students found to be using electronic devices for purposes not directly related to the class may be subject to sanctions under the Student Code of Conduct; see <https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/student-affairs/code-of-student-conduct1/>

Inappropriate use of electronics (e.g., laptops, tablets, smartphones) during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., creates a significant disruption. As a consequence, instructors may choose to limit the use of electronic devices in these settings. In addition, in order to provide a safe classroom environment, students attending in-person class sessions are strongly advised to operate laptops with batteries rather than power cords.

4. Statement on Academic Offences

King's is committed to academic integrity. Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, is posted at http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

It is expected that students will submit work that is truly their own, completed without external assistance (human or artificial) except as explicitly permitted by the course instructor. Check with you instructor on what tools, including generative AI (ChatGPT, translation tools, grammar-checking tools) are permitted in the course. Because a tool is permitted in one course, that does not mean it is permitted in other courses.

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; see <https://elearningtoolkit.uwo.ca/tools/Originality Reports - TurnItIn.html>.

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

5. Copyright of Course Material

Lectures and course materials, including PowerPoint presentations, tests, outlines, and similar materials are protected by copyright. Faculty members are the exclusive owner of copyright in those materials they create. Students may take notes and make copies for their own use. Students may not allow others to reproduce or distribute lecture notes and course materials publicly (whether or not a fee is charged) without the express written consent of a faculty member. Unauthorized sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

Similarly, students own copyright in their own original papers and exam essays. If a faculty member wishes to post a student's answers or papers on the course website, they should ask for the student's written permission.

6. Use of Recordings

Participants in this course are not permitted to record the sessions, except where recording is an approved accommodation and/or the participant has the prior written permission of the instructor. Unauthorized recording and/or sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

7. Policy on Attendance

Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course, will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course, after due warning has been given. On the recommendation of the department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course.

