

The University of Western Ontario  
Department of English  
**Precarity: Reading Risk and Responsibility in the Shadow of Neoliberalism**  
English 9147B

**Contact Information:**

**Instructor:** Dr. Pauline Wakeham  
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**Class Meetings:** Thursdays from 9:30 a.m. to 12:20 p.m. in Lawson Hall 2205

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and Thursdays from 2:45 to 4:45 p.m.

**Course Description:**

What does it mean to be precariously situated in the contemporary era? How is precarity produced, lived, felt, and distributed, and how is it being challenged? This course will explore these questions through a reading of contemporary literary and critical texts that interrogate the economic rationalization of slow forms of lethality and the ways in which these forms of harm are often occluded by the privatization of risk and responsibility and the economic rationalization of slow forms of lethality. We will also explore how these forms of harm are being challenged through contemporary literary and critical texts that interrogate the economic rationalization of slow forms of lethality and the ways in which these forms of harm are often occluded by the privatization of risk and responsibility and the economic rationalization of slow forms of lethality.

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have often been occluded by the privatization of risk and responsibility and  
economic rationalization of slow forms of lethality. We will explore how these forms of harm  
outside « W K H S X U Y L H Z - R i v e r D F R S I S R W D F O U H F G L D ´

Such conditions of obfuscation necessitate new analytics for tracing current arrangements  
of power and for making sense of the ways in which these forms of harm are being challenged. We will explore how these forms of harm are being challenged through contemporary literary and critical texts that interrogate the economic rationalization of slow forms of lethality and the ways in which these forms of harm are often occluded by the privatization of risk and responsibility and the economic rationalization of slow forms of lethality.

**Course Texts:**

Aravind Adiga, *The White Tiger* (Available at the UWO Bookstore)  
Thomas King, *The Back of the Turtle* (Available at the UWO Bookstore)

All other readings are available online (where URLs are provided) or as PDF documents available on a memory stick.

**Assignments:**

- Two 2-3 page (double spaced) response papers.

and draw connections or reflect on points of divergence between them. In this sense, the goal is to put the assigned readings for the week together in critical conversation. Students might also wish to raise a question or two for further thought or discussion.

**Guidelines for Seminar Presentations:**

- Seminar presentations should succinctly and briefly outline the arguments developed in the critical essays and analyze key themes and strategies of the readings assigned for the day. **A strong presentation, however, must go much further than merely rehear**



**January 26: Precarious Life and the Politics of Grievability**

Judith Butler, Precarious Life, Grievability

**February 2: Case Study in Precarity and Grievability: Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women**

Rebecca Moren, Mourning and the Culture of Redress: Mayerthorpe, Air India, and Murdered or Missing Aboriginal Women

This paper was presented at the 2015 Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association in Denver, CO. It is available online at: <http://www.rebeccabelmore.com/video/Vigil.html>

Rebecca Moren, "Mourning and the Culture of Redress: Mayerthorpe, Air India, and Murdered or Missing Aboriginal Women," *Journal of American Studies*, 49(1), 2015, pp. 1-27. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/indigenous-women-ask-am-i-next-to-raise-awareness-about-missing-and-murdered-1.2757295>

**February 9: Economies of Abandonment in Late Liberalism**

Rebecca Moren, "Economies of Abandonment in Late Liberalism," *Journal of American Studies*, 49(1), 2015, pp. 28-50. This paper was presented at the 2015 Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association in Denver, CO. It is available online at: <http://www.rebeccabelmore.com/video/Economies%20of%20Abandonment%20in%20Late%20Liberalism.html>

**February 16: Professor away presenting a paper at another university**

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Vulnerable, from Ferguson to Flint and Beyond

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<http://www.thefeministwire.com/2014/10/blacklivesmatter/>

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<https://frankroberts.files.wordpress.com/2012/10/audrelordepoems.pdf>

**March 30: Slow Violence and Ecosystemic Precarity**

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**April 6: Slow and Fast Violence: The Multiple Temporalities of Ecological Crisis**

Thomas King, The Back of the Turtle