

HIST 424: Problems in the Cultural History of Canada “Breaking 150 – Alternative Canadian Histories”

Instructor: Madeline Knickerbocker (mknicker@sfu.ca); office: AQ 6243
Monday, AQ 5009, 9:30-1:20



“Pierre Elliot Trudeau's and Jean Chrétien's White Paper Policy Dream,” Lawrence Paul Yuscovitch, 1994.

On the cusp of the 150th anniversary of Canada’s Confederation, this course seeks to tug at the loose ends to unravel the overarching narrative of Canadian history. Understanding “cultural history” broadly, this course explores distinctions in cultural forms (“high” versus “low” culture); emphasizes a diversity of non-conventional historical sources; and focuses on communities and experiences of the Canadian past not often central in textbooks, the media, or government and popular histories.

Each week, we will examine a different cultural element as both an aspect of Canadian histories and as a primary source. These include: food and drink, visual art, print media, music, sports and dance, material culture, photography, literature, and film and television. Course content focuses on people, communities, and events frequently left out of Canadian survey courses. This approach provides access to the everyday lives of a wide range of people who lived in Canada, while also speaking back to the dominant narratives of Canadian history. As we proceed, we will ask ourselves “so what?” – why does knowing about alternative cultural histories of Canada matter to us today?

By the end of the semester, students will: be able to explain how a cultural historical approach explodes common tropes in Canadian history; have the capacity to assess unconventional historical sources; and be poised to respond in meaningful ways to the commemoration of Canadian Confederation.

Course Assignments

Seminar Participation	25%
Reading Responses	15%
Letter to the Editor	25%
Creative Assignment	35%

Course Texts

- Cecilia Morgan, *Commemorating Canada: History, Heritage, and Memory, 1850s-1990s* (tbc)
- Course readings available online

Prerequisites

45 units, including 9 units of lower-division history; or permission of the instructor.
Recommended: HIST 101 or 102W.