

**FW 2023-24**

<p><b>AP/EN 4004 6.0A (Y)</b></p>	<p><b><i>Canadian Seers/Apocalypse and Alchemy: Marshall McLuhan &amp; Northrop Frye (and Others)</i></b></p>
<p><b>Course Director:</b></p>	<p>Professor B.W. Powe Office: 632 Atkinson College Ext. 33775 e-mail: bpowe@yorku.ca other information: Office Hours, Thursdays 3 until 5 or by appointment</p>
<p><b>Time:</b></p>	<p>Thursdays, 11:30 am until 2:30 pm</p>
<p><b>Delivery Format:</b></p>	<p><b>ONLINE</b></p>
<p><b>Description:</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><i>Apocalypse and Alchemy</i></b>: this course explores the Canadian visionary presence of Marshall McLuhan and Northrop Frye. It's devoted to engaging the perceptions and thoughts, the provocative and inspiring works of these hugely influential thinkers of mass media and the role of literature. We study their seminal impact on writers and artists, and how literary and cinema works reflect and evoke their imaginative, prophetic propositions.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">In Term One we focus on McLuhan, the inventor of <i>Media Ecology</i>. Our text will be <i>The Book of Probes</i>. We'll examine his most well-known aphorisms, and the explorations and discoveries he made into the hyper-media realm. In McLuhan's wrote in elliptical epigrams, fragments, mixed modes, what called probes, to record the breakthroughs of new media and their effects on sensibilities and consciousness.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>McLuhan sought codes that operated through the effects of electronic media. He called electronic media the new texts of Nature—a second creation. His work took on poetic eloquence and allusiveness. Can he be understood as our first poet-theorist of media?</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">We'll discuss McLuhan's attempts to frame a <i>Media Ecology</i> for the new environments that communication technologies—AI, ChatGPT4, Bing and</p>

Bard, TV, PCs, radio—generate. We also focus on his last urgent utterances and their prophetic attempts to awaken media users.

Term Two is devoted to exploring works by Northrop Frye.

*Frye's defense of deep reading centres on the cultivation and practice of imaginative inwardness.*

Frye's studies began in the poetry and art of William Blake in the canon-changing book, *Fearful Symmetry*. In that work Frye presents the awareness that there is a deep underlying mythic-poetic-structure to literature. We'll explore how imaginative-spiritual knowledge burst through in his work, beginning with *The Educated Imagination*, *The Double Vision*, and especially *The Great Code*. In these he asks, *why read? what is the importance of cultivating literary inwardness?* His books teach us to become aware of what words can do to enhance consciousness.

Frye sought aesthetic unity behind chaos to present principles of awareness and perception through transformations of the meaning of poetics. We'll call his approach *Literary Ecology*. He thought cosmos could be comprehended through the codes buried in the metaphors of literary works. We'll concentrate on his synoptic works *The Educated Imagination*, *The Double Vision* and *The Great Code*.

We'll engage their conflicting rhetorical approaches: McLuhan, the prankster and punster, the prophet of e-media and the subliminal environments of electricity; Frye, the seemingly detached scholar whose muted prose masked heretical thinking, sublime intentions. Both obsessed with the meaning of the word, "apocalypse"; both sometimes at odds with each other. *What do their inspirations and observations, their pursuits of codes and laws, say to us now? Is there something audaciously Canadian in their alchemies?*

Category:

A

Historical Requirement:

N/A

<p>Requirements:</p>	<p><b>4004 Course Requirements, fall/winter, 2023-2024</b></p> <p><i>First term:</i> essay on McLuhan: What is the meaning of the aphorisms, ‘<i>The Medium is the Massage?</i>’ and ‘User is Content?’ (20%) Due in October.</p> <p><i>Second term:</i> essay on Northrop Frye, subject matter responding to one of the following questions: 1. What is the educated imagination? 2. How does the double vision appear in a work of art? (20%) Due in February.</p> <p><i>Take home test</i> on McLuhan and Frye and the course Readings, end of second term. (30%) Due in April.</p> <p><i>Class Presentations</i> in groups on the writers and poets we’ll be exploring. (20%) Both Terms.</p> <p><i>Class participation</i>, oral skills and engagements with class debates, originality of research and readings in class. (10%)</p>
<p>Reading List:</p>	<p><i>Reading List</i> EN 4004, Fall/Winter 2023-2024 (This is the order in which these works will be read and presented.)</p> <p><b>Term 1</b></p> <p>Media Environments: alphabet to allforabit, from AEIOU to AI</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Marshall McLuhan, <i>The Book of Probes</i> (selections)</li> <li>2. Kathy Acker, <i>Empire of the Senseless</i></li> <li>3. Paolo Granata, <i>Media Ecology</i> (selections)/Mael Renouard, <i>Fragments of an Infinite Memory: My Life with the Internet</i> (selections)</li> <li>4. Patricia Lockwood, <i>No One is Talking About This</i></li> </ol>

5. Douglas Coupland/Shumon Basar, *The Extreme Self: The 21<sup>st</sup> century is about who belongs to what*
6. Jeanette Winterson, *The Powerbook*
7. Two works of cinema: *Blade Runner* and *Blade Runner 2049*; with a reading of Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*
8. Don DeLillo, *Zero K*

### **Term 2**

Cultivating Inwardness: Practices for the Imagination

1. Northrop Frye, *The Educated Imagination*
2. Patti Smith, *Devotion*
3. Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*
4. Northrop Frye, *The Double Vision*
5. William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*
6. Northrop Frye, *The Great Code* (selections)
7. Anne Carson, prose poem "The Anthropology of Water," in *Plainwater/Float* (selections)
8. Susan Howe, *My Emily Dickinson* (selections)/ Simone Weil, *Gravity and Grace* (selections)

(All books available at the York bookstore.)

**Open To:**

Yr 4 H (EN, ENPR, CRWR students only)