ENGL 448: Special Topic in Canadian Literature: Re-thinking Atwood through *The Handmaid’s Tale*

Instructor: Misao Dean
Email: mdean@uvic.ca

Course description:
In 2017 Margaret Atwood’s seemed to be everywhere. *The Handmaid’s Tale* enjoyed a revival, with reviewers and columnists remarking on its “grotesque timeliness” and uncanny parallels to the Trump era. Women dressed as Handmaids protested cuts to Planned Parenthood in the US, and a television adaptation of the novel won an Emmy for Outstanding Drama Series. In the same year, many young scholars and writers in Canada declared they were "breaking up with CanLit” because they were disappointed by Atwood’s support for Steven Galloway in the “UBC Accountable” controversy, and more generally by the continued dominance of the literary field by white authors like Atwood. In this course we will debate these controversies, and try to put them in the context of Atwood’s long career by studying a selection of her novels, poems, and essays.

Proposed assignments:
Four (short) position papers: 40%
Research essay: 30%
Exam: 30%

Proposed reading list:
*The Journals of Susanna Moodie; The Handmaid’s Tale; Cat’s Eye; Oryx and Crake; Good Bones;* a selection of essays and poems.