

Sophister Module Description Template

“The Pain of Unbelonging”: Writing from Canada, South America, and the Pacific

2026-27

Full Name: “The Pain of Unbelonging”: Writing from Canada, South America, and the Pacific

Short Name: The Pain of Unbelonging

Lecturer Name and Email Address: Melanie Otto, ottom@tcd.ie

ECTS Weighting: 10

Semester Taught: MT 2026

Year: JS

Module Content:

On this module, we study literatures produced in the context of settler nations, focusing in particular on writing and visual art from Canada, Latin/South America, Australia, and New Zealand. We will look at writers and artists of settler descent as well as indigenous and immigrant narratives and how each of them negotiate issues of place, race, and belonging. Texts include poetry, novels, and short fiction, as well as theoretical engagements with settler colonialism, landscape painting, and histories of migration.

Learning Outcomes:

- identify central themes in the literatures of settler colonies
- recognize and analyse themes and theories central to the study of the literatures of settler cultures
- examine the connection between history, politics, and the arts in the context of settler nations
- reflect and write critically on any topic in the areas studied

Learning Aims:

Central questions include:

- How do the writers and artists on the module engage with landscape and place?
- How does this engagement impact on the poetics and aesthetics of their work?
- To what extent does relationship to place affect indigenous and non-indigenous belonging and/or unbelonging?
- How is belonging (indigenous and non-indigenous) entangled with the history of colonialism?

Assessment Details:

- **1 close reading** exercise, **1000-15000 words**, counting **30%** of the overall mark
- **1 essay**, **4000-4500 words**, counting **70%** of the overall mark

Preliminary reading list:

Critical Reflections:

Clarice Lispector, "Belonging"

Germaine Greer, "The Pain of Unbelonging"

Lorenzo Veracini, "The Settler-Colonial Situation"

Nicholas Thomas, "Landscapes: Possession and Dispossession"

Richard Gott, "Latin America as a White Settler Society"

Literary and Visual Texts:

Shaun Tan, *The Arrival* and *The Lost Thing*

Margaret Atwood, *The Journals of Susanna Moodie*; "Death by Landscape" from *Wilderness Tips*

Michael Ondaatje, *In the Skin of Lion*

Emily Carr, *Klee Wyck*

Visual art by Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo

Wilson Harris, *Palace of the Peacock*

The Diary of "Helena Morley", translated by Elizabeth Bishop

Katherine Mansfield, "Prelude", "At the Bay", "How Pearl Button Was Kidnapped"

Keri Hulme, "Hooks and Feelers" from *Te Kaihau/The Windeater*; "Eyes of the Moonfish",
"Incubation", "Hatchings" from *Stonefish*

Please note:

- Curricular information is subject to change.
- Information is displayed only for guidance purposes, relates to the current academic year only and is subject to change.