

CENS 202: **Tales of Self and Social Transformation** (21 Oct. 2025 UPDATED)
(Great Works of Literature from Central, Eastern, and Northern Europe)
2025 Term 1, Tuesdays/Thursdays 2:00-3:30

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Office hours, Tuesdays 11-12, BuTo 603
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How do cultural forces shape individual desires, and how do each of us resist or adapt to social change? Reading world-shaking fictional writings and thought-provoking non-fiction works from the late 18th century to the present, our course will consider the many ways in which science, technology, capitalism, and colonialism have transformed our very sense of who and what we are.



A. Course Texts

With the exception of a few texts made available on Canvas (marked * in the Course Outline below) or available online from the library (marked **), all readings can be purchased at a modest cost from the UBC bookstore. Print copies preferred, but electronic formats allowed. Editions other than the ones below are only allowed with permission of the instructor.

Conrad, Joseph. 2020. *Heart of Darkness*. 3rd Edition. D.C.. Goonetilleke ed. Broadview Press.
Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 2014. *Notes from Underground*. K. Lodge ed., trans. Broadview Press.
Frank, Anne. 2021. *Diary of a Young Girl. The Definitive Edition*. O.M. Frank, M. Pressler eds. S. Massotty trans. Bantam Books.
Freud, Sigmund. 2016. *Civilization and its Discontents*. T. Dufresne ed. G. C. Richter trans.
Kafka, Franz. 2015. *The Metamorphosis and Other Stories*. I. Jonston trans. Broadview Press.
Kant, Immanuel. 2015. *On Perpetual Peace*. B. Orend ed. I. Johnson trans. Broadview Press.
Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. 2004. *The Communist Manifesto*. L.M. Findlay trans. Broadview Press.
Otoo, Sharon Dodua. 2023. *Ada's Room*. J. Cho-Polizzi. Penguin Books.

B. Course Evaluation (details on requirements and guidelines provided on Canvas)

1. Three (3) short essays, 1000-1500 words each, worth 15%, 25%, and 30% (total 70%):
 - Due Tuesdays 2pm in class, hard copy: 9/23 and/or 10/14; 11/4, 11/25, and/or 12/9.
 - Each essay must quote from and comment on at least two (2) authors, for a minimum of six authors across the 3 essays.
 - One (1) essay may be submitted 2pm on the next Thursday class with no late penalty.
 - One (1) essay may be revised and resubmitted anytime before 2pm, Tuesday 12/16.
2. One (1) comprehensive final exam (30%).

C. Course Outline

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→ = hard copy of essay due in class at 2pm * = available on Canvas ** = online or audio

Introduction (September 4): **Self and social transformation in troubled times**

Weeks 1 and 2 (September 9, 11, 16, 18): **Enlightenment in dark times**

Immanuel Kant, *On Perpetual Peace* (1795)

Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (1899)

Weeks 3, 4, and 5 (→Sep. 23, 25; no class Sep. 30; October 2, 7, 9): **Freedom from oppression**

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (1848)

Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Notes from Underground* (1886)

Weeks 6, 7, and 8 (→October 14, 16, 21, 23, 28): **Life against form**

* Georg Simmel, 'The Metropolis and Mental Life' (1903); * 'The Stranger' (1908)

Franz Kafka, *The Metamorphosis* (1915)

'In the Penal Colony' (1914); 'Before the Law' (1915)

'A Report for an Academy' (1917); 'An Imperial Message' (1919)

Weeks 9, 10, and 11 (→November 4, 6, 13, 18, 20; no class Nov. 11): **Reinventing the soul**

Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930)

Anne Frank, *Diary of a Young Girl* (1944)

Weeks 12 and 13 (→November 25, 27, December 2, 4): **Thinking without fear**

* Hannah Arendt, 'Ideology and Terror: A Novel Form of Government' (1953)

** Sharon Dodua Otoo, *Ada's Room* (2023)

→December 9: third essay and/or rewrite due; bring hard copy to the final exam

Final Exam: December 9, 3:30pm.