

October 17, 2022

Dear Hiring Committee,

I am applying for the following course for the winter term: Children's Literature (ENGL 249), Short Fiction (ENGL 235), and Forms of Popular Writing (250).

I have previously taught the **Children's Literature** course in the winter of 2022. In class, we worked toward developing critical responses to the readings with a focus on four major functions of children's literature: to better understand oneself, understand others, the world (theirs and the world at large), and how to live a life with meaning. We studied several genres (fairy tale, fable, nonsense, fiction, animal stories, fantasy) and have been examining how each text shapes culture and beliefs as children's literature is a vehicle to transfer of knowledge, morals, and values. We studied Freud's theory of the unconscious, Bettelheim's *Uses of Enchantment*, and Lacan's Mirror Stage theory in the first half of the semester alongside classics and we looked at how children's literature has historically defied conventions bringing in themes such as abuse and existentialism. In the second half of the term, we looked at how in contemporary pieces, the reader's age is more acutely taken into account when it comes to theme as well as vocabulary. We explored picture books such as *Stolen Words* and *Sulwe* to understand how literature can teach children about their heritage and discrimination. We touched on topics such as Edward Said's Orientalism when we read *Other Words for Home* by Jasmine Warga, Foucault's theory on power in the fantasy novel *Girl Who Drank the Moon*, and we looked at collective history and intergenerational trauma when we read Shaw Kuzki's *Soul Lanterns*. With several reflections, group presentations, opportunities to explore how we would engage young readers in these topics, and two critical essays, students learned more than just the literature, they learned how the four major functions are pertinent regardless of age.

For the **Short Fiction course (ENGL 235)** I have put together selection of short stories from widely different historical, national, and cultural backgrounds with stories by Jamaica Kincaid, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Ernest Hemingway, Margaret Atwood, and Haruki Murakami. While history and culture help to shape both the form and content of the short story, often creating internal tensions, we will also investigate themes such as sexuality, power, gender-based violence and study stylistic devices across the genre. An extension of the Critical Reading course I taught in winter of 2022, we would expound upon the short story as genre and apply theories from Spivak, Mohanty, Butler, Caruth, and Sontag, as well as conduct close readings so students can learn to identify and analyze key formal and stylistic elements and conventions of short fiction, such as plot, setting, character, symbol, point of view, tone, irony, and so on.

For the **Forms of Popular Writing (ENGL 250)** course, I plan to expand upon my knowledge in the area of children's literature (both as a professor and as an author of two storybooks) and move into the widely popular genre of Young Adults fiction. A natural extension to children's literature and middle grade chapter books, Young Adult fiction is an explored genre in academia. The demographic of the YA fiction market demonstrates that the intended reader is meant to be anywhere from the ages of 12 to 18, but statistics show that the genre attracts adult readers 18+. One reason adult readers are drawn to the genre is that although the protagonists are coming-of-age, the plot-driven, character-based genre is not unlike literary fiction in that themes often expound upon identity & individualism, death & grieving, political and current events, neurodiversity, or religion. The language, although accessible, is elevated and usually highly stylized, and form and structure are often experimental. Fertile breeding ground for connections with critical theory, some examples of novels we would touch on are 2018 Winner of the First Nations Inuit and Métis Young Adult Literature book *The Marrow Thieves* by Cherie Dimaline, graphic novel *Pashmina* by Nidhi Chanani, and *The Hate You Give (THUG)* by Angie Thomas.

Another option for the **Forms of Popular Writing** course, draws upon my experience a memoir ghostwriter. Over the years, I have ghostwritten three memoirs (a compilation of personal essays for a visual artist, the story of a high-profile businessman, and the methodologies of a mindfulness-based

licensed psychologist). I also published a 52-week series of essays based on long-form interview with womxn entitled My Profile Projects, which can be read online at [myprofileprojects.com](http://myprofileprojects.com). Memoir as genre has many angles and points of entry. I am particularly interested in teaching how the methodology of writing as well as the process of remembering is as pertinent as the story written. For example, Lisa Taddeo's *Three Women* tells the auto-real story of three women with themes of sexuality, abuse, and family issues. Playing with form and time, she, not unlike a cultural anthropologist, studied her subjects by following their lives up close for the span of one year. What she created was an interconnected memoir based on the interviews and archives of three distinct strangers and their respective communities. Creative memoirs such as *The Apology* by Eve Ensler (a memoir in the form of a letter), *In My Own Moccasin: A Memoir of Resilience* by Helen Knott (stories interspersed with poetry), and *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou (auto-fiction) are all novels discussed in my doctoral thesis. With these works, we would focus on a close reading as well as a discussion around how form, structure, and style all play a role in how a personal story is crafted. Staying on the page for literary analysis and then moving off the page to the broader practice and conventions of memoir as genre, we would look at the choices authors make in how the story is told, what gets put in, what gets left out, and how memory plays a major role. We would also touch on the author-reader relationship by way of Barthes, as well as Jung and Foucault's theories on the individual, and finally, a necessary exploration of subjectivity of the self.

In a 'what, so what, now what' workshop-based class model, I lecture for no more than fifteen minutes per class, allowing students to engage with the material in a plethora of hands-on ways. Whether it's a one-minute essay, speed debates, or chain lettering, we spend the first half of the class engaged in close reading and the second in active learning strategies. With a red thread of dynamic discussion throughout each class, we take a look how a text can change based on the framework applied. With close reading strategies, we look at everything from form and content, themes, genres, characters, narrators, figurative language, and historical context. We will discuss how and why certain pieces of literature transcend time and continue to remain culturally relevant. With two essay assignments, several in-class writing reflections, and active participation, students will have a chance to deepen their knowledge of a variety of texts and will be provided with written and/or auditory feedback progressively throughout the term.

Although part-time at Concordia, I also work as the Director of Strategy at Alice & Smith, the gamification division of Youville Haussmann Park marketing agency. Harnessing my research and writing skills to develop multiple types of thought leadership content, I write everything from white papers, case studies, reports, video scripts (see & say), video game scripts, and so on. In close partnership with Microsoft, I develop our business opportunities with turn-key pitches, high-level narrative design, and intricate game loops, as well as the marketing strategies deployed to go to launch for all new products. From brief to production, I also provide strategic insight in the form of business development as well as mentoring/training our strategy team.

I would be happy to provide the hiring committee with any further information regarding my teaching portfolio. Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Dr. Alecs Kakon

# DR. ALECSANDRA KAKON

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## EDUCATION

### **Narrative Therapy Certificate (2022)**

Vancouver School of Narrative Therapy

### **PhD Literature – Comparative Literature (2020)**

University of Montreal – *The Anatomy of Silence: Decolonizing the Female Body in Rape Narratives*

### **MA, Applied Linguistics (2015-2016)**

Concordia University

### **MA, Hispanic Language and Literature (2008)**

McGill University

### **BA, Hispanic Language and Literature (2005)**

Concordia University

### **TESL Certificate (2004)**

## **Research Contributions**

### *Journals and Articles*

“Sexual Violence in *Cereus Blooms at Night*.” Published (Sept 2019). *Fanzine*.

“Decolonizing Decolonization in *Cereus Blooms at Night*.” Forthcoming (2022). *Hypatia*. (Peer reviewed).

“The Decolonized Women of *Dreaming in Cuban*.” Forthcoming (2022). *Revista Canadiense de Estudios Hispánicos*. (Peer reviewed).

### *Conference Papers*

Association of Languages, Literatures, and Cultural Studies (Sept 2018). Violence and Alterity Conference (McGill University) “Sexual Violence as a Textual Trope in *Cereus Blooms at Night*”

The Canadian Comparative Literature Association (Oct 2018). The Comparative Literature Students’ Tribune (University of Ottawa) “Sexual Violence as a Textual Trope in *Cereus Blooms at Night*” and “*Decolonizing the Silence*”

Northeast Modern Language Association (March 2018). Transnational Spaces: Intersections of Cultures, Languages, and Peoples (University of Buffalo) “#MeToo as Literary Form”

## **Bursaries & Awards**

FESP Graduate Bursary – September 2017-2018 FESP

Bursary of Excellence – March 2019

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

### **English Literature Professor, Winter & Fall 2022**

*Part-Time Faculty, Concordia University*

- English 233/4: Critical Reading
- English 249/4: Children’s Literature
- English 210/D: English Composition

### **Guest Lecturer – English Literature, 2019 – 2021**

*Dawson College*

- Fall 2019, 2020, 2021 [603-102]: *Girl* by Jamaica Kincaid: A Reading in Performance
- Winter 2020 [603-102]: A Feminist Approach to *The Yellow Wall-Paper* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman
- Winter 2020 [603-413-DW]: Creative Writing: A My Profile Projects workshop on writing the Personal Essay

### **Workshop Leader and Group Facilitator, 2017 – 2021**

*Cereal Creatives, Womxn's Circle at ELMNT Studio, On Our Own, My Profile Projects*

- Teach 2-hour writing workshops on blogging, novel writing, content creation, journaling, and storytelling
- Facilitate discussion-based lessons focused on short stories feminist and queer theory, gender and sex, and media and culture

### **Instructor, English as a Second Language, 2013 – 2017**

*Corporate and Professional Development*

- Teach English to all levels, corporate English & Academic Writing
- Teach ESL and TOEFL preparation & Academic Writing

### **Research Assistant, Applied Linguistics, 2016**

*Concordia University, under supervision of Kim McDonough and Heike Neumann*

- Analyse English language trends in first year JMSB students' three-paragraph essay
- Evaluate student essays and exams; assess and compile reports
- Research and compare grammar, structure, and formatting across levels

### **Teacher, English Literature, ESL and Spanish, 2009 – 2013**

*Académie Linguistique Internationale and PALS of Canada*

- Design programs, create lesson plans, supervise fellow educators
- Teach academic writing (i.e. the research essay, compare and contrast essay), creative writing (i.e. journal writing, travel writing) and literature classes
- Teach ESL (and Spanish) to all levels (grammar, reading and writing skills, conversation using communicative approach)
- Teach TOEIC, IELTS, and TOEFL preparation

### **Program Developer and Curricula Consultant, 2009 – 2013**

*ProLang, ALI Summer Camp, PALS of Canada, Girls' Guide 'Write Club'*

- Teach beginner through advanced English and Spanish
- Develop ESL programs for all levels and ages
- Created '*Write Club*' – an after-school literacy program centered around writing

### **Teacher's Assistant, Hispanic Civilization [HISP 225 & 226], 2007 – 2008**

*McGill University, under supervision of Nicolas Gulino*

- Teach and assist lectures and lead seminars
- Design study material, quizzes, and Minerva material
- Formulate, invigilate, and evaluate exams

## **PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

### **Director of Strategic Insight, 2022 – present**

Alice & Smith, the gamification division of Youville Haussmann Park Group

- Develop and write thought leadership (white papers, case studies, reports, press releases, features, blog) and lead team on writing, design, and diffusion strategies
- Direct and write podcast on marketing trends, game ideology, and the future of marketing in our new world
- Strategy and narrative design on omnichannel cross-media marketing opportunities (external clients, pitches, and internal initiatives)
- Co-lead business development team on all RFPs, pitches, and nurturing campaigns
- Research, write, and conceptualize annual report

### **Senior Strategist and Senior Copywriter, 2020 – 2021**

*Youville Haussmann Park*

- Design and teach Masterclasses for internal team
- Design and facilitate workshops for clients on topics pertaining to innovation, growth, culture and employee engagement
- Lead Channel Innovation presentations for clients on market trends and innovative business development
- Write in-depth communications strategies, campaigns, launches and evergreen brand copy for luxury brands and Fortune 100 companies (Genetec, Fox Sports, NBA, Novartis, Princess Grace Foundation USA, Ford, Vuse Canada, Electrolux, and others)
- Write UX/UI web copy, blogs, and newsletter (all CRM-related content) for clients as well as internal blog
- Conceptualize content, write and create immersive video games for Microsoft PlayFab platform

### **Communications Strategist and Head of Copywriting, 2008 – Present**

*Cereal Creatives*

- Write, edit, and manage all internal and external marketing material (websites, press releases, blogs, newsletters, advertorials, long- and short-form copy...)
- Ghostwrite all blogs and writing initiatives for several social media influencers (shape tone of voice, create style guide, design content, develop visual rhetoric, manage back-end of platform, and publish content)
- Write and design websites (copy, optimization and UI/UX experience)
- Manage marketing calendar (cycle plans, playbooks) and all offline and digital communications strategies
- Create content; research and measure growth strategies; ideate and produce campaigns
- Manage copywriting team, cast projects, and final edit all client-facing content

### **Writer and Founder, 2018 – 2020**

[www.myprofileprojects.com](http://www.myprofileprojects.com)

- Conduct in-depth interviews, write, and edit long-form personal essays for web
- Prepare and publish all (52) web-based articles for click-rate and SEO optimization alongside social media campaign
- Prepare and lead workshops (currently held online) on how to define the broad themes of your life and how to create a narrative that bears witness to your past from a present perspective
- Facilitate conversations with questions that foster curiosity, assign writing tasks to further explore the self
- Critique participants' work and open a feedback loop that deepens writing (from personal journaling to writing with web-based intentions)

**Writer, Editor, and Translator, 2017 – 2019**

*LUXE Magazine & FERRER Magazine*

- Conduct interviews and write articles for both the paper and online magazine
- Edit and proofread all English copy
- Translate all French copy to English

**Editor and Copy Editor, 2014 – 2017**

*Language Learning Journal at Concordia University; Fanzine and Tribune at University of Montreal*

- Copy edit and proofread dissertations, manuscripts and submissions
- Fact check all research, tables and charts
- Format according to APA, MLA, and CP style guides

**Story Editor and Conceptual Editor, 2009 – 2011**

*Cogito Media Publishing House*

- Conceptually edit manuscripts pre-production
- Work alongside authors on concept, character development, voice, style, and plot
- Write synopsis, jackets, press releases, author bios and tip sheets

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**Fluent in English, French and Spanish**

**References furnished upon request**

## Statement of Teaching Philosophy

Alecs Kakon

I have always been guided by the belief that both teaching and learning are intricately linked. Teaching involves designing lessons that promote deep learning, providing students with opportunities to practice using concepts, ideas, and skills and continually providing them with feedback on their learning. Learning occurs when my students have developed new ideas and understandings, have made meaning of the learning experience and have become more aware of the world around them as well as themselves as learners. To me, an excellent educator is a fusion of that reciprocal relationship coupled with academic empowerment, imagination, organization, and respect.

### **Reciprocal Relationship (Teacher + Learner)**

A teacher is more than an educator. To me, teaching looks closer to facilitating. Facilitators use their knowledge of how people learn—and their knowledge of the subject they are teaching—to design optimal learning experiences. These experiences are ones that enable and empower students in their learning of the course content and help them take responsibility for their learning. In order to engage my students, I use formal and informal active and collaborative learning strategies in all of my courses and provide frequent opportunities for practice and feedback. My formal pedagogical training has informed much of my practice, especially in terms of feedback and evaluation, which I strive to provide frequently so students can grow and learn from their own work.

### **Academic Empowerment**

My teaching philosophy extends to elements of English that serve as foundational drivers to strengthen both the practice of reading and writing. My methodology is focused on literary analyses and centers around form, genre, theme, voice, and everything else that lives on the page, as well as the broader historical and cultural context a text offer. As a teacher, I have tried different techniques in order to improve students' critical reading, thinking, and writing so as to encourage deeper learning. I begin my classes by telling students that our goal is for them to “get” the concepts introduced in the course. Once we have an inquiry-based discussion, we then move onto more immersive, active learning exercises to better integrate new information and consolidate knowledge. It's important that my students view my classroom as a relational and collaborative practice with mutual and co-constructed influences.

### **Imagination**

My classrooms are a fun place to be. A space where creative minds lead with curiosity and suspend all judgment, each class is active, interactive, and collaborative. I am committed to continually seeking new pedagogical practices to implement in my classroom so that my lessons are dynamic, and spark inspired thinking. I design unique ways to approach old texts and find refreshing ways to come at old texts.

### **Organization and Respect**

The more organized I am as a teacher the more empowered my students are in their learning process. The first step is to build trust by being transparent. I outline expectations, objectives, evaluation criteria, and always take the time to ensure that clarity is achieved. The main point

here is to ensure that students are active and responsible participants in their learning. Respect is a fundamental part of a safe, non-judgmental classroom. We respect each other, we respect the work, and we respect the process of learning. In that vein, I believe that students benefit from a variety of instructional methods. Not all students learn in the same manner, at the same pace, or in the same environment. Since some students are more visual, others more experiential, within the same lecture I use different learning strategies so that I can reach every learner where s/he is at. However, the most important part of creating this environment, and determining which instructional methods the students need, I make sure I stop and listen to their needs, determine their strengths, and make appropriate decisions based on my findings.

As a teacher and writer, I am often collaborating and exchanging ideas with fellow colleagues. I have learned and implemented new strategies, ideas, and creative ways to maintain an innovative and active classroom. Creating an active learning classroom is conducive to promoting engaged learners who take more than simply subject matter away from my courses; my students learn how to learn, how to engage with material on a critical level, and how to make connections that go beyond my course. Ultimately, I strive to do more than instruct my students, I strive to inspire them.

Sincerely,

Dr. Alecs Kakon