

## Syllabus

### PLAI 500, Research Seminar

#### Uncovering Secrets: A Detective's Toolkit to Discovering Montreal

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Office hours:

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Winter Term 2017

Wednesday 2:35-5:25, (CIRM),

Centre for Interdisciplinary Research on Montreal, 3438 McTavish Street

Data Lab, Humanities and Social Sciences Library, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor

### **Course Description**

Secrets, myths and mysteries form the cultural backdrop against which a community's identity is mapped. They recede ever more into the distance as that identity takes visible shape and gains acceptance. But where to look? What tools can we use to find the hidden history of a city, reveal its secrets, raise questions about accepted truths? How have advances in the art and technology of historical research changed the very manner in which we study and understand the city and its past events?

This interdisciplinary, team-taught course takes students on a journey to discover Montreal, and to uncover its untold stories. But Montreal is only a case study. Through a close focus on specific narratives, artifacts and archives relating to Montreal, this course introduces students to the research detective's toolbox, to technological skills enabling the sharing of information, and to insights about the ways in which a city's identity develops over time.

Focussed on primary and secondary materials such as novels, photographs, maps, manuscripts, rare collections and city directories, students will be introduced to advanced research techniques and tools as a means to rethink the ways in which the past is 'produced' and 'maintained,' as well as how the public encounters the city's perceived history. To become urban detectives, students will conduct fieldwork in the city's libraries and archives, as well as its buildings, city streets and public places. Even students who have grown up in Montreal will discover new places, hidden treasures, and secrets about the city's past.

Along with watching films and reading literary works set in Montreal, we will look at historical and contemporary maps, explore unpublished materials in McGill's Archives and Rare Books and Special Collections, and read essays by authors from a wide-range of disciplines including, geography, cultural studies, and archival sciences. Readings are varied, all classes will include one hands-on workshop to familiarize students over time with technological tools. Many classes will involve either a guest speaker or site visit.

## Learning Outcomes

During the course, and with a particular focus on Montreal, students will:

- Identify forms and functions of community identity building
- Identify vehicles through which a community's historical past is produced and managed
- Engage with specific research methodologies to explore cultural artifacts, archival material and rare collections relating to a particular locale
- Understand how information systems (i.e., collections of recorded information) are organized in order to negotiate and construct meaning
- Develop advanced information and technology skills to conduct and share research using digital tools and resources, with a particular focus on different visualization tools, including hands-on instruction

## Course Outline

Unit One will focus on research methodologies, digital tools and resources available for investigation. This course will begin with a general introduction to Montreal, to what is revealed in the multiple narratives that contribute to the city's cultural imaginary, and to available sources of information about Montreal (including historical maps, photos, data) and digital mapping tools. In the second week, we begin to explore aspects of the city that are more difficult to access, focusing on what narratives of Montreal conceal or leave unspoken. Guest speakers will include David Covo and Nancy Dunton, who describe secret architectural spaces of the McGill campus, and buildings within the city of Montreal that share the same architect. In this second week, students will be introduced to ways of accessing information about the history of buildings in Montreal.

By the third week of term, we will turn our attention to Montreal's history, to the way it has been and continues to be produced and managed. Discussion will focus in particular on contested spaces, including the McGill campus. We will look at the film *Jesus of Montreal*, along with secondary materials focussed on sacred spaces. For week five, we will read the novel, *The Heart Specialist*, by Claire Rothman. Rothman will present a guest lecture on how the fictional imagination enabled her to investigate the historical figure of Maude Abbott, one of Montreal's first female doctors.

In Unit two, students will begin work on their own investigative project, focusing on a particular Montreal building or architectural site in relation to its neighbourhood. In addition to course readings from cultural studies and archival sciences, we will look at the Jonas Company Scrapbook and will develop a business history of the Jonas company, drawing on details in the unpublished sample catalogue (c. 1890). In this unit, guest speakers will include Sherry Olson (Geography) on scrutinizing stories told by historical sources and material culture evidence.

In Unit three, we will read and view a number of works about Montreal, and students will use digital tools introduced earlier in the course to create a visual representation of the novel or film they select. This unit will include Gabrielle Roy's *The Tin Flute* and tracing walking tours of the borough of St. Henri; Mordecai Richler's *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, along with secondary materials on the mapping of literary spaces. We will also watch the film *Bon Cop Bad Cop*, and look at Sebastien Caquard's visualization tool for understanding cinematographic narratives.

The final assignment will challenge students to bring their technological and information literacy skills to bear on a particular secret, myth, or mystery surrounding Montreal. Using the methodologies to which they have been introduced throughout the course, students will be tasked with investigating the mystery and possibly, even, solving it. The project will culminate in a poster, to be presented in digital form on the last day of class, and the printed poster later displayed in the IPLAI gallery space.

**Evaluation:**

Name of Assignment	Due Date	Percentage of Course Grade
Participation		10%
Short Exercises (relating to hands-on learning of technological tools and applications)	#1 - 11 January #2 - 18 January #3 - 25 January #4 - 8 February	10%
Online Mapping Assignment (visualization of the film <i>Jesus of Montreal</i> )	15 February	15%
Investigative Project (relating to a particular building in Montreal)	8 March	20%
Presentation (visualization of a creative work on class reading list)	Either 15, 22, or 29 March (sign up on 8 March)	15%
Final Project (on a Montreal myth or mystery)	150 word abstract due latest 8 March; final assignment, to include digital pdf suitable for poster reproduction, due 12 April	30%

Presentations and assignments in French are welcome.

Conformément à la Charte des droits de l'étudiant de l'Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté. In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

#### Academic Integrity

"McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures" (see [www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/) for more information).

**Course Material** (printed texts available from The Word Bookstore on Milton, cheque or cash only):

- *Jesus of Montreal* ([link](#))
- *Bon Cop, Bad Cop* (film and visual representation developed by Sebastian Caquard)
- Claire Rothman, *The Heart Specialist*
- Gabrielle Roy, *The Tin Flute*
- Richler, *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*
- *Jonas Company Scrapbook* circa 1890 (available for viewing in McGill's RBSC)

#### Class schedule:

**4 January:** Multiple tales of the city. Guest speaker on the Hochelaga controversy: Jarrett Rudy (History Department). Montreal as depicted in maps, poetry, [song](#), film and comedic performance. Discussion will scrutinize what aspects of the city are emphasized, and what aspects overlooked, ignored, or concealed. See: F.R. Scott's [poem](#)<sup>1</sup> "Saturday Sundae," [selected movie clips](#), and comedic routines such as Sugar Sammy's bilingual [farewell performance](#).<sup>2</sup>

Research tools: Introduction to a variety of tools for visualizing and analysing textual data, such as word and tag clouds, [Voyant](#), and [Google Correlate](#)

Short Exercise: Using a [tag cloud](#) app, create a visualization of a poem, song, or website about Montreal. Analyze your findings (1-2 paragraphs). Due January 11<sup>th</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> For an interesting article about the poem, see [here](#)

<sup>2</sup> See [Sugar Sammy's Youtube channel](#) for additional selections

**11 January:** Hidden Montreal: what do narratives about Montreal overlook? Guest speakers: David Covo and Nancy Dunton. In-class workshop will focus on working with historical maps, photos, and census records which will aid students in preparing their own assignments.

Although early in the term, students will be introduced to some of Montreal's mysteries, and urged to begin thinking about which mystery or line of inquiry about the city they would like to pursue in their final assignment. See also "suggested resources" section of this document.

Reading Assignment: Michel De Certeau, "Practices of Space," From the *Agony of Semiotics*, Ed Marshall Blonsky. Oxford University Press, 1985. 122-145. See [here](#).

Research Tools: Introduction to GIS and online mapping, using applications such as Google Earth, Google My Maps, and ArcGIS Online.

Short Exercise: Students will create a map of their Montreal neighbourhood that tells a story about themselves, or a significant event. The map must include at least five points, one line, or and one polygon, as well as textual information and images. Save kml file, zip and submit. Due January 18<sup>th</sup>.

**18 January:** Managing and Producing a Historical Past. Students should watch the film *Jesus of Montreal* in preparation for class, and take notes to identify the various locations around the city featured in the film. An in-class mapping workshop will focus on Montreal's topographical features and their relationship to collective memory and identity. Mapping skills acquired through this workshop will equip students to tackle their first assignment: a short online mapping assignment to identify the contemporary stations of the cross in the film *Jesus of Montreal*, including an analysis of their locations and meaning.

Reading Assignment: A. Gordon, "Devotion and Rebellion, The Contest for French Canada's Public Memory." From *Making Public Pasts: The Contested Terrain of Montreal's Public Memories, 1891-1930*. See [here](#).

Research Tools: Introduction to geospatial data and GIS, using ArcGIS Online

Short Exercise: Using a map of the City of Montreal, explain *where* you would locate the imaginary hospital, St. Mark's, in the film *Jesus of Montreal*, and *why* in that location. (1 paragraph or 150 words). Due January 25<sup>th</sup>.

**25 January:** Technologies of Discovery and Access. In-class workshop will look at how libraries, archives, and museums continually reshape, reinterpret, and reinvent cultural memory and identity. The hands-on portion of this class will focus on the ways in which researchers are using heritage collections to create novel environments for learning, tools

for discovery, and apps for story-telling (for example, [Montréal en histoires](#)). Research methodologies and skills introduced will prepare students for upcoming course assignments.

Reading Assignment: J. Schwartz and T. Cook, "Archives, Records, and Power: The Making of Modern Memory." *Archivaria*. (2002): 1-19. See [here](#).

**1 February**: Read *The Heart Specialist* by Claire Rothman for today. An in-class workshop will focus on text and data visualization tools. Digital skills acquired through this workshop, will equip students to create visualizations of the novel, and by extension, develop a research question or hypothesis that might offer productive ways of approaching Rothman's novel.

The class will conclude with a visit from a McGill Archivist, who will point to ways of accessing information about McGill's own history, including its changing admissions policies over time

Short Assignment: Using any of the digital scholarship tools introduced earlier in the course, prepare a visualization to examine some aspect of Claire Rothman's novel, *The Heart Specialist*. Due February 8<sup>th</sup>.

**8 February**: Class to begin in The Maude Abbott Medical Museum, Strathcona Anatomy and Dentistry Building, 3640 University Street, Room 2/38E in the company of Dr Richard Fraser. Author Claire Rothman will be joining us at the Museum, and will later describe her research for her novel. We will move to the Osler Museum of Medical History, and Osler Librarian Christopher Lyons will briefly introduce McGill's special collection library and the various creative productions it supports. For today's class, students will also be expected to familiarize themselves with details of [The Maude Abbott Medical Museum at McGill](#).

**15 February**: (*Online mapping assignment due in class today*) Unit Two of the course, on Montreal's buildings and architectural sites, begins with guest speakers Sherry Olson (Geography) on scrutinizing stories told by historical sources and material culture evidence. The investigative project, focusing on a particular Montreal building or architectural site in relation to its neighbourhood, due 6 March, will be introduced.

Reading Assignment: An online subject guide to researching the architectural history of homes and other buildings will be available from the Library's website.

Research Tools: Introduction to georeferencing, using Map Warper, ArcGIS Online, and Google Earth

**22 February**: Class to be held in the Canadian Architecture Collection in Redpath Hall – meet in HSSL lobby. Guest speaker, Librarian Jennifer Garland will introduce *Jonas Company Scrapbook* circa 1890, and additional research methodologies for identifying history of buildings, including files housed at the [Montreal City Archive](#). Students will identify the

subject of their own investigative assignments, and seek advice from the class on investigative tools available.

Reading Assignment: (in preparation for classes 6-27 March, focused on geographical representations of fiction and film): Marc Brosseau, *Geography's Literature Progress in Human Geography* (18): 333-353. See [here](#)<sup>3</sup>

**1 March:** Reading Week: 27 February – 3 March. Students are urged to begin reading novels by Richler and Roy this week.

**8 March:** (*investigative assignment due in class today; students will also be asked to provide one paragraph outlining their plans for final course assignment*). Discussion of student presentation assignment, with sign up in class. The assignment will consist of preparing and presenting a visualization tool that relates to either one of the novels by Richler or Roy, or a filmic depiction of Montreal other than *Jesus of Montreal* (e.g. *Bon Cop, Bad Cop*).

Reading Assignment: D.C.D. Pocock. "Place and the novelist." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* NS 6 (3), 1981. pp. 337–347. See [here](#).<sup>4</sup> Anne-Kathrin Reuschel and Lorenz Hurni, "Mapping Literature: Visualisation of Spatial Uncertainty in Fiction." *Cartographies of Fictional Worlds* -- Special Issue November 2011. 48.4: 293-308. See [here](#)

Research Tools: ESRI Story Maps

Short Exercise: Choose a template to begin working with for the final assignment. (no marks).

**15 March:** (*student presentations begin today*) Class to convene in the Richler Rooms, LB or Library Building, Room 655, 1400 de Maisonneuve Ouest, Concordia University.

Reading Assignment: Mordecai Richler, *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*. Students should also watch the film *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* in preparation for class.

**22 March:** Reading Assignment: Gabrielle Roy, *The Tin Flute* (either in English or in the original French, as *Bonheur d'occasion*.) Fyi, The Saint Henri Historical Society has mapped out Tin Flute territory very effectively.

Research Tools: Introduction to geocoding, using Google Fusion Tables, Geo-batch

Short In-class Exercise: Design and build a data set from one of the novels discussed in the course. (no marks).

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[https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Marc\\_Brosseau/publication/249871418\\_Geography's\\_literature/links/54d8e4090cf24647581cda10.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Marc_Brosseau/publication/249871418_Geography's_literature/links/54d8e4090cf24647581cda10.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.jstor.org/stable/622292?seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](http://www.jstor.org/stable/622292?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents)

**29 March:** Viewing Assignment: *Bon Cop, Bad Cop*.

Reading Assignment: George Melnyk, "The Imagined City: Toward a Theory of Urbanity in Canadian Cinema," *CineAction* 73-74, 2007/2008, pp. 20-27. See [here](#). Class will focus on the film as well as visual representation of the film developed by Concordia University cartographer Sebastian Caquard.

If needed, open lab for questions/help with final assignment.

**5 April:** Last Class. Conclusion: what have we learned? Students will also provide the class with a brief introduction to the mystery they have selected for their final assignment, and either the solutions found or investigative strategies used.

**12 April:** Final assignments, including digital poster file, due to the instructors by 17h.

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## Resources:

### On Montreal Mysteries:

Four different « *Mystères de Montréal* » were published in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century following the huge international success of Eugène Sue's *Mystères de Paris*. Two have been translated into English: the anonymous 1846 *Mysteries of Montreal*, and another by Charlotte Furher (1881). Gilles Marcotte has a chapter in *Montréal imaginaire* on various different « *mystères montréalaise* ». Guillaume Pinson of Laval University has published [an article](#) on this phenomenon in America more generally.

### On Secret Places in Montreal:

- Underground waterways: Michèle Dagenais who teaches history at Université de Montréal wrote [Montréal et l'eau](#) in 2011.<sup>5</sup>
- Abandoned buildings in Montreal. Citizens' action group "[LAND](#)"<sup>6</sup>
- Secret Montreal: An unusual guide: see [here](#)<sup>7</sup>
- Andrew Emond is a photographer who explores the tunnels below Montreal (sewers and covered streams). He has a website that includes this [map](#)<sup>8</sup> and related articles: for example, "[What maps can't tell us.](#)"<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.editionsboreal.qc.ca/catalogue/livres/montreal-eau-1870.html>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.landemtl.com>

<sup>7</sup> <http://mcgill.worldcat.org/oclc/812254551>

<sup>8</sup> <http://undermontreal.com/map/>

<sup>9</sup> <http://undermontreal.com/montreal-lost-rivers-maps/>

### **On Alternative Visualization Initiatives:**

- Aural mapping: Montreal Sound Map: [here](#)
- Rendering the invisible (e.g. homelessness) visible: e.g. Exeko, Montreal Organization for Social Innovation: [here](#)
- Subjective mapping: Marlena Zuber sketches personal maps of Toronto: see [here](#)