Library Research Tips for
ENGL 215/6.0 Canadian Literature

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Quick orientation to the Library Homepage: http://library.queensu.ca/

Summon - multisearch discovery tool, Google like
QCAT – known item searching
English Language and Literature> Subject Guide> ENGL 215/6.0 Guide and Library Tutorial for English Students
Databases

The primary resource you will need for locating journal articles is the Modern Languages Association International Bibliography (MLA).

From the library homepage you can access the MLA database under the ‘databases’ tab on search menu:

Tutorial on Keyword Search vs. Subject Search in the MLA International Bibliography on ProQuest. Getting from subject searching into literary theme searching is valuable when you want to broaden your topic to the treatment by theme across authors.

Now you know the advantage of subject searching let’s add something from the literary theme field.

**Literary Theme**: This field contains subject terms relating to the themes of the work(s) under discussion.

Examples: Native Americans; gender; 1960s; regionalism; social class

**Note**: This field is less frequently used in pre-1981 data.

**Specific Literature**: This field contains subject terms relating to national literatures, expressed in adjectival form.

Examples: Canadian Literature; American Literature;

So, if you search for something about Tomson Highway as a keyword you may find 90 results.

However, you are not going to read all 90 items, as they address a variety of topics from homosexuality in Kiss of the Fur Queen to a comparison to the treatment of bingo in Les Belles-Sœurs and The Rez Sisters.

One title may interest you if you want to write on some aspect of Native Canadian experience?
Remembering the Trickster in Tomson Highway's The Rez Sisters.

Take a look at the literary themes here, are there any you might apply to get a larger collection of articles where you can read a discussion of this treatment in a variety of works?
Note: if you click on one of the blue hyperlinks you will lose previous aspects of your search. So, if I click on Native American identity, Tomson Highway is lost.

(treatment of) Nanabozho = 9 which is reasonable.

(relationship to) Native American identity = 253 is too many so you can add back in Ltm ("Native American identity") and "Canadian literature" to get a reasonable 36. However, the 36 item result list is a variety of format types and your assignment is to find journal articles so you can limit your results at this point along the top right Narrow results by area.

If you expand the Peer Review option you can see only 13 of your results come from Peer reviewed journal articles. Amongst these 13 articles you will likely be able to read a discourse around the topic of what it is to identify as “Native” in Canadian literature.

Once you are comfortable with the MLA thesaurus language to identify groups and themes you can rely on the message of the YouTube video which is that if you place the correct word in your search it will find it anywhere.

Let’s try this again with Duncan Campbell Scott and Indian, or Duncan Campbell Scott and Native

![Advanced Search](image)

This search: (Duncan Campbell Scott) AND (Native OR Indian) results in 13 unique results, where a search for (Duncan Campbell Scott) AND (Native) provides 9, and a search for (Duncan Campbell Scott) AND (Indian) also provides 9 results. So, the best search builds in room for term variance. Since Campbell uses the term Indian, it is found in the results by title in the articles where indexing of literary terms does not yet include Native.

The articles from the 1970s don’t include Native in the indexing and so you would have missed these if you didn’t include Indian in your search.
I encourage you to experiment and not to become over reliant on the literary terms field once you are familiar with the database terms: ("Canadian Literature") AND father AND Sinclair Ross gives you 4 good results on the role of the father in As for Me and My House when searched as keywords.

Finally I want to use an example where you search just by themes as Keywords:

Gender AND (Canadian literature) AND Native

This search produces 11 peer reviewed results providing a look at the question of how gender is constructed across works of Canadian Native literature.

Note: Rereading Pauline Johnson and West Coast Picturesque: Class, Gender, and Race in a British Colonial Landscape, on gaze. Lots of potential in two references.

Also, don’t despair if you have only one good article from MLA, as that one article may have an extensive bibliography that will suggest further reading and you can build your discussion from there. Also the recommender feature at the side of the MLA provides links to books which will also have bibliographies you can scan for leads.

Importantly, I want to impress on you if you would like more assistance with one of your searches I am happy to take a look with you. Please send me an email at mcv@queensu.ca to agree on a time to meet.