

Sophia X. Gatzionis
Junior Tutorial Program
June 25th 2022

Home in America: 20th and 21st Century Immigrant Fiction

Course Instructor: Sophia Gatzionis
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Office Hours: TBD

Course Description:

Home in America is a junior tutorial on immigrant fiction written in and about the United States from the early 20th century to the present day. Many, though not all, of the primary texts on our syllabus were written by authors who identify as first or second-generation immigrants. Over the course of the semester, we will pair these primary texts with classical critical works (e.g. by Virginia Woolf and Charles Baudelaire), contemporary literary criticism, and cultural theory (by Lauren Berlant, Paul Gilroy, and Salman Rushdie, among others). We will explore and interrogate a set of three essential critical lenses: *literary history*, *authorial identity*, and *canonicity*.

During the first part of our tutorial, we will discuss two of the major literary movements that influenced the production of immigrant fiction during the first half of the 20th century. We will appraise the ways in which Modernism and Naturalism influenced our understanding of fiction written by and about immigrants, and we will challenge the category of “immigrant fiction” itself. Some of the questions we will ask are: How do we understand literary mode and genre through immigration? How do the authors on our syllabus challenge our expectations of what “immigrant fiction” can do? Our readings and discussions will be supplemented, in these first few weeks of the tutorial, by library work: a meeting with Odile Harter, and a visit to Houghton Library to explore the University’s archives.

The second part of our tutorial will offer us the opportunity to think more deeply about questions of identity and representation. We will read about postcolonialism, digging into some classical theory by writers such as Edward Said and Paul Gilroy, as well as some more contemporary criticism. How is America constructed as a supplement and opposition to our authors’ countries of origin? For example, what does the idea of America offer Lahiri’s prose, and how does this differ from what it offers Adichie’s? We will continue our work with genre, asking questions such as: What does the form of the novel afford immigrant writing? Why does Butler, in contrast with the other writers on our syllabus, reach for the short story, instead? And we will delve into the arena of thinking about literary perspective and voice, developing our understanding of the construct of “authenticity” in immigrant writing.

During the third and final part of our tutorial, we will widen our critical lens to think more broadly about the impact that American immigrant fiction has had on the country’s culture and society. We will also think deeply about the position of immigrant fiction relative to the “Canon” of American letters. How does immigrant fiction participate in the Canon? Interrogate it? Construct and reconstruct it? In what ways does immigration inform the discourse around literary controversy, when it comes to texts such as Nabokov’s *Lolita*? And how does popular fiction inform our understanding of immigration, as in the case of Puzo’s *The Godfather*?

Throughout the course of the semester, our aim will be to foster an open and respectful class environment, in which we can explore the possibility of representation in fiction, the role of literary empathy in criticism, and literary constructions of the places we call home. How do writers

signal their relative positionality when it comes to stories of immigration? Does empathy have a place in literary criticism about migration? And how does immigration inform our understanding of “the novel” as a genre? Let’s think through such questions together.

Course Goals:

Part of the purpose of a junior tutorial is to help you develop the tools that will empower you to delve deeply into research; the tools, in other words, necessary for producing a work of rigorous literary criticism. To that end, this course is designed to expose you to a wide range of critical methods and interpretive lenses that might inform your own critical work and perspective. You are invited to draw on any combination of the texts on our syllabus to produce your final paper.

The shorter assignments on this syllabus are designed to help you build towards your final research paper. At least twice in the semester, you will work with one of your classmates to produce a brief presentation on the week’s texts. Your close reading essay, due early in the semester, will enable you to funnel your attention and look very closely at a very limited amount of text. In combination with your working bibliography, it will offer you two important building blocks for setting the foundation of your research paper. Together, both in class and during office hours, we will work to develop a research question and hypothesis for your final paper that is compelling, and relevant to your academic interests.

This junior tutorial will:

- Familiarize you with a wide range of theoretical approaches and perspectives.
- Help you assemble a rich repertoire of primary and secondary texts.
- Help you develop the tools necessary for producing a rigorous work of literary research and criticism.
- Provide you with a supportive research community as you develop a central research question for your final paper.
- Offer you a cumulative framework of assignments and multiple stages of feedback along the way to your final paper.

Reading Schedule

Important Note: Writing a research paper is a process that ideally should be pleasant, interesting, fruitful, and tailored to your specific academic interests! This syllabus is flexible and can transform to reflect these. During our first meeting, we will discuss which of the texts on the syllabus most interest you. I will also invite you to suggest other texts that you would like us to discuss. Please let me know via email, before we start the semester, if you are most interested in writing about texts that we are reading later in the semester (after Week 7). This will help me make sure that we are able to spend plenty of time on the materials that most interest you.

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Part I: Literary History

Week 1

Modernism and the Formation of Literary Character

Willa Cather, *My Antonia* (1918)

Ibid., “Restlessness Such as Ours Does Not Make for Beauty.” *New York Times Book Review*, 21 December 1924. Interview by Rose C. Field.

Virginia Woolf, “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown” (1924)

Joshua L. Miller, “The Immigrant Novel.” In *The Oxford History of the Novel in English*, Volume 6, edited by Priscilla Wald and Michael A. Elliott (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

Week 2

Naturalism and the City

Henry Roth, *Call It Sleep* (1934), first half

Charles Baudelaire, “The Painter of Modern Life”. In *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, translated and edited by Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon, 1964).

Joyce, **extracts from** *Ulysses* (1922)

Richard Daniel Lehan, **extracts from** *Realism and Naturalism: The Novel in an Age of Transition* (2005)

Hana Wirth-Nesher, “Henry Roth.” *The Cambridge Companion to American Novelists*, edited by Timothy Parrish (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp.125-134.

Meeting with Odile Harter, Library Liaison for the English Department

Week 3

The Category of “Immigrant Fiction”

Roth, *Call It Sleep*, second half

Salman Rushdie, “On Günter Grass.” *Granta* (March 1985), <https://granta.com/on-gunter-grass/>.

Werner Sollors, **extracts from** *Ethnic Modernism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008)

Christopher Castellani, “On the Universal Urgency of Immigrant Literature.” *LitHub* (October 2019). <https://lithub.com/on-the-universal-urgency-of-immigrant-literature/>.

Part II: Identity and Representation

Week 4

Conceptions of Exile

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Jhumpa Lahiri, *The Namesake* (2003)

Sanjena Sathian, "Good Immigrant Novels: Jhumpa Lahiri and the Aesthetics of Respectability."

The Drift (May 2021). <https://www.thedrftmag.com/good-immigrant-novels/>.

Edward Said, "Reflections on Exile" (1984)

Homi Bhabha, **extracts from** *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994)

Student Presentation

Due: Close reading essay (4-5 pages)

Class Trip to Houghton Library

Week 5

Open Week

The content for this week will be determined by students' interests. Options include reading a set of texts that is scheduled for later in the semester (after Week 7), and adding a new set of texts.

Week 6

Americanization

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Americanah* (2013), first half

Ibid., **extracts from** *We Should All be Feminists* (New York: Anchor, 2015)

Lauren Berlant, **extracts from** *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City*

(Durham: Duke University Press, 1997).

Student Presentation

Week 7

Globalization

Adichie, *Americanah*, second half

Paul Gilroy, **extracts from** *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*
(Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

Pankaj Mishra, "Beyond the Global Novel." *Financial Times* (September 2013).

<https://www.ft.com/content/6e00ad86-26a2-11e3-9dc0-00144feab7de>.

Student Presentation

Due: Final paper proposal (1-2 pages)

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Week 8

Questions of Authenticity

Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior* (1976)

Frank Chin, “Come All Ye Asian American Writers of the Real and the Fake” (1974)

Cathy Park Hong, **extracts from** *Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning* (2020)

Student Presentation

Week 9

Literary Voice

Robert Olen Butler, *A Good Scent from a Strange Mountain* (1992)

Concepción de León, “On ‘Oprah’s Book Club,’ ‘American Dirt’ Author Faces Criticism.” *The New York Times* (March 6th 2020).

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/06/books/american-dirt-oprah-book-club-apple-tv.html>.

Alaina Lavoie, “Why We Need Diverse Books Is No Longer Using the Term #Own Voices,” *WNDB* (June 6th 2021). <https://diversebooks.org/why-we-need-diverse-books-is-no-longer-using-the-term-ownvoices/>.

Student Presentation

Due: Working bibliography (2-3 pages)

Week 10

Open Week

The content for this week will be determined by students’ interests, and the texts that you are writing about in your research papers.

Part III: Facets of the Canon

Week 11

Literary Controversy

Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (1955)

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Student Presentation

Due: Half-draft of research paper (10-15 pages)

Week 12

Intertextuality

Jamaica Kincaid, *Lucy* (1990)

Charlotte Brontë, **extracts from** *Villette* (1853)

Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author” (1967)

Diane Simmons. “Jamaica Kincaid and the Canon: In Dialogue with Paradise Lost and Jane Eyre”. *MELUS* 23.2 (1998): 65–85.

Graham Allen, **extracts from** *Intertextuality* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

Student Presentation

Week 13

Thinking Outside the Canon: The Impact on Popular Culture

Mario Puzo, *The Godfather* (1969), first half

Fred L. Gardaphe, “Mafia stories and the American gangster.” In *The Cambridge Companion to American Crime Fiction*, edited by Catherine Ross Nickerson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp.11-120.

John Storey, **extracts from** *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction*. (New York: Routledge, 2015).

Jonathan Freedland, “Introduction” to Mario Puzo’s *The Godfather*, The Folio Society edition (2020).

Week 14

Constructing the Canon: The Contemporary Archive

Mario Puzo, *The Godfather*, second half

Ibid, **extracts from** *The Godfather Papers & Other Confessions* (1972)

Ibid, **extracts from** the Mario Puzo Papers: Archival Collection at Dartmouth. Available Online: <https://archives-manuscripts.dartmouth.edu/repositories/2/resources/3500>.

Jacques Derrida, **extracts from** *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, translated by Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996).

Due: Final draft of research paper (20-25 pages)

Additional Information

Accessing the Texts:

If you want to purchase the books, the total should hopefully come to under \$100. But remember that you can also borrow most of these for a semester from the Harvard libraries or through Borrow Direct! If you can't find something, please email me and we will figure out a solution together.

On Assignments:

1. Attendance and participation: You are expected to attend and participate fully in each course meeting. However, if you are not feeling well, or if you are unable to attend section for another reason, please reach out over email ahead of time.

2. Methods presentations: You will team up with a classmate to briefly present on a literary method and/or critical lens. Expect to present at least twice over the course of the semester.

3. Close reading essay (4-5 pages): A short paper on a brief extract of your choice, from one of the primary texts on our syllabus. This paper offers students the opportunity to examine the way a literary text functions at very close range.

4. Final paper proposal (2-3 pages): A brief proposal outlining the texts that you plan to write about in your final paper, as well as your research questions, thesis, and some of the main themes you hope to address.

5. Working bibliography (2-3 pages): A preliminary bibliography of some of the sources (primary and secondary) that you plan to write about and draw on in your final paper. Use key words and phrases to briefly describe how each source is relevant to your final project.

6. Half-draft of research paper (10-15 pages)

6. Final research paper (20-25 pages): What we've been building up to! Students are required to submit a short Research Paper of 20-25 pages, on a topic relevant to our class and preferably centered around texts from our syllabus. Students cannot pass the class without submitting this paper.

Grading:

Attendance and participation:	10%
Student presentations:	10%
Close reading essay:	10%

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Final paper proposal:	10%
Working bibliography:	10%
Half-draft of research paper (~10 pages):	10%
Final research paper (20-25 pages):	40%

Course Policies:

- Bring a paper copy of the week's theoretical texts, and something to write with, to every section.
- Please refrain from using phones and laptops during class. We are a small group and deserve each others' full attention.