

English 98: Junior Tutorial
Fall 2019
Time/Location: TBD

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Office Hours: TBD

Strange Intimacies: Diaspora, Transnationalism, and Affect in American Fiction

Description

We will investigate how conceptual categories of diasporic migrations, forced and otherwise, are constructed in literature: the figures of the expatriate and immigrant, as well as the exile, slave, refugee, and cosmopolite. Legal definitions may help delineate the boundaries of each term, but intimate and affective aspects of diasporic experiences, in the 20th-21st century American literary imagination, often define each term culturally and discursively. Expatriates and immigrants might be similar in denotation—that is, they describe people who leave one land for another, a process usually involving crossing national borders and developing affiliations to multiple places. However, in connotation, each term can conjure varying norms or expectations, for example, a narrative of successful immigrant assimilation juxtaposed to one of cosmopolitan, transnational mobility.

What can we understand about diaspora by exploring texts representing different experiences of it? How does diaspora destabilize intimacy as a heuristic—in the spheres of identity, domesticity, and individuality and in the spheres of political economies, colonial histories, and global processes? This tutorial will focus on the intimate and affective dimensions of displacement and pay particular attention to gendered experiences of diaspora and diaspora as a condition of subjectivity. We will survey a selection of novels and short stories that address themes of the dispersion of people from their places of origin. How are issues of socioeconomic status, citizenship status, race/ethnicity, gender/sexuality, and cultural and economic globalization influential in both literary and social forms pertaining to diaspora? We will explore the tensions that arise when we put categories of migration into play as unsettled and disputable. Primary texts include works by: Hemingway, Larsen, Nabokov, Baldwin, Truong, Díaz, Cole, Morrison, Lahiri, Nguyen, Mengestu, Adichie, and other critical and theoretical readings.

Required Texts

The Sun Also Rises (1926), Ernest Hemingway
Quicksand (1928), Nella Larsen
“Stranger in the Village” (1953), James Baldwin
Pnin (1957), Vladimir Nabokov
The Book of Salt (2003), Monique Truong
Selections from *Drown* (2006), *This is How You Lose Her* (2012), Junot Díaz
Open City (2011), Teju Cole
Beloved (1987), Toni Morrison
Interpreter of Maladies (1999), Jhumpa Lahiri
The Thing Around Your Neck (2009), Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
All Our Names (2014), Dinaw Mengestu
The Refugees (2017), Viet Thanh Nguyen

Recommended Texts

The Craft of Research, Booth, Colomb, Williams

Junior Tutorial Goals

To introduce the discipline and practice of English literary studies at an upper-division level, & to write 20-25pp research paper in preparation for an honors thesis. You will be able to:

- Design a research question
- Develop a critical bibliography around that question, including diverse methods and viewpoints
- Put secondary criticism in conversation with a your own ideas and with other criticism
- Write with greater clarity and precision

Course-Specific Goals

To reflect critically on 20th-21st century American fiction that explores the affective and intimate dimensions of transnational experiences of displacement. You will be able to:

- Describe and use an array of approaches, terms, and methods central to diaspora and migration studies in relation to literary fiction
- Understand and critique literary theories drawing from affect studies and ethnic studies
- Generate your own ideas about broad questions of literary form, representation, and ethics

Assignments

- *Thoughtful participation* (10%): Students will be responsible for introducing (5-7 min. short presentation) and guiding discussion each week (starting **Week 2**). Attendance at departmental General Meetings is required.
- *Short paper* (10%): Due **Week 4**. 5-7pp close reading of a primary text (followed by a conference with the tutor).
- *Prospectus and annotated bibliography* (10%): Due **Week 6**. 2pp prospectus, 8-10 sources.
- *Short assignments* (10%): To help you think about your essay at a steady pace throughout the semester. Includes topics of interest list for library session, glossary and summary exercises, Department Writing Fellow meeting, presentation, draft revision workshop, potential Harvard Art Museum or Maps Collection visit. Details TBD.
- *Full draft* (20%): Due **Week 11** to course site and hard copy.
- *Final paper* (40%): 20-25pp, on a major literary work *not* read in this class, due (**Week 14**). Submit to tutor and department by 5pm. If you do not turn in a final paper, you will not pass the tutorial.

Schedule

Unit 1: Immigrants and Expatriates

Week 0 Informal meeting. Begin next week's readings. Fill out when2meet.

Week 1 *Theories and methods of diaspora studies*
Primary: Introduction. *1) "The New Colossus," Emma Lazarus. *2) "Nation, Migration, Globalization: Points of Contention in Diaspora Studies." *Theorizing Diaspora: A Reader*, eds. Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur. *3) "The Turn to Diaspora," Lily Cho, *Topia* 17: 11-30.

X, 4-5pm, General Meeting #1: "Program Welcome and Overview" (Barker 133, Plimpton Room).

Week 2 *The expatriate and the nation*

Primary: The Sun Also Rises, Ernest Hemingway.
*Secondary: *1) "Expatriate Fiction." The Encyclopedia of Twentieth-Century Fiction, Matthew Hart. *2) "Expatriation, Expatriates, and Expats: The American Transformation of a Concept." American Historical Review, 114, no. 2 (April 2009): 307-328, Nancy L. Green.*

Week 3 *Language and exile*
Primary: Pnin, Vladimir Nabokov.
*Secondary: *1) Edward Said, "Reflections on Exile." *2) Salman Rushdie, "Imaginary Homelands."*
Assignments: Draft list of potential research topics and interests due next week in class for library session.

X, Session A 4-5pm, Session B 5-6pm, General Meeting #2: "Introduction to Critical Methods," with X and X, (Kresge Room).

Week 4 *Developing research ideas through questions, topics, and sources*
Primary: Library session with the English department research librarian.
Assignments: Short paper (5-6pp.) due. TBD: individual conferences to discuss papers. Work on prospectus and annotated bibliography.

Week 5 *New World migrations and structures of feeling*
Primary: Drown, This is How You Lose Her, Junot Díaz.
*Secondary: *1) "Immigrant Literatures: A Modern Structure of Feeling." Lisa Lowe, Literature on the Move: Comparing Diasporic Ethnicities in Europe and the Americas, D. Marçais et al., eds. *2) Excerpt, "The Intimacies of Four Continents," Lisa Lowe.*
Assignments: Work on prospectus and annotated bibliography

Unit 2: Exiles and Slave Economies

Week 6 *Queer diasporas and border crossings*
Primary: The Book of Salt, Monique Truong.
*Secondary: *1) Selection, queer studies reader. *2) Selection, Thinking Sexuality Transnationally, Elizabeth A. Povinelli and George Chauncey. *3) Selection, American Expatriate Writing and the Paris Moment: Modernism and Place, Donald Pizer.*
Assignments: 2pp prospectus and annotated bibliography (8-10 sources) due. Email to everyone in the tutorial and me.

Week 7 *Affect, race, and identity*
Primary: Quicksand, Nella Larsen.
*Secondary: *"Irritation" chapter from Ugly Feelings, Sianne Ngai.*
Assignment: Workshop prospectuses and bibliographies (structured peer review).

Week 8 *Dispersal through the slave trade, the Black Atlantic*
Primary: Beloved, Toni Morrison.
*Secondary: *"The Black Atlantic as a Counterculture of Modernity," Paul Gilroy, Theorizing Diaspora: A Reader. "The Logic of Analogy: Slavery and the Contemporary Refugee," Yogita Goyal.*

Assignments: Continue discussing the prospectuses and bibliographies in workshop format. DWF session TBD.

Unit 3: Cosmopolitanism

- Week 9** *Gendering diaspora and contemporary Afropolitanism*
Primary: *The Thing Around Your Neck* (2009), Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.
Secondary: **“Gendering Diaspora: Transnational Feminism, Diaspora and Its Hegemonies.”* *Feminist Review* 90, Tina Campt and Deborah Thomas.
- Week 10** *The limits of cosmopolitanism*
Primary: *Open City*, Teju Cole. “Stranger in the Village,” James Baldwin.
Secondary: *Selection, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*, Kwame Anthony Appiah.
Assignments: Short assignment due TBD.

Unit 4: Refugees

- Week 11** *Displacement and the trans-Pacific*
Primary: *The Refugees*, Viet Thanh Nguyen.
Secondary: **“Diaspora, Transnationalism, and Asian American Studies: Positions and Debates,”* Christopher Lee, *Displacements and Diasporas: Asians in the Americas*.
Assignments: Work on drafts, share updates.
- Week 12** *Memory and the poetics of diaspora*
Primary: *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999), Jhumpa Lahiri.
Secondary: *Selection, Marianne Hirsch and Nancy K. Miller, eds. *Rites of Return: Diaspora Poetics and the Politics of Memory*.
Assignments: Full draft due in class.
- Week 13** *Statelessness: past, present, and future*
Primary: *All Our Names*, Dinaw Mengestu.
Secondary: *1) “We Refugees,” Hannah Arendt.
2) United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees website:
<http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49da0e466.html>.
Assignments: Presentations and draft revision workshops.
- Week 14** X, 3-6:30pm, Junior Tutorial Conference (Thompson Room). Details TBA.

Reading Period: X through X. Final 20-25 pp. tutorial papers due X. Submit your paper via email and a hard copy to the department by 5pm.

Policies

Personal Electronic Devices: Not allowed in class, unless you need something for a presentation or otherwise have obtained permission in advance.

Academic Integrity: Familiarize yourself with Harvard FAS's Honor Code. If you have questions about anything related to citations, plagiarism, etc. or aren't sure, please ask. Check out the [Harvard Guide to Using Sources](#) and [Literary Research at Harvard](#).

Collaboration Policy: You are encouraged to talk with other students about the course and its readings, and to read each other's work. In individual assignments, academic collaboration and external sources should be always cited.

Attendance: Your tutorial attendance is vital to your own success as well as to the success of the class as a whole – so is attendance of Junior Tutorial General Meetings and other required events. I will allow each student a “free” tutorial absence to be used in case of sickness, travel, etc.: no explanation necessary. Missing more than one class will decrease your participation grade; excessive absence could result in failing the course. Also, being late really disrupts the work we're doing together: 2 lates = 1 absence. If you have attenuating circumstances, communicate with me in a timely manner so that we can discuss how to deal with it.

Deadlines and Extensions: Unless otherwise specified, assignments are due by 11:59pm on the date listed in the schedule. Late assignments will be docked 1/3 letter grade per day late, except for the final paper, which must be turned in by the due date. Students failing to turn in a final paper, or turning it in late without an official excuse, will fail the tutorial. If, well in advance of an assignment, you expect you will need an extension, please talk with me.

Email: The course email list and Canvas site will be used to distribute important info throughout the semester—from distributing handouts to adjusting assignments and deadlines. I'll usually respond to emails within 24 hours during the week, but mark time-sensitive or urgent emails in the subject.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: *“Students needing academic adjustments or accommodations because of a documented disability must present their Faculty Letter from the [Accessible Education Office](#) (AEO) and speak with the professor by the end of the second week of the term. Failure to do so may result in the Course Head's inability to respond in a timely manner. All discussions will remain confidential, although Faculty are invited to contact AEO to discuss appropriate implementation.”*