

Sophia X. Gatzionis  
Junior Tutorial Proposal  
June 2023

## ***Home in America: 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Immigrant Fiction***

Course Instructor: Sophia Gatzionis  
Email: [sophiagatzionis@g.harvard.edu](mailto:sophiagatzionis@g.harvard.edu)

### **Course Description:**

*Home in America* is a junior tutorial on immigrant fiction written in and about the United States from the early 20<sup>th</sup> 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 Roland Barthes), 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 Harvard’s archives. During the second half of the semester, we will spend part of each class on modules and (towards the very end of our tutorial) workshops that will help you develop skills including polishing your research question, refining the scope of your project, introducing yourself to a critical field, referencing your sources, and speaking publicly about your research.

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? We will 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 and final paper proposal, it will offer you some 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

Sophia X. Gatzionis  
Junior Tutorial Proposal  
June 2023

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.

### ***Part I: Literary History***

#### Week 1

##### Modernism and the Formation of Literary Character

Willa Cather, *My Ántonia* (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)

### **General Meeting #1**

#### Week 2

##### Naturalism and the City

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

Jacob Riis, extracts from *How the Other Half Lives* (1880)

James Joyce, Episode 3 (Calypso) from *Ulysses* (1922)

David Baguley, extracts on “the ‘scandal’ of naturalism” from *Naturalist Fiction: The Entropic Vision* (1990)

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, “Introduction” 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/>

Sophia X. Gatzionis  
Junior Tutorial Proposal  
June 2023

*In-Class Module: How to close-read*

## ***Part II: Identity and Representation***

### Week 4

#### Conceptions of Exile

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, “Preface to the Routledge Classics Edition” from *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge Classics, 2004)

*Student Presentation*

**Due: Close-reading essay (5-6 pages)**

### Week 5

#### Open Week + Class Trip to Houghton Library

This week we will be spending the first half of class at the Houghton, and the second half of class discussing the first chapter (or equivalent—around 30 pages) of each primary text remaining on our syllabus. The goal is for you to sample each of these texts before you choose the subject of your final paper.

## **General Meeting #2**

### Week 6

#### Questions of Genre

Ocean Vuong, *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* (2019)

Maxine Hong Kingston, Chapter 1 “No Name Woman” from *The Woman Warrior* (1976)

David Shields, extracts from *Reality Hunger* (2010)

Cathy Park Hong, “The End of White Innocence” from *Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning* (2020)

*Student Presentation*

Sophia X. Gatzionis  
Junior Tutorial Proposal  
June 2023

Week 7

Questions of Perspective

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

Viet Thanh Nguyen, "Black-Eyed Women" from *The Refugees* (2017)

Zadie Smith, "Fascinated to Presume: In Defense of Fiction," *The New York Review of Books*,  
October 24, 2019, <https://www.nybooks-com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/articles/2019/10/24/zadie-smith-in-defense-of-fiction/>

Long Le-Khac, "Local Color to Multiculturalism" (Chapter 11), in *The Cambridge Companion to the American Short Story*, edited by Michael J. Collins and Gavin Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023), 174-188

*Student Presentation*

**Due: Final paper prospectus (2-3 pages) with annotated bibliography (10-15 sources)**

Spring Break

Week 8

Americanization

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

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

Lauren Berlant, "Introduction: The Intimate Public Sphere" from *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997)

*Student Presentation*

Week 9

Globalization

Adichie, *Americanah*, second half

Paul Gilroy, "The Black Atlantic as a Counterculture of Modernity" 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*

*In-Class Module: Introducing yourself to a critical field*

***Part III: Facets of the Canon***

Sophia X. Gatzionis  
Junior Tutorial Proposal  
June 2023

Week 10  
Literary Controversy

Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (1955)

Bring-Your-Own-Criticism Day: you will choose a short text (a magazine article, newspaper article, book review, introduction to a book, etc.) or extracts from a longer text (journal article, book chapter, etc.) and circulate it before class. Then, you will present your text. The criticism that you choose must be relevant to *Lolita*.

*In-Class Module: Refining the scope of your research project*

**Due: Full 1<sup>st</sup> draft of research paper (minimum 20 pages)**

Week 11  
Intertextuality

Jamaica Kincaid, *Lucy* (1990)

Charlotte Brontë, Chapter VII of *Villette* (1853)

Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author" (1967)

Ian Smith, "Misusing Canonical Intertexts: Jamaica Kincaid, Wordsworth and Colonialism's 'absent things,'" *Callaloo* 25, no.3 (Summer 2002):801-820,  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/3300118>

Graham Allen, "Postmodern Conclusions" from *Intertextuality* (New York: Routledge, 2000)

*Student Presentation*

*In-Class Module: Referencing your sources*

Week 12  
Constructing the Canon: The Contemporary Genre Novel

Laila Lalami, *The Other Americans* (2019)

John Guillory, extracts from *Cultural Capital* (1993)

Alan H. Goldman, Chapter 4 "The appeal of the mystery" from *Philosophy and the Novel* (2013)

*In-Class Workshop: Does your paper flow?*

Week 13  
Thinking Outside the Canon: The Impact on Popular Culture

Sophia X. Gatzionis  
Junior Tutorial Proposal  
June 2023

Mario Puzo, Books I-III of *The Godfather* (1969)  
Francis Ford Coppola, *The Godfather* (1972) [Film]  
Mario Puzo, extracts from *The Godfather Papers & Other Confessions* (1972)  
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.110-120

*In-Class Workshop: Speaking publicly about your work*

**Due via email to me and the department: Final draft of research paper (20-25 pages)**

### Junior Tutorial Conference

#### Additional Information

#### **Accessing the Texts:**

Primary readings: If you want to purchase the books, the total should hopefully come to under \$100. But remember that you can also borrow them from Harvard or through Borrow Direct. If you cannot find something, please email me and we will figure out a solution together. Shorter primary texts (such as single chapters of books) will be available through the Library Reserves on our Canvas site.

All secondary readings will also be available through Library Reserves.

#### **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 relevant to the week's secondary readings. Expect to present at least twice over the course of the semester.

3. Close reading essay (5-6 pages): A short paper on a brief extract of your choice, from one of the primary texts on our syllabus. This paper offers you the opportunity to examine the way a literary text functions at very close range.

4. Final paper prospectus (2 pages) and annotated bibliography of 8-10 sources: 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. Accompanied by 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.

5. 1<sup>st</sup> draft of research paper (min 20 pages)

6. Final research paper (20-25 pages): What we have been building up to! You 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%
Final paper prospectus and annotated bibliography	20%
1 <sup>st</sup> draft of research paper (min 20 pages):	10%
Final research paper (20-25 pages):	40%

### **On Deadlines:**

Some of the deadlines are set by the department and I cannot offer flexibility for them (these are the deadlines for the half-draft of your research paper and the final draft of your research paper). Please make sure to plan ahead, especially for these assignments. In general, I would strongly prefer if you did not take extensions on any of the assignments for this tutorial. The reason for this is that we are a very small group, and you will all be able to support each other better in your research and writing journey if you are at the same assignment-stage when we meet each week. That said, things happen, and I do not want this tutorial to be a source of stress, but rather a source of motivation and mutual support. Please let me know if something comes up and you could use a few days' leeway.