“Imaginary Homelands”: Expats and Immigrants in American Fiction

From the Oxford English Dictionary:

- **Expatriate** (noun): A person who **lives outside their native country**.
  Mid 18th century (as a verb): from medieval Latin *expatriate*—'gone out from one's country', from the verb *expatriare*, from *ex-* 'out' + *patria* 'native country'.

- **Immigrant** (noun): A person who comes to **live permanently** in a foreign country.
  Early 17th century: from Latin *immigrat-* 'immigrated', from the verb *immigrare*, from *in-* 'into' + *migrare* 'to move, shift'.

**Description**

Who counts as an expatriate; who counts as an immigrant; what are the differences, and why do they matter? Legal definitions may help delineate the boundaries of each status, but a host of literary associations, themes, and images come to define each term culturally and discursively. We might say that expatriates and immigrants are similar in denotation – that is, in their simplest meanings, 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 label often conjures up varying norms or expectations, perhaps, for example, a story of successful assimilation juxtaposed to one of glamorous cosmopolitanism. This tutorial focuses on figures of both voluntary and forced migrations: the expatriate and immigrant in particular, as well as alternative designations of the exile, refugee, cosmopolite, and traveler in the 20th–21st century American literary imagination. We will survey a selection of fiction that narrates such individuals’ changing experiences of place, movement, and flux. In what ways are these categories of migration constructed? What are their possibilities and limits in use? How are issues of socioeconomic status, citizenship status, race/ethnicity/gender/sexuality, and cultural and economic globalization influential in their formations? We will explore the connections and tensions that arise when we put categories of migration into play as unsettled and disputable. Primary texts include works by: Hemingway, MacLeish, Larsen, Nabokov, Morrison, Shteyngart, Truong, Diaz, Cole, Mengestu, and readings from literary criticism and cultural theory. (NB: Readings may change over the semester as students’ interests develop.)

**Required Texts**

*The Sun Also Rises* (1926), Ernest Hemingway
*Quicksand* (1928), Nella Larsen
*Pnin* (1957), Vladimir Nabokov
*Beloved* (1987), Toni Morrison
*The Russian Debutante’s Handbook* (2002), Gary Shteyngart
\textit{The Book of Salt} (2003), Monique Truong
\textit{The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao} (2007), Junot Diaz
\textit{Open City} (2011), Teju Cole
\textit{All Our Names} (2014), Dinaw Mengestu

Novel of choice. Some possibilities might include:
- \textit{Tender is the Night} (1934), F. Scott Fitzgerald; \textit{The Emigrants} (1992), W.G. Sebald
- \textit{East, West} (1994), Salman Rushdie; \textit{World and Town} (2010), Gish Jen
- \textit{The Reluctant Fundamentalist} (2007), Mohsin Hamid; \textit{Netherland} (2008), Joseph O’Neill
- \textit{War Trash} (2008), \textit{Map of Betrayal} (2014), Ha Jin; \textit{Foreign Bodies} (2010), Cynthia Ozick
- \textit{The Lazarus Project} (2008), \textit{Nowhere Man} (2002), Aleksandar Hemon;
- \textit{Giovanni’s Room} (1956), James Baldwin; \textit{Americanah} (2013), Chimamanda Adichie
- \textit{Leaving the Atocha Station} (2011), Ben Lerner

*Readings marked with an asterisk in the schedule will be uploaded online or copies will be handed out in advance.

Goals

- \textit{Research}: develop research skills, gain a sense of what research habits work for you individually, and write a 20-25 pp. tutorial paper effective in argument, structure, and style
- \textit{Literary analysis}: improve the ability to analyze fiction and criticism via writing, listening, and speaking skills

Assignments

- \textit{Thoughtful, active participation} (10%): Includes library and DWF sessions, etc. Contact me in advance regarding excused absences. Unexcused absences, barring special circumstances, will affect your grade. If something comes up, be sure to communicate with me.
- \textit{Short assignments} (15%): Assignments are not weekly and will help you think about your project at a steady pace throughout the semester. 1. topics of interest list (Week 2); 2. abstract exercise (Week 5); 3. prospectus and annotated bibliography (Week 6); 4. one-sentence posts (post one question or comment on course site each week).
- \textit{Short paper and conference} (10%): Due Week 4.
- \textit{Full draft} (20%): Due Week 11, Tuesday, December 17, to course Dropbox and tutor’s box (2nd floor Barker).
- \textit{Presentations and revisions} (10%): 5-minute presentation in class (Week 12). You will be assigned to be a respondent to someone else’s presentation, which will involve offering a comment and a question after your partner’s presentation.
- \textit{Final tutorial paper} (35%): 20-25 pp. double-spaced. Due Week 14, Tuesday, December 8. Submit to tutor and department by 5pm. (If you do not turn in a final paper, you will not receive a passing grade for the tutorial.)

Schedule
Week 1
*Primary: Introduction.*


Week 2
*Primary: The Sun Also Rises*, Ernest Hemingway

Assignments: One-sentence posts begin this week. List of tentative research topics and interests due in class, in preparation for next week’s library session. Required tutorial-wide meeting #1, *Tuesday, September 15, 4-5pm, Barker 133.*

Week 3
*Primary: Library session with Odile Harter, department research librarian.*
*Assignments: Get a head start on next week’s reading and short paper.*

Week 4
*Primary: The Book of Salt*, Monique Truong

Assignments: Short paper (5-6pp.) due in class. TBD: individual conferences to discuss paper. DWF appointment between Weeks 4-11.

Week 5
*Primary: Quicksand*, Nella Larsen

Assignment: Due in class. Read the Scheper article; write a 500-600 word abstract that explains her key argument to someone who hasn’t read it.

Week 6
*Primary: Pnin*, Vladimir Nabokov
Assignments: Two-page prospectus and annotated bibliography due. Please email to everyone in the tutorial. Required tutorial-wide meeting #2, Tuesday, October 13, 4-5pm, Barker 133.

Week 7

*Primary:* Beloved, Toni Morrison

*Secondary:* 1) Excerpt from Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother.*

*Assignments:* We will spend the second half of the session discussing the prospectuses and bibliographies in workshop format.

Week 8

*Primary:* The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao, Junot Díaz


Week 9

*Primary:* All Our Names, Dinaw Mengestu


Week 10

*Primary:* Open City, Teju Cole


*Assignments:* In class discussion of novel of choice.

Week 11

*Primary:* The Russian Debutante’s Handbook, Gary Shteyngart


*Assignments:* In class discussion of novel of choice, presentation pairings. Department deadline, full draft of final essay due to tutor only, Tuesday, November 17 (Dropbox and hard copy to tutor’s box, 2nd floor Barker).

Week 12

*Primary:* Novel of choice.

*Assignments:* Student presentations and draft revisions in class.

Week 13

Thanksgiving Recess.

Week 14

Department deadline: junior tutorial conference. TBD: Monday, December 7, 4-6:30pm or Wednesday, December 9, 4-6:30pm, Thompson Room. Student will present a 5-min. paper on their research.

***Final essays due TUESDAY, DECEMBER 8 (to department and tutor). Submit your paper both to the Dropbox and to my box (2nd floor Barker) by 5pm.***
Personal Electronic Devices
Not allowed in class, unless you need tech for your presentation.

Extensions
Extensions of up to 48 hours may be given on certain assignments if you request them with at least 48 hours advance notice. No extensions will be given for certain exercises at tutor's discretion. No extensions will be given on the final essay.

Emails
I will respond to emails within 48 hours but only between the hours of 9am-6pm; please feel free to drop by office hours to chat, even if you don’t have a specific question in mind.

AEO Accommodations
Let me know, and bring your letter from the Accessible Education Office, as soon as possible, so that I can be aware of any particular adjustments or accommodations needed.

Collaboration Policy
If you have questions about anything related to citations, attributions, etc. or aren’t sure, please ask. Check out the Harvard Guide to Using Sources: http://isites.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=k70847&pageid=icb.page355322.