**Migrant Writers & Their Journeys**

C LIT 251A, GLITS 313A, SLAV 320A

Winter 2023, T & TH, 12:30-2:20pm,



**Instructor: Piotr Florczyk, PhD (piotrf@uw.edu)**

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**Office: PDL A-215**

**Office Hours: TH 10:15-12:15 (and by appointment)**

**Course Description:**

Every year millions of people leave their homelands hoping to start their lives somewhere else. For some of them, it is a life-and-death decision, because they are fleeing murderous regimes, economic precarity, or climate change, while for others it is about career advancement or personal enrichment. Many migrants write about their experience, documenting the heartache of leaving home and the challenges of starting over in another place. Still others write about the feeling of being perpetually unmoored, belonging neither here nor there and thus searching for some mythical elsewhere where their minds and bodies might find a measure of equanimity. In this class, which entails a global and multi-genre approach to migrant literature, we will closely examine short stories, autobiographical prose, poems, and movies that depict the forced or voluntary relocating to a new place; our goal will be to gain a strong understanding of concepts such as community, language, identity, and belonging. All readings are in English. No prerequisites.

**TRIGGER WARNING**: As the poet Lucille Clifton once said in an interview, “You cannot play for safety and make art.” As you know, literature often confronts very complex issues. Please be aware that you should SKIP any assigned reading and step away from any discussion as needed this term, no questions asked. I can’t always give the TW in advance as it’s impossible to know what might trigger someone, but I will try to give a general sense of what’s coming.

**Required Texts and Materials (eBook or paper copies):**

1. Dohra Ahmad, ed. *The Penguin Book of Migration Literature* (2019). ISBN: 9780143133384

You are responsible for reading all assigned texts before class and attending each class prepared to participate in class discussion. Without reading the texts, you will not be able to complete the assignments.

**Learning Objectives:**

This term we will immerse ourselves in the comparative study of a select group of writers and poets who might influence our thinking about migration, home, belonging, language, etc. Additionally, the aim of the course is giving each student an opportunity to practice their skills at:

1. Comparing and contrasting rhetorical strategies (irony, understatement, etc.)
2. Examining various social, political, and cultural contexts to see if and how they might have impacted the authors under discussion
3. Applying critical thinking and reading skills to written analysis of literary, filmic, and photographic works.

**Assignments and Grading:**

1. Two response papers (500 words each), 50%
2. Fieldwork project (~500 words; group or individual), 30%
3. Active class participation (including in-class writing), 20%

**Response Papers 1 & 2:** Choose a poem/story/film/photograph and in a paper of 500 words reflect on its form and content, as well as any pertinent biographical/historical/political, etc., contexts. Write as if you were introducing the work to a stranger. The work may come from class reading/discussion or from your own research.

**Fieldwork Project:** Interview a migrant by asking him/her/them the following three questions: 1) why did you leave home? 2) what do you like about living in the United States? 3) if you could live anywhere, where would it be and why? Make sure you introduce your interviewee as part of your interview write-up of ~500 words. You will present your project at the end of the term.

**Active Class Participation:** Ours is primarily a discussion class about literature that helps us understand where we come from and where we might be heading as humans. Your voice is no less important than mine or Mr. Boyechko’s—and we want to hear your stories and your analysis. PLEASE NOTE: If you miss more than 3 class meetings (for unexcused reasons), you will lose participation points.

**Extra Credit Assignments**: During the quarter’s final week, you’ll have an option to earn extra credit. Your options for assignments are: 1) analyze a new work, something that hasn’t been covered in class but pertains to migration, or 2) create your own piece of migration literature (poem/story/hybrid work). Final deadline: TBD.

**Tentative Class Schedule:**

**Week 1:**

T 1/3 Introduction

Th 1/5 Olaudah Equiano; Julie Otsuka

**Week 2:**

T 1/10 Francisco Jiménez; Eva Hoffman; Mohsin Hamid

Th 1/12 Dinaw Mengestu; Warsan Shire; Dunya Mikhail

**Week 3:**

T 1/17 E.R. Braithwaite; Shauna Singh Baldwin; Emine Sevgi Özdamar

Th 1/19 Translation & In-class writing

**Writing due: Response Paper #1**

**Week 4:**

T 1/24 Film screening: *Fire at Sea* (2016)

Th 1/26 RB’s Lecture

**Week 5:**

T 1/31 Marina Lewycka; Djamila Ibrahim;

Th 2/2 Shani Mootoo; Hanif Kureishi

**Week 6:**

T 2/7 Zadie Smith [plus an online interview]

Th 2/9 Film screening: *Small Axe: Red, White and Blue* (2020)

**Writing due: Response Paper #2**

**Week 7:**

T 2/14 Tato Laviera; Sefi Atta; Safia Elhillo

Th 2/16 Translation & In-class writing

**Week 8:**

T 2/21 Lecture TBA

Th 2/23 RB’s Lecture

**Week 9:**

T 2/28 Pauline Kaldas; Marjane Satrapi

Th 3/2 Film screening: *Persepolis* (2008)

**Writing due: Fieldwork Project**

**Week 10:**

T 3/7 **Fieldwork Project Presentations [& Extra Credit assignments]**

Th 3/9 **Fieldwork Project Presentations [& Extra Credit assignments]**

**Bibliography for Further Study: Please see me**

**OTHER MATTERS OF IMPORTANCE**

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

The University takes academic integrity very seriously. Behaving with integrity is part of our responsibility to our shared learning community. If you’re uncertain about if something is academic misconduct, ask me. I am willing to discuss questions you might have.

Acts of academic misconduct may include but are not limited to:

* Cheating (working collaboratively on quizzes/exams and discussion submissions, sharing answers and previewing quizzes/exams)
* Plagiarism (representing the work of others as your own without giving appropriate credit to the original author(s))
* Unauthorized collaboration (working with each other on assignments)

Concerns about these or other behaviors prohibited by the Student Conduct Code may be referred for investigation and adjudication.

Students found to have engaged in academic misconduct may receive a zero on the assignment, or face other possible outcomes.

**RELIGIOUS ACCOMODATIONS**

Washington state law requires that UW develop a policy for accommodation of student absences or significant hardship due to reasons of faith or conscience, or for organized religious activities. The UW’s policy, including more information about how to request an accommodation, is available at <https://registrar.washington.edu/staffandfaculty/religious-accommodations-policy/>. Accommodations must be requested within the first two weeks of this course using the form at <https://registrar.washington.edu/students/religious-accommodations-request/>.

**DISABILITY RESOURCES**

Your experience in this class is important to me. If you have already established accommodations with Disability Resources for Students (DRS), please communicate your approved accommodations to me at your earliest convenience so we can discuss your needs in this course. If you have not yet established services through DRS, but have a temporary health condition or permanent disability that requires accommodations (conditions include but not limited to; mental health, attention-related, learning, vision, hearing, physical or health impacts), you are welcome to contact DRS at 206-543-8924 or [uwdrs@uw.edu](mailto:uwdrs@uw.edu) or [disability.uw.edu.](http://depts.washington.edu/uwdrs/)DRS offers resources and coordinates reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities and/or temporary health conditions.  Reasonable accommodations are established through an interactive process between you, your instructor(s) and DRS.  It is the policy and practice of the University of Washington to create inclusive and accessible learning environments consistent with federal and state law.

**RESPECT**

We aspire to create a classroom environment that encourages and welcomes different perspectives. How do we learn anything in the absence of robust engagement with ideas and views that differ from our own? Respect for different views and the people who express them does not necessarily mean agreement with them; at a minimum, it means that we should cultivate gratitude for the opportunity to re-examine our habits of thought. Let’s work together and show mutual respect.

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For more information on disability accommodations, academic integrity, safety, and religious accommodations, please see https://registrar.washington.edu/staffandfaculty/syllabus-guidelines/