

EN 4400 6.0: Diaspora Literatures

Session: F/W 2019-2020

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Office Hours: Mondays 3:00 – 4:00 pm; Wednesdays 5:00 – 6:00

Lecture Venue: RS 125; Time: 11:30 am – 2:30 pm

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course interprets “diaspora” broadly and addresses some of the literary texts by migrant minorities and their descendants in Canada, Britain, the USA and the Caribbean. It considers the criteria that have been used to define diaspora; it reflects upon the different situations and dynamics that produce diasporas; and it investigates the relationship between diaspora and other trans-national phenomena, as well as between diaspora and national literatures. Using a selection of texts that include poetry and fiction, we examine the changing contexts of migration and settlement and how these contexts shape the writers’ imagination. Diaspora literatures, by virtue of the nature of migration and the receptiveness of places of arrival, often present certain themes, such as separation, loss, memory, nostalgia, community formation, citizenship, identity, and so on. The course shows how the different circumstances, as well as the aesthetic choices by the writers, mediate specific iterations of these themes.

We begin with theoretical materials that suggest frameworks for analysis in order to delve into the imaginative texts. The goal is to enable students to gain a textured understanding of diaspora through attention to the structures of narration or poetic reflection; the linguistic, rhetorical and figurative resources deployed by the writers; as well as the values and themes derived from the texts. In the process, students develop valuable analytical and critical skills that will serve them in other courses and/or in their careers. The teaching format is a combination of lectures and discussion. Students get a chance to test their ideas through seminar presentations.

REQUIRED READING

- 1) **Theory/Case Studies** will use the following journal articles/book chapters, electronically available through York University library:
 - a) James Clifford. “Diasporas,” *Cultural Anthropology*, 9.3 (August 1994): 302-338.
 - b) Vijay Mishra, “The Diasporic Imaginary,” from *Literature of the Indian Diaspora: Theorizing the Diasporic Imaginary*, pp. 1 – 21.
 - c) Nabuko Adachi, “Introduction: Theorizing Japanese diaspora,” from *Japanese Diasporas: Unsung Pasts, Conflicting Presents and Uncertain Futures*, pp. 1 – 23.
 - d) Carole Boyce Davies, “Introduction: Migratory Subjectivities: Black women’s writing and the re-negotiation of identities,” from *Black Women, Writing and Identity: Migrations of the Subject*.

Imaginative Texts

- 2) Anita Badami, *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call*
- 3) Esi Edugyan, *Half Blood Blues*
- 4) Marlene Nourbese Philip, *She Tries Her Tongue, Her Silence Softly Breaks*.
- 5) Shani Mootoo, *Moving Forward Sideways Like a Crab*
- 6) Julie Otsuka, *The Buddha in the Attic*
- 7) Leila Aboulela, *The Translator*

Requirements and Grade components

	TYPE OF ASSIGNMENT	DATE GIVEN	DATE DUE	GRADED BY
1	Reading Response 1 (10%)	September 13 th	October 11 th	October 19 th
2	Seminar presentation, accompanied with essay (20%)	October 4 th	Date for which students sign.	Approximately a week after the student's presentation.
3	Fall Term Test – in-class (25%)	November 29 th	November 29 th	December 7 th
4	Research Paper (25%)	January 31 st	April 6 th	April 13 th
5	Reading Response 2 (10%)	February 14 th	March 8 th	March 15 th
6	Class Participation (10%)			End of Term

Submission of Assignments

With the exceptions of in-class tests, all the course assignments must be submitted **online (Course Moodle site) through Turnitin by 11:59 pm on due date.**

Plagiarism

Plagiarism takes place when an individual appropriates or uses somebody else's work and ideas without due acknowledgement. It also includes practices like paying someone to write an essay for you or purchasing an essay in part or whole that you can customize and pass off as your own. York University's Policy on Academic Honesty abjures and punishes all forms of plagiarism. For steps you can take to avoid committing plagiarism, such as completing an Academic Integrity Checklist and an Academic Integrity Tutorial, please visit

<https://www.library.yorku.ca/web/research-learn/academic-integrity/>

Important sessional dates for Fall Term:

Last date to add a course **without permission** of instructor (also see Financial Deadlines) Sept. 17

Last date to add a course **with permission** of instructor (also see Financial Deadlines) Oct 22

Drop deadline: Last date to drop a course without receiving a grade (also see Financial Deadlines) Feb 3

Course Withdrawal Period (withdraw from a course and receive a grade of "W" on transcript) Feb 4 – April 5

For more details and additional sessional dates, such as Financial Deadlines, please visit <https://registrar.yorku.ca/enrol/dates/fw19>

Class Schedule

Week 1: September 6th Introduction to diaspora literatures: definitions; evolution of the term **diaspora**; kinds of diaspora.

For next class, read Clifford, “Diasporas”

Week 2: September 13th Critical issues in diaspora studies: Clifford’s “Diasporas” as a discussion paper.

For next class, watch ahead of time the movie *Casablanca* – available as a video at York University’s Scott Library and online, and read Mishra’s “The Diasporic Imaginary”—to be studied next week.

Week 3: September 20th “Old” and “New” Diasporas; Theorizing Trauma. Mishra’s “The Diasporic Imaginary” as a discussion paper.

For next class, read Adachi’s “Theorizing Japanese diaspora.”

Week 4: September 27th Broadening and deepening the concept of Diaspora—Contemporary Migrations and Settlements. Adachi’s “Theorizing Japanese diaspora” as a discussion paper.

For next class, read Davies’ “Migratory Subjectivities.”

Week 5: October 4th IN-CLASS TEST

Week 6: October 11th Subjectivities and Diaspora. Davies’ “Migratory Subjectivities” as a Discussion Paper

Week 7: October 18th FALL TERM READING WEEK

Week 8: October 25th Badami, *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call*

Week 9: November 1st *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call*

Week 10: November 8th *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call*

Week 11: November 15th Edugyan, *Half Blood Blues*

Week 12: November 22nd *Half Blood Blues*

Week 13: November 29th FALL TERM TEST

Week 14: January 10th *Half Blood Blues*

Week 15: January 17th Mootoo, *Moving Forward Sideways Like a Crab*

Week 16: January 24th *Moving Forward Sideways Like a Crab*

Week 17: January 31st *Moving Forward Sideways Like a Crab*

Week 18: February 7th Otsuka, *The Buddha in the Attic*

Week 19: February 14th *The Buddha in the Attic*

Week 20: February 21st WINTER TERM READING WEEK

Week 21: February 28th Aboulela, *The Translator*

Week 22: March 6th Aboulela, *The Translator*

Week 23: March 13th Philip, *She Tries Her Tongue, Her Silence Softly Breaks*

Week 24: March 20th *She Tries Her Tongue*

Week 25: March 27th *She Tries Her Tongue*

Week 26: April 3rd *She Tries Her Tongue*

Grading Scheme

Letter grade	Numerical grade	Qualitative description
A+	90-100%	Exceptional: Thorough knowledge of concepts and/or techniques and exceptional skill or originality in the use of those concepts/techniques in satisfying the requirements of an assignment (or course).
A	80-89%	Excellent: Thorough knowledge of concepts and/or techniques together with a high degree of skill and/or some elements of originality in satisfying the requirements of an assignment (or course).
B+	75-79.99%	Very Good: Thorough knowledge of concepts and/or techniques together with a fairly high degree of skill in the use of those concepts in satisfying the requirements of an assignment (or course).
B	70-74.99%	Good: Good level of knowledge of concepts and/or techniques together with considerable skill in using them to satisfy the requirements of an assignment (or course).
C+	65-69.99%	Competent: Acceptable level of knowledge of concepts and/or techniques together with considerable skill in using them to satisfy the requirements of an assignment (or course).
C	60-64.99%	Fairly Competent: Acceptable level of knowledge of concepts and/or techniques together with some skill in using them to satisfy the requirements of an assignment (or course).
D+	55-59.99%	Passing: Slightly better than minimal knowledge of required concepts and/or techniques together with some ability to use them in satisfying the requirements of an assignment (or a course).
D	50-54.99%	Barely Passing: Minimum knowledge of concepts and/or techniques needed to satisfy the requirements of an assignment (or a course).
E	40-49.99%	Failing—Marginal Failure
F	0-39.99%	Failing—Failure