

Fall/Winter 2018-2019

AP/EN 4400 6.0A (Y)

Diaspora Literatures

Course Director:

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Office: Room 120A Atkinson College
Office hours: Wednesdays 5:00 – 6:00 pm; Fridays 3:00 – 4:00 pm

Delivery Format:

Seminar

Time:

Friday 11:30am-2:30pm

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 begins with a consideration of the notion of diaspora and the criteria that have been used to define the term. It reflects upon the different situations and dynamics that produce diasporas, and exposes students to some of the theories that have developed around these diasporas. The course investigates the relationship between diaspora and national literatures and with a range of trans-national phenomena with which diaspora overlaps.

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 imaginative response. Migration can be voluntary or involuntary. The places of arrival can be friendly, hostile or indifferent, just as the places of departure may not always be the “original” homeland. Diaspora literatures by virtue of these circumstances often present certain recurrent themes, such as separation, loss, journeying, memory, re-rooting, re-routing, nostalgia, forgetting, familial break-up, bonding, community formation, citizenship, identity, dystopia, utopia, 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. The structures of narration or poetic reflection; the linguistic, rhetorical and figurative resources deployed by the writers; as well as the implied ethical direction contribute to the aesthetics of diaspora.

The course begins with theoretical materials that suggest frameworks for analysis and it steadily moves into the imaginative texts. The goal is to enable students to gain a textured understanding of diaspora. In the process, students develop valuable critical skills that will serve them in other contexts. The teaching format is a combination of lectures and discussion. Students get a chance to test their ideas through class presentations.

Category:

C

Historical Requirement:

N/A

Requirements:

Test 1 In-class (10%)
Analytical Essay, with oral presentation component (15%)
Comparative Essay (15%)
Research Paper (25%)
Test 2 In-Class (20%)
Class Participation (15%)

Reading List:**REQUIRED READING**

1) Theory/Case Studies will use the following four journal articles/book chapters, with sources that are electronically available at 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, chapter --"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) Shani Mootoo, *Valmiki's Daughter*

5) Julie Otsuka, *The Buddha in the Attic*

6) Leila Aboulela, *The Translator*

7) Marlene Nourbese Philip, *She Tries Her Tongue, Her Silence Softly Breaks*.

Open To:

YR 4 Honours