

# LT323 African Narratives of Migration: from Colonialism to Globalization

Fall 2020 Bard College Berlin  
Dr. Fatin Abbas  
Course Times: Tuesdays, 2 pm – 5.15 pm  
Location: TBA  
Email: [f.abbas@berlin.bard.edu](mailto:f.abbas@berlin.bard.edu)  
Office hours: By appointment

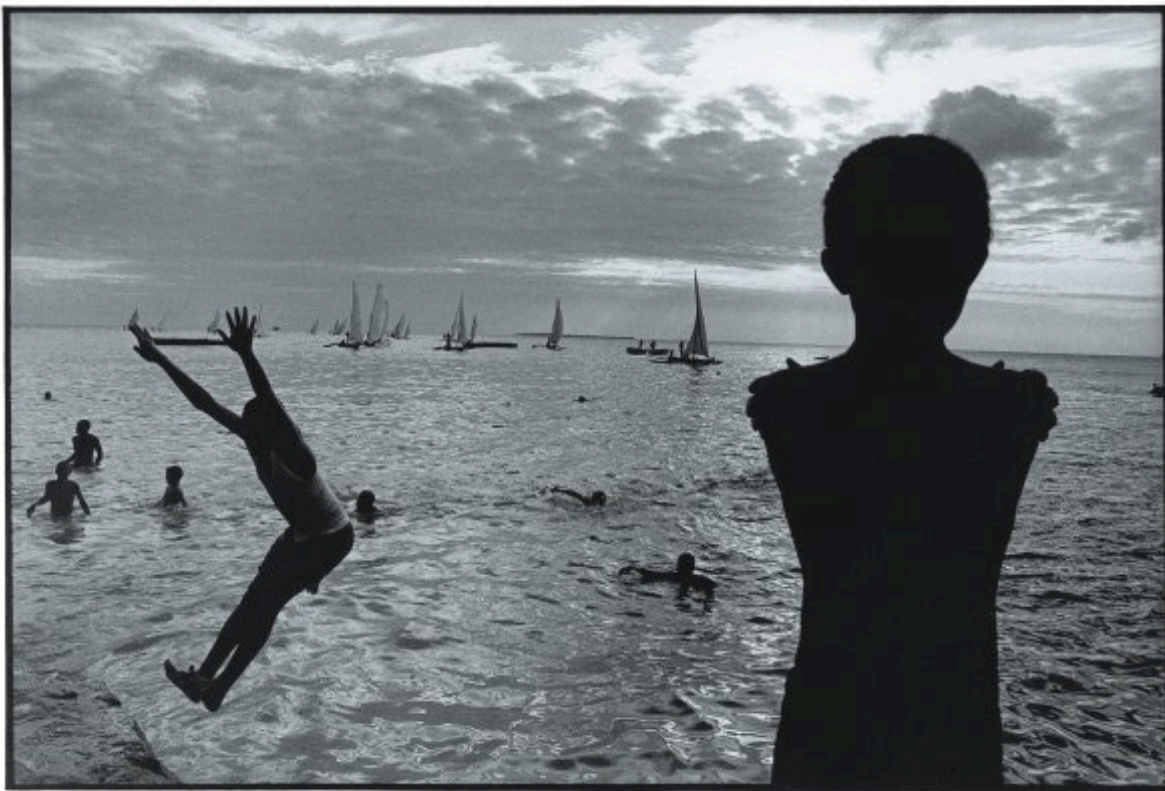


Photo credit: Luís Basto, Zanzibar, Tanzania.

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course examines African narratives of migration, focusing on literary and filmic engagements produced between the early/mid-20<sup>th</sup> century and the present day. The course will consider the ways in which African and African diasporic writers have inscribed the migrant experience in relation to the historical processes of colonialism and globalization. We will begin by contextualizing the African diasporic experience within the history of slavery and the Middle Passage, and from there, will continue on to explore the links between migration and colonialism in the work of writers such as Frantz Fanon, Andrea

Levy and Tayeb Salih. We will then go on to consider new migrant literatures within the context of globalization, tracing how the theme of migration is revised and re-constituted under new global conditions (which nonetheless hark back to colonialism) in the texts of contemporary African writers such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Teju Cole and Dinaw Mengestu, among others. The course will pay special attention to the ways in which gender, class, ethnicity and race inform representations of the African migrant experience in the works under consideration. By the end of the semester, students will have a deeper grasp of the constitution and evolution of this theme in the African literary canon, as well as related historical processes.

### **COVID-19 PRECAUTIONS AND ACCOMODATIONS**

To protect everyone's health in light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, precautionary measures will be strictly adhered to in our in-class meetings (masks must be worn during in-class sessions and distance requirements adhered to). Furthermore, some meetings may be held online or scheduled asynchronously. More information will be given at the start of class. Those who are unable to join class at the start because of COVID-19-related travel issues, or who may have to be absent for a period of time during the semester due to quarantine requirements or other COVID-19 issues, will be given instructions for alternative arrangements to complete readings and assignments asynchronously. Should we be required to move meetings entirely online at any point in the semester due to a deterioration in the public health situation, we will move all of our meetings to the Zoom app. Should you have any issues with access to computers or internet, please let me know at the beginning of the semester.

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

#### *Attendance and Participation*

You are required to attend all scheduled sessions for the course. This not only means being physically present, but also actively engaging in the discussion around the assigned readings and materials. Before arriving in class, make sure you have thoroughly read and thought through materials and noted down questions and comments to bring to class. Your attendance and participation add up to 35% of your final grade; more than one missed session will significantly (as in adversely) affect your final grade.

#### *Readings*

Please be sure to purchase a course reader from the library, which will include most of the readings we will cover in the seminar. In addition, you will need to buy the novel *Season of Migration to the North* (1969) and Imbolo Mbue's *Behold the Dreamers* (2016). Again, make sure to read actively before coming to class: take notes, write down questions or confusions the readings might raise for you, highlight the texts and write down initial thoughts and responses.

Required texts to be purchased:

-LT 323 Course Reader (purchase from the library)

-Tayeb Salih. 2010 (orig. pub. 1966; trans. 1969). *Season of Migration to the North*. Trans. Denys Johnson-Davis. New York: New York Review of Books (ISBN-10: 1590173023; ISBN-13: 978-1590173022)

-Imbolo Mbue. 2016. *Behold the Dreamers*. New York: Penguin Random House (ISBN-10: 9780525510116; ISBN-13: 978-0525510116)

Limited copies of required texts will also be on reserve in the library.

### *Assignments*

You will have four assignments for the course: 3 assignments (10% each, adding up to 30% of your final grade), and a final paper (35%). You will receive hand-out instructions for each assignment once the course commences.

### *Grade Breakdown and Final Deadlines*

Class participation: 35%

Assignment 1 (instructions will be handed out in class): 10% (29<sup>th</sup> Sept)

Assignment 2 (instructions will be handed out in class): 10% (27<sup>th</sup> Oct)

Assignment 3 (instructions will be handed out in class): 10% (24<sup>th</sup> Nov)

Final paper (10-12 pages): 35% (18<sup>th</sup> December)

IMPORTANT NOTE: Late submission of your assignments will result in a lower grade. An assignment that is submitted one day (24 hours) late will be downgraded by one full grade. There will be a drop by one full grade for each further 24 hour delay. If you foresee that you will not be able to hand in an assignment on time for a valid reason, it is crucial that you contact me, *in advance*, to discuss.

### *Academic Integrity and policy on plagiarism*

Students are expected to adhere to “the highest standards of [academic] integrity,” as outlined in The Bard College Berlin Student Handbook. Acts of academic misconduct and/or plagiarism will not be tolerated. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section III Academic Misconduct.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

# **I—Background: Slavery, the Middle Passage and Forced Migration**

### **Week 1: Introduction to the course**

1<sup>st</sup> September

***Week 2: Slave narratives***

8<sup>th</sup> September

- Equiano, Oluadah. 1794. *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Oluadah Equiano, or Gustavas Vassa, The African* (excerpt)
- Hartmann, Saidiya. 2007. *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route*. New York: Farrar, Stauss & Giroux (excerpt)
- Gyasi, Yaa. 2016. *Homegoing*. New York: Knopf (excerpt)
  - IN CLASS: Kara Walker, selected works

***Week 3: The African diaspora between Europe and America***

15<sup>th</sup> September

- Du Bois, W. E. B. 1903. “Of Our Spiritual Strivings” from *The Souls of Black Folk*. Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co.
- Baldwin, James. 1955. “Stranger in the Village” from *Notes of a Native Son*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Cole, Teju. “Black Body: Rereading James Baldwin’s ‘Stranger in the Village.’” 19 August 2014. *The New Yorker*.
  - IN CLASS: “Un étranger dans le village” (“Stranger in the Village”). 1962. Directed by Pierre Korálnik. RTS. Scenes from a short film.

***Week 4: Ghosts of slavery: Horror and diaspora***

22<sup>nd</sup> September

- *Get Out*. 2017. Directed by Jordan Peele. Blumhouse Productions/QC Entertainment/Monkeypaw Productions.

## II—Narratives of Colonial Migration

***Week 5: Human zoos, exhibition and colonial migration***

29<sup>th</sup> September

- Putnam, Walter. 2012. “‘Please Don’t Feed the Natives’: Human Zoos, Colonial Desire, and Bodies on Display.” *The Environment in French and Francophone Literature and Film*. Pp. 55-68.
- Levy, Andrea. 2004. “Prologue” from *Small Island*. New York: Picador.
- Chase-Riboud, Barbara. 2004. *Hottentot Venus*. New York: Penguin Random House (selection).
- Fanon, Frantz. 2008. “The Lived Experience of the Black Man” in *Black Skin, White Masks*. Trans. Richard Philcox. Pp. 89-119.

**ASSIGNMENT 1 due 29<sup>th</sup> September**

***Week 6: FIELD TRIP: Decolonial walking tour of Berlin***

6<sup>th</sup> October

***Week 7: The colonial journey into the “Heart of Darkness”***

13<sup>th</sup> October

- Shakespeare, William. 1604. *The Tragedy of Othello, Moor of Venice* (selections)
- Conrad, Joseph. 1902. *Heart of Darkness*. London: William Blackwood (excerpt)
- Lessing, Doris. 1950. *The Grass is Singing*. London: Michael Joseph (excerpt)

***Week 8: FALL BREAK—NO CLASS***

20<sup>th</sup> October

***Week 9: Re-writing the colonial journey into the “Heart of Darkness”***

27<sup>th</sup> October

- Salih, Tayeb. 1969. *Season of Migration to the North*. New York: New York Review of Books

**ASSIGNMENT 2 due 27<sup>th</sup> October**

### **III—Globalization and Migration**

***Week 10: What is Afropolitanism?***

3<sup>rd</sup> November

- Mbembe, Achille. 2007. “Afropolitanism” in *Africa Re-mix: Contemporary Art of a Continent*. Ed. Njami Simon. Johannesburg: Jacana Media.
- Selasi, Taiye. March 2005. “Bye-Bye, Babar (Or: What is an Afropolitan?)” *LiP Magazine* (Online).
- Wainana, Binyavanga. 2005. “How to Write About Africa.” *Granta* 92 (Online).
- Cole, Teju. 21 March 2012. “The White Savior Industrial Complex.” *The Atlantic* (Online).
- Dabiri, Emma. 21 Jan 2014. “Why I’m not an Afropolitan.” *Africa is a Country* (Online).
  - IN CLASS: Cole, Teju. 2017. *Blind Spot*. London: Faber & Faber (selections).

***Week 11: Migration under duress: refugeehood, crisis and economic struggle***

10<sup>th</sup> November

- Patel, Shailja. 2010. *Migritude*. Los Angeles: Kaya Press (excerpt)
- Shire, Warsan. 2011. *Teaching My Mother How To Give Birth*. Manchester: Flipped Eye Publishing (excerpt)
- Mengestu, Dinaw. 12 & 19 July 2010. “An Honest Exit.” *The New Yorker*. Online.
- Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. 2009. “The Thing Around Your Neck” in *The Thing Around Your Neck*. New York: Knopf.
- Smith, Zadie. 3 Feb 2013. “The Embassy of Cambodia.” *The New Yorker*.
  - IN CLASS: Christoph Buchel’s “Barca Nostra”

*Week 12: Globalization & stories of migration in Berlin*

17<sup>th</sup> November

- Asynchronous assignment: TBD

*Week 13: Globalization, migration and the American Dream*

24<sup>th</sup> November

- Mbue, Imbolo. 2016. *Behold the Dreamers*. New York: Penguin Random House.
- **ASSIGNMENT 3 due 24<sup>th</sup> November**

*Week 14: Migration, belonging and mis-belonging in Germany*

1<sup>st</sup> December

- Ayim, May. 2003. *Blues in Black and White: A Collection of Essays, Poetry and Conversations*. Trans. Anne V. Adams. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press (excerpt)
- Ayim, May, Katharina Oguntoye and Dagmar Schultz, eds. 1992. *Showing Our Colors: Afro-German Women Speak Out*. Trans. Anne V. Adams. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press (selections). (HANDOUT)

*Week 15: Migrating to another space-time: Afrofuturism on film*

8<sup>th</sup> December

- *Space is the Place*. 1974. Directed by James Coney. Music by Sun Ra. Produced by Jim Newman.
- Work on final paper.

*Week 16: TBD*

15<sup>th</sup> December

**FINAL PAPERS DUE 18<sup>th</sup> December**

\*This syllabus may be subject to revision