

# LT323 African Narratives of Migration: from Colonialism to Globalization

Fall 2019

Bard College Berlin

Instructor: Dr. Fatin Abbas

Course Times: Tuesdays, 2 pm – 5.15 pm

Location: TBA

Email: f.abbas@berlin.bard.edu

Office hours: By appointment

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course examines African narratives of migration, exploring literary engagements beginning in the early/mid-20<sup>th</sup> century to the present day. The course will consider the ways in which African writers have inscribed the migrant experience in relation to the historical processes of colonialism and globalization. We will first examine the links between migration and colonialism in the early work of African writers such as Léopold Senghor, Frantz Fanon 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, Dinaw Mengestu and Shailja Patel, among others. Finally, we will engage with and critically explore key concepts—such as “Négritude,” “Pan-Africanism” and “Afropolitanism”—that are central to debates around contemporary African migration. 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.

## 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 writing assignments for the course: 3 short writing responses (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%

Writing response 1 (2-3 pages): 10% (17<sup>th</sup> September)

Writing response 2 (2-3 pages): 10% (18<sup>th</sup> October)

Writing response 3 (2-3 pages): 10% (26<sup>th</sup> November)

Final paper (12-15 pages): 35% (20<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; Slave narratives

3<sup>rd</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 2: The African diaspora between Europe and America

10<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.
  - IN CLASS: “Un étranger dans le village” (“Stranger in the Village”). 1962. Directed by Pierre Koralnik. RTS. Scenes from a short film.

### II—Narratives of Colonial Migration

#### Week 3: Human zoos, exhibition and colonial migration

17<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).

WRITING ASSIGNMENT 1 due 17<sup>th</sup> September

Week 4: Négritude, Pan-Africanism and migration

24<sup>th</sup> September

- Sengor, Léopold Sedhar. 1994. "Negritude: a Humanism of the Twentieth Century," in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*. Laura Chrisman and Patrick Williams (eds). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Césaire, Aimé. 2017 (orig. publ. 1939). "Notebook of a Return to the Native Land," in *The Complete Poetry of Aimé Césaire*. Trans. A. James Arnold and Clayton Eshleman. Wesleyan, MA: Wesleyan University Press (excerpt)
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. Autumn 1964 – Winter 1965. "Black Orpheus." *The Massachusetts Review* (Vol. 6, No. 1): 13-52 (excerpts).
- Fanon, Frantz. 2008. "The Lived Experience of the Black Man" in *Black Skin, White Masks*. Trans. Richard Philcox. Pp. 89-119.

Week 5: The colonial journey into the "Heart of Darkness"

1<sup>st</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 6: Re-writing the colonial journey into the "Heart of Darkness" (1)

8<sup>th</sup> October

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

Week 7: Re-writing the colonial journey into the "Heart of Darkness" (2)

15<sup>th</sup> October

- Salih, Tayeb. 1969. *Season of Migration to the North* (cont'd)

WRITING ASSIGNMENT 2 due 18<sup>th</sup> October

III—Globalization and Migration

Week 8: What is Afropolitanism?

22<sup>nd</sup> October

- 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 9: FALL BREAK—NO CLASS**

29<sup>th</sup> October

**Week 10: Migration under duress: refugeehood, crisis and economic struggle**

5<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 11: Globalization, migration and the American Dream (1)**

- Mbue, Imbolo. 2016. *Behold the Dreamers*. New York: Penguin Random House.

**Week 12: Globalization, migration and the American Dream (2)**

19<sup>th</sup> November

- Mbue, Imbolo. *Behold the Dreamers* (cont'd)

**Week 13: Migration, belonging and mis-belonging in Germany**

26<sup>th</sup> November

- Aidoo, Ama Ata. 1977. *Our Sister Killjoy or, Reflections of a Black-Eyed Squint*. White Plains, NY: Longman (excerpt)
- 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).

**WRITING ASSIGNMENT 3 due 26th November**

**Week 14: African narratives of migration in Berlin**

3<sup>rd</sup> December

- Field trip, TBA

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

10<sup>th</sup> December

- *Black Panther*. 2018. Directed by Ryan Coogler. Marvel Studios/Walt Disney Studios.

*Week 16: Final discussion*

17<sup>th</sup> December

**FINAL PAPERS DUE 20<sup>th</sup> December**