



Syllabus/ Fall 2017

ENGL 3338.01: Multicultural Literature

Refugees and Literature

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T/Th 11-12:30

Office hours: 10-11 T/TH

*Once we had a country and we thought it fair,  
Look in the atlas and you'll find it there:  
We cannot go there now, my dear, we cannot go there now.  
W.H. Auden, "Refugee Blues" (1939)*

*He walks on the wind. And, in the wind,  
he knows himself. No four walls hem in the wind. And the wind is a  
compass.  
for the north in a foreign land.  
He says: I come from that place. I come from here,  
and I am neither here nor there.  
I have two names that come together but pull apart.  
I have two languages, but I have forgotten which is  
the language of my dreams.*

*Mahmoud Darwish, "Counterpoint (Homage to Edward Said)" (2007)*

## Course description

This course examines the contemporary multicultural writing of and about refugees. Refugees present an interesting vantage point for considering multiculturalism. Societies are formed through migration, yet refugee migration poses particular challenges to societies which often turn them away. Writers have grappled with the idea of borders and belonging for millennia, but the circumstances and reactions have shifted recently. The United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) was established following WWII to address the vast numbers of refugees in Europe. You will consider how writers have portrayed refugees, and how refugees have portrayed themselves in writing. Does literature address who is a refugee in a way that the UNHCR does not? How is narrative important for refugees? We will spend the course examining Jewish refugees following WWII, refugees in or from the Americas, the Middle East, and Africa. What are the similarities and differences amongst refugees? We will also consider how gender and sexuality define the experience of refugeeness. This is a class about refugee literature, but also how we *read* refugees.

## Required Readings

**Note:** You must bring your texts (printouts of short stories, poems, or novels) to class to fully participate. Unless I give a handout of a reading in class, or the reading is a novel to be purchased, all other readings are available on Blackboard.

### Novels:

1. Mohsin Hamid, *Exit West* Riverhead Books; First Edition first Printing edition (March 7, 2017) ISBN-13: 978-0735212176
2. Leila Adelrazaq, *Baddawi* Just World Books, 2015, ISBN-13: 978-1935982401
3. Viet Thanh Nguyen, *The Refugees* Grove Press; First Edition edition (February 7, 2017) ISBN-13: 978-0802126399

## ENGL 3338 Skill Objectives

In reading and writing about multicultural literature, students will develop a number of skills that will be explored in class discussions, written assignments, small group work, and presentations:

- **Critical thinking.** Students will learn to pose critical questions about the works. What kind of values are supported or refuted in the work? In what ways does the work reflect the cultural and historical context in which it was created? How do the values reflected in the work compare with the values of our contemporary society? Students will build a vocabulary of literary terms to use in evaluating a work. Students will need to produce written critical arguments about works using textual evidence to support their claims.
- **Communication skills.** Students will need to articulate their conclusions in writing, oral presentations, and discussions. Visual media (power points, handouts, visual art) will also be part of oral presentations. Part of effective communication in the class will be to demonstrate and use the critical concepts and vocabulary of the class. The goal is that these skills can be applied to other situations beyond this class.
- **Social responsibility.** Because one of the primary objectives of the course is to foster an appreciation for the values of cultures beyond their own, students are encouraged to consider the importance of engaging social issues and taking civic responsibility in their own communities as a global citizen. In reading works from diverse cultures, students will recognize the diversity of opinion and approaches to various issues such as human rights, human freedom and bondage, humans' relationship with the environment, and the relationship between people of different cultures. One goal is that students begin to develop an appreciation for the values of cultures beyond their own and establish intercultural connections.
- **Personal responsibility.** Students will consider how the themes and issues authors write about compare to their own experiences. How can the lessons of literary works be applied to your own lives? Part of the personal responsibility in the course is attending class, coming to class prepared to discuss the reading, completing assignments on time, etc.

## Aims and Objectives of ENGL 3338

- To become familiar with the works of representative writers of various cultures.
- To discover the universal themes and common concerns of literature.
- To analyze and evaluate the philosophical insights and value judgment of writers of various cultures.
- To develop a more cosmopolitan outlook, both aesthetically and philosophically.
- To develop critical and analytical skills in oral and written discussion and argumentative analysis.

## VIRTUAL OFFICE

Please post questions concerning the course or course content to the Virtual Office on Blackboard, and I will respond within 24-48 hours, M-F. You may also post responses to fellow students' questions if you have answers for them. Please don't post any questions or comments of a private nature, as this is a class discussion board viewable by all students. For questions concerning a more personal issue, please email - remembering to place a title in the subject box and to sign your name.

You will need to subscribe to this forum so that you will be notified whenever questions and/or answers are posted. Click the "Virtual Office" links. Click "Subscribe" (next to the "Create Thread" link). You will receive emails to your shsu.edu email address when anything new is posted.

To create a thread, complete the following steps:

1. Click the "Virtual Office" link.
2. Click "Create Thread."
3. Give your thread an appropriate title.
4. Write your question in full sentences with ample detail.
5. Click "Submit."

Please don't post any questions or comments of a private nature, as this is a class discussion board viewable by all students. For questions concerning a more personal issue, please email - remembering to place a title in the subject box and to sign your name. You may email me at [aas004@shsu.edu](mailto:aas004@shsu.edu). Please allow at least 24-48 hours for a response. Do not email me at the last minute before an assignment is due and expect an immediate response.

## ASSIGNMENTS and GRADING

**NOTE: IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO KEEP TRACK OF YOUR GRADES IN THE COURSE AND TO KEEP TRACK OF YOUR ATTENDANCE/DAYS ABSENT**

**ATTENDANCE** is required. Students are expected to attend every class and remain in class for the duration of the session. You will receive 2 unexcused absences. Once they're gone, that's it. **SAVE** these and use them for when you are ill, must travel, attend a funeral, care for a sick family member, study for an exam in another class, or oversleep. Students who miss more than 2 classes, even for very compelling reasons (and I've heard them all!), will have a very hard time keeping up with the course assignments and at that point, I would suggest that you drop/withdraw from the class. Your grade will be lowered for absences over 2. Arriving late will also negatively impact your grade.

**DO NOT** come to class if you are ill. I prefer that you stay home and not spread sickness to others (including me) than to "tough it out" and come to class when you are ill. If you exceed your 2 excused absences because of illness, please speak with me. I may ask for a doctor's note.

Note: Please let me know ahead of time if you intend to use a laptop for class. I am okay with them and e-readers as long as they are not used to browse the web, facebook, email, etc. Recording any part of the class is not allowed with any electronic device unless you have a documented disability (this requires speaking to me ahead of time and all information will remain confidential).

**CLASS PARTICIPATION:** This is not a lecture course. Class Participation is a part of your daily responsibility in the course. Participation does not mean simply showing up to class, but instead includes active, engaged discussion of the day's readings. Other forms of class participation include any in-class or homework exercises (small group or individual) that I assign. In order to be fully engaged in class, you must turn off all cellphones, beepers, and headphones before class begins. I **DO NOT** allow the use of cellphones as readers. In other words, do not come to class and use your phone for the readings. You are expected to **print out the readings and bring them to class** and you are expected to **bring a hard copy of the books or print-outs to class**. I do not allow

recording devices in my classes (except in the case of a specific documented disability). Students are expected to assist in maintaining a classroom environment that is conducive to learning. Behavior that will not be tolerated:

- Text-messaging
- Answering cellphone calls
- Listening to headphones
- Sleeping
- Using Facebook or other social media
- doing homework for another class
- talking out of turn
- inappropriate remarks to or about me or other students

There are myriad other behaviors other than those listed above that may be considered disruptive. Students who exhibit disruptive behavior will be asked to leave and possibly reported to both the department chair and the dean. Thus, engaging in said activities during class will have a negative impact on your grade in the course. Additionally, while it is encouraged that you will raise pertinent questions about what we are reading/discussing, your comments should be made in the spirit of fair-minded academic discussion. Class begins promptly on the hour. It is disrespectful to me and to your classmates to arrive late. Arriving late on a regular basis will have a negative impact on your grade.

**READING:** In order to do well in the course, you must keep up with the readings and the discussion questions/journals. We will discuss as much as possible in class, but there will be times when we don't get to cover everything. However, you will still be responsible for all of the readings. You are also expected to read any essays posted on Blackboard and also review any other materials or web links posted on Blackboard. We may not always be able to talk about all of these materials, but they are crucial for understanding the broader context of the works we are reading.

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

**Paper 1 & 2: TBA**

**EXAM: TBA**

**PRESENTATION:** In the last two days of class, you will do a 10 minute presentation on an author, book, short story, poem about refugees (or collection)—something that we have not read in class. I will provide more information at a later date.

**Late policy:** All work must be submitted/presented by the due date to receive full credit. A paper grade is lowered one letter grade for each day that it is late unless you have made special arrangements with me prior to the due date. Arrangements for alternative due dates will be at my discretion. I do not allow make-up exams or oral presentations except in the case of a documented emergency.

## **COURSE POLICIES**

**ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:** All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain complete honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including, but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials. Any students found cheating on exams, or plagiarizing papers (which would include not using proper citation, appropriating someone else's ideas as your own, or pasting pieces of written texts from other sources into your paper without indicating that the words and ideas are not your own) will FAIL the course.

### **A NOTE ON CELLPHONES IN THE CLASSROOM:**

Student use of electronic devices that perform the function of a telephone or text messenger during class-time is prohibited. Arrangements for handling potential emergency situations may be granted at the discretion of the instructor. Failure to comply with the instructor's policy could result in expulsion from the classroom or with multiple offenses, failure of the course.

Any use of a telephone or text messenger or any device that performs these functions during a test period is prohibited. These devices should not be present during a test or should be stored securely in such a way that they cannot be seen or used by the

student. Even the visible presence of such a device during the test period will result in a zero for that test. Use of these devices during a test is considered de facto evidence of cheating and could result in a charge of academic dishonesty (see student code of conduct <http://www.shsu.edu/students/guide/StudentGuidelines2010-2012.pdf#page=29>).

The statements on academic dishonesty that are listed below are taken from the SHSU Code of Conduct.

5.31 “Cheating” includes, but is not limited to:

- (1) Copying from another student’s test paper, a laboratory report, other report, or computer files, data listings, and/or programs.
- (2) Using, during a test, materials not authorized by the person giving the test.
- (3) Collaborating, without authorization, with another person during an examination or in preparing academic work.
- (4) Knowingly, and without authorization, using, buying, selling, stealing, transporting, soliciting, copying, or possessing, in whole or in part, the contents of an unadministered test.
- (5) Substituting for another student; permitting any other person; or otherwise assisting any other person to substitute for oneself or for another student in the taking of an examination or test or the preparation of academic work to be submitted for academic credit.
- (6) Bribing another person to obtain an unadministered test or information about an unadministered test.
- (7) Purchasing, or other wise acquiring and submitting as one’s own work any research paper or other writing assignment prepared by an individual or firm. This section does not apply to the typing of the rough and/or final versions of an assignment by a professional typist.



5.32 “Plagiarism” means the appropriation and the unacknowledged incorporation of another’s work or idea into one’s own work offered for credit.

**VISITORS IN THE CLASSROOM:** Unannounced visitors to class must present a current, official SHSU identification card to be permitted into the classroom. They must not present a disruption to the class by their attendance. If the visitor is not a registered student, it is at the instructor's discretion whether or not the visitor will be allowed to remain in the classroom.

This policy is not intended to discourage the occasional visiting of classes by responsible persons. Obviously, however, the visiting of a particular class should be occasional and not regular, and it should in no way constitute interference with registered members of the class or the educational process.

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:**

It is the policy of SHSU that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance should register with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Lee Drain Annex. They should then make arrangements with me so that appropriate strategies can be considered and helpful procedures can be developed to ensure that participation and achievement opportunities are not impaired.

SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have a disability that may affect adversely your work in this class, then I encourage you to register with the SHSU Services for Students with Disabilities and to talk with me about how I can best help you. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. NOTE: No accommodation can be made until you register with the Services for Students with Disabilities. For a complete listing of the university policy, see:

<http://www.shsu.edu/dept/academic-affairs/documents/aps/students/811006.pdf>

**SHSU Services for Students with Disabilities:**

Telephone: 936-294-3512

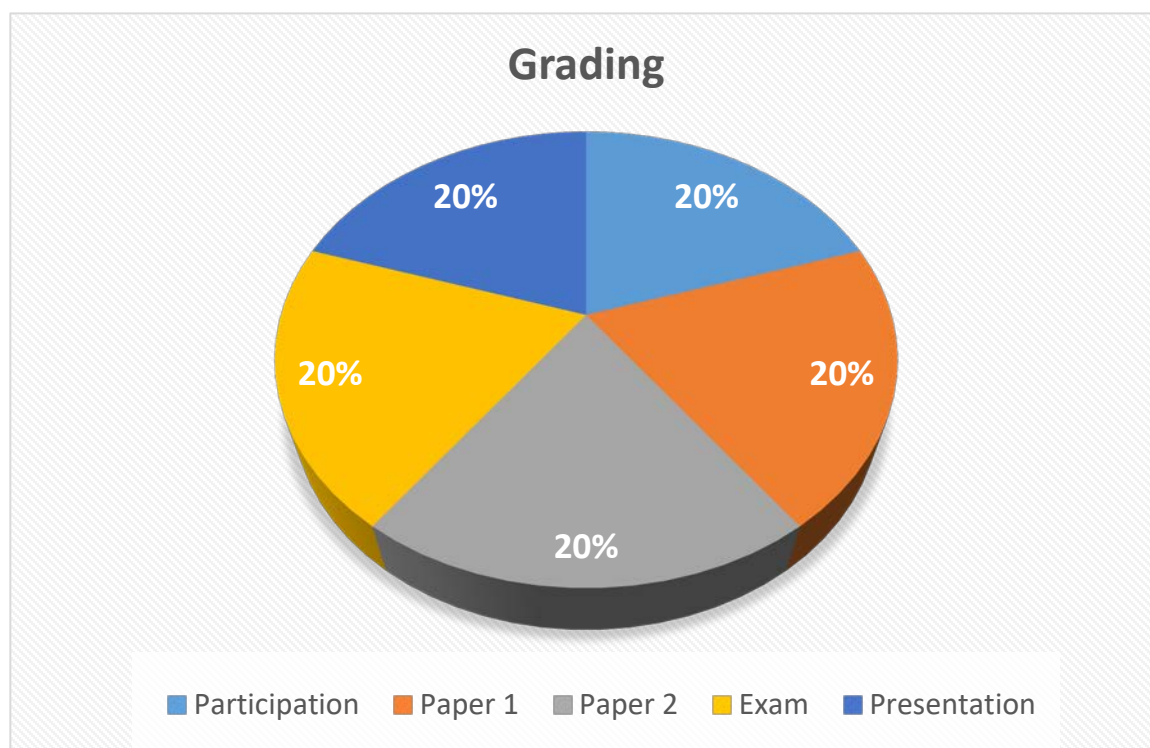
TDD: 936-294-3786

E-mail: [disability@shsu.edu](mailto:disability@shsu.edu)

Web Address: [www.shsu.edu/disability](http://www.shsu.edu/disability)

**RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS:** Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence. University policy 861001 provides the procedures to be followed by the student and instructor. A student desiring to absent himself/herself from a scheduled class in order to observe (a) religious holy day(s) shall present to each instructor involved a written statement concerning the religious holy day(s). This request must be made in the first fifteen days of the semester. The instructor will complete a form notifying the student of a reasonable timeframe in which the missed assignments and/or examinations are to be completed.

**INSTRUCTOR EVALUATIONS:** Students will be asked to complete a course/instructor evaluation form toward the end of the semester.



### Grading

|               |      |
|---------------|------|
| Participation | 20%  |
| Paper 1       | 20%  |
| Paper 2       | 20%  |
| Exam          | 20%  |
| Presentation  | 20%  |
| TOTAL         | 100% |

### Course Schedule

Note: You are responsible for any and all changes to the syllabus. If you are absent, ask a classmate for notes about what we did in the class that you missed. Do NOT email me with questions about what we did.

August 24 – November 30: Tuesday/Thursday Classes

| Day | Date     | Topic   | Notes |
|-----|----------|---|-------|
| 1   | TH, 8/24 | First Class/Introduction  |       |
| 2   | T, 8/29  | Warsan Shire, "Home" (2011)<br>"The Turmoil of Today's World: Leading Writers Respond to the Refugee Crisis" (2015) |       |

| Day | Date     | Topic   | Notes |
|-----|----------|---|-------|
|     |          | Brian Bilston, "Refugee" (2016)<br><i>The Making of the Modern Refugee</i> (excerpt--handout)<br>"Houston's refugee communities"  |       |
| 3   | TH, 8/31 | <b>Unit 1: World War II</b><br>UNHCR definition of "refugee," "asylum seeker"<br>UNCHR refugee stories ( <a href="https://stories.unhcr.org">stories.unhcr.org</a> )<br><br>W.H. Auden "Refugee Blues" (1939) |       |
| 4   | T, 9/5   | Hannah Arendt, "We Refugees" (1943)<br><br>Karen Gershon (Kaethe Loewenthal), "To My Children" and "Cast Out" (c. 1938-39)<br><br>A.M. Klein, "Air-Map" (1947)  |       |
| 5   | TH, 9/7  | Flannery O'Connor "The Displaced Person"<br><br>(warning: racist language) (1955)   |       |
| 6   | T, 9/12  | <b>Unit 2: Americas</b><br><br><i>El Norte</i> (film, 1983)   |       |
| 7   | TH, 9/14 | <i>El Norte</i> (film)  |       |
| 8   | T, 9/19  | Nikol Payen "Lavalas" and "Something in the Water"<br><br>Emmy Pérez, "Not One More Refugee Death"  |       |

| Day | Date      | Topic  | Notes |
|-----|-----------|--|-------|
| 9   | TH, 9/21  | DUE: Paper 1<br><br>TBA: library   |       |
| 10  | T, 9/26   | Edwidge Danticat. "Children of the Sea" from <i>Krik? Krak!</i><br><br>and "The Other Side of the Water"? from <i>Create Dangerously</i><br><br>Hurricane Katrina from <i>Create Dangerously</i> |       |
| 11  | TH, 9/28  | Edwidge Danticat, <i>Brother, I'm Dying</i> (excerpt)<br><br>Roxane Gay "You Never Knew...."   |       |
| 12  | T, 10/3   | Viet Thanh Nguyen, <i>The Refugees</i>   |       |
| 13  | TH, 10/5  | Viet Thanh Nguyen, <i>The Refugees</i>   |       |
| 14  | T, 10/10  | <b>Unit 3: Middle East</b><br>"Graphic Novels and the Refugee Crisis" <i>The Economist</i><br><br><i>Europa</i><br>Guidebook for refugees entering Europe  |       |
| 15  | TH, 10/12 | Samar Yazbak, <i>The Crossing</i> (excerpts)   |       |
| 16  | T, 10/17  | Mohsin Hamid, <i>Exit West</i>   |       |

| Day | Date      | Topic  | Notes |
|-----|-----------|--|-------|
|     |           |  |       |
| 17  | TH, 10/19 | Mohsin Hamid, <i>Exit West</i>   |       |
| 18  | T, 10/24  | Mohsin Hamid, <i>Exit West</i>   |       |
| 19  | TH, 10/26 | Leila Abdelrazaq, <i>Baddawi</i>   |       |
| 20  | T, 10/31  | Leila Abdelrazaq, <i>Baddawi</i>   |       |
| 21  | TH, 11/2  | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Unit 4: Africa</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">N. Farah, <i>Yesterday, Tomorrow: Voices of Somali Diaspora</i> (excerpt)</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>DUE: Paper 2</b></p> |       |
| 22  | T, 11/7   | <p style="text-align: center;">N. Farah, <i>Yesterday Tomorrow: Voices of Somali Diaspora</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Warsan Shire, "Conversations about Home (at the Deportation Centre)" (2009)</p>             |       |
| 23  | TH, 11/9  | <p style="text-align: center;">Nadine Gordimer, "The Ultimate Safari"</p> <p style="text-align: center;">E.C. Osondu, "Waiting"</p>  |       |
| 24  | T, 11/14  | "The Arrival" and "Refugee" from <i>Uhuru Street</i>   |       |

| Day | Date      | Topic                          | Notes |
|-----|-----------|--------------------------------|-------|
| 25  | TH, 11/16 | EXAM                           |       |
| 26  | T, 11/21  | Research Day for presentations |       |
|     | W, 11/22  |                                |       |
|     | TH, 11/23 |                                |       |
|     | F, 11/24  |                                |       |
| 27  | T, 11/28  | Presentations                  |       |
| 28  | TH, 11/30 | Last Class Day—Presentations   |       |
|     |           |                                |       |