

DTS412 – The Diasporic Imagination

University of Toronto – Spring 2021

General Info

Class Meetings: Wednesdays 2:10-4pm
Location: online
Instructor: Ted Sammons — ted.sammons@utoronto.ca
Office: Jackman Humanities Bldg #230
Available to meet: Tues 2-3pm or by appointment
Required Texts: available online on the course Quercus site

Course Description

This advanced seminar-style course focuses on expositions on diasporic and transnational life in artistic work and practice, and the significance of artistic work and practice to the formation of diasporic and transnational life. How have stylistic trends, producers, audiences, and works of art themselves illuminated the particularities of diasporic life? How do conventions of genre, performance, and tradition shape experiences of borders and crossings? Areas of emphasis in this course vary from one offering to the next. For Spring 2021, we will focus on creative writing and popular music.

Weekly meetings will follow a collaborative format that emphasizes discussion. In each session, an analytical, collective conversation about assigned texts will take the foreground, with weekly writing assignments offering all students a chance to gather their thoughts ahead of class. And, to allow and encourage further engagement with course readings and themes, students will a 3000-5000 word essay assignment, on a topic of each student's own choosing, will be due at the end of the semester.

Course Goals

Students who enroll in this course should finish the term:

- 1) prepared to describe in concrete terms how the diasporic imagination has taken form across a range of artistic genres and traditions of practice
- 2) prepared to cite research and other writing to critically interrogate claims—or to advance new ones—regarding the significance of aesthetic work and practice to the evolution of human society
- 3) prepared to describe how particular intersections of diasporic living and aesthetic production have shaped and been shaped by conditions of everyday life across a variety of social contexts

Evaluation

In-Class Participation (15%)

Everyone starts with a perfect grade in this category. Keep it there by showing up on time, demonstrating a preparedness to discuss the assigned course material, actively contributing to small and large group discussions, and avoiding using cellphones while class is in session.

Written Reflections (5% x 5 = 25%) – due Tues. 11:59pm, as per group assignment

Following the schedule corresponding to your group assignment, compose and submit a written reflection on the LIT or MUSIC reading assigned for discussion the following session. Class meetings may include a handout with selections from each student's response in order to facilitate conversation (with names redacted). Each written response must:

- offer a minimum of 250 words of creative and thoughtful engagement with the assigned reading, discussing—and not just summarizing—key themes and standout facts

Sketches (2.5% x 5 = 12.5%) – due Tues. 11:59pm, as per group assignment

Following the schedule corresponding to your group assignment, compose and submit a thumbnail sketch of the LIT or MUSIC reading assigned for discussion the following session. Grammar and spelling won't factor into assessment. Each thumbnail sketch must:

- identify the region(s) of the world under focus in the reading
- identify the key people / groups whose actions / perspectives are highlighted in the reading
- cite one passage from the reading that is fundamental for understanding its overall content
- include a minimum of 250 words (including quotations of the text)
- pose two discussion-starter questions

Term Paper (5% + 5% + 12.5% + 5% + 20% = 47.5%) – schedule as outlined

Compose an essay that draws on relevant course readings and your own original interpretation and analysis, to highlight key aspects of a literary or musical formation of the diasporic imagination of your choosing. Along the way, follow the course calendar to:

- submit a minimum 500wd pitch for the paper you want to write (5%)
- join classmates in bringing a copy of your chosen work to class (5%)
- submit a min. 1500wd exploratory essay that reflects steps to completing that paper (12.5%)
- submit a **maximum** 250wd abstract of the paper you plan to write (5%)
- incorporating comments on the draft, submit a final version of this essay that is a minimum of 3000wds, not counting bibliography (20%)

Other Factors

Absence/Tardiness

Attendance in this course is strongly encouraged but not mandatory.

Overdue Assignments

Assignments submitted after the due date will not be graded without prior approval from the instructor or proof of an emergency circumstance barring timely completion.

Plagiarism

Quality scholarship relies upon the work of many, but passing off someone else's work as one's own is dishonest and lazy. It is also grounds for immediate failure in this course.

All students who are unsure about the correct way to draw on another person's work for their own scholarship are encouraged to contact the instructor, to visit the U of T Writing Centre

For more information on this and other issues pertaining to academic integrity, see Section B of the U of T's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters.

Turnitin.com

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to Turnitin.com for review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com website.

Academic Accessibility

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please communicate these to me directly and/or the AccessAbility Services as soon as possible.

The sooner you let us know your needs the quicker we can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course. AccessAbility Services staff (located in 455 Spadina Avenue, 4th Floor, Suite 400) are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals and arrange appropriate accommodations. Call 416-978-8060 or email accessibility.services@utoronto.ca.

1/13 **introductions**

1/20 **on the condition of diaspora**

- [Césaire, Aimé. 1939. Notebook of a Return to My Native Land. Trans. Clayton Eshleman. Middletown: Wesleyan UP, 26-81.](#)
- [Yoon, Kyong. 2018. "Global Imagination of K-Pop: Pop Music Fans' Lived Experiences of Cultural Hybridity." Popular Music and Society 41\(4\): 373-389](#)

1/27 **imagining the 'homeland'**

- [Chua, Guat Eng. 2011. "Constructing and Deconstructing the Ancestral Homeland: Images of Diaspora in Contemporary Malaysian Novels in English." Diaspora Studies 4\(1\): 77-95.](#)
- [Murthy, Dhiraj. 2010. "Nationalism Remixed? The Politics of Cultural Flows Between the South Asian Diaspora and "Homeland." Ethnic and Racial Studies 33\(8\): 1412-1430.](#)

2/3 **on form and meaning**

- [Ellis, Alicia E. 2015. "The Imperfect Longing: Sam Selvon's The Lonely Londoners and the Dance of Doubt." African and Black Diaspora 8\(2\): 178-189.](#)
- [Hemmasi, Farzaneh. 2020. "The Capital of 6/8." In Tehrangeles Dreaming: Intimacy and Imagination in Southern California's Iranian Pop Music. Durham: Duke UP, 38-66.](#)

2/10 **making do with dislocation**

- [Murray, Tony. 2018. "Rafferty's Return: Diaspora and Dislocation in Edna O'Brien's 'Shovel Kings.'" In J. Devlin Trew and Michael Pierse, eds Rethinking the Irish Diaspora: After the Gathering. Cham: Springer International: 229-249.](#)
- [Espinosa, Andrea Shaheen. 2019. "On Diasporic Generation and Syrian-Argentine Musicking in Buenos Aires, Argentina." Yearbook for Traditional Music. 5: 139-165.](#)

DUE END OF FRIDAY 2/12: MIN 500 WORD TERM PAPER PITCH

2/17 **no class – reading week**

2/24 **on embodiment**

- [Chow, Rey. 2010. "Thinking with Food, Writing off Center: Notes on Two Hong Kong Authors." In Jing Tsu and David Der-wei Wang, eds. Global Chinese Literature: Critical Essays. Leiden: Brill, 133-155.](#)
- [Persadie, Ryan. 2019. "Sounding the '6ix': Drake, Cultural Appropriation, and Embodied Caribbeanization." MUSICultures 46\(1\): 52-80.](#)

3/3 **fashioning new lives**

- [Aumeerally, Naseem L. 2017. "Reimagining Muslim Women Through the Prism of Minor Diasporic and National Literatures." *Interventions* 19\(1\): 36-55](#)
- [Güney, Pekman, & Kabas. 2014. "Diasporic Music in Transition: Turkish Immigrant Performers on the Stage of 'Multikulti' Berlin." *Popular Music and Society* 37\(2\): 132-151.](#)

3/10 **representation and the 'rest of the world'**

- [Hayek, Ghenwa. 2017. "Whitewashing Arabic for Global Consumption: Translating Race in The Story of Zahra. *Middle Eastern Literatures* 20\(1\): 91-104.](#)
- [Drury, Meghan. 2017. "Counterorienting the War on Terror: Arab Hip Hop and Diasporic Resistance." *Journal of Popular Music Studies*. 29\(2\): 1-11](#)

3/17 **infrastructures of metaphor and other media**

- [Jaji, Tsitsi E. 2014. "What Women Want: Selling Hi-Fi in Consumer Magazines and Film" In *Africa in Stereo: Modernism, Music, and Pan-African Solidarity*. New York: Oxford UP: 111-146.](#)
- [Gilbert, Ruth. 2019. "Metaphors of Migration in the East End Imaginary" *Jewish Culture and History* 20\(3\) 204-219.](#)

DUE END OF FRIDAY 3/12: 1500 WORD EXPLORATORY ESSAY

3/24 **on 'host' societies**

- [Morrison, Toni. 1992. "Disturbing Nurses and the Kindness of Sharks." In *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. New York: Vintage, 61-91.](#)
- [Mecija, Casey. 2018. "Good-bye Ohbijou: Notes on Music, Queer Affect, and the Impossibilities of Satisfying Multicultural Ideals in Canada. In Diaz, Largo, and Pino, eds. *Diasporic Intimacies: Queer Filipinos and Canadian Imaginaries*. Evanston: Northwestern UP: 119-133.](#)

3/31 **the diaspora artist and the state**

- [Niemi, Minna. 2010. "Witnessing Contemporary Somalia from Abroad: An Interview with Nuruddin Farah." *Calaloo* 35\(2\): 330-340.](#)
- [Russell, Heather D. 2012. "Whose Rihanna?: Diasporic Citizenship and the Economies of Crossing Over." In Ifeona Fulani, Ed. *Archipelagoes of Sound: Traditional Caribbeanities, Women and Music*. Mona: UWI Press, 299-320.](#)

DUE END OF FRIDAY 4/2: MAXIMUM 250 WORD ABSTRACT

4/7 **wrap up / workshop**

DUE END OF FRIDAY 4/16: MINIMUM 3000 WORD TERM PAPER FINAL DRAFT