

**Literature of Migration****Spring 2019****LIT 190S/ ENGL 190S/ ICS 290S/ LSGS 290S****MF 3:05PM – 4:20PM****Friedl 102****Instructor:****Jaime Acosta Gonzalez ([jg272@duke.edu](mailto:jg272@duke.edu))****Office hours: By Appointment****Course Description:**

Migration, exile and displacement are rapidly becoming features of everyday life for people all over the world. Propelled by environmental catastrophe, economic crisis and political instability, people are on the move now more than ever. In this course, we will read novels and cultural texts that represent the historical, economic, and social context of migration in the age of globalization—a period seemingly defined by the free movement of commodities, culture, and ideas while simultaneously proliferating borders, barriers, and spaces of confinement to deter the movement of people. We will read a selection of contemporary novels that respond to the phenomenon of migration and dislocation, thinking through the geopolitical stakes of human mobility and broader questions of human community and belonging in and beyond the nation state. As one of the defining issues of our contemporary moment, we will study not only how writers respond to the phenomenon of migration but how they are in some instances themselves products of it. In this way, we will trace not only how novels treat the subject of migration, but how migration itself generates the conditions for contemporary fiction in a thoroughly global world.

## Course Policies

**Attendance:** Students are permitted two unexcused absences, after which further unexcused absences will result in the final grade being downgraded by half a letter grade for each absence. Absences to be excused must be arranged with the instructor as far in advance of the unattended class as possible. In the event of an absence, it is your responsibility to makeup up all work and collect notes from a classmate. Consistent late arrival will also result in a drop to your participation grade. A total of six unexcused absences will result in a failing grade.

You may view Duke's official absence policy here:

<https://trinity.duke.edu/undergraduate/academicpolicies/class-attendance-and-missed-work>.

**Incompletes:** No incompletes will be given.

**Plagiarism:** Advice will be given on proper citation practices and if followed there is no reason plagiarism should occur. If a student is found to have plagiarized material for their assessed work, a grade of zero will be given and the university's relevant disciplinary procedures will be followed. I encourage you to consult: <http://library.duke.edu/research/plagiarism>

**Laptops in the Classroom:** Laptops can be incredibly distracting. If I notice that students are checking email, internet browsing or generally not paying attention due to laptop usage, I will not hesitate to ask you to stop bringing your laptop to class.

**Participation:** You should come to class on time having done the reading in advance, with hardcopies of the day's reading assignments. Be prepared to listen to short lectures on the material before discussion is opened up to the entire class. It is often useful to bring questions about the material to class, so that you have something to contribute to discussion. This will also help you better engage with the text and prepare you for written assignments.

## Assignments

Assignments are listed below. Written assignments are to be sent to [Jaime.gonzalez@duke.edu](mailto:Jaime.gonzalez@duke.edu). Excuses for late submission will not be entertained, except in extraordinary circumstances.

### **In-class participation & weekly blog posts** 30%

Students will be asked to write 250 words on the assigned reading for class. On any given week, half the class will be asked to post on one day's reading, whilst the other half on the other. Posts will be due by noon the day of class. Posts should address problems students have with the reading and should pose at least one question about the text's argument if non-fiction, and one question regarding style or content if literary or filmic.

### **Comparative Analysis (1500 words)** 15%

Students should compare and contrast **two** texts on the syllabus, discussed thus far. Students should analyze the style, form and content of the texts, commenting on how one or more of these aspects of the text relate to the major theme of the course. Students should cite one outside source and incorporate it into their argument.

### **Literary analysis (1500 words)** 15%

Students should undertake a literary analysis of **one** literary text or film discussed thus far in class. Students should analyze the style, form and content of the text, commenting on how one or more of these aspects of the text relate to the major theme of the course. Students should cite one outside source and incorporate it into their argument.

### **Final paper (2500 words)** 40%

The final paper should concern itself with one of the themes addressed in the class. It should focus on an aspect of the political and economic context of migration but may do so by way of comparison with across the historical period covered during the course. There must be evidence of at least some original research beyond class readings undertaken in the library, though there is no expectation of a final bibliography consisting of no more than eight items. Students are required to both schedule a meeting to discuss ideas for their paper, and then to submit their paper in draft form in order to receive feedback from the instructor.

## Course Schedule & Readings

- 1/9 Introduction  
 1/11 Valeria Luiselli, *Tell Me How It Ends: An Essay in 40 Questions*

### The Ethics of Migration

- 1/14 Valeria Luiselli, *Tell Me How It Ends: An Essay in 40 Questions*  
 1/18 The Ethics of Now: Valeria Luiselli, **7:00 pm - 8:30 pm**  
 Durham Arts Council (transportation provided)

### The Cultural Politics of Assimilation

- 1/21 Richard Rodriguez, *Hunger for Memory*  
 1/25 Richard Rodriguez, *Hunger for Memory*

### The Longue Durée of Migration

- 1/28 Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "North Atlantic Universals: Analytical Fictions, 1492–1945"  
 2/1 Junot Diaz, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*  
 2/4 Junot Diaz, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*  
 2/8 Junot Diaz, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*

### The Sympathetic Migrant

- 2/11 Helena Maria Viramontes, *Under the Feet of Jesus*  
 2/15 Helena Maria Viramontes, *Under the Feet of Jesus*

### Paper #1 Due (Comparative Analysis)

### The Unexceptional Migrant

- 2/18 Aura Xilonen, *The Gringo Champion*  
 2/22 Aura Xilonen, *The Gringo Champion*  
 2/25 Aura Xilonen, *The Gringo Champion*  
 3/1 Aura Xilonen, *The Gringo Champion*

### Migrant Underworlds

- 3/4 Yuri Herrera, *Signs Preceding the End of the World*  
 3/8 Yuri Herrera, *Signs Preceding the End of the World*

\*\*\*SPRING BREAK\*\*\*

### Migration and State Violence

- 3/18 Alfonso Cuarón, *Children of Men*  
 3/22 Daniel Borzutzky, *Lake Michigan*

### Paper #2 Due (Literary Analysis)

### Migration at the End of the World

- 3/25 Cormac McCarthy, *The Road*

3/29 Cormac McCarthy, *The Road*

**Migration and the Next World**

4/1 Mohsin Hamid, *Exit West*

4/5 Mohsin Hamid, *Exit West*

**Historical Trauma, Migration, and the Family**

4/8 Patricia Engel, *Infinite Country*

4/12 Patricia Engel, *Infinite Country*

4/15 Anthony Veasna So, *Afterparties*

4/19 Anthony Veasna So, *Afterparties*

4/29 **Paper #3 Due at 5PM**