

LS 815: Organizing Social Realities: Gender, Class, Race, Nation – Strangers at Home: 21st Century Immigrant Literature in Europe and the Americas

Tuesdays – 6:30 – 9:20 – Remote Learning

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Through contemporary novels from Europe and the Americas, we explore the multifaceted representations of the immigrant experience. These stories, mostly fictional yet often loosely autobiographical, prompt us to consider such questions as: What makes a home? Who is a stranger/foreigner? When does one stop being an immigrant? Is the determining factor birth, citizenship, mother tongue? Do certain aspects, such as non-dominant skin color and religion, permanently relegate individuals to an outsider status despite citizenship? The novels grant insights into societal patterns as well as individual narratives of forging an identity while living between cultures. Despite the wide diversity of nations, cultures, and voices on each of the continents under scrutiny, we will also consider the influence of historical immigration narratives on the immigrant experience in these countries. Many European countries (falsely, as will see) considered themselves ethnically and culturally homogeneous prior to the larger influx of (mostly African) immigrants starting toward the end of the 20th century, while many countries on the American continent (also falsely) consider themselves built on (mostly European) immigration. How do these different erroneous beliefs about the historical role of migration affect 21st century immigrants?

I hope you will join me on this journey into human resilience that includes narratives focused on migration push and pull factors, generational conflicts, cultural differences, racism and prejudice, and much more. We will read novels set between countries such as Italy and Somalia, Brazil and Lebanon, Morocco and Spain, Vietnam and Canada, Iraq and the Netherlands, and Mexico and the US. Some of the stories take us along on the immigration journey itself, while others center on the experiences of settling in a new home, or the struggle of second- or third-generation immigrants to find their voice in the country of their birth.

Aside from the novels, we will also view one or two films, read selected poetry and excerpts from theoretical and philosophical works to further contextualize the fiction.

Reading List

Al Galidi, Rodaan. *Two Blankets, Three Sheets, a Towel, a Pillow, and a Pillowcase*. New York: World Editions, 2020.

Ali Farah, Cristina. *Little Mother*. Bloomington, IN: IUP, 2011.

Hatoum, Milton. *The Brothers*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002.

Lalami, Laila. *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits*. Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin, 2005.

Thúy, Kim. *Ru*. Toronto: Vintage, 2015.

Urrea, Luis Alberto. *The Devil's Highway: A True Story*. New York: Back Bay, 2005.

Films to be determined