Syllabus

English 574: Special Topics in Women’s Writing and Feminist Theory:

Migration and Diaspora in the Contemporary Women’s Writing

Time and Place: TR 2:30-3:45p.m. 212 University Club Building
(use 2 side doors at 342 E. Campus Mall for entrance)

Instructor: Susan Friedman
Office: 215 University Club Building; 7103 Helen C. White Hall
Contact Info: 262-8151 (Institute office); 263-3240 (HCW office); 258-8080 (home)
ssfriedm@wisc.edu
Class List: english574-2-s11@lists.wisc.edu
Office Hours: T 3:45-5:45 and by appointment. Sign up sheet outside 215 University Club
Building your convenience. Feel free to drop by whether or not you have signed
up in advance.

Course Description:
“The point is to negotiate between the national, the global, and the historical, as well as the
contemporary diasporic. We must both anthropologize the West, and study the various cultural systems
of Africa, Asia, Asia-Pacific, and the Americans as if peopled by historical agents.”
Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Outside in the Teaching Machine, 278

This course will examine women’s diasporic fiction, memoir, poetry, film, and graphic narrative
from the late 20th-/early 21st centuries in dialog with recent cultural and feminist theory on migration
and diaspora. What’s the meaning of home and homeland for women on the move? How has the
accelerating movement of people, ideas, goods, and cultural practices since World War II affected
women of different races, classes, religions, and national origins? What is women’s relation to the
nation, national identity, and nationalism in colonial and postcolonial contexts? What happens to
women’s bodies, love and intimacy, the family, and intergenerational relations in migration? How might
queer and gender migration reproduce the issues of geographical migration? How has the process of
racialization affected the women of what is called “the new migration”? Do women embrace or resist
the cultures of their new hostlands? What are the intergenerational conflicts for immigrants caught
between worlds? What are the narrative and lyric patterns of women’s diasporic writing? How do
women writers handle issues of language in migration? How is diasporic represented in visual forms like
film and graphic narrative? These are some of the questions to be explored in this course. Texts to be
studied will include novel, poetry, essays, memoir, graphic narrative, and film by women from Asia,
Africa, the British Isles, the Middle East, and North America. Feminist and cultural theory will be
integrated throughout to foster dialogue between theoretical and creative formulations. The sections of
the course include: (1) Cultural and Feminist Theories of Migration and Diaspora; (2) Narrating
Development--Growing Up in Diaspora; (3) Life on the Hyphen--Living In Between; (4) Diasporic
Another objective of the course is to enhance students’ ability to read theoretical texts in conjunction with literary, graphic, or filmic texts. We will examine the porous borders between theory and aesthetic expressions as well as ways in which theory and literature can be put in dialogue with each other. We will also develop strategies for reading theory; for discussing literary texts in relation to theory; for seeing how literary texts challenge theory; and for seeing ways in which literary texts can be said to “do theory” in narrative, poetic, or philosophical forms. Students will be encourage to develop independent, critical thought and to communicate their ideas effectively.

**Required Books:** Available at A Room of One’s Own Bookstore and Coffee House, 307 W. Johnson St., Madison, WI 53703. On 3-day reserve at College Library. Books are listed in order of assigned reading.

Monica Ali, *Brick Lane*, Scribner’s, ISBN 0743243315
Miriam Libicki, *Jobnik!, real gone girl studios*, 978-0978427702
Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Dictee*, University of California, 0520231120
Christina Garcia, *Dreaming in Cuban*, Ballantine, 0345381432

**Work Requirements**

- **Attendance** and active participation in class. Attendance will be taken to “participation” grade.
- **Reading assignments**, on schedule.
- **Discussion Posts**: Directions to be provided.
- **Midterm Exam**: T Feb. 15
- **Analytical Paper**: Due R March 24. Topics based on reading, to be assigned.
- **Final Project**: Due R May 5. Directions to be provided.
- **Final Exam**: Sunday, May 8, 7:45-9:45a.m.

**Note:** Graduate students will have assignments appropriate to the graduate level and may be required to attend a few extra sessions.
Schedule

January

| T  | 18 | **Introduction to the Class.** Bring Kahf, *E-Mails from Scheherazade* to class. |

**Part I: Cultural Theories of Migration and Diaspora**

| R  | 20 | Learn@UW: Cohen; Brah; Alexander

Recommended: Learn@UW: Friedman, “Migration, Diaspora, and Borders”; “Bodies on the Move”

| T  | 25 | Learn@UW: Clifford; Papastergiadis; Hall |

| R  | 27 | Learn@UW: Suarez-Orozco; Seyhan |

**Part II: Narrating Development—Growing Up in Diaspora**

February

| T  | 1  | Emecheta, *The Family* |
| R  | 3  | Emecheta, *The Family* |
| T  | 8  | Jarrar, *A Map of Home* |
| R  | 10 | Jarrar, *A Map of Home* |
| T  | 15 | EXAM |
| R  | 17 | Film: *Boys Don’t Cry* |
| T  | 22 | *Boys Don’t Cry.* Learn@UW: Wesling. Start reading Yang, *The Latehomecomer.* |
| R  | 24 | Kao Kalia Yang, *The Latehomecomer* |

March

| T  | 1  | Kao Kalia Yang, *The Latehomecomer* |

**Part III: Life on the Hyphen—Living In Between**

| R  | 3  | Monica Ali, *Brick Lane* |
| T  | 8  | Monica Ali, *Brick Lane* |
| R  | 10 | Monica Ali, *Brick Lane* |

Spring Break

| T  | 22 | Mohja Kahf, *E-Mails from Scheherazad* |
| R  | 24 | Mohja Kahf, *E-Mails from Scheherazad.* **Paper Due** |
| T  | 29 | Miriam Libicki, *Jobnik!* |
| R  | 31 | Miriam Libicki, *Jobnik!* |

**Part IV: Diasporic Generations—Revisioning History, Nations, Families**

April

| T  | 5  | Linda Hogan, *Solar Storms* |
R    7    Linda Hogan, *Solar Storms*
T    12   Linda Hogan, *Solar Storms*
R    14   Theresa Hak Kyong Cha, *Dictée*. Learn@UW: Cixous
T    19   Theresa Hak Kyong Cha, *Dictée*. Learn@UW: Fuerverger
R    21   Theresa Hak Kyong Cha, *Dictée*.
T    26   Cristina Garcia, *Dreaming in Cuban*
R    28   Cristina Garcia, *Dreaming in Cuban*

**May**

**Sun 1** 6:00-9:00 pm. Pizza and film screening. Julia Dash. *Daughters of the Dust*. Learn@UW: Friedman, notes on *Daughters of the Dust*.

**T 3**  Julie Dash. *Daughters of the Dust*.

**R 5** Conclusion to the Course. **Final Projects Due**.

**Final Exam Sunday May 8 7:45-9:45a.m.**
Readings on Learn@UW by Week

Part I: Cultural Theories of Migration and Diaspora
Thursday January 20
Robin Cohen, Introduction, *Global Diasporas*, ix-xii
Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora*, Chapt. 8, 178-210
Meena Alexander, “Alphabets of Flesh,” 143-59
Recommended:
Susan Stanford Friedman, “Migration, Diaspora, and Borders”
Susan Stanford Friedman, “Bodies on the Move”

Tuesday January 25
James Clifford, “Diasporas,” 244-78.
Nikos Papastergiadis, *The Turbulence of Migration*, Introduction, 1-21
Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” 233-46

Thursday January 27
Marcelo M. Suárez-Orozco, “Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Assimilation But Were Afraid to Ask,” 67-83
Azade Seyhan, *Writing Outside the Nation*, Introduction, 3-22

Part II: Narrating Development—Growing Up in Diaspora
Tuesday February 22
Meg Wesling, “Why Queer Diaspora?”, 30-47

Part IV: Diasporic Generations—Revisioning History, Nations, Families
Sunday May 1
Susan Stanford Friedman, notes for *Daughters of the Dust*