

## Literature of Migration: Diaspora, Exile, and Homecoming

GERM 2250 ENGL 2251 / Boston College

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German Studies



**A Syrian child is lifted over a fence near the border crossing at Akçakale, Turkey, June 2015. Bulent Kilic / AFP / Getty Images**

### Course Description

According to the UN Refugee Agency, the number of people displaced by conflict is at the highest level ever recorded. This course, taught in English, seeks to interrogate three ideas in world literature related to migration: diaspora, exile, and homecoming. Students will analyze how the boundaries between these three ideas, ostensibly at odds with each other, have collapsed during the ruptures of the twentieth century. How do authors in exile deal with the conflicting desires to return home to a country that does not want them, for example? Students will be introduced to post-colonial theory and theories of transnationalism to offer entry points to texts across a variety of genres. Of specific interest is the way that fiction allows migrant and post-migrant authors to reflect and position their individual story within a universal framework. The historical scope of the course reaches back to Greek literary *nostos* (homecoming) and medieval literature to position modern literature from the Holocaust, African Diaspora, and Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with authors including Dante Aligheri, Frantz Fanon, Tony Morrison, Else Lasker-Schüler, Yoko Tawada, Bertolt Brecht, Ghassan Kanafani, Benedict Anderson, and Edward Said.

### Contact Info:

**E-Mail:** [blockni@bc.edu](mailto:blockni@bc.edu)

**Office:** Lyons Hall 201A

**Office Hours:** By appointment through <https://block.youcanbook.me>

**Instructor's Website:** <https://nickblock.com/>

## ✓ Learning Objectives

The learning objectives for this course are goals for literature courses more broadly speaking. Students will:

1. Gain an introductory knowledge of the some of the issues explored in influential works of English and foreign-language traditions, and of some of the stylistic strategies writers have used to explore those issues.
2. Read complex texts actively: recognize key passages; raise questions; appreciate complexity and ambiguity; comprehend the literal and figurative uses of language.
3. Appreciate literary form: recognize how form and structure shape a text's meaning; appreciate how genre generates expectations and shapes meanings.
4. Enjoy the experience of reading challenging literature: appreciate literature's ability to elicit feeling, cultivate the imagination, and call us to account as humans.
5. Interpret texts with an awareness of and curiosity for other viewpoints.
6. Practice writing as a process of motivated inquiry, engaging other writers' ideas through the use of quotations, paraphrase, allusions and summary. Use sources well and cite them correctly.

## ☐ Required books to purchase

- Dante Alighieri. *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri: Volume 1: Inferno*. Edited by Robert M. Durling. Oxford University Press, 1997. ISBN: 978-0195087444
- Wolfgang Iser. *The Man Outside: Play & Stories*. Translated by David Porter, 1971. ISBN: 978-0811200110
- Frantz Fanon. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Translated by Richard Philcox. New York: Grove, 2008 (1952). ISBN: 978-0802143006
- Ghassan Kanafani. *Men in the Sun and Other Palestinian Stories*. Translated by Hilary Kilpatrick. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1999. ISBN: 978-0894108570
- Toni Morrison. *Home*. New York: Vintage International, 2012. ISBN: 978-0307740915

## Homework

Using the Carnegie national standardization guidelines for homework vs. credit hours (see <http://www.bc.edu/offices/avp/Credit-HourCompliance.html>), homework for this 3-credit class = avg. 6 hours a week. Students can expect to read 75-100 pages per week: 50-70 pages between Wednesday and Monday, 25-35 pages between Monday and Wednesday.

## GRADE:

3 Reading Responses (1 pg)	15%
2 Interim Essays (2-3 pgs)	30%
1 Final Writing Assignment (5-7 pgs)	40%
Participation (Mitarbeit)	15%

Grades issued at Boston College are defined as follows:

A - Excellent

B - Good

C - Satisfactory

D - Passing, but unsatisfactory

F - Failing

Failing an assignment  $\leq$  59.4%

Missing an assignment = 0

**Participation:**

**Attendance (Anwesenheit):** It is imperative that you attend regularly. You are allowed a **maximum of 3 absences** during the semester without penalty. Beginning with the 4th absence, a penalty of -1% will be levied on the final semester grade for each class missed. Keep your instructor informed if you miss any classes or assignments. Extended illnesses and family emergencies will be treated as exceptions and handled on a case-by-case basis.

**Punctuality (Pünktlichkeit):** Being on time is very important to Germans. It is also important in this class!!! Being late to class three times counts as one absence.

**Readings brought to class: 4 Points will be deducted** from the participation grade for each time a student does not bring the reading to class printed on paper. An electronic version of the reading is not a substitute for the book.

**Digital policy:**

**E-Mail:** I will try to answer all e-mails within 24 hours of receipt during the work week (Monday 9am – Friday 5pm). Please utilize office hours and pop by Lyons 201 during the week to ask your questions.

**Laptops/Tablets/Smartphones:** Students may utilize laptops, tablets, smartphones in class during discussion, in the hope that students are using such a device to inquire about pertinent information regarding the author, for example. Obviously, checking e-mail, facebook, et al, is frowned upon. It will negatively affect your participation grade each time I pass by your chair and see one of these on your screen. I do note this to myself on my attendance sheet and tally up the amount of times a student was on facebook at the end of the semester. This should be understandable.

**CAVEAT:** Despite trying to allow a liberal digital environment, readings themselves must be brought to class on paper. As stipulated in the participation, **4 Points will be deducted** from the participation grade for each time a student does not bring the reading to class printed on paper. **An electronic version of the reading is not a substitute for the book.**

**Disabilities:**

If you are a student with a documented disability seeking reasonable accommodations in this course, please contact Kathy Duggan, (617) 552-8093, at the Connors Family Learning Center regarding learning disabilities, or Paulette Durrett, (617) 552-3470, in the Disability Services Office regarding other disabilities.

**Discrimination:**

Boston College rejects and condemns all forms of harassment, wrongful discrimination and disrespect. Any problems in this area should be brought to the attention of the course coordinator immediately. [BC's notice of nondiscrimination.](#)

**Key**

☐ Primary Literature (read)

✦ Secondary Literature (read)

→ Point to consider while reading (critical thinking)

↘ 1-page reading response (write)

↓ 5-7 page essay (write)

↻ Guest Lecturer (listen, speak)

## Diaspora (Weeks 1 – 5)

### Themes

- Jewish big D-Diaspora
- Minor(ity) Literature



New York City's Linguistic Landscape

Week	Assignments are due on the date to the left.
1 Jan. 18	<p>Introduction. Defining migrant literature.</p> <p>☐ Psalm 137, "By the rivers of Babylon" → Bible as migrant literature?</p>
2 Jan. 23	<p>☐ Theodor Herzl, <i>The Jews' State</i>. (New York: Dover, 1988) [manifesto] p. 25-63 (39 pages)</p> <p>★ Rogers Brubaker, "The 'diaspora' diaspora," <i>Ethnic and Racial Studies</i> 28:1, (January 2005), p. 1-13 (14 pages)</p>
Jan. 25	<p>☐ Else Lasker-Schüler, <i>Star in my Forehead</i>, trans. Janine Canan (Duluth, MN: Holy Cow, 2000). [poems] p. 25, 35-93 (25 pages)</p>
3 Jan. 30	<p>☐ Franz Kafka, "The Metamorphosis," "A Report to an Academy," in <i>The Complete Stories</i>, ed. Nahum Glatzer (New York: Schocken, 1983) [novella] p. 89-139, 250-259 (61 pages)</p>
Feb. 1	<p>★ Franz Fanon, <i>Black Skin, White Masks</i>, Intro.–Ch. 3, p. xi-63 (72 pages) → Focus on how Jews enter into his discussion of colonized identity.</p>
4 Feb. 6	<p>⊘ <b>Class cancelled</b> - Prof. Block lecturing at another university.</p> <p>★ Franz Fanon, <i>Black Skin, White Masks</i>, Ch. 5, p. 89–119 (31 pages)</p>
Feb. 8	<p>★ Franz Fanon, <i>Black Skin, White Masks</i>, Ch. 6, p. 120–184 (65 pages) ✂ 1-page reading response</p>
5 Feb. 13	<p>☐ Yoko Tawada, <i>Where Europe begins</i>, trans. Susan Bernofsky (New York: New Directions, 2002), p. 85-120. (36 pages)</p> <p>★ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, "What is a Minor Literature?" in <i>Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature</i>, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1986), p. 16-27. (12 pages)</p> <p>✂ Begin Interim Essay 1</p>
Feb. 15	<p>☐ Emine Sevgi Özdamar, <i>Mother Tongue</i>, trans. Craig Thomas (Toronto: Coach House, 1994), [short stories] p. 9-34. (26 pages)</p> <p>★ Zafer Senocak, "Dialogue about The Third Language: Germans, Turks, and Their Future," in <i>Atlas of a Tropical Germany</i>, trans. Leslie Adelson (Berlin: Babel, 2000), p. 32-36. (5 pages)</p>



**Exile  
(Weeks 6 - 10)**

Themes

- Subjectivity
- Poetics and Politics



Sandro Boticelli, "The Abyss of Hell," 1480s. Map of Dante's Hell.

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|-------|---------------------|--|
| 6     | Feb. 20             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>📖 Presentation by Prof. Laurie Shepard, Boston College Italian Studies</li> <li>📖 Dante Alighieri, <i>Inferno</i>, Canto 1-14. [epic poetry] p. 26-229</li> <li>📝 Interim Essay 1</li> </ul>  |
| <hr/> |                     |  |
|       | Feb. 22             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>📖 Dante Alighieri, <i>Inferno</i>, Canto 15-22 [epic poetry] p. 230-345</li> </ul>  |
| 7     | Feb. 27             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>📖 Dante Alighieri, <i>Inferno</i>, Canto 23-34 [epic poetry] p. 346-549</li> </ul>  |
|       | Mar. 1              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>📖 Edward Said, "The Mind of Winter: Reflections on Life in Exile," <i>Harper's</i> 269, no. 1612 (1984), p. 49-55. (7 pages)</li> <li>📖 Benedict Anderson, "The Origins of National Consciousness," in <i>Imagined Communities</i>, p. 37-46 (10 pages)</li> <li>📖 Leslie Adlesohn, "Against Between: A Manifesto," <i>New Perspectives on Turkey</i>, (Spring-Fall 2003), p. 19-33. (15 pages)</li> <li>📖 Sander Gilman, "What is Self-hatred?" in <i>Jewish Self-Hatred</i>, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1986) p. 1-21. (22 pages)</li> </ul> |
|       | <del>Mar. 6-8</del> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🚫 <b>Spring Break</b></li> </ul>  |
| 8     | Mar. 13             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>📖 Ghassan Kanafani, "Men in the Sun," "The Land of Sad Oranges," in <i>Men in the Sun and Other Palestinian Stories</i>. [novella] p. 21-80 (60 pages)</li> </ul>   |
|       | Mar. 15             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>📖 Ghassan Kanafani, short stories in <i>Men in the Sun and Other Palestinian Stories</i>. [novella] p. 81-115 (35 pages)</li> <li>📝 1-page reading response</li> </ul>  |
| 9     | Mar. 20             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>📖 Bertolt Brecht, <i>Fear and misery of the Third Reich</i>, trans. John Willett (New York: Arcade, 1993) [play] p. 1-64</li> </ul>   |
|       | Mar. 22             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>📖 Bertolt Brecht, <i>Fear and misery of the Third Reich</i> [play] p. 65-94</li> </ul>  |
| 10    | Mar. 27             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>📖 Barbara Honigmann, "A Love made Out of Nothing," in <i>A Love made Out of Nothing and Zohara's Journey: Two Novels</i>, trans. John Barrett (Boston: David R. Godine, 2003). [novella] p. 1-50 (50 pages)</li> <li>📝 Begin Interim Essay 2</li> </ul>   |
|       | Mar. 29             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>📖 Barbara Honigmann, <i>A Love made Out of Nothing</i> [novella] p. 51-76 (26 pages)</li> </ul>   |

## Homecoming (Weeks 11 - 15)

### Themes

- Homecoming as Exile
- Nostos



East Berlin building painted with "This building once stood in another country." At top: "Human will can move anything."

- 11 Apr. 3 ☐ Else Lasker-Schüler, "I and I," in *Three Plays*, trans. Jane Curtis (Evanston, IL: Northwestern UP, 2005). [play] p. 220-279 (60 pages)  
→ Focus on subjectivity (e.g., "I and I") in exile. Compare with *Hebrew Ballads*.  
✍ Interim Essay 2
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- Apr. 5 ☐ Bertolt Brecht, *Poems, 1913-1956*, ed. John Willett and Ralph Manheim (New York: Methuen, 1979) [poems] p. 295-304, 318-320, 390-392, 409-414, 416-418, 431-432 (22 pages)  
→ Focus on post-1947 tone in East German poems (p. 409 ff.) in comparison with other exilic poems and play *Fear and misery*
- 12 ~~Apr. 10~~ ⓪ **Passover. Class Cancelled**  
☐ Wolfgang Borchert. Short stories including "The Three Dark Magi," "On That Tuesday," "The Kitchen Clock," "Rats do Sleep at Night," "The Bread," "This is Our Manifesto," "There's Only One Thing." In *The Man Outside*. [short stories] p. 141-200, 255-256, 259-264, 268-270. (71 pages)  
✍ 1-page reading response
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- ~~Apr. 12~~ ⓪ **Passover. Class Cancelled**  
☐ Wolfgang Borchert, "The Man Outside," in *The Man Outside*. [play] p. 77-104. (24 pages)  
✍ Begin Final Essay
- 13 ~~Apr. 17~~ ⓪ **Patriot's Day/Easter Monday/Passover. Class Cancelled**
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- Apr. 19 ☐ Wolfgang Borchert, *The Man Outside*. [play] p. 105-135. (30 pages)
- 14 Apr. 24 ☐ Toni Morrison, *Home*. [novel] Ch. 1-4, p. 3-66 (64 pages)  
✍ First three pages of Final Essay due
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- Apr. 26 ☐ Toni Morrison, *Home*. [novel] Ch. 5-8, p. 67-92 (26 pages)
- 15 May 1 ☐ Toni Morrison, *Home*. [novel] Ch. 9-17, p. 93-147 (54 pages)
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- May 3 📄 Last Day. Course Synthesis.
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- May 10 ⬇ Final Essay and makeup work due by May 10 at 11am.