

DTS412 – The Diasporic Imagination

University of Toronto – Spring 2023

General Info

Class Meetings: Wednesdays 2p-4pm
Location: OISE #5150
Instructor: Edward Sammons — ted.sammons@utoronto.ca
Drop-in hours: Mon 2-3pm or by appointment — online and in person
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 2024, 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 submit a 3000-to-5000-word essay assignment, on a topic of each student's own choosing, 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 ONE 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 EACH reading assigned for discussion the following session. Grammar and spelling won't factor into assessment. Each thumbnail sketch must:

- identify the region(s) + key people whose actions / perspectives are foregrounded
- cite one passage from the reading that is fundamental for understanding its content
- add a minimum of 100 words (elaborating on what makes this passage fundamental)
- 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 500-word pitch for the paper you want to write (5%)
- bring a copy of your chosen work to class (5%)
- submit a **min.** 1500-word essay reflecting progress to completing that paper (12.5%)
- submit a **max.** 250-word 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 is strongly encouraged. Frequent unexcused absence and / or late arrival to class meetings will count against grade for in-class participation.

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

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.

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.

1/9 introductions

1/16 the condition of diaspora [A = reflection; B = sketch]

- Césaire, Aimé. 1939. *Notebook of a Return to My Native Land*. Trans. Clayton Eshleman. Middletown: Wesleyan UP, 26-81.

1/23 imagining the ‘homeland’ [A = sketches; B = reflection]

- Kusumaningtyas & Cohen. 2020. “The Chinese Diaspora’s ‘Imaginary’ Homeland in the Novels by Four Chinese-American and Chinese-Indonesian Writers.” *Diaspora Studies* 13(2): 152-169.
- 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.

1/30 making do with dislocation [A = reflection; B = sketches]

- 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.

2/6 ‘host’ societies [A = sketches; B = reflection]

- 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.

DUE END OF FRIDAY **2/9**: MIN 500 WORD TERM PAPER PITCH

DUE IN CLASS 2/13: BRING A COPY OF YOUR CHOSEN WORK

2/13 form and meaning [A = reflection; B = sketches] + WORKSHOP

- Shandil, Vicky Vishal. 2019. "Performing the Subversive: An Analysis of Indo-Fijian Folklore." *Diaspora Studies* 12(1): 64-78.
- Achondo, Luis. 2021. "A Cry for Palestine: Vocal Practice and Imaginaries of Palestine-ness among Chilean Football Supporters of Club Deportivo Palestino." *Ethnomusicology Forum* 30(2): 302-323.

2/20 no class – reading week

2/27 embodiment [A = sketches; B = reflection]

- 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.

3/5 responsibilities of the diasporic artist [A = reflection; B = sketches]

- Du Bois, W.E.B. 1926. "Criteria of Negro Art." *The Crisis* Vol. 32.
- Schuyler, George. 1926. "The Negro Art Hokum." *The Nation*. June 16.
- Hughes, Langston. 1926. "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain." *The Nation*. June 23.

DUE END OF FRIDAY 3/8: 1500 WORD EXPLORATORY ESSAY

3/12 infrastructures [A = sketches; B = reflection]

- Jaji, Tsitsi E. 2014. "What Women Want: Selling Hi-Fi in Consumer Magazines and Film" In *Africa in Stereo*. 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.

3/19 the diaspora artist and the state [A = reflection; B = sketches]

- Yoon, Kyong. 2018. "Global Imagination of K-Pop: Pop Music Fans' Lived Experiences of Cultural Hybridity." *Popular Music and Society* 41(4): 373-389.
- 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.

3/26 fashioning new lives [A = sketches; B = reflection]

- Valančiūnas, Deimantas. 2021. "Haunting Memories: Sri Lankan Civil War, Trauma and Diaspora in Literature and Film." *South Asian Diaspora* 13(1): 37-49.
- 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.

DUE END OF FRIDAY 3/29: MAXIMUM 250 WORD ABSTRACT

4/2 wrap up / workshop

DUE END OF FRIDAY 4/12: MINIMUM 3000 WORD TERM PAPER FINAL DRAFT