

American University of Beirut
ENGL 292: Capstone Seminar for Literature Majors: Decolonizing Trauma Studies
Tuesday/Thursday 3:30PM-4:45PM
Fisk 313
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Office Hours: 10:00-11:00 Wednesday

Course Description:

The capstone seminar is designed to provide an opportunity for students to draw together the reading, writing, research, analytical, and rhetorical skills they have developed throughout their English courses. The course serves as the culmination of literary instruction for the major, and its seminar nature gives students a sense of what they can expect if they decide to pursue literary studies at the graduate level.

The theme of the capstone revolves around the professor's fields and current research interests. In this incarnation that means we will be working within the fields of postcolonial studies, World Literature, and African Literature and film to consider the issue of trauma and its representation in Africa. We will consider the Eurocentric biases of trauma studies to date and consider how the recent initiative to decolonize trauma studies helps us understand trauma in Africa and the global south.

In concrete terms, this course emphasizes developing research proposals, abstract writing, research methodologies, writing an annotated bibliography, and ultimately composing a capstone essay of original scholarly research.

Required Texts:

Abani, Chris. *Song for Night*. New York: Akashic Book, 2007.
Forna, Aminatta, *Memory of Love*. New York: Grove Press, 2013.
Graff, Gerald and Cathy Birkenstein. *"They Say / I Say": The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*. 3rd Edition. Norton: New York, 2014.
Mengestu, Dinaw. *All Our Names*. New York: Vintage, 2015.

Learning Outcomes

1. To read a text in different ways and appreciate each in its own historical and cultural context, particularly in reference to world literature, postcolonialism and globalization.
2. To read closely and critically.
3. To identify elements of a text with increasing complexity.
4. To formulate meaningful questions about a text.
5. To discuss ideas in an atmosphere of mutual respect and freedom.
6. To ground one's arguments in a text, i.e., to learn the value of accurately and critically documenting one's argumentation.
7. To analyze, in depth and concisely, excerpts of a text in English in both verbal presentation (discussion, oral presentation), and written form (in-class essays and out-of-class academic essay).
8. To assess texts with increasing complexity and independence.

Expectations of Instructor

I will begin class on time and finish on time. I will be prepared for each session. I will be available during office hours and by appointment. I will return work promptly and give clear feedback on all assignments. I will also try to demonstrate why we are doing what we are doing.

Assessment

Assessment is an imperfect tool to measure learning, not the point of learning. No one can deny that grades are important but you are ultimately here to learn and that should be your priority. Grades usually reflect how seriously one engages the materials, one's effort, one's learning and one's ability. However, grades are not negotiable. Much of our class will be discussion based and in terms of constructing arguments, student arguments are as valid and useful as my own because they must carry the burden of analytic argumentation. Grades, on the other hand, are purely handed down by the professor. I can clarify my comments and thoughts for you but I do not change grades.

Attendance and Participation 20%

By participation and attendance I mean that you should be present in class, engage in class discussion and bring the readings to class. This includes reading the assigned material, engaging in constructive discussion and not in any way inhibiting discussion in the class (things like texting/web-surfing and other demonstrations of a lack of respect for the class). I understand that you may not feel that you have something to contribute, but your insight or question might be helpful to other members of the class. So please do not deny us a learning opportunity; share your thoughts! On the other hand, participating continuously with extraneous and off-topic remarks will lower your grade. Please focus and measure your remarks to be as insightful and as on-topic as possible. We all have different learning styles and personality types, but participation is a part of your grade. Therefore, do whatever it takes to be not only an observer or follower of class discussions, but also an active participant. In terms of attendance, missing even five meetings will lower your grade automatically.

Presentations 10%

Near the end of the semester students will participate in a mini-conference (possibly in conjunction with graduate students) in which they will present a conference paper version of their capstone essay.

Response Papers 10%

Each week each member of a group will submit a one-page response paper. These papers should be one double spaced page with normal paper specifications. The point of the response papers is for you to formulate arguments and points concerning the texts while reading them. They are not mini-papers that need an intro, body, and conclusion. Rather they should be precise insightful points of interpretation. "Response" here does not mean observation or the first thing that came to mind when reading something. A response in the academic sense is a short analysis of a particular point of interest. This means making a non-generic claim, providing evidence and then analyzing why the evidence provides insight beyond the obvious. Also, do not summarize the work you are discussing; we have all read it and do not need a recap. What we want is your particular insight. All response papers must be posted to the appropriate Moodle forum by the deadline given to receive full credit.

Annotated Bibliography 10%

As part of the buildup to the final research paper, each student will create an annotated bibliography of his or her sources.

Abstract 10%

Students will craft an academic abstract for their project. The abstract will be circulated and both the professor and the class will have input as to whether the project is approved.

Capstone Paper 40%

This is the culmination of the class and is 10+ page that should demonstrate a complexity of understanding and analysis on a topic of your choosing. Your topics though will be chose in consultation with me.

Grading Criteria for Papers

Excellent (90%-100%)

1. Fulfills the assignment in a fresh and mature way. The paper is intellectually dynamic and demonstrates a mastery of the texts and salient cultural issues surrounding them.
2. The evidence is highly detailed and used persuasively towards an original analysis.
3. Citations are used effectively and formatted correctly
4. The organization of the paper gives the reader a sense of the flow of the argument; meaning paragraphs are fully developed and properly related to one another.
5. Few if any grammatical mistakes.

Above Average (80%-89%)

1. Fulfills the assignment in a better-than-average way. The paper is intellectual and demonstrates an above average understanding of the texts and cultural issues surrounding them, although may rely too heavily on the obvious.
2. The evidence is detailed and used persuasively towards an insightful analysis.
3. Citations are used effectively and formatted correctly
4. The organization of the paper gives the reader a sense of the flow of the argument; meaning paragraphs are well developed and properly related to one another.
5. Few grammatical mistakes.

Average (70%-79%)

1. Fulfills the assignment in an average way. The paper is serviceable and demonstrates limited understanding of the texts and cultural issues surrounding them and restates obvious points.
2. The evidence is primarily vague and lacks meaningful insightful towards an analysis.
3. Citations are mostly used effectively and formatted correctly.
4. The organization of the paper gives the reader some sense of connection between the argument's various components.
5. Repeated grammatical mistakes.

Below Average (60%-69%)

1. Fulfills the assignment in a below-average way. The paper's serviceability is highly limited and it demonstrates highly limited understanding of the texts and cultural issues surrounding them.
2. Necessary evidence is fragmented or missing and lacks meaningful insightful towards an analysis.
3. Citations are used ineffectively and formatted poorly.
4. The organization of the paper makes following the argument difficult, if not impossible.
5. Repeated grammatical mistakes.

F Papers-Fail (60% and below)

1. Does not fulfill the basic requirements of the assignment. The paper is unserviceable as an assignment by showing no understanding of relevant material.

2. No evidence or analysis.
3. Does not meet page requirements.
4. Citations are used ineffectively or not at all.
5. Little discernable organization.
6. Repeated grammatical mistakes.

Course Policies:

Absences:

Excused absences must come from AUH bearing a barcode, and are subject to verification

Tardiness

You have made a commitment to be in this class on time. If you can't do that then you should not be taking the class. We're all human and sometimes we turn up late for reasons beyond our control but it is disruptive and disrespectful to regularly come into class when it is already in progress. Keep in mind that any participation or in-class work missed because of tardiness cannot be made up.

Consultations

Communication with me is one of the best ways to understand the expectations of this course and how well you are fulfilling them. Contact me and I will spend as much time as needed to work on any issues. I am here to guide you through the process of this class so do not be shy about coming to see me even if just to touch base. In preparing to see me, though, you should have specific questions that you want to discuss.

Drafts

What is a draft exactly? For our purposes, a draft is a paper you would feel comfortable turning in for a grade. That means that your drafts are not sketches or outlines or a game plan. They must also be formatted to my normal paper requirements. We take this approach because we want to work on your essays in a state you would submit. Failure to submit a draft will result in one full grade off of the final draft of the paper.

In-class assignments

In-class assignments are not noted on the syllabus. They can be announced days before or simply given without warning. If you do not show up for class that day, you fail the assignment. Only students with excused absences will be given a make up.

Paper specifications

All essays must be double spaced and typed with one inch margins. The font must be 12 point Times Roman. These are the default setting of Word 2007 (not 2003) so if you don't mess with the margins, you have no worries. Do not include a cover page and be sure to staple all assignments. Your name, the class, the assignment and the date should be single spaced in the top right corner of all papers. If there is a title there should be one space between the date and the centered title.

Late Papers/Projects

All papers are due at specific times on Moodle. Any paper not submitted by that time is considered late and will be penalized 10% for every day it is late.

I do not give extensions on papers after the due date. Under special and rare circumstances I may give an extension beforehand if you have consulted with me. All the essays are noted on the syllabus and will be discussed in class well beforehand. I will not accept any papers that are more than a week late. Also, keep in mind that a failing grade and zero are two different things. Not turning in a paper earns you a

zero. A late paper may earn a low grade, even below 60%, but that will still amount to a lot more points than a flat zero.

Academic Integrity

I will not tolerate plagiarism of any kind in our class. Any student caught improperly using online or print resources in a paper will receive an automatic zero for the assignment and may incur further disciplinary action. No exceptions.

Plagiarism is a serious issue in academia and I want to clarify exactly what I mean.

Online Sources

Plagiarism includes online sources; so cutting and pasting material from a website and passing it off as your own is plagiarism. Not citing the sources of your argument is also plagiarism, as is partially citing; so do not just cite "History.com" but specific URLs.

General

Not using quotation marks for a quote is plagiarism. Not citing every time you use a quotation is plagiarism. Changing a few words in a citation and passing it off as your own is plagiarism as is using work from other classes for this class. Turning in the same paper for different classes without permission is also not allowed by the university. Please see me if you have any questions.

These are some of the major forms of plagiarism. For complete information see the university's academic integrity code.

Schedule

This schedule of readings is subject to change. All changes will be announced in class. In addition to the literary readings, we will have some sessions on how to write literary arguments. These will be allocated and adjusted once I have had a chance to read some of the classes' work.

Week 1 1/24-26

Course Introduction, *TSIS* Preface and introduction

Damrosch *What is World Literature?* Intro

Week 2 1/31-2/2

“They Say” section of *TSIS*.

Moretti “Conjecture on World Literature”

Deluze and Guttari Rhizome Reading

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gnteiRO-XfU>

Week 3 2/7 2/9 Holiday

Memory of Love 1-75

“What’s New in Africa? African Writing in the Twenty-First Century”

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/feb/13/aminatta-forna-dont-judge-book-by-cover>

Week 4 2/14-16

Memory of Love 76-150

“Decolonizing Trauma Studies”

Introduction to Special issue on Decolonizing Trauma

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SI4F_dM9JAI

<https://bookpage.com/interviews/8645-aminatta-forna#.WHOVV1N9670>

Week 5 2/21-23

Memory of Love 151-225

Harrow on *Memory of Love*

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/9946586/Aminatta-Forna-interview-unsilent-witness.html>

<https://thedianerehmsshow.org/shows/2011-01-25/aminatta-forna-memory-love>

Week 6 2/28-3/2

Memory of Love 225-300

Gunning Article on *Memory of Love*

BBC Interview Pt 1 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zHq8RcywX0M>

BBC Interview Pt 2 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=camY80DORoI>

Week 7 3/7-9

Memory of Love 300-375

Norridge Article on *Memory of Love*

Ernest Cole excerpt on *Memory of Love*

Week 8 3/14-16

Memory of Love 375-end

Week 9 3/21-23

Song for Night

“Literature, trauma and the African moral imagination”

Week 10 3/28-30

Song for Night

Novak on *Song for Night*

Halley on *Song for Night*

Week 11 4/4-6

Song for Night

Tunca on *Song for Night*

Week 12 4/11-13

All Our Names

Cheah “What is a World”

Walkowitz interview

Week 13 4/18-20

All Our Names

Apter *Against World Literature* intro

Allan *In the Shadow of World Literature* intro

Week 14 4/25-27

All Our Names

Mufti *Forget English* intro

Week 15 5/2

FINALPAPER DUE