

Migration and Diaspora: CECS 611 Syllabus

Spring 2025

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Office Hours: Wed., 11am – 12:30 pm or by appointment.

Course Description

This course will explore recent scholarship and dominant theories in the field of migration and diaspora studies, and it will engage students in experiential activities to underscore the complexities of and challenges that accompany forced or voluntary movement from a familiar to an unfamiliar location. Climate change, economic crises as well as contemporary iterations of terrorism and warfare have all intensified the global movements of people, goods, ideas, cultures, and money. These recent examinations of forces contributing to displacement have reinvigorated the study of migration in earlier periods, with many arguing that related phenomena have been endemic to the human population since our beginning. New frameworks that emphasize networks and relationality, and bring into the foreground interculturalism, borders and borderlands, and hybrid formations have begun to replace older ways of reading human cultures and civilizations.

The course brings together theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches from both the humanities and social sciences (e.g., anthropology, literary studies, performance studies, psychology, ethnomusicology, sociolinguistics, history, and sociology) with various forms of cultural expression (e.g., poetry, film, music, and literature). The course places the different theories/strategies in dialogue to familiarize you with transdisciplinarity and with tools for shaping your own unique studies of migration and diaspora in ways that exceed the boundaries of particular disciplines. Themes explored will include: the contexts for the newly invigorated field; the multiple meanings and models of diaspora and migration; the relation of migration and diaspora to the slave trade, conquest, colonialism, postcolonialism, refugeeism, and political exile; the heterogeneity of diasporic groups; the problematics and potentials of assimilation, acculturation and transculturation; nativism and the hostility of host lands; generational conflicts and continuities in the (re)production of culture; the role of language and other cultural practices in migratory experiences; the significance of memory for the production of what Salman Rushdie calls “imaginary homelands”; and the phenomenological dimensions of migration and diaspora (loss, between worlds, nostalgia, depression, and exhilaration).

Course Objectives:

By fully participating in this course, you should be able to:

- Develop and articulate a transdisciplinary approach to the study of migration and diaspora.
- Construct and participate in a simulation exercise that deepens and complicates your understanding of the societal and global forces affecting migration and the resettlement experience.
- Grasp the frameworks for analyzing and documenting global and local circuits/communities.
- Complete a project that will be of use to RIAC (Refugee and Immigrant Assistance Center) in its work to help refugee and immigrant communities resettle and flourish.

Readings

Most of the readings will be available on Canvas. They are listed here, in alphabetical order by the author's last name.

Note: The two books that you will need to purchase are:

Valeria Luiselli. *Tell Me How it Ends: An Essay in 40 Questions* (Coffee House Press, 2017).

GB Tran. *Vietnamerica: A Family's Journey* (Villard Books, 2011).

In Canvas

- Adichie, Chimamanda. 2009. "The American Embassy." *The Thing Around Your Neck*.
- Amelina, Anna and Barglowski, Karolina. 2019. "Key Methodological Tools for Diaspora Studies: Combining the Transnational and Intersectional Approaches." *Routledge Handbook of Diaspora Studies*. Ed. Robin Cohen and Carolin Fischer. 31-39.
- Arthur, Paul. 1991. "Diasporan Intervention in International Affairs: Irish America as a Case Study" *Diaspora* Vol 1 No 2: 143-163.
- Baser, Bahar and Toivanen, Mari. "Diasporas Building Peace: Reflections from the experience of Middle Eastern Diasporas." *Routledge Handbook of Diaspora Studies*. Ed. Robin Cohen and Carolin Fischer. 345-353.
- Bose, Neilesh. 2021. "Introduction: South Asian Migrations in Modern Global Histories." *Journal of World History* Vol. 32 No. 1: 1-17.
- Goeman, Mishuana. 2013. "From the Stomp Grounds on Up: Indigenous Movement and the Politics of Globalization." *Mark My Words: Native Woman Mapping Our Nations*. University of Minnesota Press, 2013. 119-156.
- Hu-Dehart, Evelyn. 2012. "Integration and Exclusion: The Chinese in Multiracial Latin America and the Caribbean." *Routledge Handbook of the Chinese Diaspora*. Ed. Chee-Beng Tan. 89-107.
- Jackson, Regine O. 2011. "The Uses of Diaspora among Haitians in Boston." *Geographies of the Haitian Diaspora*. Ed. Regine O. Jackson. Routledge. 135-162
- Kaus, Alaina. 2016. "A View from the Vietnamese Diaspora: Memories of Warfare and Refuge in GB Tran's *Vietnamerica*." *Mosaic* Vol 49 No 4 (December): 1-19.
- Luiselli, Valeria. 2017. *Tell Me How it Ends: An Essay in 40 Questions*.
- Naficy, Hamid. 1991. "The Poetics and Practice of Iranian Nostalgia in Exile," *Diaspora* Vol 1 No 3: 285 - 302.

- Paul, Anju Mary. 2017. *Multinational Maids: Stepwise Migration in a Global Labor Market*. Cambridge University Press. Chapters 6 and 7.
- Rose, Ananda. 2012. *Showdown in the Sonoran Desert: Religion, Law, and the Immigration Controversy*. Chapters 3 and 4. Online access available through the library.
- Safran, William. 1991. "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return," *Diaspora* Vol 1 No 1: 83-100.
- Scott, David. 1991. "That Event, This Memory: Notes on the Anthropology of African Diasporas in the New World," *Diaspora* Vol 1 No 3: 261 – 285.
- Shehadeh, Raja. 2007. *Palestinian Walks: Forays into a Vanishing Landscape*. Excerpts.
- Tan, Chee-Beng. 2012. *Routledge Handbook of the Chinese Diaspora*. Selected chapters.
- Tolia-Kelly, Divya P. 2019. "Diaspora and Home: Interrogating Embodied Precarity in an era of forced displacement." *Routledge Handbook of Diaspora Studies*. Ed. Robin Cohen and Carolin Fischer. 214-222.
- Tölölyan, Khachig. 2019. "Diaspora Studies: Past, Present, and Promise." *Routledge Handbook of Diaspora Studies*. Ed. Robin Cohen and Carolin Fischer. 22-31.
- Unnikrishnan, Deepak. 2017. *Temporary People*. Excerpts.
- Wilkerson, Isabel. 2010. *The Warmth of Other Suns. The Epic Story of America's Great Migration*. 8-15; 197-204; 413-431; 527-538.
- Yang, Philip Q. 2012. "From Sojourning to Settlement to Transnationalism: Transformations of the Chinese Immigrant Community in America." *Routledge Handbook of the Chinese Diaspora*. Ed. Chee-Beng Tan. 122-140.
- Zamora, Javier. 2022. *Solito*. Hogarth Press. Excerpts

Films:

Mira Nair, 1991. *Mississippi Masala*. Available through Healey Library on Kanopy

Grade Distribution by Assignment

Weekly index cards and bi-weekly reflections (participation)	20%
Simulation exercise outline and analysis of process	20%
Simulation exercise full script and enactment	30%
Guest speaker recap and analysis	10%
Final course reflection or RIAC deliverable	20%

Explanation of Assignments

This is a seminar, and therefore each class meeting will be interactive with each student expected to contribute to the discussion. Attendance is crucial. For each class, you are expected to (1) have read/viewed/listened to the class materials and any related assignments; (2) have on-hand the assigned readings for each class period so that you can refer to them during small-group or whole group discussion; and (3) participate in class discussions and other activities by listening actively, reflecting on your peers' contributions, and sharing your ideas.

1. Weekly Index Cards and Bi-weekly Reflections (20%):

Each week, you will bring to class at least two observations written on an index card on each assigned reading for that class period. You will also share these observations at the start of each class in small groups of three. Additionally, we will end each class period with a small group activity in which you will share your principal learnings from the class meeting and note them down on a second index card. I will collect the index cards each week, so before turning them in to me, make sure you take a photograph of them with your phone.

Every other week, you will turn in a 500-word reflection drawn from the index card observations and group discussion learnings. The reflection should address specifically insights gained or deepened regarding migration and/or diaspora. Thoughtful and relevant use of quotations from the readings are also encouraged as long as the quoted excerpts are brief.

2. Simulation Exercise Outline and Analysis of Process

You will come up with the outline as a team. Detailed instructions for how to construct the outline can be found on Canvas. But each team member will also submit an analysis of 500 words about the process of arriving at the outline. The analysis should address the following points: (a) how did the team select the scenario, (b) what was the quality of the discussion, (c) what were the challenges in constructing the outline, (d) how were differences of perspective among the team members handled, (e) what readings and or guest speakers were particularly helpful for crafting the outline.

3. Simulation Exercise Full Script and Enactment

As with the simulation outline assignment, each student will be graded on the team's full script and enactment as well as the individual student's analysis of the process leading up to the script and enactment. The issues to be addressed in the analysis are the same as in the simulation outline assignment. Detailed instructions for what to include in the script can be found on Canvas.

4. Guest Speaker Recap and Analysis

We will have a handful of guest speakers during the semester. You should select one to focus on and provide a recap of their remarks as well as an analysis of their presentation. The recap should include the principal points of their presentation. The analysis should address the following questions: (a) why did you select this speaker as your focus, (b) what was effective (or not) about

their presentation, (c) what were the most compelling insights you gleaned and why were these so impactful for you, (d) how did this speaker complicate your understanding of migration and diaspora.

5. Final Course Reflection (or RIAC Deliverable); Reflection, 1,000 words

I have intentionally left this undefined because RIAC may want us to “produce” something for them that is useful in their resettlement work. If RIAC does not make a specific request of us, then the final course reflection should include the following elements: (a) your perspective on migration and/or diaspora at the start of the semester, (b) insights from at least 5 readings that are particularly compelling for you and why, (c) what you propose to do with this “new” or deepened knowledge, (d) will your “contribution” affect systemic structures; why or why not?

IMPORTANT RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS

Accommodations

UMass Boston is committed to creating learning environments that are inclusive and accessible. If you have a personal circumstance that will impact your learning and performance in this class, please let me know as soon as possible, so we can discuss the best ways to meet your needs and the requirements of the course. If you have a documented disability, or would like guidance about navigating support services, contact the Ross Center for Disability Services by email (ross.center@umb.edu), phone (617-287-7430), or in person (Campus Center, UL Room 211). To receive accommodations, students must be registered with the Ross Center and must request accommodations each semester that they are in attendance at UMass Boston. For more information visit: www.rosscenter.umb.edu. Please note that the Ross Center will provide a letter for your instructor with information about your accommodations only and not about your specific disability.

Academic Integrity

Education at UMass Boston is sustained by academic integrity. Academic integrity requires that all members of the campus community are honest, trustworthy, responsible, respectful, and fair in academic work at the university. As part of being educated here, students learn, exercise, increase, and uphold academic integrity. Academic integrity is essential within all classrooms, in the many spaces where academic work is carried out by all members of the UMass Boston community, and in our local and global communities where the value of this education fulfills its role as a public good. Students are expected to adhere to the Student Code of Conduct, including policies about academic integrity, delineated here: https://www.umb.edu/life_on_campus/dean_of_students/student_conduct

Artificial Intelligence Tools

AI is not encouraged in this course, as you are all graduate students and are expected to do your own thinking and analysis. However, if you feel the need to use AI, you may do so **with attribution**: To adhere to our scholarly values and to the Student Code of Conduct, students must cite any AI-generated material that informed their work; citations should include not only in-text citations and listing in the references, but also the full text of cited ChatGPT (or other Large Language Model (LLM) generator) as an appendix to the assignment. Using an AI tool to generate content without proper attribution qualifies as academic dishonesty. Students are also responsible for making sure that any AI generated text does not contain false or erroneous information. If students are unsure about whether or not a source is appropriate to use in the assignment, they should contact the instructor.

Student Support

WRITING CENTER: The University of Massachusetts Boston Writing Center provides free writing support to undergraduate and graduate students. The Writing Center believes that every writer benefits from supportive and generous interaction with a knowledgeable peer, both online and in-person, on their writing. As such, it works one-on-one with writers on all writing projects – whether personal, academic, or professional – at any stage. During individual writing sessions, trained undergraduate and graduate student consultants collaborate with writers on their goals and take into account academic and social contexts. The Writing Center also provides a variety of programming, including workshops and writing groups. To learn more about the Writing Center and its services or schedule an appointment visit: <https://www.umb.edu/writingcenter>

Health, Wellbeing, and Success

We are still coming through the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the emerging COVID-19 variants, all members of the UMass Boston community — students, faculty, and staff — as well as contractors and visitors are encouraged to wear face coverings in public indoor spaces on the UMass Boston campus. To safeguard your own health and safety as well as that of all students, staff, and faculty, you are reminded that vaccinations are required for all faculty, staff, and students, with limited exceptions (see www.umb.edu/healthservices/corona_virus_information/coronavirus_vaccination_requirements). If you have symptoms of COVID-19, you should not come to campus. Flexibility and support will be provided for students in such situations and are addressed in this syllabus.

UMass Boston is a vibrant, multi-cultural, and inclusive institution committed to ensuring that all members of our diverse campus community are able to thrive and succeed. The university provides a wide variety of resources to support students' overall success. As we continue to deal with the evolving impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, these resources are more important than ever.

Are you in emotional distress? Call 617.287.5690 to speak with a licensed clinician 24/7 who can offer support, crisis recommendations, and assistance with finding resources.

Have a campus question or issue? Use Here4U in the UMass Boston app or via www.umb.edu/here4U.

Want advice in navigating a university or life situation? Contact the Dean of Students Office at www.umb.edu/deanofstudents.

Want to connect with housing and food insecurity support, student life groups and events, or recreation activities? Visit www.umb.edu/life.

Want to access resources specifically for immigrant-origin, DACA, TPS, and undocumented students? Visit www.umb.edu/immigrant.

Looking for additional identity-based community support? Find more resources at www.umb.edu/identity-support

Want to make the most of your academic experience?
Visit www.umb.edu/academics/vpass/academic_support.

Unable to attend class on a specific date or participate in an exam or class requirement due to a religious observance? Fill out the excused absence form (requires 2-weeks' notice) to request religious accommodation at www.umb.edu/religiousabsence.

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS

Date	Topic	Readings
Week 1 1/29	Welcome and Introductions	IRC website; discussion of meaning of migration and diaspora; what we will cover, what we leave out. Poems.
Week 2 2/5	Historical and contemporary perspectives on migration and diaspora Weekly index cards and reflection	Khachig Tölöyan, "Diaspora Studies" Past, Present, and Promise" William Safran, "Myths of Homeland and Return" Anna Amelina, "Methodological Tools for Diaspora Studies" Baher Baser, "Building Peace: Middle East Diaspora" Paul Arthur, "International Intervention in Politics: Irish America"

Week 3 2/12	RIAC Weekly index cards	Overview of Services Viet Nguyen, “The Displaced, The Unwanted” “War Years”
Week 4 2/19	African Diaspora Weekly index cards and reflection	David Scott, “That Event, This Memory” Quito Swan, Pasifika Black “Introduction” Isabel Wilkerson, <i>The Warmth of Other Suns</i> excerpts
Week 5 2/26	Colonialism and Diaspora Discussion of Simulation Scenarios Weekly index cards	Neilesh Bose, “South Asian Migrations in Global History” Film: <i>Mississippi Masala</i> Deepak Unnikrishnan, <i>Temporary People</i> South Asian and Southeast Diaspora in the Middle East
Week 6 3/5	Haitian Diaspora Weekly index cards and reflection	Patrick Sylvain, poetry “The Uses of Diaspora among Haitians in Boston” WBUR Conversation with Sylvain, Garcia, and Modestin
Week 7 3/12	Vietnamese Diaspora Phase 1: Completion of Simulation Outline Analysis of Process Reflection	Son-Ca Lam guest speaker Graphic novel: <i>Vietnamerica</i>
3/19	<i>Spring Break</i>	<i>Spring Break</i>
Week 8 3/26	Settler Colonialism and Indigenous Communities Palestinian Nakba and Diaspora Weekly index cards and reflection	Mishuana Goeman, “From the Stomp Grounds on Up: Indigenous Movement and the Politics of Globalization.” Raja Shehadeh, <i>Palestinian Walks</i>
Week 9 4/2		Chimananda Adichie, “The American Embassy”
Week 10 4/9	Latine Migration and Diaspora	Guest Speaker, Fabian Torres-Ardilo, Associate Director of the Gastón Institute

		Valeria Luiselli, <i>Tell Me How it Ends</i>
Week 11 4/16	Weekly index cards and reflection Simulation Scenarios Outline – Reflection on the Process	Guest speaker Monisha Das Gupta; she will speak about her book, <i>All of Us or None: Migrant Organizing in an Era of Deportation</i> . Ananda Rose, <i>Showdown in the Sonoran Desert</i> chapters 3 and 4.
Week 12 4/23	Simulation Scenarios Presentation	Professor Ellen Busolo's class will join us
Week 13 4/30	Simulation Scenarios Presentation Reflection on the Simulation Scenarios Presentation Process	Professor Ellen Busolo's class will join us
Week 14 5/7	Kurdish Diaspora Filipina Diaspora and the Global labor market	Guest speaker Stanley Thangaraj, Kurdish Diaspora <i>Multinational Maids: Stepwise Migration in a Global Labor Market</i> ; selected chapters: "The World According to Migrant Domestic Workers" (chapter 6) and "Inside the Stepwise Migrant's Suitcase" (chapter 7)
Week 15 5/14	Chinese Diaspora Wrap-Up and Concluding Thoughts	<i>Routledge Handbook of the Chinese Diaspora</i> Evelyn Hu-Dehart, "Integration and Exclusion: the Chinese in multiracial Latin America and the Caribbean." Philip Q. Yang, "From Sojourning to Settlement to Transnationalism: Transformations of the Chinese Immigrant Community in America."
MAY 19, 2025	Final Assignments Due	Guest Lecture Analysis Final Course Reflection

Final projects/ reflections need to be submitted by May 19, 2025