“Literary Migrations and Travel in Literature”
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Credits: 6

Course aims and objectives:
From the outset of the American experience, national mythology in the US has
celebrated the restless individualism of colonists, explorers, pioneers, soldiers, and
immigrants who supposedly left home and never looked back. To this day, mobility,
migration, resettlement, travel and the clashes and confluences of cultures they bring
about remain dominant issues in American culture and literature. This course proposes
to explore spatial mobility within and across the American borders. Though the idea
that the United States is a "nation of immigrants" is one of the fundamental premises of
American history, the country has had a changing and uneasy relationship to its actual
immigrants. Migrants were often perceived as a threat, and their necessary contributions
to American society overlooked. The course intends to provide a critical understanding
of the long history of mobility and migration, both voluntary and forced, in American
culture, and of the variety of cultural and literary texts that respond to and reflect the
experience of movement within and across the American borders.
When students have successfully completed this course, they should be able to:
-- make informed and critical uses of central terms like migration, Diaspora, trans-
nationalism, nomadism, dislocation, cosmopolitanism and globalization.
-- analyze the American experience of space through the use of recent philosophy of
space (Bachelard, Lefebvre, de Certeau, Castells, etc.)
-- examine how ideas and representations of immigration have shaped contemporary
American culture.
-- explore the complexity of literary reactions to and representations of the experience
of American mobility.
-- understand the diverse ways Americans have understood and responded to migrants
and the idea of migration.
-- trace the concept of migration in a variety of literary traditions in the US: Jewish,
African American, Chicano, Asian-American, etc.
-- generate ideas for analyzing contemporary mobility, migration and globalization
processes.

Course contents:
1. Mobility and/in Space, or Americans on the Move.
2. Migration, Dislocation, (Alien)Nation
3. New Geographies of Post-National Identity
4. Occupying the Non-Place: Homelessness
5. The Spaces of Hospitality/Hostility: (Un)Welcoming the Other
6. Postapocalyptic Spaces
Methodology:

Class meetings will consist of lectures, group discussions, and oral presentations. The course will place a strong emphasis not only in oral discussions, but also on exercises designed to stimulate the students’ writing skills. Since regularly we have an international mix of students in the course, there will be ample opportunity for participants to share their own ideas and experiences of mobility, and to bring them to bear on the analysis of American mobility.

Assessment

A selection of texts will be specified at the beginning of the course for class discussion on given dates. Students are required to read each assigned text before class and to come prepared to discuss it. In addition, each student will have to prepare an oral presentation.

The students will be evaluated on a combination of their participation in class, an oral presentation and written assignments. There will be a final paper or project.

- Participation and oral presentation: 30 %
- Written Assignments: 30%
- Final project 40%

Required Readings

- Anzia Yezierska, “America and I”
- Sui Sin Far, “Leaves from the Mental Portfolio of an Eurasian”
- Hisaye Yamamoto, “Seventeen Syllables”
- Li Young-Lee’s “The Cleaving”
- Tomás Rivera, y no se lo tragó la tierra
- Helena Viramontes, “The Cariboo Café” y “Neighbours”
- Cormac McCarthy, The Road

We will also watch a selection of the following movies:

- Steven Spielberg, The Terminal
- Thomas McCarthy, The Visitor
- Stephen Frears, Dirty Pretty Things
- Alex Rivera, Sleep Dealer

Recommended Readings

Bibliography

Castells, Manuel. 96-97-98, *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture*, (trilogy), Blackwell.