

## ENGL 5004/CLMD 6102: Diaspora Theory

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Diaspora is an ancient term that has gained new currency in our contemporary moment. Why has diaspora become ubiquitous across the disciplines, emerging as a central category of analysis for scholars in both the humanities and the social sciences? How does diaspora theory intersect with the study of transnationalism, globalization, and postcolonialism? What is the relationship between "classic" diasporas such as the Jewish and Armenian diasporas and other traumatic histories of dislocation that are increasingly being interpreted through the lens of diaspora theory? What do we stand to gain from the broader application of the term? What risks does the proliferation of the term entail?

This course traces the emergence of diaspora theory from the early 1990s through to the present. Beginning with seminal articulations by James Clifford, Paul Gilroy and others, the course then surveys a series of new directions in diaspora thought. Taking Jewish and Black historical experiences of displacement as our starting points, we will consider a variety of approaches (comparative diasporas, postcolonial diasporas, queer diasporas) as well as modalities (time and memory, space and place, indigeneity and diaspora). Drawn from a range of disciplines, our readings will illustrate how and why diaspora has become a significant focus within area studies, postcolonial studies, cultural studies and ethnic studies. Alongside the theoretical readings, we will also consider memoirs, poetry, film, and visual art that perform their own theoretical work. Examining tensions between positivistic and cultural approaches as well as between high theory and creative genres, our particular focus will be on the expressive forms and aesthetic modes that have been inspired by the lived experience of diaspora.

In the course's final weeks, students will have the opportunity to explore the implications of diaspora theory for the particular genres, media, and ethnic histories that drive their own research interests.