

Carleton University\*  
Fall 2024 Preliminary Course Outline  
Department of English

ENGL 2920B: Topics in Decolonization & Migration  
Dislocation, Illegalization, and Resistance

Prerequisite: second year standing or permission of the department

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\*On the unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinaabe people

**\*\*\* This is a preliminary syllabus only—texts and assignments are subject to change. A complete version will be available closer to the start of the term. \*\*\***

**Course Description:** This course will consider literary encounters with experiences of forced migration and diaspora due to the transatlantic enslavement of Africans; dispossession of Indigenous peoples from their territories in North America; Jewish statelessness under Nazi persecution; Palestinian uprooting during the Nakba and Japanese American incarceration in camps; Syrian and Afghani flight across oceans and continents; and climate refugee's displacement. The experiences of displaced persons, migrants, and refugees often feel distant in time and across space. Memoirs, poems, fiction, graphic novels, theatre, and animated film can help bring us into closer proximity as we imaginatively follow protagonists on precarious journeys or into spaces of internment or refugee camps or residential schools. These protagonist's stories, struggles, humanity, persistence, and resistance invite us to consider reader responsibilities to displaced persons, migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees.

We will consider historical contexts that create the conditions of forced migration and dislocation both across and within nation states and geographies. Colonialism and/or settler colonial capitalism & its aftershocks, genocides, civil wars, othering discourses, border security regimes, and state immigration policies each position some people as more worthy of rights and belonging than others. Our course will consider a number of key questions. What stories do nations or communities tell that position some humans as non-citizens, illegal, irregular, and invisibilized? How might literature and culture challenge limits on who counts as a human worthy of a livable life and story? How do different protagonists reclaim or assert agency, community, resistance, hope and homeplaces in the midst of forced dislocation? What work of translating these experiences across time and space, culture and privilege can different storytelling mediums do? What are the ethics of who is telling these stories and how different kinds of audiences are receiving them?

**\*\*All material in this course outline, along with all course materials such as lecture and discussion notes are copyrighted to the professor and are not to be shared or sold to any other entity.**

**Literary Texts for Purchase: Five books** available at Black Squirrel Books (Bank and Sunnyside) and on reserve in the Carleton library.

- Cherie Dimaline. *Marrow Thieves*. (Indigenous Speculative Fiction, forced migration under settler colonialism)
- Art Spiegelman. *Maus I: A Survivor's Tale* (Graphic Novel, Family Memoir, Holocaust)
- Kiku Hughes. *Displacement*. (Graphic Novel, Family Memoir, Japanese Incarceration Camps, WWII)
- Ahmad Meree. *Suitcase/Adrenaline*. (Refugee Theatre, Syrian Civil War)
- Joe Sacco. *Palestine*. (Graphic Journalism, Palestinian Refugee camps).

**Other Texts Available online:**

**Memoir:** Viet Thanh Ngyuen (second generation refugee family from Vietnam War)

**Poetry:** Marlene NourbeSe Philip (Black Caribbean), Dionne Brand (Black Caribbean), Lee Maracle (Sto: lo), Layli Long Soldier (Lakota), Mahmoud Darwish (Palestinian), Warsan Shire (Somalian), Mosab Abu Toha (Palestinian), Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner (Marshall Islander)

**Animated documentary film:** *Flee (2021)*: (gay refugee story from Afghanistan) – available from Carleton library

### ASSIGNMENTS

- Attendance & Participation: 15%
- 3 out of 4 In-Class Writing Responses: 350 words, 5% each: 15%
- 2 Working Group Assignments: 750 words, 15% each 30%
- Creative or Written Response to Experiential Learning Event: 10%
- Open Book Final Exam: 30%

This short answer essay exam will take place in the exam period in our own room. You may have 2 pages of study notes to refer to; your answers will be hand-written unless you have special computer access through Paul Menton.

**To pass this course, you must complete all assignments and submit them on time (with exceptions for illness). A student missing 50% (12) or more classes will not be able to pass the course (unless there are extenuating health or other circumstances discussed with the professor in advance).**