

Carleton University  
**Fall 2025 Preliminary Course Outline**  
Department of English

**ENGL 2920A: Topics in Migration and Decolonisation I**  
*Memory and Migration*

**Instructor: Professor Sarah Phillips Casteel**  
**Email: sarah.casteel@carleton.ca**

**\*\*\* 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:**

In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, violent political and religious conflicts, economic challenges and climate crises are spurring migrations across the globe. At the same time, we are reckoning with the continuing, painful legacies of older histories of forced migration connected to traumatic events and experiences such as transatlantic slavery, the Holocaust, and the Vietnam War. What is the role of literature in an era of increasing mobility and dislocation? What kinds of insights do contemporary writers offer into the impact of displacement on identity and belonging? How does migration reshape or disrupt individual and collective memory? How do writers preserve migrant memories that have been erased by official narratives of the nation state?

This course explores the relationship between migration, memory, and literary form. We will read across a series of different literary genres and artistic mediums—including autobiographical essays, short stories, novels, plays, graphic narratives, animation, and photography—to consider how each engages with and opens up distinctive dimensions of migrant memory. Our encounters with these narratives of migration will illuminate the transnational and global dynamics of memory and identity formation.

**Tentative Texts:**

- Omar El Akkad, *What Strange Paradise*
- Kiku Hughes, *Displacement*
- Jamaica Kincaid, *Lucy*
- Tetsuro Shigematsu, *Empire of the Son*

+ short stories and poetry by such writers as Zadie Smith, Warsan Shire, Hanif Kureishi, David Dabydeen, and Souvankham Thammavongsa

**Tentative Evaluation Structure:**

Attendance and participation (15%)

In-class writing exercises (35%)

Short essay assignment (15%)

Proposal for final essay (5%)

Final essay (30%)