

Home, Away, and In-Between

Theo 4040
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Fordham in London: London Liberal Arts
Spring 2017

Course Overview

This course draws on historical theology and literature to explore diverse human engagements with displacement. Readings focus on specific contexts and modes of displacement as they have upset and remade truth for those involved. Key examples include diaspora, quest, alienation, conversion, migration, and relocation. We will encounter characters and real-life actors whose experiences of these conditions—whether literal or metaphorical, whether cultivated or imposed—put them in the highly charged space between feeling “at home” and “away.” In addition to studying the responses of literary characters and religious actors, we will explore the ways the disciplines of literature and theology themselves invite practitioners into experiences of disorientation and reorientation. We will also consider the relationship between literature and theology as *ways of knowing* about displacement and its meanings. Group excursions and field research projects will take advantage of London’s rich history as a site of literary and religious creativity. Students will also have a chance to put their own experiences of home, away, and in-between in conversation with the classic and contemporary stories they will encounter in the classroom and in the streets of London. This course will fulfill Fordham’s Interdisciplinary Capstone Core Requirement.

Course Goals

- To build knowledge of diverse literary and religious engagements with the experience of displacement.
- To enhance understanding of literature as a vehicle of theological insight.
- To enhance understanding of historical theology as a tool for pondering human creativity and the inner life.
- To cultivate reflection on one’s own experiences of displacement and rootedness as a mode of understanding self and others.
- To develop appreciation of the literary, cultural, and religious history of London, Great Britain, and its former colonies.
- To sharpen skills in critical reading, thinking, writing, and speaking.
- To develop capacities to conduct meaningful, efficient research.

Course Requirements, Assignments, and Grade Distribution

➤ **Work Overview**

- Ongoing Participation-10%
- Two Discussion Leadership Presentations with Outlines- 10%
- Three Journal Entries-15%
- Three Quizzes-10%
- Two Field Research Papers-20%
- One Final Paper-20%
- One Field Research Presentation-15%

➤ **Participation (10%)**

Class participation includes evaluation of your informed and regular contribution to class discussion. It also includes attendance.

○ Readings and Discussion

- This is not a lecture course, but a course designed with informed discussion at the core. Accordingly, you should arrive to class having read the assigned pages for that day.
- Brief lectures, if offered, are meant to augment understanding of general events and themes and provide a foundation for better discussion and writing.
- You must bring assigned readings to class.
- If you have a question, no matter how basic you think it is, ask. Others probably share your question and will benefit from your having asked it. I'll do my best to answer or find the answer.
- Be prepared. I will call on people to contribute or answer questions.

○ Attendance

- Attendance counts because it influences course dynamics and provides the context for your testing out of your scholarly mind and voice. This is a seminar.
- Each student is allowed one unexcused absence. Do the reading, get any notes from your classmates, make an appointment as needed to discuss questions about what you read. See below for steps to get an absence "excused."
- Regular attendance is a required part of the course. Each unexcused absence beyond one will result in final grade deduction of 2%.

➤ **Discussion Leadership with Written Outlines (10% (2@5% each))**

- Students will sign up on the first day to serve as discussion leader during two different sessions. Each student must sign up to serve once as a "close reader" and once as an "analyst of theological implications." Each session will have at least one person in each role. Submit a substantive typewritten outline of your presentation at the beginning of class.
- Roles:
 - Close Reader- Select a short passage from that day's reading to which you will direct our class's attention. Focusing particularly on questions of

composition, style, and language, demonstrate the ways that a close reading of this passage opens up broader meanings of the text in relation to course themes. How does *the way* an author put something communicate central ideas, meanings, or feelings?

- Analyst of Theological Implications- Select a key term, character, or passage and plumb it for theological significance. How does this term (as used by the author), character, or passage offer commentary or insight about god or gods, or about religious categories such as the holy and the sacred in relation to human rootedness or displacement? What could these insights or comments mean in the world that exists beyond the text? How might they change one's basic orientations to life?
- The assignment asks you to **lead discussion**: that means thinking about what kinds of close reading/theological analysis will lead to good back-and-forth among the wider group. Be creative and thoughtful about engaging your audience. Plan to speak for about five minutes total, not including time for discussion or engagement with your presentation.
- In all cases, discussion leaders should strive for depth and specificity more than straining to capture “the whole thing.” In all cases remember to select (and point us to) specific passages or key terms that you consider crucial and which open out to wider discussion.
- The assignment does not presume you fully understand the texts in question; it does demand that you do your best to try to understand the texts and to develop—at the least—good questions that will help elicit deeper understanding.

➤ **Journal (15% [Three at 5% each])**

- Submit, in three installments, a journal assessing your own experiences of displacement. See below for details.
- Hand-written. Hand in previous journals each time, so that by the end, all three will be bound together and submitted. Use loose-leaf paper and staples, not a notebook or bound journal.
- Each entry should include **two sections**. First, write a free-association planning section (outlines, charts, key words, loosely organized memories, rough diagrams, experimental notions, etc.). Second, write a more complete official entry, drawing on the planning section but written freely, in the genre of a journal entry.
- **Honor system**: spend a minimum of thirty minutes uninterrupted time (no devices, screens, or other distractions) on the planning section and a minimum uninterrupted 60 minutes on the official entry. There is no page maximum or minimum.
 - **Journal 1**: Reflect on your decision to study abroad this semester. Consider the particular texts, literary figures or characters, conversations, and

relationships that brought you toward this decision to venture away from Fordham. What expectations and hopes influenced your decision to leave your home campus? Frame those expectations and hopes in light of broader reflections on your sense of life's basic meanings.

- **Journal 2:** What have been the most surprising, challenging, revealing, or troubling aspects of your time abroad to this point? Situate one or more of these aspects of your experience in one or more of our texts. Consider themes of separation, longing, loneliness, freedom, exhilaration, disorientation, release, etc. Have your basic assumptions about the good, the true, and the holy changed in any ways? Be as specific as possible as you cite texts and your own formative experiences.
- **Journal 3:** As you look at a life after Fordham in London (and after college more generally), what do you expect or hope will result from your time abroad? Draw on your encounter with one or two figures from our texts (either fictional or historical) to flesh out your aspirations and expectations about the future, post-displacement you.
- Journal Grading Criteria:
 - Completion (70%): did the student hand in the assignment in complete form, on time, and following instructions? Can the instructor read the entry (is it legible)?
 - Care (30%): do the journal entries witness to a purposeful and deliberative effort? Do they reflect a testing of assumptions, a dedicated searching, a self-reflexive stance, an analytical sensibility? Are the entries grounded in specifics? Do they attend to and offer analysis of specific circumstances, people, moments, and/or texts? Do they build from specifics toward broader observations? Do they witness to a lively and engaged mind?
- **Quizzes (10% [Three at 3.33% each])**
 - During three of our sections we will set aside time for a quiz consisting of one or more essay questions related to the readings from that section. Questions may also ask you to compare texts across sections.
- **Field Research Papers (20% [Two at 10% each])**
 - Each student will complete two field research projects during the course of the semester. Options are listed beneath associated reading assignments. The purpose of this assignment is to augment your reading by documenting and analyzing your first-hand encounter with objects, memorials, places, exhibits, news reports, and other materials related to the themes of a given text. Complete the reading and then arrange to conduct the field (and archival, as appropriate) research.
 - During your research, keep an eye out in particular for the ways places are designed to tell and/or exclude particular kinds of stories, activate and/or block particular kinds of memory, and cultivate certain feelings. How do the contexts you are investigating speak to questions about belonging and ultimate purpose? How do the

contexts you are investigating speak to experiences of displacement or home-making?

- With these questions in mind, write an essay which puts the reading and your research in conversation with each other to advance an intellectual project of your own. Pay particular attention to the *different kinds of knowledge* available from the text and the field work.
 - Papers should run 4-5 pages (double-spaced, 1" margins, 12 pt. font). Papers are due (in hardcopy in class) no less than two weeks after the last session associated with the text. Plan accordingly. (Note: in the case of week 13, papers due 1 week after last session).
- **Final Paper (20%)**
- Draw on four texts (two literary, two historical-theological) to answer the following questions: What does it mean to be "at home in the world?" What disciplines, practices, orientations, and attitudes could produce such a paradoxical condition? Is such a condition to be desired? Why or why not?
 - 6-8 pages (double-spaced, 1" margins, 12 pt. font).
- **Field Research Paper Presentation (15%)**
- After completion and return of your graded field research essays, choose one essay to revise and retool for delivery as an in-class presentation.

Thematic Units and Reading Schedule

I. Upheaval and the Gods

Weeks 1 & 2: Colonialism, Magic, and the Boundaries of the Human

William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*

Group Outing: Tuesday, January 17th: Royal Shakespeare Company's *The Tempest* <https://www.rsc.org.uk/the-tempest/tickets> (pending)

Week 3: Suffering and the In-Between

Charles Johnson, *Middle Passage*

Field Project: Museum of London Docklands: London, Sugar & Slavery
<http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/docklands/whats-on/permanent-galleries/london-sugar-slavery/>

Weeks 4 & 5: Roots, Religion, and Postcolonial Art

Colin Grant, *I & I The Natural Mystics: Marley, Tosh, and Wailer*

Classroom Visit: Colin Grant (pending)

Group Outing: Black Cultural Archives in Brixton

II. Removing the Self: Solitude and the Mystical

Weeks 6 & 7: Isolation and the Search for God

Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*

Group Outing: Norwich (pending)

Week 8: Leaving Self Behind

Vickie MacKenzie, *Cave in the Snow: Tenzin Palmo's Quest for Enlightenment*

Field Project: [The Victoria and Albert Museum](#), Cromwell Rd, London SW7 2RL, site of one of the U.K.'s largest collections of Buddhist art.

III. Taking Place: The Making and Unmaking of Sacred Homes

Week 9: A Religious Ethics of Home

Mahatma Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*

Field Project: Explore history and controversy surrounding Gandhi in London. Visit Gandhi monuments and statues, investigate their genesis and cultural/political dynamics of their development.

See: <https://gandhifoundation.org/>

Weeks 10 & 11: A Search for Spiritual Meaning in the Ruins of War

Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*

Field Project: Mrs. Dalloway and Virginia Woolf Self-Guided Walks:

<http://mrsdallowaymappingproject.weebly.com/index.html>

http://www.virginiawoolfsociety.co.uk/vw_res.walk.htm

<http://dallowaylondon.tripod.com/#photo1444672>

<https://voicemap.me/tour/london/such-friends-virginia-woolf-and-the-bloomsbury-group-2> (\$1.99 download)

Weeks 12 & 13: Sacred Spaces in the Palimpsests of London

Rachel Lichtenstein, *On Brick Lane* (selections)

Group Outing: Guided East End tour with Rachel Lichtenstein (pending)

Week 14: Field Research Presentations

Week 15: Field Research Presentations

Other Important Matters

- Communications
 - Many common problems can be avoided with advance notice and open lines of communication.
 - I will rely on email to communicate important course-related information to you. Please read your emails and respond to them as needed. I often send emails through blackboard, which employs your default address for Fordham. This is usually your @fordham.edu address. Be sure to arrange to check this account frequently or have it forwarded to your favored account.
 - Feel free to send emails to me with your questions or concerns.
- Field Work and Group Excursions
 - In some instances, London and its surroundings will become part of the classroom for this course.

- Please comport yourselves accordingly during field research and group excursions. This means being on-time, respectful, and otherwise responsible in your interactions with others and their spaces.
- Laptops and Other Devices
 - Use of laptops, phones, tablets, and other electronic devices during class is prohibited.
 - You may have to print out some of the readings from Blackboard. Please budget for this in your evaluation of the cost of materials for the course.
- Academic Integrity
 - From Fordham's Academic Integrity webpage: "Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly activity in an honest, truthful, and responsible manner. Violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to, plagiarism, cheating on exams, falsification, unapproved collaboration, and destruction of library materials." For further information about the Arts and Sciences Policy on Academic Integrity, and the procedures related to violations of it, please click: http://www.fordham.edu/academics/colleges_graduate_s/undergraduate_colleg/fordham_college_at_1/studying_at_lincoln_/academic_integrity_23682.asp
 - Beware in particular of non-scholarly webpages.
- Late Work, Emailed Work, Absences
 - Students are required to turn in all work on its assigned due date. Exceptions will be made only in the case of documented illness or other documented emergency.
 - Adhering to this policy will create a stable environment for learning and class discussion.
 - Unless otherwise specified, I do not accept emailed work.
 - Here are the steps to take if you are absent outside of documented illnesses or emergencies:
 1. Do the assigned reading
 2. Get notes from someone in class
 3. Review notes in light of your reading
 4. If desired, make an appointment with me to discuss your questions about the reading and the class notes
- Disabilities
 - "Under the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973, all students, with or without disabilities, are entitled to equal access to the programs and activities of Fordham University. If you believe that you have a disabling condition that may interfere with your ability to participate in the activities, course work, or assessment of the object of this course, you may be entitled to accommodations. Please schedule an appointment to speak with someone at the Office of Disability Services (Rose Hill – O'Hare Hall, Lower Level, x0655 or at Lincoln Center – Room 207, x6282)."
- Grades: 93-100% = A; 90-92% = A-; 88-89% = B+; 83-87% = B; 80-82% = B-; 78-79% = C+; 73-77% = C; 70-72% = C-; 60-69% = D; 0-59% = F