

**AC/EN 247:**  
**Storytelling and Master Tales in**  
**Contemporary Arab American Literature**  
Winter 2012  
W/F 1:10 pm – 2:30 pm, Hathorn 303

**Professor:** Dr. Therí Pickens  
**Email:** [tpickens@bates.edu](mailto:tpickens@bates.edu)  
**Office Hours:** W 10:00 am – 12:30 pm & by appointment  
**Office Location:** Hathorn 306

Course Description: This course is an in-depth look at contemporary Arab American literature from 1990 to the present. We look primarily at short fiction and novels, though we supplement our fictional reading with theoretical and critical materials.

Two questions animate our course: How do authors tell stories? How does this literature comment on our contemporary moment? We approach these questions through the lenses of formal literary analysis, literary history, gender analysis, political critiques, queer analysis, and cultural critique. We are unlikely to come to a consensus about these ideas, but we will have a set of fruitful discussions that inform our own role as present-day inhabitants of this land. These are the guiding concerns of the course; however, the nature of our exploration will be, in part, determined by student interests and observations (cf. Teaching Philosophy).

At times, this course may be difficult because it requires a new frame of reference for American literature, history and politics. I encourage you to be patient with yourselves and your classmates as I firmly believe that your continued effort and participation will greatly benefit you as readers and critics.

Course Objectives:

By the end of the courses students will be able to:

- Identify and analyze arguments in literary criticism and theoretical material;
- Describe major concerns in contemporary Arab American literature;
- Identify and trace tropes through Arab American literature;
- Understand and analyze links between formal concerns and conceptual concerns;
- Evaluate arguments and provide feedback for peers;
- Create and sustain an argument about a piece of literature.

Teaching Philosophy:

Classes work best when students and instructors fulfill their obligations to one another and explore the major questions of the course. As a professor, I am responsible for providing you with the foundation you need to explore the course material, and guide you in your exploration of the material. As a student,

you are responsible for coming to class prepared, asking questions about the materials, engaging in dialogue with each other and myself, completing all assignments to the best of your ability and taking intellectual risks. I encourage you to approach me about all issues you feel impact your learning as soon as possible. I expect that all interactions will be governed by the golden rule: *treat others as you would want to be treated*. Your continued presence in this course constitutes an agreement that you will fulfill these obligations. My continued presence in this course constitutes an agreement that I will fulfill my obligations as well.

### Required Texts

Selected writings from instructor available on Lyceum  
*Through and Through: Toledo Stories*, Joseph Geha  
*I, the Divine: A Novel in First Chapters*, Rabih Alameddine  
*West of the Jordan*, Laila Halaby  
*Inheritance of Exile*, Susan Muaddi Darraj  
*The Night Counter*, Alia Yunis  
*Abu Ghraib Arias*, Phil Metres

### Course Requirements and Grade Breakdown

*Take Home Midterm 20%* - You will be required to complete a take home mid-term. You will be given one week to respond to two questions based on class discussion. Your mid-term should be four to six pages total. Your goal is to have a well-reasoned and thoughtful response that is blessedly free of grammar and spelling errors.

*Paper in lieu of final 20%* - You will be required to complete one 10-page paper based on the readings and discussions in the class. Your grade will be based on your original thought, and clarity of argument. You must write the paper using MLA style. You must also provide proof that you met with someone at Writing at Bates. (A form will be available for you to fill-out on Lyceum.)

*Small Group Work 30%* - You will be assigned a small group at the beginning of the term. You all will need to work together on the following tasks: analyze material, present to the class, have discussions among yourselves, and provide feedback to each other on your arguments. Your group will be graded continuously throughout the semester because each activity receives a grade and feedback on how to improve. Your group grade at the end will be cumulative with all group work weighted equally in the average. Your group may submit a narrative that justifies the grade you think you should receive based on the rubric available on Lyceum. (This is highly recommended for groups who have had dynamics concerns.) You will be responsible for bringing any group dynamic concerns to my attention. Groups will not be changed except in dire circumstances.

*Participation 30%* - Your class participation is of the utmost importance. You will be evaluated on the basis of your contributions to the class (reading questions,

comments, questions, group work, etc). You will not be graded on attendance, but in order to receive a passing grade for participation, you will need to be present. Keep in mind that attendance and participation affect all other facets of your grade.

*Discussion Questions, Surveys, Pop Quizzes, Free Writing Assignments (part of participation grade)* – In order to assess whether we are on track to meet our classroom goals (cf. Class Objectives), I will ask you to complete any of the following activities. Your responses must have proper syntax, punctuation and grammar.

Grading Scale:

A	=	96 – 100
A-	=	90 – 95
B+	=	86 – 89
B	=	83 – 85
B-	=	80 – 82
C+	=	76 – 79
C	=	73 – 75
C-	=	70 – 72
D	=	60 – 69
F	=	59 and below

Late Assignments: No late assignments are accepted except in cases of documented illness or disability.

Make-up Tests: Make-up assignments are not available.

Course Evaluation Criteria:

I know that on occasion, it's difficult to figure out what a professor expects of you in order to pass the course or to receive a particular grade. In order to assuage that concern, here is the set of expectations I have of you during this term; please note that they are not listed in order of importance:

- Consistent attendance in class sessions, with you having read the materials, come prepared to discuss the materials, and come prepared to pose any questions that you have;
- Attendance in my office hours whenever you have a question or need help in understanding the materials or issues under discussion;
- Thoughtful reflection on the course materials and issues prior to coming to class, and thoughtful discussion of these materials and issues during class sessions;
- Careful attention to and implementation of all of the principles that motivate this course and the study of this material;
- The diligent pursuit of all assignments, with you committed to doing your best work on each one;

- And, overall, your commitment to doing your best work in every class session and on every assignment.

I know that you have other responsibilities or interests you have to attend to, and I am sympathetic to the various pulls on your time. However, you should note that I take very seriously what you do in this course, and I expect that your continued presence in this course will mean that you too take that seriously.

Keep in mind that I do not expect perfection from any of you. The issues we will discuss here are difficult and will most likely be new to you, and the assignments and questions I will pose to you will be challenging (and probably ones you've never been asked before). What I am looking for is a good faith sign that you are doing the best work you are capable of doing. I will take this and push on it; I will challenge you to do even better work; and I will help you achieve your potential in this course. But I can't do that if you're not trying your hardest.

#### Other Resources:

I firmly believe that you should take advantage of each resource available to you regarding your writing and public speaking development. Writing at Bates and the Learning Commons help with idea development, oral communication, and paper writing. (Think of them as your private consultants!) Writing at Bates is located in 228 Coram Library. Their telephone number is 207-786-6160. In addition, students may meet with me to discuss concerns about their writing assignments. Another resource that students can purchase is *Write On: A Concise Composition Handbook for Students*. There are various web resources at Purdue, Duke, Princeton, and Harvard's websites.

*Special Needs:* For those students with disabilities, please make sure that you indicate this to me at the beginning of the course so that I can reasonably accommodate you. If you need to request accommodations or need additional assistance, contact the Associate Dean Holly Gurney at 207-786-6220 or [hgurney@bates.edu](mailto:hgurney@bates.edu).

#### Honor Code Statement:

All papers, tests, examinations, and other exercises in this course are subject to the Bates College Code of Student Conduct, as outlined in the Student Handbook (starting page 56). So, all submitted work must be the product of your own efforts, unless credit is given with proper footnoting and bibliographic techniques. For more information on the Code, your rights and responsibilities, and other relevant topics (e.g., how to distinguish between plagiarism and statements of common knowledge), please consult: <http://abacus.bates.edu/pubs/Plagiarism/plagiarism.html>.

In my class, I have a zero tolerance policy for plagiarized assignments. I will give you an opportunity to explain. If I find your explanation satisfactory, you will receive a warning. If I do not, you fail the course.

At the bottom of each assignment, please write the following statement: "I give my word that I have not violated the Code of Conduct during the completion of this assignment. I also give my word that I do not know of anyone else who has violated the Code of Conduct during the completion of this assignment." Please sign and date it. If the assignment is turned in electronically, typing your name and the date will suffice.

#### Class Decorum:

I encourage each of you to express your views freely and openly; but keep in mind that insults and/or abusive commentary are not allowed. In addition, if your abusive commentary persists, you will be asked to leave the classroom. In order to re-enter the classroom, you will need to set up an appointment with me to discuss your last class session. Some material may support or challenge your beliefs and values. Your grades are based upon your critical engagement with the readings and classroom discussion rather than personal opinion. It is my hope that this course will assist in discrediting misinformation while also acknowledging that it is not necessary to blame ourselves or others for any misinformation we may have learned about members of our own or other social groups.

Given the nature of topics covered, some course materials will include explicit images and language, which some class members may find offensive.

In addition, confidentiality is also of utmost importance. Therefore, if you do not wish for your comments to be repeated outside the classroom, you can preface your remarks with a request that the class agree not to repeat said remarks. Lastly, if you are disruptive during class time (e.g. reading a newspaper or other inappropriate material, talking, text messaging, snoring, getting up and walking around, leaving early, and any other behavior that is disruptive to me or other students), you will not be able to re-enter class without a conference with me and the Dean of Students. If for any reason you need to leave early, please let me know before the beginning of class

#### Please note:

- Cell phones need to be "OFF" (not "VIBRATE") during the class session.
- During exams, all book bags, backpacks, cases, and purses must be placed at the front of class. All electronic media should be left at home.
- No laptops, or other electronic devices are allowed. Please make use of a paper and pen/pencil to take notes. All supplemental material must be printed out and brought to class.
- In case a class session must be cancelled, I will send an email to the entire class. I will also post on Lyceum. If I must Skype into class, I will advise

you via email and Lyceum. In the event that a class is cancelled, you will be required to participate in a discussion forum. Instructions will be posted on Lyceum if that occurs.

Course Schedule:

January 11 – Introduction

January 13 – Tanyss Ludescher, “From Nostalgia to Critique”

January 18 – Steven Salaita - "Split Vision;" Steven Salaita – *Arab American Literary Fictions, Cultures and Politics*, “Introduction”

January 20 – Lisa Majaj - "Two Worlds;" Lisa Majaj – “The Hyphenated Author”

**Skype Guest:** Steven Salaita, Virginia Tech

January 25 – Joseph Geha, *Through and Through*

February 1 – Rabih Alameddine, *I, the Divine: A Novel in First Chapters* (to page 144)

February 8 – Rabih Alameddine, *I, the Divine: A Novel in First Chapters* (finish)

**Skype Guest:** Leila Pazargadi, UCLA

February 15 – Phil Metres, *Abu Ghraib Arias*

**Skype Guest:** Phil Metres, John Carroll

**Take Home Midterm Due: February 17, 2011, 5 pm (on Lyceum)**

February 20 – 24 – Winter Recess

February 29 – Laila Halaby, *West of the Jordan* (to page 104)

March 7 – Laila Halaby, *West of the Jordan* (finish)

**(Possible) Skype Guest:** Laila Halaby, University of Arizona

March 14 – Susan Muaddi Darraj, *Inheritance of Exile* (Nadia and Aliyah)

March 21 – Susan Muaddi Darraj, *Inheritance to Exile* (finish)

March 28 – Alia Yunis, *The Night Counter* (to page 154)

April 4 – Alia Yunis, *The Night Counter* (finish)

**Skype Guest:** Alia Yunis, Zayed University

**Final Paper Due: April 13, 2012, 5 pm (on Lyceum)**