ENGL 119SL: Refugee Literature Then and Now
[Service-Learning Course]

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“To become a refugee is to know, inevitably, that the past is not only marked by the passage of time, but by loss—the loss of loved ones, of countries, of identities, of selves. We want to give voice to all those losses that would otherwise remain unheard except by us and those near and dear to us.”

- Viet Thanh Nguyen

Over sixty-eight million people are currently displaced by violence and environmental destruction. This course will focus on their stories. Throughout the quarter, we will volunteer with community organizations in greater Los Angeles to support recently resettled refugees as well as immigrant rights more broadly. At the same time, we will read contemporary stories of exile and migration alongside nineteenth-century slave narratives and medieval accounts, pushing back at the notion that there has ever been a nation “apart.” As we will see, much medieval English literature was resolutely engaged with enduring questions of displacement and hospitality, while ongoing projects like Refugee Tales evoke a deep archive of Anglophone writing by and about asylum seekers. Authors will include Gloria Anzaldúa, Hannah Arendt, Geoffrey Chaucer, Edwidge Danticat, Harriet Jacobs, Viet Thanh Nguyen, and Ocean Vuong as well as several anonymous medieval poets.

SERVICE LEARNING:

Service learning integrates significant community service (3 hours volunteering with a pre-approved off-campus community organization for Weeks 3–9 of the course) with regular reading, writing, and reflection to deepen the learning experience. Although the reading and writing assignments have been scaled back accordingly, this is demanding in different ways than a typical course, so please be prepared for an immersive quarter.

REQUIRED BOOKS:

All books are available at the UCLA Bookstore and on reserve in Powell Library; used copies may also be found online. If the cost is prohibitive, please email me.

- David Herd and Anna Pincus, eds., Refugee Tales ($12-15)
- Viet Thanh Nguyen, The Refugees ($9-16)
- Meghan Purvis, *Beowulf* ($10-15) [Please note that *Beowulf* translations differ greatly, so it’s important to have this edition]

Please note: We will no longer be reading Amitav Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide* to scale back on both course costs and reading load.

All other readings will be posted on CCLE; please be sure to bring a copy (either print or PDF) to class. I trust you to know what technology you need to facilitate your learning versus what distracts. Whether you prefer to print them out or read them on a screen, just please make sure you have a system for storing, organizing, and annotating course readings.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS:

Additional information about volunteering times, locations, and projects will be provided in class, but students will be assigned to one of the following organizations to undertake at least 20 hours of volunteering work on-site in greater Los Angeles.

**California-Pacific Neighborhood Immigration Clinic (Cal-Pac NIC)**
- **Goals:** To welcome new immigrant neighbors by offering warm hospitality, reliable legal services, and relevant policy and advocacy information, while working with local churches to foster supportive relationships

**Central American Resource Center (CARECEN)**
- **Goals:** To empower Central Americans and all immigrants by defending human and civil rights, working for social and economic justice and promoting cultural diversity

**Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)**
- **Goals:** To advance human and civil rights of immigrants and refugees in Los Angeles; promote harmonious multi-ethnic and multi-racial human relations; and empower immigrants and their allies to build a more just society

**International Rescue Committee (IRC)**
- **Goals:** To provide emergency aid and long-term assistance to refugees and those displaced by war, persecution, or natural disaster

**PARS Equality Center**
- **Goals:** To serve as a community focused center for new immigrants (mostly Farsi-speaking, but also Spanish-, Russian-, and Armenian-speakers) located in Sherman Oaks, helping with ESL and citizenship test classes and tutoring, both 1:1 and in small groups, as well as with legal and research help

**San Fernando Valley Refugee Children Center (SFV RCC)**
- **Goals:** To be a healing embrace to the hundreds of unaccompanied children who have made the perilous journey from Central America to seek refuge in the San Fernando Valley; to reach out to these children and their families; and to offer the Center as a place of welcome and healing to provide for basic needs, services and resources
COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:

- **Regular reading and active participation in class**
- **20 hours volunteering** on-site with one of the above off-campus community organizations (to be selected in the second week of class)
  - Please note: At the end of the quarter, you will need to submit a timesheet signed by your site supervisor.
- **Weekly reflection**, as manifested in discussion posts on the readings and your work with community organizations + responses to at least two of your peers’ posts per week (~250 words/week)
  - These weekly posts may form a part of your final project.
- The course will culminate in a **final, public-facing project** in partnership with the San Fernando Valley Refugee Children Center (SFV RCC).
  - A full assignment sheet will be provided, but we will be collaboratively producing a book of stories for the Center to use in raising awareness and fundraising.
  - In addition to producing a short story for this book, you will also be asked to situate your story within a larger project in digital storytelling that might combine original research, oral history, personal narrative, “story mapping,” and creative work (e.g. videography or collage). Your work volunteering throughout the quarter should inform your project here, and if you choose your final project might constitute a resource for your community partner, supplemented with a reflection on or remix of course materials.

GRADING:

- Regular reading, volunteering, and in-class participation – 30%
- Weekly posts and responses – 30%
- Final project – 40%

Note: While you will not be directly graded on your volunteering work, it forms an integral part of the course, and it is impossible to pass the course without it. You must submit a signed timesheet at the end of the quarter in order to pass.

RESOURCES TO HELP YOU SUCCEED IN THIS COURSE AND AT UCLA:

I strive for an equitable and inclusive classroom and want everyone to be able to thrive here. If anything is hindering you from doing your best work, please don’t hesitate to speak with me and please see the end of this document for helpful resources for students facing food insecurity, housing troubles, violence, and other challenges to your well-being.
COURSE POLICIES:

Classroom Environment: Please remember UCLA’s Student Code of Conduct. In general, in the words of Adrienne Marie Brown, “We like to throw glitter, not shade.”

Accommodations: If there is something I can do to help facilitate your learning, please don’t hesitate to let me know. Students needing academic accommodations based on a disability should contact the Center for Accessible Education (CAE) at (310) 825-1501 or in person at Murphy Hall A255. In order to ensure accommodations, students need to contact the CAE within the first two weeks of the term.

Attendance and Tardiness: Your attendance in lecture (and in meeting your volunteering commitment) is vital to your own success as well as to the success of the class as a whole; our discussions are richer when everyone is present and engaged. That said, I realize that life doesn’t always go as planned, so everyone gets one “free” absence from lecture to be used in case of emergencies, illness, travel, etc: no explanation necessary—please just contact me as soon as it’s feasible, and we’ll talk about keeping up with the course material and assignments. If you’re traveling to, or participating in, a university event, please let me know ahead of time so we can make similar arrangements. Missing more than one class without notice will decrease your participation grade, and excessive absence could result in failing the course. Also, being late really disrupts the work we’re doing together and poses a distraction to your peers, so 2 late arrivals = 1 absence.

Deadlines: Any late submissions will be docked 1/3 letter grade per day late (so, an A becomes an A-, etc). If, well in advance of an assignment you expect you will need an extension or if an emergency arises, please talk with me.

Academic Honesty: Please exhibit kindness and integrity in all of your endeavors. When in doubt, cite generously, following MLA style. Give me writing you’re anxious about; just make sure it’s yours.

SCHEDULE:  
With thanks to Jonathan Hry for his blog post, “Medievalists and the Global Refugee Crisis,” and to Zach Stone for bringing Meir b. Elijah of Norwich and Játvarðar Saga to my attention

Week 1:

Monday: Introduction to community organizations, service learning, and key questions in reading and writing about refugee experience

Wednesday: Selection from Gloria Anzaldúa, Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza; poems by Lorna Dee Cervantes and Joy Harjo

Week 2:

Monday: Susan Stanford Friedman, “Migrations, Diasporas, and Borders”; short Old English poems; excerpt from Caroline Bergvall, Drift; first posts due
**Wednesday:** *Játvarðar Saga*; poems by Peter Balakian; fill out volunteering survey
   In class: Visit from Dr. Shalom Staub, Director of UCLA’s Center for Community Learning

**Week 3:**

**Monday:** Prologues to the Middle English prose *Brut* and the Old Norse *Prose Edda*; William Shakespeare, speech from *The Book of Sir Thomas More*; read your organization’s website, including mission statement; post
   In class: *The Strangers’ Case* (dir. Peter Trifunovic, 2018); sign release form

**Wednesday: No class but volunteering starts this week** – Please use this extra time to get to know your organization and to complete any orientation tasks

**Week 4:**

**Monday:** Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Man of Law’s Tale*; post

**Wednesday:** *Refugee Tales*

**Week 5:**

**Monday:** Finish *Refugee Tales*; post; begin thinking about how you want to approach your story for SFV RCC

**Wednesday:** Viet Thanh Nguyen, *The Refugees*

**Week 6:**

**Monday:** Finish Viet Thanh Nguyen, *The Refugees*; post

**Wednesday:** Workshop day for final project

**Week 7:**

**Monday:** *Beowulf* (trans. Meghan Purvis); Toni Morrison, “Grendel and His Mother”; post

**Wednesday:** Finish *Beowulf* (trans. Meghan Purvis); look at photographs of Do Ho Suh’s *The Perfect Home II*

**Week 8:**

**Monday:** Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*; post
**Wednesday:** Stories from the Underground Railroad; Yogita Goyal, “The Logic of Analogy: Slavery and the Contemporary Refugee”

**Week 9:**

**Monday:** Memorial Day – University Closed; no discussion posts this week so you can work on your final project

**Wednesday:** Meir b. Elijah of Norwich, poems; Hannah Arendt, “We Refugees”

**Week 10:**

**Monday:** *Dear* and Edwidge Danticat, “The Other Side of the Water”; post

**Wednesday:** Tim McDonnell, “The Refugees The World Barely Pays Attention To”

**TBA:** Final Project DUE
RESOURCES TO HELP YOU SUCCEED IN THIS COURSE AND AT UCLA:

The following information is all drawn directly from campus websites and initiatives, but it’s just a subset of what is available. I encourage you to check out UCLA’s Basic Needs website (https://www.basicneeds.ucla.edu/) for even more programs and information.

GENERAL WELLBEING:

Food: The Community Programs Office (CPO) Food Closet in Student Activities Center Level 1, East wing provides free food for any UCLA student who is having trouble affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day. For more details, see http://www.cpo.ucla.edu/cpo/foodcloset/. If you have work study, receive CalGrant A or B, have a child, or work over 20 hours per week outside of UCLA, you most likely also qualify for CalFresh, which allows eligible students to receive up to $192/month for groceries. After completing the application process with a Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) eligibility worker and receiving approval, students receive an EBT (electronic benefits transfer) card, which is re-loaded monthly and functions as a debit card in participating grocery stores (Ralphs, Target, Trader Joe’s, and Whole Foods all accept EBT!). A CalFresh eligibility worker will be on campus in the Student Activities Center (SAC) every first and third Monday of the month to enroll students in CalFresh through private appointments. Although anyone can apply for CalFresh anytime online, applying through an in-person appointment is a much simpler and more efficient process. Fill out this pre-screening tool to find out if you are eligible for CalFresh and to see what verification documents you need to apply. Then sign up here for an on-campus CalFresh enrollment appointment.

Housing: If you are in an economic crisis and/or in need of housing assistance, you can e-mail the ECRT Emergency Housing committee (2131 Murphy Hall) at ecr@saonet.ucla.edu, and a response will be provided within 24 hours. Once you contact the ECR TEAM, your financial needs are assessed, and if housing is needed, you will be offered a room in University-owned property for up to 14 days. Bruin Shelter (http://www.bruinshelter.org) is also a registered UCLA organization that supports students experiencing homelessness in the greater Los Angeles area.

Sexual Harassment and Violence: Campus Assault Resources & Education (CARE) on the 1st floor of John Wooden Center West is a confidential place for survivors of sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, and stalking, and CARE Advocates offer free consultation and supportive services. You can get help without formally reporting an assault or requesting formal treatment; to make an appointment, call (310) 206-2465 or email advocate@careprogram.ucla.edu. In addition to advocacy, CARE also provides alternative healing groups to survivors. For more information, see https://www.careprogram.ucla.edu/. You can also call the Rape Treatment Center at 1250 16th St in Santa Monica for free 24-hour crisis counseling and medical services in-person up to 5 days after an assault. Their phone number is (424)-259-7208 [press 3 to be connected to a counselor]. RTC can assist with paying for transportation to their emergency medical clinic, or UCPD can drive you. Their website is https://www.uclahealth.org/santa-monica/rape-treatment. Please note that Faculty and TAs are required under the UC Policy on Sexual
Violence and Sexual Harassment to inform the Title IX Coordinator—a non-confidential resource—should they become aware that you or any other student has experienced sexual violence or sexual harassment.

**Mental Health and Well-being:** Remember, self-care is critical to your long-term success. Here are some of the many resources available at UCLA to support you:

- **Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS):** Offers counseling and other psychological/mental health services to students, including 24/7 crisis counseling at (310) 825-0768. CAPS may also be accessed in John Wooden Center West, M-Th 8-8pm & F 9-5pm. If you have never been to CAPS and you would like to walk in for an appointment, it is recommended that you come during brief screening hours (Monday – Wednesday 8 am – 4 pm; Friday 9 am – 4 pm) to start the process of entering the system. Services for students include screenings, crisis intervention, individual one-on-one counseling, group therapy, referrals, and medication and are prepaid for students with USHIP; students without USHIP pay $15.00 a session. For additional information, see [http://www.counseling.ucla.edu/](http://www.counseling.ucla.edu/); I will also walk you over if you would like; just ask.

- **Ashe Student Health and Wellness Center:** [http://www.studenthealth.ucla.edu](http://www.studenthealth.ucla.edu) Provides high quality and accessible ambulatory healthcare and education by caring professionals to support the academic success and personal development of all UCLA students.

- **Healthy Campus Initiative (HCI):** [https://healthy.ucla.edu](https://healthy.ucla.edu) Provides links to a wide variety of resources for enhancing physical and psychological well-being, positive social interactions, healthy sleep, healthy eating, healthy physical activity and more.

- **UCLA Recreation:** [https://www.recreation.ucla.edu/](https://www.recreation.ucla.edu/) Offers a broad array of services and programs including fitness, yoga, dance, martial arts, meditation, sports, and much more

**Equity, Diversity and Inclusion:** [https://equity.ucla.edu/](https://equity.ucla.edu/) Committed to providing an equal learning, working and living environment at UCLA and supports a range of programs to promote these goals campus-wide.

**Bruin Resource Center (BRC):** Student Activities Center B44, M-F 9-5pm (310) 825-3945 Serves all UCLA students, with a focus on current and former foster youth, students with dependents, student veterans, transfer students, and undocumented students. Provides holistic development and education of the student and campus community. Houses the Intergroup Relations and Student Development and Coaching programs. [http://www.brc.ucla.edu/](http://www.brc.ucla.edu/)

**LGBT Center:** Student Activities Center B36, M-R 8:30am-6pm F 8:30am-5pm (310) 206-3628 The UCLA Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Campus Resource Center provides a comprehensive range of education and advocacy services supporting intersectional identity development. Foster unity, wellness, and an open, safe and inclusive environment for
lesbian, gay, bisexual, intersex, transgender, queer, asexual, questioning, and same-gender-loving students, faculty, staff, alumni, their families, and the entire campus community. Scholarships, grants and work study positions available to students! www.lgbt.ucla.edu

Dashew Center for International Students: Bradley International Hall #106, M-F 8:30-5pm, (310) 825-1681 Provides resources for international students in non-immigrant visa status. Information on loans, gaining an SSN, programs and workshops, employment authorization based on economic necessity. www.internationalcenter.ucla.edu

First Year Experience: Covel #205 (310) 206-6584 The UCLA First Year Experience (FYE) Office helps students in navigating campus resources and provides programming, research, and information supportive of First Year Bruins’ success in the areas of academic success, personal identity development, building community, and health and well-being. http://firstyearexperience.ucla.edu/

ACADEMIC RESOURCES:

Writing Help: If you are nervous about academic writing or just generally looking for more tips and pointers, I strongly encourage you to make an appointment at the Undergraduate Writing Center (http://wp.ucla.edu/wc/).

Free Printing: Graduate Resource Center, The Hill, LGBT Resource Center, Computer lab, Department-specific labs

Guidelines for Contacting Faculty: Always use your professors’ proper title: Dr. or Prof. Unless specifically invited, never address them by first name. When emailing, allow 48 hours for a response.

How to Request a Letter of Recommendation: Your professors want you to achieve your goals and are generally happy to write letters of recommendation to help you along the way—as long as you’re organized in your approach. If you think you might need letters, try to go to office hours so that your professors can get to know you, and try to give as much lead time as possible and as much information as you can up front (e.g. what are you applying for and why, when would the letter be due, and when can you provide a statement of purpose and a resume).

Office Hours: This is your time, and you are not imposing. Please feel free to drop by with questions.

Course Reserves and Library Use: I have placed our primary texts along with some helpful secondary sources on reserve in Powell Library, so that they will always be available for our class. If you have questions about navigating the library, email ask.powell@library.ucla.edu. You can also schedule a free research consultation with library staff or drop by Inquiry Lab 1 in Powell 238 to learn about resources, strategies, and tools.