

LTAF 120GS African Literature: Islam and Immigration  
Summer 2025  
Session I

This course will survey texts and films from West and North Africa and Spain, with an emphasis on Islam and the practices of migration to Western Europe over the last fifty years. These are themes and activities that resonate with contemporary events both in Europe and in the United States. While many North and West Africans target France, as the French-speaking metropole, many have more recently migrated to Spain, through the Canary Islands, the straits off of Tangier, and the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla on the Moroccan Mediterranean coast. We will read some well-known literary texts in English translation that highlight Muslim culture and the dangers and traumas of migration. Films will come from both African and Spanish directors, treating issues of immigration of the last decade.

We will have a local professor lecture on Spain and immigration as well as Spain's Arab/Islamic influences, and also meet with NGOs that are active in immigration issues.

We will visit various sites in the city of Granada where recent immigrants, mostly Senegalese, live and work, often as vendors in open plazas but increasingly in other higher-paying employment. Another outing will include the Sacromonte neighborhood, where historically Romas ("gypsies"), migrants arriving from Asia, Africa and Europe for centuries, resided in cave houses. We'll explore the Albaicín, the former Arab quarter that retains the architecture and street layouts of the days when Moors ruled the city. The central attraction of the city is the famous Moorish fortress and palace, the Alhambra, and we will visit this wondrous site where Muslim and Christian Spain left their marks. We will attend a flamenco/Zambra performance that combines elements of European and African/Arab aesthetics in both the dance styles and singing/instrumental music.

Field trips will include a two-night visit to Morocco, to compare the contemporary Muslim culture and its ancient architecture with what we see in Granada. We will also visit with an NGO in Morocco that deals with African migrants and refugees waiting to enter Spain. A second overnight excursion will explore Almeria, a coastal city of great significance to both Moorish Spain and Spanish Civil War.

Instructor: Robert Cancel  
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Course ID:

Site Classroom  
Meetings: Unless otherwise noted,  
TWTh 10AM – 12 noon  
Office hours: TWTh 12 – 1 PM

**Course Requirements:**

ALL ASSIGNMENTS MUST BE COMPLETED IN ORDER TO PASS THE COURSE.

50% Class Participation: Though part of the course will comprise lectures on the material, a good deal depends on discussion of the films and texts. Most class meetings will include an introduction/analysis of the day's material by a team of students, to facilitate the lectures and discussions. Attendance, obviously, is an important component of the class and missing more than one class session will result in a reduction of the grade for this requirement. Taking part in the various local and overnight field trips are mandatory and count for the participation grade.

Writing Assignments: Because this is a small class, I will be available to help students with their writing in order to improve their research skills as well as the quality of their class essays. Students must have the topic/thesis of each paper pre-approved after consulting with me.

15% Journal entries based on our various excursions around Granada and on our field trips to Morocco and Madrid. Format and content of these entries will be discussed in our earliest class meetings.

10% Papers: Three-page paper on a text or a film. Specifics on these assignments will be provided the first week of class. Due date 14<sup>th</sup> July.

25% Term Paper: Five-page paper on a text or film (whatever genre you did not write about in the first paper. Due the last day of class: Thursday 31<sup>th</sup> July.

### **Class Etiquette**

To belabor the obvious, arriving on time and leaving only when class is ended will be expected of each student. If someone has a valid reason for either arriving late, leaving early or missing a meeting, let me know in advance or, if necessary, after class.

While acknowledging the importance of electronic information flow, laptops are to be used during class time to take notes and, if necessary, look up information pertinent to lecture topics, if I ask you to. Multi-tasking is nice, but most studies suggest that focusing on one task at a time, in this case lecture, note taking and discussion (actually three tasks), is a more effective way to understand and remember information. Students who cannot abide by this rule will be asked to close their laptops. Cell phones are not to be consulted during class.

Literature and film constitutes the main data of this class. You maximize your understanding and appreciation of this material if you complete reading assignments before they are lectured on or discussed in class. If you do not do this, and then have a hard time trying to understand or write about the material, you might want to consider one of the sources of your problem (see first two sentences of this paragraph).

Finally, this is an upper division literature and film course and writing is important. All UCSD students have signed a pledge of academic integrity. Any suspected cases of

plagiarism or AI assistance will be submitted for formal investigation by the university. The whole idea of writing a paper is for students to express their own analytical findings, ideas and impressions; otherwise no real learning is taking place. If writing is a problem for you, please ask me, or someone, for help in a timely manner in order to maximize your chances for success.

Because we are a Global Seminar meeting in Granada, and it is important to abide by the pledge you signed before departure: egregious and obvious deviations from the UCSD Code of Conduct, Academic Integrity Rules, and otherwise dangerous or threatening behavior could result in dismissal from the Program. On the other hand, I and the local Program staff stand ready to assist you in any way if you experience any sort of personal problems.

### Syllabus:

Tuesday 7/1; 10AM - noon: Introductory Remarks: Africa and its Representation in the West

READ: "How to Write About Africa," Binyavanga Wainaina; "How to Read a Film"

SCREEN FILM: *Borom Sarret*, Ousmane Sembene

Wednesday 7/2; 10AM - noon: Islam and its Complex History and Variations

READ: *Islam: A Brief History*, Karen Armstrong, pp. 1 – 53

INTRODUCTION: Team 1

Friday 7/4: 9 – 10AM: Guest Lecture: "Immigration: Africa and Spain," Professor José María Pérez Fernandez (University of Granada)

10:15AM – 12PM: Cultures Clash and the Dream of Immigration

SCREEN FILM: *La noire de...*, Ousmane Sembene (1966)

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Tuesday 7/8; 10:00AM – 1PM: Colonial Education and Images of Immigration

READ: *Ambiguous Adventure*, Cheikh Hamidou Kane; *Islam: A Short History*, Karen Armstrong, pp. 81 – 96

INTRODUCTION: Team 4

Wednesday 7/9; 10AM - noon: Granada and Senegal: Immigrant Streams

READ: *Rebordering the Mediterranean: Boundaries and Citizenship in Southern Europe*, Liliana Suárez-Navaz, pp. 162 – 220

INTRODUCTION: Team 5

Thursday 7/10; 10AM – noon: Contemporary African literature in Spanish: Equatorial Guinea and Western Sahara

READ: "The Dream," Donato Ndongo-Biyogo

INTRODUCTION: Team 1

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Monday 7/14; 6 – 8PM: The “Journey to Spain”  
SCREEN FILM: *La pirogue*, Moussa Touré (2012)

Thursday 7/17; 10AM - noon: Spanish “Othering” of African Immigrants  
SCREEN FILM: *Bwana*, Imanol Uribe (1996)  
FIRST PAPER DUE TODAY

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Tuesday 7/22; 10AM - noon: Dreams of, and “Arrivals” in, Spain  
READ: *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits*, Laila Lalami  
INTRODUCTION: Teams 1 - 3

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Tuesday 7/29: 10:15AM – 12:15PM: Immigration Matters of Conscience  
SCREEN FILM: *Frente al mar (Poniente)*, by Chus Gutierrez (2002)

Wednesday 7/30; 10AM - noon: Concluding Remarks and Review

Thursday 7/31; 10AM - noon  
FINAL PAPER DUE TODAY