

**Whose Hi/Story Is It?**  
**Memory in World Literature**

Arts & Sciences 137  
Freshman Seminar  
Fall Quarter  
1 # of credits  
Monday 2-3  
Room

**Instructor**  
Nina Berman  
**e-mail**  
berman.58@osu.edu

**Office**  
332 Hagerty Hall  
**Office Hours**  
TBA

**Course Description**

People from across the globe create memories of the past by writing literature. To what extent are these memories accurate representations of history? Can we read fiction the way we read a historical text? This course explores these and other questions connected to the relationship between literature and history. We will read *Season of Migration to the North*, a novel by the Sudanese author Tayeb Salih. The novel, first published in Arabic in 1966, comments on the colonization of the country and on the period right after Sudan became an independent state. Our discussion will focus on

- how historical events are “rewritten” and interpreted in fiction
- how fiction writing allows access to historical events
- how authors of fiction take a particular stance, and how to analyze their use of narrative strategies to accomplish this

To get an analytical grasp on these questions, we will read theoretical texts on memory and on the interpretation of literature. We will read Salih’s novel over the entire course of the quarter but you can certainly read the novel as quickly as you want to; the page number provided on the syllabus indicate the passages that we will explore in depth on the specific day.

**Primary text:**

Tayeb Salih, *Season of Migration to the North*

**Background readings:**

Maurice Halbwachs, “On Collective Memory” (ca. 50 pages); on electronic reserves

Clifford Geertz, “Art as a Cultural System” (ca. 20 pages); on electronic reserves

H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (Cambridge Introductions to Literature) (Paperback), 218 pages

Additional background materials regarding the history of Sudan will be distributed in class.

## Course Policies

Detail your expectations for:

- Attendance is mandatory; more than one unexcused absence will lower your grade by .3 (on a 4.0 grading scale)
- Classroom participation: I expect you to be prepared and participate actively in the discussion
- Two 400-500-word reaction papers (questions will be distributed in class); one final take-home paper, ca. 500-750 words, questions will be distributed on the last day of class. There will be no final exam.

## Grading

This course will use a letter grade.

- classroom participation: 20 %
- two 400-500-word reaction papers, 25 % each
- one final take-home paper (ca. 500-750 words): 30%

## Grading Scale:

A 93-100	B+ 88-89	B- 80-82	C 73-77	D+ 68-69	E 64-0
A- 90-92	B 83-87	C+ 78-79	C- 70-72	D 65-67	

## Academic Integrity

For all the assignments for this course, the Code of Student Conduct of The Ohio State University is in effect. Academic misconduct is defined as: Any activity that tends to compromise the academic integrity of the university, or subvert the educational process.

Examples of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to:

1. Violation of course rules as contained in the course syllabus or other information provided to the student; violation of program regulations as established by departmental committees and made available to students;
2. Submitting plagiarized work for an academic requirement. Plagiarism is the representation of another's work or ideas as one's own; it includes the unacknowledged word-for-word use and/or paraphrasing of another person's work, and/or the inappropriate unacknowledged use of another person's ideas;
3. Submitting substantially the same work to satisfy requirements for one course that has been submitted in satisfaction of requirements for another course, without permission of the instructor of the course for which the work is being submitted;
4. For an extended version of these examples please refer to [http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/resource\\_csc.asp](http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/resource_csc.asp)

To avoid plagiarism, students must make sure that they:

1. Always cite their sources (following the MLA format)
2. Read the guidelines for written assignments more than once

3. If in doubt consult with your professor.

**Students with Disabilities**

Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. Please contact the Office for Disability Services at 614-292-3307 in room 150 Pomerene Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Or visit the internet address of this office at <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu> for more information.

## Weekly Schedule

### **Week 1 – Introduction**

#### **Discussion: Memory in World Literature; Interpreting Literature**

READ: Tayeb Salih, *Season of Migration to the North* (p 1-31); Clifford Geertz, “Art as a Cultural System” (ca. 20 pages)

DUE: next meeting

### **Week 2 – Art and History**

#### **Discussion: Clifford Geertz, “Art as a Cultural System”; Tayeb Salih, *Season of Migration to the North* (p 1-31)**

READ: Tayeb Salih, *Season of Migration to the North* (p 31-55); H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (ca. 20 pages)

DUE: next meeting

### **Week 3 – What is Narratology?**

#### **Discussion: Tayeb Salih, *Season of Migration to the North* (p 31-55); H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (ca. 20 pages)**

READ: Tayeb Salih, *Season of Migration to the North* (p 55-87); H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (ca. 20 pages)

DUE: next meeting

### **Week 4 – Narratological Strategies in *Season of Migration to the North***

#### **Discussion: Tayeb Salih, *Season of Migration to the North* (p 55-87); H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (ca. 20 pages)**

READ: Tayeb Salih, *Season of Migration to the North* (p 88-104); H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (ca. 10 pages); **write first reaction paper**

DUE: next meeting

### **Week 5 – Narrative Perspective in *Season of Migration to the North***

#### **Discussion: Tayeb Salih, *Season of Migration to the North* (p 88-104); H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (ca. 10 pages)**

READ: Maurice Halbwachs, “On Collective Memory” (ca. 20 pages); Tayeb Salih, *Season of Migration to the North* (p 105-115)

DUE: next meeting

**Week 6 – What is “Collective Memory”?**

**Discussion:** Maurice Halbwachs, “On Collective Memory” (ca. 20 pages); Tayeb Salih, *Season of Migration to the North* (p 105-115)

READ: Maurice Halbwachs, “On Collective Memory” (ca. 30 pages); H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (ca. 20 pages)

DUE: next meeting

**Week 7 – Memory, History and Writing**

**Discussion:** Maurice Halbwachs, “On Collective Memory” (ca. 30 pages); H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (ca. 20 pages)

READ: Tayeb Salih, *Season of Migration to the North* (p 116-133); **write second reaction paper**

DUE: next meeting

**Week 8 – Memory and Writing**

**Discussion: Memory in *Season of Migration to the North***

READ: Tayeb Salih, *Season of Migration to the North* (p 134-169); H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (ca. 20 pages)

DUE: next meeting

**Week 9 – Fact and Fiction in Salih’s novel**

**Discussion:** Tayeb Salih, *Season of Migration to the North* (p 134-169); H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (ca. 20 pages)

READ: question for final discussion will be gathered; prepare for final discussion

DUE: next meeting

**Week 10 – Final discussion; topics for take-home exam will be distributed**

Paper is due one week after last class meeting, in my mailbox in Comparative Studies, 451 Hagerty Hall. No electronic submissions.

### Biographical information

**Nina Berman** teaches in the Department of Comparative Studies. Her undergraduate teaching includes courses on travel literature, translations studies, cultural theory, and modern world literature. She is the author of *Impossible Missions? German Economic, Military, and Humanitarian Efforts in Africa* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2004) and *Orientalismus, Kolonialismus und Moderne: Zum Bild des Orients in der deutschsprachigen Kultur um 1900* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1997), and has published articles on colonialism, postcolonialism, orientalism, and minority literature. She is currently completing a study, entitled *Beyond Orientalism: Germany and the Middle East, 900-2000*.

Dr. Berman is actively involved in developing new courses and programs, such as the major in World Literature and the major in Globalization Studies (which is still in the approval process). She served as the undergraduate advisor of the Department of Comparative Studies for several years, and is the program coordinator and advisor for the World Literature major. In 1999, she received the President's Associates Teaching Award from the University of Texas at Austin. She was also awarded honorary membership in the Golden Key International Honor Society.