Curriculum Committee Introduction to Migrant Literature ENG 268

Proposed by Dr. Karen Laing de Urbina 9/16/11

Load webpage for background: <http://identityintransit.weebly.com/>

In 1948 the U.N. adopted a Universal Declaration of Human Rights

61 years later, in 2009, The London School of Economics and Political Science thought the ongoing literary response to that declaration warranted a roundtable.

PODCAST

<http://richmedia.lse.ac.uk/publicLecturesAndEvents/20090228_1715_roundtableOnMigrantLiterature.mp3>

For me, teaching Migrant Literature was a natural outgrowth of teaching world literature. I see it as the same task, of examining themes, questions of identity, relationship, power and community – only using voices after 1630 instead of before.

Migrant Literature is about perspective-taking it, *enables us to understand the emotional responses migrants have to situations…an understanding we need to acquire to be able to put ourselves in each other’s shoes…that foundation of what we need to form equality*. Luc Bovens

### Literature of Migration - perspectives, struggles and innovations

[Elena Borghi](http://truthseekers.cultureunplugged.com/truth_seekers/elena_borghi.html)  |  24.Apr.09

*“The so-called “literature of migration” is written by a series of authors who come from the most diverse places and share the choice of writing in the language of the country they have migrated to. This is probably the main characteristic of the literature of migration, which thus becomes a sort of testimony. The second language these writers use is the medium through which they convey their
message to their audience, the witness of their need to say something; their effort not only demonstrates that this message is important and worth being heard by the ‘host’ country, but also tells us that those who are transmitting have chosen to leave the shield of their mother language and are now disarmed: they come in peace.*

Gary Postma summarized his experience and my hopes for the course in this way:

“[While] Not all of us will have to go through the difficult adjustment of emigration or immigration, but all of us will have to face change at some time or another in our lifetime. The idea scares people and it always takes a while for a person to adjust to it when it is necessary for them to have to change. My daughter once commented to me, … that if she could write a book, she would title it, *Ready or Not, Here it Comes!* She was meaning that change comes at a person whether they are ready for it or not and we will all be faced with it. Perhaps, we could learn from our immigrant friends in our reading how to adjust, and not just cope, with change-related issues we will all face before our life is over.”

A Google Search reveals 7,700,000 hits

My translation of one of the [Association of American Colleges & Universities Core Commitments](http://www.aacu.org/core_commitments/) – to educate students for personal and social responsibility is that as a US educator, my mission is to inculcate democratic values in all within the classroom while imparting a love and respect for the details of our disciplines. The affective side of this skill set involves creating opportunities for learners to take seriously the viewpoints of others. Interestingly, our context is increasingly global.

Post September 11 context – immigrants in the global village are telling us who we are as members of a particular nation and collectively as a species by underscoring what and who matters most to us.

My hope is to provide “windows and mirrors” (Style, 1988) using stories of those who arrive on different shores on purpose or by circumstance the better to “look at
myself looking at those who have always looked at me” ([Borghi](http://truthseekers.cultureunplugged.com/truth_seekers/2009/04/literature-of-migration-perspectives-struggles-and-innovations.html), 2009).