PS 387 Politics and Fiction: Reading Freedom in a Transnational Context
Fall 2014 (Tu/Th 10:00-11:50) with Prof. Bahareh Lampert

Course Description:
The freedom of individuals has conventionally been imagined in the context of citizenship within a particular nation-state. In this course we will examine contemporary works of literature that explore freedom beyond the bounds of national citizenship, reading texts that offer disparate visions of freedom in the local, national, and transnational frameworks that are created and contested through acts of migration.

The central questions that will guide our inquiry include:
- What does freedom look like in the lived experience of transnational subjects? How do we evaluate the degrees of freedom afforded to subjects by governments? How is our sense of freedom informed by our understanding of specific historical contexts? How have authors represented freedom around the world? Are conceptions of freedom and justice travelling/translateable concepts? In an era of globalization, when new technologies of travel and communication have transformed our perception of the distances that separate people, places, and ideas, ostensibly diminishing the spaces between, why are there such disparate conceptions of freedom and justice? What are the tensions at work in notions of individual and communal freedom? How do we weigh the lives of others against our own in an ever-increasing globalized context?

Course Objectives:
As a result of taking this course, students will be able to:
- Discuss the idea of freedom in a transnational context
- Construct close readings of literary texts supported by textual evidence
- Compose coherent arguments and essays that engage in contemporary debates about the politics of freedom, the rights of citizens and others, and the influence of migratory subjectivity and diasporic imagination on local communities and governing bodies

Texts:
- Dinaw Mengestu, The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears
- Marjane Satrapi, The Complete Persepolis
- J.M. Coetzee, Waiting for the Barbarians
- Irvine Welsh, Trainspotting
- Jamaica Kincaid, A Small Place
- Junot Diaz, Drown