**CERIS Book Discussion,** Fall 2017

Discussion Questions for *Exit West*, by Mohsin Hamid

**Doors:**

* The “doors” in *Exit West* are a fantastical element in an, otherwise, realistic novel. Why do you think Hamid choose to do this?
* What do you think Hamid meant when he said, in an interview with *Paste* magazine that: “It’s strange to say, but I really believe in these doors. . . . I think the doors exist in our world, just not the physical manifestation that I’ve given them”?
* There are a number of vignettes where other characters use the doors. One man, for example, chooses to take a door from England, where he was considering suicide, to Namibia, where created a new life for himself. What purpose does this or other stories serve?

**Place:**

* In the beginning of the book the narrator describes the telescope in Saeed’s family apartment. His father refers to looking at the light of stars, centuries after it passes as time travel. How does this foreshadow the coming changes in their lives?
* The city where Nadia and Saeed live and from which they flee is unnamed, the only unnamed location in the book. The places that are mentioned in the novel include Greece, London, San Diego, and Tokyo. How do you feel about the contrast between the vagueness of the origin of Nadia and Saeed and the specific, if futuristic, depiction of these other places?

**Love & Sex:**

* Is there a romance in this novel? Are Saeed and Nadia actually in-love the other, or have they just found themselves bound together by terrible circumstances?

**Religion:**

* Nadia uses outward signs of religiosity as a shield. Her personal (lack of) faith, however, does not vary throughout the book. What purpose do you think this serves in the book?
* We Saeed’s faith become more important to him throughout the book. What purpose do you think this serves in the book?

**Style:**

* His language is often matter of fact, yet the descriptions are often expansive. Did you find
* He sometimes uses humor in discussing horrific events (example).

**Sources:**

*Adapted, in part, from***:** “Exit West Reader’s Guide,” Penguin Random House. Available at: <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/549017/exit-west-by-mohsin-hamid/9780735212176/readers-guide/>

Jeff Milo, “‘We Are All Migrants’: Mohsin Hamid Talks His New Novel, *Exit West*,” *Paste*, 7 Mar 2017. Available at: <https://www.pastemagazine.com/articles/2017/03/mohsin-hamid-exit-west.html>

Jia Tolentino, “A Novel about Refugees that Feels Instantly Canonical,” New Yorker, 10 Mar 2017. Available at: https://www.newyorker.com/culture/jia-tolentino/a-novel-about-refugees-that-feels-instantly-canonical