**Introduction to Asian American Literature**

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# Engl 257A, Winter Quarter 2019

Department of English, University of Washington

11:30 am-1:20 pm, M and W in SIG 227

# Prof. Michelle Liu, msmliu@uw.edu, Padelford A-420

OFFICE HOURS: M 1:30-2:20; W 10:30-11:20 in Padelford A-420; also by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Restrictive immigration legislation and American foreign policy have deeply impacted Asian American populations, putting its peoples in a unique position for defining Americanness. How do artists with an Asian ancestry challenge a country that ostensibly celebrates diversity yet looks with suspicion on the foreign? We’ll look at the creation of “Asian American literature” as a category to examine this question. Why was Asian American literature created? Who is Asian American literature for?

The course material is organized thematically, and not regionally. In other words, texts have not been chosen based on the ethnic affiliation of the authors. Rather, each work has been selected based on its wrestling with themes and images commonly used to define Asian American experiences.

REQUIRED TEXTS: All books are available at the University Bookstore.

* Choi, Annie. *Happy Birthday or Whatever: Track Suits, Kim Chee, and Other Family Disasters* (2007)
* Huang, Eddie. *Fresh Off the Boat* (2013)
* Ng, Celeste. *Everything I Never Told You* (2015)

The following texts are posted under “files” on our Canvas page. Please be sure to bring a print-out to class, or make sure you have electronic access:

* Bulosan, Carlos. Short Stories: “Be American” & “Life and Death of a Filipino in America.” Essays: “My Education” Selections taken from *On Becoming Filipino: Selected Writings of Carlos Bulosan*. Edited by E. San Juan Jr. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995.
* Chen, Tina. *Double Agency: Acts of Impersonation in Asian American Literature and Culture*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2005.
* Chu, Patricia. *Assimilating Asians: gendered strategies of authorship in Asia America.* Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2000.
* Chin, Frank, et al. Preface to the *Aiiieeeee! An Anthology of Asian American Writers*. New York: Mentor Books, 1991. xi-xli.
* Lahiri, Jhumpa. “Sexy” & “This Blessed House.” From *Interpreter of Maladies*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999.
* Nakamura, Lisa. “Race in/for Cyberspace: Identity tourism and racial passing on the Internet.” In *The Cybercultures Reader*. London: Routledge, 2000. 712-720.
* Nguyen, Bich Minh. Chapter 3 from *Pioneer Girl: a novel*. New York: Penguin, 2014.
* Nguyen, Viet Thanh. “Black-eyed Women” in *The Refugees*. New York: Grove Press, 2017.
* Sue, Stanley and Derald Wing Sue. “Chinese-American Personality and Mental Health.” In *Asian-Americans: Psychological Perspectives*. Ben Lomand, CA: Science and Behavior Books, 1973: 111-124.
* Tizon, Alex. *Big Little Man: In Search of My Asian Self*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014.

Required media:

* *I’m the One that I Want*. Dir. Lionel Coleman. Cho Taussig Productions, 2000. 96 minutes

REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING:

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| 10% In-class writing | 50% 3 short answer essays |
| 10% Response papers | 25% Final project |
| 5% Classroom citizenship |  |

Your grade consists of three different types of writing assignments. Ten percent of your grade will come from informal response papers (About 2-4 paragraphs. Single spacing is fine.). The prompts will be linked to the assignment due date schedule on our Canvas homepage by Friday for responses due on Tuesday, and no later than Tuesday morning for assignments due on Thursday. Unless otherwise specified, you will be turning in these response papers electronically. The responses are meant to focus you on a particular aspect of the reading before coming to class and are not awarded points according to correctness. Note: No late response papers will be accepted (except for Response Paper 0). You can, however, skip 2 response papers without negatively affecting your grade.

Another 10% of your grade will come from in-class writing exercises. As with the response papers, these writings are meant to be low-stress exercises to help you process the material. No make-ups allowed for in-class writing exercises, but you are allowed to miss up to 2 without consequence.

There will be 3 short answer essays this quarter. Each topic will be related to themes covered in lecture and the readings. These assignments are interconnected short answers that demonstrate your ability to analyze how a text conveys meaning. Since your lowest score will be dropped, you have the option to skip one of the mini-essays, or do all 3 and drop the lowest score.

The final project is both a personal and academic essay that considers your individual reflection on racial discourses that affect identity. More details will be given as the quarter progresses.

At mid-quarter and quarter’s end, I will ask you to evaluate your class citizenship. How does your presence in the classroom help the learning environment?

*Grading Scale Sample* (estimate)

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| --- | --- |
| Assignment percentage | Is equivalent to: |
| ≥98% | 4.0 |
| ≥85.5% | 3.0 |
| 73% | 2.0 |

LATE POLICY: Timely completion of writing assignments is important to your intellectual progress and our growth as a class. Late mini-essays and final project will be docked 10% and not accepted at all one week after the due date. Exceptions may be granted for illness, and family/work emergencies, if you inform me **before** the due date.

READING SCHEDULE (Subject to change. Note that for a complete list of due dates for response papers and mini-essays are noted electronically on the Canvas homepage)

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| **WEEK 1** | **in-class activities** | **Reading Assignments/Major due dates** |
| M  Jan 7 | Introduction: Why Asian American literature? |  |
| W  Jan 9 | Theme: narrative strategies | * Canvas: Chin etal*.,* 1973 preface to *Aiiieeeee!* * Canvas: Alex Tizon, “Orientals,” chapter 3 (pp. 43-62) * Pages: Audrea Lim, “The Alt-Right’s Asian Fetish” |
| **WEEK 2** |  |  |
| M Jan 14 | Theme: narrative strategies | * Canvas: Chin etal*.,* 1991preface to *Aiiieeeee!* (pp. 2nd half xxvi-top 11 lines of xxix; xxxv from section break-end) * Canvas: Tizon, “Seeking Hot Asian Babes” and “Babes, Continued,” chapters 4-5 (pp. 63-92) * Canvas: Bich Minh Nguyen, chapter 3 + first paragraph of chapter 4 |
| W Jan 16 | Themes: abjection/core subjects; narrative strategies | * Canvas*:* Carlos Bulosan, “Be American” and “Life and Death of a Filipino in America” * Canvas: Viet Nguyen, “Black-Eyed Women” * Canvas (optional): Patricia Chu, *Assimilating Asians*, introduction pp. 9-17 |
| **WEEK 3** |  |  |
| M Jan 21 | Martin Luther King Day | * No class, but please do read * Celeste Ng, *Everything I Never Told You*, pp.1-101 |
| W Jan 23 | Theme: the storylines that shape perception  Discussion: part I and II of Mini-Essay #1 | * *EINTY*, pp. 102-157 |
| **WEEK 4** |  |  |
| M Jan 28 | Theme: the storylines that shape perception  Discussion: draft of M-E #1 | * *EINTY*, pp. 158-239 |
| W Jan 30 | Themes: imposture, impersonation, authenticity  Discussion: *EINTY*  **Class begins at 12:15 today** | * **Due:** Mini-Essay #1 * *EINTY*, pp. 240-292 * Canvas (optional): Tina Chen, “Impersonation and Double Agency” pp. 1-13 |
| **WEEK 5** |  |  |
| M Feb 4 | In-class screening: *I’m the One that I Want* |  |
| W Feb 6 | Discussion: *I’m the One that I Want* | * Canvas (optional): Tina Chen, “Impersonation and Double Agency” 17-19 |
| **WEEK 6** |  |  |
| M Feb 11 | Theme: identity tourism  Discussion: Mini-Essay #2 | * Canvas: Jhumpa Lahiri, “Sexy”’ * Canvas: Nakamura, “Race in/for Cyberspace” |
| W Feb 13 | Theme: identity tourism  Discussion: Mini-Essay #2 drafts | * Canvas: Jhumpa Lahiri, “This Blessed House” |
| **WEEK 7** |  |  |
| M Feb 18 | President’s Day  Theme: narratives of identity that jam the ideological machine | * No class, but please do read * Annie Choi, *Happy Birthday or Whatever*, first 6 stories (pp. 1-90). |
| W Feb 20 | Discussion: *Happy Birthday or Whatever* and *Fresh Off the Boat* | * Choi, “The Best Diet”; “Vegetarian Enough”; “The Devil Moisturizes”; “New Year’s Games” * **Due:** Mini-Essay #2 |
| **WEEK 8** |  |  |
| M Feb 25 | Theme: narratives of identity that jam the ideological machine | * Eddie Huang, *Fresh Off the Boat*, chapter 1 (pp. 1-20); chapters 2-4 (pp.21-66); chapters 7-part of 9 (pp. 97-137) chapter 11 (pp. 163-182) |
| W Feb 27 | Discussion: Mini-Essay #3; introduction of Final Project | * Huang, chpts 13-14 (pp. 200-226); chpt 16-17 + acknowledgments (pp.239-276) |
| **WEEK 9** | *wrap up second sequence* |  |
| M  March 4 | Peer editing of final project rough drafts, parts I & II |  |
| W  March 6 | Individual office appointments, to be held in my office (Padelford A-420). A doodle.com sign-in will be sent out. |  |
| **WEEK 10** | *don’t forget to give course evaluations* |  |
| M  March 11 | Peer editing of final project, all parts | * **Due:** Mini-Essay #3 |
| W  March 13 | Individual office appointments. A doodle.com sign-in will be sent |  |
| **Finals** |  |  |
| Mon  March 18 |  | * Final Project due at noon in the box outside my office, Padelford A-420 |

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