**Asian American Literature**

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# Engl 386A, Spring Quarter 2019

Department of English, University of Washington

10:30 am-12:20 pm, M and W in SIG 227

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

OFFICE HOURS: M 12:30 pm-2:00 pm & W 12:30-1:00 in Padelford A-420; also by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Asian American populations have been deeply impacted by restrictive immigration legislation and American foreign policy, 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? What does this genre do for re-defining a sense of self in relation to otherness and difference for everyone?

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 common to Asian American cultural production.

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

* Kingston, Maxine Hong. *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a girlhood among ghosts* (1977)
* Lee, Chang-rae. *Native Speaker* (1995)

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:

* Binerji, Chitrita. “A Shared Plate.” *The Best American Travel Writing 2006*. Eds. Jason Wilson and Tim Cahill*.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006.
* Bawarshi, Anis. “Genre Function.” *College English*, published by National Council of Teachers of English. Vol. 62, No. 3 (Jan., 2000), pp. 335-360
* Chuh, Kandice. *Imagine Otherwise: on Asian Americanist critique*. Durham: Duke UP, 2003. (Note: access this book electronically through the UW library system)
* Nguyen, Viet Thanh. “Black-eyed Women” and “The Americans” in *The Refugees*. New York: Grove Press, 2017.
* Nguyen, Viet Thanh. “On the Inhumanities” and “On Victims and Voices” in *Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2016.
* 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:

* *Better Luck Tomorrow*. Dir. Justin Lin. Paramount Pictures, 2003. 101 minutes
* *Minding the Gap.* Dir. Bing Liu. Hulu, 2018. ITVS & Kartemquin Films, 2018. 93 minutes
* *Mainstream American Comic* by Hari Kondabolu. Kill Rock Stars, 2016. 66 minutes

REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING:

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| --- | --- |
| 15% In-class work | 40% 2 writing assignments |
| 10% Response papers | 30% Final project |
| 5% Classroom citizenship |  |

Your grade consists of three different types of writing assignments. Fifteen 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 15% 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 2 essays, of a non-traditional academic format. Details will be given during the quarter.

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)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Assignment percentage | Is equivalent to: |
| ≥98% | 4.0 |
| ≥91.8 | 3.5 |
| ≥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 essays and final projects 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  April 1 | Introduction: Why Asian American literature? |  |
| W  April 3 | In-class showing: *Better Luck Tomorrow*  Identity formation and genre | * Pages: Eugene Yi, “The New White?” * Canvas: Alex Tizon, “Land of the Giants,” chapter 2 (pp. 23-42) * Canvas: Stanley and Derald Sue, “Chinese-American Personality and Mental Health” |
| **WEEK 2** |  |  |
| M April 8 | Identity formation and genre | * Canvas: Tizon, “Orientals,” chapter 3 (pp. 43-62) * Canvas: Brian Ascalon Roley, Part I of *American Son* (pp.13-54) * Optional: Canvas—Anis Bawarshi, “Genre Function” |
| W April 10 | Identity formation and genre | * Discussion of Roley, cont’ * Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior*, “No Name Woman” and “White Tigers” (pp. 1-53) |
| **WEEK 3** |  |  |
| M April 15 | Identity formation and genre | * *WW*, “Shaman” and “At the Western Palace,” (pp. 55-160) |
| W April 17 | Identity formation and genre  Discussion: writing assignment #1 | * *WW*, “A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe,” (pp. 161-209) * Canvas: Viet Nguyen, “Black-Eyed Women” |
| **WEEK 4** |  |  |
| M April 22 |  | * Discussion of writing assignment 1 |
| W April 24 | Workshopping rough draft of writing assignment 1 |  |
| **WEEK 5** |  |  |
| M April 29 | Identity v. difference | * Chang-rae Lee, *Native Speaker*, pp. 1-81 * E-library (optional): Kandice Chuh, “Introduction: on Asian Americanist critique” in *Imagine Otherwise: on Asian Americanist critique* |
| W May 1 | DUE: writing assignment 1  In-class showing: *Minding the Gap* | * *NS*, 82-141 |
| **WEEK 6** |  |  |
| M May 6 | No class | * No class (but please do read!) * *NS*, pp.142-211 |
| W May 8 | Identity v. difference | * *NS*, pp.212-292 |
| **WEEK 7** |  |  |
| M May 13 | Identity v. difference  Discussion of writing assignment 2 | * *NS*, pp. 293-349 * Canvas: Viet Nguyen, “The Americans” |
| W May 15 | Marked v. unmarked differences  Workshopping of writing assignment 2 drafts | * Canvas: Ted Chiang, “Liking What You See: a Documentary” |
| **WEEK 8** |  |  |
| M May 20 | Marked v. unmarked differences | * Amazon Prime: Hari Kondabolu, excerpts from *Waiting for 2042* and *Mainstream American Comic* (TBA) |
| W May 22 | DUE: writing assignment 2  introduction of final project | * Canvas: Viet Nguyen, excerpt of “On Victims and Voices,” pp. 193-197. * Canvas: Chitrita Binerji, “A Shared Plate” (for in class reading) |
| **WEEK 9** | *wrap up second sequence* |  |
| M  May 27 | No class: Memorial Day |  |
| W  May 29 | Peer editing of final project rough drafts, parts I & II |  |
| **WEEK 10** | *don’t forget to give course evaluations* |  |
| M  June 3 | Peer editing of final project, all parts |  |
| W  June 5 | Individual office appointments, to be held in my office (Padelford A-420). A doodle.com sign-in will be sent out |  |
| **Finals** |  |  |
| Mon  June 10 |  | * Final Project due at noon in the box outside my office, Padelford A-420 |

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