

Asian American Literature
Fall 1999
New York University
A/P/A V15.0301 C (crosslist English V41.0716)

Instructor: Cynthia Tolentino
Class meeting times: TR 1:20-2:35; Main 718
Office: 269 Mercer, 6th floor
Office hours: Thurs. 2:45-4pm (and by appointment)
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Course Description

This course is an introduction to some of the key critical issues and debates in Asian American literary studies. Through a survey of Asian American literature since 1945, we will explore how literary texts give voice to particular social and historical experiences. We will consider the recovery of earlier Asian American writings in the 1960s/1970s and their impact on contemporary literary production and criticism, with particular attention to the objectives and arguments used to define what is "Asian American" and what is "literature" Throughout the course, we will focus on the convergence of figurations of race and ethnicity with gender, sexuality and class in the ongoing process of Asian American identity formation.

Requirements

- Students are expected to attend all class meetings and to participate regularly in discussion. Students who miss more than two class meetings should not expect to receive credit for the course. (25% of final grade)
- 2 short writing exercises (20%).
- 6-8 page essay (20%)
- 1-2 page responses on the assigned reading will be due almost every week. These responses should demonstrate critical engagement with the assigned texts and will be evaluated as part of the final grade. (15%) In place of one response during the semester, students should attend a literary reading by an Asian American author(s) and write a 1-2 page review of the event.
- Final exam. We will formulate possible essay questions and topics for the exam together on the last day of class. (20% of final grade)

Course Texts

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Arranged Marriage (1995)
Maxine Hong Kingston, The Woman Warrior (1976/77)
John Okada, No-No Boy (1957)
Chang-Rae Lee, Native Speaker (1995)
R. Zamora Linmark, Rolling the R's (1995)
Lois Yamanaka, Blu's Hanging (1998)

Recommended texts on reserve at Bobst Library:

Sucheng Chan, Asian Americans: An Interpretive History. (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991).
An Interethnic Companion to Asian American Literature, ed. King-Kok Cheung. (New York and Los Angeles: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
Reading the Literatures of Asian America, eds. Shirley Geok-Lin Lim and Amy Ling.
Sau-Ling Wong, Reading Asian American Literature: From Necessity to Extravagance
Columbia Literary History of the United States, ed. Emory Elliott. (New York: Columbia UP, 1988). (in reference area)
The Columbia History of the American Novel, ed. Emory Elliott. (New York: Columbia UP, 1991). (in reference area)

Course Readings (* refers to readings from course packet) The course reader is available at Advanced Copy on LaGuardia Place.

Sucheng Chan, Asian Americans: An Interpretive History. 3-23; 45-61.*
King-Kok Cheung, "Re-viewing Asian American Literary Studies." An Interethnic Companion to Asian American Literature." 1-38.*
King-Kok Cheung, "The Woman Warrior versus The Chinaman Pacific: Must a Chinese American Critic Choose Between Feminism and Heroism." Conflicts in Feminism, eds. Marianne Hirsch and Evelyn Fox Keller. (New York and London: Routledge, 1990). 234-251.*
Frank Chin et al., Introduction from Aiiieeee!: An Anthology of Asian American Writers. (Washington D.C.: Howard UP, 1974). xi-xxii *
Nathan Glazer, "The Emergence of an American Ethnic Pattern." From Different Shores: Perspectives on Race and Ethnicity. (New York: Oxford UP, 1994).*
Elaine Kim, Preface from Asian American Literature: An Introduction to Writings and Their Social Context (xi-xix)*
Ronald Takaki, "Reflections on Racial Patterns in America." From Different Shores: Perspectives on Race and Ethnicity. (New York: Oxford UP, 1994): 24-40.*
Monique T. D. Tru'o'ng, "Kelly." Amerasia Journal. 17, no.2 (1991): 41-8.

Sept. 7:
Intro to course

Sept. 9:
Monique T. D. Tru'o'ng, "Kelly." 41-8. (hand-out)

Sept. 14:
King-Kok Cheung, from Reviewing Asian American Literary Studies. 1-21.*
Frank Chin, Introduction and "An Introduction to Chinese and Japanese American Literature," from Aiiieeee! xi-xxii.*
Elaine Kim, Preface from Asian American Literature: An Introduction to Writings and Their Social Context. xi-xix.*

Sept. 16:

selection from Carlos Bulosan, America is in the Heart *

Nathan Glazer, "The Emergence of an American Ethnic Pattern" and Ronald Takaki, "Reflections on Racial Patterns in America." 1-40.

Sept. 21:

selection from Carlos Bulosan, America is in the Heart *

Response due

Sept. 23:

selection from Carlos Bulosan, America is in the Heart *

(recommended reading: Sucheng Chan, Chpt. 1, 3)

Discuss Writing Exercise 1

Sept. 28

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni from Arranged Marriage

"Clothes" (17-33); "Silver Pavements, Golden Roofs" (35-56); "The Word Love" (57-71)

Sept. 30:

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni from Arranged Marriage

"A Perfect Life" (73-108); "The Maid Servant's Story" (109-68)

Oct. 5:

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni from Arranged Marriage

Return Writing Exercise #1 and discuss.

Oct. 7:

Maxine Hong Kingston, The Woman Warrior

No Name Woman; White Tigers (1-53)

Oct. 12:

Maxine Hong Kingston, The Woman Warrior

Shaman, At the Western Palace (57-160)

Response due

Oct. 14:

Maxine Hong Kingston, The Woman Warrior

A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe (162-209)

(recommended reading: King-Kok Cheung, "The Woman Warrior versus The Chinaman Pacific: Must a Chinese American Critic Choose Between Feminism and Heroism." 234-251).

Oct. 19:

John Okada, No-No Boy (iii-101)

Discuss Writing Exercise # 2

Oct. 21:
John Okada, No-No Boy (103-213)
Response due

Oct. 26:
John Okada, No-No Boy (215-260)

Oct. 28:
R. Zamora Linmark, Rolling the R's (1-44)
(Writing Exercise #2 due)

Nov. 2:
R. Zamora Linmark, Rolling the R's (45-119)

Nov. 4
R. Zamora Linmark, Rolling the R's (120-149)

Nov. 9:
Chang-Rae Lee, Native Speaker (1-131)

Nov. 11:
Chang-Rae Lee, Native Speaker (132-196)

Nov. 18:
Chang-Rae Lee, Native Speaker (197-323)

Nov. 23:
Discuss final paper

THANKSGIVING VACATION (Nov. 25-November 27)

Nov. 30:
Lois Ann Yamanaka, Blu's Hanging (1-135)

Dec. 2:
Lois Ann Yamanaka, Blu's Hanging (136-174)

Dec. 7:
Lois Ann Yamanaka, Blu's Hanging (175-260)

Dec. 9:
Discussion of final exam

Dec. 16:
Final Exam

