INTRODUCTION TO WRITING ABOUT ASIAN AMERICAN LITERATURE
ASIAN 221: ONLINE, ASYNCHRONOUS SECTION
Hunter College, Summer 2024

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***This course is fully online and asynchronous**

Course Description:

This introductory course offers a survey of Asian American literature through a historical lens. Our engagement with this subject will be literary in nature but will also investigate the ways in which literature as a form of "counter-hegemonic" "social document" provides a space to explore, construct and contest socio-historical issues such as race, identity, citizenship and belonging. Simply put: we are interested here in both the form and content of Asian American literature in order to better understand the Asian American experience. Students will read novels, short stories, poetry, and watch films and comedy shows with an eye towards Asian American identity formation. Students will also develop and refine their writing skills as they think and write about these issues.

Because this is a course that fundamentally examines *racialized* identities, we will employ tools of Racial Formation Theory in our exploration. Race will be examined as a social construct within America and, similarly, racism will be deconstructed as social phenomena. It is not our objective to argue whether or not racism exists, but to understand how hierarchies of power function through mechanisms of "otherness" and how this "otherization" profoundly impacts American identity, idealism and democracy.

We will begin our study by situating the literature at hand: What is Asian American literature? Who is considered to be an Asian American? What does it mean to have a hyphenated identity? What is the "cost" of immigration and the American Dream? To answer such questions, the first few weeks of the semester will include an introduction to Asian American history. Students will come to understand how issues such as, colonialism, imperialism, migration, American expansionism, xenophobia, cultural/linguistic marginalization, and economic discrimination have shaped the Asian American experience thus far. We will explore this history through the multiple lenses of empire, race, class, gender and sexuality. As we gain this historical foundation, we will concurrently deconstruct and analyze short literary text – short stories and poems.

Students will then move on to read three novels and one graphic novel in the course. We will also watch a few documentaries, films and comedy shows that are relevant to our course. While the category of "Asian American Literature" is both broad and vague, we will focus upon the following themes found in the readings: the migration experience, struggles faced by new immigrants, cultural hegemony, the creation of hyphenated identities, assimilation, intergenerational issues between first generation Asian Americans and their children, citizenship and race, community formation, transnationalism, war and the state, and intersections of gender/race/class/sexuality.

***PLEASE NOTE**: This is an entirely online, asynchronous course. There are no class meeting times; there are no Zoom sessions. Students are expected to log in every week at a time of their choosing to review assigned course material. You must log in each week – but you are free to choose your own time during the week to review material.*

Course Objectives and Learning Goals:

- Students will develop critical thinking skills through readings and lectures
- Students will develop writing skills through written assignments
- Students will develop an understanding of Asian American literature
- Students will develop an understanding of issues facing Asian Americans

Required Texts:

Okada, John. *No-No Boy,* University of Washington Press, 1976 – YOU MUST PURCHASE THE FIRST EDITION

Le, Thi Diem Thuy. *The Gangster We Are All Looking For*, Anchor Books, 2004

Hamid, Mohsin. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist,* Harvest Books, 2008

Grading Distribution and Required Assignments:

**Please note, in the audio lecture explaining the syllabus I mentioned a slightly different grade breakdown – the correct grade breakdown is what you see on this page.*

- **20% Current Events Component (current events journal)**
- **50% Cumulative Knowledge Component: (final essay)**
- **20% Short Assignments Component (weekly assignments)**
- **10% Attendance/Participation**

Online Class "Attendance" and "Participation" Expectations (10%):

Because this is a complex course on advanced subject matter, it is important for you to be a REGULAR member of the online course in order to adequately learn class material. This means logging into our course on Blackboard EVERY WEEK to listen to audio lectures – WHICH ARE MANDATORY – and participating in weekly short assignments. Blackboard allows me to see how often you log in and for how long you listen to audio lectures - and this is how I will conduct "attendance" and "participation" in this class. If you log in each week, you will receive full points for attendance. If you listen to all of the audio lectures each week, you will receive full points for participation.

Any student who fails to log in TWO WEEKS IN A ROW (for a total of 14 days or more) **will fail the course**. Any student who fails to log in for THREE SEPARATE/INDIVIDUAL WEEKS OVER THE COURSE OF THE SEMESTER **will fail the course**. Attendance is logged/monitored every Sunday.

This is non-negotiable. If you have a health issue or child-care issue that you think may interfere with your regular "attendance" in the course, you should contact me immediately. For health issues, please register with Hunter College's Office of AccessABILITY and submit their letter of registration to me. This letter is important as it can grant you special accommodations, such as extensions on deadlines. More information on their office can be found here:
http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/access/students/conditions/disabilities

Current Events Component Expectations (20%):

In this course, students will keep a current events "journal" for the duration of the summer term. This assignment is created in hopes that students will make connections between the issues covered in the lectures and in the history readings with contemporary issues. Given the political climate and the resurgence in anti-Asian racism and violence, the current events journal is a timely assignment that will help keep you informed and proactive. The Current Events Journal will be due on the last day of class – **on Thursday, July 11, by 11:59pm EST**. Students will upload their current events journals on to Blackboard in the "Assignment Guidelines" link. *If you have difficulties doing this, please email me in advance.*

The Current Events Journal assignment asks students to find FIVE NEWS ARTICLES relevant to Asian Americans. *The articles can be up to one year old, in case you can't find any current articles*. These articles can be on anti-Asian hate crimes, anti-Asian racism, Asian American activism, Asian American art, Asian American politics and social issues, Asian American business or employment issues, and/or Asian American culture. They can also be on international relations between the US and Asian countries. Once you find and read your five articles, please write HALF PAGE (DOUBLE SPACED) RESPONSES/SUMMARIES TO EACH ARTICLE. Include the links to the articles in the journal itself so that I can find the articles when I grade the assignment. The links to the articles and the response/summaries should be contained in ONE DOCUMENT ("a journal") that you upload at the end of the summer term.

Full credit for the Current Events Journal assignment will be given to students who properly complete the assignment on time. Article summaries/responses must each be half a page (double spaced) long in order to receive full credit for this assignment. ***No late Current Events Journals will be accepted.***

Cumulative Component Expectations: The Final (50%):

The capstone academic experience in the course will be the final essay. Students will write a 5-7 page essay due **on Thursday, July 11, by 11:59pm**. Essays should be uploaded to Blackboard in the "Assignment Guidelines" link. Essay topics will be given out two weeks in advance and will focus on the material covered in the course. Any student that plagiarizes any part of the final essay will FAIL THE ASSIGNMENT AND FAIL THE CLASS. Any paper that is even a single sentence shorter than 5 FULL pages will be penalized with a 10 point deduction in the midterm grade. ***No late final essays will be accepted.***

Short Assignment Expectations (20%):

While the online teaching format offers students the chance to approach their learning in a flexible and creative manner, there are a few challenges built into the experience. Specifically, there is a danger of falling behind in online courses since they lack the structure of classes that meet on site. In order to maintain an effective learning environment for all of you, I have assigned a series of short paper

assignments for the summer term that are based on my lectures and the assigned course content. The goal for this series of assignments is to pay attention to the lectures and to course materials so that you can learn our course's content! So I recommend listening to those audio recordings carefully and taking notes! Short assignments are in response to the readings and/or films and audio lectures assigned for that week. You MUST listen to the assigned audio lecture before writing your short response assignment.

For each short, response paper assignment, students will write a 1-2 page (double spaced, Times New Roman Font 12) response paper on the assigned reading. Essays must be at least one full page long to get credit.

Short assignment guidelines and upload prompts will be found in the "Weekly Coursework" folders for each week the assignment is assigned. They must be uploaded to the assignment prompt in the week's folder in "Weekly Coursework". If you have any issues uploading the short assignment, please email me at RQIDWAI@HUNTER.CUNY.EDU.

Short assignments MUST BE AT LEAST ONE FULL PAGE LONG in order to receive full credit.

These assignments are graded on the basis of submission: if you submit the assignment on time – and it is at least one full page in length – you will receive full credit for it.

Short assignments must be turned in on time; late assignments will be penalized by a ten point deduction penalty.

Short assignment grades will be posted at the end of the summer term – again, as long as you turn them in on time and they are of the minimum required page length, you will receive full credit (an A) for this portion of the grade.

A Note on Plagiarism, Course Content and Email Protocol:

Plagiarism: Unfortunately, in recent semesters, I've seen a rise in plagiarized papers. I have to warn you that I am very good at identifying potentially plagiarized writing. I am well aware of online sources that offer "help" to students struggling to write an essay (book reviews, essay databases, etc.) and I strongly discourage you from even glimpsing at these sources. *"Borrowing" a sentence or idea from someone else is plagiarism and will be punished by an 'F' in the course and will incur academic discipline.*

Course Content: This class seeks to investigate potentially controversial topics such as torture, warfare, hate crimes, racism, classism, sexism, empire, violence and militarism – which means that the content of the course is potentially upsetting. I apologize in advance for this and will go out of my way to use trigger warnings and other indications of traumatic content when I can so that all of you are aware of disturbing course content.

Email Protocol: Since the course is online most of our interactions will be entirely through electronic media – audio lectures and assignments that are posted to Blackboard, and questions that are emailed to me. Please note that I teach one hundred students each semester and am thus typically bombarded with emails. *This means that it might take me 3-5 days to respond to your email*. I thank you in advance for your patience. I also want to encourage you to polish your professionalism when you correspond with me. I would recommend researching "how to write a business letter or email" for tips in case you're unaware of this crucial professional skill. I do ask that you try to remain considerate of me as your professor and try to communicate with me, when necessary, with respect, diplomacy, tact and a spirit of collegiality. Thank you.

Reading and Assignment Calendar:

Week 1 (5/28-6/2): INTRODUCTION TO COURSE / BOLD WORDS SHORT STORIES:

Listen to WEEK 1, AUDIO LECTURE 1: Welcome to the Course!
Listen to WEEK 1, AUDIO LECTURE 2: The First Wave of Asian Migration
Listen to WEEK 1, AUDIO LECTURE 3: Introducing Themes in Asian American Literature
Listen to WEEK 1, AUDIO LECTURE 4: Analyzing the Stories in Bold Words
Reading Assignment: Read the following short stories in Bold Words **by 6/2**: *"The Grandfather of the Sierra Nevada Mountains," "From Clay Walls", "The Story of a Letter", "In the Land of the Free"**
**These short stories can be found in Bold Words, a book in PDF form that can be found in the Week 1 folder on Blackboard*
***Please note: This "week" is actually only SIX days long! So you should make sure you have enough time to complete the work for this "week".*

Week 2 (6/3-6/9): NO-NO BOY AND THE INTERNMENT OF JAPANESE AMERICANS

Listen to WEEK 2, AUDIO LECTURE 1: Introducing John Okada's No-No Boy
Listen to WEEK 2, AUDIO LECTURE 2: Discussing Chapters 1-5 in No-No Boy
Reading Assignment: Read Chapters 1-5 in No-No Boy **by 6/9**
WEEK 2 SHORT ASSIGNMENT DUE ON JUNE 9

Week 3 (6/10-6/16): NO-NO BOY AND THE INTERNMENT OF JAPANESE AMERICANS

Listen to WEEK 3, AUDIO LECTURE 1: Discussing Chapters 6-11 in No-No Boy
Listen to WEEK 3, AUDIO LECTURE 2: The Second Wave of Asian Migration
Reading Assignment: Read Chapters 6-11 in No-No Boy **by 6/16**
WEEK 3 SHORT ASSIGNMENT DUE ON JUNE 16

Week 4 (6/17-6/23): VIETNAMESE AMERICANS AND THE GANGSTER WE ARE ALL LOOKING FOR

Listen to WEEK 4, AUDIO LECTURE 1: Introducing The Gangster We Are All Looking For
Listen to WEEK 4, AUDIO LECTURE 2: Chapters 1-2 in The Gangster…
Listen to WEEK 4, AUDIO LECTURE 3: Chapters 3 in The Gangster…
Listen to WEEK 4, AUDIO LECTURE 4: Chapters 4-5 in The Gangster…
Reading Assignment: Read Chapters 1-5 in The Gangster… **by 6/23**
WEEK 4 SHORT ASSIGNMENT DUE ON JUNE 23

Week 5 (6/24-6/30): **THE RELUCTANT FUNDAMENTALIST AND POST 9/11 ASIAN AMERICA**

Listen to WEEK 5, AUDIO LECTURE 1: Introducing The Reluctant Fundamentalist
Listen to WEEK 5, AUDIO LECTURE 2: Ch 1-3 in The Reluctant Fundamentalist
Listen to WEEK 5, AUDIO LECTURE 3: Ch 4-6 in The Reluctant Fundamentalist
Reading Assignment: Read Chapters 1-6 in The Reluctant… **by 6/30**
WEEK 5 SHORT ASSIGNMENT DUE ON JUNE 30

Week 6 (7/1-7/7): **THE RELUCTANT FUNDAMENTALIST AND POST 9/11 ASIAN AMERICA**

Listen to WEEK 6, AUDIO LECTURE 1: Ch 7-9 in The Reluctant Fundamentalist
Listen to WEEK 6, AUDIO LECTURE 2: Ch 10-12 in The Reluctant Fundamentalist
Reading Assignment: Read Chapters 7-12 in The Reluctant… **by 7/7**

FINAL ESSAY AND CURRENT EVENTS JOURNAL DUE ON THURSDAY, JULY 11

***Please note: PROFESSOR MAY CHANGE ANY PART OF COURSE OR SYLLABUS (TEXTS, CALENDAR, ASSIGNMENTS, GRADE BREAKDOWN, ETC) AT ANY POINT.**