

ASIAN 320: NATION, SELF & ASIAN IDENTITY

Spring 2008

Mon, Wed, Thu 12:10 – 1:00 in Thomas Hunter 505

Asian 320 is cross-listed with ENGL 390.53

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This syllabus is subject to change during the course of the semester.

Please check Blackboard and your Hunter e-mail for regular course announcements.

What is Asian 320?

Asian 320 is set up to focus on the relationship between the nation-state and the construction of diasporic Asian identity: how do hegemonic forces (e.g. the government, but also other sites of power – the mass media, corporate interests, and the people themselves) depend upon Asian subjects in the framing (and re-framing) of national identities, borders, and transgressions? In the simplest terms, how do Asian subjects fit into our understanding of “us” and “them”? How, in turn, do Asian diasporic subjects respond to and revolt against these cues?

A central component of this class is the understanding that race is a social construct with material, lived implications; through an examination of theoretical, literary, and visual texts, we will look at how histories of nationalism and empire intersect with the law, language, sexuality, gender, capital, and culture. In our readings and discussions, we will continuously learn about and apply concepts that expand our understanding of nation, self, and Asian identity, including the meaning and influence of ideology and hegemony, colonial and post-colonial subject formation, as well as abjection and immigration.

Success in this course depends on **active** reading and participation: you should come to class having carefully read and thought about that day’s assigned reading. You are expected to contribute to class discussions by asking questions, sharing your observations with the class, and showing active interest in the topic being discussed. If you are someone who speaks a great deal in class, I expect you to open up the conversation to others. If you do not understand all of the readings, that’s fine: then you are expected to come to class prepared to ask questions – of me and of the other students – so that you can leave that day’s class with a better understanding of what we are trying to get at.

→ **You cannot pass this class if you expect to just show up and warm a seat for three hours every week.**

Required Textbooks (available at Shakespeare & Co.)

John Okada, *No-No Boy*

Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Dictée*

Andrew Lam, *Perfume Dreams*

Hanif Kureishi, *The Buddha of Suburbia*

IMPORTANT: At least half of this semester’s readings are posted on the course Blackboard site: make sure that you have access to a computer where you are able to easily and reliably download and print these readings, as you should always bring them to class for discussion. All of the readings are not yet posted on the site, but I will do my best to upload them all as early on in the semester as possible – if you, after trying different computers and browsers, are still unable to access a particular reading, email me and I will get it to you. However, please note that the files can be quite large and may as a result take a long time to download/send.

What will we do this semester?

I. There will be reading assigned for every class meeting. Because this is a 300-level course, reading assignments may be substantial and complex: you should pace yourself and give yourself ample time to complete the readings. When you show up

for class, you should be prepared to talk about what you have read, either by making notes in the margins of your textbooks, or by writing down comments and questions on a separate sheet of paper. Each class will begin with a quick quiz or freewrite to help me determine that you have done the reading. {25%}

All Blackboard readings should be printed out and brought to class for discussion.

II. You will participate in one 10-to-15-minute group presentation (with Q&A) where you make relevant connections between course concepts from the readings and a historical or contemporary event, issue, or individual. The purpose of this assignment is to make clear the relationships between the readings and the world around us: your group should demonstrate a thorough understanding of the reading and apply its central idea(s) to a relevant historical or contemporary event, issue, or individual. A group may, for example, decide to apply Benedict Anderson's chapter on patriotism and racism to CNN's Lou Dobbs. {10%}

III. You will complete at least **one** activity in the Asian American community in New York or New Jersey. You may, for example, decide that you want to attend a political rally, conduct a voter registration drive in an Asian American community, or visit one of the many important Asian American community organizations here in New York City. Alternately, you may choose to participate in an event at the Asian American Film Lab, go to a poetry reading at the Asian American Writers Workshop, or see an Asian American performance.

You will submit a 4-page narrative report on your activity that addresses why you chose that particular activity, what it consisted of, what you observed, and a substantial amount of reflection that connects the activity to your own lived experience and topics that come up in readings and class discussions. {10%}

IV. You will complete the following written assignments:

- ~ One 6-page essay based on a discussion with a family member concerning who is "foreign" and who is "American" {10%}
- ~ Three 6-page essays that examine a novel, play, or short story through the lens of concepts and ideas discussed in the critical essays [15% each]

In all of the writing assignments, you are expected to show that you understand the concepts we have read and discussed in class. If you cannot apply these concepts in your written assignments, I will take it to mean that you have not done the reading and your grade will be lowered accordingly. There is neither a midterm nor a final in this class, so I will always expect your written assignments to reflect a thorough understanding *and* application of course concepts – not a regurgitation of ideas or plot descriptions.

How can you do poorly in Asian 210?

- If you PLAGIARIZE, you will automatically fail this class. There are no exceptions to this policy. If you cut and paste or paraphrase someone else's writing in your own work and do not cite your source, you will automatically fail this class. *If you are unclear on how to cite sources, come see me and I will happily show you how.* In the past, I have had to give a failing grade to students who plagiarized, and I do not want to have to do that again this semester.
- If you sit in silence and fail to make substantial contributions to the class for the entire semester.
- If you miss more than three classes, your final grade will be lowered by one point (e.g. from a B to a B-). If you miss three more classes, your grade will be lowered by an additional point, and so on. There are no excused absences for this course: regardless of the reason, if you are absent from class, you will be marked absent. I know that we meet very frequently, but that does not mean that you won't miss important information if you are absent from class.

Disabilities

In compliance with the American Disability Act of 1990 (ADA) and with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Hunter College is committed to ensuring educational parity and accommodations for all students with documented disabilities and/or medical conditions. It is recommended that all students with documented disabilities (Emotional, Medical, Physical and/or Learning) consult the Office of AccessABILITY located in Room E1124 to secure necessary academic accommodations. For further information and assistance please call (212- 772- 4857)/TTY (212- 650- 3230).

Reading Schedule

Week 1 • "The foreigner's face burns with happiness."

1/28

Introduction & Interviews

1/30

Mae Ngai, "Illegal Aliens: A Problem of Law and History" (from *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*) handed out in class

1/31

Julia Kristeva, excerpt from "Tocatta and Fugue for the Foreigner" (from *Strangers to Ourselves*) handed out in class
Before class, view online slideshow available at <http://www.sfmuseum.org/hist/lange.html>

Week 2 • Patriotism & Antagonism

2/4

Benedict Anderson, "Patriotism and Racism" (from *Imagined Communities*) on Blackboard
Before class, view the following YouTube video: "Lou Dobbs: Mexican Flag Raised in Maywood, California" (3 min.)

2/6

Wong Sam and Assistants, "An English-Chinese Phrase Book" (from *The Big Aiiieeeee!*) on Blackboard
Paul Ong and John M. Liu, "U.S. Immigration Policies and Asian Migration" (from *Contemporary Asian America: A Multidisciplinary Reader*) on Blackboard

2/8

Davina Bhandar, "Resistance, Detainment, Asylum: The Onto-Political Limits of Border Crossing in North America" (from *War, Citizenship, Territory*) on Blackboard

PRESENTATION: What is ethnic antagonism, and where do we see it in New York?

Week 3 • National Abjection & Performance

2/11

Karen Shimakawa, "Introduction: 'It's not right for a body to know his own origins'" (from *National Abjection: The Asian American Body Onstage*) on Blackboard

2/13

Shirley Jennifer Lim, "A Feeling of Belonging: Chi Alpha Delta 1928 – 1941" (from *A Feeling of Belonging: Asian American Women's Public Culture, 1930 – 1960*) on Blackboard

2/14

Read online editorial, "Their Best Way to Show Loyalty" from San Francisco News, March 6, 1942 - available at <http://www.sfmuseum.org/hist8/editorial1.html>

Screening of "Japanese Relocation: Tale of Two Cities" (War Relocation Authority, 1949. 12 min.)

PRESENTATION: How do we perform "America"?

Week 4 • Internment I

2/20 • PERSONAL ESSAY/INTERVIEW DUE

Mae Ngai, "The World War II Internment of Japanese Americans and the Citizenship Renunciation Cases" (from *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*) on Blackboard

PRESENTATION: Who went to Tule Lake Internment Camp, and why?

2/21

John Okada, *No-No Boy*

Week 5 • Internment II

2/25

John Okada, *No-No Boy*

2/27

John Okada, *No-No Boy*

PRESENTATION: How has 9/11 and "homeland security" affected Asian Americans?

2/28

John Okada, *No-No Boy*

Week 6 • Check a box, or don't

3/3

Elena Tajima Creef, "Another Lesson in 'How to Tell Your Friends Apart from the Japs': The 1992 Winter Olympics Showdown between Kristi Yamaguchi of the United States and Midori Ito of Japan" (from *Imaging Japanese America: The Visual Construction of Citizenship, Nation, and the Body*) on Blackboard

3/5

L. Ling-chi Wang, "Race, Class, Citizenship, and Extraterritoriality: Asian Americans and the 1996 Campaign Finance Scandal" (from *Contemporary Asian America: A Multidisciplinary Reader*) on Blackboard

PRESENTATION: What are the racial categories on the U.S. Census, and how have they changed?

3/6

Karen Shimakawa, "'We' come a Chinatown Folk! Resisting Abjection" (from *National Abjection: The Asian American Body Onstage*) on Blackboard

Week 7 • Buckbuckbagaw

3/10 • ESSAY #1 DUE

Frank Chin, "Confessions of a Chinatown Cowboy" (from *Bulletproof Buddhists and Other Essays*) on Blackboard

3/12

Frank Chin, "The Chickencoop Chinaman" (from *The Chickencoop Chinaman/The Year of the Dragon*) on Blackboard

3/13

Frank Chin, "The Chickencoop Chinaman" (from *The Chickencoop Chinaman/The Year of the Dragon*) on Blackboard

Week 8 • Between identities, between languages

3/17

Elaine Kim, "Poised on the In-between: A Korean American's Reflections on Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictée*" (from *Writing Self, Writing Nation*) on Blackboard

3/19

Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Dictée*

3/20

Anne Cheng, "Memory and Anti-Documentary Desire in Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictée*" (from MELUS, 23:4) on Blackboard

Week 9

3/24

No classes

3/26

Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Dictée*

PRESENTATION: How do we speak the language of a nation?

3/27

Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Dictée*

Week 10 • Out of the ashes ...

3/31

Rubén G. Rumbaut, "Vietnamese, Laotian, and Cambodian Americans" (from *Contemporary Asian America: A Multidisciplinary Reader*) on Blackboard

Before class, please view www.pinkyshow.org - episode entitled "The American War: the U.S. in Vietnam" (60 min.)

4/2

Aimé Césaire, excerpt from *Discourse on Colonialism* on Blackboard

PRESENTATION: "Patriotism" & Vietnam Veterans Against the War

4/3

Andrew Lam, *Perfume Dreams*

Week 11 • ...into the fire

4/7 • ESSAY #2 DUE

Andrew Lam, *Perfume Dreams*

4/9

Screening of *Sentenced Home* (Dir. Nicole Newnham and David Grabias, 2005. 76 min.)

Andrew Lam, *Perfume Dreams*

4/10

Screening (cont'd) of *Sentenced Home* (Dir. Nicole Newnham and David Grabias, 2005. 76 min.)

Andrew Lam, *Perfume Dreams*

Week 12 • Empire!

4/14

Frantz Fanon, "On National Culture" (from *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*) on Blackboard

→ Required viewing before 4/28: "This Is England" on reserve at Hunter Library

4/16

Gayatri Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (from *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*) on Blackboard

→ Required viewing before 4/28: "This Is England" on reserve at Hunter Library

4/17

NO CLASS

→ Required viewing before 4/28: "This Is England" on reserve at Hunter Library

Week 13 • SPRING RECESS

Week 14 • "...they still think they have an Empire when they don't have two pennies to rub together."

4/28 • ACTIVITY REPORT DUE

Hanif Kureishi, *The Buddha of Suburbia*

→ Required viewing before 4/28: "This Is England" on reserve at Hunter Library

4/30

Hanif Kureishi, *The Buddha of Suburbia*

PRESENTATION: 80s protest music in England

4/31

Hanif Kureishi, *The Buddha of Suburbia*

Week 15 • (Trans-) Nationals I

5/5

Mae Ngai, "From Colonial Subject to Undesirable Alien: Filipino Migration in the Invisible Empire" (from *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*) on Blackboard

5/7

Jessica Hagedorn, excerpt from *Dogeaters* on Blackboard

PRESENTATION: The Marcos Regime

5/9

Han Ong, "Fiesta of the Damned" (from *Charlie Chan Is Dead 2: At Home in the World*) on Blackboard

Week 16 • (Trans-) Nationals II

5/12 • ESSAY #3 DUE

Rhacel Salazar Parreñas, "New Household Forms, Old Family Values: The Formation and Reproduction of the Filipino Transnational Family in Los Angeles" (from *Contemporary Asian America: A Multidisciplinary Reader*) on Blackboard

5/14

Brian Ascalon Roley, excerpt from *American Son* on Blackboard

5/15

Final class meeting!