Asian American Literature and Theory
ENGL 776.77-01, T 7:30-9:20
FALL 2007, HW 1242

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“Citizens inhabit the political space of the nation, a space that is, at once, juridically legislated, territorially situated, and culturally embodied. Although the law is perhaps the discourse that most literally governs citizenship, U.S. national culture—the collectively forged images, histories, and narratives that place, displace, and replace individuals in relation to the national polity—powerfully shapes who the citizenry is, where they dwell, what they remember, and what they forget.” Lisa Lowe, Immigrant Acts.

“It is time for Asian Americans to open up our universe, to reveal our limitless energy and unbounded dreams, our hopes as well as our fears.” Helen Zia, Asian American Dreams.

“A wholesale critical inventory of ourselves and our communities of struggle is neither self-indulgent autobiography nor self-righteous reminiscence. Rather, it is a historical situation and locating of our choices, sufferings, anxieties and efforts in light of the circumscribed options and alternatives available to us.” Cornel West, “The Making of an American Radical Democrat of African Descent.”

Course Description and Objectives
This course is an advance study of key texts in Asian American literature and theory. We will underscore the historical contexts from which Asian American novels have been produced, and the theoretical conversations that have commented on their significance. My purpose of constructing such a framework is to offer a working methodology for teaching Asian American literature and to illuminate the intellectual contributions of Asian American studies. We will focus on seven major novels and the critical theoretical debates that have emerged around them. In this way, we will locate the texts within the socio-historical processes of social movements and transnational capitalism. Some themes we will investigate include settlement histories of the ethnic communities, legal discourses of immigration, post-civil rights class cleavages, multiracial hierarchy, multiculturalism, neocolonialism, and imperialism. Thus, our inquiry will take into consideration a range of conversations taking place in and outside the academy, including feminist, queer, critical race, Marxist, postcolonial, American, and cultural studies.
**Required Texts**

Dictee, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha  
No-No Boy, John Okada  
Bone, Fae Myenne Ng  
Dogeaters, Jessica Hagedorn  
M. Butterfly, David Henry Hwang  
The Woman Warrior, Maxine Hong Kingston  
America is in the Heart, Carlos Bulosan  
Eat a Bowl of Tea, Louis Chu  
Orientals, Robert G. Lee  
Orientalism, Edward Said

*There will be a course packet of secondary readings*

**Assignments and Grading**

Attendance and Class Participation: 25%  
Discussion Presentation: 25%  
Syllabus and Short Response Papers: 25%  
Research Paper (12-15 pp.): 25%

**Course Requirements:**

1. This is a reading and writing intensive course. As such, our seminar will depend upon your active engagement, participation, queries, and comments about the assigned readings, lectures, and discussion. Thus, class attendance is important and crucial. Since we meet once a week, any absence will greatly affect your familiarity, continuity, and knowledge of key readings and class discussion. **Two absences** constitute a letter grade deduction for the class. To obtain full participation credit, consistency on a weekly basis with critical reflection and thoughtful inquiry is the desired aim.

2. Each member of the seminar will present a 20-minute presentation on an assigned weekly reading. As discussion leaders, presenters will guide the discussion, ask pertinent questions, and connect the parts of the week to the sum of the course. I ask that you not read exclusively from notes, responses, or long passages; instead, use talking points to lead discussion in a Socratic and/or pedagogical manner, as if you might be teaching us a streamlined lesson. Further I ask that you try to engage all members of the seminar and respect each other’s comments. Handouts are welcomed as well as visual aids.

3a. There will be 3 short reading responses that account for 25% of your grade. For all readings, the reading responses will be due on the Tuesdays of each week’s assigned readings. These reading responses are not summary, but critical reflections, analyses, and/or intellectual arguments. Reading responses will be 600-800 words. Due dates are: Sept.25, Oct. 23, Nov. 13
3b. A sample syllabus of Asian American literature will be due December 11th. This assignment asks you to think about how you might teach Asian American literature: what types of texts, themes, assignments, lesson plans, and pedagogical frameworks. This syllabus can be designed for any educational level and can include any Asian American texts discussed or not discussed.

4. The final research paper will be pp. 12-15 in length. This research paper will be original work and based upon outside scholarly research. I ask that you engage at least two primary texts and seven secondary texts. In short, critical research involves interpreting, challenging, and refereeing the views of others. Final papers will be due December 14th, 2007 at 4PM. Be advised that your paper topic can include any subject, but it must intersect with the themes of the course. No late papers will be accepted.

*Please Note:* Hunter College regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g. plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values of intellectual honesty. The college is committed to enforcing the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to Hunter College Academic Integrity Procedures. I take plagiarism seriously, and have seen all the tricks, so do this the right way.

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 Accessibility located in Room 1124 East to secure necessary academic accommodations. For further information and assistance please call (212-772-4857) /TTY (212-650-3230).

**Schedule of Classes**

*Introduction: The Groundwork of Literature, Social Struggle, and Theory*

**August 28th** - The Emergence of Asian American Literature: Social Movements, National Culture, and Citizenship.

**Sept. 4th** - Racial Formation, Hegemony, and Social Movements

**Sept. 11th** - Representation and Orientalist Stereotype

**Sept. 18th** – Classes follow Friday Schedule.
Sept. 25th – Citizen-Soldiers and No-No Boys: Excavating Asian American Literature *Impossible Subjects*, Mae Ngai; John Okada, *No-No Boy*; Frank Chin, from *Aiiieeee!*. **Reading Response #1 Due.**

**Axes of Power and National Identity: Intersections of Race, Gender, Class, and Sexuality**

Oct. 2nd – Class and Race
Carlos Bulosan, *America is in the Heart*; Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*.

Oct. 9th – Queerness and Race

Oct. 16th - Gender and Race

Oct. 23rd – Masculinity and Race
Louis Chu, *Eat a Bowl of Tea*; Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides*. **Reading Response #2 Due.**

**Capitalism, Modernity, and the Margins**

Oct. 30th - Transnationalism and Diaspora
Fae Myenne Ng, *Bone*; Sau-ling C. Wong, “Denationalization Reconsidered”; Laura Kang, *Composition Subjects*.

Nov. 6th – Imperialism and Post-Colonialism

Nov. 13th – Canons and Institutionalization
Theresa Cha, *Dictee*; Lisa Lowe, and Shelley Sunn Wong from *Writing Self, Writing Nation*. **Reading Response #3 Due.**

Nov. 20th No classes. Classes follow Thursday schedule.

**Racial Realignment and Post-Civil Rights America**

Nov. 27th 1965 and Racial Realignment
Dec. 4th Between Black and White
Brett Ratner, *Rush Hour*; Gary Okihiro, from *Margins and Mainstreams*; Helen Zia, from *Asian American Dreams*; Vijay Prashad, *Everybody was Kung-Fu Fighting*; Candice Chuh, *Imagine Otherwise*.

Dec. 11th Presentations and Final Thoughts. **Class Syllabus Due.**

**Reading List**
This is the bibliography of required and suggested readings.


Criticism Fall (1996).


