

# ASIAN 220.01: ASIAN AMERICAN WOMEN WRITERS

Hunter College • Fall Semester 2007 (Cross-listed with ENG 258.56)

Instructor: Jennifer Hayashida

Class meets Mon & Wed from 16:10 – 17:25 in HW 609

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*If you cut my yellow wrists, I'll teach my yellow toes to write.*

*If you cut my yellow wrists, I'll teach my yellow toes to write.*

*If you cut my yellow fists, I'll teach my yellow feet to fight.*

Marilyn Chin, "Blues on Yellow" (from *Rhapsody in Plain Yellow*)

## NOTE

This syllabus may be modified during the semester, so please make sure to check the course Blackboard site as well as your Hunter e-mail on a regular basis in order to keep track of updates. I do not have access to your personal e-mail accounts, so please do not depend on me to reach you via Hotmail, Yahoo, Gmail, etc.

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

In Asian 220, we will read a range of literary texts – some short stories and poems, but primarily novels – written by Asian American women. In our discussions of these readings, we will explore questions of identity formation in relation to factors such as racial ideology, global migrations of labor and capital, class status, sexuality, military conflict, geography, and language, all the while examining the role these texts may or may not fill as part of the category of literature considered "Asian American." As such, what socio-historical context best helps us enter into the worlds that these works of fiction offer? What concerns do these writers share, and how do they differ in their intentions and modes as Asian American cultural producers?

## COMMUNICATION

If you will miss a class, please e-mail me in advance to let me know. If you have to be absent from a class, it is *your* responsibility to find out what material you have missed, either from a classmate or by referring to Blackboard: I will *not* get in touch with you to fill you in on assignments. If you are unclear on an assignment or feel that you may have missed something crucial by not attending class, e-mail me to make sure you will be well prepared for the next class meeting.

**Blackboard & Hunter E-mail:** I will occasionally post schedule and/or reading changes on Blackboard, so make sure that you frequently check the site. In addition, if I need to reach the entire class, I will use your Hunter e-mail addresses, since that is what is provided through Blackboard; in other words, check your Hunter e-mail account on a regular basis! In addition, if you need to schedule an appointment, alert me to the fact that you will be absent/late to class, or if you simply have a question, e-mail me and I will do my best to promptly get back to you.

A note on e-mail courtesy: If you communicate with me via e-mail, please make sure to address me in the body of the e-mail ("*Hi Professor H...*") and to include your name in the closing; many e-mail addresses are impossible to decipher and do not reveal the name of the sender, which makes it difficult for me to know who has written to me. In addition, it is easier for me to respond to you if you write in complete sentences and make it clear what text or issue you are referring to: something like, "What's up with Moon Orchid?" doesn't give me much to work with, nor is it particularly courteous or professional.

## GRADE BREAKDOWN

Attendance: 10%

Participation, Quizzes & Reading Questions: 40%

Essay (6 - 8 pages): 50% (divided equally between first and second drafts)

### ATTENDANCE (10%)

As a courtesy to the instructor and the rest of the class, please turn off all cell phones and hand-held devices before class: anyone who finds it necessary to text-message or take a call during class will be asked to leave and will have their attendance grade reduced by one grade point.

In order to do well in this course, you can miss or be late for *no more than three class meetings*. I will take attendance at the beginning of each class meeting. More than three missed/late classes will lead to a deduction of one grade point of your final grade.

### PARTICIPATION, QUIZZES & READING QUESTIONS (40%)

Simply coming to class is not enough, though: students are expected to arrive at every class meeting having carefully read the assigned material, and to be prepared with comments and questions pertaining to that day's reading. I will on a regular basis post reading questions on Blackboard (indicated on syllabus) and assign them along with the reading – your answers to these questions will be collected at the end of class, and should be in complete sentences that are either typed or legibly hand-written. In addition, students will on a regular basis be asked to lead class discussion; students who are absent on the day when they are supposed facilitate discussion will receive a one-point deduction of their participation grade.

Additionally, in order to ensure that you are on top of that day's material, I will frequently give a quick quiz at the beginning of a class meeting. Quiz questions are intended to see that you have done the reading, and may ask you to name an important event from the reading, briefly describe the relationship between two characters in a story, *or* simply name the place where something happens. If you are late, you will not be offered a make-up quiz.

**A note on reading for this class:** Because we will for the most part be reading longer work, we will be discussing elements of each novel before the entire story is revealed to us; however, a long work of fiction – and the work we read is fiction, not autobiography or memoir – requires patience and attention: knowing how a story ends does not mean that one suddenly has an answer to what the work is “about.” I have purposefully kept the reading assignments at what I consider a reasonable length: I expect you to read each day's passage slowly, carefully, and to make notes on what you read, either in the book or in your notebook. Reading immediately before class meets is not recommended, and will eventually result in a poor understanding of the texts and a lowered participation grade. If you are confused by what you are reading, or if you have questions about why characters behave in a particular way, write your question down and present it to the class during discussion. Even though I will distribute reading questions to guide you through the text, part of your task for this class is to learn how to read closely and be able to analyze elements of each work (plot, theme, character, setting, metaphor, form, etc.) and relate their significance to the larger context of literature by Asian American women.

### ESSAY (50%) • I DO NOT ACCEPT LATE OR E-MAILED ESSAYS!

There is one essay assigned for this course, and it will go through both a draft and final stage. The first draft (a minimum of 4 typed pages) is due **Wednesday, November 14**; the final draft is due on the last day of class: **Wednesday, December 12**. The essay prompt (to be distributed at a later date) will ask you to compare one theme in two of the novels we are reading in class; as a result, the first draft should include a thorough examination of a theme in at least one of the texts we will have read by mid-November. The final version of the essay will then use the novel from the first draft as a point of departure for a thorough examination of an additional text from the course.

All essays should include your name and e-mail address, have an interesting title, be double-spaced and written in 12pt font, and all citations should follow MLA (Modern Language Association) formatting

guidelines. All essays must be stapled! If you are uncertain about what MLA formatting looks like, please go to <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/557/01/>

If you find essay-writing to be particularly difficult or stressful, I would encourage you to visit the Hunter College Reading/Writing Center: <http://rwc.hunter.cuny.edu/>, where you can get feedback on your writing, tutoring to resolve key issues, or attend workshops that can help you improve your writing skills. Please visit the RWC early on in the semester rather than the day before the essay is due – remember that I do not accept late or e-mailed work!

### PLAGIARISM

Unfortunately, I have had to deal with this issue on a number of occasions, and 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 as well as even more severe academic penalties. **INSTEAD OF RESORTING TO THESE DESPERATE MEASURES, COME SEE ME DURING OFFICE HOURS, AND I AM MORE THAN HAPPY TO HELP YOU GET A HANDLE ON THE ISSUE YOU ARE STRUGGLING WITH!**

### 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).

### TEXTBOOKS (All available at Shakespeare & Co.)

Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior*

Jessica Hagedorn, *Dogeaters*

lê thi diem thúy, *the gangster we are all looking for*

Joy Kogawa, *Obasan*

Patti Kim, *A Cab Called Reliable*

### COURSE SCHEDULE

#### • Monday, August 27

Introduction to class

What does it mean to read and write closely? What are common elements of literature that will help us analyze the texts? Why does socio-historical context matter?

Close reading of Thelma Seto, “Living in the Margins” (Handout)

#### • Wednesday, August 29

Elaine Kim, Preface to *Charlie Chan is Dead 2: At Home in the World* (Handout)

Marilyn Chin, “That Half Is Almost Gone” (Handout)

**Reading Question:** What do you think the speaker of Chin’s poem is forgetting? Does she want to forget? Identify one paragraph in Kim’s preface that you think relates to this question of forgetting/remembering one’s history. Why do you think this issue matters in the context of Asian American experience/identity?

#### • Monday, September 3 • LABOR DAY: NO CLASS

- Wednesday, September 5  
Kingston, *The Woman Warrior*: “No Name Woman” & “White Tigers” • Reading Questions on Blackboard
- Monday, September 10  
Kingston, *The Woman Warrior*: “Shaman”
- Wednesday, September 12 • NO CLASSES
- Monday, September 17  
Kingston, *The Woman Warrior*: “At the Western Palace”
- Wednesday, September 19  
Kingston, *The Woman Warrior*: “A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe” • Reading Questions on Blackboard
- Monday, September 24  
Sau-Ling Cynthia Wong, “Autobiography as Guided Chinatown Tour? Maxine Hong Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior* and the Chinese-American Autobiographical Controversy”  
Reading Questions on Blackboard
- Wednesday, September 26  
Kim, *A Cab Called Reliable*: Chapter 1 – all of 4 • Reading Questions on Blackboard
- Monday, October 1  
Kim, *A Cab Called Reliable*: Chapter 5 – all of 7
- Wednesday, October 3  
Kim, *A Cab Called Reliable*: Chapter 8 – all of 11
- Monday, October 8 • COLUMBUS DAY: NO CLASS
- Wednesday, October 10  
Kim, *A Cab Called Reliable*: Chapter 12 – End • Reading Questions on Blackboard
- Monday, October 15  
Kogawa, *Obasan*: Chapter 1 – all of 7 • Reading Questions on Blackboard
- Wednesday, October 17  
Kogawa, *Obasan*: Chapter 8 – all of 13
- Monday, October 22  
Kogawa, *Obasan*: Chapter 14 – all of 15 • Reading Questions on Blackboard
- Wednesday, October 24  
Kogawa, *Obasan*: Chapter 16 – all of 22
- Monday, October 29  
Kogawa, *Obasan*: Chapter 23 – all of 31
- Wednesday, October 31  
Kogawa, *Obasan*: Chapter 32 – End • Reading Questions on Blackboard

- Monday, November 5  
thúy, *the gangster we are all looking for*: “suh-top!” • Reading Questions on Blackboard
- Wednesday, November 7  
thúy, *the gangster we are all looking for*: “palm”
- Monday, November 12  
thúy, *the gangster we are all looking for*: “the gangster we are all looking for” & “the bones of birds” • Reading Questions on Blackboard
- Wednesday, November 14 • 1<sup>ST</sup> DRAFT OF ESSAY DUE AT BEGINNING OF CLASS!  
thúy, *the gangster we are all looking for*: “nu’o’c”
- Monday, November 19  
Workshop
- Wednesday, November 21 • NO CLASS (FRIDAY CLASSES)
- Monday, November 28  
Hagedorn, *Dog eaters*: “Love Letters” – all of “His Mother, the Whore” • Reading Questions on Blackboard
- Wednesday, November 30  
Hagedorn, *Dog eaters*: “Floating Bodies” – all of “High Society”
- Monday, December 3  
Hagedorn, *Dog eaters*: “Surrender” – all of “Jungle Chronicle” (End of Part I) • Reading Questions on Blackboard
- Wednesday, December 5  
Hagedorn, *Dog eaters*: “The President’s Wife Has a Dream” – all of “Last Chance”
- Monday, December 10  
Hagedorn, *Dog eaters*: “Dateline Manila” – all of “The Famine of Dreams” • Reading Questions on Blackboard
- Wednesday, December 12 • LAST CLASS  
Hagedorn, *Dog eaters*: “Bananas and the Republic” – End  
**Final draft of essay due!**  
**Essays handed in after the beginning of class will be considered late**