

English 230/American Culture 301/Asian and Pacific Islander American Studies 301
Introduction to the Short Story and Novel: Constructing Asian American Stories
Winter 2022

Course Description:

In this course, we'll explore the incredible diversity found at the intersection of two vast and complex topics--Asian American experiences and fictional forms in English. By reading in diverse forms—from young adult novel (Marie G. Lee's *Necessary Roughness*) to graphic novel (Trung Le Nguyen's *The Magic Fish*), spy novel (Chang-rae Lee's *Native Speaker*) to historical novel (C Pam Zhang's *How Much of These Hills Are Gold*), coming-of-age novella (Milton Murayama's *All I Asking For Is My Body*) to fictionalized memoir (Carlos Bulosan's *America Is in the Heart*)—we will ask how Asian American writers take advantage of and reinvent various fictional forms so as to interrogate issues like language, immigration, gender and sexuality, political resistance, and family relationships that lie at the heart of Asian American histories. We'll ask, also, how centering Asian American literary traditions and experiments can provide a solid foundation with regards to fictional forms in English. Although the course is not intended to be a comprehensive history of Asian American literature, readings will include earlier canonical authors (Sui Sin Far, John Okada) as well as emerging writers (Elaine Castillo, Anthony Veasna So).

Texts to Acquire:

Milton Murayama, *All I Asking For Is My Body* (1975)
Chang-rae Lee, *Native Speaker* (1995)
Ocean Vuong, *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* (2019)
Trung Le Nguyen, *The Magic Fish* (2020)
Marie G. Lee, *Necessary Roughness* (1996)
C Pam Zhang, *How Much of These Hills Is Gold* (2020)
Anthony Veasna So, *Afterparties: Stories* (2021)
Elaine Castillo, *America Is Not the Heart* (2018)

Excerpts Provided From:

Sui Sin Far, *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* (1912)
Amy Tan, *The Joy Luck Club* (1989)
John Okada, *No-No Boy* (1957)
Hisaye Yamamoto, *Seventeen Syllables and Other Stories* (1988)
Jhumpa Lahiri, *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999)
Carlos Bulosan, *America Is in the Heart* (1946)

Any edition of the books is acceptable, so long as you are able to annotate your physical or electronic copy. All other course readings will be available as PDFs on Canvas. If you have trouble purchasing—or accessing through the library—the books, please let me know and I can assist you.

COURSE POLICIES and RESOURCES:

Accessibility and Accommodations:

Official Policy

- The University of Michigan is committed to ensuring the full participation of all students, and I am committed to maximizing participation and making learning as accessible as possible for all of my students.
- If you have a disability and need an accommodation to participate in this class or to complete course requirements, please ask [Services for Students with Disabilities \(SSD\)](#) to provide documentation of the accommodations that you need. Then, please share this documentation with me as soon as possible, preferably within the first few weeks of class. I will treat as private and confidential any information that you share.
- If you suspect that you may have a disability and would like to be tested, Services for Students with Disabilities can provide referrals to diagnostic services.

My Policy

- I am most interested in your success in this course. I understand that things happen unexpectedly and obtaining official accommodations can be a slow process. If you feel that any circumstances or factors beyond your control (whether related to health, family, food or housing insecurity, or anything else) may affect your presence and work in this class, please reach out to me and we will work to accommodate your needs.
- Especially in the time of COVID-19, we may encounter more unexpected issues to do with health protocols and access to technology. I am here to help you. **If there is *any* reason that you cannot participate fully in class, please let me know and we will work together to adjust.**

Course Requirements and Final Grade Weights:

Daily engagement—20%

- Attendance
- Participation in class discussions and small group activities
- Discussion leadership (see separate handout)

First close-reading essay—15%

- 3-4 page essay close-reading a passage from one of the texts we've read for class
- Prompts and further guidance will be available in advance of the due date.

Second close-reading essay or narrative map—20%

- Choose one:
 - 4-5 page essay close-reading a passage from one of the texts we've read for class
 - Please do not repeat the topic, or text, of the first essay.
 - Narrative map assignment (see separate handout)

Final project—25%

- Final project synthesizing course themes and engaging with course texts in a form of your choosing. You will develop your project idea through a proposal and discussions with me, and may write a critical essay, develop a teaching presentation, undertake a creative project, or select another way to demonstrate mastery over our course readings and themes.

Flash fiction—5%

- Taking inspiration from our course materials, write a one- to two-page short story that draws upon the style, forms, or central concerns of a writer (or multiple writers) we've studied in class.
- You can turn this assignment in at any point during the semester.

Discussion posts—15%

- Over the course of the semester, you will submit four short (250-300-word) discussion posts to Canvas.
- Two of these should be responses to course readings, submitted before class on the day the reading is assigned.
- Two of these should be comparative posts, identifying patterns, resonances, and dissonances between two or more course readings.
- The timing of these responses is entirely up to you.

Extra credit playlist annotations—boosts on participation grade

- For extra credit on your participation grade, add a song to the [class playlist](#) and write a short (50-100 words) annotation on the [Google Doc](#) that describes why it reminds you of our course/course texts. Each one will give you a small boost on your participation grade.
- You're also welcome to add songs without annotations for fun! Just no grade bonus.

Extra credit book review—up to one-third of a letter grade bonus on the final grade

- For extra credit, read one of the books listed as "Further Reading" and write a 5-page book review of it that synthesizes course themes.
- This assignment can be completed at any point before the last two weeks of the semester.

DAILY COURSE SCHEDULE

Wednesday, January 5—Introductions

Reading

Sui Sin Far, “Mrs. Spring Fragrance”

Monday, January 10—Linked Short Stories/Chinatowns

Reading

Amy Tan, “Scar,” “Two Kinds,” “Double Face,” from *The Joy Luck Club*

Assignments due

Submit to classroom norms form

Wednesday, January 12—Protest Novel/Resistance

Reading

Excerpts from John Okada, *No-No Boy*

Optional: Ruth Ozeki introduction to *No-No Boy* (in same PDF)

Assignments due

Access survey

Discussion leadership signup

Monday, January 17—MLK Day

Wednesday, January 19—Career-Retrospective Collections/Settings

Reading

Hisaye Yamamoto, “Wilshire Bus,” “Yoneko’s Earthquake,” “Las Vegas Charley” from *Seventeen Syllables and Other Stories*

Monday, January 24—Narratorial Voice/Pulitzer Recognition

Reading

Jhumpa Lahiri, “A Temporary Matter,” “Interpreter of Maladies,” “Sexy,” from *Interpreter of Maladies*

Wednesday, January 26—Coming of Age/Novella

Reading

Milton Murayama, *All I Asking For Is My Body* (through part 5 of “All I Asking For Is My Body,” p. 43 in U of Hawaii Press edition)

Monday, January 31—Coming of Age/Novella

Reading

Milton Murayama, *All I Asking For Is My Body* (finish)

Wednesday, February 2—Spy Novel/Language

Reading

Chang-rae Lee, *Native Speaker* (pp. 1-99, stop before “Our boy, Mitt”)

Monday, February 7—Spy Novel/Language

Readings

Chang-rae Lee, *Native Speaker* (pp. 100-249, stop before “The front windows are blown out”)

Wednesday, February 9—Spy Novel/Language

Readings

Chang-rae Lee, *Native Speaker* (finish)

Monday, February 14—Fictionalized Memoir/Migrant Labor

Readings

Excerpts from Carlos Bulosan, *America Is in the Heart*

Optional: Elaine Castillo, “Life Tools”

Optional: *The Fall of the I-Hotel*, dir. Curtis Choy (in Media Gallery on Canvas)

Assignments due

First essay

Wednesday, February 16—Poets’ Novels/Queer Narratives

Readings

Ocean Vuong, *On Earth We’re Briefly Gorgeous* (pp. 1-127—stop before “Then I told you the truth.”)

Optional: Kat Chow, “Going Home with Ocean Vuong”

Monday, February 21—Poets’ Novels/Queer Narratives

Readings

Ocean Vuong, *On Earth We’re Briefly Gorgeous* (finish)

Optional: Ocean Vuong, “Someday I’ll Love Ocean Vuong”

Wednesday, February 23—Graphic Novels/Fairy Tales

Readings

Trung Le Nguyen, *The Magic Fish*

Spring Break

Monday, March 7—Young Adult Literature/Rural Belonging

Readings

Marie G. Lee, *Necessary Roughness* (Chapters 1-20)

Wednesday, March 9—Young Adult Literature/Rural Belonging

Readings

Marie G. Lee, *Necessary Roughness* (Finish)

Monday, March 14—Historical Novel/Western

Readings

C Pam Zhang, *How Much of These Hills Is Gold* (pp. 1-110—through “Plum”)

Wednesday, March 16—Historical Novel/Western

Readings

C Pam Zhang, *How Much of These Hills Is Gold* (pp. 110-189—finish Part Three)

Monday, March 21—Historical Novel/Western

Readings

C Pam Zhang, *How Much of These Hills Is Gold* (finish)

Wednesday, March 23—Humor/Representing Underrepresented Communities

Readings

Anthony Veasna So, “Three Women of Chuck’s Donuts,” “The Shop,” from *Afterparties*

Friday, March 25: Second essay/narrative map due

Monday, March 28—Humor/Representing Underrepresented Communities

Readings

Anthony Veasna So, “Human Development,” “Generational Differences,” from *Afterparties*
Reviews of *Afterparties* (Different groups of students will be assigned different reviews to report on in class)

Wednesday, March 30—Transnational Fiction/Revising the Canon

Readings

Elaine Castillo, *America Is Not the Heart* (pp. 1-94—through “Milpitas”)
Optional: Elaine Castillo, “Life Tools”

Assignments due

Final project proposal

Monday, April 4—Transnational Fiction/Revising the Canon

Readings

Elaine Castillo, *America Is Not the Heart* (pp. 95-200—through “The First Picture of You”)

Wednesday, April 6—Transnational Fiction/Revising the Canon

Readings

Elaine Castillo, *America Is Not the Heart* (pp. 201-289—through “True Love Comes for Mine Fujiko”)

Sunday, April 10—Last day for book review

Monday, April 11—Transnational Fiction/Revising the Canon

Readings

Elaine Castillo, *America Is Not the Heart* (finish)

Wednesday, April 13—Conclusions

In class

Final project presentations, concluding thoughts

Monday, April 18—Conclusions

In class

Final project presentations, concluding thoughts

Thursday, April 21—Final Project Due

Further Reading

Rumaan Alam, *Leave the World Behind* (2020)
Ted Chiang, *Stories of Your Life and Others* (2002)
Susan Choi, *The Foreign Student* (1998)
Susan Choi, *Trust Exercise* (2019)
Jean Kyoung Frazier, *Pizza Girl* (2020)
Mira Jacob, *The Sleepwalker's Guide to Dancing* (2014)
Cynthia Kadohata, *Kira-Kira* (2004)
Rachel Khong, *Goodbye, Vitamin* (2017)
Akil Kumarasamy, *Half Gods* (2018)
R. O. Kwon, *The Incendiaries* (2018)
Jhumpa Lahiri, *The Namesake* (2003)
Min Jin Lee, *Pachinko* (2017)
Chia-Chia Lin, *The Unpassing* (2019)
Ken Liu, *The Paper Menagerie and Other Stories* (2016)
Malinda Lo, *Last Night at the Telegraph Club* (2021)
Mia P. Manansala, *Arsenic and Adobo* (2021)
Bharati Mukherjee, *Jasmine* (1989)
Celeste Ng, *Little Fires Everywhere* (2017)
Fae Myenne Ng, *Bone* (1993)
Bich Minh Nguyen, *Pioneer Girl* (2014)
Viet Thanh Nguyen, *The Sympathizer* (2015)
Ruth Ozeki, *My Year of Meats* (1998)
Ruth Ozeki, *A Tale for the Time Being* (2013)
Linda Sue Park, *Prairie Lotus* (2020)
Aimee Phan, *We Should Never Meet* (2005)
Sanjena Sathian, *Gold Diggers* (2021)
SJ Sindu, *Blue-Skinned Gods* (2021)
Lysley Tenorio, *Monstress* (2012)
Monique Truong, *Bitter in the Mouth* (2010)
Karen Tei Yamashita, *Tropic of Orange* (1997)
David Yoon, *Frankly in Love* (2019)
Charles Yu, *Interior Chinatown* (2020)

Is there a work of Asian American fiction that you would like to add to this list? Pitch it to me!