Asian North American Literature and Film (Fall 2011)
English 377 and American Studies 377
M 7:40 – 9:00 pm Scott Hall 106
W 7:40 – 9:00 pm Scott Hall 105

Rick H. Lee
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Asian North American Literature and Film

This course will introduce students to a selection of Asian North American literature and film. We will explore, in particular, the similarities and differences in the experiences of people of Asian descent in the United States and Canada. Both countries share a history of implementing exclusionary immigration policies against the Chinese during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and against South Asians in the early twentieth century, as well as of interning the Japanese during World War II. Asians, moreover, are figured in both countries in similar ways as the “model minority.” However, the United States and Canada hold radically different visions of national identity—respectively, the “melting pot” versus the “cultural mosaic”—that consequently complicate figurations of the Asian as immigrant and as citizen-subject. In this course, we will explore issues of history and memory, migration and displacement, sexuality and desire, generation and kinship, and citizenship and forms of belonging (and non-belonging) as they inform depictions of racial subject formation of Asians in literature and film.

Readings
- You must bring your books and printed readings to class.
- This is a discussion and close reading course. Attendance and productive participation are important in our work during class meetings.

Goals
- To obtain knowledge of a diverse range of Asian North American literature and film and their historical, cultural, and formal dimensions
- To develop strategies of interpretation, including an ability to use critical and theoretical terms, concepts, and methods in relation to a variety of textual forms and other media
- To acquire the ability to engage with the work of writers and critics during class discussions and in written assignments by using and citing such sources effectively
- To develop the ability to write persuasively and precisely in scholarly forms

Required books (available at the Rutgers University Bookstore and NJ Books)
- Chay Yew, *A Language of Their Own* [play] [ISBN 978-0802135001]
Required readings (marked with an asterisk [*] and accessible through SAKAI)
- *Jhumpa Lahiri, “Sexy” and “Mrs. Sen’s” [short stories]
- *Janice Mirikitani, “Recipe” (1987) [poem]
- *Natasha Singh, “For All the Indian Girls I’ve Ever Loved” [short story]
- *Ronald Tataki, “Preface,” “From a Different Shore,” and “Overblown with Hope” [essays]

Films and documentaries
- Jason DaSilva (dir.), Lest We Forget (2003) [documentary]
- Richard Fung (dir.), Dirty Laundry (1996) [documentary]
- Grace Lee (dir.), The Grace Lee Project (2005) [documentary]
- Tammy Nguyen Lee (dir.), Operation Babylift: The Lost Children of Vietnam (2009) [documentary]
- Renée Tajima-Peña, My America . . . or Honk if You Love Buddha (1997) [documentary]

Requirements
- Attendance and participation. Attendance is mandatory, as is active reading, listening, and participation. Please make every effort to come to each class having read and reflected on the readings for the day. Although multiple class meetings are allotted to individual primary texts, you are responsible for reading the assigned text in its entirety prior to the first class meeting for that text. Our meetings will involve class discussion, and our goal will be to produce knowledge collaboratively in the classroom.

- Absence policy. I will take attendance at the beginning of each class. Students are expected to attend ALL classes; if you expect to miss a class, please use the University absence reporting website https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/ to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email is automatically sent to me. You are allowed 3 absences for any reason whatsoever; more than 3 absences for any reason will result in a drop in your final grade. Repeated excessive lateness (over 10 minutes) will count as absences.

- Quizzes and in-class writing exercises. Be prepared to encounter occasional short quizzes or brief writing assignments at the start of class periods. These are meant to ensure that you are keeping up with the readings, and will also be used to jumpstart class discussion. Because we go over the answers right away, I do not allow make-up quizzes if you are absent or late.

- Papers. You will complete three writing assignments: two term papers and a term paper proposal. I will provide more specific guidelines about these assignments as the due dates
approach. All papers are due at the beginning of the class period. Each day a paper is late will result in a drop in your grade (e.g., B+ to B).

Grade distribution
- Attendance and participation: 10%
- Quizzes: 15%
- Term paper 1 due on M 10/24: Kingston/Kogawa/Phan (5-7 pp): 20%
- Term paper 2 proposal assignment due M 12/5 (2-3 pp): 10%
- Term paper 2 due on M 12/12 (10-12 pp): 25%
- Final Exam on W 12/21: 20%
- TOTAL: 100%

Grade chart
- Note the following chart for grades in this course:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B+</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C+</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>95-100</td>
<td>88-94</td>
<td>80-87</td>
<td>75-79</td>
<td>70-74</td>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>Below 60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Office hours
- Please email me to meet during office hours.

Accessibility
- The Office of Disability Services for Students, located in the Kreeger Learning Center (151 College Avenue, Suite 123), offers services for students with documented disabilities. Contact the ODSS at (732) 932-2848, or visit http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/.
- All special accommodation requests must be brought to my attention in the first 2 weeks of the semester.

Academic misconduct and plagiarism
- Plagiarism is the representation of another’s works or ideas as one’s own. It includes the unacknowledged word for word use and/or paraphrasing of another person’s work, and/or the inappropriate unacknowledged use of another person’s ideas. All cases of suspected plagiarism and other violations of academic integrity will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct. If the OSC determines that you have violated the University’s Code of Student Conduct, the sanctions for the violation could include a failing grade in this course and suspension or dismissal from the University. For more information about academic integrity, visit http://studentconduct.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity.

Class cancellation policy
- In the unlikely event of class cancellation due to emergency, I will contact you via email and request that a note be placed on the door. I will also contact you following the cancellation to let you know what will be expected of you for our next class meeting.

Cell phones
- All cell phones must be turned off during class.
**SCHEDULE**

**Week 1**

W 9/7  Introduction  
*Janice Mirikitani, “Recipe”

Th 9/8  *Justin Chin, “Chain Letter”  
*Jim Wong-Chu, “How Feel I Do?”

**Immigration, Citizenship, and Asian American Histories**

**Week 2**

M 9/12  *Bill Ong Hing, “Introduction” and “Two Contrasting Schemes: Understanding Immigration Policies Affecting Asians Before and After 1965  
*Ronald Tataki, “Preface,” “From a Different Shore,” and “Overblown with Hope”

W 9/14  *Lisa Lowe, “Immigration, Citizenship, Racialization: Asian American Critique”

**What is Asian America?**

**Week 3**

M 9/19  Screening: Renée Tajima-Peña, *My America . . . or Honk if You Love Buddha*

W 9/21  Screening and discussion: *My America*

**Storytelling and the Construction of Female Identity**

**Week 4**

M 9/26  Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior*

W 9/28  Kingston, *The Woman Warrior*

**Who is Asian American?**

**Week 5**

M 10/3  *Lisa Lowe, “Heterogeneity, Hybridity, Multiplicity: Asian American Differences”  
Screening: Grace Lee, *The Grace Lee Project*

W 10/5  Screening and discussion: *The Grace Lee Project*
HISTORY AND (NON-) BELONGING I: WORLD WAR II AND JAPANESE INTERNMENT

Week 6
M 10/10  Joy Kogawa, *Obasan*
W 10/12  Kogawa, *Obasan*

HISTORY AND (NON-) BELONGING II: THE VIETNAM WAR AND OPERATION BABYLIFT

Week 7
M 10/17  Aimee Phan, *We Should Never Meet*
W 10/19  Writing session: No class

Week 8
M 10/24  Term paper 1 due: Kingston/Kogawa/Phan
Screening: Tammy Nguyen Lee, *Operation Babylift: The Lost Children of Vietnam*
W 10/26  Phan, *We Should Never Meet*
Discussion: *Operation Babylift*

REIMAGINING ASIAN CANADIAN HISTORY

Week 8
M 10/24  Screening and discussion: Richard Fung, *Dirty Laundry*
W 10/26  Screening and discussion: Richard Fung, John Greyson, and Ali Kazimi, *Rex vs. Singh*

INTERETHNIC AFFILIATIONS AND CONFLICTS

Week 9
M 10/31  Chang-rae Lee, *Native Speaker*
W 11/2  Lee, *Native Speaker*

DESIRING AND DESIRABLE SUBJECTS

Week 10
M 11/7  Adrian Tomine, *Shortcomings*
W 11/9  Tomine, *Shortcomings*
Week 11
M 11/14  *Natasha Singh, “For All the Indian Girls I’ve Ever Loved”
W 11/16  *Jhumpa Lahiri, “Sexy” and “Mrs. Sen’s”

Week 12
M 11/21  Chay Yew, A Language of Their Own
W 11/23  Thanksgiving: No class

Week 13
M 11/28  R. Zamora Linmark, Rolling the R’s
W 11/30  Linmark, Rolling the R’s

**HISTORY AND (NON-) BELONGING III: BEFORE AND AFTER 9/11**

Week 14
M 12/5  Term paper 2 proposal assignment due
Screening: Lest We Forget
W 12/7  Discussion: Lest We Forget

Week 15
M 12/12  Term paper 2 due
Review
W 12/21  Final exam: Scott Hall 105 / 8:00 – 11:00 pm
Bibliography


