

# Asian American Theatre and Dance (or: Asian American Creative Arts)

Spring 2019  
AAS 310/WGS 301/TD 311T  
Unique #: 32055/45470/25375  
MWF: 11a-12p, RLP 1.108

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Office hours: W 12-1, BUR 560 or by appointment

## Course Description

This course examines theatre, dance and performance art by and about Asian Americans. We analyze these media in social, political, and historical contexts. We also use these sources as models for creating our own original work. As such, this class is focused on praxis—the marriage of theory and practice. In other words, this course combines analysis of writing and media with learning basic methods for collaboration and devising performance. We define Asian America broadly, including both immigrants and people of Asian descent who have lived in the Americas for multiple generations. We engage with both documented (via text, video, or description) and live performance to examine how performance as a medium and mode of making meaning affects our perception of the world. We employ strategies from gender studies, queer studies, performance studies, and critical race studies to discuss how Asian Americans make meaning through performance, and how performance represents Asian America. Finally, we use our critical analysis to discover and apply creative strategies toward building meaning around Asian America that reflects our own political and social beliefs and hopes.

## Course Objectives

After successfully completing this course, students will be able to:

1. Describe, analyze and interpret works of Asian American performance, including but not limited to theatre, dance, and performance art
2. Discuss cultural artifacts and meaning around Asian American issues, using terms relating to theatre/dance/performance art, engaging critical and aesthetic issues that cross both fields
3. Create cultural artifacts relating to lived experience of Asian Americans
4. Articulate the vital importance of creative rigor and voice toward forging new meanings and engaging politically and socially in our world

## Required Materials

All readings and videos will be available on Canvas or via the UT Libraries. In lieu of spending \$60-\$140 on textbooks, you will be expected to attend live performances, which will sometimes require admission fees. Some performances may be added to your required materials, but for now, the following performances are required:

- *The Women of \_\_\_\_ (a song, not song)*, Feb 14-17 at the Oscar G. Brockett Theatre
- *Locus of Control*, Feb 28-Mar 3 at The VORTEX
- *Fortitude*, Mar 5-15 at the B. Iden Payne Theatre
- *a place called the middle* OR *30 Floods* in *UTNT (UT New Theatre)*, Mar 12-31 in the Winship Building
- *Cohen New Works Festival*, Apr 15-19, Winship Building. We will not hold class this week and you MUST see at least two works from the Festival.

Please note that all of the above performances provide possibilities for low-cost or free tickets. The VORTEX offers Radical Rush tickets starting at 7pm on all show days. UT Theatre and Dance productions offer \$5 preview tickets. Cohen New Works Festival is free. Information on UTTD shows can be found here: <https://wikis.utexas.edu/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=51841138>

## Course Requirements/Grading

All written assignments should be double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12pt font, MLA format with citations.

Critical Analysis Paper and Revision (5 pages)	15%
Performance Responses (2 pages X 5 responses)	10%
Creative Practical Project (5-8 pages)	15%
Final Project Proposal (2 pages)	5%
Final Project Draft and Revision (10-15 pages)	20%
“How to Read” Break-downs for each reading (1 page)	10%
Class Participation	25%

**Critical Analysis Paper and Revision (5 pgs):** The prompt for this assignment is in Canvas under “Assignments.” This paper will require you to find at least two sources outside course materials to support your argument. The quality of your writing—including clarity of ideas, strength of argument, syntax and grammar—is integral to your grade. After you submit this paper, I will provide you feedback for a grade and you will workshop your paper with a peer. Taking this feedback into consideration, you will revise and re-submit the paper along with the original submission. Your grade for the project will be based on the overall quality of the written project as well as your ability to receive feedback and integrate it into your final version. The feedback you provide to your peer will also be taken into consideration. The goal of this exercise is not only to develop your writing skills, but also your revising and editing skills. I strongly recommend using the Undergraduate Writing Center.

**Performance Response (2 pgs each for 5 Performances):** You are required to attend Department of Theatre and Dance productions as well as other performances related to the content of this course, including *Locus of Control*. You are responsible for being able to discuss them in class. In addition, you must write a scholarly, formal response to one performance. Response papers should include a synopsis of the event as well as use of at least one cited course reading. Follow the general arch of describe, analyze, interpret to guide your writing structure. These papers are due at the beginning of the class in which we discuss the productions.

**Creative Practical Project (5-8 pages):** In order to better understand Asian American theatre and dance, you must understand some aspect of producing work. Relating the content or structure to the Asian American experience, you must either create an original performance-based piece, or a structural plan to foster Asian American theatre, dance, or performance art. You may use this assignment to expand on training you already have, you may also use it as an incentive to begin acquiring skills, or you may submit a plan for a creative performance project. This includes, but is not limited to: a short original script or script excerpt; a choreographed dance; a piece of performance/installation art; a mock grant proposal for a commissioned play or dance; a mission and business plan for a troupe or company. For performances, you must document your performance with video and submit the video in tandem with your written work.

All written materials should include the following: brief description of how the piece relates to course content, any models or influences (previous artists) you might have looked at to help you, a description of your process. Because you are relating to critical race studies, your written work should include citations.

**If you are writing a script:** Your script needs to be at least 5 pages, but can be more. You will need to include 3-5 page description separate from the script outlining the above elements.

**If you are creating a movement piece or physical theatre:** Your written portion will need to cover the above elements and should be between 3-5 pages. It will be separate from the movement piece and you should upload a video of the full piece either to Canvas or include a link (to youtube or vimeo, etc.) in your paper.

**Final Project Proposal (1-2 pg):** You have two options for your final project. Option 1.) Conduct a standard research paper using primary and secondary sources that relate performance and Asian America. If you choose to write a research paper, your proposal should include an outline of your research question, a hypothesis, and possible primary and secondary literature you plan to use. Option 2.) Devise, create and execute a creative project that relates to Asian American history, experience, or cultural production. This can be in the form of a performance (dance, devised theatre, etc.) or an original short play. Option 2 may be done solo, in duos or a group. Outline what you plan to make and your planned process for doing so. You must also include your aesthetic and theoretical influences, your creative process, as well as a rationale for choosing your medium and subject matter.

**Final Project presentation:** You will each have seven minutes, including question and answer sessions to present your work and solicit feedback. If you choose to collaborate on a creative project, you may combine your allotted presentation time.

**Final Project/Paper and Revision:** The final project is a culmination of all your work in this class. As such, I expect it to be clear, eloquent, and well argued. If you choose to write a research paper, you will be graded on the use and knowledge of theory and literature, the quality of your writing, the tightness of your argument, and the overall structure of the paper. Research papers should be 12-15 pages. If you choose to make a creative project, you must also submit a 10-12-page report outlining your process, influences, and theoretical analysis. You will be graded on the rigor of your creative process, your craft, and relevance to course material as well as the quality of your written report. As with the Critical Analysis Paper, you will peer-review each other's writing.

**How to Read Breakdowns (1 pg, each):** The very first reading I assign you is a short manual on "How to Read" scholarly articles quickly. This article outlines how to distill a scholarly writing. Later in the semester, we will read guidelines on how to read plays and watch dance. Using these as guides, you will create "breakdowns" of each required reading in class.

**Class Participation:** In a small class such as this, you will only learn what you contribute. To do well in this class, you must **both** speak and listen. Students who rarely speak will receive low participation credit. Students who talk a lot but clearly have not thought about the materials will also receive low credit. You are expected to attend all classes on-time and prepared in order to participate in discussion and in-class exercises. This means you read and watch all required text and arrive to class with questions and thoughtful comments on them. Unexcused absence, late arrival and early departure from class will be penalized. Four unexcused absences will result in an "F" for the entire class. Tardy arrival and early departure will be counted as half an unexcused absence.

**Grading Criteria:** Rubrics will be posted for each assignment in Canvas. You will receive high grades in this class if you are diligent in your reading and writing, you show a clear understanding of the materials, and you work to foster a rigorous and stimulating intellectual environment. For critical/analytical exercises, this means that you integrate course readings into your writings, you devise and support a strong and thoughtful argument, and you submit work that is free from grammatical and syntactical errors. For creative exercises, this means that you show knowledge of

concepts, integration of creative and theoretical ideas, extensive process work, attention to craft, and an overall rigorous and diligent attitude. Documentation as well as presentation of your creative project is integral to your grade. Based on these criteria: A=excellent, B=good, C=average, D=below average, F=failing. If you feel that your grades do not match the effort you are exerting, please see me during my office hours.

### **Class Expectations/Ground Rules**

**Discussions:** Because of the nature of critical race, performance, and queer studies, this class will at times make you feel uncomfortable. You may find other classmates or even myself saying things that may offend or shock you. Listen well. Discuss topics rigorously using the course materials to support your arguments. Personal narratives can be helpful but be mindful of when you are using personal experience as evidence for an argument or for personal reasons. Respect each other as fellow scholars and me as your facilitator and designated expert. Become experts in your own right and challenge one another to think deeply. Please avoid dominating conversation, name-calling, and silencing others.

**For Creators:** If you plan to use this class as a place to explore your creativity, I suggest that you keep a sketchbook or journal of ideas you have relating to race/Asian Americans and artistic production. If you would like to submit an electronic copy of your sketchbook at the end of class, you can receive extra credit.

### **Physical Demands**

You are responsible for your body. Because we will be examining performance, some class sessions may be physically demanding and rigorous. Please alert me to any injuries or physical limitations you might have that could require modifications. Although I expect you to push yourself, I do not expect you to endure pain or experience injury. If you are sick and contagious, DO NOT come to class. I may ask you for documentation of your illness.

**Use of Electronics:** Please turn off your cell phones while in class. I strongly recommend using pen and notebook to take notes. Studies have shown that typing notes does little for committing information to memory while hand-written notes help you to remember. I encourage you to incline yourself toward remembering. Use your laptop judiciously. Please be courteous. Surfing the web or social networking during discussions will result in me asking you to leave class.

**Late Policy:** If you turn an assignment in late, I will dock one-third of a letter grade for every day it is late (B turns into B-, etc.). I will not accept papers more than five days late. Please note that I will not accept late final projects.

### **Incompletes**

Students are not permitted to take an Incomplete for this course, except in the case of a documented health or family emergency discussed in advance with me. If you feel you are falling behind in your work, it is your responsibility to meet with me and formulate a plan of action well in advance of the end of the semester so that you can complete the course successfully.

### **Services for Students with Disabilities**

The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. Students with physical or learning disabilities should provide the professor with a letter requesting reasonable academic accommodation, and work directly with the professor to determine what accommodations are needed. This letter can be obtained from Services for

Students with Disabilities, located in the Student Services Building. For more information, contact the Office of the Dean of Students at 471-6259, 471-4641 TTY, or visit their website at: [www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/](http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/)

### **The University of Texas Honor Code**

The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the University is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

### **Scholastic Dishonesty**

The University defines academic dishonesty as cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, falsifying academic records, and any act designed to avoid participating honestly in the learning process. Scholastic dishonesty also includes, but is not limited to, providing false or misleading information to receive a postponement or an extension on a test, quiz, or other assignment, and submission of essentially the same written assignment for two courses without the prior permission of the instructor. By accepting this syllabus, you have agreed to these guidelines and must adhere to them. Scholastic dishonesty damages both the student's learning experience and readiness for the future demands of a work-career. Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. For more information on scholastic dishonesty, please visit the Student Judicial services website at [deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs](http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs).

### **Religious Holidays**

Religious holy days sometimes conflict with class and examination schedules. If you miss a work assignment or other project due to the observance of a religious holy day you will be given an opportunity to complete the work missed within a reasonable time after the absence. It is the policy of the University of Texas at Austin that you must notify your instructor at least fourteen days prior to the classes scheduled on dates you will be absent to observe a religious holy day.

### **Course Content**

At times this semester we will be discussing and/or viewing material that may be upsetting to some students. Important, but sometimes difficult and contentious, topics related to race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, etc., are to be expected in an Asian American Studies course. If you ever feel the need to step outside during a discussion or screening, you may do so without academic penalty. You will, however, be responsible for any material you miss. Please note that the class will be committed to respectful dialogue at all times.

### **Resources and Assistance**

Assistance with writing is available at the Undergraduate Writing Center on a drop-in basis or by appointment (FAC 211; 471-6222). Help with studying and writing skills can be found at the UT Learning Center (Jester Center A332; 471-3614).

### **A Note About Firearms**

Some exercises in this class will be physical in nature and not safe for participants with concealed firearms or for their peers. I therefore ask that you leave firearms at home for our class. Also, while my office is shared, I respectfully ask you do not bring firearms into office hours.

**This syllabus is subject to change.**

## Course Calendar:

Readings and assignments due on the day they appear

### Week 1      Introductions

- 1/23      Course introductions, expectations, rights and responsibilities
- 1/25      Read: “How to Read, Part I: Dissecting a Text,” Shore. In-class: we dissect “Racial Formation,” Omi and Winant.

### PART I: LET’S LEARN!

### Week 2      Overview: What is Asian America? What is Performance?

- 1/28      Read: “Introduction,” J. Lee. **Due: Breakdown for Lee.**
- 1/30      Read: “Introduction,” Wong, Y. **Due: Breakdown for Wong.**
- 2/1      Read: “EF’s Visit to a Small Planet: Some Questions to Ask a Play,” Fuchs.  
**Due: Breakdown for Fuchs.**

### Week 3      Orientalism, Yellowface, and its Lineages

- 2/4      Read: “Yellowface,” R. Lee. **Due: Breakdown for R. Lee.**  
In class: Excerpts from *Madama Butterfly* and *Miss Saigon*
- 2/6      Read: *M. Butterfly*, by David Henry Hwang, Acts I and II.
- 2/8      Continue Reading *M Butterfly*, Act III and Author’s Note. **Due: Breakdown for Hwang.**

### Week 4      What is “Japan,” Anyway? / The Model Minority

- 2/11      Read: “Meditations on *The Mikado*,” J. Lee. **Due: Breakdown for Lee**  
In class: Excerpts from *The Mikado* and *The Mikado Reclaimed*.
- 2/13      “Eiko and Koma,” Candelaria. **Due: Breakdown for Candelaria**  
In class: Excerpts from Eiko and Koma
- 2/15      Read: *Peerless*, by Jiehae Park. **Due: Breakdown for Park**

### Week 5      The Model Minority, Cont

- 2/18      Writing Day, no class.
- 2/20      Read: *Disgraced*, by Ayad Akhtar through Scene 2 (pg 36)

In Class: Discuss *The Women of \_\_\_\_\_*. **Due: Performance Response 1**

2/22 Continue Reading *Disgraced* through end. **Due: Breakdown for Akhtar**

**Week 6 Solo Performance & Performance Art**

2/25 **DUE: Critical Analysis Paper**

In-class, watch: *Wong Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*

2/27 Read: "Nikki S. Lee's *Projects*," C. Smith **Due: Breakdown of Smith**

3/1 Read: Pages on Teresa Cha starting at top of pg 47 through 50 in FTDG. No breakdown due. **DUE: Peer comments on Critical Analysis Paper**

**Week 7 The "Traditional" Revisited**

3/4 In-class: Discuss *Locus of Control*. **Due: Performance Response 2.**  
Begin reading *Songs of Dragons*...

3/6 Read: First 9 pages of *Sweating Saris, Chapter 6*, Srinivasan. **Due: Breakdown of Srinivasan**

In class: Post Natyam Collective

3/8 Read: *Songs of the Dragons Flying to Heaven* by Young Jean Lee. **Due: Breakdown of Lee**

**PART II: LET'S MAKE (a crash course)!**

**Week 8 OMG I HAVE A BODY?**

3/11 **DUE: Revised Critical Analysis Paper**  
overview of The Making

3/13 Read: Read: "Resistance," Bogart. **Due: Breakdown of Bogart**  
In Class: Crash course in Suzuki—**Come dressed to MOVE!**

3/15 In Class: Discuss *Fortitude*. Crash course in Viewpoints—**Come dressed to MOVE!**

**Due: Performance Response 3**

**Spring Break**

**Week 9 OMG I HAVE A VOICE?**

3/25 Prepare: Find a short piece of writing or excerpt you find ABSOLUTELY

COMPELLING. Bring it to class. In Class: Writing exercises

3/27 Prepare: a short, written piece based on writing exercises. In Class: Share out. Critique.

3/29 Prepare: a revision of your first written piece.

## **Week 10 OMG I RELATE TO OTHERS?**

4/1 Read: “Composition,” Bogart and Landau. In Class: Crashcourse in Viewpoints—**Come dressed to MOVE**

In-class: Discuss UTNT. **Due: Performance Response 4**

4/3 Prepare: an initial idea for your Creative Practical Project. **Due: Breakdown of Bogart.**  
In Class: Show your idea to your peers

4/5 Individual Meetings about Creative Practical Project

## **Week 11**

4/8 Individual Meetings about Creative Practical Project

4/10 **DUE: Creative Practical Project Presentation Part I**

4/12 **DUE: Creative Practical Project Presentation Part II**

## **Week 12**

4/15 **DUE: Creative Practical Project Written Report**

4/15-19 Cohen New Works Festival, no class

## **Week 13**

4/22 In class: Discuss Cohen New Works Festival **Due: Performance Response 5**

4/24 **DUE: Final Project Proposal.** In class: Individual meetings about your final project; work on your project.

4/26 Individual meetings about your final project; work on your project.

## **Week 14**

4/29 Share out about work on your final project.

5/1 Share out about work on your final project.



5/3            **DUE: Final Project Draft.** In class: Individual meetings about your final project; work on your project.

**Week 15**

5/6            In class: present Final Projects

5/8            In class: present Final Projects

5/10           In class: present Final Projects **DUE: Peer comments on Final Project Draft.**

5/16           **Final Project Due Via Canvas, 11:59pm**