

Asian American Literature

Professor Nadeen Kharputly (nkharputly@wlu.edu)

Office hours: sign up on Canvas (<https://wlu.canvas.edu>)

Weekly Zoom meeting, Wednesdays 11:30-12:30pm

Our once a week Zoom meeting is **strongly recommended**. If you do not have a valid reason for skipping them, I expect you to attend each week; otherwise, please e-mail me ASAP and we will discuss your situation.

Course description

This course presents a study of literatures by Asian American authors, with a focus on how Asian Americans - broadly and inclusively defined - have transformed the social, political, and cultural landscapes of the United States. With such topics as immigration and refugee politics, racism and xenophobia, exclusion and internment (incarceration), civil rights activism, the post-9/11 period, and the model minority myth, our selected texts (novels, poetry, short stories) present both a historical and an intimate look into the lives of individuals who articulate what it means to identify as Asian American in the modern and contemporary United States

Objectives and learning outcomes

Students majoring in English will learn how to

- write clear, persuasive analytical essays driven by arguments about texts;
- read closely, recognizing subtle and complex differences in language use;
- seek out further knowledge about literary works, authors, and/or contexts, and document research appropriately, adhering to the highest standards of intellectual honesty;
- derive pleasure and edification from a broad range of texts;
- in optional creative writing courses, create literary texts and revise them to convey greater power and control.

Assignments

- Self-evaluations
- Analytical Canvas posts (minimum 200 words/5 posts/1000 words total)
- Community-building Flipgrid videos
- 1 close reading exercise + reflection (500 words)
- 1 essay (2000 words)
- Final exam (reflection)

Required texts

- John Okada, *No-No Boy* (1957)
- Ayad Akhtar, *American Dervish* (2012)
- Celeste Ng, *Everything I Never Told You* (2014)
- Ocean Vuong, *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* (2019)

All other texts (short stories and poems) are available through Canvas.

Grading policy

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Class policies

While this syllabus lays out everything you need to know for this class, please understand that our present circumstances demand a certain level of flexibility. If any changes to the class arise, I will let know you ASAP. This policy applies to you as well: there are certain expectations that you need to meet for this class, but your situation may require flexibility from me. Therefore

please maintain communication with me should any changes or emergencies arise in your situation and we can work together to address them. Please check your W&L e-mail at least once a day to keep up to date with any possible changes to our schedule. Expect responses to your e-mails within 24 hours during the week and 48 hours over the weekend.

Zoom policy

Please develop a setup that works best for you for our meetings: you can use virtual backgrounds or turn off your camera. Whether your camera is on or off, I expect you to stay engaged and be ready to respond to a question if I call on you. Do stay on mute until it is your turn to speak in order to minimize background noise. Keep distractions such as phones out of sight in order to minimize distractions. Pet sightings are highly encouraged. E-mail me a photograph of your pet (or a random animal if you don't have one) and I will know that you've read at least the first page of this syllabus carefully.

Accommodations

Students requesting accommodation will need to provide appropriate documentation of: (1) a disability, which is a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; and (2) a need for accommodation, by virtue of the specific functional limitations of the disability, to have equal access to educational opportunities. It is the responsibility of a student with a physical or mental disability who may require any type of accommodation to make the accommodation request in a timely manner. In order to ensure sufficient time for the eligibility and accommodation decision process and to make arrangements for appropriate accommodations, a student should contact the Title IX Coordinator and Director of Disability Resources, Elrod Commons 212, Washington and Lee University, Lexington, Virginia 24450, (540) 458-4055 and submit the documents required for consideration of disability accommodations during the first month of the fall or winter academic terms. Requests submitted after the first month of either of those academic terms, or requests submitted with incomplete documentation (including insufficient testing data), could result in a delay of consideration and action on the request until the the following academic term. The student will need to complete a "Request for Accommodation of Disability" form, obtain a copy of the most recent medical or cognitive testing documentation, and schedule an interview with the designated administrator.

Honor system and plagiarism

Students will be held to the standards of the W&L **Honor System**. The inclusion of your name on all assignments indicates that you have understood and abided by the pledge, whether you write the pledge or not.

Plagiarism is a serious offense. It is imperative that you review the university's statement on plagiarism before turning in any assignments: <https://libguides.wlu.edu/plagiarism> and <https://www.wlu.edu/writing-program/citation-documentation-and-plagiarism>

Plagiarism consists of but is not limited to the following: presenting another person's ideas or language as if they were your own, copying (words AND ideas) from the Internet, and failure to acknowledge and properly cite the sources of the language and/or ideas presented. Re-using language from a paper you have previously written for another class is unacceptable. If you are unsure about what constitutes plagiarism, please check in with me ahead of time. It is your responsibility to be aware. You may find this plagiarism test useful: <https://www.indiana.edu/~istd/test.html>. Another test you can take is e-mailing me a second photograph of your pets (or a random animal) (so two photographs total) so I'll know you've read most of this syllabus carefully.

Writing Center and Writing Program resources

The **Writing Center on campus** is not a tool for remedial purposes, but a crucial resource for writers of every skill and background. Good writing relies on feedback from other perspectives; I encourage you to visit the Center frequently in order to solicit feedback and improve your writing. **The Writing Center will be operating entirely online due to the pandemic.** <https://www.wlu.edu/writing-program/writing-center>

The **Writing Program website** (<http://www.wlu.edu/writing-program>) offers a good list of resources for your essays. Use right hand side menu/tabs for:

Resources: <https://www.wlu.edu/writing-program/resources>

- **Specific Types of Writing:** <https://www.wlu.edu/writing-program/specific-types-of-writing>
- **Writing in Different Disciplines:** <https://www.wlu.edu/writing-program/writing-in-different-disciplines>
- **International Students:** <https://www.wlu.edu/writing-program/international-students>

| Schedule | Topic | Reading | Assignment |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|--|
| Week 1 Aug 24-28 | Introduction | 1. Viet Thanh Nguyen, "Cannon Fodder" 2. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, "The Danger of a Single Story" TED Talk | 1) Post intro video on Flipgrid 2) Find an Asian American text for next week |
| Week 2 Aug 31-Sep 4 | Asian American identity through poetry | Selected poems | 1) Canvas discussion (include your chosen text) 2) Complete self-assessment on Canvas |
| Week 3 Sep 7-11 | Japanese Americans, World War II, and concentration camps | John Okada, <i>No-No Boy</i> (1957) | Flipgrid video |
| Week 4 Sep 14-18 | Racial asymmetry speculative fiction | 1. Ted Chiang, <i>The Merchant and the Alchemist's Gate</i> (2007) 2. Nam Le, "Love and Honor and Pity and Pride and Compassion and Sacrifice" (2008) | Canvas discussion |

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|--------------------------------------|--|---|--|
| Week 5 Sep 21-25 | Intergenerational Indian American family, immigration, and integration | Rishi Reddi, short stories from <i>Karma and Other Stories</i> (2007) | Analytical/close reading reflection exercise |
| Week 6 Sep 28-Oct 2 | Pakistani Muslim American boyhood, sexuality and morality | Ayad Akhtar, <i>American Dervish</i> (2012) | Canvas discussion Midterm reflection due |
| Week 7 Oct 5-9 | Nation and citizenship | Selected poems | Flipgrid |
| Week 8 Oct 12-16 | Work on paper | None | Paper due |
| Week 9 Oct 19-23 | Biracial family dynamics, model minority syndrome, and mental health | Celeste Ng, <i>Everything I Never Told You</i> (2014) | Canvas discussion |
| Week 10 Oct 26-30 | Grief, family, and mental health | Selected poems | Flipgrid |
| Week 11 Nov 2-6 | Vietnam War, trauma refugees, sexuality | Ocean Vuong, <i>On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous</i> (2019) | Canvas discussion |
| Week 12 Nov 9-13 | Conclusion | None | Final exam Final self-evaluation due |