

ENG 204  
Fall 2021  
TTh 11:30 a.m. - 12:45 p.m.  
W201 South College

Instructor: Prof. <PROF\_FULL\_NAME>  
(she/her)  
Email: <PROF\_EMAIL>  
Office: W341 South College

## Introduction to Asian American Literature



### Course Description

Organized around the development of Asian American studies as an academic discipline that sought to challenge white supremacy, this class will introduce students to several canonical texts in Asian American literature as well as contemporary cultural productions that contribute to and complicate what it means to be "Asian American." Our reading practice will consist of contextualizing the texts in their historical production, as well using close-reading and critical thinking in order to study how identities are produced in a given historical moment in different relationships to structures of power such as US imperialism, racism, capitalism, patriarchy, and heteronormativity. The ultimate goal of this class is not to impart an empirical knowledge on what it means to be Asian American but to destabilize such knowledge, through a study of changing representations.

### Required Texts

1. Carlos Bulosan, *America Is in the Heart* \*
2. John Okada, *No-No Boy*
3. Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior* \*
4. Thi Bui, *The Best We Could Do*
5. Ocean Vuong, *Night Sky with Exit Wounds*
6. Franny Choi, *Soft Science*

\* Available on Moodle.

You are required to bring all assigned readings to class (either in paper or electronic format) on the day that they are listed on the syllabus.

## GRADING AND COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance & Class Participation	15%
Reading Exercises	15%
Discussion Question & Facilitation	10%
SCAP (2-3 pages)	15%
Group Presentation	15%
Final Project	30%

Attendance & Class Participation (15%): Because this class will be run as a seminar, everyone's active participation will be vital to its success.

- You are allowed two unexcused absences; after that, your final grade will be lowered for every additional unexcused absence (B becomes a B-).
- If you arrive 10 minutes late more than 3 times, this will count as an unexcused absence.
- **Five or more unexcused absences will result in a failing course grade.**

Participation includes:

- Coming to class on time. Chronic lateness and/or leaving early will also have a negative impact on your grade.
- Doing the assigned reading and contributing thoughtfully to discussions by talking and listening respectfully.
- Turning off or silencing your cell phone. Computers and other electronic equipment should be used for class purposes only.

Reading Exercises (15%): There will be routine quizzes, writing assignments, and Moodle posts related to the reading for the day. Sometimes I will ask you to write a short piece or upload a Moodle post for the next class. I may also give out a reading quiz at the beginning of a class. You will not be able to make up the quiz if you are late or absent.

Discussion Questions & Facilitation (10%): You will sign up to come up with a discussion question based on the day's reading(s) and post it on Moodle before the class meeting. Once in class, you will introduce and facilitate the discussion that results from the question. Your question should be about 100-words and be conducive to a discussion. Here is an example that is 103 words:

I am interested in how the simile of a child functions as a literary device in Bret Harte's construction of his Chinese character Ah Sin in "Plain Language." The narrator, James, describes Ah Sin as "child-like." What are the characteristics from the poem that support that description, and what are some assumptions or biases that are revealed through it? Isn't it offensive to describe a grown man as "child-like"? Or, are we meant to take it as a "positive" description that renders Ah Sin harmless or innocent? If so, how does the descriptor complicate the derogatory label of Ah Sin as "heathen Chineese"?

Short Critical Analysis Paper (SCAP) (15%): You will write a short critical analysis paper (SCAP) that showcases your close reading skills and knowledge of the text's context in Asian American history. See the SCAP handout and Paper Rubric for details.

Group Presentation (15%): In a group of 5-6, you will provide the historical context of a particular text. See the Group Presentation Handout for details.

Final Project (30%): You will have the option of either working individually or in a group for your final project. You also have the option to write a research paper or do a creative project (e.g. write a short story, produce a short film, etc.). You will give a 5-minute presentation of your project at the end of the semester. See the Final Project Handout for details.

Extra Credit: You may attend up to two public or on-line events relevant to the class and submit a typed, one-page, single-spaced report for each event. The events must be announced by me in class or via email. It should have one paragraph summarizing and describing the event and another paragraph critiquing and evaluating it. The report should be submitted on Moodle, no later than one week after the date of the event.

If you have five or more unexcused absences in the class, or if you have been suspected of plagiarism, you will be disqualified from receiving any extra credit.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED, unless under exceptional circumstances.

You must complete all assignments in order to pass this class.

No incompletes will be given for this class.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS AND GUIDELINES**

### **Campus & Class Policy on Plagiarism**

The University of Massachusetts has high standards of academic integrity, which I uphold. (See For the University's definition of "academic dishonesty," see the document Academic Honesty Policy & Procedure (<https://www.umass.edu/honesty/>).

[https://www.umass.edu/dean\\_students/downloads/AcademicHonestyPolicy.pdf](https://www.umass.edu/dean_students/downloads/AcademicHonestyPolicy.pdf)). To use phrases and/or ideas from any other source as if they were your own constitutes plagiarism. Submitting your own work for more than one course without permission of both instructors can also constitutes plagiarism. The University Code of Student Conduct specifies that ignorance of these standards is not an excuse. All students in this class should familiarize themselves with the library's guidelines on avoiding plagiarism at <http://guides.library.umass.edu/content.php?pid=9697&sid=63876>. If you have questions about fair use or documentation, please do not hesitate to consult me. Plagiarism will result in, at minimum, an automatic zero on the assignment and a failing participation grade.

### **Class Policy on Notes**

Per university policy, class notes are for your own personal use, and video and audio recording of class is prohibited without express permission of the instructor.

### **Email Etiquette**

In addition to my office hours, feel free to email me with questions or concerns about the class. When doing so, please use professionalism befitting of your position as a student addressing your professor.

- Please use "ENG 204" as part of your subject heading.
- You can address me as either Professor <PROF\_LAST\_NAME> or Dr. <PROF\_LAST\_NAME>.
- I will not reply to emails that state, "I wasn't in class today. What did I miss?" Contact your classmates or stop by my office hours instead.
- I will not reply to email questions for which the answers can be found in the syllabus.
- I will respond to your email within 48 hours. I do not respond to emails on weekends and holidays.

## **Five College Asian/Pacific/American (A/P/A) Certificate Program**

The Five College Asian/Pacific/American Studies Certificate Program enables students to pursue concentrated study of the experiences of Asians and Pacific Islanders in the Americas. If interested, please visit: <https://www.fivecolleges.edu/apastudies>. You can also earn a UMass-specific A/P/A certificate. For more information, visit: <http://www.umass.edu/asianasianamstudies/>.

### **Campus Resources**

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: A student who may feel that they need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact and register with the Disability Services (DS). Please meet with me also as early as possible so that I can best accommodate specific needs. For more information, visit: <http://www.umass.edu/disability/>.

Writing Center: DO take advantage of the Writing Center, located in the northwest corner of the W.E.B. Du Bois Library's Learning Commons. To schedule an appointment, visit <https://umass.mywconline.com>.

### **Citation Style**

Please use MLA style when referencing/ citing materials in your essays. For a style guide, please see: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

### **COVID Protocols**

- Students are required to follow all UMass COVID safety requirements.
- Please keep up with information, guidelines, and instructions about COVID policies on campus. Helpful websites include:  
<https://www.umass.edu/coronavirus/vaccine>  
<https://www.umass.edu/coronavirus/coronavirus/covid-19-testing>  
<https://www.umass.edu/coronavirus/news/vaccination-and-testing-faqs-start-fall-2021-semester>  
<https://www.umass.edu/coronavirus/interim-pandemic-policy>
- UMass requires that all community members, regardless of vaccination status, wear masks indoors. UMass guideline: "Multi-layer cloth masks are recommended. Do not use loose fitting knit materials or single-layer items such as bandanas or neck gaiters. Studies have shown they do not provide as much protection as a mask." Additional information can be found here: <https://www.umass.edu/coronavirus/news/face-covering-faqs-start-fall-2021-semester>
- No food in the classroom.

Note: This syllabus is subject to change.

### **COURSE SCHEDULE (Please check Moodle for the most current and detailed schedule)**

#### Week 1: Introduction to the Course

Th 9/2 Introductions

#### Weeks 2: Chinese Labor in the US & the Beginnings of Asian American Literature

T 9/7 Bret Harte, "Plain Language from Truthful James" (1870); Mark Twain, "John Chinaman in New York" (1870)

Th 9/9 Sui Sin Far, "Mrs. Spring Fragrance," "In the Land of the Free," "Pat and Pan" (1890s-1910s)

T 9/14 Sui Sin Far, "The Smuggling of Tie Co," "Tian Shian's Kindred Spirit," "Lin John," "Its

Wavering Image," "Leaves from the Mental Portfolio of a Eurasian"

Week 3: US Imperialism & Migration of Filipino Workers

Th 9/16 Geoffrey Dunn & Mark Shwartz, *Dollar a Day Ten Cents a Dance* (1984); Carlos Bulosan, "The Story of a Letter" (1946)

**Group presentation on Carlos Bulosan**

T 9/21 Carlos Bulosan, Part 2 from *America Is in the Heart* (1946)

Weeks 4 - 5: Representations of Japanese American Internment during WWII

Th 9/23 John Okada, *No-No Boy* (1957)

**Group presentation on John Okada**

T 9/28 *No-No Boy*

Th 9/30 *No-No Boy*

Week 6: Between Two Empires and Patriarchy

T 10/5 Hisaye Yamamoto, "Seventeen Syllables," "The Legend of Miss Sasagawara" (1950s)

Th 10/7 Yamamoto, "Wilshire Bus"

Weeks 7 - 8: Gender and the Construction of Asian American Identities

T 10/12 Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior* (1976) - "No Name Woman," "White Tigers"

**Group presentation on Maxine Hong Kingston**

Th 10/14 *The Woman Warrior* - "Shaman"

T 10/19 *The Woman Warrior* - "At the Western Palace" & "A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe"

Week 8.5: TWLF & the Birth of "Asian American" Identity

Th 10/21 TWLF position paper; preface to *Aiiieeeee!*; Hua Hsu, "The Asian-American Canon Breakers"

Week 9: The Second Generation, Part I

T 10/26 Justin Lin, *Better Luck Tomorrow* (2003)

**Group presentation on Justin Lin**

Th 10/28 Mira Nair, *The Namesake* (2007)

Week 10 - 11: The Wars in Asia and Their Afterlives

T 11/2 Deann Borshay Liem, *In the Matter of Cha Jung Hee* (2010)

**Group presentation on Deann Borshay Liem**

Th 11/4 Ocean Vuong, *Night Sky with Exit Wounds* (2016)

T 11/9 Thi Bui, *The Best We Could Do* (2018)  
**Group presentation on Thi Bui**  
Th 11/11 NO CLASS

Week 12: The Second Generation, Part II

T 11/16 Franny Choi, *Soft Science* (2016)  
Th 11/18 Bing Liu, *Minding the Gap* (2018)

T 11/23 Grace Lee, *K-Town '92* Project (2017)  
**Group presentation on Grace Lee**

Week 13: Presentations

T 11/30 Presentations  
Th 12/2 Presentations

Week 14: Course Wrap-up

T 12/7 Course evaluation & wrap-up

**Final Project due by the end of Friday, 12/10 on Moodle**