

HL2012

Asian American Literature
AY 2023/24 S2

Note: This syllabus may be revised over the course of the semester.

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Office hours: Thursdays 1130- 130pm in-person, or by appointment over Zoom

Overview

This course introduces students to a variety of texts and cultural productions in the Asian American tradition, both canonical and contemporary, across a range of genres and media. We will examine the emergence, codification, and subsequent complication of “Asian American” as a positionality set within the larger histories of North American settler colonialism and Asian migration. Specifically, we will explore how Asia as a region is represented within the American imaginary, both from an imperial Eurocentric perspective, as well as from the Asian American diasporic lens. In attending to these tropes of representation, we will come to examine our own subject positions as citizens or residents of Singapore in postcolonial Asia, and ask what kinds of dialogue are possible between Asian America and Asia.

Course Readings

(Books, to be purchased or taken out from the library)

Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior*

Viet Thanh Nguyen, *The Sympathizer*

Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Exileé* and *Tempo Morts*

Divya Victor, *Curb*

Ocean Vuong, *Night Sky With Exit Wounds*

David Henry Hwang, *M. Butterfly*

Gene Luen Yang, *American Born Chinese*

(Films to be watched on DVD or via online streaming services)

Crazy Rich Asians (dir. Jon M. Chu)

Past Lives (dir. Celine Song)

Assessment Components

Participation: The format of this class is heavily peer-driven. As such, the participation grade is meant to encourage and evaluate your investment in the class. You are expected to complete the readings and come to class ready to discuss them. If you are more comfortable with ways of thinking and learning outside of the seminar format, I also encourage you to demonstrate your engagement with the text other ways, such as one-on-one conversations during my office hours, or emailing me your brief thoughts about the reading for the week. In addition, throughout the semester, I will also be moderating a communal Google Docs file where you are able to collectively take notes and contribute your thoughts and ideas, and your contributions to this collective bank of notes will also be counted towards your participation grade. (*ongoing*)

Presentations: I have designed the structure of our class around five smaller collaboration groups. We will split up into these smaller collaboration groups on the first day, and begin working in these groups starting from week 2. These groups will remain constant for five weeks, after which we'll shuffle up the make-up of our members. Each student in the assigned weekly group will get five minutes at the start of the class to speak about the text, and be asked to contribute one discussion question. You may wish to use this time to advance an individual argument about the text, collectively engage in a group presentation (individually graded), or even candidly voice any difficulties you might have with understanding our texts. Your job here is not to impress me, but to help everyone learn, and in doing so, to act as the first learner. (*Ongoing, weekly*)

Research Essay: You will be asked to formulate an original reading of our course texts that takes into account the themes of the class. This assignment tests your ability to critically analyse the texts and perform original close readings, as well as your ability to integrate scholarship from academic sources into your argument. You will also be evaluated on your overall ability to structure a persuasive argument. (*Due Week 9*)

Group Reflections: In your collaboration group, you will be asked to collectively carry out and present an exercise where you will reflect critically upon how the readings we have done relate to your personal lives as situated in Singapore, and how they have impacted your understanding of your own positionality. The format of this exercise will be specified later in the semester, and creative interpretations are encouraged. Keep in mind that to do well on the team assessments, it is necessary for you to demonstrate positive interdependence and teamwork. In principle, you will receive the same marks as your team. However, your individual score may vary based on feedback about your contributions to the group work. (*Due Week 13*)

Final Exam: You will pick from several questions given to you two prompts to respond to, and write two short essay responses that demonstrates your knowledge of the course material and your mastery of its critical concepts. The exam is intended to evaluate the degree to which you have internalized the teachings of this class and synthesise it with your ongoing knowledge of literature. (*Date TBC*)

Policy on Academic Integrity

Good academic work depends on honesty and ethical behaviour. The quality of your work as a student relies on adhering to the principles of academic integrity and to the NTU Honour Code, a set of values shared by the whole university community. Truth, Trust and Justice are at the core of NTU's shared values.

As a student, it is important that you recognize your responsibilities in understanding and applying the principles of academic integrity in all the work you do at NTU. Not knowing what is involved in maintaining academic integrity does not excuse academic dishonesty. You need to actively equip yourself with strategies to avoid all forms of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, academic fraud, collusion and cheating. If you are uncertain of the definitions of any of these terms, you should go to the academic integrity website for more information. Consult your instructor(s) if you need any clarification about the requirements of academic integrity in the course.

On the use of AI tools, this course will adopt NTU's policy on the use of AI tools for coursework:

1. Give proper citations if you use any AI tool. Extending the practice of correctly citing references in your work under NTU's policies on citation and plagiarism, the University requires students to (i) identify any generative AI tools used and (ii) declare how the tools are used in submitted work. Please note that even with acknowledgement, copying of output generated by AI tools (in part or whole) may still be regarded as plagiarism. If in the doubt, err on the side of caution and talk to me.
2. Do not pass off writing from AI as your own. At the university level, the ability to resourcefully consult and connect your writing to other vetted sources is just as important as your ability to generate original ideas. Passing off AI text as your own is not only easily detectable to a trained reader, it also undermines the entire basis of a humanities education.
3. Check your facts and sources. AI does not give you actual information; it gives you natural sounding language. In other words, it excels at writing convincing nonsense that sounds halfway plausible. If you consult AI at any point, be sure to not only properly cite it, but also to check that the texts it quotes actually exist.
4. Nothing beats your own ideas. AI tools may be good at producing summaries and grammatical sentences, but they cannot replace your original ideas and creativity. A rigorous education will equip you with the ability to express your ideas, process ideas for problem solving and make sound judgements. These capabilities and your unique human experiences are still your most valuable assets.
5. Uphold your pledge to integrity in learning. NTU expects students to uphold the Student Code of Conduct at all times. The act of taking words or ideas from other

sources, including ChatGPT and other AI technologies, and present them as your own without proper citation of the source(s), will be treated as misconduct.