

English 221-001c, 002c
Fall 2008
Clow 105

MWF: 9:10-10:10

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Introduction to Asian American Literature

This course is an introduction to Asian-American literature.

As a minority in America, Asian-American it is not a monolithic category. It has its own diverse and rich culture and history, but it shares similar experience and common ground with all Americans. Having been classified as foreigners or the perpetual aliens, Asian Americans have been struggling in forging a new identity. As we will discover in our study, like all Americans, in the process of transforming America, Asian Americans themselves were transformed.

Asian American literature is generally divided into two categories: Christian testimonial writing, spearheaded by Amy Tan (*Joy Luck Club*), and Chinatown Cowboy, represented by Frank Chin. The former only writes for the white readers; the latter writes against the white Americans. Our reading list is derived from the so-called contested Third, which emerges from their vehement rejection of both categories. Our texts are selected from the authors who write about their own struggles and lived experience as Americans.

Hence, our approach to the understanding and appreciation of Asian-Americans is through a double negation, that is, Asian-American is neither Asian nor American. Only through this agonizing negating phase will a true Asian American identity emerge.

The aim of the course is twofold: first, to familiarize ourselves with some Asian American history and literary works; second, to place or re-place, if you will, Asian Americans in our society based on our own individual experience. Nonetheless, this course is ultimately an academic exercise. We will learn how to read texts closely, and how to interpret them creatively, and how to develop our critical skills in writing.

Texts:

1. Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore*. 2. Carlos Bulosan, *America is in the Heart*. 3. John Okada, *No-No Boy*. 4. Shawn Wong, *American Knees*. 5. Susan Choi, *A Person of Interests*. Videos, *Broken Blossoms*, *Who Killed Vincent Chin?* Etc.

Grading

1. Class attendance and participation = 15%
2. Journals =15%
3. mid-term quiz =30
4. 7 page paper= 40%

I can never stress enough here the importance of class attendance. Say, if you miss three classes without excuses, you will lose that 15%. The negative impact will not just stop there. It will affect other aspects of the grading. For instance, in order to get an A or AB in this class, you need to finish reading assignment before class, attend class faithfully, actively participate in discussion, and do relatively well in the quiz and the term paper.

Course Plan

Sep.

- | | |
|--------|-----------------|
| 3 (w): | Introduction |
| 5 (f): | Takaki, pp.3-75 |
| 8 (m): | pp.79-176 |

10 (w): pp.179-269
 12 (f): pp.270-314
 15 (m) pp.315-405
 17 (w) pp.406-471
 19 (f) pp.472-509
 22 (m) Movie, "Broken Blossoms," (1919), D.W. Griffith.
 24 (w) Discussion, "Broken Blossoms."
 26 (f) Carlos Bulosan, pp. 3-62
 29 (m) Bulosan, pp.63-133
 Oct
 1 (w) Bulosan, pp. 134-173
 3 (f) Bulosan, pp.174-210
 6 (m) Bulosan, pp.211-249
 8 (w) Bulosan, pp. 250-283
 10 (f) Bulosan, pp.284-327

 13 (m) John Okada, *No-No Boy*, pp.1-68
 15 (w) pp.69-116
 17 (f) pp.117-171
 20 (m) pp. 173-251
 22 (w) Video, *Who Killed Vincent Chin?*
 24 (f) discussion
 27 (m) Shawn Wong, *American Knees*, pp.3-66
 29 (m) pp.67-105
 31 (f) pp. 106-128
 Nov
 3 (m) pp.129-171
 5 (w) pp. 172-229
 7 (f) Choi
 10 (m) Choi
 12 (w) Choi
 14 (f) Choi
 17 (m) Choi
 19 (w) Choi
 21 (f) Quiz
 24 (m) Conference
 26-30 break
 Dec.
 1 (m) Video *Bui Doi*
 3 (w) discussion
 5 (f) TBA
 8 (m) TBA
 10 (w) TBA
 12 (f) TBA
 13 (m) final paper is due 5pm via email attachment.