

---

AML 3673 - 01

# Foundations and Futures of Asian America

Asian American Literature | Florida State University | Fall 2019

---

Instructor: Frances Tran

Course/Section: AML 3673 - 01

Class: T/R 9:30 AM - 10:45 AM, WMS 114

Email: ftran@fsu.edu

Office: WMS 325

Office Hours: T/R 12:30 PM - 1:30 PM

---

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This class is an introduction to Asian American literature and theory. Over the course of the semester, we will chart the historical, cultural, and political formation of Asian America, from the making of the transcontinental railroad and the social movements of the Civil Rights Era to the haunting legacies of World War II and the contemporary flows of globalization. Engaging a wide range of work, including that of David Henry Hwang, Viet Thanh Nguyen, Julie Otsuka, Manjula Padmanabhan, Solmaz Sharif, and Gene Luen Yang, among others, we will discuss how Asian American authors, artists, and activists have continually sought to redefine Asian America as a construct that is both real and imagined, material and aspirational. As such, in addition to analyzing the social and historical contexts that inform the production of Asian American literature and culture, we will also push ourselves to reflect on and articulate the stakes attached to this work. From a study of foundational texts, theories, and histories, we will aim, in short, to elaborate what potential futures for Asian America might look like, feel, and mean for us today.

---

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Develop a deeper understanding of Asian American literatures and their social, historical, and political contexts by engaging in careful close reading and textual analysis
  - Articulate the ways that literary expressions from minoritized writers challenge the boundaries of literary conventions and speak back to the dominant culture
  - Effectively assess and contribute to existing critical and theoretical discourses in Asian American literary and cultural studies
  - Propose, complete, and share research projects focused on or creative endeavors inspired by the imaginaries of marginalized writers and activists
-

## COURSE MATERIALS

### Required Texts

- Cristina García, *Monkey Hunting* (2004) - ISBN-13: 978-0345466105
- Mohsin Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2008) - ISBN-13: 978-0156034029
- Julie Otsuka, *Buddha in the Attic* (2011) - ISBN-13: 978-0307744425
- Ruth Ozeki, *My Year of Meats* (1999) - ISBN-13: 978-0140280463
- Gene Luen Yang and Sonny Liew, *The Shadow Hero* (2014) - ISBN-13: 978-1596436978

PDFs and links to electronic course readings are available on Canvas under "modules" where they have been organized by date.

---

## ASSIGNMENTS & ASSESSMENT

### ONLINE DISCUSSION FORUMS

For each class session (unless otherwise stated), students are responsible to contribute a post to the discussion forum on Canvas, marked by the appropriate date. **This post should be either (1) a question about one or more of the assigned readings OR (2) a brief response to another student's question.**

#### On posting questions:

Constructing effective and engaging questions is a difficult skill and one that we rarely have a chance to practice. Yet, learning how to ask thoughtful and inquisitive questions is also what will serve as the foundations for developing strong thesis statements for your critical essays, research projects, and creative endeavors, not to mention your career and lifelong pursuits. The discussion forums will be a chance for you to experiment with asking each other complex, difficult, and, above all, genuine questions about the readings and topics we will cover this semester. Here are some things to consider when developing your questions for the discussion forums:

- Craft your questions carefully and cite relevant page numbers when necessary.
- Avoid asking plot-driven or yes/no questions that are easily answered if you have read the material. Keep in mind that the goal is to challenge your peers to think deeply about the assigned texts and the issues and questions it raises.
- Before posting your question, read carefully through the questions your peers have posted. You will not get credit for repeating the same question someone else has already asked!

#### On posting replies:

Instead of asking a question, you can also choose to reply to a classmate's question for your discussion post, especially if you find one that is striking or thought-provoking. While your response does not have to be lengthy, it should demonstrate a substantive engagement with the question and/or any other posted comments. Here are some things to consider when developing your replies:

- Draw on specific ideas, examples, and/or passages from the assigned readings to support your response.
- Keep in mind that you are participating in an ongoing conversation. In other words, do not simply repeat what others before you have written but contemplate how you might build on, challenge, or take the discussion into a different direction.
- Feel free to speak to each other, i.e., use names when you are referring to someone's writing and ask questions if you are curious about a point another person has made.

**Discussion posts are due before the start of class and will be evaluated on a check scale (✓+, ✓, ✓-) over the course of the semester for a cumulative grade. You are allowed 3 freebie posts, which you can miss without penalty. Discussion posts cannot be made up unless you contact me in advance for an extension.**

## **SEMINAR FACILITATIONS**

Once during the semester, students will be responsible for **leading and stimulating discussion about the assigned reading(s) for the first 15-20 minutes of a class session**. This assignment consists of an **in-class** and **written component**.

### **On the in-class facilitation:**

As a facilitator, you will guide the class in a discussion and analysis of at least one of the assigned reading(s) for your facilitation date. You should come prepared with well-crafted discussion questions, presentation materials, and/or activities. Feel free to use the questions that your peers have crowd-sourced on the discussion forum as well.

In general, I will refrain from participating during student facilitations—this is your time to introduce questions and topics that you want the class to explore. As a facilitator, you may not read from a prepared speech. Consulting bullet points or note cards is permissible but remember that your job is less to give a formal presentation than to engage class conversation about the assigned reading(s). I encourage you to be as creative as possible!

You are expected to come fully prepared on your facilitation date and seminar facilitations cannot be made up. If you discover that you are going to be absent when you are the assigned facilitator, please let me know at least 48 hours in advance so we can try to reschedule. Keep in mind, however, that this may not always be feasible depending on where we are in the semester.

### **On the written component:**

You are expected to write a **3-4 page thesis-driven essay** on at least one of the texts you organized your facilitation around. **This essay is due exactly two weeks after your facilitation date**. No extensions will be provided unless you contact me in advance.

When crafting your essay, here are some things to consider:

- The essay should present an argumentative claim and detailed analysis of your primary cultural text. Pay particular attention to the literary and aesthetic qualities of the text (e.g., language, form, style, narrative strategies) as well as its broader thematic concerns, meanings, and purpose.
- The essay should also draw on and engage with at least one of the non-literary secondary sources we have read and discussed this semester. Consider how your thesis builds on, piggybacks off, or challenges the arguments and ideas within the secondary source you have chosen.
- Strong essays will include brief quotations and analyses of specific passages from both primary and secondary sources to illustrate your main ideas and arguments.

## MIDTERM EXAM

There will be an in-class midterm exam that will give you an opportunity to apply key concepts and theoretical frameworks that we have discussed to an analysis of Asian American literature. The exam will be composed of **short answer questions on material covered within the first two units of the course**: “The Foundations of Asian/America: Narratives of Arrival and Activism” and “Enemy Aliens and the Cartographies of War: Memory, Trauma, and Haunting.” This assignment is designed to evaluate whether students have a strong grasp of the foundational theories and texts that will guide much of our discussions in the latter half of the semester. I will hold several review sessions in the classes leading up to the exam to ensure that students are amply prepared for the types of questions they will encounter.

My hope is that this exam will not only allow you to reflect on the materials we have already discussed but also serve as an opportunity to identify the ideas, texts, and critical debates that will be most generative for thinking ahead to your final research projects. More details and instructions about the exam will be given in class 1-2 weeks in advance of the test date.

## FINAL RESEARCH PROJECT

In lieu of a final exam, you will develop a **research project** for our course blog, “**The Futures of Asian America.**” For your contribution, you can decide between **writing a blog essay (7-8 pages) or producing a creative piece**. Students who choose the creative option will also be asked to compose a **brief artist’s commentary (2-3 pages)** that reflects on the inspiration, motive, and larger stakes of their creative endeavor.

For the blog essay, you will need to identify a specific cultural artifact and make an argument about how and why this particular text captures an understanding of the futures of Asian America. You may choose to focus on a work that we have read in class or any relevant external text. Alternatively, for those who select the creative option, you will produce a representation of what you imagine the futures of Asian America can or will look like. You are free to use any medium or mode of expression that best supports your vision.

Conducting research will be a crucial component of your final project regardless of which option you choose for your contribution. As such, the final project will be scaffolded with a **proposal**, **peer review session**, and **presentation** where you will share your research and works-in-progress with your classmates. More details on this assignment will be distributed in advance of the deadlines marked in the course schedule below.

## ESSAY SUBMISSIONS

- Students are expected to submit their essays **in MS Word format (.doc or .docx file) through Canvas under “Assignments” by 11:59pm** on the specified due date. Keep in mind that facilitation essays are due two weeks after your scheduled facilitation date.
- **Technology policy:** Electronic submission is a privilege that I extend to allow you more time to work on your essays in a setting that is most convenient for you. As such, I expect you to make sure to **properly attach your essay**—missing/corrupted attachments will be penalized in accordance to the lateness policy below.
- **Lateness policy:** The final grade for a late paper will drop one whole letter grade for each day it is late, including weekends. For example, a paper that merits a “B” will result in a “C” grade if it is turned in one day late. Deadline extensions, though rare, may be granted for extenuating circumstances.
- Graded assignments are typically returned within 2 weeks after the due date.

## GRADING POLICY

### Breakdown

Participation	10%
Discussion Posts	15%
In-class Seminar Facilitation	10%
Facilitation Essay	15%
Midterm Exam	15%
Final Research Project	
Proposal	10%
Presentation	5%
Blog Essay or Creative Piece	20%

## GRADING SCHEME

Below, I have listed the numerical equivalents for letter grades, which you can use to track your progress in this class.

A	100% to 93%	B	< 87% to 83%	C	< 77% to 73%	D	< 67% to 63%
A-	< 93% to 90%	B-	< 83% to 80%	C-	< 73% to 70%	D-	< 63% to 60%
B+	< 90% to 87%	C+	< 80% to 77%	D+	< 70% to 67%	F	< 60% to 0%

## TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

Course content is accessible through Canvas. You should log on to Canvas at least once every other day to check for course updates.

You will need to be able to view videos, write and upload assignments, post to discussion boards, and take assessments. As such, you should have access to high-speed internet and updated software. To view the most current technology requirements, visit the FSU Canvas support site (<http://support.canvas.fsu.edu/>).

### CANVAS SUPPORT

Need help with Canvas? Contact FSU Canvas Support:

- Email: [canvas@fsu.edu](mailto:canvas@fsu.edu)
- Phone: (850) 644-8004
- Website: [support.canvas.fsu.edu](http://support.canvas.fsu.edu)
- Hours: 8am to 5pm, Monday - Friday

## COURSE POLICIES

### COURSE CONTENT

The nature of this course will ask you to read and discuss issues that may be sensitive and controversial, such as sexuality, racism, colonialism, violence, political and religious beliefs, etc. In a college level course you are expected to think about these issues in a way that is critical, analytical, and mature, even if certain issues excite strong personal opinions from you. It is crucial that this class be a forum for the respectful exchange of ideas. Students engaging in conduct inappropriate for the classroom will be asked to leave; the same applies to online discussions. If you are unable to engage with the aforementioned topics in an open-minded and sophisticated manner, I encourage you to reconsider your enrollment in this class.

## **PARTICIPATION & ATTENDANCE/LATENESS POLICY**

The success of this course depends on frequent, active, and sustained participation from all students. Participation entails coming to class having done the assigned readings and writing, prepared with the necessary texts and documents on hand (including materials made available electronically). Strong participation, however, involves being engaged in discussions, workshops, facilitations, and group activities. As such, I expect you to speak and contribute regularly, whether it is by asking questions, offering to read a passage aloud, or voicing your own insights. I understand that not everyone is comfortable speaking up in class so I have structured activities throughout the semester that will help you practice getting out of your comfort zone. You may also visit me during my office hours, which counts as a form of participation as well.

**Attendance and Lateness:** In order to participate in class, you must be present during class meetings. As a result, failure to attend class and persistent lateness will negatively impact your grade. Over the course of the semester, **you are allowed a maximum of 4 unexcused absences**. Being late to class three times equals one absence. If you arrive more than fifteen minutes late to class, you will be counted as absent. One third of a letter grade will be deducted for each additional unexcused absence (e.g., your final grade is a “B,” but you have missed five classes. You now have a “B-”).

This course follows FSU’s attendance policy for excused absences, which is outlined below in the “University Policies” section. If your absence is excused, I will give you the opportunity to make up exams or other graded assignments. When possible, please notify me of anticipated absences in writing as soon as you can. Appropriate documentation for excused absences is required.

## **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Academic integrity is vital to the mission of this class. Consequently, plagiarism, cheating, and other violations of academic integrity will be penalized severely and may even result in a failing course grade. Examples of academic dishonesty include but are not limited to:

- Submitting essays or portions of essays written by other people, including well-intentioned friends and family
- Failing to document paraphrases, ideas, or verbatim phrases taken from outside sources
- Collaborating on an assignment without the explicit permission of the professor\*
- Submitting an essay written for one course to another course without the explicit permission of both professors
- Submitting work as your own that has been purchased or copied from a paper preparation service or website

\*In this class you will be collaborating with your peers on a number of group activities. I hope that these activities will help facilitate intellectual exchange and social interaction. As such, it will not be a violation of academic integrity for you to share resources and collaborate in developing discussion questions and activities. However, these group projects often include individual writing

components as well, which should be completed in a way that preserves author integrity.

Please familiarize yourself with FSU's academic honor policy (detailed in the "University Policies" section of the syllabus).

---

## UNIVERSITY POLICIES

### UNIVERSITY ATTENDANCE POLICY

Excused absences include documented illness, deaths in the family and other documented crises, call to active military duty or jury duty, religious holy days, and official University activities. These absences will be accommodated in a way that does not arbitrarily penalize students who have a valid excuse. Consideration will also be given to students whose dependent children experience serious illness.

### ACADEMIC HONOR POLICY

The Florida State University Academic Honor Policy outlines the University's expectations for the integrity of students' academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process. Students are responsible for reading the Academic Honor Policy and for living up to their pledge to "...be honest and truthful and... [to] strive for personal and institutional integrity at Florida State University." (For more details see the FSU Academic Honor Policy and procedures for addressing alleged violations, found at:

<http://fda.fsu.edu/academic-resources/academic-integrity-and-grievances/academic-honor-policy.>)

### AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should (1) register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center and (2) bring a letter to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type. Please note that instructors are not allowed to provide classroom accommodation to a student until appropriate verification from the Student Disability Resource Center has been provided. This syllabus and other class materials are available in alternative format upon request. For more information about services available to FSU students with disabilities, contact the:

Student Disability Resource Center  
874 Traditions Way  
108 Student Services Building  
Florida State University  
Tallahassee, FL 32306-4167  
(850) 644-9566 (voice)  
(850) 644-8504 (TDD)  
Email: [sdrc@admin.fsu.edu](mailto:sdrc@admin.fsu.edu)

Website: <http://www.disabilitycenter.fsu.edu/>

## FREE TUTORING FROM FSU

On-campus tutoring and writing assistance is available for many courses at Florida State University. For more information, visit the Academic Center for Excellence (ACE) Tutoring Services' comprehensive list of on-campus tutoring options - see the Academic Center for Excellence (ACE) Tutoring Services' website (<http://ace.fsu.edu/tutoring>) or contact [tutor@fsu.edu](mailto:tutor@fsu.edu). High-quality tutoring is available by appointment and on a walk-in basis. These services are offered by tutors trained to encourage the highest level of individual academic success while upholding personal academic integrity.

## SYLLABUS CHANGE POLICY

"Except for changes that substantially affect implementation of the evaluation (grading) statement, this syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advance notice."

---

## TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

Below you will find our working class schedule of readings and assignments. Depending on the course of our conversations and the perspectives and contributions you offer, we can discuss possible changes to organizing themes and texts. I hope that we can work together to make this class as engaging, generative, and rewarding as possible for your studies and future pursuits.

### **The Foundations of Asian America: Narratives of Arrival and Activism**

- T. 08/27 Introduction to course  
Franny Choi, "Choi Jeong Min" (2016) - [https://youtu.be/WRFyWLM6k\\_o](https://youtu.be/WRFyWLM6k_o)  
Alex Dang, "What Kind of Asian Are You?" (2013)- [https://youtu.be/VoP0ox\\_Jw\\_w](https://youtu.be/VoP0ox_Jw_w)
- Th. 08/29 Lisa Lowe, "Immigration, Citizenship, Racialization: Asian American Critique," from *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (1996), pp. 1-10.  
Edith Eaton (Sui Sin Far), "In the Land of the Free," from *Mrs. Spring Fragrance and Other Writings* (1912), pp. 93-101.
- T. 09/03 Lisa Lowe, "Heterogeneity, Hybridity, and Multiplicity: Asian American Differences,"  
From *Immigrant Acts* (1996), pp. 60-68.  
Ken Liu, "The Paper Menagerie," from *The Paper Menagerie and Other Stories* (2016), pp. 178-192.  
Jhumpa Lahiri, "Once in a Lifetime," *The New Yorker* (2006)
- Th. 09/05 David Henry Hwang, *The Dance and the Railroad* (1983)
- T. 09/10 Julie Otsuka, *The Buddha in the Attic* (2011)- pp. 3-79.

- Th. 09/12 Julie Otsuka, *The Buddha in the Attic* (2011)- pp. 81-129.
- T. 09/17 Maxine Hong Kingston, "White Tigers" (1989), pp. 19-53.  
Sau-ling Cynthia Wong, "Autobiography as Guided Chinatown Tour?," from  
*Multicultural Autobiography: American Lives* (1992), pp. 248-279.
- Th. 09/19 Amy Uyematsu, "Activist Amy Uyematsu Proclaims the Emergence of 'Yellow Power,'  
1969," from *Roots: An Asian American Reader* (1969), pp. 421-424.  
Janice Mirikitani, "Firepot," from *Time to Greez!: Incantations from the Third  
World*(1975)  
"Wandering Chinaman," from *A Grain of Sand: Music for the Struggle by Asians in  
America* (1973)  
Lysley Tenorio, "Save the I-Hotel," *Manoa* 20, no. 1 (2008): 1-18.
- T. 09/24 Gene Luen Yang and Sonny Liew, *The Shadow Hero* (2014)

### **Enemy Aliens and the Cartographies of War: Memory, Trauma, and Haunting**

- Th. 09/26 Series of Dr. Seuss's WWII Political Cartoons  
"How to Tell Japs from the Chinese" (1941) - carefully attend to images; full text of  
article is printed at the end of the document  
Excerpts from Miné Okubo, *Citizen 13660* (2014)
- T. 10/01 Yén Lê Espiritu, "Refugee," from *Keywords for Asian American Studies* (2015), pp.  
208-211.  
Avery Gordon, "Introduction to the New Edition," in *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the  
Sociological Imagination* (1997), pp. xv-xx.  
Viet Thanh Nguyen, "Black Eyed Woman" from *The Refugees* (2017)
- Th. 10/03 Aimee Phan, "We Should Never Meet" from *We Should Never Meet* (2004)  
Krys Lee, "At the Edge of the World," from *Drifting House* (2012)
- T. 10/08 **Midterm Exam**
- Th. 10/10 Sara Ahmed, "Affective Economies," *Social Text* 22, no. 2 (2004): 117-139.  
Solmaz Sharif, *Reaching Guantánamo* (2010) - excerpts
- T. 10/15 Mohsin Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2008) - pp. 1-107 (chapters 1-7).
- Th. 10/17 Mohsin Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2008) - pp. 108-184 (chapters 8-12).

### **The Shifting Currents of Asian America: Diaspora, Globalization, and (Neo)colonialism**

- T. 10/22 Cristina García, *Monkey Hunting* (2004) - pp. 3-87.  
Lisa Lowe, "The Intimacies of Four Continents," from *Haunted By Empire:  
Geographies of Intimacy in North American History* (2006), pp. 191-212.

- Th. 10/24 Cristina García, *Monkey Hunting* (2004) - pp. 88-149.
- T. 10/28 Cristina García, *Monkey Hunting* (2004) - pp. 150-251.
- Th. 10/31 Manjula Padmanabhan, *Harvest* (2003)  
**Final Project Proposal Due**
- T. 11/05 Ruth Ozeki, *My Year of Meats* (1999) - pp. 1-119 (prologue-chapter 5).
- Th. 11/07 Ruth Ozeki, *My Year of Meats* (1999) - pp. 120-197 (chapters 6-8).
- T. 11/12 Ruth Ozeki, *My Year of Meats* (1999) - pp. 198-321 (chapters 9-11).
- Th. 11/14 Ruth Ozeki, *My Year of Meats* (1999) - pp. 322-361 (chapter 12-epilogue).  
Julie Sze, "Boundaries and Border Wars: DES, Technology, and Environmental Justice," *American Quarterly* 58, no. 3 (2006): 791-814.
- T. 11/19 Dir. John M. Chu, *Crazy Rich Asians* (2018) - watch movie in full  
Jiayang Fan, "[How to Watch 'Crazy Rich Asians' Like an Asian-American](#)," *The New Yorker* (2018).  
Ruby Thiagarajan, "[Crazy Rich Asians and the failure of representation](#)," *Medium* (2018).  
Viet Thanh Nguyen, "[Asian-Americans Need More Movies, Even Mediocre Ones](#)," *The New York Times* (2018).
- Th. 11/21 **In-class Peer Review Session**
- T. 11/26 **Wordpress Workshop**
- Th. 11/28 **Thanksgiving Holiday. No classes.**
- T. 12/03 **Student Presentations**
- Th. 12/05 **Student Presentations**
- Th. 12/12 **Final Project Due**