

ENGL265: Asian American Literature

Spring 2015 – TR 11am-12pm – Palmer 211

Professor Amanda Dykema

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Office: Palmer 309B

Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday 9-10:30am, Monday 3:30-4:30pm, & by appointment

Required Texts & Materials

The following texts have been ordered at the Rhodes Bookstore and are available online. Please purchase the editions specified. Please also note that there will be additional important readings, all available to be downloaded on Moodle (moodle.rhodes.edu).

Kingston, Maxine Hong. *The Woman Warrior*. Vintage. 978-0679721888

Lahiri, Jhumpa. *Unaccustomed Earth*. Vintage. 978-0307278258

Lee, Chang-rae. *On Such a Full Sea*. Riverhead. 978-1594632891

Okada, John. *No-No Boy*. U of Washington P. 978-0295955254

Truong, Monique. *The Book of Salt*. Mariner. 978-0618446889

Yamashita, Karen Tei. *Tropic of Orange*. Perseus. 978-1566890649

Course Objectives & Learning Outcomes

This course offers an introduction to Asian American literature, examining key cultural and theoretical texts published in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries under the category of “Asian America.” We will trace how writers and literary works negotiate legacies of Orientalism, internment, labor exploitation, the model minority myth, and U.S. multiculturalism to narrate and theorize what it means to be Asian American. Beginning with early works like John Okada’s *No-No Boy* and Maxine Hong Kingston’s *Woman Warrior*, we will go on to investigate Asian American takes on a variety of genres at the turn of the twenty-first century: realism, historical fiction, speculative fiction, magical realism. Alongside this literature, we will read key theoretical texts on Asian American politics, literature, and culture.

Under the Rhodes College Foundations curriculum, this course satisfies the F2 and F4 requirements. This means that our official learning outcomes include reading and interpreting literary texts and developing excellence in written communication. In more concrete terms, this course is designed to facilitate your practice of critical thinking, writing and reading to interpret texts and your skill in making arguments supported by textual evidence. By the end of the semester, you will be familiar with both the political histories that contextualize Asian American literature and various literary strategies Asian American writers employ in the 20th and 21st centuries.

Course Policies & Requirements

Papers. The essays in this course are designed to allow you to develop your own readings of our texts and to practice close reading – the careful analysis of the how the details of a text’s language and form shape its meaning. You will write one shorter paper (approx. 3-4 pages), a close reading of a single passage, and one longer paper (approx. 6-7 pages), a literary analysis of a novel. For each essay, I will provide specific assignment sheets to explain the essays in greater detail. **All documents are due at the beginning of class on the date listed on the syllabus.** Unless alternate arrangements are made with me before the due date, late papers will lose one grade increment (ex. B to B- or C+ to C) per day.

Revision Opportunities. My teaching philosophy values revision opportunities – I prefer to offer comments on your writing during the writing process, while they can still be helpful to you, rather than after a final grade has been earned. Therefore, for each major assignment in this course, **papers will be due in two stages.** Both due dates are listed on the course calendar, and both versions are considered “final” drafts, in the sense that they must be finished and fulfill the requirements of the assignment. On the first version, you will receive thorough comments geared toward revision but no grade. The second,

revised version will receive only a grade, no comments. Please note: the original version with my comments is required to be turned in along with the second version, so take care to keep track of it.

Submitting work. All out of class work for this course should be typed and submitted in **hard copy form** (not email) unless you are otherwise instructed. Formal essays must use correct MLA format (title, page numbers, 1-inch margins, 11 or 12 point Times New Roman or Calibri font, etc.). All major assignments are integral to the goals of the course. Failure to complete any paper or test will result in a grade of F for the course.

Grade Distribution. Your grade in this course will be determined out of 1000 possible points.

Participation	100
Quizzes & Homework	100
Midterm	100
Discussion Questions	50
Paper 1 – Close Reading	200
Paper 2 – Literary Analysis	300
<u>Final Exam</u>	<u>150</u>
Total:	1000

(A: 930-1000, A-: 900-929, B+: 880-899, B: 830-879, B-: 800-829, C+: 780-799, C: 730-779, C-: 700-729, D+: 680-699, D: 630-679, D-: 600-629, F: 500 or below)

Class Participation. You are expected to come to class prepared for discussion, which means reading the assigned text carefully and marking significant pages/paragraphs before class so you can contribute to the discussion using specific textual evidence (quotes, references to specific page numbers, etc.). Please **bring your copy of the assigned text** to every class. If there is a reading assigned from Moodle, you should print it and bring it to class as well. In-class discussion may often include your general reaction to a text – always a good way to begin – but is ultimately meant to lead you to the ability to construct literary arguments that reflect the complexity of each assigned text. Participating and listening carefully to your classmates on a regular basis should help you strengthen your ability to develop and support an argument about a literary text, skills you will need to succeed on the papers and exams.

Discussion Questions. Twice during the semester, you will submit a discussion question that responds to the assigned reading. A thoughtful, well-crafted discussion question has no clear right answer and cannot be answered by basic factual or plot information. Discussion questions should aim to generate conversation and will generally require several sentences of setup. You should present the parameters of your question (give a sentence or so of context), ask the question, and point out one or two moments in the text that could inform discussion. In total, your prompt should be the length of a short paragraph. Remember to think thematically; in other words, avoid plot questions (“what will happen?”).

Courtesy. Please be respectful of everyone’s opinions, presence, and person in this course. A primary purpose of this class is to give you the opportunity to practice developing interpretations of the texts, and while you are encouraged to offer differing ideas, you should do so in a thoughtful manner. Further, I am committed to creating an academic climate that is safe, respectful, and appreciative of all people, regardless of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic background, ability, religion, or any other aspect of one’s identity. A climate of mutual respect allows us to ask difficult questions and to participate in honest discussions, even in the context of strong disagreement. Creating this kind of open, honest, and respectful climate is our mutual responsibility.

Quizzes. I will often give short quizzes as incentive for staying current on the reading. Most of these quizzes will be in class, but I may administer certain quizzes via Moodle. If so, these will be announced ahead of time and will go live at 5 p.m. the day before class.

Attendance. Please come to class on time. Regular attendance and class participation are essential for this course. In general, I do not differentiate between excused and unexcused absences. **Each absence after the third class missed will lower your final course grade by 50 points (half a letter grade).** Students with college-sanctioned extracurricular activities (athletics, mock trial, etc.) or religious observances that will require them to miss one or more classes during the semester should talk to me in advance of their anticipated absence. All such absences that are not approved in advance will adversely affect your grade.

Technology. **Turn off cell phones** and other electronic devices before class. I expect that computers will be used only for class-related work. Get in the habit of regularly checking your email, as I will send out announcements and assignments this way. Email is also the best way to contact me (though please give me up to 24 hours to respond). Depending on your question, I may recommend that we discuss it in person. Please also regularly consult our course space on Moodle at www.moodle.rhodes.edu, where you can view the syllabus and access assignments and other course materials.

Intellectual Honesty. All work turned in for this course is to be completed in accordance with Rhodes' Honor Code; it must be your own work, produced exclusively for this course. Plagiarism is a violation of the integrity of the occupation of learning and a serious act of disrespect toward me as professor and toward your fellow students. "Plagiarism" means directly copying someone else's work, paraphrasing someone else's words or ideas without giving them credit, or having someone else do your work for you. Cases of suspected plagiarism will be referred to the Honor Council, and the student, if convicted, will receive a grade of F in the course in addition to sanctions assigned by the Council. Clear evidence of plagiarism (failure to use quotation marks around copied language, failure to adequately paraphrase, failure to cite the source of quoted/paraphrased/borrowed text and ideas) may likewise result in failure of the course, regardless of the Council hearing outcome. Carelessness in documenting sources, even if not intentional plagiarism, will be penalized as I deem appropriate. If you have any concerns that your actions might violate this course's academic integrity policies, speak with me early in the assignment for help and clarification.

Special needs. If you have a registered disability that will require accommodations, please see me within the first two weeks of class so we can arrange for the resources you need. If you have a disability and have not yet registered with the Office of Student Disability Services, you should do so immediately (901-843-3885, <http://www.rhodes.edu/disabilityservices/>)

Course Calendar

Readings should be completed by the day on which they are listed. This calendar may be subject to change during the course; all changes will be announced in class and via Moodle. Readings marked (M) can be accessed on Moodle at moodle.rhodes.edu.

JANUARY

- Thurs 15** Class Introduction/Syllabus Overview
Literary Study – What, Why, How
- Tues 20** **20th Century Asian American Literature**
Maxine Hong Kingston, *Woman Warrior* pp. 3-16
Writing assignment due
- Thurs 22** Kingston, *Woman Warrior* pp. 17-54
Lowe, “Heterogeneity, Hybridity, Multiplicity” (M)
- Tues 27** Kingston, *Woman Warrior* pp. 55-160
- Thurs 29** Kingston, *Woman Warrior* pp. 161-end

FEBRUARY

- Tues 3** John Okada, *No-No Boy* pp. vii-50
Chin, *Aiiieeee!* Preface pp. xi-xxii (M)
Yamada, “Invisibility is an Unnatural Disaster” (M)
- Thurs 5** Okada, *No-No Boy* pp. 51-116
- Tues 10** Okada, *No-No Boy* pp. 117-251
- Thurs 12** **Paper 1, Due Date 1**
Okada discussion continued
- Tues 17** **Historical Fiction**
Monique Truong, *The Book of Salt* pp. 1-84
- Thurs 19** Truong, *The Book of Salt* pp. 85-152
- Tues 24** Truong, *The Book of Salt* pp. 153-215
- Thurs 26** Truong, *The Book of Salt* pp. 216-261
Midterm Prep

MARCH

- Tues 3** **Paper 1, Due Date 2**
Truong discussion continued
- Thurs 5** **In-Class Midterm**
- Tues 10** **Spring Break – No Class**
- Thurs 12** **Spring Break – No Class**

- Tues 17** **Magical Realism**
Karen Tei Yamashita, *Tropic of Orange* pp. 3-96
- Thurs 19** Yamashita, *Tropic of Orange* pp. 97-136
- Tues 24** Yamashita, *Tropic of Orange* pp. 137-210
- Thurs 26** Yamashita, *Tropic of Orange* pp. 211-268
- Tues 31** **Realism**
Jhumpa Lahiri, *Unaccustomed Earth*, “Unaccustomed Earth,” “Only Goodness,”
pp. 3-59, 128-173
- APRIL**
- Thurs 2** **Easter Break – No Class**
- Tues 7** Lahiri, “Once in a Lifetime,” “Year’s End,” “Going Ashore” pp. 223-333
- Thurs 9** **Paper 2, Due Date 1**
Lahiri Discussion continued
- Tues 14** **Speculative Fiction**
Chang-rae Lee, *On Such a Full Sea* pp. 1-76
- Thurs 16** Lee, *On Such a Full Sea* pp. 77-184
- Tues 21** Lee, *On Such a Full Sea* pp. 185-238
- Thurs 23** Lee, *On Such a Full Sea* pp. 239-290
- Tues 28** Lee, *On Such a Full Sea* pp. 291-352
- Thurs 30** **Paper 2, Due Date 2**
Lee Discussion Continued
Final Exam Prep

FINAL EXAM: Wednesday, May 6 at 1 p.m.