

Spring 2020 University of Wisconsin, Madison

ENG/GWS/AAS 464: Asian American Women Writers

Professor Leslie Bow

T/TR 11 am-12:15 pm

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Office hours:

Tues. 12:30-2:30 pm in

Office: 7179 HC White

Mailbox: #708, 7th fl. HC White

This course examines contemporary Asian American women's literature in a discussion based, task-oriented classroom. How do women negotiate multiple affiliations, whether ethnic, familial, or national? We will focus on issues such as coming of age, the policing of women's sexuality, and the formation of collective political consciousness. In addition to looking at works that engage issues of immigration and acculturation in the U.S., we will explore the legacies of colonialism in Asia and the literary portrayal of geopolitics. The course will investigate the ways in which literature can be a forum for interventionist critique of both domestic race relations and international politics. How does literary form—experimental poetry, realist memoir, performance art, or the graphic novel—provide the vehicle of such critique? We will situate literature not as a site for “learning” culture, but for understanding the gendered rhetoric of political movements, Cold War nationalism, racial segregation, sexual disciplining.



Required Books: (purchase editions noted below)

Fifth Chinese Daughter, Jade Snow Wong (*U. Washington Press edition, 2020:
<https://uwapress.uw.edu/book/9780295745909/fifth-chinese-daughter/> :1989 edition is also ok)

Jasmine, Bharati Mukherjee (Grove, 1989)

Bitter in the Mouth, Monique Truong

Skim, Mariko Tamaki and Jillian Tamaki

Scent of the Gods, Fiona Cheong (U. Illinois Press edition, 2010)

Saturday Night at the Pahala Theatre, Lois-Ann Yamanaka

Grapefruit, Yoko Ono

Dictée, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha

Electronic Course Reader on Canvas: Access individual course readings through links set up on the electronic syllabus in Modules or by name via Files.

Films in class and on Canvas:

Miss India Georgia, Friedman and Grimberg (1997)

Daughter from Danang, Gail Dolgin and Vincente Franco (2002)

Requirements:

- **Attendance, Preparation, and Participation:** You will be expected to attend **every** class meeting and participate in discussion activities during class, including informal writing assignments. You are expected to finish the reading prior to coming to class.

Attendance, preparation, participation grade rubric

A, A-	excellent attendance; consistent preparation; frequent and incisive participation
AB	excellent or strongly consistent attendance; consistent preparation; frequent and/or consistently incisive participation
B+, B	excellent or strongly consistent attendance, consistent or somewhat consistent preparation, but infrequent participation; or somewhat consistent attendance or preparation and frequent participation
B-, BC	inconsistent attendance or preparation; infrequent participation and/or lack of engagement
C+ or below	student presence, involvement, or engagement reveals indifference to classroom community

More than 2 absences compromise your participation grade. **After three** absences your total grade will be lowered according to the instructor's discretion. There will be no distinction between "excused" and unexcused" absences. (20% of the final grade).

- **In-class presentation:** Everyone will lead a discussion in groups on a primary text once during the semester (see future handout and sign-up sheet). Everyone in the group receives the same grade (10%).
- **Midterm paper:** (6 p. min.) Literary analysis based on issues developed out of lectures, readings, and discussion. **Due: Week 8, Tues. 3/10** in class (25%).
- **Final paper:** (6 p. min.) Literary analysis based on issues developed out of lectures, readings, and discussion. **Due: Week 14, Thurs. 4/30** in class (25%).
- **Final Exam:** Closed book. You will be asked to identify passages taken from the readings by author and title, to contextualize the passage in regard to the work as a whole, and to analyze the significance of the passage. [Media and recommended reading will not appear on the final.] The goal of the exam is to verify that students have done the reading, attended class, and can produce a close reading of literary texts. The best way to prepare for the exams is to **review your class notes** and the passages you have marked in the text during discussion. **You are responsible for all material discussed in class.** Thurs. May 7: 12:25pm-2:25pm. room TBA. (20%).

Extra credit policy: During the semester, there may be events, screenings, lectures, or readings offered on campus with direct relevance to our course material. In these cases, students may be offered extra credit for attending; eligible events tba or below. Extra credit will take the form of one additional passage to be used as an option during the final exam.

For Graduate students seeking graduate credit: See me for additional and/or substitute requirements, most typically, a secondary reading list in concert with a final research paper (approx. 15 pages).

Accommodation:

If you are registered with the McBurney Disability Resource Center, please meet with me at the outset of the semester. Whether or not you are officially registered as a McBurney student, feel free to contact me if there are reasonable accommodations that can facilitate your success in the course.

Credit Hours:

This is a 3-credit course that meets for two 75-minute class periods each week over Spring semester. It carries the expectation that students complete coursework for approximately 3 hours outside of the classroom for every class period.

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes: This course enables students to develop

- Knowledge about Asian American Women's literature and creative practice.
- Awareness of the historical, political, or cultural impact of social norms and conditioning on individuals and groups; awareness of the processes of racialization and gendering.
- Consciousness of Self and Other; greater awareness of the Self in the world, including recognition of how knowledge about equality and social justice impact citizenship and communal belonging.
- Enhanced critical thinking skills: ability to recognize and question assumptions, maintaining a healthy skepticism towards knowledge claims, particularly surrounding the representation of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and class in creative texts. To be able to discern and integrate divergent and contradictory perspectives and assess evidence and rhetoric.
- Critical writing and verbal presentation: to produce original, coherent, well-structured, and compelling arguments in writing and speaking that push beyond summary towards analysis and independent, critical thinking.

Content Alert:

Please note that this course deals with content that can be **graphic, violent, or disturbing**. We will be discussing racial and sexual content that directly engages issues of **discriminatory and demeaning** representation. The topics engaged are controversial and have varying stakes for different individuals and populations. We will try and respect those differences. All participants will be held to the highest standards of civility.

Resources: University Health Services, Survivor Resources, and Reporting Options at UW, <https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/prevention/violence-prevention/resources/>

Grading:

Final grades reflect UW's scale; however, grades on individual assignments will be given the following values:

A: 4; A-: 3.67; A/B: 3.5; B+:3.33; B: 3; B-:2.67; B/C: 2.50; C+: 2.33; C: 2; C-: 1.67; C/D: 1.45; D+:1.33; D: 1; F: 0

Course Attributes:

Level – Advanced. Counts towards the Ethnic Studies requirement (E); Breadth – Literature (L); Humanities requirement (H); Liberal Arts and Science credit in L&S; Certificate in Asian American Studies.*

*The Asian American Studies certificate provides students with an opportunity to develop a sustained intellectual focus on Asian American racial formation, history, literature, and culture. Interdisciplinary in nature, the certificate can be obtained by completing 12 credits of coursework.

Technology policy: Silence all phones. Laptops may be used to take notes, but all browsers must be closed.

Academic Integrity: *Cases of plagiarism or academic misconduct will be reported to the university for disciplinary action.*

Reading schedule: Actual reading assignments TBA in class; reading due dates are for Tuesdays unless otherwise noted.

Week 1 1/21; 1/23 Course Introduction: The Occluded Subject—Asian/Woman

First Class: Please bring a copy of the syllabus to class; Handouts: Course interest sheet, poem: “Conformists Trip,” Lalita Gandbhir

For Thurs. from the electronic reader: “Masks of Women,” Mitsuye Yamada; “Racist Love,” Frank Chin and Jeffrey Paul Chan; “Chronology,” Judy Yung; “Invisibility is an Unnatural Disaster: Reflections of an Asian American Woman,” Mitsuye Yamada; “Asian Women in Film: No Joy, No Luck,” Jessica Hagedorn

Week 2 1/28; 1/30 Pre-Feminist?: Perceptions of Gender and Asian Culture(s)

Tues.: from the electronic reader: “Beyond Manzanar: A Personal View of Asian American Womanhood,” Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston; “Is Arranged Marriage Any Worse Than Craigslist?,” Anita Jain; “Why Chinese Mothers are Superior,” Amy Chua; “Men and Marriage,” Mai Neng Moua

By Thurs.: finish *Fifth Chinese Daughter*, Jade Snow Wong

Week 3 2/4; 2/6 Self-ethnography and Individualism in Cold War America

Tues.: Continue *Fifth Chinese Daughter*; Recommended from the 2020 edition [also on pdf in Canvas]: “Introduction: Jade Snow Wong’s Giftshop and Travel Service,” Bow

for Thurs.: Finish *Jasmine*, Bharati Mukherjee

Week 4 2/11; 2/13 Sexuality and Acculturation: Feminist Resistance/Feminine Cooptation?

For Tues: Continue *Jasmine*; “Two Ways of Being American,” Mukherjee

Begin screening *Miss India Georgia* in class

For Thurs. Recommended from the reader: “‘Community Beauty’: Transnational Performances and Cultural Citizenship in *Miss India Georgia*,” Davé

(please begin reading *Bitter in the Mouth* this week)

Week 5 2/18; 2/20 Reading Race Through (Dis)ability

For Tues.: finish *Bitter in the Mouth*, Monique Truong

For Thurs.: read end piece of the novel, “How a Mockingbird Gave Birth to a Little Canary,” Truong

Recommended from the reader: “Synesthesia: A first-person perspective,” Day and “The ‘Rules’ of Synesthesia,” Simner

Thurs.: presentation, *Bitter in the Mouth*

Week 6 2/25; 2/27 Humanitarian Aid, Transnational Adoption, Passing

continue *Bitter in the Mouth*, discuss paper topics

In class screening: *Daughter from Danang*

Thurs: presentation, *Daughter from Danang*

Optional paper conferences: see sign-up sheet for individual meetings held in 7179 HC White

Week 7 3/3 Fortune-telling/Coming of Age

Tues. finish *Skim*, Mariko Tamaki and Jillian Tamaki

Thurs. No class **3/5; rescheduled** for optional paper conferences: see sign-up sheet for individual meetings held in 7179 HC White

Week 8 3/10; 3/12 Text vs. Image: Form of the Graphic Novel

Continue *Skim*

Tues: **PAPERS DUE** in class, hard copy

Thurs: presentation, *Skim*

Practice Final

Spring Break [please be reading *Scents of the Gods*]

Week 9 3/24; 3/26 Girlhood and the Postcolonial State

Tues.: finish *Scents of the Gods*, Fiona Cheong; Read, “Introduction: Singapore/Girl,” Bow [also in pdf on Canvas]

Thurs. presentation, *Scents of the Gods*

Week 10 3/31; 4/2 Reading Gender Discipline

continue *Scents of the Gods*

By Tues: Read Section I, *Saturday Night at the Pahala Theater*, Lois Ann Yamanaka

Listen to audio files of Yamanaka’s reading on Canvas: “Kala: Saturday Night at the Pahala Theatre,” “Tita: The Bathroom,” “Tita: Japs,” “Tita: User,” “Tita: Boyfriends,” and “Girlie and Asi Frenz4-Eva”

Thurs.: finish *Saturday Night at the Pahala Theater* Sections II-IV and read “An Interview with Lois-Ann Yamanaka” in the 2006 edition (also a pdf on Canvas)

Extra credit lecture: Professor Martin Manalansan, “On Care and Enmeshment,”
Thurs. April 2nd; 4-6pm, Orchard View Room, Discovery Center

Week 11 4/7; 4/9 Persona Poems

Tues.: presentation, *Saturday Night at the Pahala Theater*

Thurs: Finish *Grapefruit*, Yoko Ono

Week 12 4/14; 4/16 Abstracting Politics, Performing Art: Ono’s Seriousness of the Absurd

continue *Grapefruit*

Tues.: from the reader, “The Fluxus Attitude,” Smith; “The Woman Whose Name Became a Curse: the Importance of Yoko Ono,” Carver

View: “Cut Piece,” on Canvas

Thurs.: presentation, *Grapefruit*

Week 13 4/21; 4/23 Fragmentation, Memory, Translation

Finish *Dictée*, Theresa Cha

Recommended from the reader: “Unfaithful to the Original: The Subject of *Dictée*,” Lowe

Fill out the Course Evaluation: Please complete the official online course evaluation delivered via email link.

Week 14 4/28, 4/30

Tues.: presentation, *Dictée*

Thurs.: Course Closure: **Final papers due.**

Please provide a self-addressed, 3-stamped, 8 x 10 manila envelope if you would like your paper returned to you with comments. Your final exam and final grade will also be enclosed. [If you would like only the paper comments and grade summary, a self-addressed business envelope with one stamp is fine.]

Final Exam: Thurs. May 7; 12:25-2:25pm, room TBA