



James M. Estrella, Ph.D., M.Ed.
Professor, English & American Culture Studies

Office Hrs TTh 5:00-7:00 PM, HSS 346
Email via Canvas

Introduction

Course Description

This course offers an introduction to key themes in Asian Pacific American literature. An emphasis is placed on how Asian Pacific American writers are (re)imagining “modernity” through literary plots about the exchanges between Asia, the Pacific Islands, and the United States. Historically, “modernity” as an era characterized by industrialization, technological development, and a rejection of tradition has been defined against and through the “Oriental other,” “the Yellow Peril,” and the “model minority.” But the works herein challenge such narratives of “the modern” and set the stage to examine an age marked by migration, war, imperialism, (neo)colonialism, and globalization. We will examine an array of texts that take place across Asia and the Pacific Islands (and more broadly Oceania) during and after World War II, offering a rich, kaleidoscopic view of “modernity” that complicates binaries about the past and present, the traditional and the modern, and “the West” and “the East.” Such (re)imaginings urge us to ask a number of questions. What happens when these writers center Asia and the Pacific Islands as integral to the plots of “multiple modernities”? How are the aesthetic achievements of Asian Pacific American literature shaped by the political, economic, and cultural developments in Asia and the Pacific Islands? And how might we understand “America” and what it means to be “American” anew as a result of such interventions into the (re)imaginings of “modernity” and “Asia”? We will draw from the experiences of Asian Pacific Americans to investigate such questions. By the course’s end, you will see how politically textured these cultural terrains can be and that there are a multitude of voices that constitute Asian Pacific American literature.

Student Learning Outcomes

In this course, you will:

- Identify and define key concepts and themes in Asian Pacific American studies and literature.
- Analyze elements of literature, such as plot development, characterization, and imagery, and explain how such devices contribute to the effects of literary and cultural texts.
- Examine the diversity of Asian Pacific American cultures and histories, as well as the shared experiences that have shaped them over time.
- Apply critical perspectives in Asian Pacific American studies to the analysis of literary and cultural texts, including systems of power.
- Explain how cultural and historical contexts give shape to the identities, resistance movements, and cultural representations of Asians, Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, and Native Hawaiians.

Required Texts

Textbooks

1. Gene Luen Yang, *American Born Chinese*. New York, NY: Square Fish Press, 2008.
2. Nora Okja Keller, *Comfort Woman*. New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1998.
3. R. Zamora Linmark, *Leche*. Minneapolis, MN: Coffee House Press, 2011.
4. Thanhha Lai, *Inside Out and Back Again*. New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2011.

Canvas

All other assigned readings are on Canvas. You can download the assigned readings under “Files” in Canvas. The articles assigned for each week will be in their respective folder. For example, Week 1 articles will be in the folder entitled “Week 01.”

A Note on Graphic Materials

The materials herein contain elements that some may find disturbing, including: graphic language, nudity, sex and sexual violence, gore, depictions of death, colonialism, racism, ableism, heterosexism, sexism, and other -isms. Such materials are included because they inform and reflect some of the key ideas in Asian Pacific American studies and literature. You are encouraged to engage in self-care, which may include excusing oneself from the classroom as needed. If such topics are a major concern, I highly recommend that you consider taking the course at a later time when you feel prepared to engage such materials. Olympic College has free counseling services that you can use. Please use this as a resource if needed.

A Note on LGBTQ+ Existence

This class contains literary representations of LGBTQ+ communities. As such, we begin with the premise that LGBTQ+ people exist and that striving toward social equity and the elimination of structural oppression based on race, class, gender, sexuality and other social formations is an achievable ideal. This class moves forward with these premises in mind. We will not entertain discussions that run counter to these basic assumptions of the class.

Teaching Methods

Instruction

Generally, material covered in readings will also be reviewed in class. Although I’ll lecture occasionally, most class sessions will be devoted to our discussions together. The required texts are essential elements, and *you must have them*, bringing to class the particular reading we are discussing that day. Even when I lecture, I’ll encourage your active involvement, posing questions to you and welcoming questions and observations from you in return. Every assignment in this class is designed to help you think critically and independently, to develop viewpoints of your own on your own, not just to restate what the authors or I have said. The development of your skill in critical thinking—posing questions and developing interpretations, going far beyond memorization—is a prime goal of this class.

The Importance of “World-Watching”

Since this is a course about the world in which we all live, I strongly encourage you to pay fresh attention to the world around you, looking for things that challenge or confirm, contradict or reflect, points we’ll have made in class—and then to feel free to discuss those things in assignments and discussions.

In-Class Prompts and Writing Exercises

To enhance discussion, I will often pose a question that is somehow related to the topics designated for that day; I’ll collect your written responses and will usually ask each of you to share. These are not “quizzes,” and they will not be graded, but your participation in them matter. Conversely, I’ll ask each of you to come with questions to share, and the class will practice refining those questions. The goal is to make you a better questioner, and hence a better critical thinker. Also, be aware that sometimes response questions and writing exercises will be posted on Canvas. You will be expected to post on Canvas.

Discussion Guidelines

Key Realities

Topics such as race and gender can stir up strong emotions. A great deal of this results from an environment of mistrust and misunderstanding that exists in wider society. I start from the assumption that everyone in this class comes with an open mind. To develop trust amongst each other, it is important that we remain conscious of our own subject positions and speak with rigorous conceptual arguments on our side. Despite the popular pronouncements that there are no wrong answers, *there are* incomplete, superficial, surfaced, and unsubstantiated answers. That being said, this class is *not* simply about opinions that replicate debates on social media culture. Yes, this course will work to promote dialogue, but this is not a place to haphazardly share opinions without regard for research, evidence, and rigorous conceptual arguments that borrow from our assigned texts. If you do not, then this tells the class and the professor that you are haphazardly offering mere opinions and not arguments that critically engage the material. In order for productive exchanges to occur, we must speak through the material and with the guidance of specific examples.

Gender Pronouns

Everyone **must** abide by each individual's gender pronouns (i.e., they/their/them, she/her/hers). There will be zero tolerance for arguments against the usage of one's gender pronouns. Additionally, if you address someone by their incorrect gender pronoun, make continuous efforts to correct yourself.

Getting the Most Out of Class Discussions

- Listen and HEAR what your peers are saying. As you *listen* to your peers, *hear* them by striving to recognize their subject positions. It's okay to respond to a counterpoint with "Hey, I've never thought of it that way," or "Well, I'll have to think about that for a while." Discussion in this class isn't about proving, embarrassing, showing off, winning, losing, convincing, holding one's argument to the bitter end – it's about learning from dialogue and deep introspection.
- If you want to share something that you don't want repeated outside the class, you can preface your remarks with a request that the class agree not to repeat the remarks. Abide by this request.
- Always work toward becoming more aware of your own assumptions and biases. This can help you make specific connections to the reading and other people. Rather than proclaiming, "This article sucks," or "You are wrong," you can get more specific about the basis of your reaction. For example, rather than engaging in a discussion about homosexuality with statements of contempt, it might be better to state: "From my position as someone who was raised with the teachings of the Bible, I find homosexuality a bit troubling, especially in the context of the arguments made by _____ on page _____."
- Disagree with ideas, but do not make personal attacks. Challenge others to facilitate growth.
- Encourage others to contribute to our discussions. Be especially encouraging of people who are working through their biases and attempting to grow.

Tips for College-Level Reading

- Give yourself ample time to complete, highlight, and make mental or actual notes on the readings.
- If it is difficult for you to absorb new information from reading, do not attempt to read in one sitting; read portions of the readings at a time.
- Think of an article or chapter as a story that is being told to you and make mental connections in your reading. Is what you're reading new? Have you ever thought about what the author is saying before? Do certain ideas in the reading confirm and/or challenge what you believe or experience?

Assignments

Grading

Attendance & Participation30%

- 1) Active class participation
- 2) In-class activities
- 3) Quizzes
- 4) Discussion leader

Close Reading Responses20%

Unit Assignments40%

- 1) Key Concept Infographic
- 2) Story Map
- 3) Counternarrative Brochure

Critical Self-Evaluation10%

TOTAL100%

Participation

Since the class will rely heavily on discussion, careful completion of *all* assigned reading, and thoughtful, *active participation* is required. As such, your educational experience will be a communal one: you will get out of it what you put into it. To make this a success, we must all be aware of class-discussion dynamics. If you tend to speak often, experiment with holding back or drawing upon your peers’ comments; if you tend not to participate, take risks and share your point of view. *This I guarantee you: the feeling of not having something significant to say, or the incessant need to practice what you want to say in your head before speaking up is a universal one. Everyone has felt that, and some of you will feel that in this class.* But it may be that the idea you feel embarrassed by is the one idea that could lead to some incredible insight. So please don’t deny the class of a learning opportunity; share your thoughts! Just remember to always keep in mind the discussion guidelines provided in this syllabus.

Come to each class prepared to ...						
Explain the central arguments of the reading.	Assess the reading for its strengths and limitations.	Define and explain key terms, concepts, and/or underlining ideas.	Raise questions about the texts that go beyond “yes” and “no” answers.	Bridge the readings to one another and to broader ideas about American culture and identity.	Refer to claims, analyses, and arguments that you found exciting, confusing, and/or unconvincing.	Highlight key passages when posing a claim, critique, analysis, question, and/or interpretation.

Participation Scale: (50-40) Outstanding participation; impact the class discussion significantly with persuasive arguments using the texts at hand; engagement with all texts throughout the quarter. (39-30) Enthusiastic and regular participation with basic insights into the texts. (29-20) Occasional contribution with active listening. (19-10) No participation at all; inattentive to class discussions and lectures. (9-0) Disruption to class through texting or talking when others are speaking; disrespect to peers and professor.

Other ways to enhance participation grade: 1) Email me comments/questions prior to class. 2) Hand me a note at the beginning of class. 3) Come to office hours. 4) Bring the class’s attention to relevant events.

Pop quizzes will be an opportunity to demonstrate that you carefully engaged the reading. Quizzes will not test memorization, but it is expected that you know names of major characters, events, and places.

Discussion Leaders—(see schedule)

Each of you will select a day to help facilitate class discussion. You are to prepare *five questions* about the assigned reading(s). This exercise will help develop your analytical and writing skills and should therefore take up a considerable amount of thought and careful editing. Bring copies of your questions for the class and be prepared to present them. Since class discussion is an organic thing, it is possible that we will go through all of your questions or just talk about the first one. Don't worry if we do not discuss all of your questions! You will be graded on the questions themselves, not the discussion they generate. If there is more than one assigned reading you should focus on a mix of questions. For example, you may develop questions about each reading and questions that bring the readings together. Samples and the rubric are available on Canvas. More details will be provided.

Close Reading Responses (1 per unit, 1-2 pages, single-spaced, Times NR, size 12)—Upload on Canvas Before Class

A close reading is an analytical response to an element in a literary or cultural text (i.e., a passage, image, metaphor) you found compelling, disturbing, pleasing, moving or important in some way; however, it is *not* just a subjective or wholly personal opinion response. Your goal is to explain how some literary device contributes to the effects of your chosen text. We will practice a number of close readings throughout the quarter. A close reading response is due before the end of each unit for a total of three. When you write a close reading, it should be submitted before class and be based on the assigned reading for that day. Samples and the rubric are available on Canvas. More details will be provided.

Unit 1: The Key Concept Infographic—due Sun., Jan. 26 by 11:59 PM via Canvas

For this assignment, you are to create an infographic that identifies and defines key concepts that are offered by Asian Pacific American studies and literature in “Unit 1: Migration, Transnationalism, and Modernity.” Your infographic should provide an overview of the unit, focusing on key terms, people, events, story summaries, and/or policies and legislation, etc. For example, one might provide an infographic about the historical construction of the “model minority” or offer cultural contexts about the Monkey King in *American Born Chinese*. We will discuss ideas for this assignment and practice using free infographic programs in class. Samples and the rubric are available on Canvas. More details will be provided.

Unit 2: The Story Map—due Sun., Feb. 22 by 11:59 PM via Canvas

For this assignment, you are to create what the Critical Refugee Studies Collective calls a Story Map by drawing from the migration patterns, stories, and historical contexts presented in “Unit 2: War, Militarism, and Trauma.” You should endeavor to reconstruct maps about immigrants and refugees to tell a different story *by* immigrants and refugees; that is, how some come from a history of war, genocide, and militarism; how they have rebuilt their communities; and how they continue to survive and thrive, telling stories, rewriting history, and making art, literature, poetry, and films along the way. Your Story Map should center stories, communities, and collectivities that could be useful for refugees and immigrants to find resources and locate each other. We will discuss ideas for this assignment in class. Samples and the rubric are available on Canvas. More details will be provided.

Unit 3: The Counternarrative Brochure—due Tues., March 13 by 11:59 PM via Canvas

For this assignment, you are to create a counternarrative to tourist brochures about Asia and the Pacific Islands to unveil larger systems of power as examined in “Unit 3: Tourism, Neocolonialism, and Globalization.” You should use critical perspectives in Asian Pacific American studies to analyze your chosen tourist brochure and a selected literary text that counters the tourist narrative. We will discuss ideas for this assignment in class. Samples and the rubric are available on Canvas. More details will be provided.

The Critical Self-Evaluation (2-3 pages, double-spaced)—Due Thurs., March 15 at 11:59 PM via Canvas

For this assignment, you will write a letter to future students in which you evaluate your own learning and challenges. You should attempt to explain key concepts that you may have struggled with or found interesting to future students. Samples and the rubric are available on Canvas. More details will be provided.

Course Policies

Your Responsibilities

You are expected to:

- 1) dutifully read the assigned texts prior to class,
- 2) actively participate in class discussions and the Canvas discussion board,
- 3) submit all assignments at the beginning of class the day they are due, and
- 4) familiarize yourself with Olympic College's standards for academic honesty.

Attendance

I take attendance ***very seriously*** and you should, too. You are **allowed three excused absences**. An *excused absence* is a legitimate absence you discuss with me; excused absences may include health issues, religious observances, or family emergencies. Likewise, time is lost when people are late. **If you are late or miss class, it's your responsibility to find out what you missed from classmates.**

Every student has 50 points directed toward their attendance grade. I deduct 10 points for each unexcused absence and 5 points for each tardy. **Once you reach negative points for your attendance, you will fail the class. To clarify, if you are absent or tardy and have zero attendance points, you will fail the class. Attendance is extremely important in a class based on peer-to-peer engagement, and absences will impact your grade.**

No make-up quizzes will be allowed for students who are absent on the day of a quiz. Additionally, no excused absences will be acceptable on days in which the class conducts peer reviews of papers.

Academic Misconduct

Plagiarism will not be tolerated! Anyone caught plagiarizing will receive a 0 for the assignment, and may be referred to the College, for disciplinary action. Plagiarism includes the following: (1) copying sentences in the entirety or in part from any source without using quotation marks and proper citations; (2) paraphrasing from a source or referring to information gathered from a source without citing that source; (3) copying another student's work; (4) submitting an entire or parts of a written source as your own work; and (5) summarizing an internet article as the basis for your paper. This list is not exhaustive. These are just examples of the most blatant forms of plagiarism. See Student Conduct Code for Olympic College at <https://www.olympic.edu/current-students/policies-processes/student-conduct-code>.

Technology and Textbooks

The use of electronic devices is not allowed in class, unless approved by me. This includes, but is not limited to: cell phones, music players, computers, e-readers, tablets, etc. First, I will ask you to put away the device; if a second occurrence happens, you will be asked to leave the classroom and I will mark you as absent. If you have a digital copy of your textbook, be sure to print out the materials prior to coming to class. **You are required to bring your required materials to every class meeting.**

Assignment Due Dates

I will consider granting extensions, but ***only*** under the condition that you request an extension at least **24 hours prior to the due date**. This extension policy DOES NOT apply to draft deadlines. I deduct two-thirds a grade if you turn in an assignment late without permission, (e.g., "A-" would then receive a "B").

Grades

In this class, an "A" will be given only for work that is genuinely superior. Each assignment will come with a rubric for which you can reference. This class uses Olympic College's grading scale, which can be found here: <https://www.olympic.edu/current-students/student-records/grade-translations>.

Email Etiquette

I will use Canvas to communicate with the class. It is ***your responsibility*** to check your Canvas email regularly. You are welcome to email me on Canvas to request assistance with an assignment or to ask a question. Be sure to practice professional communication skills. Include a proper form of address (“Hi Professor,” or “Dear Professor Estrella,”), and sign your message with your name (“Sincerely, _____”).

Reading/Writing Expectations and Support

As this is a college-level course, the reading and writing load is extensive and the pace fast. Be prepared to spend much time carefully reading, discussing, and writing about the texts in the course. You must be able to devote the time necessary to keep up with the assignments, and to do so in a critical manner in order to do well in this class. I am here to support you; see me in office hours if you need additional support.

Students who need help with their writing do not need to struggle alone. There is support for student writing on this campus. Everyone in the class, at whatever level of writing fluidity or experience, is encouraged to visit the Writing Center. The web page for the writing center is <http://www.olympic.edu/services/tutoring-services/writing-center>.

Course Performance

Performing well on assignments and coming to class prepared are the primary ways you are assessed. What does this mean? Essentially, I am warning you that the level of effort you put into class, may not correspond to the results you produce. That is, sometimes a person’s best efforts may only earn them a “B”. Therefore, do not come to me at the end of the quarter with an argument about how hard you worked for an “A”.

Syllabus Changes

I will try to remain as faithful as possible to this syllabus. However, I reserve the right to amend any and all readings, assignments, presentations, exams, etc. which are subject to change without notice.

Addressing the Professor

Address me by: 1) “Professor Estrella” 2) “Prof. E.” 3) “Dr. Estrella” or 4) “Dr. E.” No exceptions.

Office Hours, Special Accommodations, and Tutoring

Take advantage of my office hours; I am here to help you through the course. Please let me know in (or before) class if you would like to schedule a time for office hours to ensure there are no overlapping appointments. In addition, I can meet at other times; ***e-mail me on Canvas*** to schedule an alternative time.

Please let me know of any special accommodations you may have by the first week. I am willing to work with everyone to ensure maximum accessibility for everyone’s learning.

Permissions

From time to time, I like to make a copy of a student’s work (with name removed) for use in other classes, for teacher training, or for my own course improvement files. If you consent to this, no action is required. If you object to this, please send an email to me stating that you do not give me permission.

American Culture and Equity Studies (ACES) at Olympic College

The A.A. Degree

I am happy to talk with students about the possibility of taking more courses in ACES or pursuing a major/minor in fields such as ethnic, gender, feminist, queer, or women’s studies. Feel free to drop by my office hours if you would like to learn more about these disciplines.

Finally, please use me as a resource. I LOVE talking to students about their goals and learning from their experiences. I am looking forward to working with all of you over the quarter.

Reading Schedule

UNIT I—MIGRATION, TRANSNATIONALISM, & MODERNITY

I. Tuesday, January 7 | Introduction

I. Thursday, January 9 | Who are Asian Pacific Americans? What is Asian Pacific American Lit.?

- Nat. Council of Asian Pacific Ams., “Who are Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, & Islanders?” 3-5.
- Pawan Dhingra and Robyn Magalit Rodriguez, “Arrival and History”
- Nam Le, “The Boat”

II. Tuesday, January 14 | Asian/American Modernity or Modernities?

- David Palumbo-Liu, “Pacific America: The Beginning of Modern Asian America.” 17-19.
- Tu Weiming, “Multiple Modernities: A Preliminary Inquiry into East Asian Modernity”
- Ken Liu, “The Paper Menagerie”

II. Thursday, January 16 | Migration and Transnationalism

- International Organization for Migration, “Migration and Transnationalism”
- Epele Hau’ofa, “Our Sea of Islands”
- Julayne Lee, *Not My White Savior* (selected poems)

III. Tuesday, January 21 | Chinese Literary History & *American Born Chinese*

- Alex Abad-Santos, “How to Read a Comic Book: Appreciating the Story Behind the Art”
- Lan Dong, “Reimagining the Monkey King in Comics.” 1-7.
- Gene Luen Yang, *American Born Chinese*. 7-130.

III. Thursday, January 23 | A Long History of Stereotypes in *American Born Chinese*

- Yuko Kawai, “Stereotyping Asian Americans: The Model Minority and the Yellow Peril”
- Gene Luen Yang, *American Born Chinese*. (pg. 133-233)

Unit 1 Assignment—Key Concept Infographic due Sunday, Jan. 26 by 11:59 PM via Canvas.

UNIT II—WAR, MILITARISM, & TRAUMA

IV. Tuesday, January 28 | World War II and Korean Comfort Women

- Krishna Ignalaga, “Korean Comfort Women”
- Nora Okja Keller, *Comfort Woman*. 1-72.

IV. Thursday, January 30 | Shamanism and Korean Symbolism

- Peabody Essex Museum, “Korean Art and Culture.” 14-22.
- Nora Okja Keller, *Comfort Woman*. 73-141.

V. Tuesday, February 4 | Asian Settler Colonialism in Hawai’i

- Haunani-Kay Trask, “Settlers of Color and ‘Immigrant’ Hegemony: ‘Locals’ in Hawai’i.” 45-51.
- Nora Okja Keller, *Comfort Woman*. 143-213.

V. Thursday, February 6 | Postwar Japan and U.S. Occupation

- Pearson Ed., “The U.S. Occupation of Japan, 1945-1952”
- Mary Yukari Waters, “Since my House Burned Down” and “Aftermath”

VI. Tuesday, February 11 | The Vietnam War in Children's Literature

- Peter Church, "Vietnam"
- Thanhha Lai, *Inside Out & Back Again*. 1-111.

VI. Thursday, February 13 | The Experience of Vietnamese Refugee Children

- Min Zhou, "Straddling Two Social Worlds: The Experience of Vietnamese Refugee Children"
- Thanhha Lai, *Inside Out & Back Again*. 115-260.

VII. Tuesday, February 18 | Hmong Refugees and Self-Documentation

- Bo Thao, "The Hmong: History and Culture." 1-25.
- Kao Kalia Yang, *The Latehomecomer* (selections)

VII. Thursday, February 20 | Cambodian Life Writing and the Khmer Rouge

- Peter Church, "Cambodia." 12-31.
- Luong Ung, *First They Killed My Father* (selections)

****Unit 2 Assignment—The Story Map due Sun., Feb. 22 by 11:59 PM via Canvas.****

UNIT 3—TOURISM, NEOCOLONIALISM, & GLOBALIZATION

VIII. Tuesday, February 25 | Tourism as Neocolonialism in the Pacific Islands

- Huanani-Kay Trask, "Neocolonialism and Indigenous Structures" and "Lovely Hula Hands"
- Kristiana Kahakauwila, "This is Paradise" and "The Road to Hana"

VIII. Thursday, February 27 | Reimagining Oceania and the Politics of Globalization

- Epeli Hau'ofa, "The Ocean in Us"
- Huanani-Kay Trask, "Politics in the Pacific Islands: Imperialism and Native Self-Determination"
- Dan Taulapap McMullin, *Coconut Milk* (selected poems)

IX. Tuesday, March 3 | Balikbayan and the National Imaginary

- Cristina Szanton Blanc, "Balikbayan: A Filipino Extension of the National Imaginary"
- R. Zamora Linmark, *Leche*. 1-107.

IX. Thursday, March 5 | Photo Histories of the Philippines

- R. Zamora Linmark, *Leche*. 108-213.

X. Tuesday, March 10 | Imperialism, Tourism, and Globalization

- Peter Church, "Philippines"
- R. Zamora Linmark, *Leche*. 214-355.

X. Thursday, March 12 | Sightseeing in Thailand

- Peter Church, "Thailand"
- Rattawut Lapcharoensap's, "Farangs" and "Sightseeing"

FINALS WEEK | March 17-20 (Tues-Fri)

XI. Tuesday, March 17 | Final Presentation in Class

****Unit 3 Assignment—The Counternarrative Brochure due in class and submitted via Canvas.****