
Asian American History and Culture

History 901

Fall Semester 2008

5245 Humanities; Thursdays 9 - 11 am

Professor: Cindy I-Fen Cheng

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Office Hours: Thursday 11 – 1:30 pm and by appointment

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course begins with a simple premise that how and what we write about, the histories and stories that we choose to tell, matter. We will devote this semester to exploring how various Asian American texts develop and deepen the on-going conversations about historical representation and the writing of narratives. Fundamental to this inquiry is a critical examination of how notions of race, gender, class, sexuality, and nationality shape each conversation and alter what is at stake. Among the keys themes we will explore is how do we go about representing the historically under-represented? What are some approaches taken to narrate the construction of social difference and the possibility of social change? How can we go about relating the social unevenness that occurs within a nation state to other nation states? In our attempt to answer these questions, we will hopefully arrive at a better understanding of the desires that shape the production of knowledge.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Active participation and listening are required in every seminar meeting. To help develop your thoughts on the weekly assigned readings, you are required to write a two page maximum response paper to be turned in at the beginning of seminar each week on the readings. Your first write up will be due on the second week of class meeting, 9.11. You will also help to facilitate a class meeting by presenting on one of the weekly assigned readings. The final critical thinking paper is a 10 page write up that asks you to pick a theme discussed in this course and develop it in relation to your own research interests.

Response paper (2 page maximum; 50 points each, 13 total)	650 points	65%
Critical Thinking Paper (10 pages)	350 points	35%
Total	1000 points	100%

REQUIRED TEXTS

1. Course Reader ®
2. Judy Yung, *Unbound Feet: A Social History of Chinese Women in San Francisco* (Berkeley, UC Press), 1995.
3. Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 2001.
4. Caroline Chung Simpson, *An Absent Presence: Japanese Americans in Postwar American Culture, 1945-1960* (Durham: Duke University Press), 2001.
5. Mary Paik Lee, *Quiet Odyssey: A Pioneer Korean Woman in America* (Seattle: University of Washington Press), 1990.
6. Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior* (New York: Vintage), 1989.
7. David Henry Hwang, *M. Butterfly* (Dramatist Play Service Inc), 1998.
8. Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts* (Durham: Duke University Press), 1996.
9. John Okada, *No-No Boy* (Seattle: University of Washington Press), 1978.

10. Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 2004.
11. Jessica Hagedorn, *Dogeaters* (New York: Penguin), 1991.
12. Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Dictee* (New York: Tanam Press), 1982.
13. Meena Alexander, *Fault Lines* (CUNY: The Feminist Press), 2003.

COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK 1 Course Introduction

R 9.4

WEEK 2 How do we tell stories?

R 9.11 Response Paper #1 DUE

Readings:

1. Hayden White, "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality" in *Critical Inquiry* 7:1 (1980), 5-27. ®
2. Hayden White, "The Politics of Historical Interpretation: Discipline and De-Sublimation" in *Critical Inquiry* 9:1 (1982), 113-137. ®
3. Hayden White, "Getting out of History" in *Diacritics* 12:3 (1982), 2-13. ®
4. Ronald Takaki, "From a Different Shore: *Their History Bursts with Telling*" in *Strangers From a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), 3-18. ®
5. Carole Anne Taylor, "Positioning Subjects and Objects: Agency Narration, Relationality" in *Hypatia* 8:1 (1993), 55-80. ®

WEEK 3 Social Change and Human Agency

R 9.18 Response Paper #2 DUE

Readings:

1. Judy Yung, *Unbound Feet: A Social History of Chinese Women in San Francisco* (Berkeley, UC Press), 1995.

WEEK 4 Constructing and Policing Differences

R 9.25 Response Paper #3 DUE

Readings:

1. Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 2001.

WEEK 5 Stories of Recovery

R 10.2 Response Paper #4 DUE

Readings:

1. Caroline Chung Simpson, *An Absent Presence: Japanese Americans in Postwar American Culture, 1945-1960* (Durham: Duke University Press), 2001.

WEEK 6 **Writing Life Narratives**

R 10.9 Response Paper #5 DUE

Readings:

1. Mary Paik Lee, *Quiet Odyssey: A Pioneer Korean Woman in America* (Seattle: University of Washington Press), 1990.
2. Alessandro Portelli, "Introduction" and "The Death of Luigi Trastulli: Memory and the Event" in *The Death of Luigi Trastulli* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1991), vii-xvi and 1-26. ®
3. Joan W. Scott, "'Experience'" in *Feminist Theorize the Political*, eds. Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott (New York: Routledge, 1992), 22-40. ®

WEEK 7 **Writing the Self**

R 10.16 Response Paper #6 DUE

Readings:

1. Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior* (New York: Vintage), 1989.
2. Sau-Ling Cynthia Wong, "Necessity and Extravagance in Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*: Art and the Ethnic Experience" in *MELUS* 15:1 (1988), pp. 3-26. ®

WEEK 8 **Conflicting Desires**

R 10.23 Response Paper #7 DUE

Readings:

1. Frank Chin and Jeffery Paul Chan, "Racist Love". ®
2. Frank Chin, Jeffery Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Hsu Wong, "An Introduction to Chinese- and Japanese-American Literature," in *Aiiieeeee!*. ®
3. Elaine H. Kim, "'Such Opposite Creatures': Men and Women in Asian American Literature". ®
4. King-Kok Cheung, "The Woman Warrior versus The Chinaman Pacific: Must a Chinese American Critics Choose between Feminism and Heroism?" ®
5. Leslie Bow, "'For Every Gesture of Loyalty, There Doesn't Have to Be a Betrayal': Asian American Criticism and the Politics of Locality." ®
6. David Henry Hwang, *M. Butterfly* (Dramatist Play Service Inc), 1998.

WEEK 9 **Negotiating between the Universal and the Particular**

R 10.30 Response Paper #8 DUE

Readings:

1. Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts* (Durham: Duke University Press), 1996.
2. Kandice Chuh, "Introduction" in *Imagine Otherwise* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 1-29. ®

WEEK 10 **Belonging to the Nation**

R 11.6 Response Paper #9 DUE

Readings:

1. John Okada, *No-No Boy* (Seattle: University of Washington Press), 1978.

WEEK 11 **Defining National Borders**

R 11.13 Response Paper #10 DUE

Readings:

1. Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 2004.

WEEK 12 **Legacies of Colonial Desire**

R 11.20 Response Paper #11 DUE

Readings:

1. Jessica Hagedorn, *Dogeaters* (New York: Penguin), 1991.
2. Bontoc Eulogy (Film).

WEEK 13 **Thanksgiving Holiday – No Seminar Meeting**

R 11.27

WEEK 14 **Constructing the Postcolonial and Transnational Subject**

R 12.4 Response Paper #12 DUE

Readings:

1. Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Dictee* (New York: Tanam Press), 1982.
2. Lisa Lowe, "Unfaithful to the Original: The Subject of *Dictee*" in *Writing Self, Writing Nation* (Berkeley: Third Woman Press, 1994), 35-69. ®
3. Laura Hyun Yi Kang, "The 'Liberatory Voice' of Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictee*" in *Writing Self, Writing Nation* (Berkeley: Third Woman Press, 1994), 73-99. ®

WEEK 15 **Constructing the Postcolonial and Transnational Subject**

R 12.11 Response Paper #13 DUE

Readings:

1. Meena Alexander, *Fault Lines* (CUNY: The Feminist Press), 2003.

Critical Thinking Paper – DUE Friday, December 19, 2008