

**ICS24/ELIT24 Asian Pacific American Literature**  
**De Anza College**  
**Fall 2017**

This class meets Mondays and Wednesdays 1:30 – 3:20 in room MQ-2A

Instructor: Sherwin Mendoza, mendozasherwin@fhda.edu

Office Hours: Mondays 11:00 – 12:00, Wednesdays 11:00-12:00, and by appointment

Office Hours Location: MCC-14 (IIS Division main office)

Course Web Site:

<http://www.deanza.edu/faculty/mendozasherwin/elit24ics24f17/>

This course is an introduction to Asian American Literature. The readings emphasize three themes: problems of identity as it relates to class, gender, mixed heritages, and sexuality; politics and the history of Asian American activism and resistance; and the diversity of cultures within the Asian American community.

The Student Learning Outcomes for this course state that at the end of the quarter you should be able to do the following:

- 1) Identify multiple cultural and historical issues pertaining to Asian American Pacific Islanders in literature.
- 2) Analyze issues pertaining to race, class, sexuality and/or gender in relation to Asian Pacific American communities.

### **Inequalities in Asia Emerging in the US**

Since the first articulations of Asian American identity in the 1960s and 1970s, the demographic composition of the Asian American population has changed dramatically. At that historical moment the overwhelming majority of Asian Americans were born in the US. Immigration policies for decades had severely restricted immigration from Asia to the US, but the Immigration Act of 1965 allowed family members in the US to sponsor relatives in Asia to legally enter the US. Refugee Acts in the late 1970s and in the 1980s allowed people from Southeast Asia to form Cambodian American, Khmer American, Laotian American, Hmong American, and Vietnamese American communities, and the expansion of the migration of Asians in specialty occupations such as engineering and nursing created further conditions for the expansion of the population of Asian Americans who were not born in the US.

Immigration is one of the key topics in the field of Asian American Studies, but a topic that is not as widely acknowledged is the role of changes in the economic development of countries in Asia in shaping the experiences of people of Asian descent in the US. Since the 1960s, some parts of Asia that have had a long-standing relationship with the US—Japan, then Taiwan, Hong Kong, and South Korea—have experienced tremendous economic growth. More recently, since the early 1970s, the economy of China has expanded dramatically. A result of this economic growth is that the per capita GDP of all of these areas has risen dramatically, and new currents have emerged. The number of international students from Asia to the US has exploded. However, other parts of Asia

have not developed as quickly and are still afflicted by tremendous inequality. For parts of Asia that suffer from tremendous economic inequality, immigration to the US sometimes seems like the only way for families to achieve a better life.

The topic for this quarter in ICS24/ELIT24 will be the role of inequalities in Asia in shaping the experiences of people of Asian descent in the US. These experiences have been shaped by inequalities within countries, and by inequalities between countries. In short, this class will focus on literary works that illustrate and that are formed by the relationships of people of Asian descent in the US to global capitalism.

### **Course Policies**

Attendance is mandatory. All class time counts and attendance every day is required. Please contact me before class if you are unable to attend, and we will set up a way for you to make up the missed class time. Please respect my time and the time of your classmates by coming to class on time. Please turn in assignments on time to make it easier for me to track the progress of everyone in the class.

Attendance is particularly important for people who select the video option. If I see that someone is not contributing to the group project then I will ask that person to leave the group by either dropping the class or switching to the seminar.

This course will abide by the college-wide policies of De Anza College with respect to academic conduct (honesty, respect for diversity, etc.).

### **Course Options**

In this class you will have two options for studying Asian American Literature:

Option 1: Produce a poetry video

Option 2: Participate in a seminar on Asian American Literature

## **Option 1: Produce a Poetry Video**

### **Course Texts**

All course texts will be free and available online. Additionally, you will read poems written by your classmates and watch videos produced by your classmates.

### **Course Schedule**

Unit I: Telling Your Story

September 25, 27

Course Introduction

October 2, 4

Telling Your Story

Form groups

**Select an option**

Unit II: Poetry

October 9, 11

Poem 1 due

October 16, 18

Poem 2 due

October 23, 25

Poem 3 due

Analytical Essay (Three-Five pages) due

Select poem or poems for video

Assign roles and begin planning your video projects

Unit III: Video Production

October 30, November 1

Video concepts, Music concepts

Recording

November 6, November 8

Storyboards

Recording

November 13, November 15

Recording

November 20, 22

Holiday November 23-26

Recording

November 27, 29

Recording

December 4, 6

Video due, final exam review

Final Exam Monday, December 11, 1:45-3:45

## **In-class Writing**

There will be weekly in-class writing assignments that will hopefully allow you to develop analytical skills, especially with regard to gender, class, race, and sexuality. Most in-class writing will be discussed in small groups after you have written the assignment. You need to satisfactorily complete eight out of 11 in-class writing assignments to receive credit. To satisfactorily complete assignments you should think carefully about the prompts and critically about your responses. If you miss more than three in-class assignments I will either ask you to drop the class (if it is early in the quarter) or you will have a letter grade deducted from your final grade.

## **Telling Your Story**

During the second week of the quarter you will present your story to a small group in the class (preferably four or five people per group). The story you present will be a true story about your experience of economic inequality and your relationships with people with more or less capital than you. One thing to keep in mind is that if your family is from Asia there is a very high probability that your parents and/or grandparents experienced severe poverty.

## **Poems**

Before the end of the second week of the quarter you will form a poetry group. You will write three poems that you will present to your group. For your group's video project you will select one or more poems written by people in your group to showcase in your video.

The series of poems that you and your fellow group members produce should build on each other. Your first poem will focus on your experience of economic inequality. Hopefully you can generate the poem from a line from your Telling Your Story assignment. In your second poem you will take a line or image from someone else's poem to write about a specific moment when class differences influenced your relationships with other people. In your third poem you will select a different line or image to be the focal point.

For each of your poems you will be required to provide additional commentary to aid interpreters of your poems. For your third poem you will write a short analytical essay to accompany your poem in which you describe the influences—whether from poetic traditions you have been introduced to in school, from fellow students and other peers, or from your own development as a poet—that lead to the creation of your third poem and to the artistic decisions that you made in order to create your third poem.

## **Video Projects**

The assignments for this class will build towards video projects. The class begins with you telling your story, and aspects of your story will hopefully become the basis for poems you will write. You will form groups for the video production unit of this course,

and you will select one or more poems from your group to become the poem or poems recited in your video. Finally, your poems will be uploaded and archived on the De Anza Asian American Literature YouTube channel.

Note that if you do not contribute to your poetry and video group then I will ask you to either drop the class or switch to the seminar. Multiple consecutive absences will be a reason for me to ask you to switch to the seminar or drop the class.

### **Grading**

In-class Writing: 10%

Telling Your Story Presentation and Narrative: 10%

Poem 1: 10%

Poem 2: 10%

Poem 3 + Analytical Essay (Three-Five Pages): 15%

Video Project: 30%

Final Exam: 15%

## **Option 2: Seminar on Asian American Literature**

**I recommend this option to you only if you are interested in a career involving literature.** The format of this option is similar to graduate-level courses in Asian American Literature. The reading requirement will be substantial, and I will expect you to actively engage with the course texts and the thoughts on the texts of other participants in the seminar. I will evaluate the writing requirement with the degree of rigor you should expect to find in an upper-division literature course at a 4-year university.

### **Course Texts**

After examining syllabi from Asian American Literature courses taught at several US universities the seminar participants will decide on two texts to read. We will select either two novels or one novel along with a text belonging to another genre such as a collection of short stories or a collection of poems. Preferably, the texts will be available electronically from Amazon.

### **Course Schedule**

Note: After October 4 students who choose this option will meet at a different time and location from the students who selected Option 1.

Unit I: Telling Your Story

September 25, 27

Course Introduction

October 2, 4

Telling Your Story

Form groups

**Select an option**

Unit II: Asian American Literature as an institution

Week of October 9

Review Syllabi

Decide on course texts and obtain access to course texts

Unit III: Read and discuss literary texts

Week of October 16

Begin reading the first text

Week of October 23

Finish reading the first text

Responses due

Week of October 30

Begin reading the second text

Week of November 6

Finish reading the second text

Responses due

Unit IV: Analytical Essay

Week of November 13

Research, topic, thesis

Week of November 20

Holiday November 23-26

Writing workshop

Week of November 27

First draft of analytical essay due

Week of December 4

Final draft of analytical essay due

Final Exam Monday, December 11, 1:45-3:45

**Grading**

Telling Your Story Presentation and Narrative: 10%

Presentation on a possible course text: 10%

Response 1 (Two pages): 20%

Response 2 (Two pages): 20%

Final draft of Analytical Essay (Five-Seven Pages): 25%

Final Exam: 15%