

Department: AASI/ENGL

Course No.: 3212[274]

Credits: 3

Title: Asian American Literature

Contact: A. Harris Fairbanks

Content Area: CA4 Diversity and Multiculturalism

Diversity: CA4 Non-International

Catalog Copy: 3212[274] . Either semester. Three credits. Prerequisite: ENGL 110 or 111 or 250 or 105. Open to sophomores higher. Literature, theatre, film about Asian American communities and culture in the United States from the mid-nineteenth century to the present.

Course Information:

- a) The course considers examples of Asian-American literature from various genres. It approaches major themes in Asian-American literature including intergenerational conflict, such as necessity vs. extravagance, eating bitter vs. eating treats, and nativism vs. assimilationism. They also include responses to American racism, such as the racial shadow, cultural prostitution, food prostitution, and the model minority myth.
- b) These requirements vary from instructor to instructor. Reading assignments focus on major canonical works. Typically, grading would be based on some combination of quizzes, papers, a midterm exam, and a final exam. Exam formats would ordinarily include some essay answers.
- c) Asian-American perspectives on the United States' social, political, and economic promises, e.g. asserting the Asian American's place in American history and culture (often referred to as "claiming America"), presenting oneself as a window into Asian culture (known derogatorily as "tour guide to the exotic"), refusing to submit to an agenda of U.S. nationalism through a diasporic posture, embracing a multicultural identity, and asserting a hybrid or polycultural identity.

Meets Goals of Gen Ed.:

- 1) This course helps students become articulate (a) by attending closely to the ways that nuances in language shape meaning in the literature covered by the course and (b) by requiring students to articulate their responses to the literature by discursive (rather than multiple-choice, for example) responses on tests or in essays.
- 4) This course helps students acquire moral sensitivity because the literature covered typically hinges on moral judgments that the characters confront and injustices that Asian Americans have encountered.
- 6) This course helps students acquire consciousness of the diversity of human culture and experience by attending to the modes of perception, experiences, and positions in human society unique to Asian Americans.

CA4 Criteria:

- 1) This course emphasizes the experiences, thoughts, and values brought about by the social conditions unique to Asian Americans, such as being regarded as unassimilable and forever foreign, being treated as a "model minority," being used as a scapegoat for economic problems in the U.S. (e.g. Vincent Chin's murder in 1982), being treated not as U.S. citizens but as an enemy during WWII and the Vietnam War, etc.
- 4) This course stresses the human rights issues raised by the treatment of Asian Americans, e.g. legislated discrimination (Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, National Origins Act of 1924, and others) and

unconstitutional treatment of U.S. citizens and resident aliens (Executive Order 9066, which put 112,000 Japanese Americans in internment camps during WWII).

5) This course emphasizes how political and economic systems shaped the experiences of Asian Americans: how U.S. involvement in armed conflicts in Asia created refugees, “war brides,” and U.S. “wards” who sought refuge in the U.S. (e.g. 1899 colonization of the Philippines, Korean War, Vietnam War); U.S. families adopting children from Asia; U.S. universities attracting scholars from Asia; U.S. manufacturers seeking cheap labor in Asia; etc.

Role of Grad Students: Advanced graduate students may serve as primary instructors of this course. Their major advisor will normally be their primary supervisor, responsible for training them as teachers of the course and overseeing their work. If for some reason the major advisor is not available or, as will only rarely happen, lacks expertise in the course, he or she is responsible for finding a competent faculty replacement. When the graduate student first teaches the course, the supervisor will approve the syllabus, tests, and writing assignments, will sit in on at least one class session, and will review the grade distribution. If the graduate student teaches the course subsequently, supervision will naturally be more relaxed, but the advisor will remain accountable for the instructor's performance.