

Asian North American Literature and the Remains of War
English 9177A
Fall 2019

Instructor: Dr. Thy Phu

Course Location: UC 4415

Tuesdays 3:30-6:30

Office hours: Thursdays, 1:30-3:20 in UC 4432; please email to confirm an appointment

Course Description

Though Canada and the U.S. are often celebrated in immigrant novels as havens for those seeking safety from war, a diasporic framework complicates this meta-narrative of benevolence. This course examines the emergence of Asian diasporic literature in Canada and the U.S., paying particular attention to the cultural work that they do in forming community and protesting injustice. In our close study of select novels, we will consider the significance of their formal experimentation, examine their engagement with the themes of race, gender, and sexuality, and situate them within their social and historical contexts, focusing in on how they respond to the violence of wars, from WWII to the Cold War, and their aftermaths.

Novels:

Mohsen Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*

Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood among Ghosts*

Nora Okja Keller, *Comfort Woman*

Joy Kogawa, *Obasan*; John Okada *No-No Boy*

Madeleine Thien, *Do Not Say We Have Nothing*

Monique Truong, *The Book of Salt*

Ocean Vuong, *On Earth We Are Briefly Gorgeous*

We will also view two documentary films in class, *The Apology* and *First Person Plural*.

Objectives:

By the end of the course, successful students will be able to:

- Grasp the importance of key concepts in the field of Asian North American literary and cultural studies;
- Understand the practical application of these concepts for literary interpretation;
- Situate literary texts within historical contexts;
- Analyze the cultural politics of literary and cultural texts.

Course Materials

Available on OWL, at the campus bookstore, or online. A copy of all novels is also available at Weldon Library on 1-day loan.

Methods of Evaluation

Attendance and participation (ongoing; includes mandatory meeting with the professor on your final essay proposal)	15%
Weekly critical reflection	20% (ongoing)
Presentation	20% (various)
Essay proposal	5% (Oct. 22)
Essay draft	5% (Dec. 2)
Peer editing workshop	5% (Dec. 3)
Final essay	30% (Dec. 13)

This course provides an open space for the critical and civil exchange of ideas. Some readings and other content in this course will include topics that some students may find difficult and/or traumatizing. The instructor will aim to forewarn students about potentially disturbing content. All students are asked to help to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and sensitivity.

Students are fully responsible for looking at and being familiar with the information posted on the department website at <https://www.uwo.ca/english/graduate/index.html>,

SCHEDULE

The professor reserves the right to revise as needed.

Week 1	Sept. 10	Introduction Lisa Lowe, “Heterogeneity, Hybridity, Multiplicity: Marking Asian American Differences.” Iyko Day, “Lost in Transnation.”
Week 2	Sept. 17	Joy Kogawa, <i>Obasan</i> . Iyko Day, Introduction to <i>Alien Capital</i> .
Week 3	Sept. 24	John Okada, <i>No-No Boy</i> . “How to Tell Your Friend from the Japs,” <i>Time Magazine</i> . James Kyung-Jin Lee, “Warfare, Asian American Literature, and Commitment.”
Week 4	Oct. 1	Maxine Hong Kingston, <i>The Woman Warrior</i> .

		Robert G. Lee, "The Cold War Origins of the Model Minority Myth," in <i>Orientalism: Asian Americans in Popular Culture</i> .
Week 5	Oct. 8	Monique Truong, <i>The Book of Salt</i> . Edward Said, "Reflections on Exile." Anita Mannur, "Culinary Nostalgia: Authenticity, Nationalism, and Nostalgia." <i>MELUS</i> 32.4 (2007).
Week 6	Oct. 15	Madeleine Thien, <i>Do Not Say We Have Nothing</i> . Ann Cvetokovich, "Introduction" to <i>An Archive of Feelings</i> .
Week 7	Oct. 22	<i>The Apology</i> https://www-nfb-ca.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/film/apology/ (in-class screening). Kandice Chuh, "Discomforting Knowledge: Or, Korean 'comfort women' and Asian Americanist Critical Practice" Please read this excerpt <i>before</i> class. Due: Essay proposal.
Week 8	Oct. 29	Nora Okja Keller, <i>Comfort Woman</i> . Jina Kim, "Introduction" to <i>Postcolonial Grief: The Afterlives of the Pacific Wars in the Americas</i> .
Week 9	Nov. 5	<i>First Person Plural</i> https://uwo.kanopy.com/product/first-person-plural (In-class screening). Arisa H. Oh, "Introduction: Legacies of War," in <i>To Save the Children of Korea: The Cold War Origins of International Adoption</i> . Please read this article on your own before class.
Reading Week	Nov. 12 - No class.	
Week 10	Nov. 19	Ocean Vuong, <i>On Earth We Are Briefly Gorgeous</i> . Viet Thanh Nguyen, "On True War Stories," from <i>Nothing Ever Dies</i> .

Week 11	Nov. 26	<p>Mohsin Hamid, <i>The Reluctant Fundamentalist</i>.</p> <p>Aimee Bahng, “On Speculation: Fiction, Finance, and Futurity.”</p> <p>Arif Dirlik, “Colonialism, Globalization and Culture: Reflections on September 11th”, <i>Amerasia</i> 28.1 (2001): 80-92.</p>
Week 12	Dec. 3	<p>Drafts due Dec. 2.</p> <p>Bring a hard copy to class for the mandatory editing workshop Dec. 3.</p> <p>Final essay due Dec. 13.</p>

ASSIGNMENTS, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND EXPECTATIONS

Attendance and participation. This course is, by design, dialogical. The quality of your experience will depend on your commitment to the course. Everyone is expected to contribute towards building a positive and generative space for the thoughtful exchange of ideas. Towards this end, you are required to be present at all classes, to keep up with all readings, and to come prepared to participate actively in debate and discussion. In the spirit of collegiality, please contribute to building a positive space for exchanging ideas by asking for clarification when you are confused and listening attentively and actively to one another, bearing in mind that we will be working through intellectually challenging material together. This means avoiding put-downs (even humorous ones), interrupting your peers, monopolizing discussion or disengaging. You are encouraged to offer opinions with supporting evidence drawn from your readings, to challenge each other in respectful ways, to build on one another’s comments, and to take responsibility for the quality of discussion.

Formatting and submission of assignments. Please submit all assignments, including weekly reflections, through the OWL dropbox folder. Unless otherwise noted, include a title, your name, page numbers, a standard font (Times New Roman or Garamond), and double space your papers. I prefer that you type out assignments/papers using MS Word. However, if you prefer to use another program, then submit your papers in PDF format.

Weekly critical reflections (300-500 words)

By Monday morning, you will submit a short paper in response to each assigned work of fiction novel. These responses are designed to stimulate ideas for your final paper. Prepare your responses by annotating the text as you read; these annotations ensure that you read actively. A response paper should attempt to shed light on one or more aspects of the work. Although these critical reflections are meant to be informal pieces of writing, you will be expected to use language carefully and stylishly, to draw on quotes from the works in question to support your

ideas, and to grapple with the critical questions raised by the text.

You are NOT expected to submit a critical reflection on Week 1. You are also NOT expected to prepare a critical reflection on the films we will view. Finally, you are NOT required to submit a response on the week that you present.

No late responses will be accepted (if you anticipate an absence, you may submit your responses early). Please note that, although you are expected to read assigned critical essays in preparation for classes, you are not required to write responses to these articles.

Presentations. Presentations should be 20-30 minutes long. Your presentation should set up a critical problem and provide an engaged interpretation of the assigned text or prompt that works towards an overarching thesis or argument. However, you are not expected to read a formal paper but are instead encouraged to prepare detailed notes and present in an engaging, conversational manner. You should prepare a one-page handout with your main points to assist class members in following your talk. Please submit your notes to the professor at the end of your presentation.

At the end of your presentation, your peers will offer brief feedback and suggestions on the presentation, based on organization, clarity, and quality of analysis.

Final Essay

Writing is a multi-step process that involves pre-writing, drafting, revising, and editing. Writing well means that you do not skip steps, by waiting until the night before a deadline to prepare your final paper! For this reason, the final essay assignment consists of several components, each of which is designed to encourage you to engage with each of the writing processes. The components of the final essay consist of:

- **Proposal:** By October 22nd you must submit a 500-word proposal and a preliminary annotated bibliography (2-3 peer-reviewed articles/books) for your final paper. You are encouraged to design your own topic and can write on any of the texts assigned for this course. Each annotation should be a couple of sentences summarizing the main points of the item and how it may be useful for your argument. Please note that, after submitting your proposal, you are required to meet with your instructor to discuss strategies for developing your argument.
- **Essay draft:** You will be required to complete a 4000-5000-word research paper on a topic of your design. Though you may NOT write on the same topic as your presentation, you may write on the same text so long as it's on a different topic. The draft needn't be polished but it needs to be more developed than an outline and should be written in complete sentences. Bring a hard copy to class on December 3rd. Final papers should be submitted electronically, as an email attachment.
- **Peer editing workshop:** Though we often work in solitude, ultimately, our writing is read by an audience who will engage with our work. Peer editing is a productive way to

receive feedback while our ideas are developing. On December 3rd, our class will be devoted to peer editing. Attendance and participation are mandatory.

- **Final essay:** Due before midnight on December 13th.

Policies

Accommodation

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components, and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. The UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness and further information regarding this policy can be found at http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf.

Downloadable Student Medical Certificate (SMC):

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf

Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf

Plagiarism:

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence.

Plagiarism Checking:

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>.

All instances of plagiarism will be reported to the Chair of Graduate Studies. Proven cases of plagiarism will result in a grade of zero for the assignment. Subsequent offences will result in failure for the course.

Support Services

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Student Development Centre <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western: https://www.uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/ for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Student Accessibility Services

Western is committed to achieving barrier-free accessibility for all its members, including graduate students. As part of this commitment, Western provides a variety of services devoted to promoting, advocating, and accommodating persons with disabilities in their respective graduate program.

Graduate students with disabilities (for example, chronic illnesses, mental health conditions, mobility impairments) are encouraged to register with Student Accessibility Services, a confidential service designed to support graduate and undergraduate students through their academic program. With the appropriate documentation, the student will work with both SAS and their graduate programs (normally their Graduate Chair and/or Course instructor) to ensure that appropriate academic accommodations to program requirements are arranged. These accommodations include individual counselling, alternative formatted literature, accessible campus transportation, learning strategy instruction, writing exams and assistive technology instruction.