

LTEN 181 / ETHN 124

Special Topics in Asian-American Literature: Asian Decolonization and the US Civil Rights Movement

Spring 2018

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Course ID: 934685 / 934758

TTH 2-3:20 pm

PETER 102

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From its very inception, the category of “Asian-American” was anomalous: it lumped Asian populations of the most diverse origins and histories into one, whose status as a historically underrepresented US minority group was roughly comparable to that of African- and Latinx-Americans. But of equal importance, the exclusive attention to the “American” experience of these historically underrepresented minorities neglected the fact that such Asian populations remained closely tied to the politics and cultures of the Asia-Pacific region; and that even African-Americans and Latinxs fighting for civil rights took both the experiences and lessons of decolonization in Asia as a point of departure for understanding their own struggles and histories in the US. This course addresses the inextricably intertwined histories of and reflections on Asian decolonization (in countries as diverse as Indonesia, India, Taiwan, the Philippines, Vietnam, Korea, and Japan) and the US Civil Rights movement. From Martin Luther King, Jr.’s study of Indian decolonization under Gandhi’s leadership, to Malcolm X’s understanding of the Vietnam War, civil rights leaders never ceased to weave together the historical destinies of subaltern classes in Asia and the racially segregated classes in the United States.

REQUIRED TEXTS (available at UCSD Bookstore)

W.E.B. DuBois, *Dark Princess*. University Press of Mississippi 0-87805-765-x

The Autobiography of Malcolm X. Ballantine Books 0-345-35068-5

Vijay Prashad, *Everybody Was Kung Fu Fighting*. Beacon Press 978-0807050118

Chang-Rae Lee, *Native Speaker*. NY: Riverhead Books, 1993. 978-1573225311

Karen Tei Yamashita, *I-Hotel*. NY: Coffee House Books.

*Course Reader (available at CalCopy La Jolla: <http://www.calcopy.net/>)

REQUIREMENTS:

Attendance and participation: Students are expected to attend all classes and participate in all discussions and workshops. Please make every effort to commit yourself to coming to class prepared to engage in a productive and positive way. Grades will be adversely affected by multiple absences.

Quizzes / short responses (5=25%): These in-class or take-home assignments will ask students to answer one or more questions pertaining to a key theme of the reading or discussion of the day or week; or solicit their response to a particular argument or concept. Student absence during a quiz will result in 0 points for that day: there are no make-up quizzes.

Group oral presentation (10%): Oral presentation on a given reading or topic will be conducted at the beginning of each class, and should not exceed 10 minutes. Its purpose is to highlight **ONE** main idea or theme of the assigned reading(s) for the day, and to discuss its importance in comparison / contrast to other ideas or themes we have taken up in class. Students are free to take up one of the keywords or key themes suggested in the syllabus for that particular section of the course. The oral presentation should not exceed 10 minutes.

Long Paper (25%): Students will be asked to analyze literary and / or cultural texts, either through the comparison and / or contrast with other texts or in relation to historical events or social theory; or develop an argument about an author's stakes or literary strategies in developing a story, character, event, etc., a particular way (7-10 pages). Students are encouraged to consult the UCSD student handbook on policies regarding fraud or plagiarism, which is punishable by suspension or expulsion from the university.

Midterm exam (20%): In class exam.

Final group presentation (20%) to be held the final week of the quarter.

SCHEDULE (materials in the Reader marked with an asterisk *)

Week 1 (April 3-5): Introduction

Key events and concepts: Afro-Asian economy and society; race as difference, *limpieza de sangre*, capitalism and chattel slavery, exchange value, Darwinism-Spencerianism, Aryanism

Readings: Vijay Prashad, *Everybody Was Kung Fu Fighting* (chapter 1); W.E.B. DuBois, “The Souls of White Folk”*; DuBois, *Dark Princess* (1-117; 186-311)

Week 2 (April 10-12): Pan-Asianism and Pan-Africanism in the Age of European and US Imperialism

Key events and concepts: 1886 Berlin Conference, scramble for Africa, end of US Reconstruction, “White Man’s Burden,” US World’s Fairs, World War I, Afro-Orientalism, racial aesthetic

Readings: DuBois, *Dark Princess*; Bill Mullen, *Afro-Orientalism* (ch. 1)*; Gerald Horne, *Race / War* ch. 1 (“The Asiatic Black Man”) (pdf); “Savage Acts” (film, dir. Pennee Bender *et al.*, 1995)

Week 3 (April 17-19): From Africa to Asia

Key events and concepts: Ahimsa, satyagraha, brahmacharya, aparigraha, swaraj, asceticism, apartheid, “special” laws

Readings: Mohandas K. Gandhi, “Hind Swaraj” [Indian Self-Rule]; Gandhi, “Satyagraha” and “Fifteen Instructions to Volunteers”*; Constance Bonduras, *Conquest of Violence* (ch. 4)*; *Gandhi* (film)

Week 4 (April 24-26): From Asia to America

Key events and concepts: Unjust law(s), nonviolent tension, “I-thou” relationship, Southern Christian Leadership Conference, 1896 Plessy v. Ferguson ruling, “separate but equal” status, *agape*

Readings: Martin Luther King, “Letter from the Birmingham Jail”*; King, “Nonviolence and Racial Justice” and “Beyond Vietnam”*; Robin Kelley, “Black Like Mao” (pdf); Mao Zedong, “Statement Supporting the African-American in their Just Struggle Against Discrimination” (pdf)

Weeks 5-6 (May 1-8): ...and Back to Asia

Key events and concepts: 1955 Bandung Conference, whiteness / white man, industrialization as religion, the Three Worlds division, the Cold War, pan-Arabism, Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere, Manicheanism, any means necessary

Readings: Richard Wright, *White Man, Listen!* (ch. 1)*; Carl Pletsch, “The Three Worlds, or the Division of Social Scientific Labor, Circa 1950-1975” (pdf); Frantz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, ch. 1 (“Concerning Violence”); Malcolm X, *Autobiography of Malcolm X* (chapters 10-13; 14-16; 17-19); Malcolm X, “Message to the Grass Roots”*

Midterm exam (May 10)

Weeks 7-8 (May 15-24): Convergences and Counterpoints in the Politics of Cultural Identity

Key events and concepts: *Isei/Nisei/Sansei*, Japanese internment camps, Richard Aoki, Yuri Kochiyama, JACL (Japanese-American Citizens League), JTC (Japantown Collective), Third World Liberation Front (TWLF), RG (Red Guard), FBI

Readings: Karen Tei Yamashita, *I-Hotel* (117-189; 193-220; 295-369; 423-489; 579-612); Vijay Prashad, *Everybody Was Kung Fu Fighting*, ch. 5 (“Kung Fusion”)

Films: “Enter the Dragon” (dir. Robert Clouse, 1973); “Three the Hard Way” (dir. Gordon Parks Jr., 1974); “Fall of the I Hotel” (dir. Curtis Choy, 1983)

Week 9 (May 29-31): Millennial Dreams

Key events and concepts: multiculturalism vs. polyculturalism, postmodernism, “neo-Americans,” politics of impersonation, myth of “assimilation”

Chang-Rae Lee, *Native Speaker*; Tina Chen, *Double Agency* (ch. 6)*; Vijay Prashad, *Everybody Was Kung Fu Fighting*, chs. 2-3 (“The American Ideology” and “The Merchant is Always a Stranger”)

Week 10 (June 5-7): Final presentations and conclusion