Literatures of the Pacific and the Transatlantic: Migration in Asian American and Caribbean Writing and Film

EGL 587 Topics in Race, Ethnic Studies
Professor Jeffrey Santa Ana
Office: 1094 Humanities
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 10:00am – 11:30am and 2:30pm – 4:00pm, and by appointment
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The class meets in 3008 Humanities at 3:50 – 6:40pm on Thursdays.

Course description:

This course is a comparison of literature and cultures from the Asia/Pacific and Caribbean regions. Through reading literature and watching films, we will explore the experiences of Asians in Hawai‘i and the Pacific Islands and Black people of the African diaspora in the Caribbean. We’ll look at a range of materials such as films, novels, and essays to examine people of Asian and African descents in critical relation to imperialism, colonialism, and North American race relations.

This course will introduce you to using theory in relation to literary and other artistic texts (like films and essays). In both class discussion and writing assignments, we will take into account genre, author’s gender, culture, or historical period as basic concepts in literary analysis, which inflect a particular theme or issue in the texts and films.

The course will also focus on international migration to consider how globalization exerts social and political pressures on people of Asian and African descents. Currently, scholars in literary and cultural studies are concerned with the effects of globalization and colonialism on immigrants and people displaced from homelands. This literary and critical focus on globalization raises a host of questions. How, for example, does globalization and colonialism affect diasporic (world-wide) migration of laborers? How does race and gender under globalization and colonialism force people to cross borders in search of work and a living wage? How does this international migration of people inform and shape our understanding of nationalism, imperialism, and race relations in contemporary North America?

We will address these and related questions by examining writings and films about Asian and African people in the Pacific and the Caribbean who cross national and cultural borders. We’ll examine globalization and colonialism in an America that has been shaped by the migration of people across and within its changing and contested borders. We’ll consider the pressures that capitalism and colonialism exert on national identity; displacement; multiple migrations; and constructions of home and family. Three units for exploring and analyzing borders, diaspora, and migration in Asian American and Caribbean literatures will comprise the course: (1) Postcolonial and Diaspora Theory:

Books
Olaudah Equiano: Interesting Narrative and Other Writings, Olaudah Equiano (Africa, England, and the Caribbean)  
The Dew Breaker, Edwidge Danticat (Haiti and New York)  
A Small Place, Jamaica Kincaid (Antigua)  
Down These Mean Streets, Piri Thomas (Puerto Rico and New York)  
Drown, Junot Diaz (Dominican Republic and New York)

Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction, Jonathan Culler  
International Migration: A Very Short Introduction, Khalid Koser

Typee, A Peep at Polynesian Life, Herman Melville (the South Pacific Marquesas Islands)  
Song of the Exile, Kiana Davenport (Native Hawai’ians and Korean Americans)  
Blu’s Hanging, Lois-Ann Yamanaka (Japanese Americans in Hawai‘i)  
All I Asking for Is My Body, Milton Murayama (Japanese Americans in Hawai‘i)  
The Thirdest World: Stories and Essays by Three Filipino Writers, Lara Stapleton, Eric Gamalinda, and Gina Apostol (the Philippines and U.S.A.)

The books are available at Stony Books Incorporated:  
1081 N Country Rd, Stony Brook, NY (next to the Stony Brook train station on the west side of campus)  
Tel: (631) 689-9010

Articles and essays available in pdf format in our course website on Blackboard

Films (to be viewed in class)

White Christmas (1993; to be viewed in class), a short documentary by Michael Magnaye. “After ‘four hundred years in a convent and fifty years under Hollywood,’ Philippine culture can be a spectacle of Spanish and U.S. colonial influences. Through the combination of Christmas icons, rituals and personal reflections, Magnaye offers a candid perspective of contemporary life in the Philippines” (from the video jacket).

Life and Debt (2001), a documentary about the effects of globalization on Jamaican industry and agriculture. Produced and directed by Stephanie Black.

Dirty Pretty Things (2002), a suspenseful drama about two undocumented immigrants (a Nigerian and a Turkish Muslim) in London. One of the immigrants eventually flees to New York City. Directed by Stephen Frears.

Picture Bride (1995), a drama about Riyo, who arrives in Hawaii as a "picture bride" for a man she has never met before. The film is based on the historical practice of Japanese
men in the U.S. who have wives sent to them from their homeland. Directed by Kayo Hatta.

*The Blossoming of Maximo Oliveros* (2006), a drama from the Philippines directed by Auraeus Solito. The purity of first love is pitted against the squalor and corruption in the slums of Manila. Gay, pre-teen Maxi is deeply and uncomplainingly devoted to his family of petty thieves, until he meets Victor, an honest and principled policeman. The two become friends. Victor inspires Maxi to hope for a better life, which incurs the ire of Maxi’s family.

**Course website:**
I will post the syllabus and reading materials (articles and essays) in our course website on Blackboard. On occasion, I may include in our course website any visual materials or images for discussion in class.

You are also required to post a question for leading class discussion in our course website in advance of our class meeting. See below for further details.

The website for this class is located at:
http://www.stonybrook.edu/~blackboard

**Requirements.**

**Regular attendance and active participation in seminar: 10%**
Since this class is a seminar, attendance is required. Your preparation and willingness to actively participate in seminar discussions are central to the quality of the course. Come prepared to discuss the books, films, and other materials covered that day. If you do not actively and consistently participate in discussion, or if you miss two or more classes, your grade will be lowered.

**Leading class discussion with a posted question in our course website: 10%**
We will include in each seminar meeting questions presented by 2 members of the class. On the evening or morning before we begin each seminar, two class members will formulate a detailed question about the reading or film. We will use the questions to initiate and lead discussion. Be sure that your question refers to specific passages in the reading or scenes in the film. In your question, you are required to comment on the reading or film in a way that expresses your analysis of it in relation to the topics in our class (e.g., border crossings, diaspora, immigration, displacement, home, and displacement). You can pose a question that will lead the seminar to examine closely the language in the reading or dialogue in the film or compare it to other readings or films in the class. Your question can also express what you find most intense, meaningful, or puzzling about the reading or film. All of the questions will be available to everyone in the class as possible topics for the analytical paper.

Your question must be posted in the course website on Blackboard in advance of the seminar meeting. I will screen your question in seminar on the day you are to present it.
Each person will take turns formulating and posting a question throughout the semester based on the alphabetical order of last names. I will take into account the quality and effort you put into your question when factoring your grade.

**Critical essay of analysis (5-6 pages): 25%**
You will write one critical essay of analysis on any one book we’ve read and discussed in class. I’m not assigning specific topics. However, the essay must be a close analysis of a chosen book, and must include focus on some aspect of border crossing, diaspora, migration, immigration, or displacement in relation to colonialism or globalization. You cannot use your presentation for your essay, but you may refer to any of the posted questions in our website to formulate the analysis and argument (thesis) for your paper.

**Essay format.** All writing assignments, including the written plan for your presentation, must be typed and double-spaced on an 8-1/2” x 11” paper. Use MLA style format. Your paper should be typed and double-spaced (except for block quotations of passages or dialogue from films). Number your pages and use 12-point Times New Roman font. See the Style Guide for Essays in the course website.

**Oral presentation (12-15 minutes) and written copy (3-4 pages): 15%**
You will give one oral presentation of an argument (thesis) about a book or film. I will pass around a sign-up sheet for you to choose a text or film for the oral presentation.

In your presentation, you must provide a close reading of at least one passage in a book or scene in a film that shows how it both supports your argument and generates it. If you are presenting on a film, you will need to screen one or two clips from the film as part of your analysis. Also, it is important that you make central to your argument and analysis topics and concepts in postcolonialism or globalization (i.e., border crossing, migration, immigration, displacement, home, diaspora, labor, survival, etc.). As part of your analysis, you will need to provide any background elements that will enhance our understanding of the book or film (e.g., genre, author’s gender, historical period, biographical information about the author or film director; and where you situate and critique the book in literary theory or the movie in film theory). You will conclude your presentation with one strong question for the class that will allow us to discuss the text or film in relation to your presentation as well as topics and issues we’ve discussed in previous seminar meetings. Your presentation will be approximately 12-15 minutes. You may include supplemental visual materials or audio recordings to enhance your argument and analysis. However, be sure not to let these supplemental materials make you lose focus on analyzing your chosen text or film.

After your presentation, you will need to turn in a written (typed and double-spaced)) copy of it. The written copy may be either an outline or a coherent narrative (like an essay). However, when you give your presentation in class do not just read it from your written copy. Instead, please try to give it as a discussion while looking at and talking directly to everyone in the seminar.
The grade you receive will be based on the performance of your presentation as well as the quality of your written copy. You may use your presentation to help formulate your analytical paper.

**Comparative analytical paper (8-9 pages): 40%**
An analytical paper on any two books or films in the course, except for the texts in your critical essay. You may comparatively analyze a book and a film, if you like. I’m not assigning specific topics. However, your paper must be a close analysis of passages in your chosen books or scenes in films, and must include focus on some aspect of borders, diaspora, displacement, immigration, and migration in relation to colonialism or globalization. The analytical essay is due in class on Thursday, December 12. You may use any of the posted questions in our website to formulate your paper’s analysis and argument (thesis).

**Late paper policy.** All papers must be turned in by the due date. I’ll make exceptions in cases of medical or family emergency, but in general I’m going to hold fast to this rule. If you anticipate a problem, I need to hear about potential lateness before the due date.

**Academic integrity:**
Plagiarism on one assignment may result in an F for the entire course. University guidelines on dealing with plagiarism will be followed. Although I encourage you to read websites, articles, and books about the course material, you must be careful to avoid plagiarism in your papers and midterm exam. Plagiarism is using others’ ideas and words without clearly acknowledging the source of that information. Plagiarism, intentional or unintentional, is considered academic dishonesty and all instances will be reported to the Academic Judiciary. To avoid plagiarism, you must give credit whenever you use another person’s idea, opinion, or theory; any facts or any other pieces of information that are not common knowledge; quotations of another person’s actual spoken or written words; or paraphrase of another person’s spoken or written words. Citing all sources and putting direct quotations in quotation marks are required. For further information on the policies regarding academic dishonesty see http://ws.cc.stonybrook.edu/uaa/academicjudiciary/

**DSS assistance:**
If you have a physical, psychological, medical, or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact Disability Support Services at (631) 632-6748 or http://studentaffairs.stonybrook.edu/dss/. They will determine with you what accommodations are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential.

Students who require assistance during emergency evacuation are encouraged to discuss their needs with their professors and Disability Support Services. For procedures and information go to the following website: http://www.sunysb.edu/ehs/fire/disabilities.shtml
**Course etiquette:**
If you have a laptop computer, you may bring it to seminar. We may want to draw on our course website, or other electronic resources, such as the readings that are posted for you to download and print as hard copies. However, in-class computer use is restricted to materials and resources directly pertaining to our discussion. Please do not use your laptop in seminar to catch up on email, surf the web, write papers for other courses, etc.

**Email:**
Use email for unexpected circumstances only. Discussion of paper topics, course material, or request to miss a class are best handled during office hours. If you need to see me before my next scheduled office hours, please do email me.

**Tentative class schedule:**
Be ready to discuss all readings and films on the days they are listed below. If we fall behind, I may change some of these articles and chapters to recommended readings. I will inform the class of these changes in advance.

All articles are available for you to download and print in pdf format in the course website on Blackboard. Look for “Articles, Essays, and Book Chapters” in the course website.

* Article is recommended only. You are not required to read articles or readings marked by an asterisk. However, I may refer to concepts and topics in these readings in class discussion. See last page for more recommended readings.

**Link to website is available in the course website in Links, Notes, and Presentations**

**Week 1:**
Introduction: questionnaire, course mechanics, and literary theory/comparative literature

**Th, 9/4**
Map of the Caribbean:
http://www.google.com/search?client=safari&amp;rls=en&amp;q=map+of+the+caribbean&amp;ie=UTF-8&amp;oe=UTF-8 **

Map of Hawai‘i:
http://www.google.com/search?client=safari&amp;rls=en&amp;q=map+of+hawaii&amp;ie=UTF-8&amp;oe=UTF-8 **

Map of the Pacific:
http://www.google.com/search?client=safari&amp;rls=en&amp;q=map+of+the+pacific&amp;ie=UTF-8&amp;oe=UTF-8 **

“Introduction: What Is Comparative Literature Today?” Susan Bassnett

Video (in class): *White Christmas* (24 minutes)

**Week 2:**
Postcolonial and Diaspora Theory: Discourses of Globalization, Borders, and Migration

**Th, 9/11**

**Reading:** View posted questions

*Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction*, Jonathan Culler (chapter 1)

“How Comparative Literature Came into Being” and “Beyond the Frontiers of Europe: Alternative Concepts of Comparative Literature,” Susan Bassnett

Introduction from *Orientalism*, Edward Said

*Typee*, Herman Melville (up to chapter 15)

**Week 3:**
Postcolonial and Diaspora Theory: Discourses of Globalization, Borders, and Migration

**Th, 9/18**

**Oral presentation on Typee**

*Typee* (have finished the book)

**Reading:** View posted questions

*Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (chapters 2-5)

*Olaudah Equiano: Interesting Narrative and Other Writings* (pp. 31-70 bottom of page, 77-103 bottom of page, 107 “It was very common” - 127 bottom of page, and 131-177)

“Nation, Migration, Globalization: Points of Contention in Diaspora Studies,” Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur (pp. 1-12)

**Week 4:**
The Black Atlantic: African American Literature and the Diasporic Imaginary in the Caribbean

**Th, 9/25**

**Oral presentation on Olaudah Equiano: Interesting Narrative**

*Olaudah Equiano: Interesting Narrative and Other Writings* (pp. 202 “At our arrival” - 219, 232 “I hope” - 236)

**Reading:** View posted questions

*Life and Debt* (to be viewed in class)

*Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (chapters 6 and 7)

*A Small Place*, Jamaica Kincaid (up to p. 54)
Discussion of *Life and Debt* in relation to Kincaid’s *A Small Place*

**Week 5:**
The Black Atlantic: African American Literature and the Diasporic Imaginary in the Caribbean

**Th, 10/2**
**Oral presentation on *A Small Place* and *Life & Debt***
*A Small Place* (have finished the book)

**Reading:** View posted questions

*The Dew Breaker*, Edwidge Danticat (up to p. 164)

*Dirty Pretty Things* (film to be viewed in class)

**Week 6:**
The Asia/Pacific: Asian American Writings and the Transnational Perspective in Hawai‘i and the Pacific

**Th, 10/9**
No Class: Yom Kippur Observed

**Week 7:**
The Black Atlantic: African American Literature and the Diasporic Imaginary in the Caribbean

**Th, 10/16**
Critical essay due (5-6 pages)

**Oral presentation on *The Dew Breaker***
*The Dew Breaker* (have finished the book)

**Reading:** View posted questions

**Oral presentation on *Down These Mean Streets***
*Down These Mean Streets* (have finished the book)

**Week 8:**
The Black Atlantic: African American Literature and the Diasporic Imaginary in the Caribbean

**Th, 10/23**
**Reading:** View posted questions

“Why Migration Matters,” “Who Is a Migrant?,” and “Irregular Migration,” Khalid Koser
“Border Crossings,” Caryl Phillips

_Drown_, Junot Diaz (up to p. 88)

**Week 9:**
The Asia/Pacific: Asian American Writings and the Transnational Perspective in Hawai‘i and the Pacific

_Th, 10/30_
**Oral presentation on Drown**
_Drown_ (have finished the book)

**Reading:** View posted questions

“‘The Man of Color and the White Woman,” Frantz Fanon

_Song of the Exile_, Kiana Davenport (up to p. 113)

_Picture Bride_ (to be viewed in class)

**Week 10:**
The Asia/Pacific: Asian American Writings and the Transnational Perspective in Hawai‘i and the Pacific

_Th, 11/6_

**Reading:** View posted questions

Introduction (pp. 12-21) and Chapter 1 from _The Forbidden Book: The Philippine-American War in Political Cartoons_, Abe Ignacio, et al.

_Song of the Exile_ (up to p. 237)

_The Blossoming of Maximo Oliveros_ (to be viewed in class)

**Week 11:**
The Asia/Pacific: Asian American Writings and the Transnational Perspective in Hawai‘i and the Pacific

_Th, 11/13_
**Oral presentation on Song of the Exile**
_Song of the Exile_ (have finished the book)

**Reading:** View posted questions

Blu’s Hanging, Lois-Ann Yamanaka (up to p. 64)
“Migration and Globalization” and “Migration and Development,” Khalid Koser

Week 12:_______________________________________________________________

Th, 11/20
**Oral presentation on Blu’s Hanging**
- *Blu’s Hanging* (have finished the book)

**Reading:** View posted questions

- “Migrants in Society” and “The Future of International Migration,” Khalid Koser
- “Imagining America: Forgetful Fathers and the Founding Myths of the Nation” (from *A Forgetful Nation*), Ali Behdad (up to p. 33 only)

  *All I Asking for Is My Body*, Milton Murayama (up to p. 57)

Week 13:_______________________________________________________________

Th, 11/27  **No class: Thanksgiving Day**

Week 14:_______________________________________________________________

Th, 12/4
**Oral presentation on All I Asking for Is My Body**
- *All I Asking for Is My Body* (have finished the book)

**Reading:** View posted questions

  - *The Thirdest World: Stories and Essays by Three Filipino Writers* (have read "Cunanan’s Wake," “People Are Strange (When You’re a Stranger),” and “Until It Comes to You"

  **Lara Stapleton** in class for discussion of her book and Filipino American writing

Week 15:_______________________________________________________________

Th, 12/11  **Last Day of Class.**
- **Comparative analytical paper due (8-9 pages)**

**Oral presentation on The Thirdest World** (have finished the book)

**Reading:** View posted questions

- “Conclusion: Remembering 9/11” (from *A Forgetful Nation*), Ali Behdad
More Recommended Readings (available in pdf format in Blackboard)

“Race and Postcoloniality,” Apollo Amoko*
“After Postcolonialism,” Leela Gandhi*

*Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction (chapter 8 and Appendix)*
“Introduction: Caribbean Women Writers and Postcolonial Imperialism,” Helen Scott*
“Gateway to the Caribbean” (analysis of Jamaica Kincaid’s writings), Helen Scott*
“Land of Mountains” (analysis of Edwidge Danticat’s novels), Helen Scott*
Introduction from The Cinema of Globalization: A Guide to Films about the New Economic Order, Tom Zaniello*
“The Negro and Language” (from Black Skin, White Masks), Frantz Fanon*
“The Woman of Color and the White Man,” Frantz Fanon*
“The Fact of Blackness,” Frantz Fanon*
“Raising Cane: The World of Plantation Hawaii,” Ronald Takaki (from Strangers from a Different Shore)*

“Postcolonialism and Feminism,” Leela Gandhi*
“Imagining Community: the Question of Nationalism,” Leela Gandhi*
“Refugees and Asylum Seekers,” Khalid Koser*
“One World: the Vision of Postnationalism,” Leela Gandhi*
“The Urban Climacteric” (from Planet of Slums), Mike Davis*
“The Prevalence of Slums,” Mike Davis*
“Migrancy, Mobility, Modernity: Quotidian Struggle and Queer Diasporic Intimacy,” Martin Manalansan IV*
“Discourses of Exclusion: Nativism and the Imagining of a ‘White Nation’” (from A Forgetful Nation), Ali Behdad (up to p. 120 only)*
“Practices of Exclusion: National Borders and the Disciplining of Aliens” (from A Forgetful Nation), Ali Behdad*