

# Asian American Literature and the Cold War

English 30853: Asian American Literature | Fall 2017  
Monday, Wednesday 5:00–6:20 p.m. | Reed 421

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Office Hours: Mon., Wednesday 2:00–3:30 p.m.

## Course Overview

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In 1968, activists at the University of California, Berkeley, founded the Asian American Political Alliance to mobilize Americans of Asian descent against racism, imperialism, and the war in Southeast Asia. It marked the first time that “Asian American” had been used by a national organization to unite Americans from different Asian ethnic backgrounds. As AAPA founder Yuji Ichioka remembers, “Everyone was lost in the larger rally [against the war]. We figured that if we rallied behind our own banner, behind an Asian American banner, we would have an effect on the larger public.” This course will investigate what Ichioka identifies as the intertwined histories of Asian America and the American wars in Korea and Vietnam.

Whereas television shows like *M\*A\*S\*H* (1972–83) and films like *Apocalypse Now* (1979) imagine the Korean and Vietnam wars through the eyes of the American soldier and veteran, this course will instead consider the war stories of first- and second-generation Korean and Vietnamese Americans, from Richard Kim and Susan Choi to Monique Truong and Viet Nguyen. We will read their fiction as a framework for rethinking the cultural narratives of the wars in Korea and Vietnam. And we will examine how the Cold War—and the social movements it in part motivated—gave rise to what we now call Asian American literature. Our readings will introduce you to Asian American writing as a political form and a way of reimagining the United States in the world.

## Learning Objectives

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Establish a working knowledge of the fields of Asian American literary and cultural studies.

Locate some of the overarching themes and ideas that animate Asian American literature since, and in relation to, the American wars in Korea and Southeast Asia.

Cultivate a transferable set of methodological tools for investigating Asian American literature and culture.

Use the knowledge base and methods of Asian American studies to research and write about Asian American literature and other cultural forms.

## Required Texts

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Choi, Susan. *The Foreign Student*. 1998. Harper Perennial, 2004.  
Kim, Richard E. *The Martyred*. 1964. Penguin, 2011.  
Nguyen, Viet Thanh. *The Sympathizer*. Grove, 2015.  
Truong, Monique. *The Book of Salt*. 2003. Mariner, 2004.

## Readings on Course Website

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- Apocalypse Now*. Directed by Francis Ford Coppola. United Artists, 1979.
- Belletto, Steven. "The Korean War, the Cold War, and the American Novel." *American Literature*, vol. 87, no. 1, 2015, pp. 51–77.
- Cummings, Bruce. Introduction. *The Korean War: A History*, Modern Library, 2010, pp. xv–xix.
- . "The Course of the War." *History*, Modern Library, 2010, pp. 1–36.
- Espiritu, Yen Le. "Militarized Refuge(es)." *Body Counts: The Vietnam War and Militarized Refuge(es)*, U of California P, 2014, pp. 24–48.
- Jung, Moon-Ho. "Empire." *Keywords for Asian American Studies*, edited by Cathy J. Schlund-Vials, Linda Trinh Vo, and K. Scott Wong, New York UP, 2015, pp. 238–43.
- Klein, Christina. "Sentimental Education: Creating a Global Imaginary of Integration." *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945–1961*, U of California P, 2003, pp. 19–60.
- "M\*A\*S\*H." *M\*A\*S\*H*," created by Larry Gelbart, season 1, episode 1, 20th Century Fox, 1972.
- Nguyen, Viet Thanh. "On True War Stories." *Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War*, Harvard UP, 2016, pp. 223–50.
- Park, Josephine Nock-Hee. "Lesser Friends." *Cold War Friendships: Korea, Vietnam, and Asian American Literature*, Oxford UP, 2016, pp. 25–44.
- Wong, K. Scott. "War." *Keywords for Asian American Studies*, edited by Cathy J. Schlund-Vials, Linda Trinh Vo, and Wong, New York UP, 2015, pp. 238–43.
- Young, Marilyn. "An American War (1966–1967)." *The Vietnam Wars, 1945–1990*, HarperCollins, 1991, pp. 172–191.
- . Preface. *The Vietnam Wars, 1945–1990*, HarperCollins, 1991, pp. ix–x.
- . "The War in America (1965–1967)." *The Vietnam Wars, 1945–1990*, HarperCollins, 1991, pp. 192–209.

## Assignments and Course Expectations

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### Assignments:

Daily Reading Quizzes	15%
Participation and Preparedness	15%
Multimedia Presentation	20%
Midterm Paper	25%
Final Paper	25%

### Grading Scale:

A	93–100%	C	73–76%
A-	90–92%	C-	70–72%
B+	87–89%	D+	67–69%
B	83–86%	D	63–66%
B-	80–82%	D-	60–62%
C+	77–79%	F	0–59%

**Course Expectations:** This is a reading- and writing-intensive course. To succeed, you will need to devote a significant amount of time to actively reading the course material. Your final grade will be

based on a combination of factors, including your scores on daily reading quizzes, your preparation for and participation in class discussions, your multimedia presentation, and your midterm and final papers. The latter account for half of your grade, so achieving an A or B in this course will depend in large part on your ability to produce thoughtful, original, well-organized, and argument-driven writing about the material we read and discuss. I cannot emphasize enough, however, that investing time in the smaller assignments will feed your success on these larger projects.

Participation and Preparedness: The success of this class depends on your engaged and lively participation in it. Please come to class having read the assigned readings and taken careful notes that you can then draw on in formulating and sharing ideas with your peers. At the end of every meeting, you will complete a self-evaluation sheet in which you will assess your own participation and preparedness for that day's meetings and provide a brief rationale for the score you have assigned yourself, on a scale of 1 to 10. While I will try to honor your self-evaluations, I reserve the right to raise or lower your scores based on my own observations.

Scores of 9 or 10 are reserved for those who arrive on time having read and taken notes on all of the assigned materials, bring those materials and notes to class with them, make thoughtful contributions to class discussion, behave respectfully toward their classmates, and do not become distracted by technology.

Scores of 7 or 8 are recommended for those who arrive on time having read most of the assigned materials but may not have taken reading notes, make contributions to class discussion that may be tangential or not grounded in the readings, behave respectfully toward their classmates, and do not become distracted by technology.

Scores of 5 or 6 are recommended for those who arrive on time or a little late having read some of the assigned materials but have not taken reading notes, do not contribute substantially to class discussion, behave respectfully toward their classmates, and may become distracted by technology.

Scores of 1–5 are recommended for those who arrive late having read little of the assigned materials, do not voluntarily contribute to class discussion, and may become distracted by technology.

## **Policies**

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Attendance: Regular attendance is critical to your success in this course, not only because you receive a participation grade—and it is difficult to participate when you are not there—but also because the midterm and final papers will draw directly on the conversations we have in class. If you will be absent from class for a medical or family emergency, please contact me ahead of time so that I can send you any materials from that day's meeting.

Submitting Your Work: Please submit your midterm and final papers as .doc or .docx files through the course website. Papers should be double-spaced in twelve-point font with one-inch margins. Format your references using MLA style. If you are unfamiliar with MLA style, please consult the latest edition of the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*.

Plagiarism: As defined by the university, plagiarism is “the appropriation, theft, purchase or obtaining by any means another's work, and the unacknowledged submission or incorporation of

that work as one's own offered for credit. Appropriation includes the quoting or paraphrasing of another's work without giving credit therefore." To avoid committing plagiarism, acknowledge and document all of your sources in your written work. If you are ever unsure whether something constitutes plagiarism, please check with me first.

University Disabilities Statement: Texas Christian University complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 regarding students with disabilities. Eligible students seeking accommodations should contact the Coordinator of Student Disabilities Services in the Center for Academic Services located in Sadler Hall, 1010.

Accommodations are not retroactive, therefore, students should contact the Coordinator as soon as possible in the term for which they are seeking accommodations. Further information can be obtained from the Center for Academic Services, TCU Box 297710, Fort Worth, TX 76129, or at (817) 257-6567.

### Reading Schedule and Deadlines

Date	Readings	Deadlines
<b>Week 1</b>	<b>Asian America and the Cold War</b>	
Monday, Aug. 21	Syllabus Wong, "War" (website)	
Wednesday, Aug. 23	Jung, "Empire" (website) Klein, "Sentimental Education" (website)	Multimedia presentation assigned
<b>Week 2</b>	<b>The Korean War</b>	
Monday, Aug. 28	Cumings, Introduction to <i>The Korean War</i> and "The Course of the War" (website)	
Wednesday, Aug. 30	Park, "Lesser Friends" (website)	
<b>Week 3</b>		
Monday, Sept. 4	No class (Labor Day)	
Wednesday, Sept. 6	Belletto, "The Korean War, the Cold War, and the American Novel" (website)	
<b>Week 4</b>		
Monday, Sept. 11	Kim, <i>The Martyred</i> 1–50	
Wednesday, Sept. 12	Kim, <i>The Martyred</i> 51–98	
<b>Week 5</b>		
Monday, Sept. 18	Kim, <i>The Martyred</i> 99–156	Midterm paper assigned
Wednesday, Sept. 20	Kim, <i>The Martyred</i> 157–199	Midterm paper proposal due Sunday, Sept. 24 at 5 p.m.
<b>Week 6</b>		
Monday, Sept. 25	Conferences	
Wednesday, Sept. 27	Conferences	
<b>Week 7</b>		
Monday, Oct. 2	Choi, <i>The Foreign Student</i> 1–105	
Wednesday, Oct. 4	Choi, <i>The Foreign Student</i> 106–81	

<b>Week 8</b>		
Monday, Oct. 9	Choi, <i>The Foreign Student</i> 182–272	
Wednesday, Oct. 11	Choi, <i>The Foreign Student</i> 273–325	Midterm paper due Friday, Oct. 13 at 5 p.m.
<b>Week 9</b>		
Monday, Oct. 16	No class (fall recess)	
Wednesday, Oct. 18	“M*A*S*H”	
<b>Week 10</b>	<b>The Vietnam War</b>	
Monday, Oct. 23	Young, Preface to <i>The Vietnam Wars</i> , “An American War,” and “The War in America” (website)	
Wednesday, Oct. 25	Espiritu, “Militarized Refuge(es)” (website)	
<b>Week 11</b>		
Monday, Oct. 30	Nguyen, “On True War Stories” (website)	
Wednesday, Nov. 1	Truong, <i>Book of Salt</i> 1–63	
<b>Week 12</b>		
Monday, Nov. 6	Truong, <i>Book of Salt</i> 64–133	
Wednesday, Nov. 8	Truong, <i>Book of Salt</i> 134–202	
<b>Week 13</b>		
Monday, Nov. 13	Truong, <i>Book of Salt</i> 203–61	
Wednesday, Nov. 15	Nguyen, <i>Sympathizer</i> 1–89	
<b>Week 14</b>		
Monday, Nov. 20	Nguyen, <i>Sympathizer</i> 90–193	Final paper assigned
Wednesday, Nov. 22	No class (Thanksgiving break)	
<b>Week 15</b>		
Monday, Nov. 27	Nguyen, <i>Sympathizer</i> 194–294	
Wednesday, Nov. 29	Nguyen, <i>Sympathizer</i> 295–382	
<b>Week 16</b>		
Monday, Dec. 4	<i>Apocalypse Now</i>	
Wednesday, Dec. 6	Peer workshop SPOTs (please bring a laptop or tablet to class)	Final paper due Sunday, Dec. 10 at 5 p.m.