

Asian American Literature and the Cold War

English 30853: Asian American Literature | Fall 2017

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Course Overview

In 1968, Emma Gee and Yuji Ichioka, students at the University of California, Berkeley, founded the Asian American Political Alliance to mobilize students of Asian descent against the Vietnam War. The AAPA was the first national organization to unite Americans of diverse Asian backgrounds under a now-familiar banner: Asian American. “The brutal intervention in Southeast Asia raised disturbing questions about our foreign policy and its relationship to domestic politics permeated by racism,” Gee remembered. “Everyone was lost in the larger rally,” Ichioka added. “We figured if we rallied behind our own banner, behind an Asian American banner, we would have an effect on the larger public.”

This course is about how the “hot” Cold War, including the war in Southeast Asia, gave rise to a panethnic, often anti-imperial Asian American literature. It considers how the American wars in Asia led Gee, Ichioka, and other young Americans of Asian descent to lift a new banner of belonging and resistance. From the Korean War novels of Richard Kim and Susan Choi to the Vietnam War novels of Monique Truong and Viet Nguyen, we will explore how first- and second-generation Korean and Vietnamese American writers revisit and reimagine the wars that brought them and their families to the United States, often without a choice. This course is about Asian American literature and the Cold War—how the Korean and Vietnam Wars gave form to Asian American literature and how Asian American literature rewrites the Cold War.

Required Texts

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

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.

Cumings, 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." *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." *The Vietnam Wars, 1945–1990*, HarperCollins, 1991, pp. 192–209.

Assignments and Grading

Assignments:

Reading Quizzes	15%
Participation and Preparedness	15%
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%

Reading Schedule and Deadlines

Date	Readings	Deadlines
Week 1	Asian America and the Cold War	
Monday, August 21	Syllabus Wong, "War"	
Wednesday, August 23	Jung, "Empire" Klein, "Sentimental Education"	Presentation assigned
Week 2	The Korean War	
Monday, August 28	Cummings, Introduction to <i>The Korean War</i> and "The Course of the War"	
Wednesday, August 30	Park, "Lesser Friends" (website)	
Week 3		
Monday, September 4	No class (Labor Day)	
Wednesday, September 6	Belletto, "The Korean War, the Cold War, and the American Novel"	
Week 4		
Monday, September 11	Kim, <i>The Martyred</i> 1–50	
Wednesday, September 12	Kim, <i>The Martyred</i> 51–98	
Week 5		
Monday, September 18	Kim, <i>The Martyred</i> 99–156	Midterm paper assigned
Wednesday, September 20	Kim, <i>The Martyred</i> 157–199	Midterm paper proposal due Sunday, September 24 at 5 p.m.
Week 6		
Monday, September 25	Conferences	
Wednesday, September 27	Conferences	
Week 7		
Monday, October 2	Choi, <i>The Foreign Student</i> 1–105	
Wednesday, October 4	Choi, <i>The Foreign Student</i> 106–81	
Week 8		
Monday, October 9	Choi, <i>The Foreign Student</i> 182–272	
Wednesday, October 11	Choi, <i>The Foreign Student</i> 273–325	Midterm paper due Friday, October 13 at 5 p.m.
Week 9		
Monday, October 16	No class (fall recess)	
Wednesday, October 18	"M*A*S*H"	
Week 10	The Vietnam War	
Monday, October 23	Young, Preface to <i>The Vietnam Wars</i> , "An American War," and "The War	

	in America”	
Wednesday, October 25	Espiritu, “Militarized Refuge(es)”	
Week 11		
Monday, October 30	Nguyen, “On True War Stories”	
Wednesday, November 1	Truong, <i>Book of Salt</i> 1–63	
Week 12		
Monday, November 6	Truong, <i>Book of Salt</i> 64–133	
Wednesday, November 8	Truong, <i>Book of Salt</i> 134–202	
Week 13		
Monday, November 13	Truong, <i>Book of Salt</i> 203–61	
Wednesday, November 15	Nguyen, <i>Sympathizer</i> 1–89	
Week 14		
Monday, November 20	Nguyen, <i>Sympathizer</i> 90–193	Final paper assigned
Wednesday, November 22	No class (Thanksgiving break)	
Week 15		
Monday, November 27	Nguyen, <i>Sympathizer</i> 194–294	
Wednesday, November 29	Nguyen, <i>Sympathizer</i> 295–382	
Week 16		
Monday, December 4	<i>Apocalypse Now</i>	
Wednesday, December 6	Peer workshop SPOTs	Final paper due Sunday, December 10 at 5 p.m.