ENGL 361: Asian American Women’s Writing

Professor: Jennifer Ho
Class: Monday, Wednesday, Friday 2:30-3:20 pm in Greenlaw 302
Office: 205 Greenlaw Hall (in the admin suite on the 2nd floor)
Phone: 919-962-6921
E-mail: jho@email.unc.edu (this is my preferred method of communication)
Office Hours: Mondays 3:30-5:00pm and Wednesdays 1:30-2:30 and by appointment

This course examines Asian American women’s writing by focusing on multiple genres, including narratives, critical essays, poetry, and film. Asian American women have been award-winning journalists, best-selling authors, Pulitzer Prize winning writers, and, most importantly, everyday women who have written for their eyes only. Asian American women’s writing has focused on subjects such as war, the inequity of discrimination, American history, the strength of men, and the political importance of feminist activism. We will read a variety of women's writings and will examine themes of gender, race, and sexuality, among others.

REQUIRED TEXTS:
- Woman Warrior (Vintage) – Maxine Hong Kingston
- The Interpreter of Maladies (Mariner Books) – Jhumpa Lahiri
- The Foreign Student (Harper Perennial) – Susan Choi
- A Tale for the Time Being (Penguin) – Ruth Ozeki
All texts are available for purchase on-campus

FILMS:
- Slaying the Dragon: Reloaded – Dir. Elaine Kim (on reserve at MRC)
- Saving Face – Dir. Alice Wu (available for purchase on Amazon Instant Video)

RECOMMENDED TEXTS:
Easy Writer – A. Lunsford and R. Connors
MLA Handbook (most recent edition)
Literary and Cultural Theory: from Basic Principles to Advanced Applications – Donald Hall

COURSE REQUIREMENTS
Final grades will be determined as follows:
Participation and attendance 10%
Group Journal—Posting (8) 15%
--Responding (8) 10%
Bow & Lowe lecture summaries 5%
Revised Journal Post (1) 5%
Group Teaching Presentation 20%
Final Exam (based on group presentations) 10%
Final Research Paper (2,400-3,000 words—not including the Works Cited page) [plus: abstract, annotated bibliography, outline] 25%
Week 1
W—Jan 7 Asian American Women’s Writing – an Introduction
F – Jan 9 Slaying the Dragon: Reloaded (screened in-class)

Week 2
M—Jan 12 Woman Warrior – Kingston (3-53)
W—Jan 14 Woman Warrior – Kingston (55-109)
F—Jan 16 Woman Warrior – Kingston (111-160)

Week 3
M—Jan 19 Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday – NO CLASS
W—Jan 21 Woman Warrior – Kingston (161-209)
Introductory letter due—turn in physical copy, typed or handwritten
W—Jan 21 Woman Warrior – Kingston (161-209)
F—Jan 23 Group Presentation Work Day

Week 4
M—Jan 26 Asian American Women and Men – Espiritu (1-95)
W—Jan 28 Asian American Women and Men – Espiritu (97-122)
Th—Jan 29 Mandatory Attendance at Leslie Bow’s talk at the Center for the Study of the
American South @4:30pm
F—Jan 30 Group Presentation Work Day

Week 5
M—Feb 2 Interpreter of Maladies – Lahiri (1-110)
W—Feb 4 Interpreter of Maladies – Lahiri (111-157)
F—Feb 6 Interpreter of Maladies – Lahiri (158-198)

Week 6
M—Feb 9 Rachel Norman’s guest teaching on Arab American women
W—Feb 11 Asian American Women and Men – Espiritu (123-155)
F—Feb 13 Group Presentation Work Day

Week 7
M—Feb 23 The Foreign Student – Choi (1-137)
W—Feb 25 The Foreign Student – Choi (138-162)
F—Feb 27 The Foreign Student – Choi (163-181)

Due: Annotated Bibliography
[Each group needs to meet with Jennifer to discuss their group teaching projects &
Jennifer needs the 10-20 pages of reading to scan and put on Sakai]

Week 8
M—Mar 2 The Foreign Student – Choi (182-292)
W—Mar 4 The Foreign Student – Choi (293-325)
F—Mar 6 Group Presentation Work Day

Due: Revised Journal Post (1)
SPRING BREAK – March 9-13

[Watch Saving Face – available for purchase on Amazon instant ($9.99) or on reserve in Media Resources in UL -- 65-DVD2607]

Week 9
M—Mar 16 Group Teaching project
W—Mar 18 Group Teaching project
   Mandatory attendance at Lisa Lowe’s talk either Thursday, March 19 @3:30pm in Toy Lounge, Dey Hall or Friday, March 20 @3:30pm in Donovan Lounge in Greenlaw Hall
F—Mar 20 Group Teaching project

Week 10
M—Mar 23 Group Teaching project
W—Mar 25 Group Teaching project
F—Mar 27 Group Teaching project
   Due: Abstract

Week 11
M—Mar 30 Group Teaching project
W—Apr 1 Group Teaching project
F—Apr 3 NO CLASSES – OFFICIAL UNIVERSITY HOLIDAY

Week 12
M—Apr 6 A Tale for the Time Being (1-108)
W—Apr 8 A Tale for the Time Being (109-153)
F—Apr 10 A Tale for the Time Being (154-183)

Week 13
M—Apr 13 A Tale for the Time Being (184-298)
W—Apr 15 A Tale for the Time Being (299-355)
F—Apr 17 A Tale for the Time Being (357-403)
   Due: Revised Abstract & Outline of research paper

Week 14
M—Apr 20 Class TBA
W—Apr 22 Reviewing the semester—preparing for the final exam
F—Apr 24 Exchange Papers (3-4 page drafts) for peer review writing session

Final Exam: Tuesday, May 5 @9:00am
Final Paper Due Date: Wednesday, May 6 @9:00am
Housekeeping Issues:
*All assignments are due to Sakai by 2:30 p.m. on the date due according to the syllabus. I will not accept email attachments for any assignments nor will I accept any late assignments.

*Cell phones should be turned off during class; if there is an emergency situation, please notify Jennifer ahead of class and keep the phone on vibrate mode.

*Please use respectful email etiquette when corresponding with people in this class, which means do not use the salutation “Hey” or other casual addresses (at least, please do not use those with Jennifer or any of your other professors—trust me, this is a pet peeve among faculty). Also, please be mindful of email exchanges in that IF THE INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE ON YOUR SYLLABUS OR THROUGH A CLASSMATE, CONSULT YOUR SYLLABUS OR CLASSMATE FIRST BEFORE EMAILING JENNIFER TO ASK WHEN HER OFFICE HOURS ARE OR ANY SIMILAR QUESTIONS THAT CAN BE READILY ANSWERED THROUGH A LITTLE BIT OF SEARCHING ON YOUR PART.

*I prefer to communicate with you in office hours rather than over email. If you can’t make my office hours, I’m happy to meet with you at a time and location that will suit both our schedules.

*Please come to class as promptly as possible—if you find yourself in the unfortunate position of being late by more than half-an-hour, please elect to take the day off. Excesssive tardiness (more than 3x in the semester) will negatively impact your grade, as will excessive absences. Please see the Attendance & Participation policy for more details about issues of absences and tardiness. Also, please note that the department policy on absences states that students who attend less than 75% of classes during a semester, regardless of the reasons (medical, athletic events, religious holidays) may not pass the class. This means that in a MWF class, if you miss 10 or more classes, I will be forced to assign you an “F” for the class, regardless of how much work you have submitted or how well you are doing.

*The Honor Code applies to everything that you—and I—do at this university, including our use of outside sources in our research and writing. Our work in this class will conform to the principles and procedures defined in the Instrument of Student Judicial Governance (http://instrument.unc.edu). The research that we do this semester, whether primary or secondary, print or online, formal or informal, will require careful documentation on your part. We will review citation guidelines early and often throughout the semester. The need to cite your sources applies to all your work, including drafts as well as final versions of your projects. If I suspect you of plagiarizing all or part of a paper, even unintentionally, I am required to report the offense to the Honor Court.

*Students with Disabilities: The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill ensures that no qualified person shall by reason of a disability be denied access to, participation in, or the benefits of, any program or activity operated by the University. In compliance with UNC policy and federal law, qualified students with disabilities are eligible to receive “reasonable accommodations to ensure equal access to education opportunities, programs, and activities” (http://www.unc.edu/depts/lds/faculty-policies.html). If you anticipate such accommodations,
please notify me as soon as possible so that appropriate arrangements can be made. Additionally, you may seek out student support services at the Department of Disability Services (DDS) (http://disabilityservices.unc.edu/) and through the Learning Center (http://learningcenter.unc.edu/)

*Non Discrimination Policy: UNC Chapel Hill does not discriminate against its students or employees based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, or disability. The University’s policy states that sexual orientation be treated in this same manner. In this class we will strive to maintain an open atmosphere with shared respect for all differences.

**Group Presentation Topics:**

*Transnational & Transracial adoption

*Asian American women & poetry

*Asian American women & immigration

*Southeast Asian (Vietnamese/Cambodian/Hmong/Laotian/Thai/Malaysian) American women writers

*Asian American women writers in Hawaii or the Pacific Islands

*Filipina American women writers

*Lesbian/Transgender/Queer Asian American women issues

*The film *Saving Face*

*Media images of Asian American women

*Asian American women and spoken word/performance

*Asian American multiracial women

*Asian American female essayists/dramatists/journalists

*Picture brides/arranged marriages
Dear Students,

Welcome to the class. My custom is to write an introductory letter to give you an idea of who I am. In turn, I ask that you write an introductory letter to me. You can base yours on my letter or go off on your own tangent and tell me anything you want about yourself—favorite book, most memorable birthday, etc. You will see that the first assignment due (Monday, 1/12) is the completion of this letter. Please print out or write, by hand, your letter; it is the only time I will accept an assignment that is not typed and not turned into Sakai’s dropbox.

If you are interested in my professional credentials and current research projects, feel free to go to my faculty web page, http://englishcomplit.unc.edu/people/hoj, but I thought I should share some things with you in this letter that you can’t find on my c.v. (curriculum vitae—a scholar’s resume). For example, since this class is focused on Asian American women’s writing, I thought I’d share a story about my gender identity. I identify as a cisgender woman, although when I was younger I had wished I had been born a boy because it seemed to me, growing up in the 1970s and 1980s, that boys had many more freedoms and opportunities than girls and because I didn’t like traditionally coded feminine things—playing with dolls, the color pink, wearing dresses. Fast forward to 2010. In April I was diagnosed with Stage II breast cancer and chose the treatment options of chemotherapy and double mastectomy surgery. So I found myself in late October 2010 with no hair, no breasts, and no ovarian function, thinking about these markers of my gender identity, realizing that there were many things I had taken for granted about identifying as a cisgender woman, and feeling like I didn’t identify as a woman in that moment—not in the way I had prior to my diagnosis and treatment. There’s not really a moral to this story—I’m nearly 5 years in remission—but I share this with you to suggest that how we think about our gender identities may change throughout our lives in unexpected ways.

Other interesting factoids about me. I didn’t grow up thinking I would be a university professor living in North Carolina. I grew up in the San Francisco Bay Area (a suburban city, Hayward) and thought I’d become a lawyer and live in California, where most of my family still reside. I was also not sure that a PhD program in English was the right move for me, career wise, and had decided to apply to culinary academies if I got rejected from grad school. Food is still a huge passion of mine, both cooking and eating. I don’t understand people who don’t like to eat—for me, there is such great pleasure in food and in enjoying it in the company of people you care about. I have a husband and a corgi-sheltie mix, Bruno. I have a lot of family, both those I’m related to by blood and those I’ve chosen through the many friendship networks I’ve been fortunate to find over the years. I can’t stand the taste of cilantro (it’s a genetic thing) but will eat anything that has been battered and deep-fried. I golf (which people always find odd—perhaps thinking of it as a sexist, elitist, and racist sport, which certainly it has been associated with those ideologies but I also just love to play and find it deeply meditative and I hope that my presence on a golf course helps to challenge some of those above ideologies), and I quilt (another thing people can’t seem to square with my personality—perhaps they think only the elderly quilt?).

That’s about it from me. I look forward to reading your letters and meeting you, in person when I’ve returned from Vancouver. Feel free to share as little or as much about yourself as you like. It’s just nice to have something beyond a name on my roster and a face to match—I like to feel that the letters give me a small glimpse into who you are as a person.