

USC School of Dramatic Arts

Seminar in the Arts

GESM 111g: Asian & Asian American Culture on Stage and Film

Section Number: 35313

Units: Four (4)

Fall 2017—Tuesdays & Thursdays—Time: 12:30-1:50

Location: McClintock Building (MCC) 102

Instructor: Velina Hasu Houston, MFA, PhD

Office: 1029 Childs Way, University Park Campus

Office Hours: 10:30-12 M by appointment only via email to the instructor (other times can be negotiated); 24-hour cancellation via email to the instructor required

Contact Info: greentea@usc.edu, (213) 740-8686

Teaching Assistant: N/A.

IT Help: USC Information Technology Services, <http://itservices.usc.edu>; School of Dramatic Arts – Mr.

Prakash Shirke, Contact Info: shirke@usc.edu, (213) 740-1288, MCC

Course Description

The course explores the cultures and characteristics of people of Asian descent both historically and in contemporary times via dramatic and cinematic arts. Idiosyncrasies, foods, customs, gender, generation, and acculturation all come under the microscope as students delve into Asian consciousnesses from the Far East to the Middle East and U.S. nationwide.

Learning Objectives

The course, via plays and films, will encourage a deeper understanding of the diversity within the Asian diaspora; and how that diversity is reflected powerfully in stage and film. Plays, film, and television can be important documents of history, particularly cultural history in the United States, which often focuses on Euro-centric cultures and diminishes or sidesteps cultures of color in the human narrative.

Prerequisite(s): None

Co-Requisite (s): None

Concurrent Enrollment: None

Recommended Preparation: Preparation should include both plays and films, not just films. Reading/seeing Asian American plays such as *Gold Watch*, *The Music Lessons*, *Paper Angels*, *Yellow Fever*, *F.O.B.*, *The Dance and the Railroad*, *Chinglish*, *R.A.W.*, *So the Arrow Flies*, *Ruby Tragically Rotund*, *King of the Yees*, *The White Dress*, *Dogeaters*, *Letters to a Student Revolutionary*, *Kimchee And Chitlins*, *Big Hunk o' Burnin' Love*, *The Theory of Everything*, *State Without Grace* or any plays published in Temple University Press' *The Politics of Life* or *But Still*, *Like Air*, *I'll Rise* or published in University of Massachusetts Press' *Unbroken Thread* or any plays suggested at this link: <http://www.bambonation.com/2017/06/asian-american-playwrights-recommend-plays.html>; seeing Asian or Asian American films.

(1) The course is intended to provide connectivity. The student will better appreciate the connection between plays and films, and their representations of culture, linking this artistry with sociopolitical histories and actualities. In exploring representations of multiple dimensions of Asian and Asian American culture, the course will allow students to understand how the plays and films build bridges of understanding between the Asian Diaspora and non-Asian people in the United States and globally. (2) The course will provide context. By confronting the artistry of plays and films, students will be able to see the powerful roles that drama can play in connecting with various historical, theoretical, and aesthetic dimensions of humankind both past and present within the multiethnic nexus of the Asian Diaspora. (3) The course will provide engagement via the reading and viewing of dramas that explore Asian and Asian American identity. Students will be able to engage in some materials that will expose them directly to the contemporary within the area of focus, thereby encouraging understanding that can have a direct impact on their interest in the art of theatre. (4) The course will provide analysis. The student will be able to analyze the representations of various aspects

of culture and identity within the plays and films, using shared vocabulary and focusing on the formal execution of character within the worlds of the plays and films, both supported by traditional and non-traditional research. The course will include three analytical essays, as well as a mid-term examination and a final examination. The course also will include a “making art” aspect.

Course Notes

Each semester the course will focus on one or more Asian cultures.

Learning objectives shall be met via reading of plays, lectures, guest artists, and a field trip on October 29, 2017, 3-7 pm (1500-1900) for which students will have to purchase a theatre ticket at a student discount.

Announcements and related materials will be posted to Blackboard as well as given in class and noted in this syllabus. Students must check email and Blackboard regularly, which means at least once every 24 hours for email and at least once a week for Blackboard or when directed by the instructor. If you are unfamiliar with Blackboard:

<http://itservices.usc.edu/blackboard/> and <https://blackboard.usc.edu/webapps/login/>.

Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required

None. The course will take place in a regular classroom setting.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

Required readings and supplementary materials. Field trip to view a play.

- (1) 111g Seminar in the Arts: Asian and Asian American Culture on Stage & Film **Course Reader** (available in USC Bookstore, contains seven plays)
- (2) **Anak**. Film. To be screened.
- (3) **Departures**. Film. To be screened.
- (4) Playwrights’ Arena. Field Trip. October 29, 2017.
- (5) **The Little English Handbook: Choices and Conventions 8th Edition**
By Edward P.J. Corbett and Sheryl L. Finkle
Publisher: Longman Pub Group; 8th edition (August 1997)
ISBN-10: 0321015843
ISBN-13: 978-0321015846.

Grade Evaluation – Description and Assessment of Assignments

Student Responsibility	Point Value	Percentage of Grade
Weekly Discussion Input (2 required questions or comments each class)	100	10%
Analytical Essay #1	100	10%
Analytical Essay #2	100	10%
Analytical Essay #3	100	10%
Mid-term Examination	100	25%
Final Examination	100	25%
“Making Art” Project	100	10%

What is “Weekly Discussion Input”?

For each class except for the first two, you are required to ask two questions or make two statements about the reading or screening. If you do not do so, you will receive a grade of “0” for that session or those sessions. The questions or statements may be as simple as, “Why does X character do X?” or “I like when character X does X because of X.”

What is an “Analytical Essay”?

For this course, you will complete three Analytical Essays. These are essays that examine certain aspects in a play that you read or film that is screened. These aspects are part of the Shared Vocabulary that will be covered in the first session of the course. For each essay, you will examine the following (the syllabus indicates which play/film is to be analyzed and also the due dates). For each essay:

- Write seven (7) to ten (10) pages.
- Use 12-point Times or Calibri or Caslon font.
- Maintain standard margins on the top, bottom, and sides of your pages (one (1)-inch margins).
- Submit as hard copy, not electronically, and please staple your pages.
- Be sure to put your name, the due date, and name of the course at the top of your essay.
- Name five traits of the protagonist and analyze what actions revealed each trait to you.
- Analyze the protagonist's greatest desire and worst fear.
- How does the outside world view the protagonist, especially in terms of any distinctive character trait that he or she has?
- Name five key actions of the protagonist and analyze the impact that each has on the protagonist's journey.
- How is the protagonist changed/transformed by what happens to him or her in the story?
- Name the antagonist and what he or she does that makes you believe he or she is the antagonist.
- Name five traits of the antagonist and what actions revealed each trait to you.
- Name three characteristics of generational, gender, ethnic, and/or class conflict and analyze what scene in the play or film illustrated this conflict for you.
- Name three aspects of the play or film that you feel represent a certain Asian or Asian American culture, and provide reasons why (such as geography, customs, foods, etc.).

What is the "Mid-term Examination"?

This will be an essay exam that includes questions about the Corbett book, shared vocabulary, the film *Anak*, the play *Looking Toward Lourdes*, the play *Criers for Hire*, the play *Writing Fragments Home*, and the film *Departures*.

What is the "Final Examination"?

The final examination will be an essay exam that you will complete at home and submit electronically on December 12 between 11 am and 1 pm PST (1100-1300 hours). It will not be comprehensive. It will focus on all plays and films read or seen after the mid-term examination.

What is the "Making Art" project?

The course must include a "making art" aspect. This means each student is required to create art that is appropriate to the course. In the case of this course, each student will prepare a short (ten minutes or less) play or film on the subject matter as noted here: "Making Art" – writing a short scene about (1) an Asian immigrant arriving in the U.S. and his or her first encounter with a US citizen outside of the airport, (2) an Asian American individual in a situation of conflict with a non-Asian American individual. These will be presented orally in class. They may be a short play or a short film. They should be no longer than ten (10) minutes in length. Grading will be on representation of culture in the writing, quality of effort, and length.

Extra Credit Opportunities

You may complete one (1) Extra Credit Opportunity.

Attend a performance of *Yohen* by Philip Kan Gotanda at East West Players and complete an Analytical Essay of the production. Include your ticket stub and a program when you submit this Extra Credit.

<http://www.eastwestplayers.org/news/east-west-players-and-the-robey-theatre-company-announce-danny-glover-and-june-angela-to-star-in-philip-kan-gotandas-yohen/>

Attend a performance of *Fixed* by Boni B. Alvarez at the Echo Theatre Company and complete an Analytical Essay of the production. Include your ticket stub and a program when you submit this Extra Credit.

<https://dime.io/events/fixd-by-boni-b-alvarez>

Attend a performance of *The Wong Street Journal* by Kristina Wong at The Bootleg Theater and complete an Analytical Essay of the production. Include your ticket stub and a program when you submit this Extra Credit.

<http://www.bootlegtheater.org/event/1542848-kristina-wongs-wong-street-los-angeles/>

Read the play *Talk-Story* by Jeannie Barroga and complete an Analytical Essay of the production.

https://www.amazon.com/But-Still-Like-Air-Rise/dp/1566395380/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1503362481&sr=8-1&keywords=but+still+like+air+i%27ll+rise

Grading Breakdown

With regard to grading, grades are earned, not given. In this course, students will earn letter grades with regard to the USC grade rubric:

96-100%=A	88-90%=B+	81-84%=B-	75-77%= C	67-70%=D+	
95-91%=A-	85-87%=B	78-80%=C+	71-74%= C-	66-64%=D	61-63%=D-

When the average falls between two grades, the final grade will be weighted toward the positive end of the scale for students whose participation in class has been good, but will be weighted toward the negative end of the scale for those with poor participation.

Assignment Submission Policy

- Weekly Discussion input is based on in-class engagement. There is nothing to submit; your grade will be based on your two questions or comments.
- Analytical Essays are due in hard copy in class on the designated dates below.
- The mid-term examination occurs in class on the date designated below.
- The “making art” projects are orally presented in class on the dates designated below.
- The final examination is a take-home exam that students will submit electronically as noted below. Please note that final examinations are required by USC, and you, as a USC student, are required to participate on the day and at the times that USC mandates.

Additional Policies

- Late assignments will not be accepted.
- You are expected to attend all classes except in the case of doctor-documented illness or family crisis.
- Please do not be late.
- Please do not use computers or mobile/cell telephones in class. Your weekly grade will be “0” if you do.
- The final exam is required. Its date and time are determined by the University and cannot be changed. *Please reserve that time on your calendars now.* Our class will meet electronically via your submissions of the take-home exam on December 12.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

Narrative Listings:

August 22

Review of syllabus and course overview; Q&A. Opening discussion of Corbett highlights. Shared cultural and dramatic vocabulary. What shared vocabulary can we use? What do we mean by “Asian” or “Asian American”? How shall we use the word “culture”? What is a protagonist, antagonist, point of attack? What is conflict? What are traits or characteristics? What does the climax of a story mean? What is meant by the protagonist’s journey? What is meant by “transformation of the protagonist”? Playwrights and filmmakers, directors, dramaturges, stage managers, and designers. Read Corbett for August 24.

August 24

Review of Corbett, continued. How are plays and films alike and not alike? How can they contribute to an understanding of culture; how do they connect with the sociopolitical histories and actualities within those cultures?

August 29

Screening of *Anak*.

August 31

Completion of screening of *Anak*. For September 5, write **Analytical Essay #1** based on *Anak*.

September 5

Submit Analytical Essay #1 to the instructor. Guest speaker: Francis Cullado or Abraham Ferrer, Visual Communications, regarding Asian American film. For September 7, read *Writing Fragments Home* in the course reader.

September 7

Discussion of *Writing Fragments Home*. Guest artist via Skype: Playwright Jeffrey Lo.

September 12

Continued discussion of *Writing Fragments Home* including the notions of departure, identity formation, and nostalgia. Discussion of other Filipino American playwrights such as Jeannie Barroga, Jessica Hagedorn, Linda Faigo-Hall. For September 14, read *Criers for Hire* in the course reader.

September 14

Discussion of *Criers for Hire* and related topics. Guest artist: Playwright Giovanni Ortega.

September 19

Guest speaker via Skype: Stephen Gong, Center for Asian American Media. For September 21, complete **Analytical Essay #2** on *Criers for Hire* or *Writing Fragments Home*.

September 21

Submit your Analytical Essay #2 to instructor. Guest artists: Tim Dang, Artistic Director Emeritus of East West Players (was its Artistic Director for 20 years) and Snehal Desai, current Artistic Director, on Asian American theatre. For September 26, read *Looking Toward Lourdes* in the course reader.

September 26

Discussion of *Looking Toward Lourdes*. Discussion of other Filipino American playwrights such as Roger Mason, A. Rey Pamatmat, Boni B. Alvarez, and Victor Maog.

September 28

Continued discussion of *Looking Toward Lourdes*. Guest artist: Playwright Boni B. Alvarez.

October 3

Overview of Japanese filmmakers of impact (Ozu, Kurosawa, Ichikawa, Miyazaki, Ko Mori). Background of *Departures*. Screening of *Departures*.

October 5

Continued screening of *Departures*. For October 10, prepare **Analytical Essay #3** on *Looking Toward Lourdes*.

October 10

Submit Analytical Essay #3 to the instructor. **Mid-term examination**. In class. Blue book required. Please write legibly; the instructor must be able to read your exam in order to grade it.

October 12

Discussion of *Hold These Truths*. Overview of playwright. Overview of Japanese American playwrights and some Japanese filmmakers. Discussion of culturally representative Japanese American plays and Japanese films.

October 17

Continued discussion of *Hold These Truths*. Guest artist: Playwright Jeanne Sakata. For October 19, read *And the Soul Shall Dance*.

October 19

Discussion of *And the Soul Shall Dance*. Overview of playwright. For October 24, read *Yankee Dawg You Die*.

October 24

Discussion of *Yankee Dawg You Die*. Overview of playwright. Guest artist via Skype: Playwright Philip Kan Gotanda (TBD).

October 26

Discussion of production of plays by and about people of color that reveal culture, such as the work of Boni B. Alvarez with regard to *Ruby*, *Tragically Rotund*, *Dallas Non-stop*, and *Bloodletting*. (PPT about those two productions.) Guest

artist: Jon Lawrence Rivera, Artistic Director of Playwrights' Arena theatre. NOTE: field trip on October 29 to Playwrights' Arena at The Attic Theatre (5429 W. Washington Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90016-1112).

October 29

Field trip.

October 31

Discussion of field trip play, Asian American adaptation. Read *Tea* for November 2.

November 2

Discussion of *Tea*. Dramatic presentation.

November 7

Oral presentations: "Making Art."

Student #1: _____ Student #2: _____

Student #3: _____

November 9

Oral presentations: "Making Art."

Student #1: _____ Student #2: _____

Student #3: _____

November 14

Oral presentations: "Making Art."

Student #1: _____ Student #2: _____

Student #3: _____

November 16

Oral presentations: "Making Art."

Student #1: _____ Student #2: _____

Student #3: _____

November 21

Oral presentations: "Making Art."

Student #1: _____ Student #2: _____

Student #3: _____

November 23

University holiday. No class.

November 28

Oral presentations: "Making Art."

Student #1: _____ Student #2: _____

Student #3: _____

November 30

Last day of class.

Oral presentations: "Making Art."

Student #1: _____ Student #2: _____

Student #3: _____

Final Examination due electronically on December 12, 2017, @ greentea@usc.edu. Please submit between 11:00 am and 1:00 pm (1300), not before or after that time.

Charted Listings:

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings and Homework	Deliverables/ What is due that day?
Week 1 August 22 & 24	<p>Review of syllabus and course overview; Q&A. Opening discussion of Corbett highlights. Shared cultural and dramatic vocabulary. What shared vocabulary can we use? What do we mean by "Asian" or "Asian American"? How shall we use the word "culture"? What is a protagonist, antagonist, point of attack? What is conflict? What are traits or characteristics? What does the climax of a story mean? What is meant by the protagonist's journey? What is meant by "transformation of the protagonist"?</p> <p>Playwrights and filmmakers, directors, dramaturges, stage managers, and designers. Read Corbett for August 24.</p> <p>How are plays and films alike and not alike? How can they contribute to an understanding of culture; how do they connect with the</p>	<p>Read Corbett book for August 24.</p>	<p>Deliverable: 2 questions/ comments for Weekly Discussion Input.</p>

	sociopolitical histories and actualities within those cultures?		
Week 2 August 29 & 31	Screening of <i>Anak</i> . You are strongly encouraged to take notes.	For September 5, write Analytical Essay #1 based on <i>Anak</i> .	
Week 3 September 5 & 7	Asian American film. Guest speaker: Francis Cullado, Visual Communications, regarding Asian American film. September 7: Discussion of <i>Writing Fragments Home</i> . Guest artist via Skype: Playwright Jeffrey Lo.	For September 7, read <i>Writing Fragments Home</i> in the course reader.	Deliverable: 2 questions/ comments for Weekly Discussion Input on <i>Anak</i> and on <i>Writing Fragments Home</i> . Deliverable: Analytical Essay #1 to the instructor.
Week 4 September 12 & 14	Continued discussion of <i>Writing Fragments Home</i> including the notions of departure, identity formation, and nostalgia. Discussion of other Filipino American playwrights. Discussion of <i>Criers for Hire</i> and related topics. Guest artist: Playwright Giovanni Ortega (on September 14).	For September 14, read <i>Criers for Hire</i> in the course reader.	Deliverable: 2 questions/ comments for Weekly Discussion Input on <i>Writing Fragments Home</i> .
Week 5 September 19 & 21	September 19 Guest speaker via Skype: Stephen Gong, Center for Asian American Media. September 21 Submit your Analytical Essay #2 to instructor. Guest artists: Tim Dang, Artistic Director Emeritus of East West Players (was its Artistic Director for 20 years) and Snehal	For September 21, complete Analytical Essay #2 on <i>Criers for Hire</i> or <i>Writing Fragments Home</i> . For September 26, read <i>Looking Toward Lourdes</i> in the course reader.	Deliverable: 2 questions/ comments for Weekly Discussion Input on <i>Criers for Hire</i> .

	Desai, current Artistic Director, on Asian American theatre.		
Week 6 September 26 & 28	<p>September 26 Discussion of <i>Looking Toward Lourdes</i>. Discussion of other Filipino American playwrights.</p> <p>September 28 Continued discussion of <i>Looking Toward Lourdes</i>. Guest artist: Playwright Boni B. Alvarez.</p>		<p>Deliverable: 2 questions/ comments for Weekly Discussion Input on <i>Looking Toward Lourdes</i>.</p> <p>Deliverable: Analytical Essay #2 to instructor.</p>
Week 7 October 3 & 5	<p>October 3 Overview of Japanese filmmakers of impact. Background of <i>Departures</i>. Screening of <i>Departures</i>.</p> <p>October 5 Continued screening of <i>Departures</i>.</p>	<p>For October 10, prepare Analytical Essay #3 on <i>Looking Toward Lourdes</i>.</p> <p>Read <i>Hold These Truths</i> for October 12.</p>	<p>Deliverable: 2 questions/ comments for Weekly Discussion Input on <i>Departures</i>.</p>
Week 8 October 10 & 12	<p>October 10 Mid-term examination. In class. Blue book required. Please write legibly; the instructor must be able to read your exam in order to grade it.</p> <p>October 12 Discussion of <i>Hold These Truths</i>. Overview of playwright. Overview of Japanese American playwrights and some Japanese filmmakers. Discussion of culturally representative Japanese American plays and Japanese films.</p>		<p>Deliverable: 2 questions/ comments for Weekly Discussion Input for October 12 discussion of <i>Hold These Truths</i>.</p> <p>Deliverable: Analytical Essay #3 to instructor.</p>

<p>Week 9 October 17 & 19</p>	<p>October 17 Continued discussion of <i>Hold These Truths</i>. Guest artist: Playwright Jeanne Sakata.</p> <p>October 19 Discussion of <i>And the Soul Shall Dance</i>. Overview of playwright.</p>	<p>For October 19, read <i>And the Soul Shall Dance</i>.</p> <p>For October 24, read <i>Yankee Dawg You Die</i>.</p>	<p>Deliverable: 2 questions/ comments for Weekly Discussion Input on <i>Hold These Truths</i> and subsequently <i>And the Soul Shall Dance</i>.</p>
<p>Week 10 October 24 & 26</p>	<p>October 24 Discussion of <i>Yankee Dawg You Die</i>. Overview of playwright. Guest artist via Skype: Playwright Philip Kan Gotanda (TBD).</p> <p>October 26 Discussion of production of plays by and about people of color. Guest artist: Jon Lawrence Rivera, Artistic Director of Playwrights' Arena theatre.</p>	<p>xxx</p>	<p>Deliverable: 2 questions/ comments for Weekly Discussion Input on <i>Yankee Dawg You Die</i>.</p> <p>Reminder: October 29 field trip to Playwrights' Arena at The Attic Theatre (5429 W. Washington Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90016-1112).</p>
<p>Week 11 October 31 & November 2</p>	<p>October 31 Discussion of field trip play, Asian American adaptation.</p> <p>November 2 Discussion of <i>Tea</i>.</p>	<p>Read <i>Tea</i> for November 2.</p> <p>Prepare your "Making Art" presentations.</p>	<p>Deliverable: 2 questions/ comments for Weekly Discussion Input on field trip production.</p>
<p>Week 12 November 7 & 9</p>	<p>"Making Art" presentations.</p>	<p>Prepare your "Making Art" presentations.</p>	<p>Deliverable: "Making Art" presentations.</p>
<p>Week 13 November 14 & 16</p>	<p>"Making Art" presentations.</p>	<p>Prepare your "Making Art" presentations.</p>	<p>Deliverable: "Making Art" presentations.</p>
<p>Week 14 November 21</p> <p>(No class on November 23, due to University</p>	<p>"Making Art" presentations.</p>	<p>Prepare your "Making Art" presentations.</p>	<p>Deliverable: "Making Art" presentations.</p>

Holiday)			
Week 15 November 28 & 30	“Making Art” presentations.	Prepare for your final examination.	Deliverable: “Making Art” presentations.
December 12 at 11 am-1 pm. FINAL EXAM	Take-home examination. Submit electronically on December 12, 2017, between 11 am and 1 pm (1100-1300 hours)		Deliverable: Final Examination must be sent via email to greentea@usc.edu on December 12, 2017, between 11 am and 1 pm (1100-1300 hours)

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Section 11, *Behavior Violating University Standards* <https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/>.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* <http://equity.usc.edu/> or to the *Department of Public Safety* <http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>. This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. *The Center for Women and Men* <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/> provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage sarc@usc.edu describes reporting options and other resources.

Support Systems

A number of USC’s schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the *American Language Institute* <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. *The Office of Disability Services and Programs* http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, *USC Emergency Information* <http://emergency.usc.edu/> will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.