

USC School of Dramatic Arts

GESM 111: Asian and Asian American Culture on Stage and Film Section # 35298

Fall 2018 — Tuesdays & Thursdays — 12:30 – 1:50 pm

Location: McClintock Building (MCC) 102

Instructor: Paula Cizmar

Office: JEF 201, 950 W. Jefferson, Los Angeles 90089

Office Hours: Available: Tues 3 – 4:30 pm; Wed Noon – 2 pm; Thurs 3 – 4:30 pm; please note that office hours are by appointment only; contact me via email or text, at least 24 hours in advance. For appointments outside these hours, I am available by videoconference on SKYPE or Google Hangout.

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ITHelp: USC Information Technology Services

<http://itservices.usc.edu>; School of Dramatic Arts IT – Mr. Prakash Shirke, Contact Info: shirke@usc.edu, 213.740.1288. MCC

Course Description and Overview

The course explores the many cultures of people of Asian descent, both historically and in contemporary times, toward a deeper understanding of the diversity within the Asian diaspora. Contemporary challenges in theatre and other media, along with foods, customs, gender, generation, and acculturation all come under the microscope as students view how Asian and Asian American cultures are depicted on stage, film, and other media in the United States and various parts of the globe.

Learning Objectives

This course, via plays and video, will encourage a deeper understanding of the diversity within the Asian diaspora. Among the questions to be explored are: What is the history of the term “Asian American”? Is there a single Asian American viewpoint or voting bloc? In film and theatre, how have Asians and Asian Americans been portrayed? What is the role of comedy in investigating culture? What is the role of drama? How do we tell authentic stories with integrity? The class uses project-based learning whenever possible; through research and hands-on activities, we hope to expand our understanding of important topics such as heritage, cultural appropriation, identity, and the balancing act of being a citizen in a global world.

Prerequisite(s): None

Co-Requisite (s): None

Concurrent Enrollment: None

Recommended Preparation: Reading/viewing the plays and films listed in Required Readings and Supplementary Materials.

- (1) The course is intended to provide connectivity. The student will better appreciate how plays and films can explore representations of multiple dimensions of Asian and Asian American culture; the course will allow students to view how plays and films can build bridges of understanding between the Asian diaspora and non-Asian people in the United States and globally.
- (2) The course will provide context. Through plays and films, students will explore the sociopolitical histories and actualities of representations of Asian Americans and will assess whether or not progress has been made in terms of authenticity of portrayal. By confronting the artistry of plays and films, students will be able to see the powerful roles that drama can play in illustrating 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 plays that explore Asian and Asian American identity. Students will also get a glimpse of how comedy (in various forms) looks at identity. Students will be able to engage with materials that will expose them directly to contemporary issues within the area of focus, thereby encouraging understanding that can have a direct impact on their interest in the art of theatre and performance.
- (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 videos, using shared vocabulary and focusing on the formal execution of character within the worlds of the plays and films, both supported by traditional and nontraditional research.
- (5) The course will include a making component. Students will create some form of creative depiction of the topics, culture, and characters explored in the class. Options include writing and performing a monologue; creating a letter to a future world about Asian American identity as it stands now and a prescription for the future; writing a short play or making a short video; creating a visual depiction of the topics discussed; creating and performing a stand-up comedy routine; making a short graphic novel; depicting a sci-fi treatment of the topics; or another project of the student's choosing (as approved by the instructor). The course will include analytical essays as well as a midterm and final.

Course Notes

Fall 2018's emphasis will be on how various issues of identity manifest in the arts. For example, a look at recent casting problems will be explored. Is there equity and inclusion when it comes to casting roles in general--and when it comes to casting Asian American actors in particular? Why have there been recent examples of "yellowface"? Another topic to be explored is comedy, i.e., when is it useful to be "transgressive" and when is it harmful? And finally, we will meet some of the people who work in the arts and are on the front lines of creating Asian American theatre.

Please note: This class is GOING GREEN. This means that we will save on time, energy, and paper. As a student in the class, you will not have to print your work; instead, we will project your materials, presentations, etc. onto a giant screen via laptop computer. You will not have to print assignments, including your Final Project; instead, you'll turn in your

documents and projects electronically. All handouts and course materials will be paperless, available online via Blackboard, with backups sent via email.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

Plays:

GREEN TEA GIRL IN ORANGE PEKOE COUNTRY (anthology). Velina Hasu Houston.

YELLOWFACE. David Henry Hwang.

HOLD THESE TRUTHS. Jeanne Sakata.

Attending at least one play by an Asian American playwright will be required. (Info on plays at local theatres will be provided in class.)

Films/videos/podcasts/other materials will be viewed in class.

Supplementary reading will include work from various theorists on identity, film, theatre, Asian American artists, etc.

Supplementary reading and other materials will be available on Blackboard.

The assigned plays to be read are available for purchase in the bookstore or on Amazon.

Description of Grading Criteria and Assessment of Assignments

Work to be completed includes reading, viewing, in-class exercises, critical analyses, a midterm cultural research project, and a final creative project.

Assignment	% of Grade
1. Written Assignment 1	15%
2. Contribution to Blog	5%
3. Midterm Assignment	15%
4. Written Assignment 2	20%
5. Final (Creative project)	20%
6. In class exercises	10%
7. Participation	15%
TOTAL:	100%

Grading Scale for SDA: **A** indicates work of excellent quality; **B** of good quality; **C** of average quality; **D** of below average quality; and **F** indicates inadequate work.

Grading Criteria: *The quality of work in this class is determined by the thoroughness of the effort, the ongoing process, and the imagination/critical thought displayed. The rubric for determining the quality of work for the Final Project is described below in the detailed description of the project.*

Grading Breakdown

Excellent: A (4) = 100-94; A- (3.7) = 93-90

Good: B+ (3.3) = 89-86; B (3) = 85-84; B- (2.7) = 83-80

Average: C+ (2.3) = 79-76; C (2) = 75-74; C- (1.7) = 73-70

Poor: the D range (1.3-0) = 60s; F (0) = 59 and below

- “Excellent” indicates that the student couples clear understanding of the class material with original and creative insight; “Good” means that the student demonstrates a clear understanding

of the material; “Average” indicates that the student demonstrates a general understanding of the material but with some gaps; “Poor” indicates that there are identifiable gaps in the student’s understanding of the class material; “Failure” is the result of the student not having completed his or her assignments coupled with poor understanding of the material.

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

Information about Assignments to be Graded

Your grade will be based on multiple components: assigned reading and video presentations, class exercises and discussion, two written assignments (which are critical analysis/response essays), contribution to the class blog, a midterm project (which is a study of an element of Asian American cultural and/or community), a Final Project (a creative project), and participation. Participation includes class exercises, discussion, providing feedback on other students’ work, plus contributing a short post to the class blog.

Please note that the Midterm is a research project investigating some element of Asian American culture as it IS, rather than how it is portrayed in the media; the cultural element you look at could be food, or celebration customs, or attitudes towards education or politics, or contemporary music, or the adopting of Asian cultural items into the mainstream, or events from history (e.g., the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II, the arrival of Vietnamese citizens after the Fall of Saigon, the Asian Exclusion Act, the first elections of Asian Americans to public office, the Gold Rush, etc.). You will have the option of doing this as an oral history project, or writing a paper, or creating a Prezi/Keynote/PowerPoint presentation. Plans will be discussed (and must be approved by the instructor) in class.

The *Final Project* is a creative project of your own choosing. You may write and perform a monologue on an Asian American topic; you may stage a scene from an Asian American play; you may write a short documentary play or make a short video; you may create a stand-up comedy routine and perform it. You may compose music, or create the text and art for a graphic novel, or devise a game—as long as it illustrates some aspect of portrayal of Asian Americans on stage and film. You will be given the opportunity to search for a project, plan the project, and bring in phases of the project throughout the course of the semester. Your process will be included as part of the grade. (Note: All Final Projects are subject to approval.)

Please bear in mind that you earn your grade based on the timely completion of your work, plus the quality of your work. Late assignments are marked down due to missed deadline. Assignments are accepted only within one week of due date, provided an extension has been arranged. After that, they are considered a missed assignment, which counts as zero.

Note: The SDA GUIDELINES on GRADING state that:

- *There shall be no unexcused absences.*
- *No late assignments, projects, exams, papers, or exercises shall be accepted unless advance extensions have been arranged between the student and the teacher or unless exceptional circumstances occur.*

Assignment Submission Policy

The two written assignments as well as the *Midterm Research Project*, and the *Final Project* must be submitted electronically on Blackboard. Please follow the guidelines that will be provided on Blackboard. The blog posts will be submitted to the blog editors and posted. If the Final Project is a video, please make arrangements to submit also via Dropbox, Google Drive, YouTube, or Vimeo as a backup to the Blackboard submission.

Additional Policies

Participation is essential and figures into your grade. Your participation is necessary not only for the development of your own work and insights, but for the development of your colleagues' work and insights as well. Theatre, whether documentary or fictional, is a highly collaborative, community-oriented medium and embracing these principles will enhance your experience in this course—as well as in other endeavors in other fields! We will operate as if we are in a creative workshop that thrives on team commitment. Please honor your obligation to your colleagues' work. Absences must be for reasons of illness or emergency and must be accompanied by a written explanation; in your absence, please prepare the assigned work that is due and turn it in on time electronically.

1. You are entering into a collaborative relationship with fellow creatives and, thus, it is your responsibility to be available to your workshop colleagues for feedback, analysis, and support.
2. All workshop members must be treated with respect.
3. You are required to attend the workshop and to be on time. Tardiness is defined as being 15 minutes late or more. Excessive tardiness will affect your ongoing work and participation grade. Only one (1) unexcused absence is allowed.
4. Other absences must be for reasons of illness or emergency, and you must notify me in writing (preferably in advance).
5. All assignments, written and/or otherwise, must be prepared on time and turned in (or presented) on the deadline date. Late assignments will be marked down due to the missed deadline. Assignments not turned in within a week of deadline count as missed assignments (zero credit).
6. **IF YOU MISS CLASS:** It is your responsibility—and SOLELY YOUR RESPONSIBILITY—to make up work you have missed and to obtain information about missed class discussions or missed assignments from your classmates or Blackboard, not from me. I will not be repeating lectures or class discussion; you will need to make arrangements to do independent research on whatever topics you have missed to keep up with the workshop. You will also need to keep in contact with your classmates to obtain notes and/or information re: what you missed. Again: Do not request notes or information

from me. Class materials can be found on the Blackboard site for this course. For your syllabus, handouts, etc., go to Blackboard.

7. Please check your e-mail regularly to see if there are any changes in class meeting place, etc. On rare occasions, it becomes necessary to schedule a new location for class meeting. If I am unable to provide you with this information in the preceding class, I will send you the information via e-mail and/or text message.

8. We're going green in this classroom, so you will be providing all workshop members with copies of your work by **projecting your documents onto the screen in the classroom from your computer**, thus eliminating the need for paper. When necessary, you will exchange documents with the others via email. For collaborations, you may work on Google documents that may be team-edited via Google Drive. We will also create a workshop blog, FB page, or Google circle—thus embracing social media for positive outcomes.

9. If you desire an appointment with me, you are required to contact me via e-mail or text message at least 24 hours in advance, otherwise there is no guarantee I will receive your message with sufficient time to make arrangements to meet with you. Please note that I have included multiple ways to contact me on the front page of this syllabus.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

WEEK 1 8/20-8/24	Class 1	INTRODUCTION Who Are Asian Americans – Not a Single Group
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YELLOWFACE

	Class 2	Discussion: What is Culture and What is Cultural Appropriation? Assign Weekly Blog Posts (<i>Select blog editors; launch blog by Week 3</i>)
WEEK 2 8/27-8/31	Class 3	Begin: <i>Yellowface</i> ; (Bring books to class!) Assign Written Assignment 1 Intro to Theatre, Film, and Casting Issues
	Class 4	Characters: <i>Yellowface</i> Guest speaker. Videos.
WEEK 3 9/3-9/7	Class 5	The Multiple Worlds of <i>Yellowface</i> Videos
	Class 6	Outcomes of <i>Yellowface</i> – Effect on Current Issues Videos - Cultural Differences
	<i>Note: 9/11 Last day to drop a class without a mark of "W" and with refund</i>	
WEEK 4 9/10-9/14	Class 7	Finish <i>Yellowface</i>
	Class 8	Introduction: Historical Drama; Written Assignment 1 due

HOLD THESE TRUTHS

WEEK 5	Class 9	Begin <i>How To – Getting Started on a Creative Project</i>
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9/17-9/21	Class 10	Plan for Midterm Project and Brainstorm Final Project Practicum: Intro to Creative Research, Vision Boards, Etc. Begin: <i>Hold These Truths</i> Discuss: Internment of Japanese Citizens and Resistance Videos
WEEK 6 9/24-9/28	Class 11 Class 12	Guest speaker: Jeanne Sakata Solo storytelling: <i>A How To</i>
WEEK 7 10/1-10/5	Class 13 Class 14	Constructing a Dramatic Story: <i>Hold These Truths</i> <i>Practicum: Using Archives, Testimony, and History</i> Turn in and present MIDTERM Research Project

COMEDY

WEEK 8 10/8-10/12	Class 15 Class 16	Intro: Comedy and Satire; Assign Written Assignment 2 Videos: Diversity in Stand-Up <i>Practicum: Crossing Boundaries and Dealing with the Transgressive</i>
WEEK 9 10/15-10/19	Class 17 Class 18	Truth-telling? Authenticity? Who Is the Audience? Exploring Comedy's Problems and Triumphs Guest Speaker.
WEEK 10 10/22-10/26	Class 19 Class 20	Cliches and Stereotypes—And Defying Them; Written Assignment 2 due <i>Practicum: Use of Vision Boards</i>
WEEK 11 10/29-11/2	Class 21	<i>Practicum: Imagining and Staging</i>

GREEN TEA GIRL IN ORANGE PEKOE COUNTRY

	Class 22	Begin: Selected plays from <i>Green Tea Girl</i> anthology <i>Practicum: Present Exercises and Vision Boards</i>
WEEK 12 11/5-11/9	Class 23	Characters: <i>Green Tea Girl</i> plays - Group presentations <i>Practicum: Continue to Present Exercises and Vision Boards</i>
	Class 24	Guest Speaker: Velina Hasu Houston? <i>Last day to drop a class with a mark of "W"</i>
WEEK 13 11/12-11/16	Class 25 Class 26	Impact of Asian American Writers Videos Check in: Final Projects. Work-in-progress reports.
WEEK 14 11/19-11/23	Class 27 REMINDER	Work with scenes, projects, works-in-progress for Final Projects No class 11/22 THANKSGIVING
WEEK 15 11/26-11/30	Class 28 Class 29	Present Final Project works-in-progress, part 1. Present Final Project works-in-progress, part 2.

Assignments and Deadlines:

Assignment 1: Short essay on one of the topics (provided by the instructor) related to *Yellowface*. Due Date: Thursday 9/13. (750 words)

Blog post: Due within the first four weeks of class. Blog editors will be selected and will assign due dates for bloggers. (250 words)

Midterm: Research project based on an element of Asian American culture. The form your research takes is optional, but must be approved by the instructor; the project will be presented in class. Due Date: Thursday 10/4.

Assignment 2: Short essay on one of the topics (provided by the instructor) related to character and stereotypes using a play we have viewed or a play we have read as the starting point. (May be a response to a performance—subject to approval by the instructor. Note: This assignment may be required to be submitted as an additional, extended blog post. Stay tuned). Due Date: Tuesday 10/23 (1000 words)

Final: A creative project. See the description of the Final Project under “Information About Assignments to Be Graded.” Please note that the grade for the Final will also take into consideration the process and the various components leading up to it, including vision boards, work-in-progress presentation, etc.

Due Date: Tuesday 12/11 @ 11 am – 1 pm.

In-class exercises: These include discussion, presentations, blog posts, collaborative team activities, and process exercises, which will contribute to this element of your grade.

Final Examination Date: 12/11/2018 11 am – 1 pm

Please note: The University schedules the Final Exams long before the semester begins. The date and time are determined by USC and cannot be changed. Please mark your calendar now. Your Final Project is due 12/11/2018 from 11 am – 1 pm.

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 Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” <https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b/>. 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>.

Support Systems:

Student Counseling Services (SCS) - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling/>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1-800-273-8255

Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

Relationship & Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-4900 - 24/7 on call
Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp/>

Sexual Assault Resource Center

For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: <http://sarc.usc.edu/>

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX compliance – (213) 740-5086

Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. <https://equity.usc.edu/>

Bias Assessment Response and Support

Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support/>

Student Support & Advocacy – (213) 821-4710

Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa/>

Diversity at USC – <https://diversity.usc.edu/>

Tab for Events, Programs and Training, Task Force (including representatives for each school), Chronology, Participate, Resources for Students

Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in a Crisis

In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, USC executive leadership will announce an electronic way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technologies.