

# Asian Pacific American Autobiography

CES/Engl. 315.1 [M]  
Asian Pacific American Autobiography  
Spring Semester 2008  
Time: TTH; 12:00-1:15  
Place: Wilson 6

Instructor: Rory Ong  
Office #: Wilson 119  
Phone #: 335-7089  
Office Hrs: W: 1-3  
or by appointment

## Required Texts:

*Reading Autobiography*. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson.  
*Living for Change*. Grace Lee Boggs  
*Asian American X*. Arar Han and John Hsu  
*Adios to Tears*. Seiichi Higashide  
*The Shock of Arrival*. Meena Alexander

## Objectives:

In this course, we will examine the autobiographical writings, memoirs, or life writings (personal essays) written by Asian Pacific Americans. We will specifically be looking at these writings, and the act of writing, for their influence on the invention of memory, personal history, and personal life story. We will also view current autobiographical films and documentaries as some of the new forms of lived discourses that are produced. For Asian Pacific Americans the task involves not merely telling one's story, but telling the personal tale as a rewriting of the American experience, an intervention in traditional American autobiography, and thus an interruption in the "lived site" Asians call America.

## Course Requirements:

### Reading Responses

I will be providing periodic writing prompts over the assigned readings. Your responses need to be 2-3 pages in length, and must be typewritten and double-spaced. These responses will help you begin exploring, formulating, and articulating your thoughts and ideas about the readings. These responses will be due periodically (see Syllabus). Late responses will be graded accordingly. These will count toward 20% of the total grade.

### Article Review

Students are required to review one article from a scholarly journal, or a chapter from a collection of scholarly articles that address issues of autobiography, memoir, life writing, or life narratives. A list of possible journals and/or collection of scholarly articles and texts will be made available to you. The Article Review should be 3-4 pages typed, and double-spaced with the bibliographic information at the top of the page. The article review will count toward 20% of the total grade.

### Position Paper/Presentation

A position paper is a "semi-in/formal" response to the materials we read. You are required to write 1 position paper, 3-4 pages long, typed and double-spaced. You will also read your paper to the class aloud as a point of departure for class discussion. The position paper must thoughtfully engage one of the assigned readings, or perhaps a theme that travels across several readings. **I do not want only summary, although this will be useful. I also want your critical engagement with the material.** The position paper will count as 25% of the total grade.

### Final Research Paper

Students are required to write a final research paper anywhere from 8-10 pages long, typewritten and double-spaced. Papers must have a bibliography of at least 5 references which include at least 3 pieces of literature and 2

scholarly articles (or scholarly chapters from books) as part of the research/analysis. Research papers may include any writing done for this class (Response papers, Article review) and can be an extension or revision of the position paper. The final paper will count toward 35% of the total grade.

**Policies:**

Grades will be averaged in the following proportions

Reading Responses _____	20%
Article Review _____	20%
Position Paper/Presentation _____	25%
Final Research Paper _____	35%

Grading Scale

100-98=A+	Suggests that a student's work is outstanding to excellent; it reflects the content and focus of the course and shows thoughtful and critical insight
97-93=A	into the complexities of the material. Always well written and articulated.
92-90=A-	
89-87=B+	Suggests the student's work is very good to good; it reflects a very strong
86-83=B	and solid understanding of the material. Occasionally doesn't go the
82-80=B-	extra step in critical analysis. Always well written and articulated.
79-77=C+	Suggests the student's work is adequate; it reflects a fair grasp of the
76-73=C	material but doesn't go very far in analysis or reflects a lack of
72-70=C-	comprehension of the issues represented in the material.
69-63=D	Suggests the students work shows some, but little effort, and does not comprehend the material, or reveals a lack of reading, attention, or attendance.

Attendance

In accordance with the Student Handbook, attendance in this class is mandatory. Attendance does not merely mean warming the chair, but a daily presence in the class engaged with the course materials. If you know in advance that you will have to miss class for a legitimate reason, contact me to see whether arrangements can be made to make up any work that will be missed. If you have not finished an assignment for a given class period, attend class anyway to avoid missing further assignments and in-class work/discussions. **Only institutional excuses will be accepted. After four (4) unexcused absences, your grade will be lowered one point for every absence thereafter.**

Extra Credit

There may be many opportunities for extra credit throughout the semester. I will announce those opportunities as they come up. Extra Credit assignments must relate to the course content of CES 315. Extra Credit should be in the form of a short 1-2 page review of the event, lecture, or film attended--

typed and double-spaced. To receive the possible full credit, students not only review but must also discuss how the event, film, or lecture compliments the content of this course. Students are allowed to turn in 2 Extra Credit assignments. Each Extra Credit will count 2.5 pts toward the student's overall final grade (for a total of 5 extra credit points).

#### Disability Accommodations

The Department of Comparative Ethnic Studies supports members of our community who request disability accommodations. Please notify me during the first two (2) weeks of class for any requirements needed for the course. Reasonable accommodations are available for students who have a documented disability. If you have a disability and may need accommodations to fully participate in this class, please visit the Disability Resource Center (DRC). All accommodations MUST be approved through the DRC (Admin Annex Bldg, Room 205). Please stop by or call 509-335-3417 to make an appointment with a disability specialist.

#### Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty, such as cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, and fraud, is prohibited. The proper use of primary or secondary research sources and without proper citation or acknowledgment, or copying and claiming someone else's work as your own, is illegal and is not acceptable in this or any other class at WSU. Whether intentional or unintentional, academic dishonesty will result in a grade of F for the assignment in question, or a grade of "F" for the entire course. Should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty, we will discuss the situation with you before penalties are enforced.

#### Classroom Etiquette

Out of respect for your classmates and the instructor, all cell phones must be turned off. iPods and any other devices for listening to music, podcasts, radio, or text messaging are also prohibited in class. Unless you have a documented disability, no earphones are allowed in class. Any use, even a perceived use, of these items during class will automatically result in a loss of 2 points from the student's final grade.

#### **Syllabus:**

Tuesday, January 8: Introduction to the Course. Handout Syllabus.  
 Thursday, January 10: Read/Discuss "The History of Asians in America" by Timothy Fong (handout). Video: *Xichlo*.

#### **Life Narrative as an act of Memory and Autoethnography**

Tuesday, January 15: Read/Discuss Chapter 1, "Life Narrative" and Chapter 2 "Autobiographical Subjects?" in *Reading Autobiography* (RA).  
 Thursday, January 17: Read/Discuss Chapter 3 "Autobiographical Acts" in RA.  
 Tuesday, January 22: Read/Discuss Chapter 4 "Life Narrative in Historical Perspective" in RA.  
 Thursday, January 24: Read/Discuss "Arts of the Contact Zone" by Mary Louise Pratt. (google: Arts of the Contact Zone

for pdf, or link to below address for html text or pdf). **Reading Response due.**

([http://209.85.173.104/search?q=cache:jQoMd9hLEf8J:www.class.uidaho.edu/thomas/English\\_506/Arts\\_of\\_the\\_Contact\\_Zone.pdf+arts+of+the+contact+zone&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=2&gl=us&client=firefox-a](http://209.85.173.104/search?q=cache:jQoMd9hLEf8J:www.class.uidaho.edu/thomas/English_506/Arts_of_the_Contact_Zone.pdf+arts+of+the+contact+zone&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=2&gl=us&client=firefox-a)).

- Tuesday, January 29: Read/Discuss "Introduction" and Chapters 1-6; in *Asian American X* (AAX)
- Thursday, January 31: Read/Discuss Chapters 7-13 in *Asian American X* (AAX).
- Tuesday, February 5: Read/Discuss Chapters 14-20 in AAX.
- Thursday, February 7: Read/Discuss Chapters 21-27 in AAX.
- Tuesday, February 12: Read/Discuss Chapters 28-35 in AAX.
- Thursday, February 14: Video: *Bontoc Eulogy*. **Reading Response due.**

#### Reimagining the National Narrative

- Tuesday, February 19: Read/Discuss "Introduction" and Chpt. 1 "East Is East—Or Is It?" in *Living for Change* (LC)
- Thursday, February 21: Read/Discuss Chpt. 4 "Jimmy" in LC.
- Tuesday, February 26: Read/Discuss Chpt. 5 "The City Is the Black Man's Land" LC. **Article Review due.**
- Thursday, February 28: Read/Discuss Chpt. 7 "Going Back to China, Chpt. 8 "New Dreams for the Twenty-First Century" LC.
- Tuesday, March 4: Read/Discuss Chpt. 9 "On My Own" LC.
- Thursday, March 6: Video: *Interview with Grace Lee Boggs*. **Reading Response due.**
- Mon-Fri, March 10-14: **Spring Break.**

#### Making Transnational Memories

- Tuesday, March 18: Read/Discuss Chapters 1-3 in *Adios to Tears* (AT).
- Thursday, March 20: Read/Discuss Chapters 4-5 in AT.
- Tuesday, March 25: Read/Discuss Chapters 6-8 in AT.
- Thursday, March 27: Read/Discuss Chapters 9-10 in AT.
- Tuesday, April 1: Read/Discuss Chapters 11-12, the Afterward and Epilogue in AT.
- Thursday, April 3: Video: *A Family Gathering*. **Reading Response due.**
- Tuesday, April 8: Read/Discuss sections "Overture" and "Piecemeal Shelters" in *Shock of Arrival* (SOA)
- Thursday, April 10: Read/Discuss section "Translating Violence" in SOA.

Tuesday, April 15: Read/Discuss section "Making up Memory" in SOA.

Thursday, April 17: Read/Discuss sections "Skin Fire Inside: Indian Women Writers" and "Coda" in SOA

Tuesday, April 22: Video: *Desi: South Asians In the U.S.* **Reading Response due.**

Thursday, April 24: Research Day. No Class.

Mon-Fri, April 28-May 2: **Final Research Papers due Wednesday, April 30 by 5:00pm.**