

ASAM20/ELIT24 Asian Pacific American Literature
De Anza College
Spring 2025

This class is mostly online and asynchronous, but there will be a required live meeting via Zoom or in person, required attendance at one community event (in person or live over Zoom), and opportunities for face-to-face meetings on campus.

Instructor: Sherwin Mendoza, mendozasherwin@fhda.edu

Office Hours: Mondays, 10:30 AM – 11:30 AM, and by appointment

Office Hours Location: Over Zoom and in the IIS Division Office in the Multicultural Center (MCC)

Critical reflection due by Friday, June 27 (this assignment acts as the final exam)

Catalog Description: This course is an introduction to Asian Pacific American literature. Through readings in twentieth and twenty-first century works, students will explore and analyze issues related to complexities of identity as it relates to class, gender, mixed heritages, and sexuality; politics and the history of Asian American activism and resistance to cultural marginalization; and diversity of cultures and experiences within the Asian Pacific American community.

The Student Learning Outcomes for this course state that at the end of the quarter you should be able to do the following:

- 1) Identify multiple cultural and historical issues pertaining to Asian Pacific Americans in literature.
- 2) Analyze issues pertaining to race, class, sexuality and/or gender in relation to Asian Pacific American communities.

Ethnic Studies and Collective Liberation

The editors of one of our course textbooks, *We the Gathered Heat*, provide at its beginning a note to its readers:

We offer you this anthology as just a small part of the conversation between our large We. Like all anthologies, it is necessarily incomplete. But it is one, we hope, grounded in a commitment to our collective liberation as Pacific Islanders, as Asian and Asian American, as immigrant, refugee, and indigenous poets, performers, activists, and storytellers.

These sentences make several important and interrelated claims. It conceives of literature as a part of a larger conversation that includes both writers and readers. The specific conversation that the anthology participates in is between members of a large “We,” and the editors define this “We” to some extent in racial terms: Pacific Islanders, Asians, and Asian Americans. The racial identities of this “We” intersect with the identities of immigrant, refugee, and indigenous. Further, the “We” intersects with the identities of

poet, performer, activist, and storyteller. Throughout these sentences, the editors implicitly invite any of its readers to join its “We” to achieve collective liberation.

This class likewise invites you to participate in a conversation that involves Ethnic Studies, Asian American identity, Asian American communities, and Asian American literature, with an aim for collective liberation. Everyone in this class will be able to participate in this “We” as a storyteller. Through this course, you will hopefully have a place to tell your own stories more powerfully and for you to discover new ways in which your stories are meaningful.

I especially hope that your understanding of “collective liberation” becomes deeper and more precise, and that you move beyond mere understanding towards taking concrete steps towards making collective liberation into a reality. The class begins with examples of people telling immigrant stories, which should serve as inspiration for you to tell your own story. We will then focus on a story, “The Shop,” to consider the role of humor in the stories we tell of ourselves. We will then read flash fiction pieces published by the Asian American Writers’ Workshop, one of the major platforms today for the conversation of Asian American literature, especially among emerging writers.

The class will then dwell on the two major textbooks of the course. With *We the Gathered Heat*, we will explore the tension between Asian Pacific American panethnicity and disaggregation, and how both are related to expressions of solidarity. The class will end with stories selected from the solar punk anthology *Multispecies Cities* to help us imagine what collective liberation in a more-than-human future might be like.

Course Groups

This class will have around 50 students, but you will interact on a weekly basis with a smaller group with around six members. You can think of that group as a class-within-a-class. It is very important to me that you actively participate in your group, that you find working with your group rewarding (although possibly challenging), and that group members feel empowered to speak honestly.

In the first two weeks of the quarter, you will be assigned to your group, and you and the members of your group will introduce yourselves to each other. For the remainder of the quarter, you will be in conversation with your group about questions related to the course. During one week of the quarter, you will contribute the opening discussion question for your group, with my assistance. Every week, you will be required to respond to the question raised by you or a group member and/or post to a group discussion prompted by me.

At the end of the quarter, your group will work together on a project to imagine a solar punk setting where each of you can explore what collective liberation might mean.

Asian American Communities and Ethnic Studies

This course, as an Ethnic Studies course, requires you to learn from Asian American communities themselves. You will thus be required to attend at least one live Zoom event or an in-person event from a list that I will provide to you on Canvas. All of the events on the list will be focused on either Asian Americans or another group or groups represented by Ethnic Studies disciplines, and the events should allow you to ask questions related to this class. To receive credit, before the event, you will need to draft and submit questions, during the event you will hopefully get answers to the questions, and after the event, you will need to write a short narrative that features the questions that you previously drafted.

Course Policies

Because much of this course will be built on online discussions, your classmates will rely on you to participate in the discussions in a timely manner, and you will likewise rely on them. I strongly suggest that you set notifications on Canvas to ensure that you do not miss discussion assignments.

For all assignments, including discussions, please notify me before the due date if you need an extension. The key thing is the notification in advance. I will not grant an extension if the due date has already passed. **Late assignments without extensions arranged in advance will be penalized by 10%, and assignments will not be accepted more than a week after the due date.**

This course will abide by the college-wide policies of De Anza College with respect to academic conduct (honesty, respect for diversity, etc.). Likewise, this course will comply with conditions set in accommodations letters sent from De Anza's Disability Support Programs and Services (DSPS) division. If you feel like disability accommodations will help you to succeed in this course, visit <https://www.deanza.edu/dsps/> or the DSPS office on campus to learn how to apply for DSPS services.

Finally, see the section of the syllabus below about grading and artificial intelligence for additional policies.

Course Texts

This course has two required textbooks, *We the Gathered Heat* (ISBN 9798888900871) and *Multispecies Cities* (ISBN 9781734054521). Additionally, you will read fiction and other texts written by figures within the field of Asian American Studies.

Course Schedule

Week 1: Course introductions

Week 2: Telling your story

Week 3: Asian American humor

Week 4: Emerging Asian American writers

Weeks 5 – 7: Survey of Asian American literature (*We the Gathered Heat*)

Weeks 8 – 10: Solar Punk, ecosystems, and the more-than-human (*Multispecies Cities*)
Week 11: Group project, Critical reflection
Finals Week: Critical reflection due

Course Routines

Expect to interact with this class at least three times a week. In a typical week, you should check Canvas on Sunday evening or Monday morning to read the announcement for the week's schedule. That announcement will include links to assignments due in the middle of the week. On Tuesday and/or Wednesday, you should prepare for and do the mid-week assignments, which will be due on Wednesday or Thursday. Finally, on Saturday, there will typically be a longer and more substantive assignment due. You should prepare for and do that assignment on Friday and/or Saturday.

In some weeks, you will engage more intensely with the class, but you will be able to choose those weeks. The more intense engagement will involve attending a community event or facilitating your group's discussion.

Finally, near the end of the quarter, two major assignments will be due, and so you should be prepared to spend additional time on this class near the end of the quarter. In the last week of the quarter, a group project will be due, and at the end of finals week, a critical reflection essay of at least 1,000 words will be due.

Canvas

I will check on Canvas whether you are logging in at the beginning, middle, and end of the week. Canvas is the learning management system used by De Anza College. On the course's Canvas site you will be able to find detailed course schedules and assignment descriptions, and you will turn in assignments using Canvas. Crucially, Canvas is the platform where you will be able to get credit for interacting with your group, and Canvas will function as your group's archive. You can set up another platform if you like, but the only one you will be required to participate in is Canvas.

Group Facilitation

You will be required to take the lead in the group's discussion of at least one literary text. This will require you to first select a text, and then do independent research on its author. After you read the text, do the research, review previous group discussions, and then formulate initial thoughts on the text, you will be required to meet with me on Zoom or in person to formulate a question that you will pose to your group. People from your group will be required to respond to your question. Finally, you will summarize and analyze your group's responses to formulate a response that you will share with them.

Group Projects

By the end of the quarter, it will hopefully be possible for you and your group members to identify the questions and themes that resonate most with you. I will work with your group to connect questions and themes to the student learning outcomes for this course so that you can produce something that you can share electronically and that connects your group's ideas to the wider project of Ethnic Studies.

Critical Reflection

At the end of the quarter, instead of taking a final exam, you will turn in a critical reflection of at least 1,000 words in which you reflect on the stories of Asian Americans and how they complicate your own stories about your own identity. The critical reflection should draw from multiple sources: course material and guest speakers; work that you did in this class; and your own background, circumstances, experiences, and aspirations.

Extra Credit

This class will require you to bring questions to, attend, and reflect on at least one public event. There will be several opportunities to do this. You can receive extra credit by doing this more than the required one time. See Canvas for assignment descriptions for extra credit opportunities.

Grading and Artificial Intelligence

To get a good grade in this class, you will need to read prompts and questions from your classmates carefully; draw on your own background, circumstances, experiences and aspirations as well as course material to develop responses of appropriate length; and submit assignments before they are due. Below is a partial list of reasons why you might lose points on written work in this class:

- It does not respond to the prompt or to the question raised by one of your classmates in a group discussion.
- It is below the minimum length specified in the prompt.
- It is turned in late, without an extension.
- It contains gross factual errors, like AI hallucinations.
- It has characteristics of AI-generated text (see below).

This course has a particularly extensive policy on artificial intelligence. The short version of the policy is this: never copy from AI. I encourage you to use AI like you might use a search engine, to ask questions and then receive responses generated by an algorithm applied to the data used to train the AI. You then, hopefully, critically evaluate the responses before moving on to other, more reliable sources of information. You then synthesize the information from a variety of sources and experiences to generate your own words.

Grading in this course is designed to eliminate incentives to misuse AI so that you will be able to develop your own unique voice in English. In this class, you will never receive point deductions for grammatical errors, so there is no need for you to use AI to translate or “correct” your work. If necessary, I might simply ask you to clarify what you have written. You will, however, receive point deductions if your work sounds like it was generated by AI (language that is technically “correct” but bland and general; words seemingly replaced by a thesaurus-based app; lack of specific examples with meaningful details; lack of citations or incorrect citations; lack of consistency between different assignments; lack of emotional warmth; lack of references to embodied experience or to the offline context generated by the class; opinions easily reproducible by a chatbot; etc.), regardless of whether you actually copied-and-pasted from AI.

Grades

Assignment	Points
Short Assignments	About 200
Telling Your Story	50
Group Discussion Responses	About 50 (10 points apiece)
Group Facilitation	100
Community Engagement	100
Weekly Reflection	200 (20 points apiece)
Critical Reflection Essay	100
Group Project	100
<u>Extra Credit: 10 points apiece</u>	
Total	About 900

Grading scale:

A	90%
A-	89%
B+	86%
B	80%
B-	79%
C+	76%
C	70%
D	60%
F	Below 60%