

ASIAN 390.21

Registration code: 4782

ENGL 323.52

Registration code: 4769

Note: course is cross-listed between ASIAN and ENGL

**ASIAN AND AMERICAN LITERATURES:
READING AND WRITING NEW YORK & LA**

Schedule: Wednesdays, 10:10AM to 1:00PM

Room: Hunter West 509A

New York--"the Big Apple" and L.A. --"the Big Orange"--have spawned writers-and their novels, essays, creative non-fiction and other literary genres since the settlement of the two areas. From Korean immigrant Younghill Kang's *East Goes West*--to Indian American writer Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*--and Frank Chin's *Bulletproof Buddhists*--these regions have provided rich material for the literary imaginary of the ethnic American writer. This course will contrast and compare approaches to modern 20th and 21st writing about NY and LA--from primarily an Asian American perspective—and the larger metropolitan and suburban areas for which they are the locus. While the emphasis is on writers of Asian descent, selected Latino and African writers who write about about these locales will be utilized as points of comparison, style, and voice, since both cities are truly multiracial and multicultural. A number of historical literary works e.g. Younghill Kang, Louis Chu, will also be included as point of comparison.

A unique feature of this course will be the final writing project: each student will be asked to write a fictional or non-fictional account of the community in which she/he lives, in story form. Essential to the project will be the profiling of a character, and stories found inside their community. Part of the class schedule will be devoted to your writing project.

The course explores the following themes:

- How do cities, communities, and characters thrive--in the novel, short story, or creative autobiography? What is the social ordering, gender roleplaying, and cultural mapping that provides the often unspoken context for these writings?
- The demographics and spatial urban geography of LA and NY make them diffused and dense respectively--and help to create social, labor, and gender conditions that pervade even fictionalized characters, communities, and cultures.
- Finally--is there an Asian American perspective on these two cities (regions) or is this also a "fiction" that does not exist? (In other words, does ethnicity matter--or not--in

imagination, in visualization, in perspective?) Or do the cities in themselves "provide" a voice for the writers? Are these-similar or different?

Selected writers and works (including film) may include but are subject to change:

Part of the class will also be a workshop, for the writing final project, so the final list of writers will be posted at the bookstore. The following is a sample, only, of the types of works the class will cover.

The Big Apple: Waylaid, by Ed Lin; The Namesake, by Jhumpa Lahiri (with film by Mira Nair); Eat a Bowl of Tea by Louis Chu (with film by Wayne Wang; Open City by Teju Cole, Toxicology, by Jessica Hagedorn, A Gesture Life, by Chang Rae Lee, East Goes West, by Younghill Kang.

The Big Orange: The Age of Dreaming, Nina Revoyr; Bulletproof Buddhists, by Frank Chin, I'm the One that I Want, by Margaret Cho; Circle K. Cycles by Karen Tei Yamashita; The Slanted Screen by Jeff Adachi (film); Better Luck Tomorrow by Justin Lin (film); Always Running by Louis Rodriguez; Phoenix Eyes and Other stories (selected) by Russell Leong.

References: Literary Brooklyn/Evan Hughes; Ancient L.A./Michael Rochlin; Forbidden Workers/Peter Kwong/; Satyagrapha in America/Vijay Prashad; Taxi! Taxis and Capitalism/Biju Mathew; Corky Lee (photos/Into East Rivers); Impossible Desires/Gayatri Gopinath, AAARI CUNY Research Bulletin (Global Voices-Local Identities), Kyeyoung Park/Asian Americans Create Places; Moving the Image (Russell Leong); High Performance: Looting and Fire Ravage L.A.

Revised: October 12, 2011