



MW: 11:30 - 12:45PM

WAR AND THE ASIAN DIASPORA

INSTRUCTOR: NATASSJA B. GUNASENA, PH.D



Course ID: INTS 306-90,

Method of Instruction: Remote

Instructor Email: natassja.gunasena@trincoll.edu

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 12:00 - 2:00PM, or by appointment

Course Description: How has war shaped and reshaped the Asian diasporic experience in the mid to late 20th century? How does U.S. militarism in Southeast Asia shape national politics and society? This course examines texts by Sri Lankan, Korean, Vietnamese and other Asian voices to examine how militarized conflict intersects with gender and sexuality to shape the politics and experiences of Asians in diaspora. We will read novels, poetry, academic articles and essays on the experiences of Asian subjects who have witnessed/survived/ been impacted by war in their homelands in order to understand the systemic, transnational, everyday effects of militarization, ethnic violence and imperialism on the lives of women, children, and queer folks. Finally, we will consider how narrative arts and creative expression can help us make sense of unimaginable histories and envision livable futures.

Course Objectives:

- 1) Introduce the range of regional and transnational politics contributing to war and unrest in Asia
- 2) Examine how gender and sexuality intersect with war, militarization and transgenerational trauma
- 3) Establish the interconnections between the U.S. War on Terror, militarized domestic policing, and U.S. military aggression in Southeast Asia
- 4) Examine how war, militarism, and nationalism disrupts the lives of women, children, and queer folks
- 5) Consider how we can use literature and art to understand these interconnections, form solidarity with others, reframe history, and imagine futures.

Required Texts:

Funny Boy by Shyam Selvadurai

Pachinko by Min Jin Lee

The Best We Could Do by Thi Bui

In the Shadow of the Banyan by Vaddey Ratner

The Latehomecomer by Kao Kalia Yang

Online Readings: Weekly readings will be uploaded to the course Moodle page by the instructor. Any changes/ additions to the readings listed below will be communicated to you by the instructor in a timely manner via email. **Please check your email regularly for any changes or updates.**

Accessibility: Trinity College is committed to creating an inclusive and accessible learning environment consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Like many things, the need for disability accommodations and the process for arranging them may be altered by the COVID-19 changes we are experiencing and the safety protocols currently in place. Students with disabilities who may need some accommodation in order to fully participate in this class are urged to contact the **Student Accessibility Resource Center**, as soon as possible, to explore what arrangements need to be made to assure access.

If you have approval for academic accommodations, please notify me by the end of week two of classes. For those students with accommodations approved after the start of the semester, a

minimum of 10 days' notice is required. Please be sure to meet with me privately to discuss implementation.

Student Accessibility Resources can be reached by emailing **Lori.Clapis@trincoll.edu** or **SARC@trincoll.edu**.

Course Expectations:

Zoom Lecture and Discussion: Throughout the semester, I will host Zoom meetings where I lecture on the week's topic and hold discussion with the class. In order to accommodate varying time zones and access to private computer space, every meeting will be recorded and uploaded to our course Moodle. Keep in mind that lectures provide important insight and context for the week's readings and assignments, so it's important for your success in the course that you watch the lecture videos even if something prevents you from attending them.

Students experiencing difficulty with access to computers and WiFi should contact me at their earliest convenience so we can collaborate on a plan to ensure you still receive course content.

Links to our Zoom meetings will be posted to the course Moodle

This is a seminar style class, which means that everyone is expected to read *all* material prior to class and actively participate in discussions. Participation can be verbal, or typed in the chat feature of our Zoom meetings.

The topics of our discussions will be determined mostly by the readings for that day, but your intellectual, social and personal interests will also guide them. **Keeping up with the reading material is crucial to success in this course.**

In a successful learning community, we will all be learners and teachers at some point. Here are some suggestions for creating greater opportunities for participation:

- As you read and make notes on your readings keep a list of running questions you would like to ask. Listen carefully for openings to bring them into discussion or ask them of me outside of class (office hours are perfect for this).
- Even if you are uncomfortable in a large group setting, take the lead during small group discussions. You may find others have similar questions, which you can then bring back to the larger discussion.

- If you do not understand what someone has said, ask for clarification from the speaker. or, if you do not know how the person arrived at their conclusion, ask them to explain their thought process, reasoning or argument more fully.
- If you disagree with someone's point, but do not want to confront them, or state an opposing view, try to determine the underlying assumptions of what they have said and ask a question about the assumption.
- If you feel you have been particularly silent on a certain subject, try putting your ideas down on paper. We have a course discussion board on Moodle, which is exactly the place to pose questions, add analysis and continue discussions if you feel you better engage via writing.

Please be mindful of respecting your peers in the following ways:

- Listen actively when someone is speaking
- Avoid talking when a peer is speaking
- Refrain from interrupting or cutting people off
- DO ask questions, with due respect and sensitivity

Email: It is vital that you regularly check your email to keep up with instructions, updates and announcements. **Please Note** if you email me after 5pm during the work week I will likely not reply until the next business day. Likewise, any emails sent over the weekend will be answered on Monday. I encourage all of you to set consistent and healthy work/life boundaries so that you can protect your leisure time while still meeting course expectations.

I will not be taking nor grading you on attendance, rather your points will be derived from class participation and written assignments.

Office Hours: You are welcome to attend Office Hours on Zoom to discuss any questions or concerns you might have. I will be available on Zoom for you to log on and meet with me during the specified hours. Please email me if you need to schedule an alternate meeting time.

College is a challenging and stressful environment under any circumstances, and I am happy to work with you on necessary accommodations, extensions and additional help you may need this semester - however, I urge you to **contact me in a timely fashion** if you find yourself struggling to meet course expectations. The sooner you alert me to your needs, the better we can work together on ensuring your success in this course.

(Please note that this syllabus is subject to change or alterations as necessary at the instructor's discretion)

Course Assignments:

Participation: It is expected that you will contribute to classroom discussion, which will include a group presentation as well as questions/comments you present to the class based on the readings and learning activities during class meetings (**25 % of grade**).

Group Presentation: Students will collaborate with their peers on a group discussion of an assigned text. You will share your insights and thoughts about the text as it relates to our lecture material and secondary readings, and finally develop a minimum of five (5) discussion questions that you will share with the class (**20% of grade**).

Reflection Papers: Students will write a short (2-3 page) reflection paper on each novel based on prompts provided by the instructor. These short papers will lay the groundwork for your final assignment. (**25% of grade**)

Final Paper: For this cumulative assignment, students will critically reflect by crafting either a longform essay (7-10 pages) or a creative project (with accompanying 3-page rationale) based on the themes of the course and in conversation with our class readings. (**30% of grade**)

Week 1

Wednesday, September 8th: Introductions and Syllabus Review

Week 2

Monday, September 13th: Read *American Civil Liberties Union, 2014, War Comes Home: The Excessive Militarization of American Policing*

Lutz, Catherine, "Introduction" from *Bases of Empire: The Global Struggle Against U.S. Military Posts*

Wednesday, September 15th: Read Gerson, Joseph, "U.S Foreign Military Bases and Military Colonialism: Personal and Analytical Perspectives"

Fatimah Asghar, "If they Should Come For us"

Shailja Patel, "Eater of Death"

Suheir Hammad, "First Writing Since"

Sarah Burke, ["Fatimah Asghar Questions What it Means to be American"](#)

Week 3

Monday, September 20th: Read, “We Have all Failed the Afghan People: a Conversation on Afghanistan.”

<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/leaving-afghanistan/> (Watch in Class)

Wednesday, September 22nd: Read, Kathleen Belew, *Bring the War Home: The White Power Movement and Paramilitary America*, “Introduction” and “The Vietnam War Story”
Charles Ornstein, Hannah Fresques, ProPublica, Mike Hixenbaugh “[The Children of Agent Orange](#)”

Week 4

Monday, September 27th: *Funny Boy* by Shyam Selvadurai

Wednesday, September 29th: Sri Lanka, Militarization, Violence, and Peace Activism

Sri Lanka Profile, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-12004081>

Neloufer De Mel, “Constituting Martial Virtue: The Process of Militarization in Sri Lanka”

Malathi De Alwis, “Moral Mothers and Stalwart Sons: Reading Binaries in a Time of War”

The Sri Lankan Civil War and its History, Revisited in 2020,

<https://hir.harvard.edu/sri-lankan-civil-war/>

“Introduction” by Shyam Selvadurai

Leah Lakshmi Piepzna Samarasinha, *diaspora*

Week 5

Tuesday, October 4th: Watch: *Funny Boy*, dir. Deepa Mehta (Netflix)

Read Sharanya Jayawickrama, “At Home in the Nation? Negotiating Identity in Shyam Selvadurai’s *Funny Boy*”

Tariq Jazeel, “Because Pigs Can Fly: Sexuality, Race and Geographies of Difference in Shyam Selvadurai’s *Funny Boy*”

Sindhuri Nandakumar, “[Brandon Ingram: on ‘Funny Boy’ and the Queer Sri Lankan Experience](#)”

Wednesday, October 6th: Vietnam, the Cold War, and Third World Liberation

Read: “Chronology”

Brenda M. Boyle, “Introduction: The War Stories we Tell”

Martin Luther King, Jr. “Beyond Vietnam: a Time to Break Silence”

Week 6**Monday, October 11th: TRINITY DAY, Reflection Paper #1 Due****Wednesday, October 13th: Discussion, Thi Bui, *The Best We Could Do*****Week 7****Monday, October 18th:** Diane Niblack Fox, “Agent Orange: Coming to Terms with a Transnational Legacy”**Watch in Class:** “Nobody Dies” by Thao Nguyen**Wednesday, October 20th: Discussion, *Pachinko* by Min Jin Lee****Reflection Paper #2 Due****Week 8****Monday, October 25th:** Korea, Imperialism, and Gender

Yuri Doolan, “Transpacific Camptowns: Korean Women, U.S. Army Bases and Military Prostitution in America.”

Pyong Gap Min, “Korean ‘Comfort Women’: the Intersection of Colonial Power, Gender and Class”

Margo Okazawa-Rey, “Amerasian Children of G.I. Town: a Legacy of U.S. Militarism in South Korea”

Wednesday, October 27th: Discussion, *In the Shadow of the Banyan* by Vaddey Ratner**Week 9****Monday, November 1st: Lecture:** Cambodia, the Khmer Rouge and Troubled Diasporas**Read:** Ben Kiernan, “Introduction: the Making of the 1975 Khmer Rouge Victory, ” “Ethnic Cleansing: the CPRK and Cambodia’s Minorities, 1975-77.”

Savina Sirik, “Memory Construction of former Khmer Rouge Cadres: Resistance to Dominant Discourses of Genocide in Cambodia.”

Reflection Paper #3 Due**Wednesday, November 3rd: Discussion, *The Latehomecomer*, by Kao Kalia Yang**

Week 10

Monday, November 8th: Aline Lo, “Fanciful Flights: Reimagining Refugee Narratives of Escape in Kao Kalia Yang’s *The Latehomecomer*”

Anne Fadiman, “Birth” and “Fish Soup”

Wednesday, November 10th: Viet Thanh Nguyen, “Remembering War, Dreaming Peace: on Cosmopolitanism, Compassion, and Literature”

Paisley Rekdal, “Narrative, See Also Trauma”

Reflection Paper #4 Due

Week 11

Monday, November 15th: Kao Kalia Yang, “Refugee Children: the Yang Warriors”

Thi Bui, “Perspective and What Gets Lost”

Suheir Hammad, “break(place)”

Sivaramani, “Wartime”

Wednesday, November 17th: Edward Said, “Reflections on Exile”

Sophia Azeb, “Who Will We Be When We Are Free? On Palestine and Futurity”

Week 12

FALL BREAK

Week 13

Monday, November 29th: Katherine T. McCaffrey “Environmental Struggle after the Cold War: New Forms of Resistance to the U.S. Military in Vieques, Puerto Rico”

Kyle Kajhiro, “Resisting Militarization in Hawai’i”

Reflection Paper #5 Due

Wednesday, December 1st: Individual Meetings with Instructor

Week 14**Monday, December 6th: Group Workshops for Final Project****Wednesday, December 8th: Julian Aguon, “Afterword: Down Here”****Review and Reflections:** How has war and the formation of Asian diasporas impacted your life?**Week 15****Monday, December 13th: LAST DAY OF CLASS**