

War and Asian Americans
UGS 303 Difficult Dialogues
Fall 2014
MWF 10:00-11:00am, CLA 0.122

Instructor:
Dr. Sharmila Rudrappa
Office hrs: M. 11:00-1:00pm, CLA 3.268

COURSE DESCRIPTION: While the relationship between the United States and Asia is understood as an economic one, it is hard to miss that most of this country's wars over the course of the 20th century have been fought in the East. Right from the colonization of the Philippines beginning with the Spanish American War, 1898 to the current intervention in Afghanistan Asia has been central to American military engagements and the nation's imaginary. Here is a list of the United States' overt and covert wars in Asia:

- Philippines (colonization from 1905 to 1946)
- Japan (World War II; the deployment of nuclear weapons for the first time in history, Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6, 1945 and August 9, 1945 resp.)
- Korea (1950-1953)
- Laos (1960-1975)
- Vietnam (official combat during the years 1964-1973)
- Cambodia (1970-1975)
- Afghanistan (proxy war against the former Soviet Union as part of the Cold War, 1979-1989)
- Iraq (Persian Gulf War, 1990-1991; Operation Desert Storm)
- Afghanistan (Operation Enduring Freedom, 2001- to present)
- Iraq (Operation Iraqi Freedom, 2003- to present)

A large part of Asian immigration, especially from the Philippines, Korea, Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, can be traced to these military engagements. Moreover, these military incursions have affected American politics, public life, and culture.

In this course we examine the gendered effects of militarism on Asians and Asian American families. How have the United States' militaristic engagements affected Asian immigration into the United States? The effects of war are felt not just on the battlefield, but also affect resident immigrant populations in the United States through immigration laws and racial profiling. And second, we will think through what these wars have meant for non-Asian Americans, those soldiers, their families and communities who have been indelibly changed by these war engagements halfway across the world.

This course is organized according to key sociological themes rather than key geographical areas. That is, we pay attention to sociological concepts such as family, gender, sexuality, historical memory, citizenship rights, and transnationalism. The ethnographies, memoirs, and documentary films that tell the stories of various communities across the U.S. and various parts of Asia are case materials we use to learn about these concepts.

One final note— our plan here is to not engage in mindless criticism of American foreign politics or the American military; or posit Asian refugees, immigrants and sojourners as

blameless victims. Instead, our goal in this course is to examine how these large-scale political processes affect the choices we make, the families we form, and the communities that emerge within these contexts. We will use a plethora of books, articles, fiction, memoirs, documentary films, photographs and popular culture to examine the mundane, everyday effects of these wars on all Americans in general, and Asian Americans in particular.

WRITING FLAGS: This course carries the Writing Flag. Writing Flag courses are designed to give students experience with writing in an academic discipline. In this class, you can expect to write regularly during the semester, complete substantial writing projects, and receive feedback from your instructor to help you improve your writing. You will also have the opportunity to revise one or more assignments, and you may be asked to read and discuss your peers' work. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from your written work. Writing Flag classes meet the Core Communications objectives of Critical Thinking, Communication, Teamwork, and Personal Responsibility, established by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

ATTENDANCE: Your presence in class is mandatory. In recognition that you may fall sick, have family obligations, or may need to study for another exam you have permission to miss up to THREE class sessions without facing any grading consequences. If you miss more than three classes your grade will be negatively affected. Your grade will drop by one letter grade for every two classes you miss (beyond the three excused absences).

GRADING: You have a choice of writing 5 papers over the course of the semester from a variety of topics. Each paper is 20% of your grade. Paper length—5 pages, double-spaced, font 12 Times Roman, margins of 1 inch each; please number pages and remember to write your names on it.

COURSE MATERIALS: I. All materials are posted on Blackboard or available online.

II. Please purchase the following books from Amazon.com

1. *The Gangster We Are All Looking For* by Thi Diem Thuy Le.
2. *Pride of Baghdad* by Brian Vaughan.
3. *Barefoot Gen* by Nakazawa Keiji

III. We will watch documentary films in class.

IV. Recommended readings are available online or on reserve at PCL. These readings are especially useful in writing your papers.

Course schedule

1. Introduction

Aug 27— 6 word project.

2. What is war?

Aug 29—Read aloud your six words on what war has meant for you.

Begin watching *Tattooed Under Fire*, documentary film (57 minutes long)

Sep 3—Continue watching *Tattooed Under Fire*

Sep 5—Write-up on what is war to be submitted on Sep 8. Peer review of papers, and continue discussion in class.

3. Animals in war

Sep 8—Low tech solutions for high tech wars. New Yorker article on mules:

<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2010/02/15/riding-high>

National Geographic article on combat dogs:

<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2014/06/war-dogs/paterniti-text>

Sep 10—Discussion of graphic novel, *Lions of Baghdad*.

Sep 12— Submit second write-up about soldiers and their animals, or animals used in war; class discussion

Recommended readings on reserve at PCL:

Elephant Company: The Inspiring Story of an Unlikely Hero and The Animals

Who Helped Him Save Lives in World War II by Vicki Croke.

Animals in the Military by John Kistler.

4. American citizenship, the Philippine war

Begin reading excerpts from Rick Baldoz's *The Third Asiatic Invasion*

Sep 15—Documentary film *Two Bells, Two Worlds* (56 minutes)

Sep 17— Continue watching *Two Bells, Two Worlds*, discussion

Sep 19— Submit write-up on the American-Philippine War

Recommended readings available online:

“Race-Making and Colonial Violence in the U.S. Empire,” by Paul Kramer.

2006. *Diplomatic History*. Vol. 30 (2): 169-210.

“Wars of Civilization: The U.S. Army Contemplates Wounded Knee, Pullman Strike, and the Philippine Insurrection” by Priscilla Murolo. 2011. *International Labor and Working Class History*, Vol. 80 (80): 77-103.

John Judis, “Imperial Amnesia,” *Foreign Policy*, 143: 50-59.

5. Militarization

Sep 22— Excerpts from Cynthia Enloe's *Maneuvers*.

Sep 24— Documentary film, *Militainment, Inc*

Sep 26— Submit write-up on militarization.

Recommended reading: See Cynthia Enloe's *Maneuvers* (on reserve at PCL).

6. Sexual violence and war

Sep 29—Excerpts from Cynthia Enloe's *Maneuvers*.

Oct 1—Documentary film *The Invisible War* (97 minutes)

Oct 3—Finish watching *The Invisible War* and discussion

Oct 6—Submit write-up on sexual violence and war

Recommended documentary film in the Fine Arts Library, *The Murmuring*. Also please find anything you can on comfort women (Korean and Chinese women forcibly used by the Japanese army into sexual servitude).

7. Vietnam War: Testimony and memorials

Oct 8—Begin watching *Winter Soldier* (95 minutes)

Oct 10—Finish watching *Winter Soldier*

Oct 13—Discussion on war and violence

Oct 15—Please read excerpts from Marita Sturken's *Tangled Memories*.

Submit write-ups on the effects of war's violence. Recommended video, *Maya Lin: A Strong, Clear Vision*.

8. Hiroshima and Nagasaki

Oct 17—Documentary film *Radio Bikini* (60 minutes)

Oct 20—Finish watching film *Radio Bikini* and class discussion

Oct 22—Discussion of graphic novel *Barefoot Gen*

Oct 24—Submit write-up on atomic terror.

Recommended readings—none. You may watch the anime film *Barefoot Gen* available in the Fine Arts Library. I'd also recommend *Atomic Café* available online.

9. Japanese American internment

Oct 27— Begin watching *Rabbit in the Moon* (85 minutes).

Oct 29— Finish watching *Rabbit in the Moon*

Oct 30— Discussion on race, war, and civil rights

Submit sixth write-up on war and civil rights.

Recommended documentary film to watch in the Fine Arts Library, *The Cats of Mirikitani*.

10. Military bases, camp towns

Nov 3—Begin watching *ANPO: Art X War* (89 minutes)

Nov 5— continue *ANPO: Art X War*

Nov 7—discussion on ANPO, and on military bases in general

Submit write-up on military bases.

11. Medical Practice and War

Nov 10—Begin watching documentary film, *Doctors on the Dark Side* (73 min.)

Nov 12—Finish watching *Doctors on the Dark Side*

Readings: None, but please do some research on what is Abu Ghraib. Questions we'll want to talk about—what is the role of doctors in war?

Nov 14—NO CLASS. Submit write-up on the role of doctors in war.

12. Children and War

- Nov 17—Begin documentary film *In the matter of Cha Jung Hee* (62 min).
 - Nov 19—Finish watching *In the matter of...* and class discussion
 - Nov 21—Submit write-ups on adoption of children from war-torn countries.
- Recommended readings: TBA. Search for articles on Operation Babylift. Also see documentary film, *Daughter from Da Nang*.

13. Civil Rights and Cambodian Refugees

- Nov 24—Begin documentary film, *Sentenced Home*.
 - Nov 26—Finish *Sentenced Home*; class discussion.
 - Nov 27 to Nov 31—Thanksgiving Break. No class.
- Finish reading *The Gangster We Are All Looking For* by Thi Diem Thuy Le over Thanksgiving break.

14. War and Memory

- Dec 1—Discussion of *The Gangster...*
Submit book reports on *The Gangster*.
- Dec 3— Discussion on adoption. Why do some children deserve a “better life,” yet others do not? Comparing Korean adoption and refugee children (in *The Gangster* and *Sentenced Home*).
- Dec 5—Wrap-up. Last class day.