



## English IV Honors Course Descriptions (Fall, Winter 2014-15)

### **Asian American and South Asian Literature** (Ms. Sohn and Mrs. Vibhuti Patel)

#### *Part One: Asian American Literature* (Ms. Sohn)

We will begin the course with a few select essays designed to introduce the concept of Asian American rhetoric within social, cultural, racial, and political context and then briefly examine the theme of racial identity in Frank Chin's 1971 play, *The Chickencoop Chinaman*, written prior to the existence of Asian American Literature as an acknowledged category. As we dive into a more contemporary list of texts, we will continue our conversation that will include, but not limited to, orientalism, diaspora, immigrant voice, defining what is Asian American literature—do we define them by authors or by characters?—and representation of Asian American rhetoric in literature, arts, music, and media.

During the fall trimester, the students will read the following works by East and Southeast Asian American writers:

- A selection of essays from *Representations: Asian American Rhetoric* eds. LuMing Mao and Morris Young and *Aiiieeeee! An Anthology of Asian-American Writers* eds Frank Chin, Jeffery Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Wong
- Frank Chin - *The Chickencoop Chinaman*
- Chang Rae Lee - *Native Speaker*
- John Okada - *No-No Boy*
- Monica Truong - *The Book of Salt*
- Matthew Salesses - *I'm Not Saying, I'm Just Saying*

#### *Part Two: Contemporary South Asian Fiction* (Mrs. Patel)

This course will focus on four major, award-winning South-Asian fiction writers. The selected novels are impassioned, humorous, moving and highly readable. They have young protagonists that Americans can readily recognize, even identify with, in situations that are universal: Rushdie's whimsical adventure story about the silencing of a storyteller was written for his young son while he himself was in hiding, under the fatwa; Lahiri explores an Indian-American boy's search for identity and his coming-of-age conflicts; Hamid offers a provocative take on the American Dream from the perspective of a high-performing Pakistani MBA; and Desai's quirky teenage hero lives out a hilariously surreal adventure in a lyrical, poetic tale. Each novel exemplifies the uniquely distinctive stylistic features of its creator. The course will include audio-visual presentations and an Indian meal.

- *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* by (Man Booker Prize Winner) Salman Rushdie
- *The Namesake* by (Pulitzer Prize Winner) Jhumpa Lahiri
- *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* by (Commonwealth Writers Prize Winner) Mohsin Hamid
- *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* by (Man Booker Prize Winner) Kiran Desai



### **Full of Stories: The Art and Craft of Personal Narrative Writing** (Ms. Sawyer-Mulligan)

"The fact is," said American author Flannery O'Connor, "that anybody who has survived his childhood has enough information about life to last him the rest of his days." In this course, we will read contemporary non-fiction that focuses thematically on evolving personal identity and will hone the craft of reflective and observational writing. Requirements, beyond engagement at the seminar table, are weekly writing and blog posts that will culminate first in a "pre-Portfolio" at the end of Trimester 1, then in a Portfolio at the end of the course. While we will do some text-based discussion, we will also devote one class period a week to a Writers' Workshop whose content will be determined by pieces written each week. Peer consulting will also be a part of our process.

We will read three memoirs (probable titles: *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight* by Alexandra Fuller, *Where Rivers Change Direction* by Mark Spragg, and *The Color of Water* by James McBride), as well as a broad selection of contemporary personal essays.



### **Generation Lost: In and Out of Paris with Hemingway and Friends** (Mr. Jacobsen)

"You're an expatriate," Bill Gorton tells Jake Barnes in Hemingway's 1926 novel *The Sun Also Rises*. "You've lost touch with the soil. You get precious. Fake European standards have ruined you. You drink yourself to death. You become obsessed with sex. You spend all your time talking, not working. You are an expatriate, see? You hang around cafes."

Bill speaks one version of the truth, but Gertrude Stein's "Lost Generation" is more than alcohol-fueled excess on the streets of Paris. Hemingway, Fitzgerald, and their fellow artists in Europe wrote some of the greatest fiction and poetry of the era, and most of it not about the dissolute lifestyle of their inner circle. In this course we will consider the "Moveable Feast" made famous by Hemingway, but we will focus more fully on the diverse works--some of which are set in the American heartland rather than in Europe--of expatriates published both just before and after the Great War.

- Ernest Hemingway, *A Moveable Feast*, *A Farewell to Arms* and selected stories
- F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Tender is the Night* and selected stories
- Sherwood Anderson, *Winesburg, Ohio*
- Willa Cather, *A Lost Lady*
- Zelda Fitzgerald, *The Iceberg*
- Gertrude Stein, selections
- Selected poems of Hart Crane, e.e. Cummings, and T.S. Eliot



### **Paradise Lost: Coming of Age** (Ms. Halsey)

In this course, we will explore the essential elements and perennial complexities of what it means to "come of age" in a variety of eras and in a range of cultures. We will start by trying to define the term itself, examining different ideas of what it means to move into adulthood. We will use a number of texts as springboards for discussion, asking questions like: What does it mean to be a woman? A man? How do we understand and reconcile tensions between the individual and community? Is tension with established custom and authority (e.g. parents, religious beliefs and other social codes) inevitable in this process of becoming? What rituals do we associate with coming of age? Do they matter? Is coming of age necessarily an experience of a "paradise lost"?

Texts include: *Paradise Lost* (excerpts), *Romeo and Juliet*, *Portrait of the Artist As A Young Man*, *Jay-Z's Decoded*, *Why Be Happy When You Can Be Normal*, *Purple Hibiscus*, *Black Ice*, *All The Pretty Horses*, selected poems, documentary film excerpts and articles related to media literacy and the impact of advertising on concepts of identity.



### **Political Conflict and the Graphic Novel** (Mr. Sohn)

This class aims to understand political philosophy and conflict through the study of the graphic novel. In particular, the course will explore the roots and consequences of violent conflict and political unrest through the medium that eminent social theorist C.L.R. James declared as the “clearest ideological expression of the people, and a great window into the future of the modern world.” Graphic novels not only give critical introductions to major world events and crises, but also reveal important truths about the nature of conflict, violence, and political power. The works will cover issues such as revolution, occupation, insurgency, ethnic conflict, ethnic cleansing, terrorism, vigilantism, and genocide.

Throughout these texts, we will also consider how they resist, represent, and entrench dominant cultural ideologies about power, myth, heroism, adolescence, family, religion, and identity. With an eye for literary analysis, students will also learn about the complex and sophisticated relationship between language, image and narrative unique to the graphic novel form. While this course will use the graphic novels as primary texts, additional readings from graphic narrative theory and comic history, plus seminal works in political science on conflict and violence, will inform our study.

#### Required Texts:

- Art Spiegelman's *Maus I and II*
- Alan Moore and David Lloyd's *V for Vendetta*
- Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns*
- Joe Sacco's *Palestine*
- Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*
- G.B. Tran's *Vietnamerica*