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Spring '23  
R 3-5 (9:35-12:35)  
ROG 0106

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<https://ufl.zoom.us/j/2447969731?pwd=amJBb25uZ115b0tKcXVBNXdPYjd2Zz09>

### Refugees, Aliens, and Other Impossible Subjects

“To be an immigrant is to be part of the American Dream. To be a refugee is to be part of the American nightmare” tweet Viet Thanh Nguyen, 2016

“We are not born equal; we become equal as members of a group on the strength of our decision to guarantee ourselves mutually equal rights.” Hannah Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*

### **Course Description**

What constitutes a refugee? How do we think of refugees? Who is an illegal alien? What do refugees reveal about the Nation-State? What do we learn from refugees? Wars, displacements, and nationalist and racial anxieties about refugees in Europe and the US in the twenty-first century have once again made the issue of the refugee a central one. This course will center the field of critical refugee studies in order to foreground the refugee not as a victim but as a source of knowledge. What kinds of critiques of the nation-state, militarized violence, imperialism, humanitarian and human-rights discourse does a refugee epistemology enable? How do refugees work out their subject-positions through cultural productions and how do these productions work as sites of critique?

In particular, we will focus largely (although not solely) on how Asian American literary and cultural production figures the refugee, the illegal alien, the immigrant/non-citizen/citizen as sites of social and political critique that brings to light processes of U.S. colonialism, occupation, war, and violence in Asia and the Asia Pacific. Because refugee studies and Asian American studies are interdisciplinary, we will be drawing on fields such as history, sociology, anthropology, as well as cultural studies as well as engaging with U.S. empire studies, postcolonial theory, critical race studies, and collective memory studies.

Required Texts:

### **Course Requirements and Grade Distribution**

*Position papers* on the readings due during class (2-3 pages): 15%

These should be critical and evaluative rather than summations of the readings. Raise questions here but be specific and try to link the readings with each other (you might not be able to link all but comment at least on 3 readings) or to issues discussed earlier. You need to turn in a total of 5

position papers but you may turn in more if you wish. I'm happy to read more. The position papers should be on the readings for that day and should be uploaded on canvas before class. It would be a good idea to do position papers on possible texts you'll be working with on your final paper. You may not do position papers after the material has already been discussed in class.

#### *Two Oral presentations: 20%*

The purpose of these presentations is to make you think critically and intensively about the texts you are reading and to engage you in further research. For one presentation, choose a critical work from which we are reading for the day and do a full presentation of the book. Your presentation should include (a) the book's main argument, (b) a summary of each chapter and (c) what you found most useful and most problematic. What you're doing here is basically a book review plus adding a bit of informational content for the class. A short handout for the class would be good. For the second presentation, evaluate 3 critical articles on a literary text/film being discussed in class. Present the arguments of each essay, the methodologies used, and your assessment of the successes and problems of the arguments. I have listed the articles/essays for many of these. Again a short handout for the rest of the class would be good but **please don't simply read the handout. Both presentations should take no more than 15 minutes so please time yourself beforehand.** Again, it would be a good idea to pick presentations which would help you with your final paper. Another option would be to do a presentation on a section of <https://aaww.org/heretostay-14-things-to-read-as-you-stand-by-undocumented-immigrants/>

#### *Final paper (20 pages): 65%*

These should be analytical papers about 20 pages in length (excluding Notes and Bibliography). They may be extensions of the work you've done for the presentation or entirely new papers. Whatever option you choose, you need to do a complete MLA search on your subject and incorporate the research into your paper. Be sure that your papers have a theoretical angle so that the argument you make is significant not only because of the specific works you are considering but also to an interpretation of certain cultural issues. Connect your critical angle to current scholarship on the subject. You need not deal with the specific texts we're discussing in class (although you can) but the paper should be about settler colonial studies.

As part of the requirements for the paper you need to :

1. Find conference with a Summer or Fall deadline for CFP
2. Write the required abstract for the conference, as well as the letter of submission.

If you are a Ph.D. student, I strongly urge you to think about your paper as a possible publication. You will need to look at some journal issues in order to see how you need to frame your argument. I will be happy to work with you on these papers both during the semester and after the semester is over.

#### *Attendance*

It is understood that graduate students do not skip class. Please remember that this is an intensive discussion class and part of the work of the class is building up a series of discussions which we continue to build upon in the course of the semester. Because your participation is central to these discussions, you are expected to read all materials carefully and attend every meeting. If you are presenting a paper at a conference and have a conflict with ONE weekly meeting, please see me. There will be a grade penalty for classes missed beyond the one meeting.

### *Reading Materials*

You are required to read all assigned material and bring the readings to class.

**Syllabus:** This is a tentative syllabus which might be changed according to the needs of the class.

Jan 12: Introduction

Andrew Shacknove, "Who is a Refugee?"

Stephen Castles "The International Politics of Forced Migration" *Socialist Register* 29 (2003), 172-189.

Jan 19: Hannah Arendt from *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 267-302.

Hannah Arendt "We Refugees"

Giorgio Agamben "We Refugees"

Immanuel Levinas "Ethics as First Philosophy" in *The Levinas Reader*, pp. 75-89.

Patricia Owens "Reclaiming 'Bare Life'? International Relations 23 iv (2009), 567-582.

### **Impossible Subjects of Colonialism**

Jan 26: Mae M. Ngai from *Impossible Subjects* pp. 1-14; 96-126

Giorgio Agamben from *Homo Sacer*, pp. 9-14 (acc. to pdf. It's the intro)

Paul Kramer from *The Blood of Government* 1-14; 116-130.

Omi and Winant from *Racial Formation in the United States*

Carlos Bulosan *America is in the Heart*

### **War, Militarization, and Refugees**

Feb 2: Timothy Linh Bui *Green Dragon* (2001)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_x\\_nR9ZEQ2I](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_x_nR9ZEQ2I)

Lisa H. Malkki "Speechless Emissaries: Refugees, Humanitarianism, and Dehistoricization"

Mimi Thi Nguyen from *The Gift of Freedom*, pp. 1-82

Yen Le Espiritu from *Body Counts: The Vietnam War and Militarized Refuge(es)*, pp. 1-23.

Yen Le Espiritu, "Toward a Critical Refugee Study," *Journal of Vietnamese Studies*, Vol.1, No.1-2 (2006), pp.410-433

Feb 9 Loung Ung *Lucky Child* (2005)

Cathy Schlund-Vials from *War, Genocide, Justice: Cambodian American Memory Work*, pp. 1-25.

Eric Tang *Unsettled: Cambodian Refugees in the NYC Hyperghetto*, pp. 28-51.

Michael Schudson "Dynamics of Distortion in Collective Memory" from *Memory Distortion: How Minds, Brains and Societies Reconstruct the Past*, pp. 346-364.

Cathy Schlund-Vials from *War, Genocide, Justice: Cambodian American Memory Work*, pp. 1-25.

William Peterson "Success Story Japanese American Style"

Frank Chin and Jeffrey "Racist Love"

### **Adoption/Saving Babies**

Feb 16: Yen Le Espiritu from *Body Counts*, ch 4 or essay

Aimee Phan *We Should Never Meet*

Soojin Pate from *From Orphan to Adoptee*, 1-19; 73-92

James Scott From *Weapons of the Weak*, pp. 314-340

Natalie Cherot "Storytelling and Ethnographic Intersections" *Qualitative Inquiry* 15 I (2009), 113-148 (maybe?)

### **Food Matters**

Feb 23: Monique Truong *The Book of Salt*

Sau Ling Cynthia Wong "Food Pornography" from Reading Asian American Literature pp. 55- 71—maybe whole chapter 18-76?

L. Law "Home Cooking" in D. Howes Ed *Empire of the Senses* pp. 224-41.

Brad Kessler "One Reader's Digest: Toward a Gastronomic Theory of Literature" Kenyon Review 27 ii (2005): 148-165

### **Trauma and Recovery**

Mar 2: Viet Thanh Nguyen *The Refugees*

Avery Gordon from *Ghostly Matters* 3-28.

Marianne Hirsch *The Generation of Postmemory* 29 I (2008), 103-128.

David Lloyd "Colonial Trauma/Postcolonial Recovery?"

Freud "Mourning and Melancholia"

### **Autoethnography**

Mar 9: Kao Kalia Yang's *The Latecomer*

Joey Slaughter from *Human Rights Inc* 1-25; 111-139.

Jeannie Chiu, "I salute the spirit of my communities": Autoethnographic Innovations in

Hmong American Literature *College Literature*. Summer2004, Vol. 31 Issue 3, p43-69

Christian Moser "Autoethnography"

Clifford, James. "On Ethnographic Authority." *The Predicament of Culture. Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*. Cambridge/London: Harvard University Press, 1988. 21-54.

From Dina Nayeri *The Ungrateful Refugee*, 225-231.

Mar 16: Spring Break

March 23: Moshin Hamid *Exit West*

Timothy K. August from *The Refugee Aesthetic*, pp. 1-24

Peter Nyers "Abject Cosmopolitanism: the politics of protection in the anti-deportation movement" *Third World Quarterly* 24 no. 6 (2003), 1069-1093.

### **(In) Security and Terror**

Mar 30: Michel Foucault from *Security, Territory, Populations*

David Grabias and Nicole Newnham *Sentenced Home*. Watch on your own.

From Eric Tang *Unsettled: Cambodian Refugees in the NYC Hyperghetto*, pp. 52-76.

James Hathaway, "The Meaning of Repatriation" *International Journal of Refugee Law* 9 iv (1997), 551-558.

Kathy Gilsinan, "Trump Keeps Invoking Terrorism to Get His Border Wall," *The Atlantic*, Dec. 11, 2018.

### **Refugeetude**

April 6: Dinaw Mengestu *The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears*

Vinh Nguyen "Refugeetude: When Does a Refugee Stop Being a Refugee" *Social Text* 37 ii (2019), 109-131

Presentations on Papers

April 13 Junot Diaz *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*

Peter Nyer "Conclusion"

Presentations on papers