Multiraciality in Asian American Literature:
A Literary and Pedagogical Study of Lisa See

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Introduction

Multiracial people are some of the most visible and invisible subjects in contemporary American society.[1] Despite hundreds of advertisements featuring mixed-race Asian Americans;[2] the oft-cited cover photo of *Time* magazine's 1993 special issue proclaiming a computer-generated face created "from a mix of several races" to be the "New Face of America;"[3] and the high profiles of mixed-race individuals like Barack Obama, Kamala Harris, and Tiger Woods, multiraciality is a grossly underexplored topic both in popular culture and in academic scholarship. Although discussed somewhat more in studies of Asian American experiences and literature, multiraciality remains a tangential subject, with many mixed-race authors like Ruth Ozeki and Alexander Chee being subsumed under monoracial assumptions.

Lisa See, the main author studied in this paper, is similarly treated as a monoracial subject, though her treatment is significantly different from that of Ozeki's or Chee's. See's appearance alone causes many people to automatically assume her race – White[4] – and, at times, even her ethnicity – Irish?[5]

Figure 1: Photograph of Lisa See. *Lisa See*, https://www.lisasee.com/about-lisa-see/.

See, though, has established her literary career based on a less visible portion of her racial and ethnic identity – her Chinese ancestry. This disjunction between See's appearance and her authorial identity frequently causes negative reactions among both popular readers and scholars.

For example, my own friends and academic colleagues have almost uniformly rejected the idea of See's writing upon seeing her face. Their reactions range from statements like "that's not right" and "she must be faking it" to "you must be arguing how Orientalist she is, right?" These reactions reveal an expectation ingrained in American culture that, "if we can classify a person by his or her race or ethnicity, we will know something about that person's true self" (D. Nakashima 113). My friends' and colleagues' initial assumptions, depending upon whether I present See's photo or her authorial position first, are either that See is a White woman or that she is a Chinese American woman. Both of these racialized identities are culturally connected to different assumptions about See's "true self," particularly as a writer producing Chinese American fiction. Upon either seeing her picture or hearing how it is that she claims a Chinese American identity, these assumptions are disturbed, disturbing with them the idea that my interlocutors know about See's "true self." My acquaintances, along with many popular readers and scholars, usually prioritize See's appearance, therefore understanding her to be a White woman – an identity which they assume to be mutually exclusive from a Chinese American identity.

See, though, goes to great lengths to claim authority and legitimacy as a multiracial Chinese American author. The complexities in race, ethnicity, and "ethnic" authorship that are made visible in See's case complicate simplistic understandings of identity and representational authority. Simultaneously, emotive reactions to See's authorship reveal our cultural assumptions

and display our lack of ability to understand and categorize those who do not neatly fit preconceived identity notions.

In this thesis, I therefore argue that it is of utmost importance to study and teach See, her writing, and that of others like her to develop a more nuanced understanding of the cultural meanings of race, ethnicity, and particularly multiraciality. In my first chapter, I primarily study receptions of See's work among popular readers and scholars to reveal how both positive and negative reactions to it are informed by culturally enforced assumptions about race, ethnicity, and "ethnic" authorship. I also discuss the ways in which See reinforces these expectations by incorporating stereotypes in her fiction to achieve the cultural authority that she lacks because of her appearance. In my second chapter, I explore how one might teach See, her books, and other racially complex authors like her to develop students' understandings of race and ethnicity in the college classroom. In the appendices, I include three syllabi that display the concepts I discuss in this chapter and that include See's work in ways that may not only help students to investigate cultural assumptions about race and ethnicity, but also encourage them to reflect upon their personal identities in connection with race and ethnicity.

Notes

[1] I use the terms multiracial and mixed race interchangeably in this paper to indicate someone of two or more racial backgrounds.

[2] See Leilani Nishime's *Undercover Asian: Multiracial Asian Americans in Visual Culture*.

[3] See the November 18, 1993 cover of *Time* magazine by Ted Thai.

[4] I capitalize the term White in this paper to bring recognition to the fact that Whiteness is a "race," rather than reinforce the enduring conceptual framework that being Asian, Black, or anything other than White is racialized while White is the absence of race.

[5] Several reviewers and commenters on See's appearance have said "she could be mistaken for an Irish lass" ("Lisa See;" Camp Runamok). See is in fact part Irish, though she rarely acknowledges this side of her ancestry, especially in comparison to her Chinese ancestry (Lapidus; Nanda).

Chapter One:
Authority, Authenticity, and Multiraciality in "Ethnic" Authorship

> I guess what I'm trying to say is that in many ways I straddle two cultures. I try to bring what I know from both cultures into my work. The American side of me tries to open a window into China and things Chinese for non-Chinese, while the Chinese side of me makes sure that what I'm writing is true to the Chinese culture without making it seem too "exotic" or "foreign."
>
> Lisa See, in answer to the question "Why do you write about China?" in her FAQ

Lisa See's conception of her authorship as one that bridges two cultures mirrors how Maxine Hong Kingston's, Amy Tan's, and other Asian American authors' authorial positions have often been defined.[1] See has employed this position as a "translator" of Chinese culture for American readers in ten of the eleven books she has written thus far, each of which features stories about Chinese and Chinese American people.[2] In the family memoir that launched her writing career, See narrativizes her paternal family history beginning with her great grandfather's immigration from China to the U.S. With this book's publication, See established her claim to a multiracial Chinese American identity through her paternal heritage and strong ties to the Chinese culture and Los Angeles' Chinatown.[3] See has since capitalized on this racial/ethnic identity,[4] taking advantage of the increasing popularity of "ethnic literature" in the U.S. to successfully write and market predominantly historical fiction about Asian and Asian American characters. See and her publishers utilize her Chinese American identity to market her work as "ethnic" fiction written by a correspondingly "ethnic" writer, creating the expectation that See has inherent knowledge about the subject matter of her novels. While this has proved to be a successful marketing tactic, those who encounter See's works for the first time are often shocked to find the author's picture featuring a pale-skinned, red-haired woman with freckles.

This disjunction between the expectations of See's appearance based on her racial/ethnic identity and her actual appearance repeatedly causes readers to question and, at times, reject her authorship and her oeuvre. Many readers prioritize her appearance, therefore understanding her to be a White woman – an identity which they assume to be mutually exclusive from a Chinese American identity – which in turn causes them to dismiss her writing on the assumption that it must be Orientalist or, at the very least, not "authentic." These reactions simultaneously reveal how readers connect a writer's identity with the assumed quality of that writer's "ethnic" literary work.

Using See's authorial position as my primary point of investigation, I will explore how an author's racial/ethnic identity is used both by readers to impose expectations of authenticity upon ethnic texts and by the author themselves to establish authority as a source of information about a racial/ethnic community. In relation to this latter trend, I will analyze See's novel *Shanghai Girls* and her family memoir *On Gold Mountain: The 100-Year Odyssey of a Chinese-American Family* to demonstrate how Asian American authors may incorporate self-Orientalizing details that align with readers' expectations of authenticity to create marketable fiction that affirms their identity and, in connection, their position as an authoritative source of information. Finally, by incorporating tenets of Critical Mixed Race Theory, I intend to show how a rejection of an "ethnic" author's writing primarily on the basis of their appearance is an exclusionary act that not only precludes multiracial authors from gaining literary recognition, but also reinforces the literary and cultural trends described above.

♦

"Authenticity" as Literary Value

What we would now call ethnic American literature – including Asian American, African American, Jewish American, and other panethnic literatures – is often a highly valued if vague and problematically homogenizing category of literature. In both popular and scholarly discussions of this fiction, considerations of an author's racial/ethnic identity in connection with the socio-cultural content in their works are privileged as informing literary value and analysis. These considerations are fundamental in discussions specifically about ethnic literature for several reasons. Despite the prevalence of color-blind, individualistic ideology in the U.S.,[5] the categorization of individuals based on race and ethnicity is still prevalent in our society. According to cultural sociologist Phillipa Chong, the prevalence of this racial/ethnic categorization in combination with the attention paid to socio-political contexts of literature – which is prioritized by the recently-influential historicist approaches in literary criticism – has brought ethnic literature to the forefront of scholarly conversations. Specifically, Chong notes that these considerations have become relevant in literary conversations since "concerns about the inclusion/exclusion of literature by racial and ethnic minorities [became] integral to the literary 'canon wars' that raged within academic departments in the post-war period" (P. Chong 67). This attention to creating a more diverse literary canon in academic realms and the increased study of ethnic literature in higher education has therefore helped similar interests in the racial/ethnic qualities of a work to be valued in the public, popular literary realm.

When these qualities are taken into consideration, they are often evaluated as being either "authentic" or "inauthentic" of "the ethnic experience," depending upon their alignment with expectations for what constitutes this authenticity. Although academic scholars are not immune to such expectations, these expectations are especially widespread among popular readers by

whom, Patricia Chu notes, "writers from minority ethnic communities are particularly liable to be read as race representatives and held to arbitrary standards of authenticity" (Chu 75). Phillipa Chong's 2010 study of popular book reviews published in *The New York Times* and *The New Yorker* illustrates the prevalence of these expectations in the popular literary realm. As Chong notes, book reviewers specifically mention the race or ethnicity of an author when that author's background aligns with that of their characters. Reviewers "draw parallels" between these characteristics to suggest to readers that these writers rely on "their knowledge as ethno-racial insiders to inform the books," thus indicating that, in some way, the books are "based on first-hand experiences rather than pure imagination" (P. Chong 71). When writers of ethnic literature are perceived as writing "authentically" as this sort of "ethno-racial insider," readers – especially those who are not part of the author's same identity group – attribute literary value to these works as being high-quality portrayals of "true" ethnic experiences.

These assumptions are further supported when critics use the racial/ethnic identity of the authors to mark their books as being a part of what Chong calls a specific "ethnic-genre." According to Chong, "ethnic-genre books can be understood as cultural artifacts of these regions and appreciated as a way of 'knowing' these different societies through its fiction" (75). When categorized under an ethnic genre, these authors' works are isolated from "non-ethnic" literature as fiction that is not "universal" but is nevertheless desirable in the American race- and ethnicity-obsessed society. This complex quality also becomes a marketable feature, as ethnic literature is often marketed separately from "non-ethnic" American literature. This separation, in turn, reinforces the authenticity expectations that plague ethnic fiction by homogenizing these texts under a singular umbrella term.

Even while See's appearance causes some readers to view her as a "non-ethnic" author, because her books are marketed as Chinese American – and thus "ethnic" – literature, See's fiction is often expected to adhere to these expectations of authenticity regarding the racial/ethnic context of her work. In addition to See's "Chinese Americanness" being mentioned in nearly every review of her fiction, which Chong notes as initially creating expectations for authenticity, reviewers frequently note her family heritage and experiences growing up in Los Angeles' Chinatown to explicitly draw connections between her racial/ethnic identity and the supposed authenticity of her work. Reviews of See's fiction feature such headlines as "Family Stories Inspire Lisa See's New Book" (Pitz), "Novels Focused on Her Family Lineage" (Rosenberg), and "Of Heritage and Hardships; Author Lisa See Revisits Family Through Her Novels" (Karm). Even though most of See's work does not directly portray her family's experiences, these titles impose the expectation that See is using her position as a "ethno-racial insider" to accurately portray the Chinese and Chinese American communities depicted in her novels. The body of these reviews reinforce these expectations by frequently speaking of the "authenticity" of See's portrayals of historical Chinese American communities (D. Chong), indicating that she creates "authentic, visually arresting world[s]" (Bohjalian), saying that she "knows precisely how hard life on this continent was for the Chinese" (Fulford), and even explicitly referencing See's "racial roots and ethnic background" as proof that she may act as "an ambassador of understanding China" (Andrei). In such reviews of her fiction, See's appearance and multiracial identity are never the focus, but rather something that is explained and then ignored. See's identity therefore becomes simply portrayed as Chinese American, and her Chinese American family becomes the primary background acknowledged, allowing her to seemingly serve as the unambiguous "ethno-racial insider" writing "authentically" for readers.

♦

Self-Orientalizing to Establish Authority in Asian American Literature

While See's work is valued by many readers as being authentic, her writing has been also criticized by several scholarly and popular critics as being Orientalist.[6] While these individuals rightly condemn the Orientalist details in See's work, they often fail to discuss the choices that See has made in including these details and the purposes that they serve. Like many other Asian American writers, See frequently includes what I will call self-Orientalizing details in her writing to successfully market her fiction as "authentic" and to affirm her own identity as an authoritative Chinese American writer. [7]

As previously suggested, adherence to expectations of authenticity often plays a large role in the success of "ethnic" authors and their literary works. For Asian American literature, these expectations are predominantly informed by Orientalist concepts. These hegemonic beliefs among American readers concerning what constitutes both Asian and Asian American culture are not far removed from what Edward Said originally defined as "essential ideas" in nineteenth-century Orientalism: that the "Orient" is marked by "its sensuality, its tendency to despotism, its aberrant mentality, its habits of inaccuracy, its backwardness" (Said 205). Particularly, mysticism, "backwardness," and Otherness still feature in American cultural representations of Asia and, to a somewhat lesser degree, Asian Americans.[8] Partially because of the continuing influence of these beliefs, many Asian American writers incorporate Orientalist details into their own writing. This tactic of self-Orientalizing allows these works to become more successful in the literary marketplace because of their alignment with hegemonic expectations of what constitutes the highly valued notion of authenticity. According to Sheng-mei Ma, "*only* those Asian Americans who compose, more or less, in alignment with such Orientalism stand a chance

in emerging among mainstream Western readers as representative ethnic voices" (Ma, *The Deathly Embrace* xiii; emphasis added). s

Scholars have frequently noted the prevalence of this tactic in many authors' works throughout the last century. For example, Viet Thanh Nguyen's brilliant analysis of Onoto Watanna and Sui Sin Far's writings in *Race and Resistance* reveals the ways in which these early multiracial Asian American authors used self-Orientalizing details in their works to market their books and identity. Other critics have discussed how Amy Tan's, Maxine Hong Kingston's, and other more recent canonical Asian American writers' works also frequently incorporate these self-Orientalizing details. See's fiction is no exception.

One example of self-Orientalizing details features in the beginning of See's novel *Shanghai Girls*. In the following passage, the narrator, a young middle- to upper-class woman who has received both Chinese and Western education in early 20th century Shanghai, describes her expectations as a young unmarried Chinese woman:

> In the days before the Republic, I would have already been sent sight unseen to my husband's home in a red lacquer sedan chair. By now I would have given birth to several children, sons hopefully. But I was born in 1916, the fourth year of the Republic. Footbinding was banned and women's lives changed. People in Shanghai now consider arranged marriages backward. Everyone wants to marry for love. In the meantime, we believe in free love. (15-16)

This short section contains no distinct factual errors. The timeline concerning the overthrow of the Qing dynasty, the institution of the Chinese Nationalist republic, and the banning of footbinding is correct. The descriptions of customs like arranged marriages and footbinding before the revolution and "free love" after the revolution also reflect the experiences of many

young *urban, middle- to upper-class* Chinese women during these times. Additionally, the character's thoughts about these customs may reflect those thoughts of a young woman in her position. However, See's phrasing in this passage aligns with Orientalist expectations that the "traditional," pre-1912 China is "backward." The additional invocation just a few pages earlier of Shanghai as the "Paris of Asia" and the contrasts drawn between the narrators' "worshipping all things foreign" and her mother's "antiquated" Chinese customs also reinforce this reading that traditional Chinese customs are primitive and the direct opposite of "modern" Western customs (11, 4). See's inclusion of these details allows this passage, along with its surrounding context, to be read as "authentic" because it aligns with Orientalism notions that Asian customs are "backward" and primitive until "saved" by modern Western customs.

Shanghai Girls is also subject to the same criticisms made by Sau-ling Cynthia Wong of Amy Tan in her chapter "'Sugar Sisterhood:' Situating the Amy Tan Phenomenon" in David Palumbo-Liu's book *Ethnic Canon: Histories, Institutions, and Interventions*. In this chapter, Wong criticizes Tan for including "Chinese or Chinese-seeming details" as "markers of authenticity" to gain a readership of primarily White women "through acts of cultural interpreting and cultural empathy that appear to possess the authority of authenticity but are often products of the American-born writer's own heavily mediated understanding of things Chinese" (Wong 181, 187). The detail for which Wong initially criticizes Tan – and that gives Wong's article its name – is Tan's anglicized version of the Mandarin word for one's paternal female cousin, *tang jie* (堂姐), as "sugar sister," which Wong identifies as an incorrect translation of the word based on homonyms (180-182). See similarly incorporates words into her fiction that rely on homonyms to create mystical-sounding translations. One example is her translation of the Chinese word for skyscrapers, "mo t'ien talou," or, in pinyin, *motian dalou* (摩天大楼), as

"magical big buildings" (See, *Shanghai Girls* 11). While *dalou* (大楼) does literally translate as "big building," *motian* (摩天) does not translate as "magical." Instead, See similarly inputs the Chinese homonym *mo* (魔) used in the word for magic in place of the character *mo* (摩) meaning to scrape or touch. See, who has studied Mandarin but who claims to have forgotten a great deal of her learning, may have simply confused these two homonyms (See, "Re: Ask the Author: Lisa See"). However, this "mistake" also functions, as Wong indicates, to "create an 'Oriental effect' by signaling a reassuring affinity between the given work and American preconceptions of what the Orient is/should be" for American readers unfamiliar with the Chinese language. Even if See had literally translated the term, this "Oriental effect" would still exist in this text. A literal translation of *motian dalou* (摩天大楼) as "scraping sky big building" would still sound mystical and strange for English-speaking readers when used in place of the English word "skyscraper." Regardless of whether a writer correctly translates Chinese terms or not, many literal or close to literal translations serve to create Orientalizing effects that confirm readers' Orientalist ideas that the Chinese language is strange and mystical. Again, this serves to make the writing containing these "translations" seem more authentic for these readers.[9]

In addition to reinforcing expectations of authenticity, these self-Orientalizing details also serve another purpose. Especially for writers like See – whose Chinese American identity may be and often is questioned – these details may serve to affirm authorial identity and connection to the Chinese language and culture. This "display" of knowledge about Chinese customs and the Chinese language that See includes in her novels allows them to be read as "authentic." This, in turn, creates the illusion that See has the authority to act as the "ethno-racial insider" – to return to Phillipa Chong's words – who inherently has the knowledge necessary to "translate" Chinese

culture and language for readers who are not familiar with them. For See, such authority becomes a crucial piece in her ability to claim the identity of a Chinese American author.

See more explicitly affirms her identity as a Chinese American through descriptions of her family members in her family memoir *On Gold Mountain*. The most relevant of these narrative images, a description of See's multiracial father supposedly told through the point of view of See's young mother, Carolyn, reinforces the notion that an individual who may be passing for White as See does can still have recognizably "Chinese" features.

> He was unbelievably cute: black hair, a darling smile, high cheekbones. Though he was only one-quarter Chinese, his eyelids had epicanthic folds, which Carolyn found extremely attractive. The Caucasian part of his background came out in the color of his eyes – green. What this meant was that Richard looked just enough Chinese to be positively beautiful but not too foreign. (*On Gold Mountain* 320)

As there are no quotes or indications of direct language taken from See's interviews with her family members that she used to construct the memoir, it is unclear whether these descriptions are in the words of Lisa See herself, her mother, or another family member. Regardless of whose words these originally were, this passage is an important look into See's own interpretation of her identity and appearance. By indicating that one can identify the separate "Chinese" and "Caucasian" features on her father, See indicates she understands that racial mixing results in a person who is identifiably of both races, regardless of the percentage of each racial background. This kind of description also matches the ways in which See has described which of her physical features are supposedly recognizably Chinese – or, at least, recognizably from her Chinese family. She has repeatedly emphasized the similarities in her appearance to those of her relatives in China, saying, "We are the same height, the same build, the same proportions of ankle to knee,

hip to shoulder. I have the same jaw and the same eyes as my great-grandfather. Only my coloring is different" ("FAQ"). By identifying which parts of her and her father's physical appearances are supposedly recognizably Chinese, See attempts to further affirm her identity as a multiracial Chinese American person rather than simply a monoracial White person. Through these descriptions, even See's physical appearance – the most easily identifiable "non-Chinese" part about her – becomes a reason why she argues she *should* be accepted as being Chinese American. This, in turn, reinforces her claim to authority as a Chinese American writer who can write "authentically" about China and Chinese American communities.

♦

The Problem of "Ethnic" Appearance as Authority

See continually reaffirms her authorial identity as a Chinese American through her work partially because many people reject her claim to "ethnic" literary authority after seeing her appearance. As the friends I mention in my introduction do, many of See's critics question the authenticity of her writing and assume it must be Orientalist because she, the author, is phenotypically White and not "recognizably" Chinese. While I argue that See's writing does contain self-Orientalizing details, I would argue against those who would reject See's work outright based on her identity – that is, who might reject her claim to identify as Chinese American and instead say she is a White woman taking advantage of a loose connection to family heritage to "get away" with writing Orientalist fiction. This assumption rests on the belief that See must not be Chinese American because she does not *look* Chinese American. By operating under this assumption, those who would critique See's writing based on her appearance reinforce appearance-based racial categories that not only exclude multiracial people whose appearance may not "match" expectations, but also reinforce the notion that someone's

appearance – and, therefore, someone's racial identity – makes them more likely to write "authentically."

Like expectations about authenticity, these types of reactions are especially prevalent among popular readers. Particularly in situations where these readers reject See's novels as inauthentic and Orientalist, See's appearance is often emphasized as the primary reason why her work is worthy of rejection. For example, on a Tumblr blog designed to be "A safe space for all diasporic Chinese or Sino folk (華裔)" that works to address racism, Orientalism, and appropriation, two posters seemingly reject her works primarily because of See's visible racial background. While one poster claims to have read and disliked See's books, the other poster admits to never having read See's work yet says, "i always thought there was something weirdly orientalist about this visibly white author (even if she has chinese ancestry) writing about ~exotic china~ for white audiences." This second poster writes that See's insistence that she is Chinese American despite looking White "rub[s] [them] the wrong way," accusing See of using her ancestry to "get away with writing orientalist literature unlike other white people" (angrygirlcomics-prime). The way in which this second poster connects See's appearance to the apparent failings of her writing, even if they have never read it, makes apparent the way readers' expectations about the quality and authenticity of ethnic literature are tied at least in part to the author's appearance.

Kristan Hoffman, a Chinese American who describes herself as "Writer. Halfie. Feminist," expresses similar anxieties about See's appearance. In a blog post in which she falsely assumes that See's mother is also part Chinese, [10] Hoffman describes her unease at See's (and her mother's) appearances by saying:

> It shouldn't bother me, and maybe 'bother' isn't even the right word, but it does make me feel…strange, to see these non-Chinese-looking women so clearly and easily labeled as Chinese American. Maybe it's because I, who am half-Chinese, have struggled over the years with my own appearance and identity.
>
> …
>
> Did these women struggle similarly? With one quarter and one eighth (I think) Asian-ness in their blood, can they really identify as Chinese? Can they understand what it's like when no one would ever mistake them for being anything other than 'white'? What in their body of experiences give them the – sorry to use this word – right, to claim that heritage, the one that I am so tentative to take, because I worry that if someone were to challenge me on it, they might decide I don't have enough evidence to support my stake? (Hoffman)

In this passage, Hoffman questions See's authority and "right" to a Chinese American identity based on her appearance and the amount of "Asian-ness in [her] blood," indicating that both of these aspects disallow See the bodily experiences necessary to have a "right" to claim this identity. Hoffman also indicates that someone who is mixed race must have a certain amount of "evidence" to "support [one's] stake" in a racialized identity, which – she seems to indicate – See does not possess. This perception of needing to "prove" one's identity is not uncommon among multiracial Asian Americans who, according to Yen Le Espiritu, are "expected to prove their allegiances and feelings of connection to the ethnic community in order to be accepted as 'real' Asians" (Espiritu 32). This appears to be the "logic" that Hoffman is using to question See's identity, in addition to her own.

These negative reactions to See reveal cultural anxieties prevalent in the U.S. about accepting someone as possessing an "ethnic" identity if they do not look "appropriately" "ethnic." Such anxieties do not affect writers like Amy Tan or Maxine Hong Kingston because these women's appearances align with common expectations about what a Chinese American person "should" look like. While these authors have been questioned about the authenticity of their writing – most infamously by Frank Chin – these authenticity questions are not, as in See's case, based on their appearance. Rejections based in assumptions about appearance not only dangerously reinforce the expectations that Chinese Americans should and do align with a certain appearance, but they actively work to exclude multiracial Chinese Americans who, like See, may not "fit" the expected appearance.

By rejecting See's literary works because of her appearance, these critics exclude and silence the voices of mixed-race Chinese American people by assuming that they are Orientalist or, at least, "inauthentic." Patricia Chu speaks to this rejection of See as a multiracial Chinese American:

> In the absence of early theory affirming mixed-race Asian Americans as central to Asian American concepts of identity or authorship, some scholars may have tacitly viewed Lisa See as another White author writing about Asian women for a popular audience, rather than closely considering how she claims authority to tell this story: by virtue of her descent and family affiliation, cultural awareness, and research. (Chu 66).

While Chu's argument relies upon the claim that See has a certain "authority" to write her stories, a phrase that is in some ways synonymous with her ability to produce "authentic" fiction, Chu's argument is important as it reveals the lack of legitimation afforded to mixed-race Asian American writers' ability to produce Asian American literature. Chu also suggests that

multiracial authors like See attempt to establish authority in other ways, through "descent and family affiliation, cultural awareness, and research." While not equal to the bodily experiences that Hoffman alludes to, these alternative methods of establishing authority are also used by monoracial Asian American writers to establish the same authority that See seeks.

♦

Using Multiraciality as a Literary Analysis Lens

As Patricia Chu indicates, multiraciality in the Asian American context has yet to find the centrality that it deserves, especially in literary studies. While I do not wish to suggest that See's body of work should be lauded as Chinese American fiction – on the contrary, I recognize the many failings and problems with See's writing and authorship – I do hope to suggest that See's work and that of other multiracial authors must find acknowledgment in academic literary studies.[11] In See's particular case, the relative success and acceptance of her work as Chinese American fiction in the popular literary market must not be ignored just because her texts are unideal and even problematic. By viewing See's authorship and literary works through the lens of multiraciality, I propose that we might be able to better understand the complex cultural negotiations that multiracial authors must maneuver to gain authority in the literary realm as well as the cultural assumptions about race and authenticity that continue to plague all writers of ethnic literature in the U.S.

Notes

[1] For a range of scholarly views on perceptions of ethnic authorship, see Jing He's "Sisterhood Across Cultures – With Reference to Chan Ran's and Amy Tan's Fiction;" David Pendery's "Identity Development and Cultural Production in the Chinese Diaspora to the United States,

1850-2004: New Perspectives;" Shirley K. Rose's "Metaphors and Myths of Cross-Cultural Literacy: Autobiographical Narratives by Maxine Hong Kingston, Richard Rodriguez, and Malcolm X;" and Mary Louise Buley-Meissner's "Pioneering Authors of Chinese American Literature."

[2] See's most recent novel, *The Island of Sea Women*, is a work of historical fiction focused on Korean women on Jeju Island. While not discussed in this paper, See's departure from writing about Chinese and Chinese American characters further calls into question her ability to establish authority as an "ethnic" Chinese American author. Does her claimed identity as a Chinese American author afford her the authority to write about any Asian or Asian American story?

[3] See frequently connects her literary authority to her time spent in Los Angeles' Chinatown as a child and familiarity with it as an adult ("For Lisa See, Los Angeles' Chinatown").

[4] I use the combined term racial/ethnic in this paper to describe the Chinese American identity because, in the U.S., Chinese American people are understood to be a part of the broad Asian "race," and because being of Chinese descent is considered to be an ethnicity. For more information about the intertwined nature of race and ethnicity, see Michael Omi and Howard Winant's *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1980s*.

[5] The prevalence of color-blind individualism is evident in former president Donald Trump's Executive Order No. 13950, which includes language discounting those who "are pushing a different vision of America that is grounded in hierarchies based on collective social and political identities rather than inherent and equal dignity of every person as an *individual*" (60683; emphasis added).

[6] For examples of both popular and scholarly writing that criticize the Orientalism in See's fiction, see Susie Lan Cassel's "'…the binding altered not only my feet but my whole character':

Footbinding and First-World Feminism in Chinese American Literature;" Sheng-mei Ma's chapter "Chink Chic, a.k.a., Shitnoiserie" in his book *Diaspora Literature and Visual Culture: Asia in Flight*; M. Isabel Santaularia Capdevila's "This is China and Shit Happens: Space in Rock, Paper, Tiger by Lisa Brackmann and Other Crime Narratives Set in China and Russia;" and Alice Stephens's "Writing in Yellow Face."

[7] For this discussion, I use the more specific term "self-Orientalizing" rather than the term "Orientalizing" not to suggest that See's work is definitively Chinese American fiction, but rather to acknowledge that See's understanding of her own authorship as being based in a Chinese American identity differently influences the choices that she makes as an author.

[8] It should be noted that representations of Asian American communities are impacted by additional racist stereotypes like the model minority myth. For the purpose of this discussion, I focus on how self-Orientalism impacts See's writing because most of her fiction is set in China or in Chinatowns, which are often more closely associated with the Chinese culture and society than American culture and society in American cultural representations.

[9] In contrast with these Orientalist "authenticities" for which I and other scholars criticize See, Walter S. H. Lim seems to praise See for her historical authenticity in the first chapter of his book, *Narratives of Diaspora: Representations of Asian in Chinese American Literature*. Lim specifically praises "See's amplification of the horrors of Angel Island [as filling] in a gap in Amy Tan's narrative of the Chinese American diasporic experience. Because Tan's novels do not emphasize the experience of hardship in the process of migration, they suggest ready Chinese access to the promise of the United States. By contrast, See's Angel Island portrays the many obstacles that exist in the way of the Chinese dream of America" (26-27). Though not discussed in this thesis, See's historical fiction is often based on extensive research in archived historical

records, about geography through travelling to the story's locations, and about individuals' experiences through personal interviews ("FAQ"). This research-based approach is another way in which See attempts to establish authority as an author.

[10] This assumption may result from a common stereotypical, racist expectation that only White men marry minority "ethnic" women and that minority "ethnic" men cannot "win the hearts" of White women. Regardless, the assumption is wrong for Carolyn See, who, as far as I can find, has never claimed a Chinese American identity.

[11] Jennifer Ho makes a very interesting and, I believe, related argument about the importance of engaging with "transgressive texts" in Asian American literary studies as an anti-racist move in her article "The Place of Transgressive Texts in Asian American Epistemology."

Chapter Two:
Discussing Complex Racial/Ethnic Identity in the College Classroom

As discussed in my previous chapter, Lisa See's complex authorial position illuminates several expectations about race, "ethnic" authorship, authenticity, and – ultimately – the still-underexplored subject of multiraciality in Asian American literary studies that should be further addressed in scholarly discourse. I now wish to turn to the ways in which we might use See's authorship and writing to further complicate and critically investigate cultural understandings of race, ethnicity, "ethnic" authorship, and multiraciality through teaching.

Particularly in Asian American literature and studies courses, but also in other American studies courses, multiraciality is not often discussed, or, if covered at all, it is only discussed as a marginal issue. As Cynthia L. Nakashima observes, "Traditional approaches to Asian American studies tend to limit the impact of the 'multiracial experience' on Asian America to the confines of a 'contemporary issue,' i.e., Week 11 on the syllabus" (C. Nakashima 112). However, as See's family illustrates, biracial marriages and multiracial Asian Americans are not a new phenomenon. Additionally, as large as the multiracial population of Asian American-White individuals like See is, the populations of White-American Indian and Black-White individuals are even larger.[1] As the percentage of multiracial people continues to rise in the U.S.,[2] it is becoming increasingly important to address multiraciality as both a contemporary and historical topic in educational settings.

As I discuss in the previous chapter, See's work does not constitute "ideal" multiracial Asian American literature; however, as I also discuss, her authorship raises many questions about racial/ethnic identity and literary representation that could generate productive critical discussions in college classrooms. However, instructors must be aware that discussions about

race and ethnicity in educational settings risk becoming fraught with difficult moments and potential for harm. As Megan Boler aptly points out, "The challenge within educational environments is to create space for honest and collective self-reflection and inquiry rather than closing off discussion. At the same time, such inquiry needs to avoid letting ourselves 'off the hook' from responsibilities and ethical complexities" (Boler 187). Boler's quote briefly describes challenges that any instructor may face when preparing to discuss race and ethnicity. Without effective approaches and discussion techniques, even the best educators may encounter unfruitful discussions arrested or derailed by issues like white fragility,[3] colorblind ideology, and high emotions that may (in some cases, rightfully) come along with discussing topics like the long and continuing histories of racism in the U.S.[4]

To draw out the complexities of race and ethnicity and create fruitful discussion in college courses, I argue that instructors should employ, in connection with thoughtfully designed syllabi, a combination of two pedagogical theories – pedagogy of discomfort and border pedagogy – to fully engage students with these issues that so desperately need addressing in our current moment.[5] These approaches may be combined under the umbrella term "anti-racist pedagogy" as they both aim at critically investigating imbalances of power in regards to race and ethnicity with the goal of critiquing and eventually dismantling the power structures upholding racist practices.

♦

Developing Syllabi to Investigate Racial/Ethnic Complexities

The first question an instructor might face in considering teaching See – or other multiracial or "complex" racial/ethnic authors – is how she may be incorporated into course

syllabi. The options I describe below focus on the complexities of her authorial identity and writing in different but instructive ways.

The first kind of syllabus on which See might appear is an Asian American studies or literature course. In courses focused on Asian American populations, See might be included not only as a Chinese American writer, but specifically as a multiracial Chinese American writer. To explore issues of multiraciality and "claiming" or "discovering" Chinese American racial/ethnic identity, one might read See's essay "The Funeral Banquet," which deals with her experiences as a white-passing Chinese American and with her White grandmother who felt more connected with her husband's Chinese family than her own White family. One might also include readings from *On Gold Mountain*, which only briefly discusses Lisa See herself, but more importantly discusses her family's long history of biracial marriages and multiracial children. [See Appendixes A and C]

In an Asian American literary studies course, See's historical works might be useful in discussing the experiences of Asian Americans in the 20th century. For example, *On Gold Mountain* is one of the few books that discusses early Chinese immigration to the U.S., miscegenation laws, Chinese exclusion laws, and other important events and legislation that affected the Chinese population in the U.S., especially through the unique lens of focusing on a singular family. *Shanghai Girls* also discusses many of these same historical events but in a fictional world. *China Dolls* focuses more narrowly on Asian American entertainers in the "Chop Suey Circuit" – a series of night clubs that flourished in Chinatowns from the 1930s through the 1950s. Finally, *The Tea Girl of Hummingbird Lane* deals with the adoption of Chinese babies by Americans in the late 20th century. Each of these books addresses different aspects of Chinese American history that few other literary works examine but that instructors might be interested in

addressing in their courses. As Wei Ming Dariotis discusses in her article on teaching Edith Eaton/Sui Sin Far in similar contexts as a multiracial Chinese American author, the focus in these types of courses should be on See's "literary qualities, themes and issues," as opposed to when one teaches her in an Asian American studies course or a "mixed heritage course" in which students should "explore the social, legal, and historical circumstances" that impact both the author's life and the lives depicted in her work (70). [See Appendix B]

Finally, See might be taught in more generalized American studies and literature courses. As Sarita Cannon appropriately argues, literature by historically marginalized groups should be included in general American studies courses not just because they have been historically silenced, "but because they [have] literary merit and [complicate] our understanding of what it means to be American" (40). In this way, See's fiction may be fruitful to read as Asian American literature – or, if the instructor prefers, fiction about Asian American populations by a White author – and evaluated for its literary merit in courses that investigate American literature in its broadest sense. Even if an instructor chooses to teach See as a White author, the presence of race and ethnicity in See's novels – along with the questions associated with a White author writing about the Asian American community – may be critically investigated.[6]

♦

Pedagogy of Discomfort: Critically Investigating Race and Ethnicity in Class Discussions

Teaching literature that deals with race and ethnicity in any class can be potentially difficult for both instructors and students for a variety of reasons. One of the first pitfalls that teachers of multiracial and multicultural literature often attest to is the likelihood of conversations about race "shutting down" and both students and teachers becoming uncomfortable.[7] Not only is it possible that students (and instructors) may express problematic

thoughts and biases that do harm, but a more likely possibility is that neither students nor instructors will push deeply enough into discussions of race because of their discomfort and therefore will not truly engage with the issues in ways that can be transformative. Particularly when teaching White, privileged students – who unfortunately still make up the majority of student populations in higher education – instructors may find that these students "immediately dismiss the topic or merely parrot back what they feel the teacher wants to hear while inside hardening all the more against the whole prospect" (Nurenberg 61).

My own teaching experiences, which are neither race-centered nor specifically literary, aptly illustrate this trap. When I have taught literacy narratives chosen with the intention of exploring linguistic diversity in the U.S. and the racism and prejudices that impact individuals who speak anything other than General American English (GAE), both my students and I have shied away from naming and engaging with the racism that we saw through the narratives.[8] Though these narratives specifically deal with language *in relation to* race and ethnicity, our class discussions about these texts have never engaged with these topics beyond surface-level readings. I have recognized my own discomfort in pushing my students to identify and name the racism in the texts, worrying that I might arrest the discussions that we were already having. I have also noticed that my students discuss these topics as if they are "going through the motions" of recognizing that these authors were discriminated against and yet not critically engaging with that recognition. Therefore, we all missed out on the opportunity to critique the cultural biases and power structures that keep these discriminatory practices in place. As my limited experiences show, the inability of both instructors and students to push through discomfort while discussing important issues surrounding race and ethnicity arrests the possibilities of not only true engagement and learning, but also of transformation and change.

What is therefore needed when engaging with literary texts that deal with race and ethnicity, especially those by "ethnic" authors, is a pedagogical approach that allows teachers and students to push through that discomfort while also avoiding treating works by historically marginalized authors as a "clinical case study or a window to an exotic culture" (TuSmith 22). Megan Boler's pedagogy of discomfort is perhaps the most useful theory, then, for helping students not only to think about race and ethnicity but also to critically interpret their own learned emotional reactions and biases in relation to these issues. Boler's 1989 book *Feeling Power: Emotions and Education* investigates emotional reactions in classrooms and establishes the pedagogy of discomfort as a way to "engage in critical inquiry regarding values and cherished beliefs" while also recognizing "how emotions define how and what one chooses to see, and conversely, not to see," particularly in relation to engagement with authors and texts that are "other" (176).[9] Boler's text encourages both teachers and students to participate in a collective process of witnessing rather than spectating. Especially in the multiracial and multicultural classroom, this is important as spectating indicates that students "inhabit a position of distance and separation" from the "other" and therefore only view texts by the "other" through the lens of irreconcilable difference or cultural relativism that ultimately reinforce harmful stereotypes (184). Witnessing, on the other hand, requires the collective to question the social forces that create cultural products and enforce certain readings of them while also recognizing that "how we see or choose not to see has ethical implications and may even cause others to suffer" (194).

When employing a pedagogy of discomfort to teach students about See and other racially and ethnically complex authors, it is important to encourage students to think critically about their own positions in relation to race and ethnicity and their likely unconscious roles in

perpetuating racism. As Boler indicates, “The aim of discomfort is for each person, myself included, to explore beliefs and values; to examine when visual ‘habits’ and emotional selectivity have become rigid and immune to flexibility; and to identify when and how our habits harm ourselves and others” (185). Therefore, in discussing See, it is important to confront the complexities of her racial/ethnic background directly and discuss how her actions and our reactions to her may be harmful. One may introduce See to students in a similar manner in which I did to my friends that I discuss in the introduction – that is, either introduce her as a Chinese American author and then show her picture, or show her picture then discuss her claimed position as an author writing Chinese American fiction. As occurred with my friends, students will likely be discomforted by the fact that See’s physical appearance “mismatches” with her racial/ethnic identity. As Werner Sollors observes, “Organizing people by groups sometimes goes along with a particular hostility toward those who are not easily classifiable or refuse to be classified that way” (96). Therefore, instructors may take this opportunity to critically discuss dominant cultural assumptions about race – specifically the Asian “race” – and ethnicity to understand why we may have reactions of hostility or discomfort at See.

All students – but particularly those students who are usually high-achieving in academic settings – may dislike this process of interrogating their own assumptions about and reactions to race and ethnicity. Therefore, instructors should model how students might appropriately engage with this discomfort by “exposing our own disorientations along with everyone else’s” (Center 228). As Boler specifically mentions, “The educator’s own beliefs and assumptions are by no means immune to the process of questioning and ‘shattering.’ Similarly, it is important that the educator explore what it means to ‘share’ the students’ vulnerability and suffering” (187). By modeling this process for students and displaying similar vulnerability, instructors may create an

environment in which students are more likely to productively engage in the task of investigating and challenging their assumptions about race and ethnicity.

It should also be noted that students should not be forced to adopt certain viewpoints. For example, students should not be forced to understand See as a White-passing Chinese American woman – instead, they may understand her as a White woman posing as Chinese American, a Chinese American woman whose Whiteness is inconsequential, or have other conclusions. As Boler indicates, this pedagogical method acts as a "mode of inquiry and invitation that emphasizes a historicized ethics and testimonial witnessing" that importantly "does not assert one right ideology or resolution" (199). Similarly, in a discussion of teaching her students about multiculturalism in ways that are designed to be "transformational," AnaLouise Keating says:

> Of course, I cannot force my students to change their views. Nor would I want to do so. My goals are more modest: I want to expose and denaturalize the dominant-cultural framework and challenge them to explore the ways this framework shapes present-day U.S. culture and influences their own worldviews as well as their reading practices. By doing so, I heighten their sense of agency and hold them more accountable for the choices they make. (111)

This all emphasizes that the intention behind pedagogy of discomfort is not for students to come away with a definitive set of beliefs inscribed by the instructor; rather, this method may provide students with the tools and practice necessary to critically investigate their own assumptions and those of the dominant culture and be able to critique and correct those assumptions if they find fault with them. Boler also indicates that it is important that students know that "they are not being graded or evaluated on whether or how they choose to 'transform'" (198). This will ensure

that any "transforming" that students do is genuine, and that real learning and change is occuring.

♦

Border Pedagogy: Engaging Students Through Investigating Personal Racial/Ethnic Identity

While a pedagogy of discomfort aims to help students discuss race and ethnicity on a deeper level and critically investigate their own reactions, this method also hinges on students and teachers learning to "notice how one's sense of self and perspectives are shifting and contingent" (Boler 177). Achieving real and lasting learning and change in students, then, is partially reliant on students engaging on a personal level by thinking about their own identities in connection with race and ethnicity. As Sarita Cannon explains, "we (students and professors alike) are not neutral vessels of information who leave our experiences at the door when we enter the classroom. The challenge lies in being able to integrate our intellectual and personal selves" (42). While it is understood that any multicultural course should provide "conditions for students to imagine beyond the given and to embrace their identities critically as a source of agency and possibility," it is important to lead students to investigate and integrate their own positionality, experiences, and identity into their learning, particularly when that learning involves issues of race and ethnicity (Giroux, "Insurgent Multiculturalism" 252). One pedagogical theory that can help in this integration is border pedagogy.

Border pedagogy has primarily found its place in k-12 schools along the U.S.-Mexico border where migrant and immigrant children face unique challenges in the traditionally colonized space of the U.S. classroom.[10] However, border pedagogy as it is originally defined by Henry A. Giroux is somewhat more broad as it focuses on "educating students not only to read [cultural] codes critically but also to learn the limits of such codes, including the ones they use to

construct their own narratives and histories … Within this discourse, a student must engage knowledge as a border-crosser, as a person moving in and out of borders constructed around coordinates of difference and power" (*Pedagogy and Politics of Hope*, 147). Border pedagogy inherently calls for students to engage in the "language in which one speaks with rather than exclusively for others" and understand "how fragile identity is as it moves into borderlands crisscrossed with a variety of languages, experiences, and voices" (Giroux, "Border Pedagogy" 53, 63). Therefore, border pedagogy insists upon students using their personal languages, cultural memories, and experiences to investigate their own identities and understand them. At the same time, students may become "border crossers in order to understand otherness in its own terms" as together with the instructor they "create borderlands in which diverse cultural resources allow for the fashioning of new identities within existing configurations of power" (Giroux, "Border Pedagogy" 51-52, 52).

As Giroux indicates, "One's class, racial, gender, or ethnic position may influence but does not irrevocably predetermine how one takes up a particular ideology, reads a particular text, or responds to particular forms of oppression" (*Pedagogy and Politics of Hope*, 150). However, students should consider how and when their own racial/ethnic identities influence their readings and experiences. Again, the instructor must normalize and model this technique by including discussions of their racial/ethnic identity or experiences while they are interpreting texts. For example, in my teaching of Amy Tan's "Mother Tongue," I indicate that I have a background in Asian American literature at an academic level that helps me in understanding the historical and linguistic backgrounds that Tan describes. However, I emphasize that I am a White, European-heritage woman whose family speaks exclusively GAE, and, therefore, I have never experienced these kinds of situations or emotions myself. This practice encouraged some of my students to

speak about their racial/ethnic identities and personal experiences in similar manners, whether that meant that their identities allowed them to interpret the literacy narratives in unique ways because of their own similar cultural backgrounds or that their dissimilar experiences left them feeling disoriented while trying to interpret the authors' texts.

Recognizing how personal identities affect readings, students may more easily come to understand one of the central tenets of border pedagogy – that is, "how the relationship between power and knowledge works as both a practice of representation and the representation of practice to secure particular forms of authority" (Giroux, "Border Pedagogy" 53). It is specifically this relationship that can be explored in the teaching of Lisa See's work, as students may investigate how her books are informed by the knowledge or lack of knowledge afforded to her by her family background and how she creates authority to write her books. Students may also discuss whether her fiction is more likely to be published because of the power that her Whiteness holds while at the same time being less likely to be accepted because of that same Whiteness. The goals of these discussions must be to "break down those ideologies, cultural codes, and social practices that prevent teachers and students from recognizing how social forms at particular historical conjunctures operate to repress alternative readings of their own experiences, society, and the world" (Giroux, "Border Pedagogy" 56). Discussing the multiple identity allegiances and border crossings that See makes also helps students to complicate and avoid reinforcing binaries that emphasize that See is this or that – White or Chinese American, insightful or Orientalist, right or wrong, good or bad. This practice of discussing and breaking down binary identifications helps students to recognize how both characters and real people have "contingent, overlapping, and interdependent identities" that cannot be understood in terms of the dichotomies that dominant culture so often attempts to enforce (Center 233). Ultimately,

border pedagogy helps students to understand that their own identities are similarly unfixed and are instead "defined within multiple literacies that become a referent, critique, and practice of cultural translation, a recognition of no possibility of fixed, final, or monologically authoritative meaning that exists outside of history, power, and ideology" (Giroux, *Pedagogy and Politics of Hope* 250).[11]

♦

Developing Student Assignments to Reflect Learning

The last step in the educational process is to encourage students to learn through activities while at the same time displaying their understanding through results.[12] As Giroux points out, it is "Equally important" for students in a classroom operating under border pedagogy to "be able to create their own texts" ("Border Pedagogy" 54). Therefore, students must produce analytical texts that examine their learning through discussions of See and other authors as well as personal reflective and, potentially, creative projects that show learning about their own identities. For example, if an instructor covers the histories of racism and contemporary critical analyses of race in the U.S., then that instructor's students may produce an analytical essay examining how those race-related concepts are reflected in the literature read during the semester and in students' analyses of that literature. Particularly in combination with border pedagogy and an emphasis on students' investigation of their own racial/ethnic identities, instructors may assign reflective essays or shorter assignments detailing how their students' own conceptions of identity, race, and ethnicity have changed. Instructors may also ask their students to produce a reflective, creative, or multimedia project that investigates their family background and how historical forces of race and ethnicity impact their current identities.

♦

Inspiring Cultural Revolution Through Teaching

As examined in this chapter, complex concepts of race and ethnicity central to questions about Lisa See's authorship are difficult but by no means impossible to teach and discuss. By following the tenets of a pedagogy of discomfort and border pedagogy, along with careful attention to course planning, instructors may create classrooms where students are able to push through discomfort to critically discuss issues related to race and ethnicity, their assumptions about these concepts, and their own personal connections with them. While I have emphasized that students should not be evaluated based on the extent of their "transformation," the end goal of teaching using these pedagogical theories should be to help create more informed student citizens who have the knowledge and skills necessary to promote social justice. This also illustrates the importance of discussing these issues, as we work to form the people who will engage in present and future revolutions of thought and practice in relation to race, ethnicity, and equity in the U.S. As Sarita Cannon puts it, "Belief in the possibility of change, even within ourselves, is the root of revolution" (53).

Notes

[1] According to a Pew Research analysis of 2018 U.S. Census Bureau data, "22% of multiracial Americans are White and American Indian, 21% are Black and White, 20% are White and Asian American, 4% are Black and American Indian and 2% are Black and Asian American. About three-in-ten (31%) are some other combination, including 9% who select three or more races" (Horowitz and Budiman).

[2] See Bill Chappell's "Census Finds a More Diverse America, As Whites Lag Growth."

[3] See Robin DiAngelo's "White Fragility."

[4] As Daniel P. Liston writes, "At the university we seem to imagine that we can cut through the butter of emotions and get right to the rational, hard core. That's an illusion. At the university we can't expect to address over two centuries of white violence directed at blacks [and, I would add, Asian American, Latinx, Indigenous, and other historically marginalized populations] and not experience conflict, painful emotions, and heartache" (Liston and Al Salim 240-241).

[5] It should be noted that all the theories and practices that I discuss necessitate having a decentered classroom. As David Nurenberg points out, "Providing students with the chance to play a transformative role in their own classrooms may, in turn, give them valuable practice in transforming the larger communities and societies they inhabit. Moreover, it could help them to see that systems of power are not fixed but are, in fact, changeable" (62). For more information about the importance of decentered classrooms and how to create them, see L. Dee Fink's *Creating Significant Learning Experiences*.

[6] Even while viewing See as a White author, I argue that her literary works may still be fruitful to include in courses that primarily focus on race and ethnicity not only because of the content in her books, but specifically because of her Whiteness. As many critics have noted, instructors should avoid an "exclusive emphasis on difference" (Keating 96) by making "whiteness visible as a racial category" while providing "white students [and, I add, white-passing multiracial students] with the cultural memories that enable them to recognize the historically- and socially-constructed nature of their own identities" (Giroux, *Pedagogy and the Politics of Hope* 250). For more information about incorporating Whiteness Studies in courses focused on race and ethnicity, see Gregory Jay and Sandra Elain Jones's "Whiteness Studies and the Multicultural Literature Classroom."

[7] Many of the texts that I discuss in this chapter investigate how and why these reactions occur. See Sarita Cannnon's "'Do I Remain a Revolutionary?': Intellectual and Emotional Risk in the Literature Classroom;" Bonnie TuSmith's "Frontline Teaching: Ruminations, Sober and Hilarious, of an Ethnic Literature Professor;" David Nurenber's "What Does Injustice Have to Do with Me? A Pedagogy of the Privileged;" and Daniel P. Liston and Sirat Al Salim's "Race, Discomfort, and Love in a University Classroom." Also see Carlin Borsheim-Black and Sophia Tatiana Sarigianides's *Letting Go of Literary Whiteness: Antiracist Literature Instruction for White Students* for further discussions of negative reactions in classrooms where race is discussed and techniques for how to address and overcome this. Although this last source primarily discusses k-12 education, I believe that the techniques are useful for college classrooms as well.

[8] Both of the classes in which I encountered this situation were first year writing courses focused on digital media and multiple literacies. In a mini unit at the beginning of the semester, we read excerpts from Richard Rodriguez's *Hunger of Memory,* Amy Tan's "Mother Tongue," and Lyeza Wicker's "Retelling My Story: Code-Switches and Beat Breaks," a literacy narrative by a Black woman that I found on the Digital Archive of Literacy Narratives (thedaln.org).

[9] For a discussion about the risks of employing a pedagogy of discomfort in the college classroom, see Cristina Stanciu and Anastasia Lin's guest editors' introduction to the Winter 2017 edition of *MELUS* titled "Teaching Multi-Ethnic Literatures of the United States: Pedagogy in Anxious Times."

[10] For more information about these uses of border pedagogy, see Elizabeth Garza's "Becoming a Border Pedagogy Educator: Rooting Practice in Paradox" and Jamie J. Romo and Claudia Chavez's "Border Pedagogy: A Study of Preservice Teacher Transformation."

[11] While using both pedagogy of discomfort and border pedagogy, it is important to also employ attentive love to ensure that an instructor is never assuming the worst of their students and is instead helping them in their journeys through difficult learning. As discussed by Daniel P. Liston and Sirat Al Salim, "If we disregard attentive love we neither heal nor nurture each other; without a pedagogy of discomfort, we may not confront the issues we need to address. We may come to believe that we are all innocent and not culpable in white supremacy" (Liston and Al Salim 241). Therefore, combining attentive love with these approaches is important to help students to actually learn in a safe and loving environment while they are led to examine and rethink difficult and emotive topics.

[12] Although this section is the last in my discussion of pedagogical approaches to teaching these issues, it should be noted that, according to backwards syllabus design, designing assignments should be the first task for an instructor designing a course. For more information about backwards syllabus design, see L. Dee Fink's *Creating Significant Learning Experiences*.

Conclusion

In answer to a question about the writing of *On Gold Mountain* on her FAQ page, Lisa See recalls a moment when she was pouring over UCLA's (at the time) few books about Chinese American history and realized that "History … was not about dates and wars. It was about how those dates and wars affect real people" ("FAQ"). While this is a seemingly obvious and mundane statement, I consider the sentiment in this quote to be central to this study.

I have developed this project entirely during the COVID-19 pandemic, a time during which, among other tragic consequences, the U.S. has seen *at least* a 150% increase in hate crimes against Asian Americans in large cities (Center for the Study of Hate & Extremism). Many recognize the ways in which repeated phrases and negative attitudes towards China from top U.S. officials throughout the pandemic have caused and exacerbated these racist actions. While multiracial Asian Americans have not been unaffected by this racism and resulting grief and fear (Hohman), the larger population of monoracial Asian Americans have been more directly and adversely affected. It is with this in mind that we must acknowledge not only the impact that dates, wars, and global pandemics have on real people, but also that of words and positive recognition. I have therefore often questioned: how might my words and the words of Lisa See that I elevate and discuss, along with the recognition that I afford her here, affect real people?

The words of my students and friends have, in some ways, provided a glimmer of an answer to this question. In my introduction, I discuss how many of my friends reject See's literary works and her authorial identity. But there is another subset of my friends, along with several of my students, who have had the opposite reaction. In explaining my project to these individuals, I have learned – often for the first time – that they too are multiracial. Their

reactions include phrases like "Wow, I didn't know authors like me existed" and "Let me write down her [See's] name – I want to read about someone like me." Particularly when one of my White-passing Japanese American students told me that she felt immediately drawn to See, I saw the *positive* impact that bringing increased recognition to the works of multiracial authors could have.

As I have said multiple times in this paper, I do not think that See is the perfect example of an Asian American or multiracial author. I do think that there are problematic stereotypes and other issues – especially in her writing but also in relation to her claims to authorial identity – that need to be acknowledged and discussed in productive ways. However, it would also be wrong to exclude her from the conversation or to only name and study her as a monoracial author; neither discussing her as a White author nor as a Chinese American author captures the full complexity and rich possibilities that studying See's work can generate. Instead, See's imperfections, along with others' emotive reactions to her authorship and writing, provide ample opportunities to examine cultural beliefs about race, ethnicity, and authorial and personal identity. Additionally, affording increased attention to mixed-race authors through teaching may not only help monoracial students to understand differing viewpoints about race and ethnicity, but may also allow multiracial students a lens through which to view their own experiences.

I draw connections between the potential richness of teaching See and my recent teaching of Richard Rodriguez and his memoir *Hunger of Memory*. As with See, many critics have taken issue with Rodriguez's works, his stances on bilingual education and affirmative action, and his disavowal of Mexican culture. In class discussions, my students questioned, critiqued, and countered his assertions while acknowledging his individuality in ways that were highly productive. At the same time, every single one of my multilingual students – including a

Mexican American student who described Rodriguez's writing as "very hard to read" – said that Rodriguez's words resonated with them and, in many cases, that they comforted by the recognition that their feelings of "intimacy, guilt, emotions and confusion [and] isolation" were not singular and may be successfully navigated. These affective reactions were equally if not more valuable in these classes than the critical discussions we had about Rodriguez. I expect classes that involve discussing See's works might find similar success; all students would hone their skills in critiquing works and discussing issues of race and ethnicity, while multiracial students might find resonance and comfort in recognizing See's experiences as similar to their own.

This study therefore calls for increased recognition for and critical conversations about mixed-race authors, including but not limited to Lisa See. I also hope to encourage others to consider previously canonized authors like Nella Larson, E. Pauline Johnson, and Alexander Chee through the lens of multiraciality. I would also like to call for further research on multiraciality as a central and important concept across many fields, but particularly in Asian American literary studies. As See's authorship shows, centralizing discussions of mixed-race experiences may allow for a more nuanced understanding of race, ethnicity, and "ethnic" authorship in contemporary discourse.

Appendices: Syllabi

Appendix A: First Year Writing: Writing About Race, Ethnicity, and Personal Identity 44

Appendix B: Introduction to Asian American Literature 54

Appendix C: American Literature II: Mixed Race in America 62

First Year Writing
Writing about Race, Ethnicity, and Personal Identity

Instructor: Katie Campbell **Online Synchronous Class Period**
Email **Office Hours**

COURSE INQUIRY

What is race? What is ethnicity? How do these two things relate to one another and to our personal identities? These are just some of the questions that we will investigate during this course. We will hone our reading, analytical, and critical thinking skills by reading and discussing novellas, short stories, short films, and videos that center around issues of race and ethnicity in connection with personal identity. We will investigate how race and ethnicity impacts the author and creators that we study, and then you will use your own writing to investigate how race and ethnicity impacts your personal identity.

As you begin to develop and articulate a sense of self during this class, you will also be learning about and developing writing skills that will be applicable to other parts of your life both now and in your future.

Writing is at the center of this course and, therefore, developing skills in writing will be the primary focus. This course will help you to develop your writing abilities for a variety of both academic and non-academic contexts. Regardless of your major or future career, an ability to write clearly and intentionally will be valuable, and this semester is designed to help you develop the skills necessary to achieve this. We will develop critical thinking and reading skills, learn how to analyze others' writing, conduct and integrate research, develop and defend arguments, and, hopefully, learn to enjoy writing. You will be writing often, and you should expect that your writing, as well as your peers' writing, will be discussed often in class.

COURSE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Objectives for the Course

By the end of this course, you will…

1. Understand and employ knowledge about the complexities of race and ethnicity as they are understood in the U.S.
2. Be able to identify and use appropriate and reliable research materials and tools such as libraries, online databases, journals, etc.
3. Be able to identify and summarize others' arguments and rhetorical strategies
4. Develop and articulate strong, original arguments
5. Identify the intended audience for any piece of writing and appropriately cater one's rhetorical choices for that audience
6. Use peer review and other revision strategies to show marked improvement between drafts
7. Recognize that you have experience and knowledge that can be adapted
8. Recognize the value of strong writing skills in your other classes, your future career, and your everyday life

Long-term Goals

After this course is completed, I hope you will…

1. Recognize the implications of race and ethnicity in relation to personal identity for both yourself and those around you
2. Understand writing skills to be important and applicable in everyday life
3. Continue to analyze and learn about different kinds of writing
4. Use writing as a tool to articulate your own ideas and communicate your knowledge to help others learn
5. Conduct good research and think critically about issues in your daily life
6. Seek out and enjoy reading about new topics and issues
7. Feel confident expressing yourself in writing
8. Value discussion and debate and listen well to other's arguments before thoughtfully designing and defending your own

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ASSIGNMENTS

Argumentative Essays (35% total)

You will write two research-based argumentative essays during this semester, the first being 3-4 pages in length and the second being 5-6 pages in length. I will give you a list of potential topics for your first paper, and you will choose your own topic for your second paper. In order to help you prepare for your second essay, you will write and turn in a separately graded one-page topic proposal on which I will give you feedback. You will also have individual conferences with me to help you prepare for this second essay. We will have peer review sessions for both of these papers, giving you an opportunity to use feedback from your peers to help you revise.

This is Me Project (15% total)

During this class, you will write several personal creative, reflective, and investigative essays discussing your own connections with race and ethnicity in relation to your personal identity. Near the end of the course, you will choose one or two of these essays to develop into a larger project that will address the fundamental prompt, "This is Me," which should reflect your racial and ethnic identity as you understand it after completing this course, recognizing that this sense of personal identity will continue to morph over the course of your lifetime. There are few limits on what the resulting project may look like. Some examples might include a short story based on your experiences, a documentary-like video, a reflective essay, a work of creative nonfiction, a website, etc. In the final week of the course, you will present part or all of your project to your classmates in a short, five-minute presentation. Your presentation grade will be a small part of your overall project grade.

Digital Portfolio (15%)

You will create a digital portfolio at the beginning of the course and will upload at least three of your favorite or best response papers, both essays, and your This Is Me project as you complete and receive feedback on each writing assignment. You will also be asked to upload one additional written piece of your choice that you have completed in a context outside of our class during this semester. You will write a reflection about each assignment as you upload it, and, at the end of the course, you will write a final reflective cover letter about your progress during the course. This portfolio will serve as a reflection of your hard work this semester and your growth

as a writer and critical thinker. Should you choose, this digital portfolio may be shared with your friends, family, or others to display your achievements from your first-year writing course.

Daily Response Papers (15% total)
For most class periods, you will be asked to complete a short response paper. Some of these may be responses to specific prompts regarding our reading for that day, some may be reflections and responses to prompts about how race and/or ethnicity are connected with your personal identity, and some of them may be open prompts. Many of these will require you to practice one or more of the writing skills that we will be learning about in class. All responses papers will be due the night before the class period during which we will discuss the assignment unless otherwise instructed. You may receive feedback from me on some, but not all, of these assignments. These writing assignments will be graded on a 2-point scale as described below:

2/2 points: This assignment was completed in full by the stated deadline.

1/2 points: This assignment was completed in part by the stated deadline or was completed in full but showed little effort or attention to detail.

0/2 points: This assignment was not completed or does not follow the stated guidelines and prompts.

GRADE BREAKDOWN (in order of due date)

Participation	20%
Daily Responses Papers	15%
Argumentative Essay 1	10%
Argumentative Essay 2 Proposal	5%
Argumentative Essay 2	20%
This is Me Project	15%
Digital Portfolio	15%

ATTENDANCE
During this time of changed circumstances and increased isolation due to social distancing, I hope that we can replicate some semblance of normal circumstances and build a new kind of community through synchronous class periods. Therefore, attendance of our weekly class periods on Zoom is required. However, if at any point during this course you have difficulty accessing or attending our synchronous activities, please let me know as soon as possible.

All students are allowed one week worth of absences (three synchronous class periods, in our case) during the term for any reason. You do not need to contact me as long as you stay within this limit. The course grades of students who miss or fail to submit required work for more than one week's worth of activities that depend on collective participation will be reduced by 1/3 of a letter grade (ex. from B+ to B) for each additional absence, in addition to whatever penalties are associated with failure to submit or participate in required work. Students shall not be penalized for absence, tardiness, or failure to participate or submit work that results from the following:

illness, required varsity sports obligations in which the student officially represents the University, religious observances, or conflicts, crises, or obligations beyond the student's control, including medical, personal, or financial crises. You do not need to submit proof of any of the above situations, but please email me as soon as possible when you know you will be missing class periods or activities, especially if you are nearing or already at the absence limit.

ZOOM AND WIFI INFORMATION & ISSUES

Each week, I will start the meeting approximately 10 minutes before the start of our class period and plan to stay after for approximately 10 minutes after our class period ends in case anyone would like to chat with me before or after class about the readings, upcoming or returned assignments, potential issues, or anything else.

If you are unable to access Zoom at the beginning of or at any point during class, please let me know as soon as possible so that I do not count you as absent. Please note that this only applies to situations in which you are normally able to or are reasonably expected to be able to access wifi and have tried every possible way to access our Zoom meeting. If reliable access to wifi or other required technology may be an issue for you at any point, please reach out to me so that we can discuss other options.

If Zoom does not work or stops working on my end before or at any point during class, please wait for an email from me indicating how to proceed.

Note about privacy: Our sessions will be recorded and posted to our class page so that any students who miss class are able to watch the recording and find out what they missed, and so that any student who wishes to go back to a part of the class period for any reason (ex. to review something said in class) may do so.

I do encourage you to turn on and keep your video on throughout all class periods. This not only helps us develop and maintain a sense of community and togetherness, but it can aid with attention and accountability. I also encourage you to use (appropriate!) virtual backgrounds on Zoom. This is a way to not only add a fun and personalized element to class, but it can be a way to hide your real background. However, if at any point you feel uncomfortable turning on your video, do not have video capabilities, or would prefer to have your video off for any reason, please email me or private message me on Zoom before class starts so that I am aware.

I also encourage you to use your audio to interact with me and your peers during class periods. If at any point you feel uncomfortable with turning on your audio, do not have audio capabilities, or would prefer to keep your audio off for any reason, please email me or private message me on Zoom before class starts so that I am aware.

LATE WORK

If you are having trouble with any assignment or have an outside factor that you believe will impact your ability to finish an assignment on time, please email me as soon as possible but no later than 24 hours before that assignment is due. I will try to help you finish the assignment on

time or, if you have a legitimate reason why you need an extension, we will discuss a new due date that is fair for everyone.

Daily Response Papers
Because we will likely discuss or work with these assignments in class on the class day for which they are due, it is imperative that you turn in these assignments on time. If you miss the stated deadline, please turn in your assignment as soon as possible before our class period starts. Points may still be awarded for the first two late assignments as long as the assignment is still turned in before class starts. However, any assignments turned in after class or repeatedly late assignments will receive no points. I do still encourage you to turn in these assignments for feedback, though.

All Other Assignments
For each day after the deadline that you turn in the assignment, your grade will drop by ⅓ a letter grade and the corresponding amount of percentage points (ex. one day late 90% (A-) → 87% (B+), two days late 90% (A-) → 83% (B), three days late 90% (A-) → 80% (B-)).

GRADING TIMELINE
All work that is evaluated as part of your final grade will be graded and returned to you within two weeks from when the assignment is handed in. I will do my best to return assignments sooner than this.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY
If you quote or paraphrase the words of another in any writing assignment you submit for this course, you must cite your sources responsibly. Plagiarism may result in a failing grade for an assignment, a failing grade for the course, or even dismissal from the university.

This does not mean you should not seek out responses to your writing from friends or family. Suggestions from others can be very useful, and you may include an "Acknowledgments" section at the end of your paper if you've received assistance. Ultimately, though, the words on the pages that you submit must come from you, or you must indicate through citation where you have quoted or paraphrased from others.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1
Day 1 - First day of class
Day 2
Readings
Syllabus
"Race & Ethnicity: Crash Course Sociology #34" (video)
Due
Response paper

Day 3 – Mini Writing Workshop: reflections

Readings
Hank Green, "Personal Identity: Crash Course Philosophy #19" (video)
Recommended: Digital Writing Portfolio Example
Due
Digital Portfolio template created

Week 2

Day 1

Readings
Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African,* pg. 57-85
Due
Response paper

Day 2

Readings
Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African,* pg. 85-109
Due
Response paper

Day 3 – Peer Editing Training Workshop

Week 3

Day 1

Readings
Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African,* pg. 109-132
Due
Response paper

Day 2

Readings
Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African,* pg. 132-149
Due
Response paper

Day 3 – Writing Workshop: introductions and outlining

Week 4:

Day 1 – Library Day

Due
Response paper – questions you have about the library and resources

Day 2

Readings
E. Pauline Johnson, "A Red Girl's Reasoning"
Due
Essay 1 introduction and outline

Day 3 – Peer Review on Essay 1 Draft; Writing Workshop: using sources and MLA

Due

Peer edits on assigned partner's Essay 1 draft

Week 5

Day 1

Readings

Lisa See, *On Gold Mountain*, Chapter 1: The Wonderous Time, 1866-71

Due

Response paper

Day 2

Readings

Sui Sin Far/Edith Eaton, "'Its Wavering Image'"

Due

Essay 1 draft

Day 3 – Peer Review on Essay 1 Draft; Writing Workshop: body paragraphs and conclusions

Due

Peer edits on assigned partner's Essay 1 draft

Week 6

Day 1

Readings

Dora Colonna, "The Two Friends"

Due

Essay 1

Day 2

Readings

Alfred Kazin, "The Kitchen"

Due

Response paper

Day 3 – Writing Workshop: writing narrative

Week 7

Day 1

Readings

Richard Rodriguez, *Hunger of Memory*, Chapter 1: Aria

Due

Response paper

Day 2

Readings

Judith Ortiz Cofer, "American History"

Due

Response paper

Day 3 – **Mandatory Midterm Instructor Conferences (NO CLASS)**

Week 8

Day 1

Readings
Lucinda Roy, "Effigies"
Due
Response paper

Day 2

Readings
Vin Diesel, "Multi-Facial" (video)
Due
This Is Me rough plan

Day 3 – Writing Workshop: tailoring writing for a specific audience

Week 9

Day 1

Readings
Sui Sin Far/Edith Eaton, "Leaves of a Mental Portfolio of an Eurasian"
Due
Response paper

Day 2

Readings
Lisa See, "The Funeral Banquet"
Due
Response paper

Day 3 – Writing Workshop: formal/academic vs. informal/subjective language

Week 10

Day 1

Readings
Gail Trembley, "Nothing to Give"
Due
Essay 2 Proposal

Day 2

Readings
Craig Womack, "Howling at the Moon: The Queer But True Story of My Life as a Hank Williams Song"
Due
Response paper

Day 3 – Writing Workshop: multimodality

Week 11

Day 1

Readings
Grace Paley, "The Loudest Voice"
Due
Response paper

Day 2

Readings
Mary Antin, "The Lie"
Due
Essay 2 introduction and outline

Day 3 – Peer Review on Essay 2 Draft; Writing Workshop: in-class work on This Is Me Project

Due
Peer edits on assigned partner's Essay 2 draft

Week 12

Day 1

Readings
Sandra Cisneros, "'Mericans"
Due
Essay 2 partial draft and revised outline

Day 2

Readings
Salvador Acevedo, "I Am Mestizo" (video)
Due
Response paper

Day 3 – Mandatory Instructor Conferences on Essay 2 (NO CLASS)

Week 13

Day 1

Readings
Diana Abu-Jaber, "My Elizabeth"
Due
Response paper

Day 2

Readings
Beth E. Brant, "Turtle Gal"
Due
Essay 2 draft

Day 3 – Peer Review on Essay 2 Draft; Writing Workshop: reverse outlining

Due
Peer edits on assigned partner's Essay 2 draft

Week 14

Day 1

Readings
Bharati Mukherjee, "Hindus"
Due
Response paper

Day 2

Readings

Alexander Chee, “Girl”
Due
Response paper

Day 3 – Writing Workshop: cover letters
Due
Essay 2

Week 15:

Day 1 – This Is Me Presentations
Due
This Is Me Project

Day 2 – This Is Me Presentations; Last Day of Class

Finals Week:

Assigned Final Day
Due
Digital Portfolio

Introduction to Asian American Literature

Instructor: Katie Campbell **Class Period**
Email **Office Hours**

COURSE INQUIRY

This semester, we will focus on learning about Asian American history and Asian American authors who wrote over the last 150 years. We will read several of the most important and famous works of Asian American literature, but we will also read some lesser-known works. The course texts will consist mainly of novels and short stories, but we may also read and analyze poetry, podcasts, and works of nonfiction. Our course is structured in a linear fashion with texts discussing the first wave of Asian immigration to the U.S. in the 19th century through the contemporary era. While one focus of our course will be to learn and understand the complex history of Asian Americans in the U.S., and our course will have a heavy focus on immigration – a limited and, in some ways, problematic view that we will discuss in class – we will also consider questions of race, culture, gender, sexuality, family, borders, and other themes in relation to the works that we read. During our course, we will explore questions including but not limited to:

- What does the term "Asian American" mean?
- How have Asian American populations been impacted by U.S. colonization and involvement in foreign affairs?
- How has our understanding of Asian America developed over the last 150 years?
- How do race and gender impact the experiences and writings of these authors?

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, you will…

1. Be able to articulate why we use the panethnic term "Asian American" and understand the nuances of this term.
2. Know and understand major historical moments that have impacted Asian American communities in the U.S.
3. Understand the U.S.'s involvement in waves of Asian immigration to the U.S.
4. Analyze literature both through discussion and writing by understanding and critiquing a work's themes, representation, and writing style.
5. Understand intersectionality and be able to articulate its importance in studying works of literature.

REQUIRED TEXTS

The following texts are required for the course:

Julie Otsuka, *The Buddha in the Attic*
Lisa See, *Shanghai Girls*
John Okada, *No-No Boy*
Thi Bui, *The Best We Could Do*
Amy Tan, *The Joy Luck Club*
Mohsin Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*

Celeste Ng, *Everything I Never Told You*
Karen Tei Yamashita, *Tropic of Orange*

ASSIGNMENTS

Weekly Responses (20%)

Each week, you will write a one-page response to our readings for that week. The response prompts are open, but some topics that you may choose address could include your own personal reactions to readings, themes that you notice across readings, an analysis of a specific scene, an investigation of the history that informs a specific reading and that was not covered in class, or any other topic.

Group Multimedia Project (20%)

At the beginning of the semester, you will choose a group project topic that is of interest to you. You and your groupmates will then create a multimedia presentation with the purpose of teaching the class about the history that informs and contextualizes our readings for that week. Your presentation should include factual information about the time period or event that your group is discussing as well as non-textual elements related to or from that era that can help the group to understand more about the time period or event. These non-textual elements may include: images, audio clips, video clips, physical objects, etc. Presentations must be 10-15 minutes in length, and each group member should present at least once during the presentation. Group members should also be prepared to answer questions about their presentation and the historical event to which they are assigned. Topics include:

- Japanese Colonialism in Asia
- Angel Island
- American Colonialism in the Philippines
- Japanese Internment
- The Partition of India
- The Vietnam War
- 9/11 and the War on Terror

Midterm Paper (10%)

For your midterm paper, you will write a critical analysis essay of 4-5 pages in length. You may determine your own topic for this paper, but you should focus on analyzing one of the readings that we have done in the first half of the course. You may use one of your earlier response papers as the initial basis for your paper, though you are also welcome to choose a topic about which you did not previously write. Your discussion should be informed by scholarly research.

Final Paper (30%)

For your final paper, you will write a critical analysis essay of 8-10 pages in length. You may determine your own topic for this paper, but you should focus on analyzing one or more of the readings that we have done in the second half of the course. You may also choose to write about a work of Asian American literature that we have not discussed in this course, but you should confirm your text selection with me first. You may use one of your earlier response papers as the initial basis for your paper, though you are also welcome to choose a topic about which you did not previously write. Your discussion should be informed by scholarly research.

GRADE BREAKDOWN

Participation	20%
Weekly Responses	20%
Group Multimedia Project	20%
Midterm Paper	10%
Final Paper	30%

ATTENDANCE

Attendance of our thrice weekly class periods is required. However, if at any point during this course you have anything that may prevent you from regularly attending class, please let me know as soon as possible.

All students are allowed one week worth of absences from the class during the term for any reason. You do not need to contact me as long as you stay within this limit. The course grades of students who miss more than one week's worth of classes will be reduced by 1/3 of a letter grade (ex. from B+ to B) for each additional absence, in addition to whatever penalties are associated with failure to submit or participate in required work. Students shall not be penalized for absence, tardiness, or failure to participate or submit work that results from the following: illness, required varsity sports obligations in which the student officially represents the University, religious observances, or conflicts, crises, or obligations beyond the student's control, including medical, personal, or financial crises. You do not need to submit proof of any of the above situations, but please email me as soon as possible when you know you will be missing class, especially if you are nearing or already at the absence limit.

LATE WORK

If you are having trouble with any assignment or have an outside factor that you believe will impact your ability to finish an assignment on time, please email me as soon as possible but no later than 24 hours before that assignment is due. I will try to help you finish the assignment on time or, if you have a legitimate reason why you need an extension, we will discuss a new due date that is fair for everyone.

For each day after the deadline that you turn in an assignment, your grade for that assignment will drop by ⅓ a letter grade and the corresponding amount of percentage points (ex. one day late 90% (A-) → 87% (B+), two days late 90% (A-) → 83% (B), three days late 90% (A-) → 80% (B-)).

GRADING TIMELINE

All work that is evaluated as part of your final grade will be graded and returned to you within two weeks from when the assignment is handed in. I will do my best to return assignments sooner than this.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY
If you quote or paraphrase the words of another in any writing assignment you submit for this course, you must cite your sources responsibly. Plagiarism may result in a failing grade for an assignment, a failing grade for the course, or even dismissal from the university.

This does not mean you should not seek out responses to your writing from friends or family. Suggestions from others can be very useful, and you may include an "Acknowledgments" section at the end of your paper if you've received assistance. Ultimately, though, the words on the pages that you submit must come from you, or you must indicate through citation where you have quoted or paraphrased from others.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1
Day 1 – First Day of the Course
Day 2
Readings
Lisa See, *On Gold Mountain* (Chapter 1: The Wonder Time 1866-71)
Day 3 – Response Paper Due
Readings
Lisa See, *On Gold Mountain* (Chapter 2: Exclusion 1872-93)

Week 2
Day 1
Readings
Julie Otsuka, *The Buddha in the Attic* (pg. 3-60)
Day 2
Readings
Julie Otsuka, *The Buddha in the Attic* (pg. 61-end)
Day 3 – Response Paper Due
Readings
Hisaye Yamamoto, "Seventeen Syllables"
Hisaye Yamamoto, "Life Among the Oil Fields"

Week 3
Day 1 – Group Presentation: Japanese Colonialism in Asia
Readings
Mary Paik Lee, *Quiet Odyssey* (Chapter 1 – Chapter 7)
Day 2
Readings
Mary Paik Lee, *Quiet Odyssey* (Chapter 8 – Chapter 16)
Day 3 – Group Presentation: Angel Island
– Response Paper Due
Readings

Poems from Angel Island on Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation Website
Sui Sin Far/Edith Eaton, "In the Land of the Free"
Sui Sin Far/Edith Eaton, "'Its Wavering Image'"

Week 4

Day 1

Readings
Lisa See, *Shanghai Girls* (pg. 3-59)

Day 2

Readings
Lisa See, *Shanghai Girls* (pg. 60-124)

Day 3 – Response Paper Due

Readings
Lisa See, *Shanghai Girls* (pg. 127-192)

Week 5

Day 1

Readings
Lisa See, *Shanghai Girls* (pg. 195-248)

Day 2

Readings
Lisa See, *Shanghai Girls* (pg. 249-end)

Day 3 – Group Presentation: American Colonialism in the Philippines – Response Paper Due

Readings
Carolos Bulosan, *America Is in the Heart* (pg. 97-151)

Week 6

Day 1

Readings
Carolos Bulosan, *America Is in the Heart* (pg. 152-218)

Day 2

Readings
Carolos Bulosan, *America Is in the Heart* (pg. 219-261)

Day 3 – Response Paper Due

Readings
Carolos Bulosan, *America Is in the Heart* (pg. 265-end)

Week 7

Day 1 – Group Presentation: Japanese Internment

Readings
Executive Order 9066
C. B. Munson, "Japanese on the West Coast"
Alex Laughlin, "'I'm Not a Jap, I'm a Half-Jap'" (podcast)

Day 2

Readings

Miné Okubo, *Citizen 13660* (pg. 8-91)

Day 3 – Midterm Paper Due

Readings

Miné Okubo, *Citizen 13660* (pg. 92-209)

Week 8

Day 1

Readings

John Okada, *No-No Boy* (Preface-pg. 63)

Day 2

Readings

John Okada, *No-No Boy* (pg. 64-129)

Day 3 – Response Paper Due

Readings

John Okada, *No-No Boy* (pg. 130-189)

Week 9

Day 1

Readings

John Okada, *No-No Boy* (pg. 190-end)

Day 2 – Group Presentation: The Partition of India

Readings

Bharati Mukherjee, "The Imaginary Assassin"

Bharati Mukherjee, "Nostalgia"

Day 3 – Response Paper Due

Readings

Bharati Mukherjee, "Hindus"

Jhumpa Lahiri, "When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine"

Week 10

Day 1 – Group Presentation: The Vietnam War

Readings

Thi Bui, *The Best We Could Do* (pg. 1-172)

Day 2

Reading

Thi Bui, *The Best We Could Do* (pg. 173-329)

Day 3 – Response Paper Due

Readings

Viet Thanh Nguyen, "Black-Eyed Women"

Viet Thanh Nguyen, "War Years"

Viet Thanh Nguyen, "Fatherland"

Week 11

Day 1

Readings

Amy Tan, *The Joy Luck Club* (pg. 17-83)

Day 2

Readings

Amy Tan, *The Joy Luck Club* (pg. 89-144)

Day 3 – Response Paper Due

Readings

Amy Tan, *The Joy Luck Club* (pg. 147-209)

Week 12

Day 1

Readings

Amy Tan, *The Joy Luck Club* (pg. 213-end)

Day 2 – Group Presentation: 9/11 and the War on Terror

Readings

Mohsin Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (pg. 1-61)

Day 3 – Response Paper Due

Readings

Mohsin Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (pg. 62-122)

Week 13

Day 1

Readings

Mohsin Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (pg. 123-end)

Day 2

Readings

Celeste Ng, *Everything I Never Told You* (pg. 1-76)

Day 3 – Response Paper Due

Readings

Celeste Ng, *Everything I Never Told You* (pg. 77-157)

Week 14

Day 1

Readings

Celeste Ng, *Everything I Never Told You* (pg. 158-239)

Day 2

Readings

Celeste Ng, *Everything I Never Told You* (pg. 240-292)

Day 3 – Response Paper Due

Readings

Karen Tei Yamashita, *Tropic of Orange* (Preface – Chapter 11)

Week 14

Day 1

Readings

Karen Tei Yamashita, *Tropic of Orange* (Chapter 12 – Chapter 23)

Day 2

Readings

Karen Tei Yamashita, *Tropic of Orange* (Chapter 24 – Chapter 35)

Day 3 – Response Paper Due

Readings

Karen Tei Yamashita, *Tropic of Orange* (Chapter 36 – end)

Week 15

Day 1

Readings

Alec Mapa, "Pointless"

Natasha Singh, "For All the Indian Girls I've Ever Loved"

Alexander Chee, "Girl"

Finals Week

Assigned Final Day – Final Paper Due

American Literature II: Mixed Race in America

Instructor: Katie Campbell **Class Period**
Email **Office Hours**

COURSE INQUIRY
In this course, we will focus on American literature, film, podcasts, and other cultural creations from the past 150 years that were created by and about mixed-race individuals. Some of these creators – like Vin Diesel and Ruth Ozeki – may be creators that you know but have not considered through the lens of multiraciality. Many of our other creators may be less well-known to you. All of the stories that we will read this semester investigate what it means to be mixed race in America. As we read about different experiences of multiraciality, we will also discuss themes that arise in our readings regarding family, gender, sexuality, prejudice, etc. During this course, we will consider such questions as:

- How do mixed-race individuals "fit" into racial categories?
- Do mixed-race individuals of different racial backgrounds have similar experiences or unique experiences depending on their backgrounds?
- Is multiraciality changing common conceptions about race and identity in the U.S.? If so, how?
- How are mixed-race individuals portrayed in popular media?
- How have the experiences of mixed-race people changed over the past 150 years?

While our course has no official structure in order to highlight themes and experiences common across all of our readings, the texts we read during the first half of the course will progress mostly linearly through time, and we will have certain days and weeks where we read literature about specific individuals who have similar multiracial backgrounds.

COURSE OBJECTIVES
By the end of this course, you will…

1. Have a greater understanding of what being "mixed race" means and be able to articulate some of the complexities of that term.
2. Discuss some of the historical experiences, events, and laws associated with multiraciality, including passing, miscegenation laws, the one-drop rule, and blood quantum.
3. Recognize how different experiences of being multiracial both impact and are impacted by contemporary politics.
4. Analyze literature by understanding and critiquing its themes, representations, and writing styles.
5. Understand intersectionality and be able to articulate its importance in studying works of literature.

REQUIRED TEXTS
The following texts are required for the course:

Nella Larsen, *Passing*
Celeste Ng, *Everything I Never Told You*

ASSIGNMENTS

Weekly Reading Journal Responses (20%)

At the beginning of the semester, you will create an online blog that you will update after our last class weekly with your reactions to, responses to, and analyses of our readings for that week. Each post should be at least 300 words in length and likely no longer than 600 words. The response prompts are open, though you should try to connect various readings over the course of the semester, and, when you discuss your own personal reactions to a work, you should analyze why you have those reactions. You may incorporate multimedia elements in your blog posts if you find them helpful.

Partnered Leading of Class Discussion (20%)

At the beginning of the semester, you and one other person will choose one of the following class days that contains readings that may be of interest to you. You and your partner will then develop a short oral presentation about the author(s) of the readings for that day and a series of discussion questions about your assigned readings. You will then send your discussion questions and any outside information or short readings that you would like your classmates to know before your presentation the night before your assigned class period. You will then be expected to lead the class discussion for approximately 30 minutes, with both partners contributing to both the presentation and the discussion portions. The available class days and readings are:

- Week 3, Day 1 – Nella Larsen, *Passing* (Part 1 & 2)
- Week 4, Day 1 – E. Pauline Johnson, "A Red Girl's Reasoning" and Emily Landau, "Double Vision" *author focus is E. Pauline Johnson
- Week 5, Day 1 – Lisa See, excerpts from *On Gold Mountain* and "The Funeral Banquet"
- Week 6, Day 1 – Julia Álvarez, "A White Woman of Color"
- Week 7, Day 1 – Ruth Ozeki, "The Anthropologists' Kids" and Alex Laughlin, "A Magical Web Series, A Rock Concert, and Transplant Shock" (podcast) *author focus is Ruth Ozeki
- Week 10, Day 1 – Vin Diesel, "Multi-Facial" (video) and Sika Alaine Dagbovie, "Star-Light, Star-Bright, Star Damn Near White: Mixed-Race Superstars" *creator focus is Vin Diesel
- Week 13, Day 2 – Alexander Chee, "Girl" and Joanna Thompson, "The Space Between: To Be Mixed-Race and Queer" (video)
- Week 14, Day 1 – Ariana Brown, "Dear White Girls in My Spanish Class" (video) and "Introductions"

Midterm Paper (10%)

For your midterm paper, you will write a critical analysis essay of 5-6 pages in length. You may determine your own topic for this paper, but you should focus on analyzing one of the readings that we have done in the first half of the course. Your discussion should be informed by scholarly research, and you should reference other scholars in your writing.

Final Paper (30%)

For your final paper, you will write a critical analysis essay of 10-12 pages in length. You may determine your own topic for this paper, but you should focus on analyzing one or more of the readings that we have done in the second half of the course. You may also choose to write about

a work of literature, film, etc. that deals with multiraciality and that we have not discussed in this course, but you should confirm your text selection with me first. Your discussion should be informed by scholarly research, and you should reference other scholars in your writing.

GRADE BREAKDOWN

Participation	20%
Weekly Responses	20%
Partnered Leading of Class Discussion	20%
Midterm Paper	10%
Final Paper	30%

ATTENDANCE

Attendance of our twice weekly class periods is required. However, if at any point during this course you have anything that may prevent you from regularly attending class, please let me know as soon as possible.

All students are allowed one week worth of absences from the class during the term for any reason. You do not need to contact me as long as you stay within this limit. The course grades of students who miss more than one week's worth of classes will be reduced by 1/3 of a letter grade (ex. from B+ to B) for each additional absence, in addition to whatever penalties are associated with failure to submit or participate in required work. Students shall not be penalized for absence, tardiness, or failure to participate or submit work that results from the following: illness, required varsity sports obligations in which the student officially represents the University, religious observances, or conflicts, crises, or obligations beyond the student's control, including medical, personal, or financial crises. You do not need to submit proof of any of the above situations, but please email me as soon as possible when you know you will be missing class, especially if you are nearing or already at the absence limit.

LATE WORK

If you are having trouble with any assignment or have an outside factor that you believe will impact your ability to finish an assignment on time, please email me as soon as possible but no later than 24 hours before that assignment is due. I will try to help you finish the assignment on time or, if you have a legitimate reason why you need an extension, we will discuss a new due date that is fair for everyone.

For each day after the deadline that you turn in an assignment, your grade for that assignment will drop by ⅓ a letter grade and the corresponding amount of percentage points (ex. one day late 90% (A-) → 87% (B+), two days late 90% (A-) → 83% (B), three days late 90% (A-) → 80% (B-)).

GRADING TIMELINE

All work that is evaluated as part of your final grade will be graded and returned to you within two weeks from when the assignment is handed in. I will do my best to return assignments sooner than this.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

If you quote or paraphrase the words of another in any writing assignment you submit for this course, you must cite your sources responsibly. Plagiarism may result in a failing grade for an assignment, a failing grade for the course, or even dismissal from the university.

This does not mean you should not seek out responses to your writing from friends or family. Suggestions from others can be very useful, and you may include an "Acknowledgments" section at the end of your paper if you've received assistance. Ultimately, though, the words on the pages that you submit must come from you, or you must indicate through citation where you have quoted or paraphrased from others.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1

Day 1 – First Day of the Course

Day 2

Readings

Jonathan Brennan, Introduction to *Mixed Race Literature*

Week 2

Day 1

Readings

Sui Sin Far/Edith Eaton, "Leaves from the Mental Portfolio of an Eurasian"

Sui Sin Far/Edith Eaton, "'Its Wavering Image'"

Day 2

Readings

Onoto Watanna/Winnifred Eaton, "Miss Lily and Miss Chrysanthemum: The Love Story of Two Japanese Girls in Chicago"

Due After Class

Reading journal post

Week 3

Day 1 – Partner-Led Discussion Day

Readings

Nella Larsen, *Passing* (Part 1 & 2)

Day 2

Readings

Nella Larsen, *Passing* (Part 3)

Rebecca Nisetich, "Reading Race in Nella Larsen's *Passing* and the Rhinelander Case"

Due After Class

Reading journal post

Week 4

Day 1 – Partner-Led Discussion Day

Readings
E. Pauline Johnson, "A Red Girl's Reasoning"
Emily Landau, "Double Vision"
Due

Day 2

Readings
Alex Laughlin, "'I'm Not a Jap, I'm a Half-Jap'" (Podcast)
Stephen Murphy-Shigematsu, "Flowers Amidst the Ashes"
Due After Class
Reading journal post

Week 5

Day 1 – Partner-Led Discussion Day

Readings
Lisa See, Excerpts from *On Gold Mountain*
Lisa See, "The Funeral Banquet"

Day 2

Readings
Erika Aigner-Varoz, "Cutting and Pinning Patterns"
Due After Class
Reading journal post

Week 6

Day 1 – Partner-Led Discussion Day

Readings
Julia Álvarez, "A White Woman of Color"

Day 2

Readings
Mamle Kabu, "Human Mathematics"
Mariana Budhos, "Hollywood"
Due After Class
Reading journal post

Week 7

Day 1 – Partner-Led Discussion Day

Readings
Ruth Ozeki, "The Anthropologists' Kids"
Alex Laughlin, "A Magical Web Series, A Rock Concert, and Transplant Shock" (podcast)

Day 2

Readings
Stephen Murphy-Shigematsu, "Grits and Sushi"

Alex Laughlin, “The Bridges We Build Within Our Families – And the Ones We Can’t” (podcast)
Due In Class
Midterm Paper

Week 8

Day 1

Readings
Craig Womack, “Howling at the Moon: The Queer But True Story of My Life as a Hank Williams Song”
Patricia Penn Hildren, “Ritchie Valens Is Dead: E Pluribus Unum”

Day 2

Readings
“Black Native Americans Beginning to Assert Identity”
Laurie Arnold, “Radmilla Cody (1975-)”
Liz Jones, “‘We’ll Always Be Nooksack’: Tribe Questions Ancestry of Part-Filipino Members”
Stephen Murphy-Shigematsu, “I am Your Illusions, Your Reality, Your Future”
Due After Class
Reading journal post

Week 9

Day 1

Readings
Garrett Hongo, “Lost in Place”
Mat Johnson, “Gift Giving”

Day 2

Readings
Lucinda Roy, “Effigies”
Alex Laughlin, “When You Don’t Look Black” (podcast)
Due After Class
Reading journal post

Week 10

Day 1 – Partner-Led Discussion Day

Readings
Vin Diesel, “Multi-Facial” (video)
Sika Alaine Dagbovie, “Star-Light, Star-Bright, Star Damn Near White: Mixed-Race Superstars”

Day 2

Readings
Salvador Acevedo, “I Am Mestizo” (video)
Diana Abu-Jaber, “My Elizabeth”
Due After Class
Reading journal post

Week 11

Day 1

Readings

Celeste Ng, *Everything I Never Told You* (pg. 1-76)

Day 2

Readings

Celeste Ng, *Everything I Never Told You* (pg. 77-157)

Due After Class

Reading journal post

Week 12

Day 1

Readings

Celeste Ng, *Everything I Never Told You* (pg. 158-239)

Day 2

Readings

Celeste Ng, *Everything I Never Told You* (pg. 240-292)

Due After Class

Reading journal post

Week 13

Day 1

Readings

Rainier Spencer, "Race and Mixed-Race: A Personal Tour"

Day 2 – Partner-Led Discussion Day

Readings

Alexander Chee, "Girl"

Joanna Thompson, "The Space Between: To Be Mixed-Race and Queer" (video)

Due After Class

Reading journal post

Week 14

Day 1 – Partner-Led Discussion Day

Readings

Ariana Brown, "Dear White Girls in My Spanish Class" (video)

Ariana Brown, "Introductions"

Day 2

Readings

Inez Petersen, "What Part Moon"

Danzy Senna, "The Mulatto Millennium"

Due After Class

Reading journal post

Week 15

Day 1

Readings

Danzy Senna, “Triad”
Maria P. P. Root, “Bill of Rights for People of Mixed Heritage”
Due
Reading journal post

Finals Week
Assigned Finals Day
Due
Final Paper

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