

# Contemporary Asian American Drama

Dr. Shilarna Stokes

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## Course Description

In the 1960s, the designation "Asian American" emerged to encompass a diverse array of experiences, histories, languages, and cultures. This decade also marked the establishment of the first Asian American theater companies, which subsequently led to an increasing collection of plays authored by Asian American playwrights. This seminar will facilitate in-depth readings and discussions of works by fifteen contemporary playwrights whose heritage connects them to various regions across East, South, Southeast, and Western Asia. Notable figures include Philip Kan Gotanda, David Henry Hwang, Aasif Mandvi, Qui Nguyen, Jiehae Park, and Sanaz Toossi, among others. Alongside employing various analytical methods for dramatic texts, we will explore the political, cultural, and historical contexts that influenced the consciousness of Asian American playwrights during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Our aim is to gain a renewed understanding of what it means to be (and perform) Asian Americanness for both current and future generations.

## Learning Objectives

1. Students acquire a diverse set of formal, creative, and analytical skills essential for examining various types of plays, including realist, abstract, historical, and fantastical works.
2. Students cultivate a foundational comprehension of key concepts such as diaspora, performance, racialization, representation, authenticity, abjectness, and orientalism.
3. Students explore the contributions of Asian Americans to the American theatrical landscape, focusing on formal and conceptual innovations that challenge cultural imperialism, racism, pigeonholing, and stereotyping.
4. Students investigate the historical, political, social, and cultural contexts that led to the emergence of the Asian American movement, its theaters, and its playwrights.

## Course Format

This seminar is a reading and discussion course that will be held through Zoom. All sessions will be recorded for future reference. Breaks will be incorporated throughout

the course. During our initial meeting, we will address standards related to visibility, attendance, participation, compartment, and other relevant topics.

## Required Course Materials

Please refer to the course schedule provided below. All readings and videos will be available on Canvas or can be accessed through the Yale Library system. There is no requirement to purchase any course materials.

- Julia Cho, *Durango*
- Yussef El Guindi, *Back of the Throat*
- Philip Kan Gotanda, *Yankee Dawg, You Die*
- Dipika Guha, *Yoga Play*
- Velina Hasu Houston, *Tea*
- David Henry Hwang, *The Dance and the Railroad*
- Naomi Iizuka, *36 Views*
- Hansol Jung, *Wolf Play*
- Aasif Mandvi, *Sakina's Restaurant*
- Qui Nguyen, *Vietgone*
- A. Rey Pamatmat, *House Rules*
- Jiehae Park, *Peerless*
- Lloyd Suh, *The Far Country*
- Sanaz Toossi, *English*
- Lauren Yee, *Ching Chong Chinaman*

## Course Schedule

### Session One

#### **U.S. Immigration Histories and Theater Histories**

Readings due before class:

- Lauren Yee, *Ching Chong Chinaman*
- Elinor Fuchs, "EF's Visit to a Small Planet: How to Read a Play"

### Session Two

#### **Chinese American Playwrights: Performing the Past**

- David Henry Hwang, *The Dance and the Railroad*

- Lloyd Suh, *The Far Country*

Assignments Due: Reading Quiz #1\* and Response #1\*

### **Session Three**

#### **Japanese American Playwrights: Tradition, Gender, and Memory**

Readings due before class:

- Philip Kan Gotanda, *Yankee Dawg, You Die*
- Velina Hasu Houston, *Tea*

Assignments Due: Reading Quiz #2\* and Response #2\*

### **Session Four**

#### **Japanese American Playwrights, continued**

Readings due before class:

- Naomi Iizuka, *36 Views*

Assignments Due: Reading Quiz #3\* and Response #3\*

### **Session Five**

#### **Korean American Playwrights: Driving and Dreaming**

Readings due before class:

- Julia Cho, *Durango*
- Jiehae Park, *Peerless*

Assignments Due: Reading Quiz #4\* and Response #4\*

### **Session Six**

#### **Korean American Playwrights, continued**

Readings due before class:

- Hansol Jung, *Wolf Play*

Assignment Due: MIDTERM EXAM

### **Session Seven**

#### **Southeast Asian American Playwrights: The Intergenerational Imagination**

Readings due before class:

- Qui Nguyen, *Vietgone*
- A. Rey Pamatmat, *House Rules*

Assignments Due: Reading Quiz #5\* and Response #5\*

### **Session Eight**

#### **Asian American Muslim Playwrights: In the Wake of 9/11**

Readings due before class:

- Youssef El Guindi, *Back of the Throat*

Assignments Due: Reading Quiz #6\* and Response #6\*

### **Session Nine**

#### **South Asian American Playwrights: Labor, Authenticity, and Assimilation**

Readings due before class:

- Aasif Mandvi, *Sakina's Restaurant*
- Dipika Guha, *Yoga Play*

Assignments Due: Reading Quiz #7\* and Response #7\*

### **Session Ten**

#### **Language/Culture/Identity**

- Sanaz Toossi, *English*

Assignment Due: FINAL ESSAY

<b>Assessments and Grading</b>
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Comprehensive descriptions of all assignments are available on Canvas and will be addressed during class sessions. All submissions must be made through Canvas. Please be advised that each day an assignment is submitted late will incur a grade reduction of one-third of a letter grade (for example, from B to B-).

Assignment	Percentage	Session Due
6 of 7 Reading Responses	30 (5% each)	2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9
6 of 7 Reading Quizzes	30 (5% each)	2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9
Midterm Exam	15	6
Final Exam	15	10
Participation	10	throughout

<b>Attendance Policy</b>
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Attendance at every class session is mandatory. Any excused absences must be communicated in writing prior to the absence. Instances of tardiness, early

departures, and excessively long breaks hinder the overall progress of the class and should be minimized as much as possible. Requests for such instances must also be submitted in writing. Absences resulting from extracurricular activities, employment, or other courses will not be considered excused. Approximately one hour of unexcused absence during a scheduled class will be counted as one-third of an unexcused absence.

Grade penalties for absences are implemented in the following manner:

- 1 absence results in a reduction of one-third of a letter grade (for instance, from B to B-).
- 2 absences lead to a full letter grade reduction (for example, from B to C).
- 3 absences cause a decrease of one and a half letter grades (such as from B to C-), and the student may face the risk of not passing the course.
- A student with four unexcused absences may be asked to withdraw, as this may result in an insufficient basis for evaluation.

### **Academic Integrity**

The strength of the university depends on academic and personal integrity. In this course, you must be honest and truthful. Plagiarism is the use of someone else's work, words, or ideas as if they were your own. Here are three reasons not to do it:

- By far the deepest consequence to plagiarizing is the detriment to your intellectual and moral development: you won't learn anything, and your ethics will be corrupted.
- Giving credit where it's due but adding your own reflection will get you higher grades than putting your name on someone else's work. In an academic context, it counts more to show your ideas in conversation than to try to present them as solely the product of your own thinking.
- Finally, academic dishonesty always catches up with you. The most common penalty is suspension, but students caught plagiarizing are also subject to lowered or failing grades.

### **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Belonging**

I am committed to fostering a fair, inclusive, and welcoming educational atmosphere for all students, irrespective of their age, experience, primary language, race, ethnicity, gender, or abilities. Should you have any concerns or inquiries regarding any

aspect of the course, please do not hesitate to reach out. Additionally, I welcome any suggestions you may have for enhancing the course's accessibility for yourself or other student groups. While I may not be able to accommodate every request, I assure you that I will carefully consider each one. We will commence the course by dedicating time to establish guidelines for discussion and collaboration, which I hope will empower everyone to express themselves, feel supported by their peers, and contribute their distinct talents and viewpoints.