

ARLT 100 | THE NATION AND ITS OTHERS IN AMERICAN LITERATURE AND FILM

Prof. Viet Nguyen | Class Time T & Th 2-3:20
Classroom WPH 206 (location may change)
Office Hours T 2-4
F 1-2
W and TH afternoons by appointment

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COURSE OVERVIEW

This course examines American national identity, especially as it is formed and changes during periods of intense conflict and stress. Conflict and stress existed at the origins of American society, in the nexus of cultural confrontations between English settlers, native Americans, and African slaves, as we will see with Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography*. Although these initial confrontations seem to be explicitly about race, we will also see the complex interplay between class, gender, sexuality and cultural self-imagination. This complex interplay has shaped the early foundation of American identity and exclusions from that identity. We will explore the legacy of this early identity as it has evolved into the 19th and 20th centuries, and we will examine how our contemporary notions of cultural difference concerning other issues besides race—feminism, homosexuality, foreigners (legal and undocumented), and the poor—find some of their origins in this legacy. We will also examine the United States at war, from World War II to Iraq.

Ultimately we will make inquiries about the present state of American national identity: is it singular and unified or multiple and in negotiation? The tensions between different groups, resulting from struggles for cultural and economic dominance, have long been a primary concern for American artists. It is through the work of writers and filmmakers that we will explore these tensions, both as the content with which they are concerned, and as the formal limits of their work that they wrestle with. Ultimately, what we are concerned with is the function of literature and film as a part of America's cultural self-expression; literature and film both expose and embody the tensions and contradictions of American character. Film screenings outside of class, usually from 5-8 PM, are mandatory. Students should also expect to deal with controversial issues that may be construed as "offensive" or "difficult." Disagreement with my opinions or those of other students is not discouraged, as long as they are couched respectfully and with the intent of contributing to a productive discussion.

GRADING AND ASSIGNMENTS

Attendance and Participation	20%
Unannounced Quizzes (5 to 10)	20%
Three Papers, 5-7 pages	20% each, 60% total

Attendance is mandatory, both in class and at film screenings. Only two unexcused absences are allowed; a third unexcused absence results in a 10% automatic deduction from your grade. Every unexcused absence results in a further deduction of 3%. Participation is both verbal and written; besides classroom participation, students are also expected to post weekly comments or responses that are *thoughtful* and *substantive* on Blackboard, an electronic resource for the class, which can be accessed at

<https://blackboard.usc.edu/>. See instructions at the end of the syllabus. *Classroom and online participation is essential to the class, and will significantly impact your grade.*

Unannounced quizzes will cover only factual questions that are related to the reading. The reading will be paced proportionally by the number of allotted days. It is important that you keep up with the reading, as you will not be able to participate without having done so. The quizzes will have a significant impact on your final grade. They substitute for in-class midterm and final exams. *Quizzes cannot be made up, except in cases of documented illness and emergency.*

There will be three research papers of 5-7 page research papers. There will be a later handout with further information about topics. *Strict late penalties of 1/3 grade deduction per 24 hours of tardiness will apply, except in cases of documented illness and emergency.*

There will be one required conference with the professor in the semester.

Plagiarism will be prosecuted to the fullest extent allowed, including failure in the class and reporting to student conduct. Further information about plagiarism and standards of citing others' work will be available in paper handouts. USC policy on plagiarism and academic integrity can be found here: www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/forms/tig.pdf

Disability Policy: Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with the Disability Services Program (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

Electronic devices: You may not use your cellphone, PDA, iPod, or any other handheld electronic device in class. You may not text, IM, send email, read email, check your Facebook or myspace pages, etc. The only multitasking you can do in class is to use your laptop to take notes or to check information related to class online.

Syllabus is subject to change at the professor's discretion.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Katherine Bigelow, *The Hurt Locker*
Frances Ford Coppola, *Apocalypse Now*
Dang Nhat Minh, *Don't Burn*
Duong Thu Huong, *Novel Without a Name*
David Fincher, *Fight Club* (film)
Benjamin Franklin, *Autobiography*
Paul Haggis, *In the Valley of Elah*
Doan Hoang, *Oh, Saigon*
D.W. Griffith, *Birth of a Nation*
Toni Morrison, *Beloved*
John Okada, *No No Boy*
Chuck Palahniuk, *Fight Club* (novel)
John Sayles, *Lone Star*
Helena Maria Viramontes, *Under the Feet of Jesus*
Selected Essays

Please note that Anna Deavere Smith's *Twilight* was ordered for this class and is in the bookstore; that text is cancelled, so you may return it.

SCHEDULE

Date	Topic and Reading
WK 1 Jan 12 Tuesday WK 1 Jan 14 Thursday	Introduction Bad and Good Wars: The Vietnam War and World War II
WK 1 Jan 14 Thursday	Martin Luther King, Jr. "Beyond Vietnam"; Duong Thu Huong, <i>Novel Without a Name</i>
WK 2 Jan 19 Tuesday WK 2 Jan 21 Thursday WK 2 Jan 23 Saturday	Duong Thu Huong, <i>Novel Without a Name</i> Duong Thu Huong, <i>Novel Without a Name</i> "Dreaming of Peace: Vietnamese Filmmakers Move From War to Reconciliation" Norris Cinema Theatre/Frank Sinatra Hall, 2-6:45 PM Screening of films <i>Don't Burn</i> and <i>Oh, Saigon</i> (see attached image at end of syllabus)
WK 3 Jan 26 Tuesday WK 3 Jan 28 Thursday	<i>Don't Burn</i> and <i>Oh, Saigon</i> discussion Class cancelled
WK 4 Feb 2 Tuesday WK 4 Feb 2 Tuesday WK 4 Feb 4 Thursday	Libraries and research methods orientation, location Leavey Room B Film Screening: <i>Apocalypse Now</i> (153 mins.); 5-7:30PM, Leavey Auditorium <i>Apocalypse Now</i> , discussion; additional reading, Michael Herr, "Illumination Rounds"
WK 5 Feb 9 Tuesday WK 5 Feb 11 Thursday WK 5 Feb 12 Friday	John Okada, <i>No No Boy</i> John Okada, <i>No No Boy</i> First paper due, 5 PM, via email
WK 6 Feb 16 Tuesday WK 6 Feb 18 Thursday	John Okada, <i>No No Boy</i> The Undocumented and the Unspeakable Immigration, Race, and Slavery Helena Maria Viramontes, <i>Under the Feet of Jesus</i>
WK 7 Feb 23 Tuesday WK 7 Feb 23 Tuesday WK 7 Feb 25 Thursday	Helena Maria Viramontes, <i>Under the Feet of Jesus</i> 5-8 PM, Film Screening: John Sayles, <i>Lone Star</i> (135 mins) Leavey Auditorium <i>Lone Star</i> discussion

WK 7 Feb 25 Thursday	5-8 PM, Film screening: D.W. Griffith, <i>Birth of a Nation</i> (187 MINS) VKC 111
WK 8 Mar 2 Tuesday WK 8 Mar 4 Thursday	<i>Birth of a Nation</i> , discussion Toni Morrison, <i>Beloved</i>
WK 9 Mar 9 Tuesday WK 9 Mar 11 Thursday	Toni Morrison, <i>Beloved</i> Toni Morrison, <i>Beloved</i>
Mar 15 – 20	Spring Break
WK 10 Mar 23 Tuesday WK 10 Mar 25 Thursday WK 10 Mar 26 Friday	William Faulkner, <i>Absalom, Absalom!</i> William Faulkner, <i>Absalom, Absalom!</i> Second paper due, 5PM, via email
WK 11 Mar 30 Tuesday WK 11 Apr 1 Thursday	William Faulkner, <i>Absalom, Absalom!</i> William Faulkner, <i>Absalom, Absalom!</i>
WK 12 Apr 6 Tuesday WK 12 Apr 8 Thursday	The Making of Typical Americans: Masculinity, Nationalism, and the Self Benjamin Franklin, <i>Autobiography</i> Class cancelled
WK 13 Apr 13 Tuesday WK 13 Apr 15 Thursday WK 13 Apr 15 Thursday	Benjamin Franklin, <i>Autobiography</i> Benjamin Franklin, <i>Autobiography</i> 5-7:30 PM, Film Screening: David Fincher, <i>Fight Club</i> (139 mins.) Leavey Auditorium
WK 14 Apr 20 Tuesday WK 14 Apr 22 Thursday WK 14 Apr 22 Thursday	Chuck Palahniuk, <i>Fight Club</i> Chuck Palahniuk, <i>Fight Club</i> 5-7:30 PM, Film Screening: Katherine Bigelow, <i>The Hurt Locker</i> (131 mins.) Leavey Auditorium
WK 15 Apr 27 Tuesday WK 15 Apr 27 Tuesday WK 15 Apr 29 Thursday	<i>The Hurt Locker</i> , discussion 5-7:30 PM, Film Screening: Paul Haggis, <i>In the Valley of Elah</i> (121 mins.) Leavey Auditorium <i>In the Valley of Elah</i> , discussion
WK 16 May 6 Thursday	Final Paper Due Online, 5 pm

BLACKBOARD

Blackboard is an online home page for USC classes which allow for online discussions and posting of papers (while Blackboard has many other functions, these are the only two we will use). Every student who is registered in this class is automatically entered into the Blackboard roster for this class; if you cannot sign in, please let me know immediately and I will register you.

Periodically I will send announcements and documents out to the class via email, through Blackboard. Blackboard uses your USC email address. Check this address regularly, or change your email address through Blackboard through the "Tools" section. You can also check your grades here as well.

1. Blackboard can be accessed at <https://blackboard.usc.edu/>
2. Sign in using your USC username and ID
3. Go to ARLT 100
4. Go to "Discussion Board" (one of several choices)

ONLINE DISCUSSION REQUIREMENTS

Students will be required to post an original comment (i.e., start a new thread) to the discussion board once every three weeks, on an alphabetical basis. Please follow this schedule:

Alanis through Dimento Weeks 2, 5, 8, 11

Do through Matsuda Weeks 3, 6, 9, 12

Miller through Yeh Weeks 4, 7, 10, 13

1. There will be a weekly forum where you can post comments and responses; click on the forum for the week. Comments will be due for these students by Sunday midnight preceding the beginning of the week.
2. Comments should be *at least* 100 words and refer to *at least* the reading (the texts) in the course, in *specific* and *thoughtful* ways (i.e., no generalizations, no personal attacks). If you wish to bring in the issues (the contexts) we have raised, or address unresolved or unfinished topics of discussion from the previous week, you may do so.
3. In addition to these original comments, *all* students must also post *at least 4* responses during the course of the semester to other people's threads (a total of at least 8 comments during the semester). There is no length requirement on these responses, but again, they must be specific and thoughtful. Responses can occur any time in the semester
4. Late comments will not be counted, and you should not expect to get credit if you post makeup comments, or save all your responses, for the very end of the semester
5. I will not participate in the discussion, but I will monitor them; occasionally ask questions; and ask you to re-post if I feel your comments need to be more focused.
6. Online participation will be a portion of your participation grade for the class.

DREAMING OF PEACE

Vietnamese Filmmakers Move from War to Reconciliation

Saturday, January 23, 2010, 2 to 6:45 p.m.
Norris Cinema Theatre/Frank Sinatra Hall
Admission is free.

Don't Burn!, by Vietnam's most acclaimed filmmaker, is based on the Vietnamese best seller *Last Night I Dreamed of Peace: The Diary of Dang Thuy Tram*, written by a young female doctor from North Vietnam who was killed during the war. *Oh, Saigon* is an award-winning documentary by Doan Hoang about a Vietnamese family who fled Saigon in 1975. After 30 years in the United States, the family returns to visit relatives and to make amends with one daughter left behind. Join us for a screening of both films and a discussion featuring the filmmakers.



Schedule of Events:

- 2 p.m.: Screening of *Don't Burn!*
- 4 p.m.: Panel Discussion with Dang Nhat Minh and Doan Hoang
- 4:45 p.m.: Reception
- 5:15 p.m.: Screening of *Oh, Saigon*
- 6:15 p.m.: Q&A with Doan Hoang

Organized by Janet Hoskins (Anthropology) and Viet Nguyen (English and American Studies and Ethnicity). Co-sponsored by the Diasporic Vietnamese Artists Network, Asian American Studies, the USC School of Cinematic Arts and the Center for Trans-Pacific Studies.

For more information, please visit our website or contact us at visionsandvoices@usc.edu.

www.usc.edu/visionsandvoices
University of Southern California

