



Nanyang Technological University
Division of English, School of Humanities
HL 2041 Asian Historical Fiction

Course Blog: <https://hl2041asianhistoricalfiction.wordpress.com>

Course Coordinator: Assistant Prof. Jane Wong

Email: yc.wong@ntu.edu.sg

Office: HSS 03-58

Course Description

Historical fiction has always occupied a special place in literature for several reasons. Historical narratives record histories of peoples, cultures, and social and political crises. Historical fiction becomes especially important in history-making because it uses historical records to *reflect* on and *re-imagine* the past. More importantly, the re-imagination of the past is often bound up with the anxieties of today. Historical fiction then provides a platform for writers and readers to look to the past, the present, and the future simultaneously. This course focuses on modern Asian historical fiction and will cover the selective histories of Myanmar, India, Malaya, Korea, and Japan. Some of the larger themes that students will consider in this course include discussions of 1) genre: how do we define historical fiction; 2) types of narrative devices that are used in the representation; 3) the limitations of historical representation in literary narratives; 4) how to form a meaningful understanding of the past in historical fiction, and 5) the implications of interdisciplinary research in literary studies.

Learning Objective

This course aims to develop critical reading, writing and research skills through a study of Asian historical fiction. The reading materials in this course encourage students to consider how historical knowledge is formed and interpreted through literary narratives. More specifically, students will learn to form a critical understanding of the limits of representation in literary works. Students will also be exposed to interdisciplinary research in literary studies.

Content

1. Introduction to basic theoretical approaches to studying historical fiction.
2. Examination and discussion of historical and cultural contexts in Asian historical fiction.
3. Examination and discussion of the major authors and works in Asian historical fiction; introduction of interdisciplinary research in literary studies.
4. Students will be expected to participate in class discussions. Each student will also write a literary analysis of about 1800 words related the materials assigned in class. In addition, students will also be required to give a presentation.

Course Guidelines

You are welcome to make an appointment to see me in my office if you have any concerns about the course. Please keep in mind that appointments should be arranged at least 3 working days in advance.

All materials distributed in class and on the course blog are strictly meant for class lectures and assignments only. These materials are protected by copyright laws and are not to be re-distributed outside of class for any other purposes. If you wish to use the materials for your assignments, you must cite them accordingly.

Plagiarism is a serious violation of academic integrity. If you are not familiar with plagiarism guidelines, please consult the university's plagiarism policy here:
<http://www.ntu.edu.sg/ai/Pages/academic-integrity-policy.aspx>

Course Assessment

- Final Essay 30%
- Presentation & Participation 20%
- Exam 50%

Required Texts:

Orwell, George. *Burmese Days* (1934). New York: Penguin, 2010. ISBN: 0141185376

Tan, Twan Eng. *The Garden of Evening Mists*. New York: Weinstein Books, 2012. ISBN: 1602861803

Mistry, Rohinton. *A Fine Balance*. Vintage. ISBN: 978-1400030651

Murakami, Haruki. *After the Quake*. Vintage. ISBN: 978-0375713279

Viet Thanh Nguyen. *The Sympathizer*. Grove Press. ISBN: 978-0802124944

White, Hayden. *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987. (Selections from this work will be posted on the course blog at the beginning of the term. You do not need to purchase this title.)

Tentative Course Outline

Week	Topic	Text
1	Introduction	Introduction: Excerpts from Hayden White's <i>The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation</i>
2	Vietnam	Viet Thanh Nguyen's <i>The Sympathizer</i>
3	Vietnam	Viet Thanh Nguyen's <i>The Sympathizer</i>
4	Japan	Haruki Murakami's. <i>After the Quake</i>
5	Malaya	Tan Twan Eng's <i>Garden of Evening Mists</i>

6	Malaya	Tan Twan Eng's <i>Garden of Evening Mists</i>
7	Korea	Film: Hur Jin-ho's <i>The Last Princess</i> (덕혜옹주)
8	India	Rohinton Mistry's <i>A Fine Balance</i>
9	India	Rohinton Mistry's <i>A Fine Balance</i>
10	India	Rohinton Mistry's <i>A Fine Balance</i>
11	Myanmar	George Orwell's <i>Burmese Days</i>
12	Myanmar	George Orwell's <i>Burmese Days</i>
13	Review	Exam Review