



HL 2041 Asian Historical Fiction

Semester 1 (Academic Year 2026–2027)

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

Pass for lectures and presentation PPTs: AHF2041

Course Coordinator: Associate Professor Jane Wong Yeang Chui

Office: HSS 03-58

Office Hours: TBA

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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 Burma, India, Malaya, 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.

General Guidelines

- All students who need to consult during office hours should send an email at least 3 working days ahead of time. Allow at least a day or two for responses to emails (with the exception of weekends and public holidays).
- Office consultation: All consultations are in-office unless otherwise stated (strictly limited to one consultation per assignment).
- **All materials** distributed in class and on our course blog are to be used for class lectures, assignments, and discussions only. They 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.
- You are not allowed to record lectures in any form without formal permission from the university.

Attendance and Participation:

- If you are unable to attend class, it is your responsibility to check our course blog for updates or announcements that you may have missed.
- If you are absent on the day when an in-class writing assignment is due, you will not be able to make-up for this. Those who are absent for presentations will not have the opportunity to make-up their work in another group's presentation.

Plagiarism, Generative AI, and Late Assignments:

- Plagiarism cases will be subject to university disciplinary action. Please familiarize yourself with the university's academic integrity policies here: <http://www.ntu.edu.sg/ai/Pages/academic-integrity-policy.aspx>
- You are discouraged from using any Generative AI platforms for all assignments in this class. In accordance with the general grading criteria, you are expected to demonstrate independent core skills in critical thinking and writing.
- Late assignments: written assignments that are submitted late will receive a penalty of half a grade each day (including weekends and holidays); if I do not receive an assignment a week after it is due, you will receive a 0 for the essay.

Extension Requests:

- Extension requests will only be reviewed with documentation **and** a consultation with me to discuss work-in-progress (students are expected to have a working draft for this purpose). Requests will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Course Assessment

Presentation	20%
Participation	10%
Critical Response (Deadline 16 Sept.)	20%
Final Essay (Deadline 11 Nov.)	50%

Required Texts:

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

Murakami, Haruki. *After the Quake: Stories*. Knopf Doubleday, 2003. ISBN: 978-0375713279

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

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

Tentative Course Outline

Week	Topic
Week 1 12 Aug.	Introduction (Presentation Sign-up)
Week 2 19 Aug. Vietnam	Viet Thanh Nguyen's <i>The Sympathizer</i>
Week 3 26 Aug. Vietnam	Viet Thanh Nguyen's <i>The Sympathizer</i>
Week 4 2 Sept. Vietnam	Viet Thanh Nguyen's <i>The Sympathizer</i>
Week 5 India 9 Sept.	Rohinton Mistry's <i>A Fine Balance</i>
Week 6 16 Sept. India	Rohinton Mistry's <i>A Fine Balance</i> Critical Response Deadline
Week 7 23 Sept. India	Rohinton Mistry's <i>A Fine Balance</i>
Week 8: 30 Sept.	Recess

Week 9 7 Oct. Japan	Haruki Murakami's <i>After the Quake</i>
Week 10 14 Oct.	Film: TBA
Week 11 21 Oct. Burma	George Orwell's <i>Burmese Days</i>
Week 12 Burma 28 Oct.	George Orwell's <i>Burmese Days</i>
Week 13 Conclusion 4 Nov.	Conclusion and Review