ENGL 665: TOPICS IN CULTURAL/INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES
Spring 2024
DR. VANITA REDDY

COURSE INFORMATION:
Course Number: ENGL 665
Course Title: Afro-Asian Intimacies
Section: 600
R 1-4 pm
LAAH 504
Credit Hours: 3

INSTRUCTOR DETAILS:
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Title: Afro-Asian Intimacies

Course Requirements:

• One course organized around concepts, issues, or themes (as opposed to courses organized primarily according to chronological period

This course will begin by surveying a body of scholarship now known as Afro-Asian studies, which has rapidly expanded over the past two decades. Heralded by the recent turn toward comparative racialization, Afro-Asian critiques recuperate legacies of anti-imperial and postcolonial solidarity to promote an oppositional historical consciousness and to provide models for present and future cross-racial alliances. Drawing upon a resulting desire to promote histories of crossings between Asian and African diasporas, scholarship from Vijay Prashad’s path-breaking Everybody Was Kung Fu Fighting (2002) to Nico Slate’s more recent Colored Cosmopolitanism (2012) has mobilized cross-cultural and transnational approaches to theorizing Asian and African racial formations. Turning to public archives and the personal collections of political leaders, these studies reveal the deep history of political cross-fertilizations between African and Asian leaders across the twentieth century, including those among Chairman Mao, Martin Luther King Jr., Mahatma Gandhi, Malcolm X, and Ho Chi Minh. They focus on friendships, such as that of W.E.B. Du Bois and Lala Lajpat Rai, an Indian nationalist who Du Bois proclaimed a “martyr to British intolerance,” and on political strategies of anti-imperialist struggle, such as King’s proclamation of Gandhi as “the guiding light of our technique of nonviolent social change.” The influential 1955 Bandung
Conference organized by state leaders of nearly 30 newly independent Asian and African countries has, in particular, functioned as a milestone of Afro-Asian internationalism and coalition.

The course will also attend to how much of this scholarship upholds a limited model of cross-racial brotherhood, as queer and women’s experiences are marginalized, rendered illegible, or simply elided. These lacunae often reflect the patriarchal views held by the historical and cultural subjects upon which these studies focus. As Yuichiro Onishi acknowledges in his recent *Transpacific Antiracism* (2013), many prominent twentieth-century public figures engaged with anti-imperial internationalisms “without interrogating the operations of gender and sexual normativity that reified diplomacy and international affairs as spheres of male activity.” In response to these fraternal Afro-Asian formations, much of the reading for this course will serve as an intervention into heteropatriarchal cultures and histories of cross-racial struggle and resistance.

Sample Readings:
Vijay Prashad, *Everybody was KungFu Fighting: Afro-Asian Connections and the Myth of Cultural Purity*
Fred Ho and Bill Mullen, *AfroAsia: Revolutionary Political and Cultural Connections between African Americans and Asian Americans* (2008)

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**
Participation and Attendance: 20%
4 Response Papers (1-2 pp. each): 20% (@5% each)
Individual Presentation: 15%
Final Paper: 40%:
500-word proposal/conference paper abstract + Annotated Bibliography: 5%
Final Conference Paper: 35%
Short Presentation on Final Conference Paper (5%)