

**FILIPINO AMERICAN POLITICAL CULTURES**  
**AAS 3550**  
**SPRING 2009**  
**THURSDAYS 2:55 - 4:10**

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ROCKEFELLER 427  
OFFICE HOURS: WEDNESDAY 11:30 – 1:00

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

For the lives of many Filipinos living in the U.S., the Philippines plays a significant role: it is “home.” But what does it mean for many of these Filipinos to call a country in which many of them have never lived, especially those who are second and third generation, the “homeland”? What kind of identification takes place when this form of ethnic and cultural belonging is invoked as the basis for what is essentially a diasporic claim to, for lack of a better term, a sense of authentic or essential sense of community? This question becomes even more problematic when the issue of ethnic and cultural identity begins to articulate a political subjectivity as its inevitable and inescapable counterpart.

This course will investigate the interplay between ethnicity, race, nation, and diaspora as they are expressed, critiqued, reevaluated, and endorsed by a number of cultural workers and intellectuals who identify as Filipino and/or Filipino American. One particular problem we will concern ourselves with is this: the *subjective* and *ontological* foundations that unite the Filipino diaspora to the Philippines, that anchor the former to the latter. What are the fundamental characteristics and criteria through which Filipinos can be said to *globally* self-identify as Filipino, those ethnic, cultural, and even political attributes that Filipinos employ so as to define themselves as such, regardless of where they happen to live? This may at first seem like a simple enough issue, but if one considers that the Philippines is comprised of hundreds of ethnolinguistic groups, many of whom do not understand each other (not to mention the century-long attempts by the Moro populations in the predominantly Muslim regions of the south to establish their own autonomous state) the notion of a singular nation through which the Filipino diaspora acquires its identity becomes very complicated. What kinds of assumptions does one make when even invoking “the Philippines” as a stable, unified basis for one’s identity? What does it mean to “be” Filipino? What does it mean to “be” Filipino in the U.S.?

Through a number of writings (and to a limited extent photographs, drawings, paintings, and films), we will ask these questions and attempt to grapple with the social, cultural, and political ramifications of the kinds of diasporic subjectivities expressed in these texts and cultural productions. Do they present new versions of the Filipino diaspora? Do they express counterintuitive ways of seeing ethnic and cultural belonging, and in so doing posit different iterations of political affiliation as well? Finally, what kinds of belonging and identification come into play during the act of reading itself? Does engaging with creative and intellectual work that advances a claim to identity in itself create a dynamic through which the reader creates and fashions his or her own identity in the process?

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

Attendance and participation: 15%  
10-minute presentation: 15%  
Mid-semester paper (7 – 10 pages): 30%  
Final paper (10 – 15 pages): 40%

## REQUIRED TEXTS

- Giorgio Agamben. *The Coming Community* (tr. Michael Hardt, University of Minnesota, 2001, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.)  
—Rick Bonus. *Locating Filipino Americans: Ethnicity and the Cultural Politics of Space* (Temple UP, 2000).  
—Carlos Bulosan. *All the Conspirators* (Plain View, 2002).  
—Carlos Bulosan. *On Becoming Filipino: Selected Writings of Carlos Bulosan* (ed. Epifanio San Juan, Jr., Temple UP, 1995).  
—Jessica Hagedorn. *Dream Jungle* (Viking, 2003).  
—Wilfrido Nollo. *But for the Lovers* (Dalkey, 1994).  
—Han Ong. *The Disinherited* (Picador, 2005).  
—Brian Ascalon Roley. *American Son* (Norton, 2001).  
—Angel Velasco Shaw and Luis H. Francia, eds. *Vestiges of War: The Philippine-American War and the Aftermath of an Imperial Dream, 1899 – 1999* (NYU, 2002).  
\*All texts are available at the Campus Store and are on reserve in Olin 301.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### THURSDAY 1/22: INTRODUCTION

#### TUESDAY 1/27

- Jody Blanco. “Patterns of Reform, Repetition, and Return in the First Centennial of the Filipino Revolution, 1896 – 1996” from *Positively No Filipinos Allowed* (handout).  
—Vicente L. Rafael. “Parricides, Bastards, and Counterrevolution: Reflections on the Philippine Centennial” from *Vestiges of War: The Philippine-American War and the Aftermath of an Imperial Dream, 1899 – 1999*, Angel Velasco Shaw and Luis H. Francia, eds. (361 – 375).  
—Antonio T. Tiongson, Jr. “Reflections on the Trajectory of Filipino/a American Studies: Interview with Rick Bonus” from *Positively No Filipinos Allowed* (handout).

#### THURSDAY 1/29

- E. San Juan, Jr. “In Search of Filipino Writing: Reclaiming Whose ‘America’?” from *Asian American Studies: A Reader*, Jean Yu-Wen Shen Wu and Min Song, eds. (handout; also available at Uris Reserve, listed under AAS 1100).  
—E. San Juan, Jr. “The Predicament of Filipino in the United States: ‘Where Are You From? When Are You Going Back?’” from *The State of Asian America: Activism and Resistance in the 1990s*, Karin Aguilar San-Juan, ed. (handout).

#### TUESDAY 2/3

- Rick Bonus. “Introduction: Marking Locations” (1 – 14) and “Cartographies of Ethnicity” (15 – 30) from *Locating Filipino Americans: Ethnicity and the Cultural Politics of Space*.  
—Giorgio Agamben. “Whatever” (1 – 2); “Example” (9 – 11); “*Principium individuationis*” (17 – 20) from *The Coming Community*.

#### THURSDAY 2/5

- Rick Bonus. “Homeland Memories and the Media: Filipino Images and Imaginations in America” (128 – 163) and “Conclusion: Re-Marking Locations” (164 – 182) from *Locating Filipino Americans*.  
—Daniel B. Schirmer. “U.S. Racism and Intervention in the Third World, Past and Present” from *Vestiges of War* (163 – 176).

#### TUESDAY 2/10

- E. San Juan, Jr. “Introduction” from *On Becoming Filipino: Selected Writings of Carlos Bulosan*, E. San Juan, Jr., ed. (1 – 44).

—Nerissa S. Balce. “Filipino Bodies, Lynching, and the Language of Empire” from *Positively No Filipinos Allowed* (handout).

**THURSDAY 2/12**

—Carlos Bulosan. “Be American” (66 – 72); “Life and Death of a Filipino in America” (85 – 89); “Homecoming” (90 – 96); “My Education” (124 – 134); “Portraits With Cities Falling” (157 – 158); “If You Want to Know What We Are” (166 – 168) from *On Becoming Filipino*.

—Luis H. Francia. “Five Poems” from *Vestiges of War* (347 – 352).

**TUESDAY 2/17**

—Caroline S. Hau. “Unfinishing Revolution” from *Necessary Fictions: Philippine Literature and the Nation, 1946 – 1980* (handout).

—Sarita See. “An Open Wound: Colonial Melancholia and Contemporary Filipino/American Texts” from *Vestiges of War* (376 – 395).

**THURSDAY 2/19**

—Brian Ascalon Roley. *American Son*

—Antonio T. Tiongson, Jr. “On the Politics of (Filipino) Youth Culture: Interview with Theodore S. Gonsalves” from *Positively No Filipinos Allowed* (handout).

**TUESDAY 2/24**

—*American Son*

—Guillermo Gomez Peña. “Notes From the Other Cartography” from *Vestiges of War* (312 – 317).

**THURSDAY 2/26**

—*American Son*

—Han Ong. *The Disinherited* (3 – 49).

—Caroline S. Hau. “The Fiction of a Knowable Community” from *Necessary Fictions: Philippine Literature and the Nation, 1946 – 1980* (handout).

**TUESDAY 3/3**

—*The Disinherited* (50 – 135).

—S. Lily Mendoza. “A Different Breed of Filipino Balikbayans: The Ambiguities of (Re-)turning” from *Positively No Filipinos Allowed* (handout).

**THURSDAY 3/5**

—*The Disinherited* (139 – 230).

**TUESDAY 3/10**

—*The Disinherited* (231 – 369).

**THURSDAY 3/12**

—Oscar V. Campomanes. “Casualty Figures of the American Soldier and the Other: Post-1898 Allegories of Imperial Nation-Building as ‘Love and War’” from *Vestiges of War* (134 – 162).

—Bienvenido Lumbea. “Pedagogy” from *Brown River, White Ocean: An Anthology of Twentieth-Century Philippine Literature in English*, Luis H. Francia, ed. (handout).

—Yong Soon Min. “Kindred Distance” from *Vestiges of War* (290 – 301).

**TUESDAY 3/17**

**IN-CLASS PAPER WORKSHOP**

**THURSDAY 3/19**

—Jessica Hagedorn. *Dream Jungle*.

—Jessica Hagedorn. “The Exile Within/The Question of Identity” from *The State of Asian America: Activism and Resistance in the 1990s*, Karin Aguilar-San Juan, ed. (handout).

**SPRING BREAK 3/14 - 3/22**

**TUESDAY 3/24**

**\*PAPERS DUE**

—*Dream Jungle*

—Paul Pfeiffer. “*Quod Nomen Mihi Est? Excerpts From a Conversation With Satan*” from *Vestiges of War* (279 – 289).

**THURSDAY 3/26**

—*Dream Jungle*

—Nick Deocampo. “Imperialist Fictions: The Filipino in the Imperialist Imaginary” from *Vestiges of War* (225 – 236).

**TUESDAY 3/31**

—*Dream Jungle*

—*Apocalypse Now Redux*

**THURSDAY 4/2**

—Wilfrido Nollado. *But for the Lovers* (9 – 58).

**TUESDAY 4/7**

—*But for the Lovers* (59 – 119).

**THURSDAY 4/9**

—*But for the Lovers* (120 – 181).

**TUESDAY 4/14**

—*But for the Lovers* (182 – 254).

**THURSDAY 4/16**

—*But for the Lovers* (255 – 301).

**TUESDAY 4/21**

—*But for the Lovers* (302 – 316).

—Giorgio Agamben. “Pseudonym” (59 – 62); “Without Classes” (63 – 66); “Outside” (67 – 70); “Homonyms” (71 – 78); “Shekinah” (79 – 84); “Tiananmen” (85 – 87) from *The Coming Community*.

**THURSDAY 4/23**

—Carlos Bulosan. “Letter to a Filipino Woman” from *On Becoming Filipino* (210 – 214).

—Dylan Rodríguez. “‘A Million Deaths?’ Genocide and the ‘Filipino American’ Condition of Possibility” from *Positively No Filipinos Allowed* (handout).

**TUESDAY 4/28 – THURSDAY 4/30**

**ONE-ON-ONE MEETINGS**