



HL 2041 Asian Historical Fiction

Semester 1 (Academic Year 2025–2026)

Course Blog: TBA

Pass for lectures and presentation PPTs: TBA

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. Email queries are only acceptable if they do not involve lengthy discussion sessions to avoid miscommunication, instead you should make an appointment to see me in my office. Please allow at least a day or two for responses to emails (with the exception of weekends and public holidays).
- Office consultation: Please come prepared with questions so that we can address your concerns effectively and efficiently. Out of consideration for your classmates who may also need consultation time, I will limit consultations to about 20 mins for each student.
- I will not attend to group consultations and will see students individually.
- Be sure to arrive on time to class, and if you have to leave early, pls. let me know ahead of time. As usual, pls. be respectful to your classmates and be sure to turn off all electronic devices during lectures and tutorials.
- **All materials** distributed in class and on the course blog are meant to be used for class lectures 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 permission formal permission to do so.

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 not allowed to use any Generative AI platforms for all assignments in this class. Assignments that incorporate any use of generative AI constitutes a form of plagiarism.
- 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:

- Blackout Period: the blackout period for extension is **1 week before the assignment deadline.** This means that extension requests made during this period must be supported with documentation **and** a consultation with me to discuss work-in-progress.

Course Assessment

Presentation	20%
Participation	10%
Critical Response (Deadline 17 Sept.)	20%
Final Essay (Deadline 12 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 13 Aug.	Introduction (Presentation Sign-up)
Week 2 20 Aug. Vietnam	Viet Thanh Nguyen's <i>The Sympathizer</i>
Week 3 Vietnam 27 Aug.	Viet Thanh Nguyen's <i>The Sympathizer</i>
Week 4 Vietnam 3 Sept.	Viet Thanh Nguyen's <i>The Sympathizer</i>
Week 5 India 10 Sept.	Rohinton Mistry's <i>A Fine Balance</i>

Week 6 India 17 Sept.	Rohinton Mistry's <i>A Fine Balance</i> Critical Response Deadline
Week 7 India 24 Sept.	Rohinton Mistry's <i>A Fine Balance</i>
Week 8 1 Oct.	Recess
Week 9 Japan 8 Oct.	Haruki Murakami's <i>After the Quake</i>
Week 10 Malaya 15 Oct.	Film: TBA
Week 11 Burma 22 Oct.	George Orwell's <i>Burmese Days</i>
Week 12 Burma 29 Oct.	George Orwell's <i>Burmese Days</i>
Week 13 Conclusion 5 Nov.	Conclusion and Review