

ETHN 189: Southeast Asian Refugee Communities in the US
Fall 2008
(CSB 004)

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Office: SSB 249
Office Hours: Tues. 12:30-1:30pm
Thurs. 11:30am-1:30pm

Since the Cold War era, over 1.8 million Southeast Asian refugees from Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam have entered the United States and remade their lives through and against conditions of war and displacement. This course first examines the conditions that led thousands of people to flee their homes in Southeast Asia and then critically and comparatively examines the ways Southeast Asian refugees have forged new lives and communities in the US. We will focus on both institutional constraints/challenges as well as the strategies deployed by refugees to negotiate their marginal status in the US, particularly paying attention to the creative ways they maintain transnational (often vexed) ties to their homelands.

Required Texts:

1. Anne Fadiman. *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures*. Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1997.
 2. Nazli Kibria. *Family Tightrope: The Changing Lives of Vietnamese Americans*. Princeton UP, 1993.
 3. Aihwa Ong. *Buddha Is Hiding: Refugees, Citizenship, the New America*. UC Press, 2003.
 4. Course Reader – Available on E-Reserve
- * The textbook is available for purchase at Groundworks Bookstore (855) 452-9625. The book is also on reserve at the Social Science and Humanities Library.

Requirements

- 1) **Attendance:** It is required that you attend all lectures. Pop quizzes may be given occasionally during lecture. Films and other media shown during lectures will not be made available on reserve.
- 2) **Readings:** You should complete weekly readings **before** Tuesday lectures. This will help you get the most out of lectures and be prepared to participate in discussion.
- 3) **Assignments:** You will have a chance to use your creative skills to complete a creative project of your choice. We will discuss this assignment in greater detail in class. You will also need to conduct a brief oral history interview in order to complete an oral history paper and presentation for the class.
- 4) **FINAL EXAM:** (take home) Due on Thursday, Dec. 11.

Grading*

1) Attendance and active class participation	15%
2) Creative Project	20%
3) Oral History Paper	25%
4. Oral History Presentation	10%
5) Final (Take-home)	30%

*You must complete all course requirements in order to pass the course.

** You must receive a passing grade in section to pass the course. Section grades are assigned by your teaching assistant and will be based on your attendance and active participation in classroom discussion.

Lecture Schedule

***readings should be completed before Tuesday's lecture each week**

**** Readings from the texts are indicated by their titles and those from E-Reserves are designated as (ER)**

Sept. 25: Introduction to the Course

Week 1 (Sept. 30 & Oct. 2): Introduction to Refugees and Immigrants

Family Tighrope, Ch. 1

Buddha Is Hiding, Introduction

Rumbaut, Ruben, "A legacy of War: Refugees from Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia," in *Origins and Destinies: Immigration, Race, and Ethnicity in America*. Ed. Silvia Pedraza and Ruben Rumbaut. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company (1996) Pp. 315-333. **(ER)**

Harles, John C., "Politics in an American Lifeboat: The Case of Laotian Immigrants," *Journal of American Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (1991): 419-441. **(ER)**

Week 2 (Oct. 7 & 9): Refugees and the Nation

Agamben, Giorgio. "We Refugees."
<http://www.egs.edu/faculty/agamben/agamben-we-refugees.html> **(ER)**

Lui, Robyn. "Governing Refugees." 1919-1945. *Borderlands e-journal* 1:1 **(ER)**

Tuitt, Patricia. "Refugees, Nations, Laws, and the Territorialization of Violence," in *Critical Beings. Law, Nation, and the Global Subject*. Ashgate Publishing, 2004. pp. 37-56. **(ER)**

Week 3 (Oct. 14 & 16): The American War/The Vietnam War

Berg, Rick. "Losing Vietnam: Covering the War in an Age of Technology." In *From Hanoi to Hollywood: The Vietnam War in American Film*, edited by Linda Dittmar and Gene Michaud. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990. pp. 41-68. **(ER)**

Bradley, Mark Phillip. "Representing Vietnam: The Interwar American Construction of French Indochina." In *Imagining Vietnam & America: The Making of Postcolonial Vietnam, 1919-1950*. University of North Carolina Press, 2000. **(ER)**

Film Screening: *The Killing Fields*

Week 4 (Oct. 21 & 23): Critical Views of War

***Creative project due on Oct. 23**

Buddha Is Hiding, Part I, pp. 25-65

Yen Le Espiritu. "The 'We-Win-Even-When-We-Lose' Syndrome: U.S. Press Coverage of the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the 'Fall of Saigon.'" *Amerasia Quarterly* 58:2 (2006): 329-352. **(ER)**

Khatharya Um. "The 'Vietnam War': What's in a Name?" *Amerasia Journal*, Vol. 31, no. 2, 2005, pp. 134-139. (HAND OUT COPIES IN CLASS)

Nguyen-Vo Thu Huong. "Forking Paths: How Shall We Mourn the Dead?" *Amerasia Journal*, Vol. 31, no. 2, 2005, pp. 157-175. **(ER)**

Week 5 (Oct. 28 & 30): Displacement and Resettlement

Buddha is Hiding, Part II, pp. 69-191.

Film Screening: Monkey Dance

Week 6 (Nov. 4 & 6): Family & Gender Relations

Family Tightrope, Ch. 4 & 5

The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down, pp. 3-118.

Chan, Sucheng, "The Fang Family of San Diego" in *Hmong Means Free: Life in Laos and America*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994. Pp. 129-160. **(ER)**

Week 7 (Veterans Day & Nov. 13): Representing Refugees

The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down, pp. 119-288

DuBois, Thomas A. "Constructions Construed: The Representation of Southeast Asian Refugees in Academic, Popular, and Adolescent Discourse." *Amerasia Journal* 19:3 (1993): 1-25. **(ER)**

Schein, Louisa and Thoj, Va-Megn. "Occult Racism: The Masking of Race in the Hmong Hunter Incident A Dialogue between Anthropologist Louisa Schein and Filmmaker/Activist Va-Megn Thoj" *American Quarterly* 59:4 (December 2007): 1051-1095. **(ER)**

Week 8 (Nov. 18 & 20): Refugee Community Formations

***Oral History Paper Due**

Vo Dang, Thuy. "The Cultural Work of Anticommunism in the San Diego Vietnamese American Community." *Amerasia Journal* 31:2(2005): 65-85.

Film Screening: Saigon, USA

Week 9 (Nov. 25 & Thanksgiving): Cultural Formations

Family Tightrope, Ch. 7.

Chan, Sucheng. "Negotiating Cultures" in *Survivors*. U of Illinois Press, 2004. pp. 162-193. **(ER)**

Reyes, Adelaida. "Vietnamese Americans in Orange County: The Musical Life." in *Songs of the Free, Songs of the Caged*. Temple UP, 1999. pp. 124-159. **(ER)**

Week 10 (Dec. 2 & 4): Postmemory in Refugee Communities

Espiritu, Yen Le. "Toward a Critical Refugee Study: The Vietnamese Refugee Subject in US Scholarship." *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 1:1&2(2006): 410-33. **(ER)**

Nguyen, Viet Thanh. "Speak of the Dead, Speak of Viet Nam: The Ethics and Aesthetics of Minority Discourse." *The New Centennial Review* 6:2 (2006): 7-37. **(ER)**

Andrew Lam, excerpts from *Perfume Dreams*.

FINAL (take home) DUE DEC. 11

Majoring or Minor in Ethnic Studies at UCSD

Many students take an Ethnic Studies course because the topic is of great interest or because of a need to fulfill a social science, non-contiguous, or other college requirement. Often students have taken three or four classes out of "interest" yet have no information about the major or minor and don't realize how close they are to a major, a minor, or even a double major. An Ethnic Studies major is excellent preparation for a career in law, public policy, government and politics, journalism, education, public health, social work, international relations, and many other careers. If you would like information about the Ethnic Studies major or minor at UCSD, please contact Yolanda Escamilla, Ethnic Studies Department Undergraduate Advisor, at 858-534-3277 or yescamilla@ucsd.edu.