

# ASIAN MIGRATIONS

## 508:338 Spring 2018



**Mondays and Thursdays  
11:30am to 12:50 pm  
Campbell Hall, Rm A3**

**Instructor: Julia Stephens  
([julia.stephens@rutgers.edu](mailto:julia.stephens@rutgers.edu))  
Office Hours: TBA**

This course traces the modern history and contemporary cultures of Asian migration, from approximately 1850 to the present. It explores how

global historical trends, including overseas exploration, colonialism, capitalism, nation-building, and war have shaped patterns of Asian migration. This includes migration within Asia, as well as to Europe, the Americas, and Africa. We will look at how longer histories of long-distance Asian travel and trade was reshaped by the expanding power of European empires in the nineteenth century. During the second half of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, Asians, beset by economic crises at home, were drawn into imperial labor circuits which sent them everywhere from Caribbean sugar plantations to African mines and railways. Turning to the twentieth century, the rise of territorial nationalism, the Great Depression, and World War II again pushed Asian migration in new directions. In the middle decades of the twentieth century, many Asians were forced to migrate as refugees when the creation of new national boundaries reclassified them as foreigner in their own homelands. The course concludes with the more recent history of Asian migration, exploring how the twinned forces of globalization and terrorism have shaped patterns of mobility during the last several decades.

While providing an introduction to large-scale patterns of mobility the course focuses on how these “macro” development have shaped individual lives. Over the course of the semester we will get to know a Chinese maritime explorer, a Bengali sailor who jumped ship in New York, an Indian woman who traveled, while pregnant, to work as an indentured laborer in Guiana, and a Chinese immigrant in New York who was accused of killing his Jewish lover. A series of “primary-source labs” will guide students through the use of different types of historical sources, including autobiographies, legal sources, maps, newspapers, and oral interviews. Students will also be encouraged to think creatively about what or whom might constitute a historical source, including the streets and neighborhoods in which they routinely spend time, and interactions with their own families and friends.

## **Assignments and Grading**

**Attendance, Participation, and Discussion Questions (20%).** Attendance and participation in all class meetings is required. If students have to miss a class, they should email the professor beforehand whenever possible. Students who miss more than two classes will have points deducted from their attendance/participation grade. In cases of illness or family emergency, exceptions to this policy will be made at the professor's discretion.

Students are also required to post at least seven discussion questions to the course website over the course of the semester (approximately one every other week). Each question must address a specific reading from a different week of the course. During the weeks in which we read the two novels, *The Glass Palace* and *Mona in the Promised Land*, every student must post a discussion question. You may post the other five questions during weeks of your own choosing.

**Assignment 1 (25%): Map Exercise + Reflection (3 pages).** The first assignment involves creating a visual map, broadly defined, of an immigrant space in New York or New Jersey. This is an opportunity for students to explore and be creative. Spaces could also include online forums and “maps” could be any form of visual representation.

**Assignment 2 (25%): Oral Interview + Reflection (3 pages).** The second assignment involves conducting an interview either from a first or second generation Asian migrant. Students are encouraged to speak to family, friends, or neighbors to complete this assignment, but the professor can also refer them to local organizations that can provide contacts.

**Assignment 3 (30%): Historical Fiction Review of *The Glass Palace* or *Mona in the Promised Land* (5 pages).** For the final assignment students will write a short paper which reflects on how historical fiction can provide insight into the migrant experience.

**Policy on Late Assignments:** All assignments must be submitted via email by midnight on the day of the deadline. Unless the professor has granted an extension prior to the deadline, late assignments will be penalized up to one grade (for example from an A to B+) per week.

**Guidance on Avoiding Plagiarism:** Students are welcome to receive feedback on their writing from other classmates, the Writing Center, etc. The substance of the paper, however, must be their own work. References to course readings are encouraged and should be cited according to the guidelines provided on the course website. In general course assignments do not require consulting outside materials. If you plan to use other materials, please consult with the professor to avoid any possibility of plagiarism.

**Laptop Policy:** During short lectures and presentations, students may take notes on their laptops. They are, however, requested to close their laptops during discussions and activities, unless the professor indicates that computer use is appropriate. In short please do not “disappear” into your laptop (and Facebook, Snapchat, etc.) while we are trying to engage together as a class. Your help in respecting the spirit of this policy is highly appreciated.

**Core Texts:** We will read the following three texts in full, and students may choose to purchase their own copies or use the copy on reserve in the library. Used copies of all three books are readily available at discounted prices. All other readings will be available via the course website.

Gaiutra Bahadur, *Coolie Woman: The Odyssey of Indenture* ISBN-10: 0226034429

Amitav Ghosh, *The Glass Palace* ISBN-10: 0007427468

Gish Jen, *Mona in the Promised Land* ISBN-10: 0679776508

## WEEKLY COURSE SCHEDULE

### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### **Session 1 (Jan. 17): Introduction to Course and Overview of Themes**

Readings: Amitav Ghosh, "The Diaspora in Indian Culture," *Public Culture* 2, no. 1 (Fall 1989):73-78; and Adam Mckeown, "Global Migration, 1846-1940," *Journal of World History* 15 (2004): 155-89.

### 2. MERCHANTS AND SOJOURNERS (PRE-1850)

#### **Session 1 (Jan. 22): Early-Modern Asian Mobilities**

Readings: Philip Kuhn, *Chinese Among Others: Emigration in Modern Times*, 7-54.

#### **Session 2 (Jan. 25): Primary-Source Lab -- The Voyages of Zheng He**

Readings: Zheng He Source Pack

### 3. ASIAN MIGRATION IN THE AGE OF EUROPEAN EMPIRE (1850-1930)

#### **Session 1 (Jan. 29): New Circuits of Migration in the Age of European Empire**

Readings: Sunil Amrith, *Migration and Diaspora in Modern Asia*, 18-88.

#### **Session 2 (Feb. 1): Primary-Source Lab -- Immigrant Autobiographies**

Readings: Autobiography Source Pack, including selections from Amir Haider Khan, *Chains to Loose* and Easurk Charr, *Golden Mountain*.

### 4. INDENTURED LABOR

#### **Session 1 (Feb. 5): Was Indenture a New Form of Slavery?**

Readings: Start Gaiutra Bahadur, *Coolie Woman: The Odyssey of Indenture*. For this week you should finish reading pp 1-102.

#### **Session 2 (Feb. 8): Discussion of *Coolie Woman***

Readings: Continue reading *Coolie Woman* up to page 102.

### 5. LEGACIES OF INDENTURE: GENDER AND VIOLENCE

#### **Session 1 (Feb. 12): Primary-Source Lab – Legal Sources**

Readings: Selections from coroner-court inquests on domestic violence.

**Session 2 (Feb. 15): Concluding Discussion on *Coolie Woman* and Legacies of Indenture**  
Readings: *Coolie Woman*, pp. 103-131 and 191-214.

## 6. IMMIGRANT NEIGHBORHOODS: PHYSICAL SPACES AS SOURCES

*\*\* Note: There are limited readings for the materials we will cover in week 6 to 8. You should instead use your time to work on your map exercise and start reading **The Glass Palace**, which we will discuss in week 9.*

**Session 1 (Feb. 19): Historical “Walking Tour” through London’s East End**

**Session 2 (Feb. 22): Historical “Walking Tour” through Singapore’s “Little India”**

## 7. NAVIGATING GENDER, RACE, & XENOPHOBIA IN IMMIGRANT SPACES

**Session 1 (Feb. 26): Primary Source Lab -- Investigating the “Chinatown Trunk Mystery”**  
Readings: Selected primary-source materials on the “Chinatown Trunk Mystery,” PART 1.

**Session 2 (Feb. 29): Primary Source Lab -- Investigating the “Chinatown Trunk Mystery” (cont.)**

Readings: “Chinatown Trunk Mystery,” PART 2.

### **ASSIGNMENT 1 DUE: Mapping Immigrant Spaces**

#### **Visual “Map” (broadly defined) + 3-page Reflection**

Create a map (broadly defined) of an immigrant space in New Jersey or New York. This could be a neighborhood, home, or online community. As you explore your space keep in mind the structural features of immigrant spaces that we identified when comparing London’s East End and Singapore’s “Little India.” Your “map” should use visual modes of representation to highlight at least one such structural feature. In your accompanying reflection explain the visual logic of your map.

## 8. MAKING OUR OWN ARCHIVES: ORAL HISTORIES

**Session 1 (Mar. 5): Meeting with Oral History Librarian**

**Session 2 (Mar. 8): Oral Interview Analysis**

Before coming to class, listen to the two interviews that are linked to on the course website, paying special attention to how the interviewers pose and follow up on questions.

SPRING BREAK

9. MIGRATION IN THE AGE OF NATIONS: REVOLUTIONS AND REFUGEES (1930-1950)

**Session 1 (Mar. 19): The Unmaking of Empire: War, Revolutions, and Refugees**

Readings: Continue reading Amitav Ghosh, *The Glass Palace*.

**Session 2 (Mar. 22): Discussion of the novel *The Glass Palace*.**

Readings: Finish Amitav Ghosh, *The Glass Palace*.

10. MIGRATION AND GLOBALIZATION (1970-2000)

**Session 1 (Mar. 26): Migration & Late-20<sup>th</sup> Century Globalization**

Readings: Lizzie Widdicomber, “The Thin Yellow Line: The Taxi-Driver’s Advocate,” *The New Yorker* (April 18, 2011); and Rachel Aviv, “The Cost of Caring: The Lives of Immigrant Women Who Tend to the Needs of Others,” *The New Yorker* (April 11, 2016).

**Session 2 (Mar. 29): Global Bollywood**

Readings: Rachel Dwyer, “Bollywood’s Empire: Indian Cinema and the Diaspora,” in *The Rutledge Handbook of the South Asian Diaspora*, 409-418.

11. FOOD & MOBILITY

**Session 1 (Apr. 2): Taking Food Seriously –Historical and Anthropological Approaches**

Readings: Theodore C. Bestor, “How Sushi Went Global,” *Foreign Policy* no. 121 (Nov-Dec 2000): 54-63; and Elizabeth Buettner, “‘Going for an Indian’: South Asian Restaurants and the Limits of Multiculturalism in Britain,” *The Journal of Modern History* 80, no. 4 (2008): 865-901.

**Session 2 (Apr. 5): *The Search for General Tso* (2014) and discussion.**

12. POST-MODERN MIGRATION: TERROR AND MOBILITY (2001-PRESENT)

*\*\*Note: Readings for weeks 12 and 13 are lighter than normal to allow you to start reading **Mona in the Promised Land**, which we will discuss in week 14.*

**Session 1 (Apr. 9): Terror and the Fear of Migrants**

Readings: Leti Volpp, “[The Citizen and the Terrorist](#),” *UCLA Law Review* (2002): 1575-1600.

**Session 2 (Apr. 12): Screening and Discussion of *Out of Status* (2005).**

**ASSIGNMENT 2 DUE: Oral Interview + 3-page Reflection**

Prepare a list of eight questions (to be turned in with the assignment, but not included in the page count) in preparation for conducting an oral interview (of at least 30 minutes) with someone who either emigrated from Asia or is the child of an emigrant. In addition to conducting the interview, you should write a three-page reflection which uses transcribed quotes from the interview to highlight how it relates to themes we have covered in the course.

13. IDENTITY AND BELONGING IN GLOBAL ASIA – BEYOND EAST AND WEST

**Session 1 (Apr. 16): Race and Class within Inter-Asian Migrations**

Readings: Selected media sources on Singapore’s “Little India” Riots (2013).

**Session 2 (Apr. 19): Asia in Africa**

Readings: Emmanuel Ma Mung Kuang, “The New Chinese Migration Flows to Africa,” *Social Science Information* 47, no. 4 (2008): 643-659.

14. BEING “SECOND GENERATION”

**Session 1 (Apr. 23): Migration, Generations, and Assimilation**

Readings: Continue reading Gish Jen, *Mona in the Promised Land*.

**Session 2 (Apr. 26): Discussion of the novel *Mona in the Promised Land***

Readings: Finish Gish Jen, *Mona in the Promised Land*.

15. BOOK REVIEW EXERCISE AND CONCLUSIONS

**Session 1 (Apr. 30): How to Write a Book Review, and Concluding Thoughts**

Readings: Read the sample book review, focusing on what are its core components, and what you think makes it a strong example of this genre of writing.

**ASSIGNMENT 3 DUE: Historical Fiction Review of either *The Glass Palace* or *Mona in the Promised Land* (5 pages)**

Your review should address how a work of fiction such as Ghosh’s or Jen’s novels can provide insight into the historical experience of migration.