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I.  Visions of the Orient
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IV. Migratory Modernisms: American Identity in the In-Between
V. Romance of Remembered Space: Chinese Urban Nostalgia (1919–present)

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Program Statement

Dear Hist & Lit Oral Exam Committee,

When I first arrived on campus in August of 2015, I unpacked a number of things that were central to my identity: three worn suitcases stood against the peeling white plaster walls of Wigglesworth D-31. One was stuffed with thrifted men’s sweaters (all oversized and woefully inadequate for the coming winter) and DIY cutoff jeans. Tucked inside another’s zippered compartments were glass canisters of my grandma’s homemade spicy radish: slivers of home. In the third sat miscellaneous décor and documents, including the sheet music for Chopin’s piano works, the faded yellow pages creased and covered in years of penciled study.

The me who was born in Guangzhou, China and grew up in suburban Texas nervously exchanged hellos with new roommates. Their hometowns seemed impossibly distant: a Catholic, coastal town in Ireland, the far reaches of California, the East Coast prep circle. In the whirl of unfamiliar people and places, and also overwhelming privilege, I was suddenly unsure what I was supposed to be doing. Was I even good at piano? (Someone in a neighboring entryway performed in concert halls around the world while simultaneously studying French philosophy.) What did it mean to identify as Asian American? (One friend penned short stories, in prestigious literary journals, that poignantly probed her immigrant upbringing and the limitations of language, and another led pro-diversity rallies at a social justice organization.) And, most inexplicably, why did I have to wear a variation of the same tight-jeans-and-tube-top ensemble to every social event? (I showed up in my regular uniform of baggy everything and felt acutely out of place.)

It seemed silly to worry about things like clothes and campus community when headlines warned of nuclear war and Trump and the impending demise of our democracy. My concerns mirrored my sense of self: so very small. But as I listened to conversations unfolding in dining halls and coffee shops, I began to realize that it wasn’t just me. Everyone, from peers to professors to Starbucks strangers, was trying to make sense of their own words and feelings and actions. It is these little things, after all, that become the fabric of our lives. In Art History lectures and Hist and Lit tutorials, I found my voice. I continued to ask questions, louder now: Why have certain forms of music and art come to mean so much for different people? What drives individuals to identify so strongly with a particular social group, and for what purposes have such affiliations been constructed? How do people present themselves in person, or on the page, or via pixelated platforms? What circumstances have enabled these performances of the self, and what do they suggest about the state of multiculturalism or even the stability of systems of government? In short, I wanted to understand how the broader social, economic, and political transformations charted in history textbooks emerge from ordinary actions and events—from fashion to food, painting to music, literature to *LIFE* magazine ads.

The following program of study is a compilation of these intersecting interests. At its heart is the belief that the stuff of everyday life is a ripe site to parse the complicated and changing dynamics between people and nations, ones often drawn along the lines of race, class, and gender. This program demonstrates the ways in which my studies have enabled me to think deeply and differently about the world. I’ve purged my closet of destroyed denim, but I still think about the ways in which style trends, whether “mom” jeans or “dad” bods, both reinforce and reshape existing gender norms. After four years of rubbery HUDS chicken, my mouth waters for my grandma’s spice-filled Hunan cooking. Yet I also know that the cuisine I love served as a political tool in the Cold War, its aesthetic co-opted (but producers suppressed) by the kitchens of white America in order to domesticate a perceived Communist threat. Though my Chopin playing is definitely rusty, encounters with other forms of artistic expression, from provocative portraiture to contemporary Chinese poetry, have sharpened my perspectives on agency and representation. The five topics assembled below speak to my conviction that a bottoms-up approach to the art and experiences of the past generates rich terrain for critical inquiry. In pursuing this academic path, I hope that I, too, am participating in the kinds of conversations that help us make sense of our lives—and the histories from which they have emerged.

And oversized sweaters? I stand by my belief: they’re a timeless wardrobe staple.

Warmly,

Qianqian (QQ) Yang
List of Courses

Concentration Requirements

Tutorials

HIST-LIT 99  Senior Tutorial (2 semesters)
Completed research and writing for the senior thesis, which established the long-overlooked work of female, Japanese artist Toshiko Okanoue, as a critical voice on the condition of women in postwar Japan in the wake of American Occupation.

HIST-LIT 98  Junior Tutorial (2 semesters)
Collaboratively designed a course of study on challenges to conventional family structures in 1950s America and fashion as a form of cultural production and performance. Produced junior essay on the latter topic.

HIST-LIT 97  Sophomore Tutorial: Imagining Media (1 semester)
Charted innovations in communication technology over the past two centuries, ranging from the phonograph to the radio to the computer, and considered their impact on conceptions of autonomy and humanity.

Language Requirement

CHNSE 140A/B  Advanced Modern Chinese
Discussed contemporary social issues in China and classical literary texts. Language course conducted in Mandarin Chinese.

Field of Study: Modern World

AESTHINT 58  Modern Art and Modernity
Chronicled defining moments in European and American art, ranging from traditional forms (i.e., painting and sculpture) to new media (e.g., photography and video, installation, performance art) from the 1730s to the 1980s. Considered the place of artistic practice in the conditions of modern society.

CULTBLF 30  A History of Photography
Considered photography’s role in shaping social relations, memory, and ideologies from its origins in the early 19th century to the digital era. Integrated close-looking exercises at the Harvard Art Museums and careful study of writings on photography throughout time.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ENGLISH 170A</td>
<td>High and Low in Postwar America</td>
<td>Traced the economic, political, demographic, and technological changes in American culture that effected the shift from modernism to postmodernism during the three decades after World War II. Covered theoretical writings and artistic production, primarily poetry, fiction, art, film, and television.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GSD/HIS 4329**</td>
<td>Urbanization in the East Asian Region</td>
<td>Examined patterns of urbanization in major East Asian cities (i.e., Beijing, Macau, Hong Kong, Seoul, Shanghai, Singapore, Taipei, Tokyo) from their origins as settlements, some as early as the 14th century, to modern day. Explored both spatial changes, from the design of micro-level buildings to planning of macro-level districts, through blueprints, maps, and architectural renderings, as well as the political, social, economic, and environmental factors underlying development.</td>
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<tr>
<td>HAA 101</td>
<td>The Making of Art and Artifacts: History, Material, and Technique</td>
<td>Researched the histories of a number of key artistic techniques throughout history: paper-making, bronze casting, fresco painting, wood carving, etc. Also participated in hands-on workshops aimed at deepening the understanding of artists’ material considerations and conservators’ interventions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>HIST 1013</td>
<td>Introduction to Asian American History</td>
<td>Outlined the key historical processes undergirding Asian American community formation in the U.S. through a transnational lens. Studied political documents (court cases and immigration legislation), artistic production (books, films, and theater), and archival material (letters, interviews, and photographic records).</td>
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<tr>
<td>HIST 1602</td>
<td>Modern China</td>
<td>Surveyed major “-isms” in China, including republicanism, militarism, nationalism, and socialism, after the collapse of the imperial system in 1911. Focused on close analysis of primary source documents, from news articles to policy documents to propaganda posters.</td>
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<tr>
<td>HIST-LIT 90L</td>
<td>Stories of Slavery and Freedom</td>
<td>Engaged with pamphlets, petitions, autobiographies, sermons, speeches, and other written and visual forms of expression produced by enslaved African peoples in America. In so doing, considered the articulation of American ideals such as freedom, liberty, and justice through the voices of the “black Atlantic” rather than their oppressors.</td>
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Relevant Electives

**ENGLISH 179B**  
*Art Novels*  
Explored the relationship between the visual arts and the form of the American novel, beginning with the pioneering works of Henry James in the late 19th century to the contemporary ones of Thomas Pynchon. Read works of fiction alongside theoretical texts on the visual arts in the same period in order to think through how changing ideas in the visual arts influenced literary production, and vice versa.

**HAA 98R**  
*The Documentary Image: Truth and Crisis in American Society*  
Examined documentary as a genre in 20th-century American photography and film, focusing specifically on its claim to objective truth and critical capacity to capture moments of crises. Treated subject matter from state-endorsed propaganda films, photobooks promoting social reform, television reportage, and more.

**HAA 298W**  
*Photography in Weimar Germany, and in Exile, 1919–1959*  
Studied the development of avant-garde photography in Weimar Germany (and, after the rise of the National Socialists in 1933, in exile to the U.S.), particularly the oppositional movements of New Objectivity and New Vision. Combined detailed study of photographic materials with careful readings of major theoretical texts to understand how and to what effect the aesthetics and politics of photography changed during this formative period for the medium.

**TDM 124X**  
*Acting, Theory, and Public Speech*  
“Activated” seminal works of art theory via close reading assignments, instructor-led movement and voice workshops, as well as prepared presentations on the historical and biographical context of the text. Produced a final project, a group performance art piece, by reciting Rosalind Krauss’s critical essay on postmodernist art, “Sculpture in the Expanded Field” (1971), for five hours on loop through the Harvard Art Museums (!).

**indicates course taken at the graduate level**
Topics List

I. Visions of the Orient

Primary

Eugene Delacroix, *Women of Algiers in their Apartment* (1834)

Louis Dalrymple, “School Begins” in *Puck* magazine (1899)

“How to Tell Japs from the Chinese” in *LIFE* magazine (1941)


Transcript of interview with John Galliano and select designs from The Metropolitan Museum of Art, *China Through the Looking Glass* exhibition and past collections (2015)

Secondary

bell hooks, “Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance” from *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (1992)


II. The Oppositional Gaze: Women Looking Back

Primary

Sojourner Truth, “Ar’n’t I A Woman?” (1851)

Marianne Breslauer, *Selbshotrait, Berlin* (1933)


Secondary

Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” (1975)

Linda Nochlin, “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?” (1971)

III. Photographic Portraiture, Politics, and Power Across the Atlantic (1839–1939)

Primary

Frederick Douglass, “Pictures and Progress” (1861)

Samuel Bourne, *Mabaraja of Ratlam* (1870s)

Aleksandr Rodchenko, *Pioneer with a Bugle* and *Pioneer Girl* (1930)

August Sander, “Photography as a Universal Language” (1931)

Dorothea Lange, *Woman of the High Plains* (1937)

Secondary

Teju Cole, “When the Camera Was a Weapon of Imperialism (And When It Still Is)” (2019)


Allan Sekula, “On the Invention of Photographic Meaning” (1975)

IV. Migratory Modernisms: American Identity in the In-Between

Primary

Gertrude Stein, “Melanctha” from *Three Lives* (1909)

Isamu Noguchi, Letter to Man Ray from Poston War Relocation Camp, Arizona (1942)

James Baldwin, *Giovanni’s Room* (1956)


Secondary


Clement Greenberg, “Modernist Painting” (1961)
V. Romance of Remembered Space: Chinese Urban Nostalgia (1919–present)

Primary

Nanyang Tobacco Company, Yuenfengpai (1920s)
Depictions of Liang Jun on 1-yuan note (1960)
Yi Lei, Stanzas 5, 13, and 14 from “A Single Woman’s Bedroom” (1987)

Secondary


Ana M. Moya Pellitero, “Repairing the Rural-Urban Continuum: Cinema as Witness” from *Aspects of Urbanization in China: Shanghai, Hong Kong, Guangzhou* (2012)

Images

1. Eugene Delacroix, *Women of Algiers in their Apartment* (1834)

2. Louis Dalrymple, “School Begins” in *Puck* magazine (1899)

3. “How to Tell Japs from the Chinese” in *LIFE* magazine (1941)


Dresses from John Galliano for House of Dior, F/W 1997–98 (Top L); F/W 2002 RTW (Top R); S/S 2003 Couture (Bottom L and R)

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Images

5. Marianne Breslauer, *Selbsportrat, Berlin* (1933) (Top L)


8. Samuel Bourne, *Maharaja of Ratlam* (1870s)


![Image of Nanyang Tobacco Company, *Yuefupai* (1920s)](image139x78to311x202)

14. Depictions of Liang Jun on 1-yuan note (1960) (L)
15. Generic architectural rendering of *lilong* alleyway (R)

![Image of 1-yuan note (1960) and *lilong* alleyway](image346x71to505x251)
Bibliography

Primary
Rembrandt van Rijn, *Self-Portrait in Oriental Attire with Poodle* (1631)
Diego Velázquez, *Las Meninas* (1656)
Phillis Wheatley, “A Hymn to the Evening” and “On Being Brought from Africa to America” and “To the Right Honorable William, Earl of Dartmouth” (1773)
Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, *La Grande Odalisque* (1814)
Lord Byron, Stanza 5 and 22 in the Second Canto (2.V and 2.XXII) of “The Bride of Abydos” (1814)
Eugene Delacroix, *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* (1834)
Sojourner Truth, “Ar’n’t I a Woman?” (1851)
Solomon Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave* (1853 novel, 2013 movie)
Hiram Powers, *America* (1854)
Utagawa Hiroshige, *Plum Estate, Kameido, No. 30* from *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo* woodblock print series (1857)
Harriet E. Wilson, *Our Nig; or, Sketches from the Life of a Free Black* (1859)
Frederick Douglass, “Pictures and Progress” (1861)
Edouard Manet, *Olympia* (1863)
Samuel Bourne, *Maharaja of Ratlam* (1870s)
Chinese Exclusion Act (1882)
Henry James, *Portrait of a Lady* (1881) and “The Art of Fiction” (1884)
Edgar Degas, *The Tub* (1886)
Vincent van Gogh, *Flowering Plum Orchard (after Hiroshige)* (1887)
Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives* (1890)
Paul Gauguin, *Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?* (1897)
United States v. Wong Kim Ark, 169 U.S. 649 (1898)
Keppler & Schwarzmann, “A Trifle Embarrassed” (1898) and Louis Dalrymple, “School Begins” cartoon in *Puck* magazine (1899)
“‘Stop it, Kid!’ Cries Congress to the American Boy” cartoon from the *San Francisco Call* (1908)
Lewis W. Hine, “Social Photography; How the Camera May Help in the Social Uplift” (1909)
James Joyce, “The Dead” from *Dubliners* (1914)
Marcel Duchamp, *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* (1912) and *Fountain* (1917)
Willa Cather, *My Antonia* (1918)
Hannah Hoch, *Cut with the Kitchen Knife Through the Last Weimar Beer-Belly Cultural Epoch of Germany* (1919) and *From an Ethnographic Museum* series (1930s)
Marcel Breuer and Gunta Stozl, “African” or “Romantic” Chair (1921)
Radio Act of 1912 (1912)
Nanyang Tobacco Company, *Yuefenpai* (1920s)
Ozawa v. United States, 260 U.S. 178 (1922) and United States v. Bhagat Singh Thind (1923)
Ernest Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises* (1926)
W. E. B. Du Bois, “Criteria of Negro Art” (1926)
Siegfried Kracauer, “Photography” (1927)
Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (1927)
John Heartfield, *The Face of Fascism* (1928)
Aleksandr Rodchenko, *Pioneer with a Bugle* and *Pioneer Girl* (1930)
Pablo Picasso, *Guitar* (1912), *Au Bon Marche* (1913), and *Les Demoiselles d’Avignon* (1930)
August Sander, “Photography as a Universal Language” (1931)
Hannah Hoch, “A Few Words on Photomontage” (1934)
Mme. Chiang on the New Life Movement, 1935
Walter Benjamin, “Little History of Photography” (1931) and “The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility” (1936)
Pare Lorentz, *The Plow that Broke the Plains* film (1936)
Dorothea Lange, *Migrant Mother* (1936) and *Woman of the High Plains* (1937)
*LIFE Magazine*, “How to Tell the Japs from the Chinese” (December 22, 1941) and *TIME Magazine*, “How to Tell Your Friends from the Japs” (1941)
Executive Order 9066 (1941)
Dr. Seuss, “Waiting for the Signal from Home” cartoon (1942)
Isamu Noguchi, Letter to Man Ray from Poston War Relocation Camp, Arizona (1942)
Carlos Bulosan, *America Is in the Heart* (1943)
Korematsu v. United States, 323 U.S. 214 (1944)
Mao Zedong, “U.S. Imperialism is a Paper Tiger” (1956)
Jack Kerouac, *On the Road* (1957)
Depictions of Liang Jun on 1-yuan note (1960)
James Baldwin, *Giovanni’s Room* (1956) and “Nothing Personal” (1964)
San Francisco State University Third World Liberation Front Declaration of Position (1968)
Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas* (1972)
Deng Xiaoping, Four Modernizations policy (1977)
Yi Lei, Stanzas 5, 13, and 14 from “A Single Woman’s Bedroom” (1987)
Transcript of interview with John Galliano and select designs from The Metropolitan Museum of Art, *China Through the Looking Glass* exhibition and past collections (2015)
Ocean Vuong, “Aubade with Burning City” from *Night Sky with Exit Wounds* (2016)

**Secondary**
Jeff Allred, “From Eye to We” in *American Modernism and Depression Documentary* (2010)
Shelton Barrie, Justyna Karakiewicz, and Thomas Kvan, “Massing and Rising: The Postwar Decades” from The Making of Hong Kong: From Vertical to Volumetric (2011)
Roland Barthes, “Myth Today” in Mythologies (1957)
Charles Baudelaire, “The Painter of Modern Life” (1863)
Teju Cole, “When the Camera Was a Weapon of Imperialism (And When It Still Is.)” (2019)
Michael Fried, “Art and Objecthood” (1967)
Clement Greenberg, “Avant-Garde and Kitsch” (1939) and “Modernist Painting” (1960)
Brett M. Van Hoesen, “Performing the Culture of Weimar Postcolonialism: Hannah Hoch’s From an Ethnographic Museum and its Legacy” in Hannah Hoch (2014)
Moon-Ho Jung, “Outlawing ‘Coolies’: Race, Nation, and Empire in the Age of Emancipation” (2005)
bell hooks, “Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance” from Black Looks: Race and Representation (1992)
Rosalind Krauss, “A View of Modernism” (1972) and “Sculpture in the Expanded Field” (1979)
Maud Lavin, “ringl + pit: The Representation of Women in German Advertising” (2001)
Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” (1975)
Linda Nochlin, “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?” (1971)
Robert Morris, “Notes on Sculpture” (1966)
Alexander Nemerov, Soulmaker: The Times of Lewis Hine (2016)
Mark Padoongpatt, ““Oriental Cookery”: Devouring Asian and Pacific Cuisine during the Cold War” in Eating Asian America: A Food Studies Reader (2013)


Ana M. Moya Pellitero, “Repairing the Rural-Urban Continuum: Cinema as Witness” from Aspects of Urbanization in China: Shanghai, Hong Kong, Guangzhou (2012)


Annie McClanahan, “Photography and Foreclosure” in Dead Pledges: Debt, Crisis, and Twenty-First Century Culture (2017)


Paula Rabinowitz, They Must Be Represented: The Politics of Documentary (1994)

Peter G. Rowe, East Asia Modern: Shaping the Contemporary City (2005)

James Ryan, “Photographing the Natives” in Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire (1998)

Edward Said, Orientalism (1978)

Meyer Schapiro, “Nature of Abstract Art” (1937)

Lena Scheen, “Sensual, But No Clue of Politics: Shanghai’s Longtang Houses” in Aspects of Urbanization in China (2012)


Jonathan D. Solomon, “It Makes a Village: Hong Kong’s Podium Shopping Malls as Global Villages” in Aspects of Urbanization in China (2012)


Susan Sontag, “Against Interpretation” (1964)


Sally Stein, “The Graphic Ordering of Desire: Modernization of a Middle-Class Women’s Magazine” (1985)


