

Week 1: History of Asian Studies in the American Academy

Sunday, June 11: Arrival and Welcome Reception – TBD

Monday, June 12: Introductions and Orientations

Tuesday, June 13

The Institute will begin with an overview of the history of Area Studies in the American academy. The first session will trace the division of an amorphous “Orient” into “regional areas” and the transformation of the Orientalist scholar into the nation expert as the academic paradigm. How did the austere philologist poring over ancient manuscripts become the agent of European empires? In what global contexts did these shifts take place and how did they impact the reorganization of academic disciplines? What role did the American academy play in the articulation and institutionalization of these new modes for producing knowledge?

Wednesday, June 14 – Free Day

Thursday, June 15

The second session will be devoted to the institutional history of Area Studies at the University of Michigan. Home to the Army Japanese Language School during the Second World War, where instructors included Japanese Americans recently released from internment camps, the University of Michigan became a particularly important hub for Area Studies of Asia at the conclusion of the war. By reading a selection of materials from the university archives, we will discuss the role of government funding agencies in the creation and maintenance of area centers, the premise of collaboration between the humanities and social sciences upon which these centers were built, and the partnership of these centers with newly created regional departments.

Friday, June 16

A session at the University of Michigan [Bentley Historical Library](#) will introduce the Institute participants to various collections significant to the history of Asian Studies in the US. These include the Angell Papers (UM President James B. Angell served as the US Minister to China from 1880 to 1881), the American-Philippines Relations Collections, the Army Japanese Language School Collection, and the records of the Association of Asian Studies, headquartered in Ann Arbor.

During the next three weeks, Institute participants will be able to pursue individual projects at the University of Michigan archives and/or collaborate to create teaching modules. Wednesdays will be set aside for archival research or curriculum design. Participants choosing to conduct archival research will receive library support, engage in one-on-one conversations about their projects with Institute instructors, and join a peer research group. Participants choosing to work on teaching modules in small teams will receive advice from the [Center for Research on Learning and Teaching](#) on effective curricular design, and participate in Wednesday afternoon workshops.

Week 2: Christopher Hill and Xiaobing Tang – *Kokoro*

Monday, June 19

We will start this week by learning about Natsume Sōseki, the author of *Kokoro*, and his place in modern Japanese literature. After talking about historical events in early twentieth century Japan—notably, the death of the Meiji Emperor in 1912—we will turn to circumstances of the novel’s publication and responses to it. We will then discuss the development of the modern novel in Japan and why *Kokoro* has been regarded as a canonical text. In the process, we will also make comparisons with the development of modern Chinese and Korean literatures.

Tuesday, June 20

After situating *Kokoro* in its overlapping historical and literary contexts, we are ready to discuss the novel along several related themes. We will begin by considering the first-person narrator, his relationship with Sensei, and the experience of youth. We will then discuss how Sensei compares with the narrator’s own father and what these relationships suggest about life in the city and the countryside in Japan at the turn of the twentieth century.

Wednesday, June 21 – Free Day

Thursday, June 22

As we get deeper into the novel, we realize that Sensei’s “testament” is a major part of the text. We will consider how we may read it and what relationship it bears to the previous parts of the novel. Specifically, we want to discuss the question of how reliable Sensei is as a narrator. By the end of the novel, we also see an explicit reference and connection to the passing of the Meiji era. This moment provides us with an opportunity to reflect on the author’s intention and the extent to which this novel demands to be read as an allegory of national history or even identity.

Friday, June 23

We will start this session with an open discussion. Which parts of *Kokoro*—characters, episodes, and so forth—most sparked our imagination? What can *Kokoro* tell us about its times? About our times? We then will talk about ways to use *Kokoro* in class. What themes would you teach with *Kokoro*? Are there writing exercises you could design around the novel? Would you pair it with a similarly iconic novel from the United States or another country?

Week 3: Christi Merrill and Varuni Bhatia – *Ghare Baire (The Home and the World)*

Monday, June 26: Historical Context

The first class will be conducted as a mix of lecture and discussion and will focus on the following aspects:

1. Historical Context: British Colonialism, Anti-colonial Nationalism, the Swadeshi Movement (the immediate context of the novel)
2. Tagore and *Home and the World*: Publishing history, reception of the novel
3. Tagore's critique of nationalism in this novel
4. Comparing Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay's *Anandamath* (Abbey of Bliss) and *The Home and the World*, especially in their representation of the patriot/ nationalist figure (the ascetics of the former who worship 'Bharat Mata' as a Mother Goddess versus the virile male of the latter for whom the nation is up for grabs)

Tuesday, June 27: Tagore in Translation

How to read Tagore's novel in English translation? Christi Merrill's lecture will draw on an article she co-wrote with translator and literature scholar M. Asaddudin on 20th-century Indian fiction in translation for the fifth volume of the forthcoming Oxford History of Literary Translation in English, edited by Lawrence Venuti, himself a translator and literature scholar interested in rethinking how we approach translated literature. In this lecture she will elaborate on examples discussed in the article (such as the two translations of *Home and the World* just read, and two translations of *Anandamath* where the "vande mataram!" cry appears in literature for the first time) to give more detailed context of comparisons between versions produced in colonial and postcolonial India to demonstrate how to approach these texts beyond a melancholic attachment to a "lost" original, while still respecting the Bengali source text. These ideas will then be discussed with the group as a whole in light of the pre-class writing exercises and readings.

Wednesday, June 28 – Free Day

Thursday, June 29: Complicating Binaries

The third class will serve to complicate the binaries between “the home” and “the world”. We will do this as a group in the following ways:

1. By identifying various places in the narrative where the “home” and the “world” are specifically invoked
2. By analyzing different meanings of these terms (Home as the inner or women’s quarters, as the domestic sphere, as the nation? World as the living room, the public sphere, the global/ international/ humanistic?)
3. Gender, Love and Marriage in the novel

This session will be organized around group exercises that will include: identifying passages; thinking through binaries as antonyms, as a spectrum, or as complimentary terms / concepts. We will spend a good part of the session going through the passages and scenes identified by the participants in the workshop. Our aim will be to see the semantic and conceptual breadth that these terms are able to indicate in this novel, thereby opening it up for multiple interpretations.

Friday, June 30: Tagore on the World Stage

How do we approach this novel as a text of world literature? Six years before Tagore won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913 (the first writer from Asia to do so) for his own translation of the poem a.k.a. “song offering” Gitanjali, he wrote an essay in Bengali on “World Literature” in which he warns fellow readers—here in Swapan Chakravorty’s translation—not to approach “universal literature” in the “rustic light” of parochialism but instead that we recognize its potential for “universal humanity” which allows us to “perceive the interrelations among all human efforts at expression.” Postcolonial studies theorists starting with Edward Said have taught us to be suspicious of such universals (especially in colonial contexts), and yet Tagore’s concerns in his 1907 essay anticipate the stinging rebuttal Aijaz Ahmad posed to Frederic Jameson at the end of the century: Must all Third World writers be read only in terms of “national allegory”? Christi Merrill will give an overview of debates over world literature and its connection to comparative literature (that Tagore mentions in his essay) to suggest strategies for combining attentiveness to the specificity of local historical context with appreciation for textual moments evincing “universal humanity” while still being mindful of Said’s critique. This will then form the basis for a discussion linking the ideas in the lecture with the pre-class writing exercise and readings.

Week 4 – Deirdre de la Cruz and Allan Lumba – *Noli Me Tangere*

Monday, July 3

Monday’s seminar serves as a broad introduction to the historical context in which the *Noli me tangere* was written. We will briefly cover the era from sixteenth-century Spanish arrival and Catholic conversion to nineteenth-century liberal reforms in the Philippines. Our goal is to illuminate the historical significance of the novel in relation to anti-colonialism, Philippine nationalism, Asian literature, and world literature.

Tuesday, July 4 – Free Day

Wednesday, July 5

Wednesday will be dedicated to close readings of the novel in light of secondary texts on the following themes: government; religion; gender and sexuality; race; language; and capitalism. Our goal is to develop a comparative approach to teaching the novel that may be adopted for a variety of undergraduate populations and subject courses.

Thursday, July 6

Thursday will be dedicated to exploring the afterlives of Rizal’s *Noli* in the twentieth and twenty-first century. First, we will focus on how the novel and the figure of Rizal have been deployed to various political ends, including in the transition to American empire, for state commemoration, and nationalist feeling both within the Philippines and in its diaspora. Second, we will ask how Rizal and novel’s political critiques can speak to the contemporary issues faced by the Philippines and the world.

Friday, July 7: Final Session

During the final session of the Institute, we will both look back and look ahead, weaving together the histories of interpretation surrounding the three novels we have discussed and the institutional histories of Area Studies. We will begin by discussing various critiques of Area Studies premised upon the continuation of “the American Century.” The sharpest critique has come from Asianists based in Asia, who have sought to build networks of “inter-Asian” scholarship that circumvent the centrality of the US in the production of knowledge about Asia. How do such endeavors re-envision Asia? What would be gained and what would be lost? The final session of the Institute will be devoted to an open group discussion about the future of Asian Studies beyond Area Studies.