TAKE-HOME FINAL EXAM

Due Tuesday, December 22, via email
Worth 25% of your grade

Since this is a take-home exam, I expect your responses to be thorough, complex, and coherent. Your responses should also take into account our in-class discussions of the texts. Take as much time as you want reviewing and preparing, but try to take no longer than 2 hours to write the actual exam.

Format and Other Details

- Email completed exams as DOC/DOCX or PDF files to caroline.hong@qc.cuny.edu.
- Exams should be typed, double-spaced, in standard 12-point font, with 1-inch margins, page numbers, a full heading, and parenthetical citations in MLA style (when applicable).
- Late assignments will be penalized a full letter grade each day they are late.

Part I – IDENTIFICATIONS

Each ID is worth 3 points. This section is worth a total of 12 points.

For each passage, write 1-2 paragraphs in which you…

a. Identify the author and the title of the work. (worth ½ point)

b. Close read the passage, paying attention to its language and imagery. (worth 2 points)

c. Discuss the passage’s significance and connect it to the text’s overall themes. (worth ½ point)

1. “In so many ways, his family’s life feels like a string of accidents, unforeseen, unintended, one incident begetting another. It had started with his father’s train wreck, paralyzing him at first, later inspiring him to move as far as possible, to make a new life on the other side of the world. There was the disappearance of the name Gogol’s great-grandmother had chosen for him, lost in the mail somewhere between Calcutta and Cambridge. This had led, in turn, to the accident of his being named Gogol, defining and distressing him for so many years. He had tried to correct that randomness, that error. And yet it had not been possible to reinvent himself fully, to break from that mismatched name. His marriage had been something of a misstep as well. And the way his father had slipped away from them, that had been the worst accident of all, as if the preparatory work of death had been done long ago, the night he was nearly killed, and all that was left for him was one day, quietly, to go. And yet these events have formed Gogol, shaped him, determined who he is. They were things for which it was impossible to prepare but which one spent a lifetime looking back at, trying to accept, interpret, comprehend. Things that should never have happened, that seemed out of place and wrong, these were what prevailed, what endured, in the end.”
2. “And she wondered for the first time what it had been like for the original Ishidas and Sakais, the desperate or brave ones who’d left their home country to try their luck in this new, wide land. She wondered about the battles they’d had, amongst themselves, against others; she wondered how they struggled and suffered. And she knew, unmistakably, that while they’d acquired and achieved; while they’d cut ties with their old land and dropped anchor in this new one, the cost had been high, the losses massive. She was where she was, her parents where they were, because of what Frank and the other elders had been through. But the original Issei had been like the mothers on the sidewalk, and Frank and the second generation like the children—poor, lost, enclosed in themselves, not yet ready for their struggles with the larger world. The swarms of children looked to Jackie like a deep, slow river, which she wanted, now, to enter and be a part of, but which she needed just as deeply to avoid.”

3. “Sometimes, when he wanted to hide or not outright lie, he chose to speak in English. He used to break into it when he argued with my mother, and it drove her crazy when he did and she would just plead, ‘No, no!’ as thought he had suddenly introduced a switchblade into a clean fistfight. Once, when he was having some money problems with a store, he started berating her with some awful stream of nonsensical street talk, shouting ‘my hot mama shit ass tight cock sucka,’ and ‘slant-eye spic-and-span motha-fucka’ (he had picked it up, no doubt, from his customers). I broke into their argument and started yelling at him, making sure I was speaking in complete sentences about his cowardice and unfairness, shooting back at him his own medicine, until he slammed both palms on the table and demanded, ‘You shut up! You shut up!’ I kept at him anyway, using the biggest words I knew, whether they made sense or not, school words like ‘socioeconomic’ and ‘intangible,’ anything I could lift from my dizzy burning thoughts and hurl against him, until my mother, who’d been perfectly quiet the whole time, whacked me hard across the back of the head and shouted in Korean, Who do you think you are?”

4. “Every mispronunciation is like a mouth shooting bullets
   the spit of syllables building from a gullet turn barrel
   triggering precise memories attached to precise feelings
   like shame inflected in my parents’ broken English
   and the guilt of witnessing daily sacrifices by my mother and father
   their dreams and youth slaughtered for money, food, my perfect English.
   Every misplaced tongue targets my foreignness, my un-belonging, my vulnerabilities.
So when I get angry or curse you for your mispronunciation
   Please don’t tell me I can’t do that
   Don’t tell me to take it easy
   Don’t scold me afterwards for making a point of it in public
Don’t downplay my childhood wounds
Don’t shrink me down any further
   Please just listen.”
Part II – SHORT ANSWERS

Answer the following questions in 1–2 paragraphs each.
Each question is worth 2 points. This section is worth a total of 6 points.

1. Define polyculturalism, and provide a specific example from Chang-Rae Lee’s *Native Speaker*.

2. Define the grammar of expectancy, and provide a specific example from Jhumpa Lahiri’s *The Namesake*.

3. Define a palimpsest, and briefly discuss how it works metaphorically in Nina Revoyr’s *Southland*. Provide a specific example from the text.

Part III – MINI-ESSAY

Write a short essay (about 5–7 paragraphs) in response to the following prompt.
This section is worth a total of 7 points (2 points for thesis/argumentation + 5 points for evidence/analysis).

**The Future of Asian American Literature** – Throughout this course, we have been reading and discussing different (and sometimes competing) visions of Asian America and its literature. For example, some of our texts portray characters who move toward an assimilated future, unburdened of its connection to history and/or community, while other texts imagine a future built on acts of remembering the past and embracing community. Which vision do you think will or should prevail? What will or should Asian American literature look like in the future? What cultural forms, literary strategies, narrative techniques, themes, issues, and/or questions from the past do you think will persist and stay relevant in the twenty-first century, and which will change or disappear? Craft a specific and complex argument that imagines the future of Asian American literature by discussing its past, and support it with textual evidence and analysis from 3 different texts from our course—and at least 1 text must be from before the midterm. You are not required to close read your textual evidence, but there should be some discussion and analysis of specific examples. I invite you to use this mini-essay as an opportunity to talk about what you’ve learned and the texts you really liked and connected with.