Parallel to the contradictions and consequences of globalization’s uneven development, neoliberalism’s promise of freedom and flexibility for all really means redistribution of wealth from the poor to the rich. Neoliberal discourse and policy have become naturalized and embedded in our current understandings of democracy, the market, the political, culture, and the social. Much has been written about neoliberalism in relation to the economy and capital accumulation, but what about it in relation to race, culture, and specifically literature? How has the genealogy and development of neoliberal thought and policy been informed by anti-colonial and anti-racist struggles and more recently by multiculturalism? How has neoliberalism as an institutional condition informed Asian American cultural production? And in turn, how have Asian American authors addressed liberal humanism and more recently the effects of neoliberalism and neoliberal multiculturalism?

Exploring how Asian American culture serves as a site of criticality, the course will explore how select novels by Asian American writers expose the promises and the contradictions of liberal humanism and neoliberalism. Can culture, specifically literature, offer modes of resistance and/or alternatives to other kinds of systems of living and being? We will read novels by Jessica Hagedorn, Ruth Ozeki, Karen Tei Yamashita, Pamela Lu, Azar Nafisi, and Larissa Lai.

GEs: Arts & Humanities and Social Sciences