Event Title:
Expat Writers in and from Asia: Questioning the Term “Expatriate”

Event Description:
The expatriate writer was often romanticized during the twentieth century, but the reality of writing overseas is more complicated, especially in relation to various forms of privilege. This panel interrogates the nature of the expatriate writer today and whether the term “expatriate” is meaningful or misleading. Five writers from the U.S. Thailand, and the Philippines share their experiences living overseas and wrestling with their position in their newfound home.

Participants:
Sybil Baker, Collier Nogues, James Shea, Ploi Pirapokin, Lawrence Lacambra Ypil

Questions:

- What does the term “expatriate” mean to you? Do you consider yourself an expatriate writer?

- Is the term “expatriate writer” problematic and inherently racist as it is associated with western white people? Can the term be reclaimed or should it be used only as a historical reference to a canon of literature (e.g., Hemingway, Bowles, James, Barnes, etc.)

- Is “expatriate” a term that is meaningful anymore, giving that writers of certain ethnicities and cultures are not writing from where they are from? Also, does the term, if used today, have a negative or unexamined connotation?

- What is “immigrant” literature? Does this differ from expat literature? Can you give some examples?

- Can you give examples of more recent work that subverts our assumptions of what an expatriate novel is? (e.g. The Sympathizer, etc.)

- Can we/do we have the right to critique from the “outside”?

- What does authenticity mean in literature?