

THE CHINESE IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE IN AMERICA

Spring 2019, Wednesday 12-2:45pm, William James Hall 305

Dr. Nicole Newendorp

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Office Hours: F 2-4 & by appointment most days in WJH 380

Note: This course will be lotteried. You can access the lottery form [here](#).

OVERVIEW

Asian Americans are currently the fastest growing immigrant group in the United States. Chinese immigrants, who first began coming in significant numbers to the U.S. around 1850, make up the largest ethnic group of contemporary Asian Americans. In this course, we will focus on the history and contemporary social development of Boston's Chinatown as a case study to examine the experiences of Chinese immigrants in the U.S. from the 1880s until the present day. Our explorations of these experiences will include historical, anthropological, and sociological perspectives to focus on major themes such as: the formation early Chinatowns in the late 19th century; the relationship of U.S. immigration policy to the social and economic development of Chinese immigrant communities throughout the 20th century; transnational connections between the U.S. and China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong; post-World War II Chinese American activism; and 21st century changes to traditional Chinese migration and settlement patterns in the U.S., including new "satellite" Chinatown communities and ethnoburbs.

Adopting a chronology developed by MIT professor emeritus (and former Chinatown resident) Tunney Lee, we will examine Boston's Chinatown through the following periods: "Beginnings" (roughly 1880-early 1900s), "Emergence" (1920s-1940s); "Expansion" (1950s-1970s); and "Consolidation and Strengthening" (1980s-present). Oral histories, personal narrative accounts, and documentary films will make up an integral part of our course materials. For each time period, we will try to answer the following questions: what is happening in Boston's Chinatown? And how does that compare to the experiences of Chinese immigrants throughout the U.S.?

Because this class is also an activity-based learning class, our discussions and assignments will not only focus on this history but also seek to make relevant connections between this history and students' contemporary service work in communities that include Chinese immigrants. By focusing on these two issues in tandem—an academic exploration of Chinese immigrant experiences and the needs and characteristics of contemporary Chinese immigrants in the greater Boston area—we will actively address the additional questions of how social sciences can contribute to solving community needs and how involvement in community-based service work might improve through having a better understanding of the historical and sociological context of that community.

Overall, the four main goals of this course are:

- To learn about the social and economic development of Boston's Chinatown from the 1880s until today, as well as how this development compares to Chinese immigrant communities in other parts of the United States
- To learn about the different constituent actors and roles they have played in the development of Boston's Chinatown, along with the varying perspectives contemporary groups have for Chinatown's future
- To explore ways that the social sciences can contribute to addressing contemporary community needs and social problems
- To develop a strongly reflective sense of students' roles and contributions as service providers in the communities they serve

REQUIREMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS

Service Work:

This course is an engaged learning course and has a community-based service requirement. To enroll in the class, you **MUST** also be an active participant in a Harvard-affiliated service program interacting with Chinese Americans or Chinese immigrants in the greater Boston area. Otherwise, you will be unable to

successfully complete written assignments and contribute to class discussion. While the course itself will take Boston's Chinatown as a case study for learning about the experiences of Chinese in the U.S. more broadly, your service work does not necessarily need to be in Boston's Chinatown. Please ask me if you have questions about the fit between your service work and the class!

Class Discussion:

This course is a seminar, and so class participation is essential to its success. I expect you to come to class each week having completed all readings and journal entries (see below), so that you are fully prepared to discuss the assigned material and make connections between the readings and your service work. All students will make two presentations to the group over the course of the semester. One presentation will introduce the organization where you do your service group to the class, and the second presentation will be on your final project. Additionally, there will be two class fieldtrips which will greatly contribute to your understanding of our class material.

Written Assignments:

Each week **by noon on the Tuesday before class**, you will need to turn in a 2-page journal entry drawing on both your service experience and that week's readings. Prompts will be provided the Friday before each entry is due. In addition to your weekly journal, you will have two other major written assignments to complete for the class. The first is a **take-home midterm due by Friday, March 15th at 4pm**. The second assignment will be a 10-page final paper which will be part of a larger final project which I will explain in more detail later in the term. In short, the final project will consist of three parts, including an interview with a Chinese immigrant of your choice, the development of the interview into a short (1-2 page) narrative text, and a 10-page paper that explains how your interviewee fits within Chinatown's history and contemporary social development making direct connection to course themes and texts. **The final project is tentatively due Monday, May 13th.**

Attendance and late policies:

I expect you to attend each class meeting unless you are sick with a fever or experiencing personal distress, as documented by your Resident Dean. Participation in Harvard extracurricular activities, groups, plays, or the like does not constitute grounds for an excused absence.

Journals are due each week and are graded largely on completion, so as long as you turn something in, you will get credit for your work. You are allowed one free pass during the semester but are still responsible for coming to class having done the readings that week.

The mid-term exam and the final project will be graded down 1/3 of a letter grade per 24 hours late, unless I receive a note from your doctor or Resident Dean explaining that the lateness is excused due to illness or personal emergency. If you think you will have problems with either assignment deadline, please let me know as soon as possible!

Grading:

Class Discussion/Participation-25%

Journal Completion-25%

Midterm Exam-15%

Final Project-35% (long paper 20%, narrative text 10%, interview transcript 5%)

Collaboration:

You should feel free to discuss your ideas for paper topics and sources with your classmates or others who can enhance your understanding of the material by engaging the ideas we address in class in helpful, new, or thought-provoking ways. However, you must ensure that all written assignments that you turn in to class result from your own research and writing and reflect your own ideas and viewpoints on the material you've studied. You will also need to cite all sources and references and acknowledge any help received. Please feel free to ask me any questions that you have on this subject relating to your class projects.

Book to Buy:

To, Wing-kai and the Chinese Historical Society of New England. *Chinese in Boston: 1870-1965*. Arcadia Publishing 2008.

Available at the COOP and on Amazon. All other materials are on the course website.

COURSE OUTLINE

Week 1 (January 30): Introduction to the class

Introduction to the class, including discussion of course syllabus and goals and students' service work. "Quiz" on contemporary Chinese immigration stats in MA and the U.S. (Migration Policy Institute paper). Lottery form completion by midnight.

Week 2 (February 6): ALL CLASS FIELDTRIP TO CHINATOWN

Boston's Chinatown—we will visit Chinatown to walk around and learn about its population, demographics, transportation, and so on. We will also eat lunch!

Movie:

PBS American Experience: *The Chinese Exclusion Act* (2018). Available through Amazon Prime for streaming, rental cost is \$4.99. If this cost presents a difficulty, let me know. Note that the movie is about 2 hours and 45 minutes long, and you will need to watch it to complete the journal assignment for this week.

Week 3 (February 13): Boston Chinatown Beginnings—Early Society and Social Networks

Readings and video:

[Yu, Renqiu. 2011. *To Save China, To Save Ourselves: The Chinese Hand Laundry Alliance of New York*. Chapter 1, Chinese Laundrymen in New York City, pp. 8-30.](#)

[Lee, Anthony. 2008. *A Shoemaker's Story: Being Chiefly about French Canadian Immigrants, Enterprising Photographers, Rascal Yankees, and Chinese Cobblers in a 19th Century Factory Town*. Selections, pp. 1-7.](#)

[Chen, Yong. 2000. *Chinese San Francisco 1850-1943: A Trans-Pacific Community*. Chapter 3, "The Social Landscape of Chinese San Francisco," pp. 70-95.](#)

[Wong, K. Scott. "The Eagle Seeks a Helpless Quarry": Chinatown, the Police, and the Press: The 1903 Boston Chinatown Raid Revisited." In *Asian American Studies Now*, ed. Jean Wu and Thomas Chen, Rutgers U Press, 2010, pp. 67-83.](#)

To, *Chinese in Boston*, pp. 9-22.

A Chinatown Banquet: 1) [Family Associations](#) (4:25); 2) [Link](#)(3:40); Laundryman video

[It Dates Back That Far](#) (6:35); and 4) [Boston's "Lower East Side"](#) (3:50)

****All Class Fieldtrip to the Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, MA—President's Day Monday February 18th****

Week 4 (February 20): Transnationalism and Family Life

Reading and video:

[Chin, Tung Pok \(with Winifred C. Chin\). 2000. *Paper Son: One Man's Story*. "The Early Years," pp. 5-37.](#)

Hsu, Madeline. 2000. *Dreaming of Gold, Dreaming of Home: Transnationalism and Migration Between the United States and South China, 1881-1943*. Chapter 3, "Slipping Through the Golden Gate," pp. 55-89 AND Chapter 4, "Surviving the Gold Mountain Dream: Taishanese American Families," pp. 90-123.

[Nee, Victor and Brett de Bary. 1972. *Longtime Californians: A Documentary Study of an American Chinatown*. Chapter 6: "Growing Up," pp. 148-181.](#)

A Chinatown Banquet: 1) [Firewood](#) (2:03); 2) [Bootlegging](#) (2:17); 3) [Chinatown's Social Security System](#) (2:53); 4) [The Quincy School](#) (2:33)

Week 5 (February 27): Restaurants and Food

Readings and video:

Lee, Heather. "A Life Cooking for Others: The Work and Migration Experiences of a Chinese Restaurant Worker in New York City, 1920-1946." In *Eating Asian America*, eds. Robert Ku, Martin Manalansan, and Anita Mannur, NYU Press, 2013, pp. 53-77.

Chen, Yong. 2014. *Chop Suey, USA: The Story of Chinese Food in America*, Chapters 5 and 7, "The Rise of Chinese Restaurants," pp. 92-101 and "Chinese American Cuisine" and the Authenticity of Chop Suey," pp. 126-152.

"Check, Please!: Health and Working Conditions in San Francisco Chinatown Restaurants." A Report by the Chinese Progressive Association.

http://www.cpasf.org/sites/default/files/CPA%20full%20report_ENG_0.pdf

To, *Chinese in Boston*, pp. 23-54

The Search for General Tso, available for rent on Amazon Prime (please contact Nicole if you need help covering this cost)

Week 6 (March 6): Origins of the "Model Minority"

Readings:

Wong, K. Scott. "From Pariah to Paragon: Shifting Images of Chinese Americans during World War II." In *Chinese Americans and the Politics of Race and Culture*, eds. Sucheng Chan and Madeleine Hsu, Temple University Press, 2008, pp. 153-171.

Hsu, Madeline. 2009. "Befriending the 'Yellow Peril': Chinese Students and Intellectuals and the Liberalization of U.S. Immigration Laws, 1950-1965." *The Journal of American "East Asian Relations*, vol. 16, no. 3, pp. 139-162.

Espiritu, Yen Le. "Changing Lives: World War II and the Postwar Years." In *Asian American Studies Now*, ed. Jean Wu and Thomas Chen, Rutgers U Press, 2010, pp. 151-157 ONLY.

Yeh, Chiou-Ling. 2012. "A Saga of Democracy": Toy Len Goon, American Mother of the Year, and the Cultural Cold War." *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 81, No. 3, pp. 432-461.

To, *Chinese in Boston*, pp. 55-106

Week 7 (March 13): No Class

TAKE HOME MIDTERM Due by Friday, March 15th at 4:00pm

Note that to be able to complete the midterm, you will first have to watch Kenneth Eng's documentary: *My Life in China* (2016). It's about an hour and a half long and free to watch if you have an Amazon Prime membership. If not, there's a rental cost of \$3.99. Let me know if this cost presents a difficulty.

Week 8 (March 27): Destruction and Rebirth of Boston's Chinatown "Urban renewal and Development in the 1950s-1960s

Readings and video:

O'Connor, Thomas H. 1993. *Building a New Boston: Politics and Urban Renewal, 1950-1970*. Northeastern University Press. "Visions and Design," pp. 66-88.

Chinatown Atlas: <http://chinatownatlas.org/>

To, *Chinese in Boston*, pp. 107-120

A Chinatown Banquet: 1) [The Original Settlers are Now the Strangers](#) (4:01); 2) [Syriantown](#) (6:18); 3) [Recreation in the '50s](#) (4:05); 4) [The Chinese Merchant's Building](#) (5:45); 5) [Hudson Street Stories](#) (5:59); 6) [Traffic](#) (2:30)

Week 9 (April 3): Chinatown as an Ethnic Enclave "Assimilation and the New Immigrant Arrivals post-1965

Reading:

Zhou, Min. 1992. *Chinatown: The Socioeconomic Potential of an Urban Enclave*. Chapters 4-7 (â€œUprooted: The New Arrivals,â€ â€œThe Rise of the Economic Enclave,â€ â€œThe Ethnic Labor Force and its Labor Market Experience,â€ and â€œThe Other Half of the Sky: Socioeconomic Adaptation of Immigrant Womenâ€), pp. 69-184.

Week 10 (April 10): Activism and Mobilization

Readings and video:

Omatsu, Glenn. â€œThe â€œFour Prisonsâ€ And The Movements of Liberation: Asian American Activism From the 1960s to the 1990s.â€ In *Asian American Studies Now*, ed. Jean Wu and Thomas Chen, Rutgers U Press, 2010, pp. 298-329.

Liu, Michael and Kim Geron. 2008. â€œChanging Neighborhood: Ethnic Enclaves and the Struggle for Social Justice.â€ *Social Justice* Vol. 35, no. 2(112), pp. 18-35.

Leong, Andrew. â€œThe Struggle Over Parcel C: How Bostonâ€™s Chinatown Won a Victory in the Fight Against Institutional Expansionism and Environmental Racism.â€ In *Asian American Studies Now*, ed. Jean Wu and Thomas Chen, Rutgers U Press, 2010, pp. 565-580.

Kwong, Peter and JoAnn Lum. â€œHard Labor in Chinatown: How the Other Half Lives Now.â€ *The Nation*, June 18, 1988, pp. 858-860.

A Chinatown Banquet: 1) [The Bubble Y](#) (4:21); 2) [The Combat Zone](#) (6:56); 3) [Parcel C](#) (7:46)

Week 11 (April 17): New Residential Patternsâ€”Ethnoburbs and Satellite Chinatowns

Readings:

Zhou, Min and Guoxuan Cai. 2002. â€œChinese Language Media in the United States: Immigration and Assimilation in American Life.â€ *Qualitative Sociology*, Vol. 25, No. 3, pp. 419-441.

Li, Wei. 1998. â€œAnatomy of a New Ethnic Settlement: The Chinese *Ethnoburb* in Los Angeles.â€ *Urban Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 3, pp. 479-501.

Tsui, Bonnie. 2009. *American Chinatown: A Peopleâ€™s History of 5 Neighborhoods*. Chapter 13, â€œChinatown, Next Exit: The man who invented a new breed of Chinatown,â€ pp. 199-215.

Newendorp, Nicole. 2017. â€œQuincy, MA.â€ In *Americaâ€™s Changing Neighborhoods: An Exploration of Diversity through Places*, ed. by Reed Ueda. ABC-CLIO.

Optional skim through: [Chinatown Masterplan 2010: Community Vision for the Future](#). Chinatown Masterplan Oversight Committee: Boston, MA, 2010.

Week 12 (April 24): Contemporary Chinese American Identities

Readings and video:

Lee, Erika. 2015. *The Making of Asian America: A History*. â€œThe â€œRise of Asian Americans?â€: Myths and Realities,â€ pp. 377-380.

Louie, Andrea. 2004. *Chineseness across Borders: Renegotiating Chinese Identities in China and the United States*. â€œIntroduction: On Boundary Crossings,â€ pp. 1-25 (ONLY) and Chapter 3, â€œCrafting Chinese American Identities: Roots Narratives in the Context of U.S. Multiculturalism,â€ pp. 95-123.

Lowe, Lisa. 1996. *Immigrant Acts*. Chapter 3, â€œHeterogeneity, Hybridity, Multiplicity: Asian American Differences,â€ pp. 60-83.

To, *Chinese in Boston*, pp. 121-126

A Chinatown Banquet: 1) [Bostonâ€™s Asian Women Lion Dancers](#) (4:45); 2) [A Cross-Generational Dialogue](#) (4:17); 3) [Where Do I Belong?](#) (4:21)

Also watch: *American Revolutionary: The Evolution of Grace Lee Boggs* (available through Netflix, 1 hour and 24 minutes long)

Week 13 (May 1): Presentations on Final Project

Readings: Class website narratives: <https://social-studies-hkcb.squarespace.com/>

Final Project Due: Friday, May 10th 2019 by 7:00pm