

**AAS 310/AMS 315 / RTF 301N – Asian American Film History
Fall 2018**

T/TH 11am-12:30pm
RLP 1.102

Professor: Curran Nault

Office Hours: Fridays, Noon-3:00pm, BUR 570

Email: cnault@utexas.edu

Course Overview

This course will consider Asian American film from a historical perspective, from the pioneers of the silent era, to the *Crazy Rich Asian* blockbusters of today. Students will explore Asian American films from a number of cinematic genres (romance, action, comedy) and forms (Hollywood, independent, documentary, experimental), as well as their attendant constraints and freedoms. Foundational to this course is the belief that film history can only be understood in relation to dominant social structures and the workings of the film industries and, as such, textual, reception and industrial analysis will all be employed. Key issues discussed will include: politics of representation; the rise of Asian American independents; oppositional practices of Asian American creation and spectatorship; intersections of race, class, gender and sexuality; exhibition and distribution strategies of Asian American film festivals; and transnational Asian (American) cinema. While this course will focus primarily on cinema, students will also have the opportunity to examine related forms of Asian American mediamaking, including the contemporary turn to web series and TV shows like *Fresh off the Boat* and *Master of None*.

Course Goals

By the end of the semester, students should:

- Have a greater understanding of the breadth and complexity of Asian American film and film history
- Be able to critically analyze cinematic representations of Asian Americans and apply theoretical insights to their analyses
- Possess further knowledge about Asian American spectatorial and industrial practices and how to research these practices
- Appreciate the intersections of Asian American film and identities of class, gender, sexuality and nation

Course Materials

All readings will be posted on Canvas. Students are responsible for retrieving and printing them.

Evaluation

Midterm...30%

Final...30%

Journals...20%

Attendance/Participation...20%

Grading Scale: This class will use the standard +/- grading scale.

Midterm and Final Examinations will be a combination of multiple choice and short essay questions, with an emphasis on the latter. While not cumulative, the final exam will require students to recall key theories and concepts from earlier in the course.

PLAN AHEAD. Do not make plans that will cause you to miss any exam. If you must miss an exam for a documented reason (illness, family emergency or school-sanctioned event), I may allow you to take a make-up exam at a time convenient for me. The format of a make-up exam may differ substantially from the regular exam. Be aware that fabricating a reason for missing or delaying an examination is a form of academic misconduct and will be treated as such.

Journals: Students will keep weekly journals via the discussion board on Canvas. In these journals, students will record reactions to class screenings and readings. Your journal should be thoughtful and specific—and should include both "factual" details and critical insights. Often you will be given a specific question(s) to address. However, at times you will be at liberty to write about what most interests you most. Your journal entries will be housed on Canvas and due by Noon on Wednesdays. Entries will be reviewed throughout the semester. Students are encouraged to read and engage each other's work.

Class Participation is a grade that must be earned; it requires more than being a warm body in class. For a high grade, you must be an active participant. This means asking and answering questions, and listening attentively and respectfully to me and your classmates.

Students who are repeatedly disruptive will receive a poor class participation grade. This includes but is not limited to: talking/whispering to your neighbor, talking/text-messaging on a phone, checking email/playing computer games, sleeping, and noisily packing your books before class has ended.

About the Course

"Will This Be On The Test?" Your best bet is to assume that the answer is "yes." Everything, including but not limited to: lectures, discussions, readings, informative handouts, clips, screenings and online material, is 'fair game.'

Reading assignments should be done prior to the class period for which they are listed. Students who fall behind in the readings will find it difficult to succeed in this course.

Cultural Diversity Flag: This course carries the flag for Cultural Diversity in the United States. Cultural Diversity courses are designed to increase your familiarity with the variety and richness of the American cultural experience. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from assignments covering the practices, beliefs, and histories of U.S. cultural groups that have experienced persistent marginalization.

Difficult Course Content: At times this semester we will be discussing and viewing material that may be upsetting to some students. In a class dedicated to minority cinema, the engagement, discussion and critique of significant, but sometimes difficult, issues related to race, gender, sexuality, etc., is to be expected. If you ever feel the need to step outside during one of these discussions or viewings, you may

do so without academic penalty. You will, however, be responsible for any material you miss.

Services for students with disabilities: The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact the Office of the Dean of Students at 471-6259, 471-4641 TTY.

Academic misconduct: Cheating will not be tolerated. Expect me to pursue every instance of suspected academic misconduct in this course. Two kinds of academic misconduct are **cheating** on quizzes and exams, and **plagiarism** (such as turning in someone else's work, downloading a paper from the Web in part or in whole, or paraphrasing or quoting sources without citation). Penalties range from a zero on the assignment to expulsion from school.

The work that you turn in should honestly and accurately demonstrate your own academic efforts. Your assignments should also reflect work done for this course. Do not turn in assignments done for another course or attempt to pass off as "research" readings or screenings from another course.

I expect all of you to know the University's full definition of academic misconduct and its possible penalties. Information on academic integrity and disciplinary action is available online at <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/academicintegrity.html>. Please see me if you have further questions.

A word about grades: I try to design the course so that diligence is rewarded. If you are working hard and feel your grades aren't reflecting that, meet with me so we can talk about studying strategies. Please do not wait until the end of the semester to address this.

Course Schedule

Note: Readings should be read *prior* to the class period under which they are listed.

INTRODUCTION

Week 1: Introduction

8/30 Course Introduction

HISTORIES AND HYSTERIAS

Week 2: Under the Lens

9/4 Screening: Excerpt from *Hollywood Chinese* (Dong, 2007)

9/6 Read: Xing, "Cinematic Asian Representation"

Week 3: Frame Jobs

9/11 Screening: *Days of Waiting* (Okazaki, 1988) and *Pilgrimage* (Nakamura, 2003)
Read: Renov, "Warring Images"

9/13 Read: Powell, "Framing Islam"

Week 4: Talking Back

- 9/18 Screening: *Fall of the I-Hotel* (Choy, 1983)
 Read: Ishizuka, "Yellow Power"
- 9/20 Read: Okada, "Noble and Uplifting and Boring as Hell"

GENRES AND GENDERS

Week 5: Masculinities and Muscle Movies

- 9/25 Begin: *Enter the Dragon* (Clouse, 1973)
 Read: Caldwell, "Invisible No More"
- 9/27 Finish: *Enter the Dragon*
 Read: Chan, "Bruce Lee's Fictional Modes of Masculinity"

Week 6: Masculinities and Muscle Movies Cont'd

- 10/2 Discussion of *Enter the Dragon* and midterm review
 Read: Nishime, "Reviving Bruce: Negotiating Asian Masculinity Through Bruce Lee Paratexts"
- 10/4 **Midterm**

Week 7: Femininities and Family Dramas

- 10/9 Start: *The Joy Luck Club* (Wang, 1993)
- 10/11 Finish: *The Joy Luck Club* (Wang, 1993)

Week 8: Femininities and Family Dramas Cont'd

- 10/16 Discussion of *The Joy Luck Club*
 Read: Xing, "The Family Dramas"
- 10/18 Read: Xing, "Hybrid Cinema by Asian American Women"
 In-class excerpt from Trinh T. Min-ha's *Sur Name Viet, Last Name Nam*

Week 9: Queer Appropriations w/ a Slice of SciFi

- 10/23 Screening: Selection of LGBTQ+ shorts
 Read: Oishi, "Bad Asians" and Han, "No Fats, Femmes or Asians"
- 10/25 Excerpt from *Blade Runner* (Scott, 1982)
 Read: Park, "American Anxiety and the Oriental City"

COMEDY AND CONTROVERSY

Week 10: What's So Funny?

- 10/30 Read: Lopez, "Leveraging Media Policy for Representational Change"

In class episode of *All American Girl*

- 11/1 Screen: *Harold and Kumar Go to White Castle* (Leiner, 2004)
Read: Gillota, "Peoples of Color: Multiethnic Humor in *Harold and Kumar*"

Week 11: "Roles" of the Tongue

- 11/6 Screen: Episode/s of *Master of None*
Dave, "Racial Accents, Hollywood Casting and Asian American Studies"
- 11/8 Read: Dave, "Apu's Brown Voice"
In class excerpt: *The Problem with Apu*

Week 12: Being Bad

- 11/13 Start: *Better Luck Tomorrow* (Lin, 2003)
Section of Hall, "The Spectacle of the Other"
- 11/5 Finish: *Better Luck Tomorrow* (Lin, 2003)
Read: Hillenbrand, "Of Myths and Men: *Better Luck Tomorrow* and the Mainstreaming of Asian American Cinema"

Week 13: Being Bad Cont'd

- 11/20 Discussion of *Better Luck Tomorrow*
- 11/22 THANKSGIVING

Week 14: Filmic Futures

- 11/27 Start: *Gook* (Chon, 2017) or *Crazy Rich Asians* (if available)
Read: *Cinema Journal* "In Focus: Asian American Cinema"
- 11/29 Finish *Gook*

Week 15: Filmic Futures Cont'd

- 12/4 Discussion of *Gook* and review for final exam
Read: Choe, "Koreans Gone Bad"
- 12/6 **Final Exam**