

Introduction to Asian American Studies

Coordinator: Karen Suyemoto M-2-335, x7-6370

Participating Faculty (in order of appearance): Peter Kiang (GCOE and Asian American Studies), Robert Johnson (Africana Studies), Luis Aponte-Pares (CPCS and Latino Studies), Amy den Ouden, (Anthropology), Andrew Leong (CPCS), Paul Watanabe (Political Science, IAAS), Connie Chan (CPCS), Rajini Srikanth (English and Honors Program), Ping-Ann Addo (Anthropology), Elora Chowdhury (Women Studies), Shirley Tang (American Studies and Asian American Studies)

Course Description

This collaboratively taught course offers interdisciplinary perspectives on a variety of issues related to Asian American Studies and the Asian American experience. We will consider the history and creation of Asian American Studies, exploring the ideologies and goals that unify it as a discipline in order to frame our understanding of specific issues. Through guest lectures and presentations we will sample the breadth of the field, exploring history and politics, law and civil rights, social and health issues for Asian American women, intergenerational issues for Asian American families, education and Asian Americans, and community connections. Throughout the course we will consider the connections between the personal and the political, between the contemporary and the historical, between unity and recognition of unique and varied experiences, and between the *status quo* and social change. Students' contributions of their own experiences and knowledge will constitute a vital component of the course.

Goals:

- To introduce the field of Asian American Studies, including its diverse nature, the multiple methods of inquiry used within, and the diversity of disciplines connected to Asian American studies.
- To explore the collaborative, interdisciplinary nature of Asian American studies and the ideologies and goals that unify the discipline.
- To consider the relevance and place of Asian American Studies and Asian American issues in the current context (Boston and UMass)
- To make connections and develop resources within Asian American Studies, disciplines and courses related to Asian American issues, and Asian American faculty/staff/resources at UMass. To facilitate connections to people, topics, disciplines, and ideas for students interested in the Asian American experience.

Required Reading

On reserve in the library or distributed in class.

Course Requirements

Class Participation, Preparation, and Attendance (10%): The success of this course will depend on you—your active presence, participation, and preparation will make it a success for everyone. If you need to be absent for some reason, please call or email to let me know (ahead of time whenever possible). You are responsible for any material missed during absences and for communicating about handouts, announcements, etc, that are needed to complete the course requirements.

Course Requirements (cont.)

Reflection memos, In-class Activities and Quizzes (e.g. history jigsaw, 20%): Throughout the semester, we will engage in class activities, informal reflective writing assignments (in class or as homework preparation for class), and unannounced quizzes with multiple choice, true/false, and short response questions in order to assess your understanding of and engagement with readings, presentations, and discussions. Collectively, these will be worth 20% of your total grade.

Essay (20%): One 6-8 page essay based on readings and class discussions. Your essay will be evaluated based on thoughtful analysis of the readings with specific examples that demonstrate your understanding of the material and your ability to integrate and apply the concepts.

Praxis Project (35%): Praxis refers to the integration of theory with practice -- a commitment central to teaching and learning in Asian American Studies. This requirement expects you to develop an educational resource project/product that concretely integrates Asian American Studies theory and practice for a specific setting and audience. This is a semester long project, culminating in both a written product and a presentation of your resource to the campus wide community. Further guidelines will be distributed in class.

Community-Based Learning (15%): Since its founding, the field of Asian American Studies has been shaped by active connections to Asian American communities and to organizing efforts for equity/justice both inside and outside of school. In that spirit, this requirement expects you to commit at least six hours during the semester to participate in and reflect on relevant community events (within the Asian American campus community or in the greater Boston Asian American community). See details about possible placements and contact information below.

Resources and Support Services at UMass

The **library** is a great resource with more information than you (or I) can possibly take in. The library staff can also help you with research techniques and library use. Part of the job of reference librarians is to help you find what you need, so don't be afraid to ask for help!

The **CAS Reading, Writing, & Study Skills Center** can help with study skills (notetaking, time management, etc.), research assignments (preparation and organization) and writing skills (organization, grammar/language, analysis, etc.). They can be most helpful if you develop an ongoing relationship to work on improvement over time. You will need to schedule and confirm an appointment: 287-6560 or 287-6550.

If you have a disability and feel you will need accommodations in order to be successful in this course, please contact the **Ross Center for Disability Services** at 287-7430. Please also let me know, as well.

Counseling through **Health Services** can help with stress, difficulties in relationships, confusion or uncertainty about goals, substance abuse, sexuality or other concerns. Counseling services is part of health services located in Q-2-039 (phone 287-5690). They are open M-F 8:30-4:30 and evenings by appointment.

Health Services also provides the **Health Promotion Program**, which can help us keep balanced and energized. Programs include Tai Chi, Yoga, meditation, and stress reduction. Contact the program to find out what's being offered this semester: 287-5685.

Course Calendar

Section 1: Introduction to Asian American Studies

Tu 9/6	Introduction and Overview
Th 9/8	<p>What is Ethnic Studies? What is Asian American Studies? <u>Reader:</u> <i>Endo & Wei, Hune, Omi</i></p> <p>What is "Asian American Studies"? We will consider the possible themes that bring together the diverse disciplines and areas linked within Asian American Studies, the challenges facing Asian American studies in recent years and today, the potential of Asian American Studies as transformative education, and the experience of Asian American Studies at UMass Boston.</p> <p>Check out on-line: http://www.asianamerican.net/centers.html</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose at least two of the colleges/university programs and check out their websites. Consider what these tell you about the meaning of Asian American Studies. • What do you make of the fact that the UMB Asian American Studies <i>Program</i> is not included, in spite of the fact that we offer the most AsAmSt classes of any college/university in New England?
Tu 9/13	<p>What is Asian American Studies? <u>Reader:</u> Chan, Kiang</p>
Th 9/15	<p>Praxis Project Discussion and Resources Session <u>Read:</u> <i>Suyemoto et al. (Integrating disciplines...)</i></p>
Tu 9/20	<p>Developing Allies: Relationships between Racial Minorities and Ethnic Studies: Peter Kiang, Robert Johnson, Luis Aponte, Amy den Ouden <u>Reader:</u> <i>Marable, Yamamoto</i> <i>Also, continue the history reading and assignment due Sept. 22.</i></p> <p>How does Asian American Studies relate to other areas of Ethnic Studies? What are some of the challenges and benefits to creating alliances between people of color for educational transformation and social justice, given the nature of the disciplines and of the social meanings of race and culture?</p>
Th 9/22	Section Response and Discussion
<u>What/Who is Asian American?</u>	
Tu 9/27	<p>What is Asian American?</p> <p>What does "Asian American" mean? Who is Asian American? We will consider issues of defining race and ethnicity and overview current numbers and other demographic information, particularly in Massachusetts/Boston.</p> <p><u>Read:</u> <i>Modarres; Zhou & Gatewood (pp. 21-27), Kibria, Stats & local info handed out in class.</i></p>
Th 9/29	Who is Asian American?

	<p>Who is considered Asian American and how is this determined? We will explore individual, social, and political meanings, ingroup and outgroup defining and boundaries.</p> <p><u>Read:</u> <i>Suyemoto (Redefining "Asian American")</i>, Khandelwal</p>
Tu 10/4	<p>Who is Asian American? Project Reflection</p> <p><u>DUE:</u> Praxis project reflection memo</p>
Th 10/6	<p>Foundations of Unity: History Jigsaw and current connections</p> <p><u>Read:</u> <i>Fong, Asian American Timeline (distributed from last class and also on line)</i> <u>Check out on-line:</u> http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/asian_voices/asian_voices.cfm http://www.asian-nation.org/index.shtml <u>DUE:</u> History jigsaw</p>
Tu 10/11	<p>Foundations of Unity: Discrimination against Asian Americans and Community Organizing: From Yick Wo to Parcel C: Andrew Leong <u>Reader:</u> <i>Case readings: The People V. George W. Hall, Yick Wo V. Hopkins, Sheriff</i></p> <p>The history of the United States and our interaction with race has often took on the lens of a 'black/white' perspective. In this session we examine the historical dealings that 'white' America had with Asians and thus the construct of 'Asian America.' How do we go about defining who is 'white', 'black', or Asian? More importantly, how do we define who is NOT 'white'? In our short session together we will explore some of the above questions through assigned case readings.</p>
Th 10/13	<p>AsAm Community Organizing: CAPAY youth, VietAid, AARW, AACA Bring food for potluck dinner after class</p>
Tu 10/18	<p>Project Work</p>
<u>Section 3: Unity And Diversity</u>	
Th 10/20	<p>Asian American Psychology: Identity and Mental Health: Nancy Lin and Phuong Nguyen <u>Reader:</u> <i>Ngor, Bankston & Zhou</i></p> <p>What are some of the identity issues for Asian American young adults and their families? How does Asian American studies relate to the lived experiences and psychology of Asian Americans in the United States? This class will explore Asian American identity, intergenerational relations/conflicts, and how psychology and human services can help Asian American individuals, families, groups, and communities.</p>
Tu 10/25	<p>Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Asian Americans: Connie Chan</p>

	<u>Reader:</u> <i>Chan</i>
Th 10/27	<p>Solidarity and Tension: Literature and Ethnic Group Relations Within Asian America: Rajini Srikanth</p> <p><u>Reader:</u> <i>Poem, Fujikane, articles from Hawai'ian newspapers.</i></p> <p><i>Recommended reading: Srikanth</i></p> <p>This class will focus on tensions within the Asian American pan-ethnic collective in order to underscore the heterogeneity of the group. Ignoring these fissures and insisting on a harmonious coalition only generates resentment within those groups that feel marginalized—e.g. Filipinos and South Asians. Acknowledging internal tensions is actually beneficial to building a stronger coalition.</p> <p>"The strongest coalitions are those in which dissension is given free play, rather than suppressed" (Srikanth, 16).</p>
Tu 11/1	<p>Solidarity and Alliances: Connecting History and Today</p> <p>Thus far in the semester, we have been focusing primarily on "Asian Pacific Americans." But social justice requires creating alliances and finding common causes. This becomes very clear when we see echos of the past and must take action to ensure that history does not repeat itself.</p> <p><u>Check out on-line:</u> http://www.itvs.org/facetoface/intro.html</p> <p>Listen to the stories from the "Face to Face" website and carefully go through the Teachers Guide resources and activities</p> <p>http://www.itvs.org/facetoface/activities/.</p> <p><u>DUE:</u> Send a comment to the site (please cc: me and Jon). be prepared to discuss your feedback/critique in class. ALSO: do some web searching (or read the newspaper) and find something in the last 12 months that relates to this: what is happening now with detainees? With torture issues? What activism is the Asian American community or from other sources is resisting these things?</p> <p><u>Optional Read</u> (optional): <i>Mark et al.</i></p> <p><u>Optional Check out on-line::</u></p> <p>http://americanhistory.si.edu/perfectunion/experience/index.html</p> <p>http://www.geocities.com/Athens/8420/main.html</p>
Th 11/3	End of section response and discussion
Tu 11/8	Project work
<u>Section 4: Interventions and Activism</u>	
Th 11/10	<p>Education and Asian Americans: Peter Kiang</p> <p><u>Reader:</u> <i>Kiang</i></p> <p>What does Asian American Studies have to offer K-12 education? What should K-12 teachers and administrators know about Asian American students and Asian American Studies? How can AsAmSt impact the education and development of Asian American children and their families through the K-12 curriculum? This class will explore these questions and related issues nationally and locally with some examples from UMass Boston's AsAmSt Program.</p>

Tu 11/15	<p>Ping-Ann Addo Reader: <i>Stillman</i></p> <p>Thus far in the semester, we have been discussing "Asian American Studies" with only a brief nod to the place of Pacific Islanders and the categorization of Asian Pacific Islanders (APIs). Yet, there is an active debate about the place and role of Pacific Islanders within Asian American Studies. This session will explore these issues and consider the activism of Pacific Islanders to make space for their voice and experiences.</p>
Th 11/17	<p>Transnational Feminisms: Elora Chowdhury Reader: <i>Purkayastha</i>.</p> <p>Recommended readings: <i>Kempadoo</i></p> <p>We live in a time when social, political, cultural and economic relations are the most extensively globalized than they have been before. Feminist theory has always aimed to be expansive in its scope, from "global sisterhood" in the 1970s to transnational and global feminisms in contemporary politics. At the same time, feminist theory is challenged by the need to expand beyond national and local boundaries to consider the ways in which what happens to women here is always related to women in other parts of the world. Through readings and discussions on transnational feminist perspectives on contemporary globalization, we will consider questions such as the following: how are our perspectives raced, classed and gendered? How do we think about relations of privilege and dispossession globally? How might we imagine a world in which relations and resources were more equitable? How might our perspectives shift when we consider that the majority of the world's women live outside of the United States? How does the US as a global superpower condition the lives of women here and elsewhere? How are we as US citizens and residents connected to the rest of the world? Why should feminist theory be concerned with global perspectives?</p>
Tu 11/22	<p>Ethnic Studies: Connecting Activism and Academics: Shirley Tang Reader: <i>Lipsitz</i></p> <p>Ethnic Studies is, like all academic disciplines, about the advancement of knowledge, in this case knowledge grounded in communities, activism, practice etc. Two strengths of ethnic studies are that it offers comparative vantage points about U.S. "national cultures" and critiques of U.S. ethnocentrism, and that it integrates community activism within the discipline. However, these comparative critiques are quite different from other academic discourses and community activism is frequently seen as non-intellectual and non-academic. How can people in Asian American Studies draw on the work of both scholars and practitioners in their own fields and challenge academia to transform standards and academic canons? How can we think critically about where ethnic studies as a field stands in the world of academics and within our own university?</p>
Th 11/24	Thanksgiving—no class
Tu 11/29	Community Projects Discussion
Th 12/1	End of Section Response and Discussion

<u>Wrapping Up</u>	
Tu 12/6	Praxis Projects Presentations <i>Praxis Projects due</i>
Th 12/8	Praxis Projects Presentations
Tu 12/13	Wrap-up