COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course provides a general survey of major historical events and processes related to Asian American representation, migration and politics. It attends to the diverse meanings that construct the social category of “Asian American” but also frame what we think of as constituting “Asian” and “American.” The class will include a practical component that will allow students to see in creative texts or apply/engage what they learn in personal life. The course uses the material content and realities that produce and give rise to Asian American history to help us rethink and reformulate this term called Asian American history itself. In short, this course will examine the history of Asian Americans in the U.S. It examines the causes for the settlement of Asians in the country as a reflection of processes related to militarization, war, globalization, economic displacement, and labor demands. The course takes a comparative approach to the study of Asian Americans by recognizing that the lives of Asians are inseparable from other minorities such as Latino/a, Native American, Muslim/Arab, and Black people.

The course begins with a discussion of European conquest and U.S. colonialism in the Americas. This starting point opens up “Asian American” history as a contested planetary intercultural field of interest that will disrupt the usual sense of that history beginning with Chinese (indentured) migrant laborers who began to arrive in the 1820s. From conquest, we move quickly to the history of exclusionary anti-Asian laws in the late 19th and early 20th century toward the 1960s at the height of Asian American activism and political organizing to the current transnational moment with the great flow of people between Asia and America. There is an interdisciplinary dimension to the course and texts are drawn from a variety of fields such as literature, sociology, history, and public health. Discussions will be a time for students to freely and creatively flesh out the topics covered in lectures. This highly interactive space will include logic games, debates, visual/arts activities, mock interviews/speeches, and open personal dialogue. ALL READINGS ON MOODLE.

*This class was made possible by the long-time activism and organizing work of the Asian American Student Collective (AASC) and many others fighting for a diverse curriculum.

Grade Breakdown:
Class participation/weekly questions/presentations: 20%
Midterm essays (20): 25% each
Final Project: 30%

Attendance: If you miss class, you must have a doctor’s note or official memo to make-up for missed assignments. Lectures are Tuesday and Discussion are on Thursday.
Participation is crucial to success in this class. You should come to each class having read and thought about the assigned materials, being prepared to contribute majorly to class discussions. You must bring in 3 questions ready to be asked every time you come to class. Class presenters are required to lead discussion and be prepared to consider or answer other students’ questions about their assigned weekly texts.

Gender Pronoun/Disability/Name Preference: If you have a specific name or gender pronoun you prefer to be called by, please contact me at the beginning of the course.

Disability: Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Resources and provide me with a letter of accommodation.

Academic Integrity: This class assumes that all participants are doing assignments with integrity. Academic dishonesty violates university regulations and is a reportable offence that may lead to expulsion and will greatly detract from your final grade.

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Week 1 (Tues 9/8, Thurs 9/10)

Week 1: Orientalism--Imperialism and Colonialism


Activity: Personal History Statement

Week 2: Identity--Race and Racism (Tues 9/15, Thurs 9/17)


*Class Activity: Peer-to-Peer Oral History Interview

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Week 3: Diaspora--Movements and Migrations (Tues 9/22, Thurs 9/24)


*2011 Asian American Studies Association Resolution to Seek Congressional Regret for Passage of Asian Exclusion Laws.

Week 4: Interracialism--Coalitions and Class (Tues 9/29, Thurs 10/1)


Week 5: Hegemony--Culture and Ideology (Tues 10/6, Thurs 10/8)


*Something of interest for students:* Center for the Art show Mr. Joy (Oct. 9). A Harlem community is disrupted when the Chinese immigrant's shoe repair shop, a neighborhood pillar for
decades, does not open its doors. Reflect on the shop owner's impact in this moving exploration of one diverse community's efforts to heal in order to dream again. $6/student tickets.

**Week 6: Sovereignty—Government and Law (Tues 10/13, Thurs 10/15)**


*Amy Uyematsu. Poetry and Interview Selections.*

**Week 7: Reparations--War and Internment (Tues 10/20, Thur 10/22)**


**Essay #1 due:** Write a 3-4 page single-spaced paper (12 font, 1 inch margins) discussing Asian American history as a struggle for and over space, however you define space. How might we view Asian Americans as a group produced through spatial contestations, imaginaries, and conflicts. Contextualize the ways space informs Asian American history, using course texts to demonstrate that you have read and understood class materials. Using a minimum of 6 essays (you can mention lecture examples as extra). Remember to have a strong thematic focus and critical argument that bring all those texts together. You will be graded on originality of argument, strength of analysis, and organization/spelling/grammar etc. Submission of an electronic copy via Moodle is due 12 pm., Wed (10/28).

**(10/27 and 10/29 section/classes cancelled for Fall Semester Break)**

**Week 8: Citizenship: Membership and Belonging (Tuesday 11/3, Thurs 11/5)**


*Yang, Kao Kalia. Excerpt from *The Latehomecomer.*

*Wesleyan Alumni Profile-Daphne Kwok

**Week 9: Yellow Power--Militarism and Geopolitics (Tues 11/10, Thurs 11/12)**


**Week 10: Panethnicity--Rights and Resistance (Tuesday 11/17, Thursday 11/19)**


**Week 11: Tues 11/24 and Thurs 11/26 section cancelled for Thanksgiving break)**

**Essay #2:** Write a 3-4 page single-spaced paper (1 inch margins, 12 font) that responds to the quote below from a famous Asian American historian. Respond first by saying how you understand the quote, construct an argument in reaction to that quote, and then launch into your discussion of course texts and
themes to back up your argument. You will be graded on originality of insights, strength of organization, and proper citation/grammar/spelling etc. Essay due electronic copy on Moodle noon Wed (11/25).

“We need to ‘re-vision’ history to include Asians in the history of America, and to do so in a broad and comparative way. […] We must not study Asian Americans primarily in terms of statistics and what was done to them. They are entitled to be viewed as subjects—as men and women with minds, wills, and voices.”—Ronald Takaki

**Week 12: Asian American Studies-Education and Students (Tues 12/1, Thurs 12/3)**


*News articles on student movement to establish Asian American Studies at Wesleyan

**Week 13: Historiography-Writing and Thinking about History (Tues 12/8, Thurs 12/10)**


Final Exam: Write a 6-7 page single-space essay discussing Asian American history as not simply a study of things that happened in the past, but a battle over (the meaning of) history itself and who gets to shape it. One major problem about the ways people regard history is that they believe it in human events as just random (things were bad back then but they're naturally better now because people become more open minded) or that we forget about those things (because the past has passed already). This is a passive uncritical appreciation of history rather than a holistic, dynamic sense of history for what it can teach us about shifting power relations and the evolution of our society (an evolution made possible only through direct action and political movements). Make an argument in relation to the prompt and demonstrate that you read the texts clearly (choose a minimum of 10 texts to discuss). Bring out major points and your thoughts on the readings. Remember to cite the page number of quotes or ideas and thoroughly discuss them; don’t just mention them. Submission of an electronic copy via Moodle is due Friday noon Dec. 18.

Majoring or Minoring in American Studies

Many students take an American Studies course because the topic is of great interest or because of a need to fulfill a college requirement. Often students have taken three or four classes out of "interest" yet have no information about the major or minor and don't realize how close they are to a major, a minor, or even a double major. An American Studies major or minor is excellent preparation for a career in law, public policy, government and politics, journalism, education, public health, social work, international relations, and many other careers. If you would like more information, please contact the American Studies department staff.