

Asians in the Americas: A Comparative Perspective

Spring 2017

Course No. Anthropology 3703/Asian American Studies 3030/American Studies 3703

McGraw 215

TR 10:10-11:25

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Office: McGraw 205

Office Hours: TR 4:30-5:30. You need to sign up for office hours—sign up sheet on office door.

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Course Overview:

Ethnicity is often perceived as a "natural" or inevitable consequence of cultural difference. "Asians" overseas, in particular, have won reputations as a people who cling tenaciously to their culture and refuse to assimilate into their host societies and cultures. But, **who are "Asians?" Who are "Asian Americans?"** What does a fourth generation Chinese-American have in common with a Kampuchean refugee who fled to the U.S in 1975 or a South Indian doctor who came to America looking for professional advancement, say in the 1960s? On what basis can we label "Asians" an ethnic group? Although there is a significant Asian presence in the Caribbean, the category "Asian" itself is not common in the Caribbean. What does this say about the nature of categories that label and demarcate groups of people on the basis of alleged cultural and phenotypic characteristics? What role might academic disciplines play in the formation of cultural and political identities and how might an anthropological perspective with its emphasis on ethnography lend insight to our understanding of Asian America?

This course will examine the dynamics behind group identity, namely ethnicity, by comparing and contrasting the varied experiences of Asian populations in the Caribbean, and the United States. Ethnographic case studies will focus on East Indian, Japanese and Chinese experiences in the Caribbean, and Latin America and "Asian"/ "Asian American,"—Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Filipino, South Asian, Vietnamese etc.-- experiences in the United States. The comparative method will be used to deconstruct the popular notion that ethnicity is a uniform phenomenon by exploring diverse expressions of ethnicity in the Americas. The final part of the course will address pressing issues in contemporary cultural politics of Asian American identity, such as how this identity is informed by gender, race and class differences, relations between diaspora and homeland, and the struggle for cultural citizenship in the Americas.

The course is structured in three parts. The first is a theoretical overview of some major anthropological approaches to ethnicity. The second and third parts will focus on ethnographic examples--first, from the Caribbean and Latin America and second, from the United States.

Course Requirements:

1. Class attendance and participation. For each class students will be expected to come prepared with 2 or more questions/issues related to the readings (approx. 1 page). Your comments will be used as a basis for class discussion and will be collected at the end of each class. 25%

2. One 15 minute presentation on the final paper. 25%
3. One 10-12 page final research paper that focuses on an "Asian" group in the Caribbean, Latin America and/or the US which explores any dimension of ethnic identity using theoretical issues raised in class and the readings. **The final paper must incorporate a theoretical analysis of your specific empirical case study. Due May 16 50%**

****Code of Academic Integrity***

“Each Student in this course is expected to abide by the Cornell University Code of Academic Integrity. Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit will be the student’s own work.”

The **Essential Guide to Integrity at Cornell** can be viewed by clicking on the “Academic Initiatives” link <http://newstudentprograms.cornell.edu/>

Limited use of electronic devices permitted.

Required Texts:

Ronald Takaki, Strangers from a Different Shore, Boston: Little Brown and Company.

Martin Manalansan ed., Ethnographic Explorations of Asian America, Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Shalini Shankar, (2008) Desi Land: teen culture, class and success in silicon valley, Durham: Duke University Press.

All readings are available at the Campus Book Store and at the Asian American Studies Resource Center 420 Rockefeller. Articles are posted on Blackboard.

Syllabus

Jan 26

Introduction

Jan 31

Why Asian America through Ethnography?

1. Miner, Horace (1956) “Body Ritual Among the Nacirema.”

2. Manalansan (2000) “Introduction” (2-6).

Continue with introduction and discussion of Nacirema and Manalansan readings

Feb 2

3. Vo, Linda Trinh, “Performing Ethnography in Asian American Communities” in Manalansan (2000).

4. Kang, Miliann, “Researching One’s Own” in Manalansan (2000).

1. *Theories of Ethnicity*

Feb 7 **"Primordialism"**

1. Geertz (1973) "The integrative revolution" in The Interpretation of Cultures.
 2. Isaacs (1974) "Basic group identity: Idols of the tribe." Ethnicity 1:15-42.
- *focus mostly on the Geertz essay

Recommended Readings:

1. Shils (1957) "Primordial, personal, sacred and civil ties." British Journal of Sociology

Feb 9 **"Situationalism"**

1. Barth (1969) "Introduction" in Ethnic Groups and Boundaries.
2. Eidheim (1969) "When ethnic identity is a social stigma" in Ethnic Groups and Boundaries.

Recommended readings:

1. Okmura (1981) "Situational ethnicity." Ethnic and Racial Studies 4 (3): 452-465.

Feb 14 **Classifying Inequality: Producing Ethnics, Minorities and Races.**

1. Sanjek, Roger (1994) "The Enduring Inequalities of Race," In Race. Eds., Roger Sanjek and Steven Gregory. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
1. Vincent (1974) "The structuring of ethnicity." Human Organization 33:375-379.
3. Munasinghe, Viranjini (1997) "Culture Bearers and Culture Creators: The interface between Race and Ethnicity in Trinidad." Transforming Anthropology 6(1&2) 72-86.

2. *Asians in the Caribbean*

Feb 16 **Film: Mirrors of the Heart**

Feb 21 **Break**

Feb 23 **Introduction to the Caribbean: Ethnicity, Creole Society and Stratification**

1. Mintz, Sidney (1966) "The Caribbean as a Socio-Cultural Area. Journal of World History 9 (4): 912-937.
2. Safa (1987) "Popular culture, national identity and race in the Caribbean." New West Indian Guide 61 (3,4):115-126.
3. Naipaul (1967) "The Baker's Story" in A Flag on the Island 133-146.
4. Crowley (1957) "Plural and differential acculturation in Trinidad." American Anthropologist Vol. 59

Feb 28 **East Indians in the Caribbean**

1. Munasinghe (2001) "Redefining the Nation: The East Indian struggle for inclusion in Trinidad." Journal of Asian American Studies
2. Jayawardena (1980) "Culture and ethnicity in Guyana and Fiji." Man 15:430-450.

Mar 2 **Film: Dhal Puri Diaspora**

Mar 7 **Chinese in the Caribbean and Latin America**

1. Christine Ho. (1989) "Hold the Chow Mein, Gimme Soca": Creolization of the Chinese in Guyana, Trinidad and Jamaica.
2. Carlisle Chang (1998) Chinese in Trinidad Carnival.
3. Barry Higman (1972) Chinese in Trinidad

Mar 9 **Japanese Brazilians**

1. Lesser (2003) "Japanese, Brazilians, Nikkei: A Short History of Identity Building and Homemaking" in Searching for Home Abroad: Japanese Brazilians and Transnationalism. Ed. Lesser
2. Ishi (2003) "Searching for Home, Wealth, Pride and Class: Japanese Brazilians in the 'land of Yen.'" in Searching for Home Abroad: Japanese Brazilians and Transnationalism. Ed. Lesser

Mar 14 Discussion/catch up

3. Asians in the United States: Locating Asian America through History

Mar 16 **Film: Ancestors in the Americas**

Mar 21 **Chinese in the United States**

1. Lipsitz, George (1998) The Possessive Investment in Whiteness. [Introduction and Chapter 1]
2. Takaki (1989) Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans. [Chapter 1, 2, 3 and 6]

Mar 23 **Japanese and Koreans in the United States**

1. Takaki (1989) [Chapter 5 and 7]

Mar 28 **South Asians and Filipinos in the United States**

1. Takaki (1989) [Chapter 8 and 9]

Mar 30 **Asian America and World War II**

1. Takaki (1989) [Chapter 10]

Apr 4-6 **Spring Break**

Apr 11

Asian American Identity and Heterogeneity

1. Espiritu, Yen Le (1992) "Coming Together: The Asian American Movement" in Asian American Panethnicity, pp., 19-52. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
2. Espiritu, Yen Le (1997) "Ideological Racism and Cultural Resistance" in Asian American Women and Men, pp., 86-107. London: Sage.

Apr 13

1. Bonus, Rick (2000) "Of *Palengkes* and Beauty Pageants: Filipino American-Style Politics in Southern California" in Manalansan.
2. Ong, Aihwa (2000) "Making the Biopolitical Subject: Cambodian Immigrants, Refugee Medicine, and Cultural Citizenship in California" in Manalansan.

Apr 18

Immigrant/Cosmopolitan/Diaspora**Film: Miss India Georgia**

Apr 20

1. Kang, Milliann (1997) "Manicuring Race, Gender and Class: Service Interactions in New York City Korean-owned Nail Salons."
2. Vergara, Benito (2000) "Betrayal, Class Fantasies, and the Filipino Nation in Daly City" in Manalansan.

Apr 25-27

1. Shankar, Shalini (2008) "Desi Land: teen culture, class, and success in Silicon Valley" [chapters will be assigned]

May 2,4 and 9

Presentations

May 16 FINAL PAPER DUE—*Please note Academic Integrity Statement on Page 1. (Please include a stamped and addressed envelope if you wish your paper to be mailed to you with my comments. If there is no envelope I will assume you will not be collecting your paper and therefore not write comments on the paper)