

## Introduction to Asian American Studies

Tuesday/Thursday 1:25-2:40

Spring 2011

Course No. AAS 1110

251 Malott Hall

Instructor: Professor Viranjini Munasinghe

Office: 205 McGraw Hall

Office Hours: Thursday 3:15-4:15; Friday 1:30-3:00

Email: [vpml@cornell.edu](mailto:vpml@cornell.edu)

T.A. Reighan Gillam

Office: B60

Office Hours:

Email: [rag47@cornell.edu](mailto:rag47@cornell.edu)

### ***Course Overview:***

This course is an interdisciplinary introduction to Asian American Studies focusing on historical and contemporary issues. It will explore how a diverse group of people-- Chinese, Filipinos, Japanese, Koreans, South Asians and Southeast Asians--came to be identified as “Asian Americans” through a critical examination of history and the politics of race in the United States and how this identity relates to “Asians” in other parts of the Americas, like the Caribbean. We will first ask why people need to classify other people on the basis of cultural or racial difference in order to understand the complex history of Asian American identity. Some themes covered will be the development of Asian American Studies as a field; how Asian American identity relates to questions of nationalism and citizenship; how the tension between cultural difference and sameness plays out in Asian American identity; the complexities of mixed race identity and panethnicity; sentiments of “group belonging”; how class, ethnicity and gender intersect in the formation of identities; and how history—especially, in this case, a history of racism and stereotypes about cultural difference— informs contemporary issues. In addition to the standard academic readings this course will draw upon film and popular literature as bases for discussion.

### ***Course Requirements:***

1. Class attendance and participation. Students are **required** to do the assigned readings and formulate two questions **on the basis of the readings for each class**. You must post these questions **electronically on the discussion board (there will be delineated forums on the discussion board on Blackboard for this class) by 8:00p.m. of the evening before each class**. These questions will be used to facilitate class discussion and you are all encouraged to read them before coming to class. Students will be called upon randomly to express their views on the assigned subjects for the week. 30%
2. Group project and presentation: Each student will be part of a 5-6 person team (depending on class size) that will be responsible for choosing a topic on any aspect

of Asian American identity which they will then present at the end of the semester. Although some class time will be allotted for students to conduct meetings, students will primarily meet outside of class, to conduct the research, discuss the topic and organize the presentation. 30%

3. **Exam Essay- April 14.** One approximately 5 page essay taken at the end of semester (before presentations begin). The essay will be a reflective essay on a topic related to Asian American identity that incorporates issues raised in class discussions and readings. You will be given a choice of topics. 40%

***“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.”***

***Required Texts:***

1. Bharati Mukherjee, Jasmine.

Jasmine is available at the Campus Book Store and the Asian American Studies Resource Center (Rockefeller 420). All other readings are on Blackboard.

**Course Syllabus (subject to change)**

**Week 1      Why Asian American Studies**

Jan 25      **Introduction**

Jan 27

-Raymond Williams, “Hegemony.”

-Takaki, Ronald, “Their History Bursts with Telling,” From a Different Shore.

-Glenn Omatsu, “The ‘Four Prisons’ and the Movement of Liberation: Asian American Activism from the 1960s to the 1990s.”

**Week 2      Locating Asian America: Historicity and Classification**

Feb 1      **Film:** “Ancestors in the Americas: Coolies, Sailors, Settlers”

Feb 3

- Gary Okihiro, “When and Where I Enter.”

- Viranjini Munasinghe, “Culture Creators and Culture Bearers” The Interface between Race and Ethnicity in Trinidad.”

**Week 3**

Feb 8

- Roger Sanjek, "The Enduring Inequalities of Race."
- Joan Vincent, "Brief Communications: The Structuring of Ethnicity."

Feb 10

- Michael Omi and Howard Winant, "On the Theoretical Status of the Concept of Race."
- preliminary discussion of group projects

-

#### **Week 4      Life in the Americas**

Feb 15

- Sucheng Chan, "Immigration and Livelihood, 1840s to 1930s" (Chapter 2 in Asian Americans: An Interpretive History).
- Sucheng Chan, "Hostility and Conflict" (Chapter 3)

Feb 17      **Film:** "Ancestors in the Americas: Chinese in the Frontier West"

#### **Week 5      "Yellow Face: Portrayals of Asians in American Cinema"**

(Sponsored by Society for Asian American Graduate Affairs [*SAAGA*] and the Asian American Studies Program).

There will be no classes this week (Feb 22 and 24). Instead Students are required to attend screenings of two of the following films in the series:

Jan 27 (Thursday) "Shanghai Express" (An Anna May Wong film. It will be introduced by Visiting Professor Yunte Huang, author of Charlie Chan: The Untold Story of the Honorable Detective and his Rendezvous with American History. Here is the link: [http://cinema.cornell.edu/EarlySpring2011/shanghai\\_express.html](http://cinema.cornell.edu/EarlySpring2011/shanghai_express.html))

Feb 10 (Thursday) "Memoirs of a Geisha"  
7 p.m. in Lewis Auditorium in Goldwin Smith

Feb 24 (Thursday) "Charlie Chan: The Black Camel"  
7 p.m. in Lewis Auditorium in Goldwin Smith

March 31 (Thursday) "The Last Dragon"  
7 p.m. in Lewis Auditorium in Goldwin Smith

April 21 (Thursday) "Harold and Kumar Go To White Castle"  
7 p.m. in Lewis Auditorium in Goldwin Smith (introduced by Professor Derek Chang, Director, Asian American Studies Program)

#### **Week 6      Belonging: Nationalist and Global Currents**

March 1

- C.B.Munson “Japanese on the West Coast”
- Executive Order 9066
- Yen Le Espiritu “Changing Lives: World War II and the Postwar Years”

March 3

- Paul Ong and John M. Liu “U.S. Immigration Policies and Asian Migration”
- Rhacel Salazar Parrenas “New Household Forms, Old Family Values: The Formation and the Reproduction of the Filipino Transnational Family in Los Angeles

### **Week 7      **Laboring for the Nation****

March 8

- Paul Ong and Karen Umemoto “Life and Work in the Inner City”
- Min Zhou and Regina Nordquist “Work and Its Place in the Lives of Immigrant Women: Garment Workers in New York City’s Chinatown”

March 10

- Jennifer Lee “Striving for the American Dream: Struggle, Success, and Intergroup Conflict among Korean Immigrant Entrepreneurs”
- discussion of group presentations

### **Week 8      **Multiple Belongings: Panethnicity and Race Mixture****

March 15

- Ruben G. Rumbaut “Vietnamese, Laotian, and Cambodian Americans”
- Nazli Kibria “Not Asian, Black, or White? Reflections on South Asian American Racial Identity”

March 17

- Viranjini Munasinghe “Narrating a Nation through Mixed Bloods”
- Paul Spickard “What Must I Be? Asian Americans and the Question of Multiethnic Identity”

### **Week 9      **Spring Break****

March 22 -24

- start working on your part of the project and begin reading Jasmine

### **Week 10**

March 29      Guest Speaker

- continue Jasmine

March 31

-Bharati Mukherjee “Jasmine”

**Week 11 Cultural Difference: Stereotypes and the “Cultural Defense”**

April 5

-US News and World Report, 1966

-Lucie Cheng and Philip Q. Yang “The ‘Model Minority’ Deconstructed”

April 7

-Leti Volpp “(Mis)identifying Culture: Asian Women and the “Cultural Defense””

**-review of final exam**

**Week 12 Asian American Aesthetics**

April 12

-Transcribed by Gargi Chatterjee and edited by Augie Tam “Is There an Asian American Aesthetics”

April 14

**Final Exam**

**Week 13, 14 and 15 Group Presentations**

April 19

April 21

April 26

April 28

May 3

May 5