Introduction to Asian American Studies
Spring 2012
AAS 1100

Professor Information:
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Office Hours:
(Th) 10-11:30a in Goldwin Smith GM08
(Next door to History of Art office)
Class Location/Time:
Mallot Hall 406
T/Th 2:55-4:10p

TA Information:
Ivan Small
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Office Hours:
(T) 4:15-5:30; (Th) 1:30-2:30; and by appt. in Rockefeller 427

"It's always a good idea to let me know ahead of time that you'll be dropping by for office hours!"

Course Information
Asian Pacific America encompasses a complex, diverse, and rapidly changing population of people. This interdisciplinary course introduces students to major issues in the historical and contemporary experiences of Asian Pacific Americans, including migration, modernization, racial formation, community-building, political mobilization, among others. In this course we will pay particular attention to Asian Americans' use of cultural productions—films, literature, art, media, and popular culture—as an expression/reflection of their cultural identities, historical conditions, and political efforts.

Requirements/Assignments

* Attendance/Participation (15%)
Attendance and participation are mandatory. I notice when students are consistently engaged and prepared—as well as when they are not. More than 2 absences and 3 tardies will result in a grade deduction.

The history of Asian American studies is deeply rooted in student and community activism following the Civil Rights movements in the 1960s. Education and public engagement are thus totally intertwined for students and scholars of AAS. In this tradition, students are required to attend 5 Asian American-focused events and write one-page response papers for each event that connects the issues raised at the event with the readings/discussions from class. Three (3) of these events are Asian American Studies Program-sponsored events—listed on the syllabus—and the other two (2) will be up to you. Events may include movie screenings, readings, lectures, art events, and concerts. I'll announce events as I hear about them but students are also encouraged to suggest events!

* 3 Short Essays (20% each)
Students must turn in 3 short essays throughout the course of the semester. These papers should be 5-6 pages (typed, double-spaced) in length and should present a narrowly-focused argument based on the readings assigned prior to the paper deadline. More guidelines to follow.

* Midterm (25%)
Students will be asked to apply theories and ideas discussed in the course to particular historical and cultural "problems."

Required Texts
Books are available from an independent local bookstore, Buffalo Street Books, in the Dewitt Mall (between Cayuga and Tioga St). Books can be ordered by phone or email. Students may pay for the books, tax-free, through credit card or PayPal and can have the books delivered, free of charge, to the January 31st class session with a receipt. You may also pick up the books from the bookstore directly. Students who miss out on the initial opportunity or transfer into the class later would still be able to pick up the course books at Buffalo Street Books before the books are returned to the publishers. Additionally, students who are unable to afford all the books at once can leave the books "on hold" with us and purchase them over the course of the semester. Call 607-273-8246 for more information.

* Asian American Studies Now edited by Jean Wu and Thomas Chen
* Vietnamica: A Family's Journey (graphic memoir) by GB Tran
* Course Packet available at Cornell Bookstore
A Guideline to Writing A Successful Essay

Essay writing is difficult for everyone. Period. The idea that there are “talented writers” is a myth that helps no one. All writers struggle with their writing, in some way. It is true, however, that some writers are more successful than others. However, their success is not a consequence of talent but perseverance. Successful writers write a lot. They write reading notes and lecture notes that become drafts of their essays and then they write a lot of drafts. In other words, successful writers are engaged thinkers and critical readers. This isn’t a pep talk from your professor; this is real talk from a seasoned writer (who constantly struggles with her writing).

Incidentally, essay writing is not the only kind of writing that matters. People who struggle with the academic essay (a particular genre of writing) are often wonderfully evocative fiction writers and poets or witty Tweeps or amazing letter writers. The academic essay is only one form of writing. It has a particular set of conventions that students often have to practice — a lot.

While there are no short cuts to writing — trust me, there aren’t — there are a number of things you can do that will help you become a more successful writer (or at least give your professors the illusion that you’re a successful writer). Here’s a short list:

Preparing to write
- Take copious reading and lecture notes.
- Don’t go overboard with reading and lecture notes.
- Try outlining your paper; try doing a brain dump; try reading over your notes; try checking your Facebook, try watching a movie; try listening to some music. In other words, figure out what it takes for you to get in the writing zone and do it — and do it often!

While writing
- Remember there’s no ideal thesis. It isn’t your job to figure out what we want you to write; it’s your job to share with us what you think.
- Figure out what you ACTUALLY think about your topic. What is your position/opinion? If you have none, you shouldn’t be writing about it. (If writing an essay is mandatory for you, you’re screwed.)
- Make sure your thesis is an argument and not a description, a question, or a well-established fact.
- Consider the lectures and our in-class discussions thoughtfully but not uncritically. While essays should demonstrate that you understand the key concepts and terms of the class, there’s no ideal thesis.

The night before the deadline
- Provide a THOUGHTFUL title for your essay that describes – in an INTERESTING way – the crux of your thesis, not your topic. (Because the title should speak to your argument, it’s best to wait until after you’ve fully figured out your argument before titling your essay.)
- Provide page numbers.
- Proofread!!
- Proofread it again!! (Try reading your paper aloud. Really works!)
- Make sure you’re using a standard font and formatting. (11 or 12pt Palatino or Times New Roman and 1" margins all around should do it.)
- Make sure your name appears somewhere on the first page of the text. That means, NO TITLE PAGES.
- Print your FINAL DRAFTS on only one side of the paper.
- Staple or paper clip your paper together.

NB: For Paper #1, I will provide students’ an essay prompt. For Papers #2 and #3, students are responsible for coming up with their own paper topics. (We’re happy to help you strengthen your thesis but will not come up with a paper topic for you.)
Course Schedule

January 24
What's in a Name? Asian/Pacific/American vs Oriental?
Introductions/Syllabus
FILM: Culture Shock, dir. Calvin Sun (2006; 10 min) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LW4rFV5EJyg

January 26
FILM: The Grace Lee Project, dir. Grace Lee (2005; 68 min.)

January 31
Discuss The Grace Lee Project
Buffalo Street Books Delivery: make sure you have your receipts w/ you!

February 2
Orientalism
Said, Introduction to Orientalism

February 7
Okiiho, "When and Where I Enter" (WC, Ch.1)
Chang, "Introduction: Becoming Asian American" from Disoriented: Asian Americans, Law, and the Nation-State

February 9
Exclusion & Its Legacies
Lee, "The Chinese are Coming: How Can We Stop Them?" (WC, Ch. 9)

February 14
Shah, "Public Health and the Mapping of Chinatown" (WC, Ch. 10)
Weglyn, "The Secret Munson Report" (WC, Ch. 11)
**Talk about papers

February 16
Citizenship & Its Limits
Chan, "Asian American Struggles for Civil, Political, Economic, and Social Rights" (WC, Ch. 12)

February 21
Lee, "The Cold War Origins of the Model Minority Myth" (WC, Ch. 14)

February 23
Refugee Histories, Refugee Subjectivities
Tran, Vietnamera

February 28
Tang, "Collateral Damage: Southeast Asian Poverty in the U.S." (WC, Ch. 23)
**Paper 1 due

February 29
AASP Event: "Blogging While Asian American" Location TBD, 5-7pm
Special Guests: Angry Asian Man, Disgrasion, & Sepia Mutiny

March 1
Asian American Gender & Sexualities
FILM: Picturing Oriental Girls, dir. Valerie Soe (1992; 15 min)

March 6
Penalesas, "Asian Immigrant Women and Global Restructuring, 1970s-1990s" (WC, Ch. 18)
Manaliansan, "Searching for Community: Filipino Gay Men in NYC" (WC, Ch. 20)

March 8
Intra/Inter Racial Relationality
Zia, "Detroit Blues: Because of You Motherfuckers" (WC, Ch. 3)
Kim, "Home is Where the Ham Is" (WC, Ch. 5).

March 13
Song, Ice Cube "Black Korea"
FILM: APALC El Monte Animated Short (2011; 6 min) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L58H61NgmUE

March 15
Perez, "How to Rehabilitate a Mulatto: The Iconography of Tiger Woods" (WC, Ch. 21)
March 20-22
Spring Break

March 27
IN-CLASS MIDTERM

March 29
Consuming Asian/American Cultures

Informal Asian American Politics
FILM: Slaying the Dragon, Reloaded; dir. Elaine H. Kim (2011; 30 min)

April 3

April 5
FILM: Better Luck Tomorrow; dir. Justin Lin (2002, 101 min.)
Hyon, "The right to be whoever the hell they want to be": Better Luck Tomorrow and Asian American Cultural Politics of Normal* (unpublished dissertation chapter)
Discuss BLT and SDR
** Paper 2 due

April 9
AASP Event: Asian Americans and Dance
Special Guest: Professor Yulian Wong, San Francisco State U, Location TBD; 5-7pm

April 10
Wong, "Situating Asian American Dance Studies"
Guest: Professor Yulian Wong visits our class!

April 12
Lieu, "Pageantry and Nostalgia: Beauty Contests and the Gendered Homeland"
FILM: Miss India Georgia; dir. Daniel Friedman & Sharon Grimberg (1998, 56 min)

From Model Minority to Problem Minority, Post 9/11
Maira, "Youth Culture, Citizenship, and Globalization: South Asian Muslims in the U.S. after 9/11" (WC, Ch. 17)

April 17

April 18
AASP Event: "Sci-Fi Islamica"
Professor Junaid Rana, U of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Location TBD; 5-7pm

April 19
Guest: Professor Junaid Rana visits our class!

New Directions in Asian American Studies

April 24

April 26
KoreaAm, "How YouTube Transformed the Asian American Arts Scene" (31 August 2010)
http://korean.com/cover-story-youtube-stars/
Moy, "The Asian Whiz Kid's Sibling? The Heartthrob" Huffington Post (3 March 2011)
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/victoria-moy/is-america-ready-for-cool_b_830525.html

May 1
Class Wrap Up

May 3
** Paper 3 due