

# Asian American Popular Culture

Fall 2012

<b>Professor Information:</b> Minh-Ha T. Pham <a href="mailto:mp724@cornell.edu">mp724@cornell.edu</a>	<b>Class Location/Time</b> Goldwin Smith Hall 144 Tu 2:30-4:25p
<b>Office Hours:</b> Wednesdays, 2:30-4p. (Sign up sheet posted)	

## Course Information

This course will examine the ways in which Asian Americans have constituted and positioned their identities through various mediums of popular culture. This diverges from much of ethnic studies scholarship which examines racial representations produced from the perspective of the dominant group. This is not to say that we will be ignoring the legacy of Orientalism and Orientalist representational systems. The multiplicity of Asian American cultural practices which sometimes reproduce, challenge, negotiate, or dismiss Orientalism must be positioned in relation to this cultural and political history. However, this course emphasizes Asian American-produced popular culture in order to centralize the agency of Asian Americans in our examination of cultural texts and practices. Focusing on popular institutions of representation like music, theater, fashion, television, film, and the Internet, we will examine the complex relationship between Asian American representational practices and their material experiences and sociopolitical locations. In addition, we will consider the multiple and differentiated interpretive strategies of Asian American consumers of popular culture. How are Asian American consumption and reception practices constituted differently across class, gender, and sexuality?

## Course Requirements

### I. Attendance/Participation

- This is a seminar style class. This means that your participation is vital to the course. That said, your participation grade (based on your overall attendance and participation in class) will account for a **large portion** of your grade.

### II. Precis

- Students will need to write 10 one to two page précis (typed, double spaced) of reading assignments. Precis should demonstrate that you've critically read and considered the reading assignments. *Please do not summarize the readings.* Consider, instead, their significance to the class; how they are in dialogue with other readings from that week or from any other week in the semester; and questions you have about the readings. Precis will also be useful aids to class discussions.

### III. Final Paper

- Each student will write a 12-15 page paper applying the methods and theories presented in this course to an analysis of one popular culture performance, work, genre, practice, or subculture.

This is a green course which means that all texts will be available online on the Web, by PDF through me, or in digital academic archives.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

- August 28                    Introductions  
                                  “I Got My” Music Video ft. Jin [Magnetic North & Taiyo Na]  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IFxgYZdHlno>
- WHAT IS POPULAR CULTURE? WHAT IS CULTURAL STUDIES? WHAT IS ASIAN AMERICAN CULTURAL STUDIES?**
- September 4                “Adventures in Media and Cultural Studies: Introducing the KeyWorks” (Introduction)  
<http://www.rasaneh.org/Images/News/AtachFile/19-10-1390/FILE634617983141947500.pdf>
- Richard Fung, “The Trouble with ‘Asians,’”  
<http://www.richardfung.ca/index.php/?articles/the-trouble-with-asians-1995/>
- September 11              Mimi Thi Nguyen and Thuy Linh Nguyen Tu, “Introduction” (pdf)  
  
**Screening:** Excerpts from *Race: Power of an Illusion*
- September 12              Asian American Studies Program Fall Reception (4:30-6:30p, Rockefeller 4<sup>th</sup> floor) (extra credit, substitute for one précis, must attend **entire** event)
- DIFFERENCES**
- September 18              Lisa Lowe, “Heterogeneity, Hybridity, and Multiplicity: Asian American Differences” (pdf)  
  
**Screening:** *My America or Honk if You Love Buddha*
- IDEOLOGICAL WORKINGS OF POPULAR CULTURE**
- September 25              Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, “The Ruling Class and the Ruling Ideas” (ch. 1)  
  
                                  Antonio Gramsci, “Concept of Ideology”; “Cultural Themes: Ideological Material” (p.14-16)  
  
                                  Roland Barthes, “Operation Margarine,” and “Myth Today” (ch. 7)  
  
                                  Marshall McLuhan, “The Medium is the Message” (ch. 8)  
  
                                  All articles in:  
<http://www.rasaneh.org/Images/News/AtachFile/19-10-1390/FILE634617983141947500.pdf>
- RACE, PLACE, AND ASIAN AMERICA**
- October 2                    SanSan Kwan, “Performing a Geography of Asian America: The Chop Suey Circuit,”  
*TDR* 55.1. (2011): 120-136  
**Screening:** *Forbidden City USA*
- October 9                    Fall Break – NO CLASS.
- October 16                    **Screening:** *Chan is Missing; K-Town*  
  
**DUE:** 3-page prospectus of final paper
- October 23                    Adria Imada, “Hawaiians on Tour: Hula Circuits Through the American Empire” *American Quarterly* 56.1 (2004): 111-149.  
  
**Screening:** *American Aloha*

October 30 Sukhdev Sandhu, “*The Guru* and the Cultural Politics of Placelessness” (pdf)  
**Screening:** *Guru*

**POLITICS OF REPRESENTATION: CONTESTING FEMININITIES**

November 6 Kathleen Zane, “Reflections on a Yellow Eye”  
<http://www4.ncsu.edu/~mseth2/com417s12/readings/zanefixed.pdf>

Shirley Jennifer Lim’s “Contested Beauty: Asian American Beauty Culture during the Cold War” (pdf)

**Screening:** *Two Lies, All Orientals Look The Same*

November 13 No Class – American Studies Association Conference

**POLITICS OF REPRESENTATION: PERFORMING MASCULINITIES**

November 20 Oliver Wang, “Rapping and Repping Asian: Race, Authenticity, and the Asian American MC” (pdf)

**Screening:** Prometheus Brown; Jin

**SCREENING ASIAN AMERICANS ON FILM, TV, VIDEO**

November 27 Lisa Nakamura, “Measuring Race on the Internet: Users, Identity, and Cultural Difference in the United States”

FINAL PAPERS DUE IN CLASS. NO EXCEPTIONS.