

AAS/HIST 3515
The Asian American Middle Class
Professor Chrissy Lau
Spring 2015
MW 2:55-4:10pm

Course Instructor: Chrissy Lau
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Office: 427 Rockefeller Hall
Office Hours: MW 1-2pm, TR 3-4pm

Course Description: The Asian American middle class is defined by having a certain level of education, bourgeoisie sets of manners, investment in home ownership, professional qualifications such as a doctor or an engineer, and participation in popular culture. This course takes a historical, cultural, and social perspective of the rise of the Asian American Middle Class from the late nineteenth century to the current day. How did Asian Americans become part of the American middle class? Did the middle class experience racism differently compared to the working class? And although many Asian Americans strived to belong to the middle class, what are the limits of middle-class Asian American politics and lifestyle? We will cover topics such as immigration, imperialism, family politics, second generation, popular culture, model minority, education, and suicides.

Course Goals:

- Guide the student to understanding how Asian American lives are constituted through intersectional systems of power of gender, race, and class within the United States.
- Help the student to explore how Asian Americans resist, negotiate, and comply with multiple systems of power.
- Challenge the student to read and listen analytically and to think, write, and discuss critically about matters of substantial personal, social, cultural, and political importance.

Course Texts:

Readings on Blackboard

Course Breakdown:

20% Attendance and Participation
20% Facilitation (x2)
20% Weekly Reflections
20% Mid-Semester Paper
20% Final Paper

Attendance and Participation 20%

Each student is required to attend class regularly. You may miss class only if it qualifies as an excused absence, which is a written note from your doctor concerning an illness or from counseling/social services about a grievance. Please clear your absences with me beforehand. Moreover, each student must show up to class on time and if you are tardy, it will count against your attendance. Attendance is the first step to achieving a good letter grade for section. The next step is participation: you are required to do the readings prior to class and actively participate in

class activities and discussion. Please take down notes, jot down some questions, and bring your voice to class. Please silence your phones and absolutely no texting in class.

Facilitation and Leading Discussion 20%

In this course, students will sign up to lead one discussion with a partner during the semester. Leading discussion is not the same as a presentation. A presentation is when you give a summary of the readings and speak the entire time. Leading discussion means asking questions, guiding and building the conversation, talking with your peers – an equity of talking across everyone in the room. The goal of leading discussion is to get everyone involved. You will be graded on preparation, which includes developing questions for discussion and/or bringing materials that will contribute to or enhance our understandings of the topics addressed that week. You will also be graded on facilitation, making sure that all discussion leaders facilitate and that you achieve your goal of stimulating activity and conversation. Past facilitation activities included role-playing, games (however, must be followed by discussion), debates, and questions. Please email me your preparatory questions/activities *at least a day* before discussion (Wednesday). I strongly encourage you to meet with me at least once before you lead discussion so that I can help you prepare and frame your questions.

Weekly One-Page Reflections 20%

Summarize the major arguments and respond and/or reflect with initial thoughts and questions. Due every Wednesday in class. These reflections will be graded on a grading scale of ✓+, ✓, ✓- and is assigned in this class for the purpose of helping students keep up with the readings and to generate productive discussion in class.

Mid-Semester Paper 20%

Take-home paper due 3/9 in class. This take-home paper will analyze and assess the major themes of the readings in the first half of the course. Your goal is to show your comprehension of the major arguments of the readings. 5-7 pages

Final Paper 20%

Take-home paper due date TBA. This take-home paper will analyze and assess the major themes of the readings in the second half of the course. Your goal is to show your comprehension of the major arguments of the readings. 5-7 pages

A Precaution Against Plagiarism

MLA defines plagiarism as “the act of using another person’s ideas or expressions in your writing without acknowledging the source...to plagiarize is to give the impression you have written or thought something that you have in fact borrowed from someone else.” This means absolutely no referencing of websites or outside sources as well as paraphrasing without full citations. If you are caught plagiarizing or party to plagiarizing, you will receive a FAIL in the course.

Class Schedule

*Schedule and readings are subject to change

Week 1: Introductions

1/21 How do we talk about class in Asian America?

Week 2: Chinese Elite and Civil Rights

1/26 Lecture: Tape v. Hurley
Read: Marcus and Chen, "Inside and Outside of Chinatown"
Mai Ngai, "History as Law and Life"
Primary Document: *A Letter from Mrs. Tape*

1/28 Discussion

Week 3: Gambling, Drinking, and Prostitution in Japanese America

2/2 Lecture: Immigrant Reform
Read: Eiichiro Azuma, "Re-forming the Immigrant Masses"
Kikumura, "Coming to America"
Primary Document: *Washington Post's* "Japanese Invasion"

2/4 Discussion

Week 4: American Imperialism and the Philippines

2/9 Lecture: Education
Read: Fujita-Rony, "Education in the Metropole"
Choy, "Usual Suspects"
Primary Document: Political Cartoon

2/11 Discussion

Week 5: Second Generation

2/16 Lecture: Second Generation and Popular Culture
Read: Judy Yung, "Flora Belle Jan"
Valerie Matsumoto, "Social World of the Urban Nisei"
Primary Document: Chiyo Otera

2/18 Discussion

Week 6: World War II and Cold War

2/23 February Break – No Class

2/25 Lecture + Discussion: Suburbanization
Read: Brooks, "The Orientals Whose Friendship is So Important"

Week 7: 1960s Model Minority

3/2 Lecture: The Origins of the Model Minority
Read: Ellen Wu, *The Color of Success* Chapter 5 and 6
Primary Documents: "Success Story – Japanese American Style" and
"Success Story – One Minority Group"

3/4 Discussion

Week 8: 1965 Immigration Act and Capitalist Restructuring

3/9 Lecture: Post 1965 Immigration

Read: Lubheid, "The 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act: An End to Exclusion?"
Bonacich et al, "The New Asian Immigration in Los Angeles and Global Restructuring"
Prashad, "Of India"

Due: Take-Home Mid-Semester Paper

3/11 Discussion

Week 9: 1980s LA Uprisings

3/16 Lecture: Los Angeles Race Riots

Read: Zia, "Lost and Found"
Bonacich, "Entrepreneurs and Firms"
Claire Jean Kim, "Racial Triangulation"

3/18 Discussion

Week 10: Religion and Politics

3/23 Lecture: Asian American Religion

Read: Busto, "Gospel According to the Model Minority"
Kim, "Emerging Ethnic Group Formation"
Iwamura and Wong, "The Moral Minority"

3/25 Discussion

Spring Break 3/28-4/05

Week 11: Filial Piety

4/06 Lecture: Race and Parental Love

Read: Vivian Louie, "Parents' Aspirations and Investment"
Amy Chua, Tiger Mother Excerpt
Yoshihara, "Class Notes"

Suggested Readings: Ellen Wu, "The Back Story"
Not That Kind of Asian Doctor, "To Love in This Way"

4/08 Discussion

Week 12: On Doctors and Engineers

4/13 Lecture: Asian Americans in Medicine and Science Industries

Read: Arthur Wang, "Become a Doctor or an Engineer"
Varma, "High-Tech Coolies"
Mia Mungus, "On Claiming My Movement: Disability and Reproductive Justice"

4/15 Discussion

Extra Credit: Lisa Cacho Talk

Week 13: Middle-Class Madness

4/20 Lecture + Discussion: Mental Health and Suicides
Read: Lisa Park, "Letter to My Sister"

4/22 No class

Week 14: Conspicuous Consumption

4/27 Lecture: Second Generation, Name Brands, and Vacationing
Read: Lisa Park, "Consumptive Citizenship"
Joel Johnson, "1 Million Workers. 90 Million iPhones. 17 Suicides. Who's to Blame?"
Trask, "Lovely Hula Hands"

4/29 Discussion

Week 15: Graduation

5/2 Lecture: Graduation
Read: Vijay Iyer, "Our Complicity With Excess"
Toni Morrison's Address to Rutgers 2011

Finals Week

Take-Home Final Due Date: TBA