

## Contemporary Asian American History

Instructor: Julie Hua  
 Time: 4-5:50 MWF  
 Location: Cognitive Sci. Bldg (CSB) 004  
 Office Hours: M 3-4, W 6-7, by appointment  
 Office:  
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### Course Description

In this course, we use narratives of Asian American history, which have been erased from traditional historical narratives, as a tool for interrogating history as subjectively constituted. Thus the first portion of the course will examine history not as a given, but as a narrative of memory. We will examine history as a construct that is always being re-constructed so that we may begin to understand why racial subjects like Asian Americans have not been part of traditional US histories. We will use the construction of Asian-ness as a way to critically reconsider traditional historical narratives.

The second portion of the course will look at how “model minority” and “deviant/criminal” are two seemingly contradictory ways in which the narrative of “Asian Americans in the US” has constructed Asian-ness since the Civil Rights era.

### Course Objective

The objective of the course is to develop critical thinking skills. The exams are open-book, open-note and ask that you apply the concepts from the course to particular social examples. I am not interested in memorization of “facts” or dates. Rather, I am interested in developing your analytic ability to reflect and reconsider what we take as “given.”

### Required Texts

*The Gangster We Are All Looking For*, thi diem thuy le (available at Groundwork Books)  
 ETHN 121 Reader (available through Copy Plus 858-794-7836) – will be sold first wk of class

### Course Requirements

- Active participation/learning: This course will be run on a lecture-discussion basis. The success of the course depends on your active participation and attendance.  
 NOTE: You are required to submit a one-page self-evaluation of your participation and attendance in class.
- Critical Essay (5-6 pages)
- Midterm exam – short essay (take home)
- Final exam (in class)

### Grading

To **MINIMALLY** pass the course and receive a grade, you must have handed in all completed work by the specified due date and time. *I will not accept any late work.* As there are very few assignments, any one missing assignment will result in a course failure. *You must turn in all assignments to pass the course.* If you are taking the course P/NP, you must turn in all assignments and receive at least 70% on each. Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

Participation/attendance: 10%  
 Critical essay: 30%

Midterm: 30%

Final: 30%

*Participation is not calculated by the number of times you talk in class. I am interested in QUALITY of discussion, not QUANTITY. Participation also means being engaged and respectful of your colleagues. Because our course materials deal with sensitive materials, we must engage with each other's work in a respectful manner. If I feel that you are being hostile or in any other way impeding a respectful, productive classroom atmosphere, I will ask you to leave. If I feel you are continually causing disruptions, I may request that you drop the course. Missing more than 2 class periods will result in a request to drop the course.*

### **Policies**

\*Always bring text(s) with which we are currently working.

\*Assigned readings are to be completed *before* class. Please come prepared and ready to discuss the assigned materials.

\*All written work must be typed in 12pt., Times New Roman font with regular (1-inch) margins. For proper paper format and citation guidelines, please refer to an MLA stylebook. Paginate all work and *staple all work in the upper left-hand corner.*

\*All written work you turn in should be grammar and spell checked as well as proofread before I see it.

\*The only acceptable way of turning in an assignment to me is in person. If you try to leave your paper for me in any other way without consulting me first, and your paper gets lost, you are held responsible and your paper will be counted as late.

\*Turn off all phones and beepers during class.

\*Please take advantage of my office hours! Also, I check my email at least once a day (usually at night) so please don't hesitate to email me.

### **Course Schedule**

(subject to change)

#### **Week 1 – Establishing our Framework: History as Narrative and Memory**

Mon 8.1 Introduction

Wed 8.3 Marita Sturken, “The Wall and the Screen Memory” (Reader p.1-22)

Film – “History and Memory,” Rae Tajiri

Fri 8.5 – Traditional History vs. Critical History

Howard Zinn, “Columbus and Western Civilization” (Reader p.23-36)

bell hooks, “Columbus: Gone but Not Forgotten” (Reader p. 37-43)

#### **Week 2 – Concepts: Race, Objectivity/Subjectivity, and Postmodernism**

Mon 8.8 Joan Wallach Scott, “Gender and the Politics of History” (Reader p.50-56)

Jane Flax, “Transitional Thinking” (Reader p.44-49)

Wed 8.10 Michael Omi & Howard Winant, “Racial Formation” (Reader p.57-64)

Fri 8.12 Robert Lee, “Introduction” (Reader p.65-73)

**Week 3 – Examining the Asian Subject: Toward a Critical History**

Mon 8.15 Lisa Park, “Letter to My Sister” (Reader p.85-88)

Henry Yu, “Thinking About Orientals” (Reader p.74-84)

Wed 8.17 *The Gangster We Are All Looking For*, le

**Midterm Essays due in class**

Fri 8.19 *The Gangster We Are All Looking For*, le

**Week 4– The Narrative of Asian Americans as “Model” Minorities**

Mon 8.22 David Palumbo-Liu, “Citizens and Subnations” (Reader p.89-100)

Robert Lee, “The Model Minority as Gook” (Reader p.101-107)

Wed 8.24 Neil Gotanda, “Multiculturalism and Racial Stratification” (Reader p.118-124)

Robert Lee, “After L.A.” (Reader p.108-117)

Fri 8.26 Edward Park & John Park, “Engineering the Model Minority” (Reader p.136-141)

**Critical Essay due in class**

**Week 5 – The Narrative of Asian Americans as “Criminal” Immigrants**

Mon 8.29 Edward Park & John Park, “Efficiency and Cost” (Reader p.125-135)

Yen Le Espiritu, “Contemporary Asian America” (Reader p.142-155)

Wed 8.31 Excerpts from “Major Problems in Asian American History,” #9-11 (Reader p156-158)

**Self-Evaluation due in class**

Fri 9.2 review/study day

**Final Exam is Saturday, Sept. 3, 3-6pm (please bring a blue book)**