

ETHN 189:  
Asian American Politics  
(M-W-F, 10-10:50 am, Fall 2006)

Instructor: Theresa C. Suarez

Office hours & location: M/W 2-3:30 pm, SSB 231

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(Mailbox available in the Ethnic Studies Department: Social Science Building 201.)

**Course Description**

This “special topics” course is based on the premise that the perspectives, experiences, and prospects of Asian Americans *have always* shaped “political” life in the United States. As a class, we will examine various renderings of “Asian American Politics” through course readings, visual materials, artistic work, even our own collective research projects, to identify various ways of *politicized* engagement in contemporary issues.

**Required Readings**

The following books are available at Groundwork Books, located south of Mandeville Auditorium.

1. Asian Americans and Politics, edited by Gordon H. Chang
2. Asian Americans on War and Peace, edited by Russell Leong and Don Nakanishi
3. Heartbeat of Struggle: The Revolutionary Life of Yuri Kochiyama, by Diane Fujino
4. Mobilizing an Asian American Community, by Linda Vo

**Course Assignments**

1. 15% Class Attendance & Participation
2. 15% Student-led Discussion of Critical Representations of Asian Americans
3. 40% 4 Structured Response Papers (4-5 pages)
4. 30% Final Research Project Proposal, Fieldwork, and Presentation

*Any special needs/concerns should be raised with the instructor as soon as possible.*

*To encourage candid and respectful dialogue, any “disrespectful class behavior” will not be tolerated; if discussion with the instructor does not result in appropriate changes, recourse shall follow department and UC protocol.*

**ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION:** Attendance and participation will be noted by response papers, creative in-class assignments, and written feedback on all student-led discussions and presentations.

STUDENT-LED DISCUSSION: Each student will conduct a presentation on contemporary representations of “Asian Americans.” Examples may include film, literature, poetry, internet analysis of specific Asian American sites, ethnographic notes on off-campus locales, etc. *Your creative interpretation of this assignment is encouraged!*

As part of the presentation, each student should also engage the class in a critical and thoughtful discussion of how, or perhaps *whether*, such representations engage the themes raised in the assigned readings. Each student must: 1) meet with the instructor in office hours in advance of the presentation; and 2) **\*\*email\*\*** the instructor with the assignment below by 11 pm the evening before your presentation (earlier is preferable).

1). A 2-page outline/ summary of your presentation (reflections/ disagreements/ analyses, *\*five\** discussion questions/ topics for your peers, in-class activities, etc.), including a brief annotated bibliography of *\*three\** additional sources (creative, non/academic, interview, etc.) used in the preparation of your presentation. (That is, why was the source helpful for you?)

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS: Each student will submit five, 4-5 page response papers in class, on the due dates indicated in the course syllabus. No email submissions without prior instructor approval. Any email submissions after the start of class will receive partial credit. (*Students will not compose and email response papers during class with laptop access.*) Absolutely no late response papers. These need not be exhaustive response papers, addressing every important detail in the reading assignments; rather, they should demonstrate critical engagement with several compelling ideas of the student’s own choosing—and, if applicable, selective personal observations which might serve as illustrative examples.

Please follow these general guidelines:

1. Include a brief summary of the assigned text (no more than a page), noting the parts to which you are responding.
2. Pick a topic of focus.
3. Discuss what is compelling about the topic(s) you’re focusing on. Can you summarize the author’s point(s) in your own words, or include a concise quote? What is the author saying? Who is the audience?
4. Describe how you feel about the topic(s). What do you think about the author’s idea(s), and why? Strengths? Limitations?
5. Describe how the topic fits, or doesn’t fit in, with other topics discussed and read about in the class.

For individualized writing assistance, or with any other matter regarding the course and your progress, please email the instructor or visit during office hours or by appointment.

**ESSAY FORMAT: Times New Roman, 12-point font, double-spaced, left justified, 1-inch margins.**

**FINAL RESEARCH PROJECT:** Students will be involved in a term-long project of their own choosing on “Asian American Politics.” A research proposal, preliminary “fieldwork,” and presentation of preliminary analyses/ findings will be delivered the last week of the quarter. Projects are subject to instructor approval, and may be conducted as team projects. Details—including fun, creative, “do-able” examples—will be provided in class.

### **Course Schedule**

(Please note: the instructor may make minor changes to the syllabus at her discretion during the term. Students should ensure that they are informed of such changes.)

F      9/22                      *Introduction*

#### ***“Checking Out Your Campus” Activity:***

As you settle into your fall quarter routine, take 1 page of notes on observable gender, race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality matters on campus as they pertain to “Asian American communities”—as you would interpret these at this stage of your learning. What are you “observing?” Are you a non/participant? Why are these observations compelling to you? How are they significant? How do you think about them, and why? Possibilities may include informal and formal gatherings, public transportation experiences, sitting in on other classes, exercising at the gym, etc. You may also consider analyzing flyers, posters, and other creative material. If possible, please respectfully borrow copies to share in class. (*Activity adapted from original design, by Vicki Byard, Northeastern Illinois University*)

**\*\* Bring in notes/ materials on Friday, 9/29.**

<u>Week 1,2</u>		Read <u>Heartbeat of Struggle: The Revolutionary Life of Yuri Kochiyama</u>
M	9/25	<i>Colorblind Patriot?</i>
		Partner activity & discussion/ “Growing up ‘Asian American’”
W	9/27	<i>“Asian Americans” and the Civil Rights Movement</i>
F	9/29	<b>“COyC” discussion/ Final Project Intro (Already?!)</b>
M	10/2	<i>On “Political” Prisoners</i>
W	10/4	<i>Social/ “Political” Activism</i>
F	10/6	<b>Response Paper I./ FILM TBA</b>
<u>Weeks 3,4</u>		Read <u>Asian Americans on War and Peace</u>
M	10/9	<b>Student-led Discussion (2)</b>
W	10/11	<i>Global Crises: Orientalist Constructions of “Terror”</i>
F	10/13	<i>On Civil Liberties</i>

M	10/16	<b>Final Project Proposal/</b> <i>On “Geopolitics”</i>
W	10/18	<i>On the Possibilities of Peace?</i>
F	10/20	<b>Response Paper II./ FILM TBA</b>
<u>Weeks 5, 6, 7</u>		Read <u>Asian Americans and Politics</u>
M	10/23	<b>Student-led Discussion (2)</b>
W	10/25	<i>On Citizenship</i>
F	10/27	<i>On “Political” Authority and the State</i>
M	10/30	<b>Student-led Discussion (2)/ Fieldwork Report I.</b>
W	11/1	<i>Voting Behavior</i>
F	11/3	<i>Emerging “Political” Identities</i>
M	11/6	<i>“Political” Empowerment</i>
W	11/8	<b>Response Paper III/ FILM TBA</b>
(F	11/10)	Campus Holiday – NO CLASS
<u>Weeks 8, 9</u>		Read <u>Mobilizing as Asian American Community</u>
M	11/13	<b>Student-led Discussion (2)</b>
W	11/15	<i>Reflexive Feminist Ethnography</i>
F	11/17	<i>On the “Politics” of Culture and Place</i>
M	11/20	<i>Guest Speaker TBA</i>
W	11/22	<b>Fieldwork Report II.</b>
(F	11/24)	Campus Holiday – NO CLASS
<u>Week 10</u>		<i>“Future Possibilities”</i>
M	11/27	<b>Response Paper IV./ Student-led Discussion (2)</b>
W	11/29	<i>Wrap-up I.</i>
F	12/1	<i>Wrap-up II.</i>