

**ETHNIC STUDIES 122**  
**ASIAN AMERICAN CULTURE(S) AND IDENTITI(ES)**  
**Fall 2021 - Tuesdays/Thursdays 5:00 – 6:20 PM**  
**(PCYNH 120)**

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Office hours: 6:30 – 8:00 PM Tuesdays/Thursdays

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course explores the identity formation and the ongoing experiences of Asian Americans in the U.S. society. We will analyze a multitude of cultural texts such as literature, film, music, performance, and everyday acts of social and political resistance to articulate how Asian/Americans have responded to the ways in which they have been racialized, marginalized, gendered, sexualized, classed, and deemed as always already “foreign.”

Throughout the course, we will be exploring and answering the following questions:

- 1) How do we define “Asian American culture”—what makes it “Asian American”?
- 2) How do different cultural mediums shape and frame how the experiences of Asian America are represented?
- 3) How do Asian American politicize themselves through their cultural expressions?
- 4) How do you practice an intersectional lens in the representation of Asian Americans?

The goal of the course is to provide you with the tools to theorize and articulate how various cultural forms allow us to conceptualize the processes of identity formation among Asian Americans.

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

*Asian American Dreams: The Emergence of An American People* (Helen Zia, 2001)

*The Best We could do: An Illustrated Memoir* (Thi Bui, 2017)

Other readings and links will be available on Canvas.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

Attendance and Participation	20%
Group Presentation & Class facilitation	10%
Reading Responses	30%
Final Project Proposal	10%
Final Project	30%

**Attendance and Participation:** A large part of your learning in this class will come from your peers. Your regular attendance and active participation is crucial to your success in the course

and will also enhance the quality of the course. Throughout the course, we will work through themes/concepts, readings, and other materials as a group, therefore, your attendance and participation is key to understanding the complexities of Asian American culture and identity formation. Participation will involve class discussions and other class activities.

It is recommended that you attend all class meetings, with the exception of two (2) excused absences. However, if you have Covid symptoms or a positive Covid test, please contact me via email so that we can discuss how to deal with the situation. I expect every student to come to class with reading-task completed and questions in mind.

### **Group Presentation & Class Facilitation:**

After the first two weeks, students will work in groups of 4 to be in charge of one class facilitation. This assignment will allow you to *lead* the class to engage critically in the readings of that day. Each facilitation should not be longer than 30 minutes and will start at the beginning of the class. In your facilitation, you should briefly *summarize* the fundamental points, make critical *analyses*, *ask* questions, and *facilitate* the class discussion on the assigned reading materials of that day. You will use PowerPoint or Prezi for your facilitation but feel free (and be creative) to use any other sources of material/visual aids, such as pictures, cultural objects, or a very short video (no more than 5 minutes), to illustrate your points. Facilitators will email me the link to your work via Google Slides or as an attachment 24 hours before your facilitation begins. You can either submit to me a hard copy of your presentation that day (including the brief summary, the comments, and the questions) or send it to me via email. Your facilitation will be graded based on both your class performance and the quality of the materials.

**Critical Responses:** Critical responses are an important way for you to engage with the reading/viewing material before coming to class. You will submit **five** weekly reading responses (about 350 words) on Canvas **two hours prior** to the class period on **Tuesdays**. You can choose any 5 weeks among our 10 weeks to submit your critical responses. The response papers should not be a summary but rather a way for you to highlight the author's main points and make connections across the readings in relation to the themes/concepts of the course. The response paper must account for at least two of the readings for that week.

Here are some recommended questions (not requirements) that you may take into consideration when writing the critical responses:

- 1) What are the main arguments made in the texts?
- 2) How do the texts connect to that week's theme(s) and the course's themes?
- 3) What theoretical framework(s) are the texts corresponding to?

### **Final Project Proposal:**

You must turn in your project proposal by the end of week 4 (Friday, 10/22/2021). Your proposal must be approved before starting your actual project. If you are doing a group project, you can turn in one 700-word proposal for the entire group, but you must work on it together. I highly suggest that you consult me about your final project before turning in a proposal. I will discuss the requirements for a project proposal during Week 3.

## **Final Project:**

You are required to create a cultural text as an expression of your understanding of Asian American culture and identity. This cultural text can be in the form of a poem, short story, prose, art piece, short film/video, podcast, digital gallery, or any other popular mediums. You can do your final project on your own or participate in a group with no more than three people. You are required to turn in a 1200-word paper (if you are in a group, **each member** must turn in their own write-up) describing how your final project addresses course themes and topics. You will make a short presentation about your final project in week 10.

**Extra Credit:** I will assign extra credit depending if there are any relevant events on campus or in San Diego.

## **CLASS POLICY**

**Late assignments:** Assignments' deadlines are indicated on Canvas. Assignments will be deducted 1/2 of a letter grade for each day they are late.

**Technology:** NO laptops, tablets, and/or phones are allowed during the duration of the class. If there is a legitimate reason as to why you need use an electronic device to take notes, please let me know as soon as possible.

**Class Conduct:** By the very nature of the course topic, there will likely be a wide range of opinions. A good classroom environment should stimulate you to think for yourself, challenge paradigms, and raise critical questions. However, please keep in mind that we must engage each other in a respectful and considerate debate in the classroom. These ground rules are reflected in the UCSD Principles of Community to which we are all expected to adhere (<http://www.vcoba.ucsd.edu/principles.htm>). Abusive and harsh language, intimidation, and personal attacks will not be tolerated.

**Academic Dishonesty:** Plagiarism is a serious violation, whether intentional or inadvertent. All work submitted in this course must be your own and original. The use of sources such as ideas, quotations, paraphrases, or anything written by someone else must be properly acknowledged and cited. Plagiarism is when you use someone else's words without attribution; it includes using portions of a previously published work or website in a paper without citing the source, submitting a paper written for another course, submitting a paper written by someone else, and using the ideas of someone else without attribution. If you have questions about the proper citation of sources, please discuss them with your instructors or consult Charles Lipson's *Doing Honest Work in College: How to Prepare Citations, Avoid Plagiarism, and Achieve Real Academic Success* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004). Students found guilty of plagiarism will be disciplined to the full extent of university policy and forwarded to the dean of their college. Students found cheating on an exam or quiz will receive a failing grade in the course and be reported to the dean of their college for disciplinary action. Each student is expected to be familiar with UCSD's Policy on Integrity of Scholarship, available at <http://www.senate.ucsd.edu/manual/appendices/app2.htm#AP14>.

**Disabilities:** If you have a documented disability needing accommodations in this course, please inform me and bring a notification letter outlining your approved accommodations. I will make

all reasonable efforts to assist you. If, as a result of a disability, you cannot accept the content or terms of this syllabus, you must notify me in writing within one week of receipt of syllabus. You may also seek assistance or information from the Office for Students with Disabilities, 858-534-4382.

### **CLASS SCHEDULE & ASSIGNED TEXTS**

#### **Week 1: Theorizing Asian American Cultural Identity & Culture Productions**

- Tuesday: “Cultural identity and diaspora” (Stuart Hall)  
“Immigration, Citizenship, racialization: Asian American critique” from *Immigration Acts on Asian American Cultural Politics* (Lisa Lowe, 1996)  
“From Nothing, a Consciousness” from *Asian American Dreams: The Emergence of an American People* (Helen Zia, 2001)
- Thursday: “Introduction” from *Imagine Otherwise: On Asian Americanist critique* (Kandice Chuh, 2003)  
“Introduction” from *Alien Encounters: Popular Culture in Asian America* (Mimi Thi Nguyen and Thuy Linh Nguyen Tu, 2007)

#### **Week 2: Good enough to work but not good enough to stay: Historical Legacies of Exclusion and Labor Exploitation**

- Tuesday: “Surrogate Slaves to American Dreamers” from *Asian American Dreams: The Emergence of an American People* (Helen Zia, 2001)  
*Home from the Eastern Sea - The Story of Asian Immigration to America*  
[documentary 57 min.]  
Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XAF39vVYfA>
- Thursday: Short stories from *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* (Sui Sin Far, 1912)  
“Introduction” & chapter 4 “One Hundred Kinds of Oppressive Laws” from *At America's Gates: Chinese Immigration during the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943* (Erika Lee, 2003)

#### **Week 3: Racializing Asian – Becoming Asian Americans**

- Tuesday: Chapter 2 “Coming together: The Asian American Movement” from *Asian American Panethnicity: Bridging Institutions and Identities* (Yen Le Espiritu, 1992)  
“Heterogeneity, Hybridity, Multiplicity: Asian American Differences” from *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (Lisa Lowe, 1996)
- Thursday: Chapter 3 “Detroit Blues: ‘Because of You Motherfuckers’” from *Asian American Dreams: The Emergence of an American People* (Helen Zia, 2001)  
Chapter 4 “To Market, to Market, New York Style” from *Asian American Dreams: The Emergence of an American People* (Helen Zia, 2001)

**Week 4: Moments of Crisis: Identities forged through emergency**

- Tuesday: Film: *Who's going to pay for these donuts, anyway?* (Janice Tanaka, 1992)  
“‘Positively No Filipinos Allowed’: Differential Inclusion and Homelessness”  
from *Home Bound: Filipino American Lives across Cultures, Communities, and Countries* (Yen Le Espiritu, 2003)  
“The ‘We-Win-Even-When-We-Lose’” Syndrome: U.S. Press Coverage of the  
Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the ‘Fall of Saigon’” from *American Quarterly* (Yen  
Le Espiritu, 2006)
- Thursday: “Cultural Citizenship” from *Missing: Youth, Citizenship, and Empire after 9/11*  
(Sunaina Marr Maira, 2009)  
Documentary series: *NBC Asian America Presents: Deported*

**Week 5: Dismantling the Model Minority Myth**

- Tuesday: “Model Minority, Yellow Peril: Functions of "Foreignness" in the Construction of  
Asian American Legal Identity” from *Asian Law Journal* (Natsu Taylor Saito,  
1997)  
Epilogue “Model Minority/ Asian American” in *The Color of Success: Asian  
Americans and the Origins of the Model Minority* (Ellen Wu, 2014)  
“The Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans” from *Politics and Society* (Claire  
Jean Kim, 1999)
- Thursday: Film: *Better Luck Tomorrow* (Justin Lin, 2002)  
*a.k.a Don Bonus* (Spencer Nakasako, 1995)  
“Asian Americans in the Age of Neoliberalism Human Capital and Bad Choices  
in a.k.a Don Bonus (1993) and Better Luck Tomorrow (2002)” from *Black  
Orientalism and Asian Uplift from Pre-Emancipation to Neoliberal America*  
(Helen Heran Jun, 2011)

**Week 6: Performing Asian/ America**

- Tuesday: Chapter 5 “The Gangsters, Gooks, Geisha, and Geeks” from *Asian American  
Dreams: The Emergence of an American People* (Helen Zia, 2001)  
*M. Butterfly* by David Henry Hwang
- Thursday: *The Yellow Face* by David Henry Hwang  
“The Heat is On *Miss Saigon* Coalition: Organizing Across Race and Sexuality”  
from *Q & A: Queer in Asian America* (Yoko Yoshikawa, 1998)

**Week 7: Performing Asian/ America (Cont.)**

Tuesday: Chapter 1 “Rapping and Repping Asian: Race, Authenticity, and the Asian American MC” from *Alien Encounters: Popular Culture in Asian America* (Mimi Thi Nguyen and Thuy Linh Nguyen Tu, 2007)

“How It Feels to Be Viral Me: Affective Labor and Asian American YouTube Performance” from *WSQ: Women's Studies Quarterly* (Christine Bacareza Balance, 2012)

Thursday: “Performing Culture in Diaspora: Assimilation and Hybridity in Paris by Night Videos and Vietnamese American Niche Media” from *Alien Encounters: Popular Culture in Asian America* (Mimi Thi Nguyen and Thuy Linh Nguyen Tu, 2007)

**Week 8: The generation after: Inheritance and Dissidence**

Tuesday: “Discovering My Mother as the Other in the Saturday Evening Post” from *Qualitative Inquiry* (Elena Tajima Creef, 2000)  
“Notes from a Fragmented Daughter” (Elena Tajima Creef)  
Chapter 9 “Out on Front Lines” from *Asian American Dreams: The Emergence of an American People* (Helen Zia, 2001)

Thursday: *The Best We could do: An Illustrated Memoir* (Thi Bui, 2017)  
“Parents” (*Master of None*, 2015)

**Week 9: Globalization & Racial Capitalism**

Tuesday: Documentary: *Hearts Suspended* by Meghna Damani  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nj34k6fLpf4>

Thursday: Thanksgiving

**Week 10: Final Project Presentations**