

**ETHNIC STUDIES 122**  
**ASIAN AMERICAN CULTURE(S) AND IDENTITI(ES)**  
**Fall 2023 - MWF 5:00 – 5:50 PM**  
**(WLH 2113)**

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Office hours: By appointment

## **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**

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

Other readings and links will be available on Canvas.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Attendance & Participation	15%
2 Response Papers	20%
Group Presentation & Facilitation	15%
Mid-term paper	10%
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 four (4) excused absences. You will receive an "F" (Fail) grade in this class if you have more than 7 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 three weeks, students will work in groups of 3 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 **two** critical responses (about 500 words each) on Canvas **one hour prior** to the class period (**by 3:00 pm**) on **Fridays**. You can choose any 2 weeks among our 9 weeks to submit your critical responses (Note: There is no reading/ viewing material in week 10, so there will be no critical response assignment for this last week). 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 reading/ viewing materials 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) How do the texts help you understand/ explain more current events or issues facing Asian Americans/ communities?

### **Mid-term paper:**

Each student writes a paper (about 500-600 words) reflecting on how an Asian American cultural event or a cultural product help the student learn about Asian American Experience. A cultural product may be a museum displaying Asian American Art and History (e.g. Chinese American Museum, Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles), a play/ a movie/ a novel/ short story(es)/ poem(s)/ a piece of art/ a song/ a website/ a newspaper, etc. created by Asian American(s).

### **Final Project Proposal:**

You must turn in your project proposal by the end of week 7. 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 5. There will a guideline for the final project proposal.

### **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://wwwvcba.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**

Monday: "Immigration, Citizenship, racialization: Asian American critique"  
from *Immigration Acts on Asian American Cultural Politics* (Lisa Lowe, 1996)

Wednesday: "Immigration, Citizenship, racialization: Asian American critique"  
(CONTINUED)

Friday: "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**

Monday: Introduction & Chapter 3 "Exclusion Acts: Race, Class, Gender, and Citizenship in the Enforcement of the Exclusion Laws" from *At America's Gates: Chinese Immigration during the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943* (Erika Lee, 2003)

Wednesday: Short stories from *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* (Sui Sin Far, 1912)

<https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/62940/pg62940-images.html#p1>Links to an external site.

"Sui Sin Far's Argument for Biculturalism in *Mrs. Spring Fragrance*" from *Asian American Studies: Identity, Images, Issues Past and Present* (Ellen Dupree, 2020)

Friday: "'Positively No Filipinos Allowed': Differential Inclusion and Homelessness" from *Home Bound: Filipino American Lives across Cultures, Communities, and Countries* (Yen Le Espiritu, 2003)

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

Monday:

Chapter 2 "Coming together: The Asian American Movement" from *Asian American Panethnicity: Bridging Institutions and Identities* (Yen Le Espiritu, 1992)

Wednesday:

"Heterogeneity, Hybridity, Multiplicity: Asian American Differences" from *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (Lisa Lowe, 1996)

Friday:

Chapter 3 “Detroit Blues: ‘Because of You Motherfuckers’” from *Asian American Dreams: The Emergence of an American People* (Helen Zia, 2001)

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

Monday: ***[Group 1 - presentation & discussion facilitation]***

Film: *Who’s going to pay for these donuts, anyway?* (Janice Tanaka, 1992)

Wednesday:

“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)

Friday: ***[Group 2 - presentation & discussion facilitation]***

“Cultural Citizenship” from *Missing: Youth, Citizenship, and Empire after 9/11* (Sunaina Marr Maira, 2009)

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

Monday: ***[Group 3- presentation & discussion facilitation]***

“Situating Asian Americans in the political discourse on Affirmative Action” from *Asian American Studies Now: A Critical Reader* (Michael Omi and Dana Takagi, 2010)

Jeremy Lin’s Model Minority Problem from *Contexts* (Maxwell Leung, 2013)

Wednesday:

“The Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans” from *Politics and Society* (Claire Jean Kim, 1999)

Friday:           **[Group 4 - presentation & discussion facilitation]**

Film: *Better Luck Tomorrow* (Justin Lin, 2002)

Suggested watching: *A.K.A Don Bonus: The life of a Cambodian Refugee in USA* (Spencer Nakasako, 1995)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gxcCcbC-vJY&t=1486s>Links to an external site.

“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**

Monday:           **[Group 5 - presentation & discussion facilitation]**

Chapter 5 “The Gangsters, Gooks, Geisha, and Geeks” from *Asian American Dreams: The Emergence of an American People* (Helen Zia, 2001)

*Butterfly* by David Henry Hwang

Wednesday:   **[Group 6 - presentation & discussion facilitation]**



*Indo-Chic: Late Capitalist Orientalism and Imperial Culture* by Sunaina Maira

Friday: VETERANS DAY

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

Monday: ***[Group 8 - presentation & discussion facilitation]***

Film: *Bad Rap* (Salima Korom, 2016)

Wednesday: ***[Group 9 - presentation & discussion facilitation]***

*Cooking up the Senses: A Critical Embodied Approach to the Study of Food & Asian American Television Audiences.* (Mimi Thi Nguyen and Thuy Linh Nguyen Tu, 2007)

Friday: ***[Group 7 - presentation & discussion facilitation]***

*Asian American Auto/Biographies: The Gendered Limits of Consumer Citizenship in Import Subcultures*

**Week 8: Globalization & Racial Capitalism**

Monday: ***[Group 10 - presentation & discussion facilitation]***

Documentary: *Hearts Suspended* by Meghna Damani

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nj34k6fLpf4>

Mallapragada, Madhavi. "Immigrant Activism: Narratives of the 'H-4 Life' by Indian Women on YouTube." *Communication, Culture and Critique*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2017, pp. 76-92.

Wednesday: Asian Americans in the Media

"Debating the State of Asian American Media" by Vincent N. Pham

Friday: THANKSGIVING

**Week 9: The generation after: Inheritance and Dissidence**

Monday: ***[Group 10 - presentation & discussion facilitation]***

Film: *Among the Bboys* (Christopher Woon, 2011)

Chapter 10 "Reinventing Our Culture" from *Asian American Dreams: The Emergence of an American People* (Helen Zia, 2001)

Wednesday: ***[Group 11 - presentation & discussion facilitation]***

"Producing Missing Persons: Korean Adoptee Artists Imagining (Im)possible Lives" by Eleana Kim

Friday: ***[Group 12 - presentation & discussion facilitation]***

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

“Parents” (*Master of None*, 2015) – **in class screening** ((You don't need to watch the video in advance)

**Week 10:     Final Project Presentations**