

University of California, San Diego

ETHN 121
Contemporary Asian American History

Professor Lisa Sun-Hee Park, Ph.D.

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COURSE OVERVIEW

The goal of this course is to critically place contemporary Asian American experiences within a larger social and historical context. To do this, we will strive for a deeper understanding of the social, political, and economic institutions that construct the basis of Asian America since 1965. This goal will require an emphasis on the race, class, and gender dynamics of migration that continue to structure the roots of Asian America. The course is organized into four themes: movements and migration, defining Asian American communities, the continuing myth of the model minority, and resistance and empowerment.

The required texts for this course are as noted. Please note that this is an upper division course. It is expected that you have some introductory knowledge of issues pertinent to Asian American studies. For those who need a “refresher” on the basic history of Asian America, I suggest you review Ronald Takaki’s *Strangers from a Different Shore* and Bill Ong Hing’s *Making and Remaking Asian America Through Immigration Policy, 1890-1990*. It is your responsibility to fulfill this prerequisite.

Also, I suggest that students form reading groups to informally discuss the required texts. Given that this course is upper-division, I generally do not discuss the readings in lecture. In preparing for the exams and essays, focus on comprehension of the course materials and the central points of each.

REQUIRED TEXTS (Available at Groundwork Books)

Abelmann, Nancy and John Lie. 1995. *Blue Dreams: Korean Americans and the Los Angeles Riots*. Harvard University Press.

Prashad, Vijay. 2000. *The Karma of Brown Folk*. Univ. of Minnesota Press.

Zhou, Min and James V. Gatewood, ed. 2000. *Contemporary Asian America*. NYU Press.

Pham, Andrew X. 1999. *Catfish and Mandala*. Picador Press (Farrar, Straus, & Giroux).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

This course will involve lectures, discussions, and films. Attendance and active participation is mandatory. There will be in-class assignments that cannot be “made up.” This includes films, which are an important and serious part of this course. Take notes

while watching the films. In addition to the take-home midterm and final exams, I have assigned brief essays that require you to *critically* analyze the readings, lectures, and/or films (rather than simply summarizing the materials). These papers are limited to 2 pages in length. All take-home exams, essays, and assignments must be typed. Late papers, assignments or exams are not accepted. I will not read late material.

Midterm exam (take-home)	30%
Critical Essays(2 take-home)	20%
Final exam & project/paper	40%
Participation/Discussion	10%

- Students with disabilities who may need academic accommodations should discuss options with me during the first two weeks of class.
- Please familiarize yourself with the university policy on plagiarism. All materials used must be appropriately cited. Be particularly cautious in using the internet – copying even small portions of an essay from the web is cheating.
- An interactive classroom environment is an important part of my teaching-learning philosophy. Mutual respect, cooperation, and participation form the basis of this environment. By the very nature of the course topic, there will likely be a wide range of opinions, many of which may be rooted in your personal experiences. That is fine. A good classroom environment is supposed to stimulate you to think for yourselves and 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.
- All electronic equipment (i.e. cell phones) must be turned off prior to entering the classroom.

Note: I reserve the right to revise the contents of this syllabus at any given time (with due notice, of course).

OUTLINE OF COURSE READINGS AND FILMS

Unit One: Movements and Migration

Film: My America

January 10	Introduction to the course
January 12	<i>Contemporary Asian America</i> , Part II
January 17	<i>Contemporary Asian America</i> , Part III
January 19	<i>Contemporary Asian America</i> , Part V

Unit Two: Defining the Asian American Community

Film: Who Killed Vincent Chin?

January 24	<i>The Karma of Brown Folk</i> , pp.1-46
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January 26	<i>The Karma of Brown Folk</i> , pp. 47-108
January 31	<i>The Karma of Brown Folk</i> , pp. 109-156
February 2	<i>The Karma of Brown Folk</i> , pp. 157-203
February 7	Review
February 9	Critical Essay #1 Due
	Hand out Midterm Exam

Unit Three:	The Continuing Myth of the Model Minority
	Films: aka Don Bonus
	Sa-I-Gu

February 14	Midterm Exam Due
	<i>Contemporary Asian America</i> , Part VIII
February 16	<i>Blue Dreams</i> , Chs. 1,2
February 21	<i>Blue Dreams</i> , Chs. 3,4
February 23	<i>Blue Dreams</i> , Chs. 5,6
February 28	<i>Contemporary Asian America</i> , Part I

Unit Four:	Resistance and Empowerment
	Film: Kelly Loves Tony

March 2	<i>Contemporary Asian America</i> , Part IX
March 7	<i>Contemporary Asian America</i> , Part XIII
March 9	<i>Catfish and Mandala</i> , pp.1-120
	Critical Essay #2 Due
March 14	<i>Catfish and Mandala</i> , pp.121-226
March 16	<i>Catfish and Mandala</i> , pp. 227-342
	Review

March 24	Final Exam
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