

**ETHN 122: Asian American Culture and Identity**  
**Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:30am - 10:50am**

Instructor: Ayako Sahara  
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Office: Social Science Building 243  
Office Hours: Tuesdays 11:00-12:00 (SSB243)  
Thursdays 11:00-1:00 (Cross Cultural Center)

Course Description:

This course examines Asian American cultural expressions in literature, film, art and other popular venues to understand the social experiences that helped forge Asian American culture and identity. The course explores “Asian American culture” as a site of possibility to critique “nation of immigrants” myth of the US. We will investigate “Asian American culture” in the intersectionality of immigration, class, gender and sexuality. First, we trace the gendered construction of Asian Americans as “Orientals” through cultural representations. Second, we investigate and deconstruct the Model Minority Myth in relation to US imperialism to highlight its effects on and the negotiations with Asian American culture and identity. Finally, we explore the possibility of Asian American culture and identity through various medium. Our task will be to deconstruct the stereo-typical cultural representations and reconstruct or imbue with different narratives to formulate new political/cultural/social/racial subjectivities. This course will focus on Asian American cultural/historical experiences to seek the ways to illuminate the past, present, hope and desire of Asian American lives.

Required Texts:

Mimi Thi Nguyen and Thuy Linh Nguyen Tu editors, *Alien Encounters: Popular Culture in Asian America* (Duke University Press, 2007).

David Henry Hwang, *M. Butterfly* (NY: Dramatists Play Service, Inc., 1998).

GB Tran, *Vietnamerica: A Family's Journey* (NY: Villard, 2011).

E-reserve articles at [roger.ucsd.edu](http://roger.ucsd.edu)

Course Requirements:

Attendance and Participation	20%
Short Essay	15%
Cultural Text	15%
Midterm	25%
Final	25%
(Extra Credit	5%)

**Attendance and Participation 20%:** 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 weekly activities about each week's themes.

Note: Although office hours are not a requirement, it is in your best interest to utilize my office hours if you have questions/thoughts/ideas about the course materials or what the materials evoke for you. Office hours are another way for you to participate in the course.

**Short Essay 15%:** Write a short essay (3-4 pages). (Due on February 2)

**Cultural text 15%:** 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, or any other popular mediums. The text can be a parallel of one of the films, stories, etc. that we discussed in class. (Due on February 24)

**Midterm 25%:** Take-home midterm (Due on February 14)

**Final 25%:** Take-home final (Due on March 20)

**Extra Credit 5%:** Introduce the material(s) that you want to share with the class (from week 5 to week 8). Please consult with me in advance.

### **Course Policies:**

**Late submissions:** No late submissions. All submissions are due at the beginning of class and will be considered late once lecture/class has begun.

**Lectures:** Attendance is mandatory because lectures further your understanding of readings and themes introduced in the course. Lectures or classroom time will also serve as discussions for you to work through the materials with other students. It is your responsibility to attain lecture/class notes from your peers if you miss class. Videos and films shown in class are part of the lecture and the course material. Some videos/films you will be able to access at the library but others you will not. It is advantageous to watch these videos/films in class with your classmates.

**Readings:** The readings are chosen to give you the breadth and depth of knowledge about the works about and by Asian Americans. They are an important foundation for our collective work in this class because we will rely on them for classroom discussions, writing assignments, and exams. The readings provide the guide for our exploration about contemporary Asian American history and we will read across the texts to juxtapose the different points they offer for each week's theme. ALL the readings should be completed before class on Tuesdays.

**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-vcba.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.

### **Reading and Lecture Schedule**

#### **Week 1: Introduction on Asian American Culture and Identity**

- Mimi Thi Nguyen and Thuy Linh Nguyen Tu, "Introduction," *Alien Encounters*, 1-32.
- Robert Lee, "Introduction: Yellowface," *Orientalism: Asian Americans in Popular Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1999): 1-14 (**E-Reserve**)
- Glen Mimura, "Diaspora & Modernity's Other," *Ghost Life of Third World Cinema: Asian American Film and Video* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009) 1-24 (**E-Reserve**)
- Screening: "Slaying the Dragon Reloaded"

#### **Week 2: "Orientalism," Gender and Sexuality**

- Gary Okihiro, "When and Where I Enter," *Asian American Studies Now*, 3-20 (**E-Reserve**)
- Colleen Lye, *America's Asia: Racial Form and American Literature, 1893-1945* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005): 1-11 (**E-Reserve**)
- David Henry Hwang, *M. Butterfly* (New York: Dramatists Play Service Inc., 1988)
- Screening: "M. Butterfly"

#### **Week 3: "Orientalism," Gender and Sexuality Continued**

- David Eng, "Heterosexuality in the Face of Whiteness: Divided Belief in M. Butterfly," *Racial Castration: Managing Masculinity in Asian America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001): 137-66 (**E-Reserve**)

- Jennifer P. Ting, "The Power of Sexuality," *Journal of Asian American Studies* 1.1 (1998): 65-82 (**E-Reserve**)
- Margaret Hillenbrand, "Of Myths and Men: Better Luck Tomorrow and the Mainstreaming of Asian America Cinema", *Cinema Journal*, 47, Number 4, (Summer 2007): 50-75. (**E-Reserve**)
- Screening: Better Luck Tomorrow

**Week 4: Asian American Critique of National Culture (Short Essay Due on January 31)**

- Robert Lee, "The Cold War Origins of the Model Minority Myth," *Asian American Studies Now*:256-271 (**E-Reserve**)
- Victor Bascara, "Unburdening Empire: The Cultural Politics of Asian American Difference" *Model Minority Imperialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006): 1-25. (**E-Reserve**)
- Lisa Lowe, "Immigration, Citizenship, Racialization: Asian American Critique," *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996): 1-36 (**E-Reserve**)
- Screening: Vincent Who?

**Week 5: Asian American Representation in Music**

- Oliver Wang, "Rapping and Repping Asian: Race, Authenticity, and the Asian American MC," *Alien Encounters*, 35-68.
- Kevin Fellezs, "Silenced but Not Silent: Asian Americans and Jazz," *Alien Encounters*, 69-108.

**Week 6: Asian Americans and Spaces (Midterm Due on February 14)**

- Christopher A. Shinn, "Homicidal Tendencies: Violence and the Global Economy in Asian American Pulp fiction" *Alien Encounters*, 111-129.
- Joan Kee, "Visual Reconnaissance" *Alien Encounters*, 130-149.
- Sukhdev Sandhu "The Guru and the Cultural Politics of Placelessness" *Alien Encounters*, 161-175.

**Week 7: Asian Americans in Media**

- Martin F. Manalansan IV "Cooking up the Senses: A Critical Embodied Approach to the Study of Food and Asian American Television Audiences," *Alien Encounters*, 179-193.
- Nhi T. Lieu, "Performing Culture in Diaspora: Assimilation and Hybridity in Paris by Night Videos and Vietnamese American Niche Media," *Alien Encounters*, 194-220.
- Sunaina Maira, "Indo-Chic: Late Capitalist Orientalism and Imperial Culture" *Alien Encounters*, 221-243

**Week 8: Asian American Racial Formation and Technologies (Cultural Text Due on February 28)**

- Robyn Magalit Rodriguez and Vernadette Vicuna Gonzalez, "Asian American Auto/Biographies: The Gendered Limits of Consumer Citizenship" *Alien Encounters*, 247-270.
- Mimi Thi Nguyen, "Bruce Lee I Love You: Discourses of Race and Masculinity in the Queer Superstardom of JJ Chinoi" *Alien Encounters*, 271-304.

### **Week 9: Refugee Figure**

- GB Tran, *Vietnamerica: A Family's Journey*
- Yen Le Espiritu, "Towards a Critical Refugee Study" *Journal of Vietnamese Studies*, vol. 1, no.1-2: 410-433. **(E-Reserve)**
- Rosalind C. Morris "Giving Up Ghosts: Notes on Trauma and the Possibility of the Political from Southeast Asia" *Positions*, Vol. 16, No.1, (Spring, 2008): 229-258. **(E-Reserve)**
- Screening: Journey from the Fall

### **Week 10: Future of Asian American Culture and Identity**

- Bonnie Honig, "Immigrant America? How Foreignness 'Solves' Democracy's Problems," *Social Text*, no.56 (Autumn, 1998), 1-27. **(E-Reserve)**
- Lisa Lowe, "Heterogeneity, Hybridity, Multiplicity: Asian American Differences," *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996): 60-83. **(E-Reserve)**

### **Final: Due on March 20, 2012**

#### **Majoring or Minor in Ethnic Studies at UCSD**

Many students take an Ethnic Studies course because the topic is of great interest or because of a need to fulfill a social science, non-contiguous, or other college requirement. Often students have taken three or four classes out of "interest" yet have no information about the major or minor and don't realize how close they are to a major, a minor, or even a double major. An Ethnic Studies major is excellent preparation for a career in law, public policy, government and politics, journalism, education, public health, social work, international relations, and many other careers. If you would like information about the Ethnic Studies major or minor at UCSD, please contact Yolanda Escamilla, Ethnic Studies Department Undergraduate Advisor, at 858-534-3277 or [yescamilla@ucsd.edu](mailto:yescamilla@ucsd.edu).