

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN  
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND ASIAN AMERICAN STUDIES PROGRAM  
SPRING 1992

HISTORY 201

INSTRUCTOR: LON KURASHIGE  
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INTRODUCTION TO ASIAN AMERICAN HISTORY

Texts:

Sucheng Chan, *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History*  
Ronald Takaki, *Strangers From a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans*  
Yuji Ichioka, *Issei: The World of the First Generation Japanese Immigrant, 1885-1924*  
Peter Kwong, *The New Chinatown*  
Carlos Bulosan, *America is in the Heart*  
Packet of Xeroxed Readings

Course Description:

This course is designed to introduce major themes in Asian American history from the beginning of North American Asian immigration in the mid-nineteenth century to the present. Four thematic questions structure the course: Why have various Asian peoples come to America? How has American society incorporated them? What has it meant to be "Asian American"? How have Asian and European Americans gotten along? These questions address overlapping issues of immigration, race relations, racial politics, social mobility, cultural adaptation, ethnic identity, and community formation.

The definition of Asian American history in this course is contingent upon available research. Thus the experiences of "old" Asian American groups (Chinese and Japanese), of which more is written, assume greater emphasis than perhaps is warranted. Of course, this does not mean inattention to the experiences of "new" Asian Americans (Filipinos, Koreans, East Indians, Vietnamese and other Southeast Asians, and Pacific Islanders). A primary goal is to promote a synthetic understanding of Asian American history, that is, to have students grasp common, but not monolithic, experiences of being Asian in nineteenth and twentieth century American society.

Course Requirements:

It is expected that students not simply memorize and regurgitate isolated facts (dates, names, places). It is more important to be able to string together disparate facts into a chain of events, a coherent story, and then to comment about why these events occurred as they did and not some other way. That the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, for example, is meaningless (for our purposes) unless one understands the events leading up to the attack and its domestic and international repercussions. The first (minimum) requirement for the course is to display a command of general narratives, or storylines, of Asian American history.

The second requirement is that students be able to recognize and create convincing historical arguments. To say the Chinese Exclusion Act passed in 1882 because of Euro-America's racial beliefs is making a historical argument. A more persuasive one, however, would attribute the origins of Chinese exclusion to a combination of factors, including Euro-American racial attitudes, Western labor conditions and practices, China-US relations. An even better argument would identify such multiple causes of exclusion and then explain their order of importance. Like lawyers, historians are not concerned with Truth, but persuasive interpretation. It is paramount, therefore, to be able to think critically about the arguments presented in the readings and lectures. The art of historical criticism is not simply denouncing

## COURSE OUTLINE AND LECTURE TOPICS

| LECTURE TOPICS  | WEEK       |
|---|------------|
| <b>I. ROOTS OF ASIAN AMERICA, 1840s TO 1940s</b>                                |            |
| The Eastern Frontier: Theoretical Exhortations and Course Requirements          | Jan. 21    |
| Setting the Stage: Domestic and International Context of 19th century Migration | 21         |
| Birds of Passage? Asian Americans and "New" Immigrants                          | 27         |
| Down on the Plantation: Life and Labor in Hawaii                                | 27         |
| Ethnicity or Class: Padrones, Coolies, and Labor Contracting Systems            | Feb. 3     |
| Film: <i>Mississippi Triangle</i> (Chinese workers in Mississippi Delta)        | 3          |
| Politics of Prejudice: Organized Labor and Chinese Exclusion                    | 10         |
| Politics of Prejudice: Progressives and the anti-Japanese movement              | 10         |
| Race, resistance, and the American law  | 17         |
| Small Business and the Ethnic Economy   | 17         |
| Women and Families in a Bachelor Society  | 24         |
| A Dream Deferred: The Second Generation Dilemma                                 | 24         |
| Overseas Communities and the Changing Face of Asia                              | March 2    |
| The Decision to Relocate Japanese Americans                                     | 2          |
| <br>MID-TERM EXAMINATION  | <br>9      |
| <br><b>II. THE CRUCIBLE OF WAR AND A "NEW" ASIAN AMERICA, 1940s TO 1990s</b>    |            |
| World War Two: Concentration Camps, U.S.A.                                      | 9          |
| World War Two: Cracks in the Mold   | 16         |
| Film: <i>Color of Honor: The Japanese American Soldier in World War II</i>      | 16         |
| SPRING BREAK  | 23         |
| Postwar Politics: Communities, Collaborators, and "Cold Warriors"               | 30         |
| The Affluent Society: Middle Class Transformations and Trappings                | 30         |
| Asian Americans and Civil Rights: Beneficiaries and Benefactors                 | April 6    |
| Politics of Identity: Asian American Movements                                  | 6          |
| Immigration Reform: Politics and Practices                                      | 13         |
| New Migrations: From Brain-drain to Boat-people                                 | 13         |
| The New Chinatown and Other Ethnic Economies                                    | 20         |
| Asian American Women: Work, Family, and Feminism                                | 20         |
| The Declining Significance of Race?   | 27         |
| Film: <i>Who Killed Vincent Chin?</i>   | 27         |
| Asian American Renaissance  | May 4      |
| Asian Americans in the Pacific Rim Era  | 4          |
| <br>FINAL EXAMINATION   | <br>May 11 |

historians works, but requires knowledge of how they assembled their arguments, where they went wrong, and how they could have improved them. Central to doing good historical criticism is being alert to bias in other persons' and one's own work. It is expected that students will learn to think and criticize rather than believe and accept, to present their own historical interpretations, rather than paraphrase those found in the readings and lectures.

There will be two examinations during the course: each will be in a format of essay and short "identify and give the significance of" questions. There will be a required mid-term (scheduled for the week of March 9th) and a final examination (scheduled for the week of May 11)—rooms to be announced.

In addition to examinations, there will be two required written assignments. The first is a brief (2-3 page) review essay of a book or collection of articles mutually agreed upon by the student and instructor. The review essay is due the week of March 24th. The second assignment asks students to write a research paper (10-15 pages) on a topic, again, mutually agreed upon by the student and instructor. The research paper is due no later than the Week of May 4th. Further details for both assignments will be discussed in class.

### Grading:

The grading breakdown is as follows:

25% mid-term  
15% review essay  
30% research paper  
30% final

Grades will not be assigned according to a statistical "curve"; the instructor would be more than happy to reward all students with an "A"—if they earn it.