
Asian American History and Culture

History 901

Fall Semester 2006
5245 Humanities; 11am-1pm

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Asian American, as a category of analysis, uncovers the production of knowledge. As a trace, it exposes not only the narratives suppressed in order to create a certain vision of the world along with ways of being in that world but also the disciplinary mechanisms deployed in order to construct narratives that seek to define who or what constitutes as “Asian American.”

The process of uncovering the meanings and values that inform our understanding of Asian American is indeed useful. It casts the production of culture as a contestation over meanings, where the “universal” is but a hegemonic ideal rather than an epistemic truth. It also explains how national memory is produced and sustained and proposes alternatives that unsettle the fixity of that memory.

In our semester together, we will build on this productive potential and develop how the category of Asian American can interrogate and challenge the disciplinary strictures that have guided knowledge production. We will also explore what alternative narratives and subject formations can be produced that speak to this desire to “unbelong.” To help jumpstart our discussions, we will explore texts that deals with the illicit and the transnational.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Active participation and listening are required in every seminar meeting. In addition, you will present on one of the weekly assigned reading(s) of your choosing. There are two paper assignments for this course. The first is a short 5-7 reaction paper examining key themes and concepts developed in an assigned text. The final critical thinking paper is a 15 page write up that offers a more comprehensive and in-depth analysis on overall themes explored in this course.

Course Participation	40%
Reaction Paper	20%
Critical Thinking Paper	40%
Total	100%

REQUIRED TEXTS

1. Course Reader
2. Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts* (Durham: Duke University Press), 1996.
3. Laura Hyun Yi Kang, *Compositional Subjects* (Durham: Duke University Press), 2002.
4. Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 2004.
5. Maxine Hong Kingston, *China Men* (New York: Vintage Books), 1989.
6. Leslie Bow, *Betrayal and Other Acts of Subversion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 2001.
7. Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 2001.

8. Viet Thanh Nguyen, *Race and Resistance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 2004.
9. Catherine Ceniza Choy, *Empire of Care: Nursing and Migration in Filipino American History* (Durham: Duke University Press), 2003.
10. Sandhya Shukla, *India Abroad* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 2003.
11. Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Dictee* (New York: Tanam Press), 1982.
12. Mine Okubo, *Citizen 13660* (Seattle: University of Washington Press), 2002.
13. Peter X Feng, *Identities in Motion* (Durham: Duke University Press), 2002. Chapters 1; 6-8.

COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK 1 Course Introduction

W 9.6

WEEK 2 The Question of Disciplinarity and Asian American Cultural Politics

W 9.13

Readings:

1. Arjun Appadurai, "Diversity and Disciplinarity as Cultural Artifacts" in *Disciplinarity and Dissent in Cultural Studies*, eds. Cary Nelson and Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar (New York: Routledge, 1996), 23-36.
2. Benjamin Lee, "Between Nations and Disciplines" in *Disciplinarity and Dissent in Cultural Studies*, eds. Cary Nelson and Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar (New York: Routledge, 1996), 217-233.
3. "Symposium on Ronald Takaki's *Strangers From a Different Shore*," *Amerasia* 16:2 (1990): 63-154.
4. Collection of Essays on the Cultural Politics of Asian American Studies:
 - a. Frank Chin and Jeffery Paul Chan, "Racist Love".
 - b. Frank Chin, Jeffery Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Hsu Wong, "An Introduction to Chinese- and Japanese-American Literature," in *Aiiieeeee!*.
 - c. Elaine H. Kim, " 'Such Opposite Creatures': Men and Women in Asian American Literature".
 - d. King-Kok Cheung, "The Woman Warrior versus The Chinaman Pacific: Must a Chinese American Critic Choose between Feminism and Heroism?".
 - e. Leslie Bow, " 'For Every Gesture of Loyalty, There Doesn't Have to Be a Betrayal': Asian American Criticism and the Politics of Locality"

WEEK 3 National Culture: A Contested Terrain

W 9.20

Readings:

1. Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts* (Durham: Duke University Press), 1996.
2. Lisa Lowe, "The International within the National" in *The Futures of American Studies*, eds. Donald E. Pease and Robyn Wiegman (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 76-92.

WEEK 4 Disciplining Knowledges

W 9.27

Readings:

1. Laura Hyun Yi Kang, *Compositional Subjects* (Durham: Duke University Press), 2002.

WEEK 5 **Asian American Subject Formation**

W 10.4

Readings:

1. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, eds. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 271-313.
2. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography" in *Selected Subaltern Studies*, eds. Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 3-32.
3. Rey Chow, "Where Have all the Natives Gone?" in *Writing Diaspora* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 27-54.
4. Rey Chow, "Theory, Area Studies, Cultural Studies: Issues of Pedagogy in Multiculturalism" in *Ethics After Idealism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 2-13.
5. Kandice Chuh, "Introduction" in *Imagine Otherwise* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 1-29. (selections)

WEEK 6

W 10.11

Readings:

1. Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 2004.

WEEK 7

W 10.18 **Reaction Paper DUE**

Readings:

1. Maxine Hong Kingston, *China Men* (New York: Vintage Books), 1989.

WEEK 8

W 10.25

Readings:

1. Leslie Bow, *Betrayal and Other Acts of Subversion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 2001.

WEEK 9

W 11.1

Readings:

1. Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 2001.

WEEK 10

W 11.8

Readings:

1. Viet Thanh Nguyen, *Race and Resistance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 2004.

WEEK 11

W 11.15

Readings:

1. Catherine Ceniza Choy, *Empire of Care: Nursing and Migration in Filipino American History* (Durham: Duke University Press), 2003.

WEEK 12

W 11.22 **Thanksgiving Holiday – No Seminar Meeting**

WEEK 13

W 11.29

Readings:

1. Sandhya Shukla, *India Abroad* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 2003.

WEEK 14

W 12.6

Readings:

1. Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Dictee* (New York: Tanam Press), 1982.
2. Lisa Lowe, "Unfaithful to the Original: The Subject of *Dictee*" in *Writing Self, Writing Nation* (Berkeley: Third Woman Press, 1994), 35-69.
3. Laura Hyun Yi Kang, "The 'Liberatory Voice' of Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictee*" in *Writing Self, Writing Nation* (Berkeley: Third Woman Press, 1994), 73-99.

WEEK 15

W 12.13

Readings:

1. Mine Okubo, *Citizen 13660* (Seattle: University of Washington Press), 2002.
2. Elena Tajima Creef, "Beyond the Camera and between the Words" in *Imaging Japanese America* (New York: New York University Press, 2004), 71-92.
3. Peter X Feng, *Identities in Motion* (Durham: Duke University Press), 2002. Chapters 1; 6-8.

Critical Thinking Paper – DUE Wednesday, December 20, 2006