Asian American History

Since the mid-nineteenth century, people of Asian descent have migrated to, worked in and fought against discrimination by the United States. This course explores the histories of Asians in the United States from 1850 to the present, linking this longstanding presence with issues of contemporary significance.

This course covers a broad range of topics, reflecting the diversity and complexity within Asian American communities, both past and present. We will study the shared and different experiences of immigrants and Americans with origins in China, Japan, Korea, the Philippines, India, and Vietnam. Together, we will explore: processes of colonialism, migration and exclusion; issues of citizenship; racial and ethnic identity formation; practices of resistance; work and labor relations; acculturation, family and community formation; transnational networks; and, representations of Asian Americans. Our historical topics will include: Chinese and Asian exclusion, Asian independence movements, World War II, Japanese internment, the Cold War, the Model Minority myth, the Asian American Movement, post-1965 Asian American communities and multiracial identities. Throughout the course, we will pay close attention to the ways that gender, class, and sexuality intersect with racial, national and generational identities.

In addition to learning the histories of Asian Americans, this course will also consider how these histories have been told and what these ways of telling reveal about contemporary Asian American concerns. We will study aspects of Asian American experience that have been ignored in traditional narratives of American history, but we will also ask: What changes when we look at American history through Asian American eyes? How does Asian American history transform American history? And how has Asian American history itself been transformed over time? We will study the history of Asian Americans, but we will also critically interrogate the term, “Asian American.” We will ask: What is a pan-ethnic Asian American identity? What is the history of this identity and how has it been constructed? Under what conditions and for whom is this identity meaningful?

In this course, you will not only become familiar with the key themes and topics in Asian American history, you will also learn skills that are important to becoming a thoughtful and self-reflexive interpreter of historical and contemporary events. In addition to readings from cultural, social and oral histories, we will review a broad range of primary sources, such as laws, court rulings, newspaper reports, memoirs and poems. We will also pay special attention to visual media, such as films, photographs and cartoons. Our class assignments are designed to help develop your skills as historians: you will not only learn to analyze secondary histories, but also to research and write histories.

Course Materials
All required books are available for purchase from the College Store and the Student Book Store and are on reserve in the Madison library and the University Library. The coursepack is available for purchase from the College Store and is on reserve in the Madison Library and the University Library. Some readings are also available online. However, I recommend that you read the texts in hard copy as it is generally easier to read hard copy more actively and efficiently. If you have special circumstances which make it difficult to purchase the
books or access them at university reserves, please discuss these with me as I may be able
to loan you books from my library.

**Required Texts**
Chin, Tung Pok with Winifred C. Chin. *Paper Son: One Man’s Story*. Philadelphia: Temple
Espiritu, Yen Le. *Homebound: Filipino American Lives Across Cultures, Communities and

**Coursepack.**

**Course Requirements, Assignments and Expectations**

- Participation (20%)
- Reading response papers (20%)
- Primary source essay and interpretation (20%)
- Oral history (20%)
- Final exam (20%)

**Participation (20%)**

Class sessions will use both lecture and discussion to strengthen your understanding of the
course themes and to improve your critical historical skills. Each session will be organized
on the assumption that you have carefully read the assigned texts and that you are
prepared to discuss them thoughtfully.

The requirements are as follows:

- Regular class attendance. More than two unexcused absences from class sessions will
  affect your final grade. Students with more than four unexcused class absences will not
  be eligible to receive a grade.
- Careful reading of all required materials and preparation for class meetings. Your daily
  response papers will help you prepare for discussion. However, if you have concerns
  about speaking in class, you may also want to prepare by formulating one or two
  questions or comments in advance of the class.
- Informed, thoughtful contributions to discussions and debates throughout the semester.
- Attendance at one or more film screenings. During the three weeks that we are reading
  Robert Lee’s *Orientals* (9-20, 11-8 and 12-1), we will screen a film featured in the text.
  You are required to attend at least one film screening and you have one free class
  (Wednesday, October 20) to compensate for this time.
- Please feel free to raise questions in class, whether during lecture or discussion. All
  questions are welcome, no matter how basic, complex or confused! If you would prefer
to ask your question privately, you can come to my office hours or email me.

Although it is not related to your participation or to your grade, I also encourage you to take
advantage of the opportunity to meet with me outside of class. It is especially important
that you come to my office hours if you feel that you are having difficulties with the course.
However, I strongly encourage each of you to attend office hours *at least once* during the
semester to talk about issues related to the course or about your outside interests. You
may come individually or, if you prefer, with other students. If you cannot make my
assigned office hours, I would be happy to make an appointment with you for another time.
I will also be getting together with small groups of students for coffee in the Barista coffee shop on Wednesday after class, so that we can get to know one another in a more informal setting.

**Reading Response papers (20%)**

Each week (starting September 8), you will be required to submit a short, informal response to the readings. This 1-2 page response paper may focus on key themes from one reading, from one day’s readings or from the week’s readings. This assignment is due in the Angel electronic drop-box before class on either Monday or Wednesday. Every three weeks, I will review 10 students’ reading response papers and return them with comments and an interim grade. During the course of the semester, students will receive four sets of comments and grades.

**Primary source analysis (20%)**

All historians work not only with secondary texts, but also with primary sources (original documents). Therefore, this project will help you learn how to conduct archival research and to analyze a primary source in the context of one of our course readings: Robert Lee’s *Orientals*. In your primary source research and analysis, you will:

- Attend a research session at the Appel Collection of Ethnic and Immigrant Caricature. The curator will review appropriate techniques for handling primary documents and guide you to the relevant sections of the collection.
- Select an image or images for analysis and, if necessary, file a reproduction request.
- Write a 4-7 page analysis of the image in historical context, following the guidelines that will be provided for the assignment.

If you would prefer to work with a primary source document or documents that are not located in the Appel Collection, please contact me in advance of the scheduled research sessions.

**Oral history project (20%)**

Oral history plays a central role in Asian American history, both because of the field’s focus on the significance of ordinary lives and because many Asian Americans do not have the access to write their histories more formally. Therefore, one of your assignments is to conduct your own Asian American oral history. As the assignment approaches, we will study examples of oral histories and learn about good practices. However, you should think about who you might want to interview and make sure that you have their consent well in advance of the assignment.

The components of the oral history assignment are as follows:

- Select an interviewee, secure their consent and notify me of your subject.
- Conduct a tape-recorded interview of your subject.
- Transcribe at least 4 pages of your interview.
- Write a 4-7 page history of your subject, which places their own words and your description of their history within an analytical framework.

**Final exam (20%)**

In addition to the writing assignments, there will be a final exam worth 20% of your grade. This will be cumulative essay-based exam, covering all the materials reviewed previously in the course.

All written assignments must be typed and double-spaced with one-inch margins. Whether formal or informal, all written assignments should be carefully reviewed, revised and proofed. All assignments MUST be handed in on time, unless you have made prior arrangements with me.
Calendar of Assignments
These are the dates by which your various assignments must be completed. If any of the assignments are not completed, you will not be able to receive a final grade.

Ongoing Participation
Weekly Reading response papers
Week of 9-20 Primary source research at Appel Collection
10-4 Primary source analysis due in class
10-18 Select oral history subject and notify professor
11-8 Oral history transcript due in class
11-24 Oral history analysis due in class
12-13 12:45pm Final exam

Grading policies
Grading criteria
Participation, written and other work will be graded according to the criteria listed below. As these criteria show, once the minimum requirements are met, it is the quality rather than the quantity of your contributions that will be considered in grading. That is, you will not get a better grade simply for speaking a lot during class or for handing in long papers. Rather, it is important that you think carefully and take the time to convey your thoughts effectively. In those cases where participation and written work shows a marked improvement during the course of the semester, later grades will carry more weight.

Grades
4.0 Exceptional work
Offers exceptional insights during class discussions; outstanding written work makes an original contribution to the field through sophisticated argument.
3.5 Excellent work
Makes consistent contributions to class discussions which demonstrate full and careful reading of assigned materials; written work is original, clearly written and carefully argued.
3.0 Good work
Makes contributions to class discussions; however, these contributions are not always consistent in terms of quality or quantity; written work makes a persuasive argument that is clearly written and reasoned.
2.0 Sufficient work; meets minimum requirements
Occasionally contributes to class discussion; written work reveals knowledge of course themes and familiarity with the assigned materials; however, it is not always clearly written and does not develop a consistent argument.
1.0 Below average work; does not meet minimum requirements
Rarely speaks during class discussions, despite regular attendance; written work does not always demonstrate an understanding of the course themes or familiarity with the assigned readings; written work does not make an argument and is not clearly written.

Academic honesty
Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are extremely serious matters and will be dealt with accordingly. We will follow James Madison College and Michigan State University policy on academic dishonesty. These policies and additional information are provided in the statement on academic honesty at the end of the syllabus. If you have any questions about academic honesty, please consult Professor Pegler-Gordon or Professor Constance Hunt, Director of Academic and Student Affairs.
**CALENDAR**

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>8-30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
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<tr>
<td>9-1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Introduction: Asian American identity</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Renee Tajima-Pena, dir., <em>My America (... or Honk if You Love Buddha)</em> (1988). (87 minutes)</td>
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<tr>
<td>9-6</td>
<td></td>
<td>Holiday: no class</td>
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<td>9-8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Introduction: Asian American history</td>
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**Recommended:**


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<th>9-13</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>Origins of immigration</th>
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<tr>
<th>9-15</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Work and social organization</th>
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|       |     | • Judy Yung, “Unbinding the Feet, Unbinding Their Lives: Chinese Immigrant Women in San Francisco, 1902-1931,” in *Asian...
9-20 week  Research images at Appel Collection for primary source paper

9-20  6  Popular Representations (1)
- Bret Harte, "Plain Language from Truthful James" [The Heathen Chinee], *The Overland Monthly Magazine* (September 1870).

9-22  7  Popular Representations (2)

9-27  8  Discrimination and Resistance

Recommended:

9-29  9  Colonialism and Resistance

10-4  10  Primary source paper due in class
Citizenship (1)
### 10-6 11 Citizenship (2)

### 10-11 12 Women, Families and the Second Generation (1)

### 10-13 13 Women, Families and the Second Generation (2)

**Recommended:**

### 10-18 14 Select oral history subject and notify professor
**Illegal Immigration**

### 10-20 Mid-semester: no class

### 10-25 15 Impacts of the Cold War

**Recommended:**

### 10-27 16 Japanese Internment (1)

### 11-1 17 Japanese Internment (2)

**Recommended:**

### 11-3 18 1965-present: New Identities and Communities
**Introduction and Indian communities**

### 11-8 19 Oral history transcript due in class
**Model Minority Myth**

### 11-10 20 Asian American movement
- Daryl Maeda, “Relate to the Panthers’ or a ‘Yellow Minstrel Show’? Building Asian American Identity Through Performing Blackness.”

**Recommended:**

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<th>11-15</th>
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<th>Asian American movement (2)</th>
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<th>Transnational Filipino Communities (1)</th>
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<tr>
<th>11-24</th>
<th>24</th>
<th>Oral History analysis due in class</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Transnational Filipino Communities (2)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Yen Le Espiritu, <em>Home Bound</em>, pp. 70-126.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11-29</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Transnational Filipino Communities (3)</td>
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**Recommended:**


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<th>26</th>
<th>Multiracial communities?</th>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Jeff Chang, &quot;Race, Class, Conflict and Empowerment: On Ice Cube’s 'Black Korea,’&quot; <em>Amerasia</em> 19, no. 2 (1993): 87-107.</td>
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**Recommended:**


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<th>12-6</th>
<th>27</th>
<th>Multiracial identities? (Or panethnicity and its discontents)</th>
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*Recommended:*

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<th>12-8</th>
<th>28</th>
<th>Conclusions</th>
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<tr>
<td>12-13</td>
<td><strong>12:45-2:45</strong> Final Exam</td>
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Statement on Academic Honesty

There is strong evidence that academic dishonesty is increasing in U.S. colleges. Some commentators attribute this to the increased ease of plagiarism: internet access and wordprocessing programs make it comparatively easy to cut and paste other people’s words into your work. Others claim that students are less familiar with the boundaries between honest and dishonest citation. This statement is part of my efforts in this class to help you become more familiar with issues of academic honesty and their importance in academic work.

In his essay on “Plagiarism in Colleges in USA,” Ronald B. Standler asks the question: “What is plagiarism?” According to Standler, “In minor cases, it can be the quotation of a sentence or two, without quotation marks and without a citation (e.g., footnote) to the true author. In the most serious cases, a significant fraction of the entire work was written by someone else: the plagiarist removed the true author(s) name(s) and substituted the plagiarist’s name, perhaps did some re-formatting of the text, then submitted the work for credit in a class (e.g., term paper or essay) or as part of the requirements for a degree (e.g., thesis or dissertation)” (Standler, 2000). However it is done, plagiarism is the misrepresentation of someone else’s words or ideas as your own.

Most often academic dishonesty refers to plagiarism, but it also includes other forms of misrepresentation. For example, I consider presenting work from another class as work produced in this class as one form of academic misrepresentation. Obviously, you should build on ideas, themes and readings from other classes, but you should not use substantial sections of written work produced for another class in papers produced for this class. If you do want to quote yourself, then you should cite yourself! Another form of academic dishonesty is subtly misrepresenting ideas or words to make your argument more forceful. Some examples would be claiming that a piece of primary evidence “clearly” supports your argument, when you are not sure if it is really clear. Or quoting a historian’s words accurately, but out of context.

As these examples suggest, academic honesty is a problem in part because it is not always clear where to draw the line between honest and dishonest representation. However, if you have any uncertainty, you should listen to your doubts and write only what you are certain is true. I would be very happy to discuss these borderline cases with you, as they can sometimes illuminate the complexity of writing about history.

Most importantly, academic honesty and proper attribution are fundamental to the collaborative creation of knowledge. The appropriate citation of other people’s words and ideas allows us to build on their work and to share our own ideas with the confidence that they will be acknowledged.

Beyond the importance of integrity to the expansion of knowledge, the punishment of plagiarism is also a serious matter. The James Madison College Student Handbook contains the following statement as part of the Policy on Academic Dishonesty: “The Faculty Assembled recommend that in cases involving proven academic dishonesty, the student should receive, as a minimum, a 0.0 in the course and that a record of the circumstances, sanctions, and any appeal, be placed in the student’s confidential file. ... The individual faculty member or the Dean may recommend further action, including dismissal from the University, to the Student-Faculty Judiciary. If a second case of academic dishonesty should occur, the recommendation is that the faculty, through the Office of Director of Academic and Student Affairs, should seek the student’s dismissal from the College and the University.”
The MSU policy on plagiarism and additional information about academic honesty is also available through the MSU Office of the Ombudsman:
http://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/honestylinks.html

Tips to help you avoid unintentional plagiarism and misrepresentation:

♦ As you make research notes for your papers, be sure to keep a careful record of your sources, including all the relevant information. This is especially important if you are collecting source materials from the internet or combining different source materials in the same file.

♦ If you are quoting words that are already quoted in a secondary source (rather than quoting from the original document) you should either check the original document for accuracy or acknowledge that you are quoting from a secondary source, e.g. Ronald B. Standler, "Plagiarism in Colleges in USA" (2000) cited in Anna Pegler-Gordon, "Statement on Academic Honesty,” January 2004, p. 1.

♦ Check your writing for factual accuracy, just as you would for grammatical accuracy. Ideally, you should highlight all the factual statements and citations in your work and check these against the original sources to ensure their accuracy.

♦ Check that every quote and substantially original idea from another source has a citation.

♦ The Georgetown University Honor Council has a website with very helpful guidelines about unintentional plagiarism at: http://www.georgetown.edu/honor/plagiarism.html

♦ Internet citation is a new and sometimes complicated process. However, internet sources, like all sources must be cited. A useful resource is Bedford/StMartin’s online guide to online citation (Harnack and Kleppinger, 2003), available at: http://www.bedfordstmartins.com/online/cite7.html.

♦ Finally, if you have any doubts about the honesty or accuracy of any part of your work, err on the side of caution.

Works Cited