

**Asian American Studies 33B**  
**Asian American History & Contemporary Issues**

Professor: Wayne Jopanda  
Email: [wayne.jopanda@sjsu.edu](mailto:wayne.jopanda@sjsu.edu) Office hours: By appt on Zoom

**Course Description:** This course examines the social, historical, and structural contexts defining the experiences of Asians and Pacific Islanders in the U.S. from 1850 to the present through the lens of popular culture, with an emphasis on how global movements of capital, population, goods, and culture have impacted the transnational relations and identity formation of contemporary AAPI (Asian American Pacific Islanders) communities and individuals. Topics include immigration, labor, community development, U.S.- Asia relations, gender and family dynamics, and race relations. This transdisciplinary course draws from historical and journalistic accounts, literary narratives, ethnographic studies, community research, and individual experiences. The course also identifies relevant resources and current issues in local AAPI communities for students interested in doing research in the field of Asian American Studies. No previous experience with Asian American studies or college-level history courses is required or expected.

**Course Goals**

- To introduce the historical linkages Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) experiences through the production, economics, consumption and socio-cultural spaces of representations of popular culture of and by AAPIs
- To explore the collaborative, interdisciplinary nature of Asian Pacific American Studies in popular culture, such as food, film, and fashion as sites of racial capitalism or of cultural reclamation
- To consider the relevance of historical linkages to contemporary contexts of production and consumption related to pre-colonial and colonial periods as well as decolonial or anti-colonial resistance as dynamics of power
- To make connections and develop resources between Asian Pacific American Studies and Asian American Pacific Islander communities
- To facilitate connections to people, topics, disciplines, and ideas for students interested in Asian Pacific American or comparative ethnic studies

## Course Learning Outcomes:

- To understand the similarities and differences that exist between Asian American Pacific Islander communities,
- To understand the positionality and perspectives of Asian American Pacific Islander communities and identity formation through food
- To be able to articulate what the impacts of historical/socio-cultural/political factors have been for different Asian American Pacific Islander communities,
- To understand how transnational circuits operate with the Asian diaspora in the period of globalization through cultural consumption, reclamation, and resistance
- To write an academic paper with a clear organization, thesis, effective use of evidence, and use of citations
- To successfully participate in collaborative and interdisciplinary oral history projects that include oral history interviews, archival research, and library research

## Course Expectations

- Attend all classes on time and fully prepared. Contact the instructor in advance if you will be absent.
- Be respectful of others. Communicate with civility, and step in the speaker's "shoes."
- Keep an open mind—you might learn a different perspective!
- Sharing: Personal stories and experiences should be confidential within this class.
- Listen and do not engage in side conversations when others are speaking.
- Step Up Step Down. If you are very quick to raise your hand, give others a chance. If you are very quiet, try speaking up!
- Keep your cell phones on silent or off. No texting in class.
- Complete all readings and other assignments by the due dates.
- Follow the Code of Student Conduct.

**Required Texts** All course readings will be from books, library reserves, and PDF documents on Canvas. Please purchase the required text or find it in the library course reserves for three-hour check out. All other readings will be included in Canvas as PDF attachments or links to journal articles. Videos will be embedded or linked in Canvas as well and will be available via Kanopy, Vimeo, or YouTube.

- 1) [Asian American Histories in the United States by Dr. Cathrine Ceniza Choy](#)
- 2) Additional articles, multimedia resources, and readings will be provided on Moodle and via email reminders.

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this introductory course for Asian American Studies, we will engage current movements in relation to the Asian American and Diasporic communities as well as moments, events, and imaginings of solidarity between communities. From the development of Asians 4 Black Lives to advocating for indigenous communities' self determination to the engagement of pop culture, art, music, and media as tools of resistance and liberation, this course provides a multitude of avenues for engaging diverse issues and topics pertaining to our Asian American community. We will collectively learn through modes of critical thinking, the use of multimedia tools and projects, and building a community of learning and unlearning, a space to further grow as scholar activists. This course aims to invite multiple community organizers, scholars, and leaders to speak on their movement building experiences, their narratives of solidarity, and lessons learned through their respective grassroots work. The goal of this course is not to develop one's self as an ally, but to engage ethnic studies, activist scholarship, and community engaged research in ways to grow as coconspirators against white supremacy, imperialism, cis-heteropatriarchy, and systems of oppression. If you have any questions regarding this course, please feel free to email me at [wayne.jopanda@sjsu.edu](mailto:wayne.jopanda@sjsu.edu)

### **The Course Grade Will Be Based On The Following:**

Canvas Comment/Question after each Thursday Lecture	20%
Multimedia (Mis)representation History analytical essay	20%
Attendance	20%
Asian American History Political Education Video Group Project	40%

**Total 100**

## **ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION – 20%**

### **Weekly Reflection:**

#### **Comment and Question for Lectures due each Thursday by 11:59pm pst**

- Participation: Students are expected to complete the weekly reading assignments at the beginning of each week. Be prepared to answer questions when the professor (or guest speaker) calls on you during lecture. When called on, you are encouraged to critically comment on the issues discussed and/or readings assigned.
- From the beginning of lecture to the end of the day at midnight, you are required to make a comment *and* a question relating to the lecture. This recurring assignment is available for you on Moodle. This is how your I will take attendance.

- Discussion sections are dedicated for students to field questions about the course, assignments, and group project.

**Midterm Essay: History Asian American History Multi-Media & Representation Analysis (20 points, due in Week 7 Friday)**

3-4 page analytical essay regarding one piece of media that serves as (whether positive, negative, or both) a representation of historic Asian American identity and experiences. This can range from past and current music, television episodes, movies, art, poetry, specific fictional characters, animations, books, comedy specials, video games, etc. Your objective is to use the readings, guest speaker notes, and theories we discuss through this course to analyze this piece of multimedia and demonstrate what modes of identities are in play (race, gender, sexuality, class, ethnicity, ability, and many more identities intersecting with Asian identities)

**Multimedia Video Group Project: 40 points Total**

Through this course you will utilize multitudes of diverse media, literature, research, and even some personal experience to collaborate in groups on your final project: the **Multimedia Video Group Project!**

I am excited to borrow this project from Professor Caroline Valverde during my time teaching alongside her:

“Questions that may arise are: What more can we do to expose and confront the legacies and perpetuation of colonialism, racism and other systems of oppression? What stories need to be told from the perspectives of communities impacted by these systems? How does your learning help you connect to and transform your communities on and off campus? What do you have inside you that needs to be heard? How can you use this bubbling desire to inspire us to learn more, and more deeply? Be informed, passionate, and authentic with your message.

Our goal: create a creative message on diverse media platforms created by individuals or groups with the objective of bringing new and interesting information, raising awareness, and changing and/or influencing public attitudes and behavior towards the pertinent social issue.”

**Week 2:** During your second week, you will form groups and start deciding on which a topic you will choose for your video by Week 5. Topics can be as creative as you’d like to be in regards to Asian American History. In the past, students have done projects about international students, mental health, immigration/deportation, hate crimes, media representation, employment, and even food.

### **Week 5: *Bibliography* (5 points) Due on Friday**

For this *group* assignment, your bibliography must have the sources below:

- 1) Two books
- 2) Two journal articles no older than 2015.
- 3) Two visuals (in the form of DVDs, VHS,...that are movies, documentaries, shorts...from places like hulu.com, Youtube.com, Netflix....) with no date limitations.

For the research data, you can use primary data such as interviews, reports, public hearings, and oral histories. You should also use secondary data, such as books, journal articles, theses, and dissertations. You can use newspaper and magazine articles, but they should augment books and journal articles, not be your only source of data. Interviews are mandatory. The Internet can also be useful, but use information selectively and cautiously.

You can also use materials from the class syllabus; however, you must find additional materials to receive full credit for the research project.

One member of each group must submit their group's bibliography to Moodle with every member's name included.

### **Week 7: *Proposal/Concept Explanation* (10 points). Due Friday to Moodle.**

Choose a topic, explain how it relates to the class theme(s), and use the outline below to help guide your proposal:

1. What is your Topic?
  1. What are you most passionate about?
  2. What would you like to learn more about?
  3. What injustice do you most want to rectify?
2. Target audience:
  1. Who are you trying to influence?
  2. What do they already know about your issue?
  3. Who's already on your side?
  4. How active are they willing to be after watching the video?
  5. Who stands to benefit and who stands to lose?
3. Overall objectives
  1. What do you want to make happen?
  2. Who or what is in the way?
  3. What is your issue's "unique selling proposition"?
  4. Why are you credible?

Two pages double spaced minimum. One member of each group must submit their group's proposal to Moodle with every member's name included.

**Week 10: *Rough Script and Outline* (10 points).** Due Friday to Moodle.

Who is speaking when; What each person will discuss; Music to be used; When will you do the recording; How are you incorporating class content? Consider the following questions:

1. Outline of Video: What elements will you adopt (interview, documentary, voice over, skit, reality, stylistic...)
  1. Who will be the ‘talking heads’ or other forms of information giving?
  2. Where and when will the footage(s) take place?
  3. What will you be wearing?
  4. What music will be used?
  5. What animation(s) will be used?
  6. Who and how will editing be done?
  7. What apps will you be using to create your videos (visuals, sounds, editing...)?
2. Preliminary Script
  1. Outline scenes
  2. Create a draft of spoken lines (interview questions/answers, voiceovers, etc.).
  3. What answers you may anticipate based on earlier conversations with your proposed interviewees (if you are using them) ?

Two pages double spaced minimum. One member of each group must submit their group’s script and outline to Moodle with every member’s name included.

**Week 12: *Record and Edit (post production)* (5 points) by Friday.**

Your **Multimedia Video Group Project** video should be between 3 to 6 minutes.

**Week 14: *Upload final video* (10 points) Due before our last class session (Thursday)**

Final edits based on feedback from Professor, classmates, friends... Clean up any loose ends of bad quality video, sound, exposure/light...

Only one member of the group needs to submit the final video. Title your video “SP23 Insert Topic Name Here.” Make sure to add the names of your group members in the comments/notes line of the submission box.

Additionally, each group will prepare an oral presentation to present during lecture or during the discussion section.

- Questions to consider for yourselves as you create your presentation:
  - What is your **Multimedia Video Group Project** about?
  - Who is your intended audience?
  - Did you accomplish what you set out to do?
  - What were the challenges?
  - What would you have done differently?
  - What is the future of your **Multimedia Video Group Project topic**?

## Reading Schedule

Since this course deals with both history and pop culture, I decided to introduce themes through the lens of one of my favorite historic pop culture archives: the Marvel Universe:

### **Week 1: Deconstructing Identity: Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Sexuality, & Class**

“Leads with your breath, the light, and the dark. To know yourself, you must know both.” -Ying Nan

Welcome and Introductions. Review Class Syllabus and Other Important Documents

- Introductory Circle
- Community Agreements

Complete Community Survey by Friday.

### **Week 2: Decolonizing History**

"You Are A Product Of All Who Came Before You, The Legacy Of Your Family." (Shang-Chi)

1. Pawan Dhingra and Robyn Rodriguez, "Arrival and History," in Asian America: Sociological and Interdisciplinary Perspectives. 19pgs
2. Wu, Ellen D. "Introduction," The color of success: Asian Americans and the origins of the model minority. Vol. 100. Princeton University Press, 2015. (Links to an external site.) 10pgs
3. [Watch: A Brief History of Asian American Representation in Film](#)
4. [Watch: A Racist History of U.S. Immigration](#)

### **Week 3: Early Migrant Labor & Racial Formation**

“No man can win every battle, but no man should fall without a struggle.” - Peter Parker

- 1 Choy: Choose between Chapter 7: 1919: Declaration of Independence or Chapter 8: 1875: Homage
- 2 Watch one of the following and write down some points of analysis in your Tuesday through the intersectional lens of race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, nationality, and more!
  - a) Crazy Rich Asians
  - b) Shang Chi (Disney+)

c) Always Be My Maybe (Netflix)

d) Everything everywhere all at once

#### **Week 4: Exclusion, WWII, & Militarization**

“I can’t control your fear, I can only control mine.” -Wanda

Choy: Chapter 6: 1941 and 1942: The Days That You Remember

Choose between two short archival readings:

- New York Tribune, “Editor Henry George Supports Chinese Exclusion on Economic and Racial Grounds, 1869,” R;
- Proceedings of the Asiatic Exclusion League, “Asiatic Exclusion League Argues for Excluding Japanese and Korean Immigration, 1908,”

#### **Week 5: Challenging Assimilation & Family Formation**

“He may have been your father, boy, but he wasn’t your daddy.” -Yondu

Choy: Chapter 5 1953: Mixed Race Lives

Online: Roger Daniels, “Neglect and Distortion of Asian Americans by American Historians,”

#### **WEEK 6: Breaking the “Watershed”:1965 IMMIGRATION ACT**

“I’VE BEEN FIGHTING WITH ONE ARM TIED BEHIND MY BACK. BUT WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I’M FINALLY SET FREE?” - CAROL DANVERS

Choy: Chapter 4 1965: The Many Faces of Post-1965 Asian America

Shelley Sang-Hee Lee, “Chapter 12: The Watershed of 1965 and the Remaking of Asian America,”

### ***History & Media Analysis PAPER DUE on Week 7***

#### **Week 7: Deconstructing Model Minority Myth’s History & Asian Invisibilization**

“I have nothing to prove to you.” -Carol Danvers

Choy: Chapter 2 1975: Trauma and Transformation



Rhacel Parrenas, “Asian Immigrant Women and Global Restructuring, 1970s-1990s,” R  
[Globalized migrations are now significantly women and not men and this is a significant  
change.

### **Week 8: Spring Break**

“When you said you would take me to California for the first time, I thought you meant  
Coachella or Disneyland.” - Shuri

- **Rest & Relax!**

### **Week 9: Asian American Contemporary Issues**

“The price of freedom is high, it always has been. And it’s a price I’m willing to pay.” -Steve  
Rogers

No readings! Use this week to focus on your recording, edits, and final versions of your group  
video projects!

### **Week 10: Community Week + Film Festival!**

“I’m with you ‘til the end of the line.” - Steve Rogers

Final Video Presentations & Community Potluck!

### **Grading Scale**

93 and above = A

90-92 = - A

87-89 = B+

83-86 = B

80-82 = -B

77-79 = C+

73-76 = C

70-72= -C

### **Syllabus Change**

The professor reserves the right to make changes as necessary to this syllabus,  
schedule, and assignments. If changes are made, notification will be given to the  
class. Please check Moodle regular updates.