

SOCIAL HISTORY OF ASIAN AMERICANS

COURSE DESCRIPTION

On 16 March 2021, eight people were shot and killed at several spas in Atlanta, Georgia. Six of the victims were women of Asian descent: Daoyou Feng, Hyun Jung Grant, Suncha Kim, Soon Chung Park, Xiaojie Tan, and Yong Ae Yue. The Atlanta shootings were a spectacular crest in a sea of anti-Asian violence. While anti-Asian racism has surfaced in public consciousness during the Covid-19 pandemic, its roots are deep, vast, and formidable.

This course begins in death and tries to end in life. It examines the long history of anti-Asian racism as a necessary step toward its undoing. We will focus on how Asians, Asian Americans, and the Asiatic have been racialized alternately as subhuman (viruses, animals) and superhuman (model minorities). We will examine how these figurations have shuffled over time and animated legal exclusion, imperial expansion, social marginalization, and multiracial liberalism. We will see how Asians and Asian Americans have sought redress—sometimes by appealing to structures of oppression, sometimes by spearheading them, and sometimes by fighting them.

REQUIRED TEXTS

All texts are available on Canvas.

RECOMMENDED TEXT

Cathy J Shlund-Vials, Linda Trinh Võ, and K Scott Wong (editors), *Keywords for Asian American Studies*

This book provides helpful definitions for key terms in this class. The Auraria Library has an electronic version.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The University of _____ is located on the territories of the _____ nations. Invasion, land theft, and genocide are the historical conditions that allow our class to convene. Colonial brutality is a bloodstain on our dialogues, our community, our education, our degrees. Let us acknowledge that these histories continue and

that their violences are still unfolding. Let us acknowledge that Native resistance and resurgence also have a long, powerful history. Let us acknowledge that acknowledgments are but one step in a lifelong, generations-long struggle to undo colonial violence, heal lands and waters, and restore Native ways of being in the world. Let us honor that struggle in our engagement with this course.

COURSE MATTERS

EDUCATION

Life is hard, especially in the long 2020 aka the COVID-19 pandemic. The conditions of learning are still severely strained. I trust that you are doing your best to learn. I hope that you will challenge yourself to grow and be gentle with yourself when you cannot. Please let me know how I can support you.

Online courses are tough. They require exceptional discipline. They can feel distant. You are encouraged to share thoughts and questions about the readings when they arise. I would love to hear what you think!

Some readings will be theoretical and difficult. Consider them an opportunity to develop your reading skills and analysis. Academic texts require *at least* three readings: first, to get a general sense; second, to understand the main argument and other key points; and third, to see how different sections fit together. The process is daunting but also enriching. Reading gets easier, thinking gets richer, and you will be growing. *Good things take time and effort.*

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

You will set your own learning objectives (see "Narratives" section below).

ACCESSIBILITY

If you are a student with a disability or believe you might have a disability that requires accommodations, please contact Disability Resources and Services at _____. We will work together to make the appropriate accommodations.

CANVAS

Please stay updated by regularly checking Canvas for announcements. Note that there are no modules. Please follow the course schedule in this syllabus.

MEETINGS

Please make appointments via email.

ASSIGNMENTS

You begin this class with an A. You will keep that A if you turn in all assignments. Each assignment not turned in will result in your final grade being lowered by half a letter. I fully trust that you are dedicated to your learning and that you are sincerely trying your best in these hard times. Thus, while I will provide feedback on your work, assignments are not graded.

THREE PROCESS LETTERS

Process letters are reflections on your learning. They are meant to convey how your knowledge is growing.

In your process letter:

- Explain how 2-3 texts have made you curious over the past five weeks;
- Describe how that text has *changed* what you think. Explore specific passages. Say what you had previously thought (or didn't think about);
- Discuss the importance of those texts to your understanding of a social history of Asian Americans.

Each process letter should be at least 600 words long. Could be longer. Write more than three if you are so inspired.

Process letters are due on February 20, April 3, and May 8. Please email process letters as a docx or doc file, named in this format: Lastname-Letter#

Late process letters may not receive feedback.

NARRATIVES

In this course, how we learn is as important as what. This assignment is meant for you to set your own learning goals, reflect on your progress, and improve your engagement with the course. You will complete three worksheets: "Introductory Narrative," "Midsemester Narrative," and "Culminating Narrative."

Introductory Narrative

Introduce yourself, reflect on your learning style, and set goals for yourself in the course. Complete the "Introductory Narrative" worksheet and return via email by 11:59pm on January 23.

Midsemester Narrative

Check in with yourself and your goals. Return to your introductory narrative and first process letter. Complete the "Midsemester Narrative" worksheet and return via email by 11:59pm on March 6.

Culminating Narrative

Reflect on the semester and your goals. Return to your introductory and midsemester narratives and process letters. Complete the "Culminating Narrative" worksheet and return via email by 11:59pm on May 8.

DEADLINES

Introductory narrative	January 23
First process letter	February 20
Midsemester narrative	March 6
Second process letter	April 3
Third process letter	May 8
Culminating narrative	May 8

*All deadlines are 11.59pm

COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK 1 // JANUARY 16

TEMPERATURE CHECK: ANTI-ASIAN RACISM TODAY

- Maria Cecilia Hwang and Rhacel Salazar Parreñas, "The Gendered Racialization of Asian Women as Villainous Tempresses" (2021)
- Rumya S Putchá, "White Supremacy and the Wellness Industry, or, Why It Matters that This Happened at a 'Spa'" (2021)
- Madhavi Mallapragada, "Asian Americans as Racial Contagion" (2021)

WEEK 2 // JANUARY 23

ORIENTALISM

PRELIMINARY NARRATIVE DUE JANUARY 23 BY 11:59PM

- Edward W Said, "Introduction" (pages 1-15) from *Orientalism* (1978)
- Sylvia Shin Huey Chong, "Orientalism" (2015)
- Shelley Sang-Hee Lee, "Orientalism before Asian America" from *A New History of Asian America* (2013)

WEEK 3 // JANUARY 30

BECOMING YELLOW

- Michael Keevak, "Before They Were Yellow: East Asians in Early Travel and Missionary Reports" and "Taxonomies of Yellow: Linnaeus, Blumenbach, and the Making of a 'Mongolian Race in the Eighteenth Century" from *Becoming Yellow: A Short History of Racial Thinking* (2011)
- Robert Ji-Song Ku, "Yellow" (2015)

WEEK 4 // FEBRUARY 6

CHINATOWN: DISEASE IN THE AMERICAN BODY POLITIC

- Nayan Shah, "Public Health and the Mapping of Chinatown" and "Perversity, Contamination, and the Dangers of Queer Domesticity" from *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown* (2001)

WEEK 5 // FEBRUARY 13

BORDERS AND BODIES, OR, THE GEOPOLITICS OF DISEASE

- Nayan Shah, "Making Medical Borders at Angel Island" from *Contagious Divides* (2001)
- Warwick Anderson, "Excremental Colonialism" from *Colonial Pathologies: American Tropical Medicine, Race, and Hygiene in the Philippines* (2006)
- Neel Ahuja, "'An Atmosphere of Leprosy': Hansen's Disease, the Dependent Body, and the Transoceanic Politics of Hawaiian Annexation" (pages 65-70 optional) from *Bioinsecurities: Disease Interventions, Empire, and the Government of Species* (2016)

WEEK 6 // FEBRUARY 20

YELLOW PERIL

FIRST PROCESS LETTER DUE FEBRUARY 20 BY 11:59PM

- Gary Y Okihiro, "Perils of the Body and Mind" from *Margins & Mainstreams: Asians in American History and Culture* (1994)
- Stanford M Lyman, "The 'Yellow Peril' Mystique: Origins and Vicissitudes of a Racist Discourse" (2000)

WEEK 7 // FEBRUARY 27

EXCLUSIVE CITIZENSHIP

- Takao Ozawa vs United States (1922)
- United States vs Bhagat Singh Thind (1922)
- Mae M Ngai, "The Architecture of Race in American Immigration Law: A Reexamination of the Immigration Act of 1924" (1999)

WEEK 8 // MARCH 6

WAR: FROM ENEMY TO ALLY

MIDSEMESTER NARRATIVE DUE MARCH 6 BY 11:59PM

- Fred I Lee, "The Japanese Internment and the Racial State of Exception" (2007)
- Naoko Shibusawa, "Introduction" and "Women and Children First" from *America's Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy* (2006)

WEEK 9 // MARCH 13
ASIAN SETTLER COLONIALISM

- Ellen D Wu, "The Melting Pot of the Pacific" from *The Color of Success: Asian Americans and the Origins of the Model Minority* (2013)
- Dean Itsuji Saranillio, "Colliding Histories: Hawai'i Statehood at the Intersection of Asians 'Ineligible to Citizenship' and Hawaiians 'Unfit for Self-Government'" (2010)
- Haunani-Kay Trask, "Settlers of Color and 'Immigrant' Hegemony: 'Locals' in Hawai'i" (2000)

SPRING BREAK // MARCH 20

WEEK 10 // MARCH 27
LEGACIES OF WAR: SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND THE ERASURE OF TRAUMA

- Grace M Cho, "Tracing the Disappearance of the Yanggongju" and "The Fantasy of Honorary Whiteness" from *Haunting the Korean Diaspora: Shame, Secrecy, and the Forgotten War* (2008)

WEEK 11 // APRIL 3
MODEL MINORITIES

SECOND PROCESS LETTER DUE APRIL 3 BY 11.59PM

- William Peterson, "Success Story, Japanese-American Style" (1966)
- US News and World Report, "Success Story of One Minority Group in US" (1966)
- David Brand, "The New Whiz Kids" (1987)
- Andrew Yang, "We Asian Americans Are Not the Virus, But We Can Be the Cure" (2020)
- Ellen D Wu, "The Invention of the Model Minority" (2017)
- Madeline Y Hsu and Ellen D Wu, "'Smoke and Mirrors': Conditional Inclusion, Model Minorities, and the pre-1965 Dismantling of Asian Exclusion" (2015)

WEEK 12 // APRIL 10
THE WAR ON TERROR

- Vivek Bald, "American Orientalism" (2015)
- Jasbir K Puar and Amit S Rai, "The Remaking of a Model Minority: Perverse Projectiles under the Specter of (Counter)Terrorism" (2004)

WEEK 13 // APRIL 17
ANTI-ASIAN RACISM TODAY, AGAIN

- Lok Siu and Clare Chun, "Yellow Peril and Techno-Orientalism in the Time of Covid-19: Racialized Contagion, Scientific Espionage, and Techno-Economic Warfare" (2020)
- Claire Ching Jen, "How to Survive Contagion, Disease, and Disaster: the 'Masked Asian/American Woman' as Low-Tech Specter of Emergency Preparedness"

WEEK 14 // APRIL 24
CLAIMING YELLOW

- Amy Uyematsu, "The Emergence of Yellow Power in America" in *Gidra* (1969)
- Larry Kubota, "Yellow Power!" in *Gidra* (1969)
- Gary Y Okihiro, "Is Yellow Black or White?" from *Margins & Mainstreams: Asians in American History and Culture* (1994)
- Kat Chow, "If We Called Ourselves Yellow" (2018)
- Minju Bae and Mark Tseng-Putterman, "Reviving the History of Radical Black-Asian Internationalism" (2020)

WEEK 15 // MAY 1
HISTORY IN THE MAKING? ASIAN AMERICA OTHERWISE

- Setsu Shigematsu, "The Sky Is Falling: On Asian American Imperial Entitlement to Life" (2021)
- Dylan Rodríguez, "The 'Asian exception' and the Scramble for Legibility: Toward an Abolitionist Approach to Anti-Asian Violence" (2021)
- Red Canary Song and Survived and Punished, "Our Response to Charges Being Pursued" (2021)
- Asian American Feminist Collective, "Asian American Feminist Antibodies: Care in the Time of Coronavirus" (2020)

WEEK 16 // MAY 8
FINALS WEEK

***THIRD PROCESS LETTER AND CULMINATING NARRATIVE DUE MAY 8 BY
11:59PM***