Course Description:

This course offers a set of analytic tools for grappling with the historical and contemporary complexities of Asian American identification and community formation. Each section of this course introduces students to different theoretical frames for exploring and interrogating the meaningful contours of the terms “Asian American” in relation to other racialized and ethnic groups in the U.S. By taking an interdisciplinary and comparative cultural studies approach, we will pay particular attention to the historical conditions and ongoing processes for the social formation of persons and collectivities under the rubric “Asian American” and its variants (e.g., Asian-American, Asian-Pacific-American, Asian/Pacific/American, etc.) as well as examine multiplicities, contradictions, and gaps of Asian American identifications and politics. The goal of this course is to provide students with useful theoretical tools for critically thinking about the ever-shifting terrain of Asian American identification in the wider contexts of orientalism, U.S. imperialism and nationalism, racialization and racism, economic restructuring, transnationalism and other social processes and transformations.

Course Objectives:

1. Broaden student knowledge and appreciation of the complex historical conditions and social processes in the formation of Asian American identities and communities.

2. Develop students’ understanding and mastery of key concepts and analytical approaches for examining issues of identity and community formation in the U.S.

3. Sharpen students’ critical listening, reading and writing skills, particularly their ability to grasp, articulate, synthesize and challenge key arguments in course readings, lectures and discussions.

4. Hone students’ ability to apply analytical skills and knowledge from this course to issues of contemporary relevance.
Prerequisites:

There are no prerequisites for this course. Students do not need any background in anthropology or Asian/American Studies to do well in this course. I will provide basic historical and social context for all topics we address in class sessions. However, while students do not need any specialized background to excel in this course, they are expected to keep up with current events (e.g. reading major news sources like the *New York Times*) during the semester as well as look critically and reflexively at their own personal histories in order to enrich class discussions and assignments. Intellectual curiosity and critical thinking are valued and will be rewarded.

Required Readings: All books are available for purchase at the Wellesley College Bookstore. They are also on reserve at the Knapp Center in Clapp Library.

- Selected Readings on E-Reserves and in Firstclass subconference, “ANTH 220-Online Links.”

**NOTE on this course’s online conference:** All students enrolled will automatically have “ANTH 220” as a Firstclass conference on their desktop. You must regularly check this online conference for weekly readings, key terms, course notices and assignments.

Course Requirements:

This course will be conducted as a seminar with the expectation that students come to class ready with questions and comments about the assigned readings and key concepts for each week. Students also need to be prepared to draw on readings and other course materials to critically discuss in-class screenings of films and film excerpts, which will be a regular feature of this course. For this reason, class attendance and participation are essential. You will have one permissible skip day (no questions asked) and beyond that, each unexcused absence will cost you 1 point from your final total of 100. Please note that religious observances and verified illnesses are exempt from this policy. Excessive tardiness (10 minutes or more late to class) will also cost you a point from your final grade. As far as participation, you will be expected not only to contribute comments and questions in class but also to post additional thoughts and concerns online via our Firstclass course conference. Particularly, I encourage you to share your reactions.
and questions about weekly readings prior to our discussions of them in Monday sessions. Evaluation of participation will be based on how engaged you are both in our Monday sessions and online in our Firstclass course conference.

Besides active engagement, there will be several writing assignments. Two short papers (5-7 pages) chosen from assigned topics will be due after Section II and Section III of this course. Once during the semester, each student—in consultation with the Instructor—must also draw from their own surroundings to bring in a cultural artifact for discussion (e.g., a current event in the news, a website, a commodity, a film, etc.) which is relevant to a topic covered in the course. This “show and tell” assignment will consist of a 5-minute presentation by the student followed by a 5-minute class discussion. In lieu of a final exam, students will develop a final presentation and paper (8-12 pages) on a topic of the their choice, with approval of the instructor. More details on all assignments will be posted to the Firstclass subconference, ANTH 220-Assignments, as deadlines for each assignment approaches. I will also post a specific guide to grading standards for this course online in ANTH 220-Syllabus/Policies.

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<th>Course Evaluation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Preparation and engaged class participation – 10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Show and Tell” Presentation – 15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short Paper #1 – 20%</td>
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<td>Short Paper #2 – 20%</td>
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<td>Final Paper – 35%</td>
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Course Policies and Protocol:

All students are expected to abide by the Wellesley Honor Code. While students are encouraged to work collaboratively with each other, you are expected to develop original arguments in your written assignments and cite properly when drawing on the ideas of others (including from class lectures and discussions). A more detailed guide on proper citations for this course will be posted online as assignment deadlines approach. **Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Any incident of dishonest work will be immediately reported to your class dean and advisor.**

Unless you have prior permission and verifiable reasons for missing deadlines for assignments, late work will be docked half a grade per day past the formal deadline. For instance, if you are one day late, your maximum grade will be A-. After two days, the maximum grade will be B+ and so forth.

The process for discussing or contesting a grade for a particular assignment is as follows:

1. Students must wait at least 24 hours to reflect and review their assignment and the instructor’s comments before coming to discuss a grade.
2. After 24 hours, if the student still wants to contest a grade, they must write and submit a one-page explanation of why they deserve a different mark on their assignment.
3. The instructor will then meet with the student to discuss possible options for working towards a better grade in the course.

Regarding general class protocol—students are expected to come to class on time and engage in open and respectful discussion with each other and the instructor. Make sure you turn off your cell phones and other disruptive electronic devices before the start of class.

Course Schedule by Topic:

I. Orientalism

Week 2 (9/11/06): Introductory Remarks
Sumiko Higashi, “Ethnicity, Class, and Gender in Film: Demille's The Cheat,” in Unspeakable Images: Ethnicity and the American Cinema, pp. 112-139.

- In-Class Screening: The Cheat (1915), Dir. Cecile B. Demille (50 min.)

Week 3 (9/18/06): Theorizing Difference

Henry Jenkins, “People from that Part of the World”: The Politics of Dislocation, pp. 469-486


II. U.S. Empire

Week 4 (9/25/06)—Pacific and Transatlantic Entanglements:


Week 5 (10/2/06)—Remembering The Asia-Pacific War(s):


• In-Class Screening: History and Memory (1990), dir. Rea Tajiri

Week 6 (10/9/06)—“Tense and Tender Ties” of Empire:
• No class on Monday due to Fall break
• Please screen one of the following films at the Knapp Center:
  1. Daughter from Danang
  2. A.k.a. Don Bonus


**Short paper assignment #1 will be distributed online this week and must be posted in the ANTH 220 online drop box by **Monday, 10/23/06, 10 AM.

Week 7 (10/16/06): “Tense and Tender Ties” (continued)


• In-Class Screening: First Person Plural, dir. Deana Borshay Liem (60 min.)

III. The Nation and its Others

Week 8 (10/23/06): Imagining the Nation
Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities, pp. 1-82, 163-185.

**Short Paper #1 Due at 10 AM, Monday, 10/23/06!**
Week 9 (10/30/06): “Race” in the National Order of Things


Week 10 (11/6/06): Yellow Peril and the Politics of Public Health
Nayan Shah, Contagious divides: epidemics and race in San Francisco's Chinatown, Ch.1-4, 7

Screening: Ancestors in America, dir. Loni Ding (excerpt)

Week 11 (11/13/06): Asian American Panethnicity and Coalition Politics


Screening: My America (…or honk if you love Buddha) (1997), dir. Rene Tajima-Pena (87 min)

Short paper assignment #2 will be distributed this week and must be posted to the ANTH 220 online drop box by 10 AM next Monday, 11/20/06.

ALSO, Guidelines for Final Paper and Presentation will be posted online this week. All students must see the instructor for approval for their final paper topics by Friday, 12/1/06.

Week 11 (11/20/06): Mediating Racialized Violence-The L.A. Riots (no class)
Gary Okihiro, “Is Yellow Black or White?” in Margins and Mainstreams, pp. 31-63.


Screening: Sai-I-Gu (1993), dir. Dil Sil Kim Gibson, Elaine Kim, Christine Choy (40 mins.)

Short paper assignment #2 is due at 6 PM, Monday, 11/20/06!
IV. Global Re-visions and Quandaries


Bladerunner (1982), dir. Ridley Scott (excerpt)

Students must have approval for their final paper topics by Friday, 12/1/06!

Week 14 (12/4/06): Diaspora, Transnationalism and Flexible Citizenships
Ang, Ien

Ong, Aihwa

Kumar, Amitava

Cha, Theresa Hak Kyung

Special Evening Screening: Mississippi Masala (1990), dir. Mira Nair (location/time TBA)
Week 15 (12/11/06): Re-figuring Asian/America(s)
Visweswaran, Kamala

Park, Kyeyoung

Note: The second half of this class session will be devoted to student presentations of final papers.

**Final Papers** must be posted in the ANTH 220 online drop box by the end of the exam period on Thursday, 4:30 PM, 12/21/06.