

AMST 520 Readings in Asian American Studies

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Class time	Thursday 4:15-6:35
Class location	KAP 150
Office location	THH 404D
Office hours	Tuesday, 1-3 Wednesday and Thursday afternoons by appointment

Description

This course is a multidisciplinary overview of Asian American studies and what I will call its three phases of intellectual formation: essentialism, strategic essentialism, and post-essentialism. In the past forty years of Asian American studies, it's arguable that essentialism—the belief that there is such a thing as an Asian American—dominated and defined the field for two decades. Essentialism is hardly over, but still continues as a powerful force in the field of Asian American studies, in community politics, in new ethnic formations, in organizing, and so on. Strategic essentialism has dominated the academic field since the early 1990s, and arguably still does today, the principle that even if there is no such thing as an Asian American, the concept is crucial and useful as a mode of analysis and activism. In the last decade, post-essentialism has emerged through various attempts to criticize the necessity and utility of Asian American identity and formation. These attempts include poststructuralist critiques of the field and efforts to expand it transnationally and cross-racially, as well as efforts to foreground issues of ideology and political practice over identity, foregrounding pressing issues like war, violence, religion, queerness, imperialism and indigeneity.

Furthermore, the rising importance of Asian American subgroups like Vietnamese, Cambodians, Hmong, Filipinos, Indians, and more mean that older assumptions based on the historical experiences of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean Americans are being challenged, particularly as 19th and early 20th century immigration models of Asian American formation are contested by refugees, exiles, diasporics, flexible citizens, adoptees, mixed-race peoples, and transnationals, to name just a few possibilities. This course does not suggest an inevitable movement from essentialism to strategic essentialism to post-essentialism; rather, it proposes that these emphases are more like Raymond Williams' residual, dominant and emergent structures of feeling, existing simultaneously. Our task in the course is to survey the intellectual genealogy of the field of Asian American studies and understand the possibilities and limitations of these different structures. Hence, we will be reading both well-established and influential texts (mostly in excerpts) as well as more recent ones arguing for new directions in the field, and possibly even challenge the existence or viability of Asian American studies.

Requirements: this is a readings course, so there is no research paper. Instead, students will present twice on a book and write a book review of 1,000 to 1500 words for a third book.

The seminar presentation will be a single presentation. You will be responsible for leading class discussion on the week's for the first half of the class.

The book review will be a 1000 to 1500 word review of a book on which you are not presenting. The purpose of the review is to give you an exercise in a common academic task, one that many of you will do before you graduate as a relatively easy way to publish and enter into academic conversation. 1000 to 1500 words is about standard for most single-book academic reviews in many academic journals. Consult a leading journal in your field for models. The book review will be due two weeks after the book has been read in class. You can choose the book.

Grading: two seminar presentations (20% each), a book review (20%) and class participation (40%).

Reading list

1. Gopinath, Gayatri, *Impossible Desires: Queer Diasporas and South Asian Public Cultures*
2. Grewal, Inderpal. *Transnational America: Feminisms, Diasporas, Neoliberalisms*
3. Jane Iwamura, *Virtual Orientalism* (manuscript)
4. Allan Isaacs, *American Tropics: Articulating Filipino America*
5. Jodi Kim, *Ends of Empire: Asian American Critique and the Cold War*
6. Scott Kurashige, *The Shifting Grounds of Race: Black and Japanese Americans in the Making of Multiethnic Los Angeles*
7. Margo Machida, *Unsettled Visions: Contemporary Asian American Artists and the Social Imaginary*
8. Daryl Maeda, *Chains of Babylon: The Rise of Asian America*
9. Bill Mullen, *Afro-Orientalism*
10. Jasbir K. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*
11. Dylan Rodriguez, *Suspended Apocalypse: White Supremacy, Genocide and the Filipino Condition*
12. Shu-Mei Shih, *Visuality and Identity: Sinophone Articulations across the Pacific*
13. Siu, Lok C. D. *Memories of a Future Home: Diasporic Citizenship of Chinese in Panama*

Essays in PDF form from Ibrahim Aoudé, Moustafa Bayoumi, Kuan-Hsing Chen, Kandice Chuh, David Eng, Mark Chiang, Laura Hyun-yi Kang, Daniel Kim, Dorinne Kondo, Robert Ku, James Kyung-jin Lee, Lisa Lowe, Sunaina Maira, Martin Manalansan, Viet Nguyen, Vijay Prashad, Magid Shihade, Lok Siu, Rhacel Parreñas, Edward Said

Schedule

Week 1 August 26	Introduction
Week 2 September 2	Jodi Kim, <i>Ends of Empire: Asian American Critique and the Cold War</i> ; excerpts, Lowe, <i>Immigrant Acts</i>
Week 3 September 9	Dylan Rodriguez, <i>Suspended Apocalypse: White Supremacy, Genocide and the Filipino Condition</i> ; excerpts, Chuh, <i>imagine otherwise</i>

Week 4 September 16	Allan Isaacs, <i>American Tropics: Articulating Filipino America</i> ; excerpts, Nguyen, <i>Race and Resistance</i>
Week 5 September 23	Daryl Maeda, <i>Chains of Babylon: The Rise of Asian America</i> ; excerpts, Chiang, <i>The Cultural Capital of Asian American Studies</i>
Week 6 September 30	Scott Kurashige, <i>The Shifting Grounds of Race: Black and Japanese Americans in the Making of Multiethnic Los Angeles</i> ; excerpts, Lee, <i>Urban Triage</i>
Week 7 October 7	Bill Mullen, <i>Afro-Orientalism</i> ; excerpt from Kim, <i>Writing Manhood in Black and Yellow</i>
Week 8 October 14	Unit on Arab Americans and Asian American studies, with essays from Bayoumi, Aoudé, Maira and Shihade, Prashad, and Ku; excerpts from Said, <i>Orientalism</i>
Week 9 October 21	Jane Iwamura, <i>Virtual Orientalism</i> (manuscript); Lye, “In Dialogue with Asian American Studies”
Week 10 October 28	Margo Machida, <i>Unsettled Visions: Contemporary Asian American Artists and the Social Imaginary</i> ; Kondo, “Art, Activism, Asia and Asian Americans”
Week 11 November 4	Jasbir K. Puar, <i>Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times</i> ; excerpts, Eng, <i>Racial Castration</i>
Week 12 November 11	Gopinath, Gayatri, <i>Impossible Desires: Queer Diasporas and South Asian Public Cultures</i> ; excerpts, Manalansan, <i>Global Divas</i>

Note that class sessions for week 13 and 14 are on Tuesday, not Thursday, and from 2-4:20, room TBA.

Week 13 November 16	Grewal, Inderpal. <i>Transnational America: Feminisms, Diasporas, Neoliberalisms</i> ; excerpts, Kang, <i>Compositional Subjects</i>
Week 14 November 23	Siu, Lok C. D. <i>Memories of a Future Home: Diasporic Citizenship of Chinese in Panama</i> ; excerpt, Lok and Parrenas, <i>Asian Diasporas</i>
Week 15 December 2	Shu-Mei Shih, <i>Visuality and Identity: Sinophone Articulations across the Pacific</i> ; excerpt, Chen, <i>Asia as Method</i>