

**Sociology 215: Contemporary Asian American Experience
Oberlin College**

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Spring 2005
Tues and Thurs. 3-4:15pm
Room: King 321

Course description: The goal of the course is to introduce you to a range of contemporary issues dealing with Asian Americans and immigrants generally, so that you understand the complexity involved within immigrant adaptation. The focus is less on each ethnic group's differences and more on the trends that many groups face, with a focus on how they experience challenges and claim accomplishments. The course stresses the light that studying Asian Americans sheds on other groups and for the country as a whole, including immigration, identity, religion, family, gender, race relations, and other topics. We will read from a variety of disciplines, with stress on sociology.

Required Texts:

- Espiritu, Y. *Asian American Women and Men*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. 1997
- Maira, S. *Desis in the House: Indian American Youth Culture in New York City*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. 2002.
- Zia, H. *Asian American Dreams: The Emergence of Asian American People*. New York: Farar, Straus and Giroux. 2000.

All other readings are on Blackboard or ERES. The password is soci215.

Office hours: Tuesday, 4:30-5:30pm; Thursday, 4:30-5:30pm. Each student is encouraged to come by my office hours at least once during the semester. Email is also a convenient way to ask me questions. I am also available on the phone.

Course Requirements:

Student responsibilities:

(Note: By enrolling and remaining in this class, you have agreed to these responsibilities.)

1) You should arrive on time for class and remain for the entire period unless you make arrangements with me prior to class. If you cannot show up on time, then don't show up at all. You should not disrupt the class with conversations or materials not related to the coursework. Students anticipating lengthy absences should contact me in advance.

2) You will engage each other and the professor in a civil manner and take into account multiple points of view on issues. Disagreement is healthy and can be done without attacking.

3) Completion of each week's readings by the beginning of class. You will not be able to successfully complete this class without reading the assignments in a timely manner.

4) Completion of all required assignments. All assignments must be completed by the beginning of class, not during or after class. If you anticipate that you may miss a due date because of illness or a personal emergency, I require a doctor's note or some other documentation *before the assignment is due*. If you do not supply this documentation, your assignments will be penalized one third of a grade (for example, an A will slip to an A-, a B+ to a B, etc.) starting the day of the assignment and for every calendar date past the due date.

Required assignments:

Attendance, and class participation: This class depends on class discussion. You are expected to attend class regularly and to participate in group discussion so that we all learn from one another. You are considered absent if you arrive five minutes past the start of class. Pop quizzes or short essay questions on the readings may be conducted to ensure comprehension of the readings. *Participation and pop quizzes are worth 10% of your final grade.*

Short papers: There are 3 papers due during the semester, each five pages. The purpose of the paper is to give you an opportunity to expand on a topic tied to class themes. The format and specifics of each paper will be discussed in class. The papers may require a little outside research, but not much. The papers will draw from course readings and discussion. You are encouraged to see me and/or the writing center for assistance on the papers. *Each paper is worth 25% of your final grade.*

Collaborative Research Project: In groups of about three, pick an Asian American (or Arab American) ethnic group and present some aspect of it not discussed in class. You can report on a historical or current condition. The point of this is to give you an opportunity to do in-depth research on a topic or group that we may not cover in detail during this survey course. You are to tie your presentation to course themes. This will require outside research. You will turn in a written copy of your report on the last day of group presentations. Presentations are to be 10 minutes. *The collaborative research projects is worth 15% of your grade. Group members may receive different grades if it appears that some did more work than others.*

Instructor responsibilities:

1) To assist students in thinking critically about concepts and ideas. This often entails challenging students.

2) To respect student opinion and value each student's contributions equally.

3) To give feedback on student progress; to be accessible during office hours, and to return all course materials, graded, in a timely fashion.

Other notes:

1) This class will try not to privilege one line of thought over another and asks that you approach ideas with an open mind. You are expected to treat others with respect but also to voice disagreements as they come up, with the goal of sharing knowledge and goals.

2) You are assumed to follow the Honors Code. This pertains to how you write papers, read materials, talk with other students in and outside of the class, and other modes of behavior. Please consult your student handbook or see me for details. You will need to attest to your compliance to the honors code with each written assignment you turn in.

3) If you have a learning disability or other disability, you are entitled to assistance and accommodations through the university. Please register with the Jane Boomer, Coordinator of Services for Students with Disabilities, in Room G 27 Peters Hall, ext. 5-8467, for assistance in developing a plan to address your academic needs. Please do this *at the beginning of the semester*. Please notify me as well.

Tentative Course Outline

Feb. 8. Introduction to the course and to one another.

Feb. 10. Immigration and Nativism

- “Introduction: How I Came To Write This Book?” By P. Brimelow. *Alien Nation*. New York: Random House. 1995
- “A Nation of Immigrants, A History of Nativism.” By B. Hing. *To Be an American*. New York: New York University Press. 1997

Week of Feb 15. Greeting Immigrants

- “Introduction: Who They Are and Why They Come,” by A. Portes and R. Rumbaut. *Immigrant America: A Portrait*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 1996.
- “Where and When I Enter,” by G. Okihiro, in *Margins and Mainstreams*. Seattle: University of Washington Press. 1994.
- “From a Different Shore,” by R. Takaki, in *Strangers from Different Shore*. Boston: Little, Brown and Co. 1998.
- “I Would Remember,” by C. Bulosan, in *Charlie Chan is Dead*. J. Hagedorn (ed.). New York: Penguin Books. 1993.
- Recommended: Espiritu, ch. 1
- Recommended: “United States Policy Towards Asian Immigrants,” in *New American Destinies: A Reader in Contemporary Asian and Latino Immigration*. D. Hamaoto and R. Torres (eds.). New York: Routledge. 1997.

Week of Feb. 22. History of Asian America – before WWII

- Espiritu, ch. 2
- “Ideological Images: U.S. Nationalism in Japanese Settler Photographs.” By Eiko Kosasa.
- “The Gadar Party: Political Expression in an Immigrant Community.” By Jane Singh, in *Asian American Studies*, (J. Wu and M. Song, eds). New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press. 2002

Week of March 1. WWII – Post-1965

- Espiritu, ch. 3 and 4
- Zia, ch. 2, p.39-52
- “The Political Economy of Capitalist Restructuring and the New Asian Immigration.” By P. Ong, E. Bonacich and L. Cheng, in *The New Asian Immigration in Los Angeles and Global Restructuring* (P. Ong, E. Bonacich and L. Cheng, eds). Philadelphia: Temple University Press. 1994

Week of March 8. Race Relations Beyond Black and White

- *Who Killed Vincent Chin?* producer, Renee Tajima ; director, Christine Choy – voluntary showing this week.
- “Introduction: Neither Black nor White,” by A. Ancheta, in *Race, Rights and Representation*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press. 1998.
- “Perils of the Body and Mind.” By G. Okihiro, in *Margins and Mainstreams*. Seattle: University of Washington Press. 1994
- Zia, ch. 3.
- “Blue Dreams: Korean Americans and the Los Angeles Riots,” by Abelmann, N. and J. Lie, in *Mapping the Social Landscape*. Fergusson, S. (ed). Boston: McGraw Hill. 1996
- “Of Anti-Black Racism,” by V. Prashad, in *Karma of Brown Folk*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 2000.

Week of March 15. Gender and Sexual Relations

- “Dissecting Desire,” by M. Manalansan, in *Privileging Positions*. G. Okihiro et al (eds.). Seattle: University of Washington Press. 1995.
- Zia, ch. 9.
- “Presenting the Blue Goddess: Towards a National Pan-Asian Feminist Agenda,” by S. Shah, in *The State of Asian American Activism*. K. Aguilar-San Juan (ed.). Boston: South End Press. 1994.
- *Slaying the Dragon*, produced and directed by Deborah Gee

NOTE: 1ST PAPER DUE MARCH 17TH

Week of March 22. Working for the Man: Class and Work Relations

- Espiritu, ch. 4
- “The Chinese and the American Labor Unions,” by P. Kwong, in *Asian American Studies: A Reader*. J. Wu and M. Song (eds.). New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press. 2002.
- “Asian Americans: Achievements Mask Challenges,” by R. Varma, in *American Journal of Social Science*, v. 32, 2:290-307. 2004.
- “The Entrepreneurial Adaptation of Korean Immigrants.” By P. Min, in *Origins and Destinies* (S. Pedraza and R. Rumbaut, eds.). New York: Wadsworth Press. 1996.
- Recommended: “Asians in the Los Angeles Garment Industry,” by E. Bonacich, in *The New Asian Immigration in Los Angeles and Global Restructuring* (P. Ong, E. Bonacich and L. Cheng, eds). Philadelphia: Temple University Press. 1994.

Week of March 29. Spring Break

Week of April 5. Religion and Family

- “Becoming American by Becoming Hindu.” By P. Kurien, in *Gatherings in Diaspora*, R. S. Warner and J. Wittner (eds). Temple University Press: Philadelphia. 1998
- “Asian American Pan-Ethnic Formation and Congregational Culture.” By R. Jeung, in *Religions in Asian America*, (P. Min and J. Kim, eds.). New York: AltaMira Press. 2002
- “The Significance of Race in the Private Sphere: Asian Americans and spousal preferences,” by S. Chow, in *Sociological Inquiry*, 70, 1: 1-29.
- “Asian American Pan-Ethnicity and Intermarriage.” By L. Shinagawa and G. Pang. *Amerasia Journal*, v.22, 2:127-152.
- “Factors Influencing the Variation in Racial and Ethnic Identity of Mixed-Heritage Persons of Asian Ancestry.” By M. Root, in *Sum of Our Parts*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. 2001
- “Mrs. Sen’s,” by J. Lahiri, in *Interpreter of Maladies*. New York: Mariner Books. 1999.

Weeks of April 12 and 19. Who Am I? Issues Around Identity.

- Maira.
- “The construction of ‘Asian American’” by N. Kibria, in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 20:523-544. 1997.

NOTE: 2ND PAPER DUE APRIL 12TH

Week of April 26. Group Presentations

No readings

Week of May 3 and May 10. Alliance Formations and Self Definition.

- “Heterogeneity, hybridity, multiplicity: Marking Asian American differences,” by L. Lowe, in *Diaspora*, v.1 (1) 24-44.
- “Southeast Asians in the House: Multiple Layers of Identity,” by R. Jeung, in *Contemporary Asian American Communities* (L. Vo and R. Bonus, eds.). Philadelphia: Temple University Press. 2002.
- Zia, ch. 5, 6, 8 10.

NOTE: 3RD PAPER DUE MAY 12.