

**098:262**  
**Spring 2008**

**Asian American Experience**

**MW 1:10 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.**

**SC 219**

**Instructor: Dr. Gloria Shen**

**Office Hour: M 2:40 p.m.—3:30 p.m. (TBA)**

**Scott Hall, Rm. 322**

**Course Description:**

The course focuses on the multicultural, intercultural and historical understanding of the social behavior and current experiences of Asian Americans and their communities in the United States. The format of the course consists of lectures, readings, discussions, and documentaries on various ethnic issues. The course will integrate readings on the historical background of ethnic groups, individuals' oral histories, fiction and films with historical, socio-political and literary analyses.

**Course Objectives:**

1. Students will have a solid understanding of key figures, events and chronologies, including immigration patterns, labor and community experience, political movements, and, meanings of discrimination against and within Asian American groups.
2. Students will address major themes in Asian American studies including: conflicts of values and loyalties, intergenerational change and continuity, struggles to stay separate or assimilate.
3. Students will develop a broadly comparative and integrative "Asia-Pacific" view of Asian American experiences in an interdependent global context. How have "Asian Americans" been pushed, pulled and shaped by colonial legacies, war, political decisions, or economic and demographic trends in North America, and in East, Southeast and South Asia, the Pacific islands, and the Americas?

**General Investigative Queries:**

Within the broad context outlined above, this course is organized around the general question, "What does it mean to be(come) an American?" for individuals and groups of Asian descent or ancestry, particularly first-generation immigrants (new Asian Americans).

What distinctive cultures and sensibilities define, constitute, and are appropriated as elements of Asian American identities"? How can we understand these against such formulations as "model minority," or "eternal foreigner"? We will draw on history, biography, autobiography, film and fiction to address these questions.

**Required Texts:** (Available at Rutgers University Bookstore)

Zhou, Min & Gatewood, Gatewood, James V. *Contemporary Asian America: A Multidisciplinary Reader*. New York University Press, 2000.

Zia, Helen. *Asian American Dreams*. Farrar, Strauss, & Giroux, 2000.

See, Lisa. *On Gold Mountain*. Vintage Books, 1995.

Takaki, Ronald. *Strangers from a Different Shore*, updated & revised. Little, Brown & Co., 1998.

Tan, Amy. *The Joy Luck Club*. (Optional)

### **Course Requirements:**

Attendance	10%
Participation	10%
Bi-Weekly quizzes	40%
Group Written Project or Individual term paper	40%

**Policies:** I take class attendance. If you miss class, you miss the material. Make a friend with whom you can share notes and realize that nobody beside yourself is responsible for your grade in this or any class. If you miss class more than three times the whole semester, you will get a letter grade lower than what you get with full attendance. If you miss class more than six times, you will get two letter grades lower. Cheating and plagiarizing are serious offenses at RU. Never let me suspect you are engaging in the favorite RU vice of grade grabbing. Work hard and you will enjoy the class.

### **Some films for the course among others:**

1. Interviews: Vietnam

Interviews of seven Vietnamese young adults of their war experience.

55mts

2. Cambodia

Cambodia and Laos ; Peace is at hand, 1968-1973 Bruce Palling and Martin Smith tells how the U.S. extension of the Vietnamese war into Cambodia and Laos to stop attacks and supplies from across those borders, hurt those countries more than it hurt the object of the attack2-579980

120mts

3. Passion For Justice (Japanese Activist--Political with the mention of Malcom X) 57 mts?

4. Spike Lee, "Do the Right Thing" 120 mts.

5. Journey from the Fall (Boat People)

6. "Interactions"-Four high school students probing into the past to find out what it was like for teenagers to live in Japanese concentration camps during World War II.

33mts

7. Who killed Vincent Chin? 82 minutes

8. 1421 When China Discovered America. 60 mts

## Course Schedule

### **Week One (Jan. 21) General Introduction**

#### **Week Two (Jan. 26 & 28)**

**M—Film** (“Who killed Vincent Chin?”)—82 minutes

**W— Read:** *Multidisciplinary Reader* (MR), pp. 1-20.

#### **Week Three (Feb. 2 & 4)**

**M—Films** (“We Served with Pride: the Chinese American Experience in WWII”-57 mts)

    (“Dear Miss Breed”—the Japanese American Experience in WWII—13 mts)

**W— Read:** *MR*, “Transforming Asian American: Globalization and Cotemporary Immigration to the United States,” pp. 115-138.

#### **Week Four (Feb. 9 & 11)**

**M—Film** (“Rabbit in the Moon”—the Japanese American Internment in WWII--85 mts)

**W— Read** *Strangers*, pp.3-18 & *On Gold Mountain*, pp. 47-58.

#### **Quiz One**

#### **Week Five (Feb. 16 & 18)**

**M—Films** (“The Untold Stories: Coolies, Settlers and Sailors, 1600-1900,” Part I-64 mts)

    (“Ancestors in America: Chinese in the Front West”—Part II--15/60 mts)

**W— Read** Ch. 2: “Surrogate Slaves to American Dreamers” in *Asian American Dreams*, pp. 21-52.

#### **Week Six (Feb. 23 & 25)**

**M—Films** (“Ancestors in America: Chinese in the Front West”--Part II cont’d-45/60 mts)

    (“The Bracelet”\*the Japanese American Experience of the Internment-25 mts)

**W—Read** Ch. 1: “From Nothing, a consciousness” in *Asian American Dreams*, pp.1-20.

#### **Quiz Two**

#### **Week Seven (March 2 & 4)**

**M—Films** (“Carved in Silence”—Angel Island—45 mts)

    (“Ellis Island”—America’s role in the great immigration movements--28 mts)

**W— Read** *On Gold Mountain*, pp. 59-86.

#### **Week Eight (March 9 & 11)**

**M—Film** (“Chan is missing.”—80 mts.)

**W—Read** Ch. 9: “Enclaves, Ethnoburbs, and New Patterns of Settlement among Asian Immigrants” in *MR*, pp. 222-236.

#### **Quiz Three**

#### **Week Nine (March 16 & 18)**

    Spring Break!

#### **Week Ten (March 23 & 25)**

**M—Films** (“Cambodia/Laos”—120mts or “Journey from the Fall” on Boat People--?mts)  
**W—Read** Ch. 5: “The Waves of War: Immigrants, Refugees, and New Americans from Southeast Asia” in *MR*, pp. 139-157.

**Quiz Four**

**Week Eleven** (March 30 & April 1)

**M—Films** (“In No One’s Shadow”—Filipinos in America—28 mts)  
 (“Blue Collar and Buddha”—Other S E Asians in America—50/57 mts)

**W—Read** Ch. 8: “New Household Forms, Old Family Values: The Formation and Reproduction of the Filipino Transnational Family in Los Angeles” in *MR*, pp. 206-221.

**Week Twelve** (April 6 & 8)

**M—Films** (“Sa-I-Gu”—Korean Shops at L.A. after Rodney King’s case—42 mts)  
 (“First Personal Plural: the filmmaker experiences being adopted from S. Korea and raised by an American family, 36/56 mts)

**W—Read** Ch. 10: “Striving for the American Dreams: Struggle, Success, and Intergroup Conflict among Korean Immigrant Entrepreneurs” in *MR*, pp. 243-258.

**Quiz Five**

**Week Thirteen** (April 13 & 15)

**M—Film** (“First Personal Plural”, cont’d, 20/mts)  
 (“Passion for Justice”, 57mts)

**W—Read** Chapter 3: “Detroit Blues” in *Asian American Dreams*, pp. 55-81

**Week Fourteen** (April 20 & 22)

**M—Films** “Who killed Vincent Chin?”—82 mts)

**W—Read** Ch. 24: “The Cold War Construction of the Model Minority Myth” in *MR*, pp. 469-484; Ch. 21: “A Letter to My Sister” in *MR*, pp. 425-430.

**Week Fifteen** (April 27 & 29)

**M—Film** (“Asianization”—26 mts)  
 (“Better Luck Tomorrow”—50/99 mts)

**W—Read** Ch. 19: “What Must I Be? Asian Americans and the Question of Multiethnic Identity” in *MR*, pp. 393-407; Ch. 2: “The Four Prisons” and the Movements of Liberation: Asian American Activism from the 1960s to the 1990s” in *MR*, pp. 56-88.

**Quiz Six**

**Week Sixteen** (May 4)

**M—Film** (“Better Luck Tomorrow”—cont’d 49/99 mts)  
 (“Interactions”—Four high school students probing into the past to find out what it was like for teenagers to live in Japanese concentration camps during World War II.--33mts)

**Group Project Due.**

Have a nice summer!