

Asian Pacific Americans and Popular Culture

CES 413.1
Fall 2009
CUE 209
MW: 10:35-11:50

Instructor: Rory J. Ong
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Course Description and Goals:

This class will examine and discuss the various ways in which Asian and Pacific Americans have been “represented” through US popular culture. We will begin with 19th century portrayals of Asians during the exclusion era, WWII representations, as well as address the representations of Asians and Pacific Islanders during the Cold War. We will also take account of impact of transnational and transcultural contexts on Asian American identity and the alternative forms of representation that it engendered. At the forefront will be constructs of identity that include nation, culture, family, gender, and sexuality. To do this we will study a variety of forms of popular culture such as political cartoons, literature, posters, television, commercial advertisements, documentaries, independent and mainstream film. While we will need to examine the racist ideology through which a dominant culture in the US has portrayed, and in many respects continues to portray Asians, we will also consider the ways many Asian Pacific American counter-cultural producers have attempted to challenge, interrogate, and refute such racist representations.

Required Texts:

Robert Lee. *Orientalists: Asian Americans in Popular Culture*
Shilpa Dave, LeiLani Nishime, and Tahsa G. Oren. *East Main Street: Asian American Popular Culture*.
Gene Luen Yang. *American Born Chinese*.
Supplemental Readings. Available at Cougar Copies.

Course Requirements:

In-Class Writing

Students will be asked periodically to write a short essay in class over the course readings. These will only take up 5-10 minutes of our class time. These may focus on the readings of a particular day, or cover a theme that has been introduced through other readings or materials presented in class. In-class writing assignments will count 10% toward the total grade.

Popular Culture Analysis

Students will review one of the films listed on the course film list, or an analysis of an on-line Asian Pacific Am website, or popular Asian Pacific Am blog. The review

should be 2-3 pages long, typed and double-spaced. **I do not want only summary, but also your critical engagement with the material.** The Pop Cultural Analysis will count as 15% of the total grade.

Reading Review/Summary

You are required to write review/summaries of the class reading(s) for a given class period. The review must be 3-4 pages long, typed and double-spaced. The review/summary must thoughtfully engage and discuss the assigned readings. Students will share their review/ summaries with the class, and are due the day of the reading in class. The reading review will count as 20% of the total grade.

Mid-Term Paper

The mid-term will be a take home exam which will be written in the form of a short paper (4-5 pages). Students will write to a particular question or issue concerning APA's and popular culture in the US. You will have 1 week in which to complete the mid-term. The mid-term will count as 25% of your grade.

Final Research Project

Students will also produce a final research project. The project will be a presentation and analysis of Asian Americans in popular culture in some current media form (film, website, blog, advertising, sports, etc). The final project will count as 30% of the total grade.

Policies:

Grading

Grades will be averaged in the following proportions:

In-Class Writing Assignments	10%
Popular Culture Analysis	15%
Reading Review/Summary	20%
Mid-Term Exam	25%
Final Research Project	30%

Grading Scale

100-98=A+	Suggests that a student's work is outstanding to excellent; it reflects the content and focus of the course and shows thoughtful engagement with, and critical insight into, the complexities of the material. Always well written and articulated.
97-93=A	
92-90=A-	
89-87=B+	Suggests the student's work is very good to good; it reflects a very strong and solid understanding of the material. There is some engagement with the materials, but occasionally doesn't go the extra step in critical analysis. Well written and articulated.
86-83=B	
82-80=B-	

79-77=C+	Suggests the student's work is adequate; it reflects a fair grasp of, but often a weak engagement with, the material. Doesn't go very far in analysis or reflects a lack of comprehension of the issues represented in the material. Some writing limitations.
76-73=C	
72-70=C-	
69-63=D	Suggests the students work shows some but little effort, or engagement and does not comprehend the material, or reveals a lack of reading, attention, or attendance. Poorly written.

Attendance

Because this is discussion oriented class, engaged discussion among all of the participants is obligatory. Attendance, therefore, is mandatory. If you know in advance that you will have to miss class for a legitimate reason, contact me to see whether arrangements can be made to make up any work that will be missed. If you have not finished an assignment for a given class period, attend class anyway to avoid missing further assignments and in-class work/discussions. **Only institutional excuses will be accepted. If you have more than four (4) unexcused absences, your grade will be lowered one point for every absence thereafter.**

Extra Credit

Periodically there may be exhibits, speakers, or films that may serve as extra credit. I will announce them when they come up. For the extra credit write up a one page synopsis of the event. Extra credit in no way serves as an alternative to the course materials, only as a supplement. Extra credit counts as 2 points per extra credit (limit 3).

Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty, such as cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, and fraud, is prohibited. The proper use of primary or secondary research sources and without proper citation or acknowledgment, or copying and claiming someone else's work as your own, is illegal and is not acceptable in this or any other class at WSU. Whether intentional or unintentional, academic dishonesty will result in a grade of F for the assignment in question, or a grade of "F" for the entire course. Should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty, we will discuss the situation with you before penalties are enforced.

Classroom Etiquette

Out of respect for your classmates and the instructor, **all cell phones must be turned off. iPods and any other devices for listening to music, podcasts, radio, or**

text messaging are also prohibited in class. Unless you have a documented disability, no earphones are allowed in class. Any use of these items during class will automatically result in a loss of 5 points from the student's final grade.

Disability Accommodations

I support those members of our university community who request disability accommodations. Please notify me during the first 2 weeks of class for any requirements needed for the course. Reasonable accommodations are available for students with a documented disability. If you have a disability and may need accommodations to fully participate in this class, please visit the Disability Resource Center (DRC). All accommodations MUST be approved through the DRC (Washington Building, Room 217). Please stop by or call 509-335-3417 to make an appointment with a disability specialist. Late notification may result in the request being unavailable.

Campus safety plan/emergency information

In the interest of campus safety and emergency procedures, please become familiar with the information available on the WSU-provided websites:

- <http://safetyplan.wsu.edu> Campus Safety Plan
- <http://oem.wsu.edu/emergencies> Emergency management web site
- <http://alert.wsu.edu> WSU Alert site

Syllabus:

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| Monday, August 24: | Handout and review Syllabus. Introduction to the Course. |
| Wednesday, August 26: | Video: Slaying the Dragon (1988). |
| Monday, August 31: | Video: The Slanted Screen (2006). |
| Wednesday, September 2: | Discuss the films Slaying the Dragon and The Slanted Screen. |
| Monday, September 7: | LABOR DAY. ALL UNIVERSITY HOLIDAY. |
| Wednesday, September 9: | Read Chpt. 1, "The Heathen Chinees on God's Green Soil," in <i>Orientalis</i> ; Discuss Chinese immigrants in California, free soil California, racialization of the Chinese, white supremacy. |
| Monday, September 14: | Chpt. 1 cont'd; Discussion on Early representation of Asians in American popular culture such as poetry, "The Heathen Chinees" by Brett Hart (handout). Discuss early advertisements, music, vaudeville. |

- Wednesday, September 16: Video clip: *Bontoc Eulogy*. Discuss the racialization of Filipinos; the 1904 World's Fair; and miscegenation.
- Monday, September 21: Read "Of The Mysterious East" and "Of the Oriental Menagerie" by Vijah Prashad (SR). Video clips from *Lord of the Rings: Return*. Discuss the fetishization and commodification of India; Orient (east) v. Occident (west).
- Wednesday, September 23: Video clips: *The Thief of Baghdad* (1924) Gunga Din (1939); *Jungle Book* (1942, 1994); "Gunga Din" by Rudyard Kipling (handout). Discuss stereotypical representation of India.
- Monday, September 28: Read Chpt. 2, "The Coolie and the Making of the White Working Class," in *Orientalism*. Discuss the relationship between anti-Asian sentiments and the development of a white working class.
- Wednesday, September 30: Read Chpt. 4, "Inner Dikes and Barred Zones," in *Orientalism*. Discuss exclusionary policies and contexts against Asians. Video Clips: *The Cheat* (Cecil B. De Mille, 1915).
- Monday, October 5: Read Chpt. 3, "The Third Sex." Also read, "The Story of One White Woman Who Married a Chinese," and "Her Chinese Husband" by Edith Eaton (SR).
- Wednesday, October 7: Film: *The Ballad of Little Jo* (1993).
- Monday, October 12: Film: *The Ballad of Little Jo* (1993).
- Wednesday, October 14: Read "Introduction: Racial Castration" by David Eng (SR). Discuss gender roles, sexuality, and power in Asian Pacific caricatures.
- Monday, October 19: Read Chpt. 5, "The Cold War Origins of the Model Minority" in *Orientalism*. Film Clips: *Son of Fury* (1942), *The South Pacific* (1957). Video Clips: *Flower Drum Song* (1958). Discuss romance and the pacifying of the Pacific, inventing the model minority, red menace, and the white family.

- Wednesday, October 21: Read Chpt. 6, "The Model Minority as Gook" in *Orientalism*. Discuss the neoconservative racial project, pathology of the model minority (as gooks).
- Monday, October 26: Read "Introduction" and "How to Rehabilitate a Mulatto" in East Main Street (EMS). Discuss racial migrations and transformations.
- Wednesday, October 28: Read "Miss Cherry Blossom Meets Mainstream America" and "Whose Paradise? Hawai'i, Desire, and the Global-Local Tensions of Popular Culture" in EMS. Discuss the exotic, essential, and authentic in Asia Pacific identities.
- Monday, November 2: Read "Alllooksame? Mediating Asian American Visual Cutlures . . ." and "Guilty Pleasures" in EMS. Discuss Asian Pacific American counter cultural discourse.
- Wednesday, November 4: Read "Apu's Brown Voice" and "Secret Angry Asian Man" in EMS. Discuss Asian Pacific American counter cultural discourse.
- Monday, November 9: Read "Planet Bollywood" and "Model Minorities Can Cook" in EMS. Discuss Asian Pacific American counter cultural discourse.
- Wednesday, November 11: **VETERANS DAY. ALL UNIVERSITY HOLIDAY.**
- Monday, November 16: Film: *Baji on the Beach*. By Gurinder Chadha
- Wednesday, November 18: Film: *Baji on the Beach*, cont'd.
- Mon-Fri, November 23-27: **THANKSGIVING BREAK. ALL UNIVERSITY HOLIDAY.**
- Monday, November 30: Read American Born Chinese.
- Wednesday, December 2: Final Research Project Presentations.
- Monday, December 7: Final Research Project Presentations.
- Wednesday, December 9: Final Research Project Presentations.
- Mon-Fri, December 14-19: **Finals Week.**