

Anthropology 220
Identity and Community Formation:
Asian American Perspectives

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Office Hours: Tuesdays, 4:30-5:30 PM; Wednesdays, 5-6 PM

Course Number: ANTH 220

Course Location: PNE 239, Tuesdays 1:30-4:00 PM

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.

- Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Yen, Espiritu, *Asian American Panethnicity: Bridging Institutions and Identities*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial formation in the United States: from the 1960s to the 1990s*. New York: Routledge.
- Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- 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. Excessive tardiness (10 minutes or more late to class) will also cost you ½ 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 Tuesday

sessions. Evaluation of participation will be based on how engaged you are both in our Tuesday sessions and online in our Firstclass course conference. This semester we have the exciting opportunity of doing four joint class sessions with Professor Elena Creef's 100-level course, "American Studies 151: The Asian American Experience." These joint classes will all take place during the first part of our Tuesday seminars, from 1:30-2:40 pm, in a larger classroom (TBA) to foster dialogue and shake up the dynamics of our individual courses. For this reason, class participation and attendance will be especially important to make these sessions productive.

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 her 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. An online sign up sheet (first come, first serve) for these presentations will be posted during Week 2. In lieu of a final exam, students will develop a final multimedia project on "Asian/American Spatial Imaginaries" in consultation with 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.

Course Evaluation

Preparation and engaged class participation – 10%
"Show and Tell" Presentation – 15%
Short Paper #1 – 20%
Short Paper #2 – 20%
Final "Spatial Imaginaries" Project – 35%

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 1 (1/29/08): Introductory Remarks

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

Recommended Reading:

Sumiko Higashi, "Ethnicity, Class, and Gender in Film: Demille's *The Cheat*," in *Unspeakable Images: Ethnicity and the American Cinema*, pp. 112-139.

Week 2 (2/5/08): Theorizing Difference

Edward Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 1-9, 25-28, 31-75, 201-209.

Mari Yoshihara, "The Flight of the Japanese Butterfly: Orientalism, Nationalism, and Performances of Japanese Womanhood," in *American Quarterly* 56(4): 975-1001 (2004) (27 pp)

Raymond Williams, "Hegemony" in *Marxism and Literature*, pp. 108-114.

Gayatri Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, pp. 24-28.

- In-Class Screenings: *My Life as a Poster* (1995), dir. Shashwanti Talukdar (7:30 min.)

II. U.S. Empire

Week 3 (2/12/08)—Pacific and Transatlantic Entanglements:

Steffi San Buenaventura, "The Colors of Manifest Destiny: Filipinos and the American Other(s)," *Amerasia Journal* 24:3: pp. 1-26.

Adria Imada, "Hawaiians on Tour: Hula Circuits Through the American Empire," *American Quarterly*, vol. 56, no. 1, March 2004, pp. 111-149.

Paul A. Kramer, "Empires, Exceptions and Anglo-Saxons: Race and Rule between the British and U.S. Empires, 1880-1910," in *The American Colonial State in the Philippines*, pp. 43-91.

- In-Class Screenings: *Savage Acts: Wars, Fairs, Empire* (1995), American Social History Productions (30 min.)

Week 4 (2/19/08)—Remembering The Asia-Pacific War(s):

****NOTE:** *This is a joint session with AMST 151, 1:30-2:40 pm (classroom TBA)***

Caroline Chung Simpson, "'That Faint and Elusive Insinuation': Remembering Internment and the Dawn of the Postwar," in *An Absent Presence: Japanese Americans in Postwar American Culture, 1945-1960*, pp. 12-42.

Lisa Yoneyama, "Traveling Memories, Contagious Justice: Americanization of Japanese War Crimes at the End of the Post-Cold War," in *Journal of Asian American Studies* (6:1), pp. 57-93.

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

Recommended Reading:

David Palumbo-Liu, "War, the Homeland, and the Traces of Memory," in *Asian/American: Historical Crossings of a Racial Frontier*, pp. 217-254.

Week 5 (2/26/08)—"Tense and Tender Ties" of Empire:

****NOTE:** *This is a joint session with AMST 151, 1:30-2:40 pm (classroom TBA)***

Prescreen: *Daughter from Danang* (83 min)

Mire Koikari, "Exporting Democracy? American Women, 'Feminist Reforms,' and the Politics of Imperialism in the U.S. Occupation of Japan, 1945-52," in *Frontiers* (23:1), pp. 23-45.

Elena T. Creef, "Discovering My Mother as the Other in the *Saturday Evening Post*," in *Qualitative Inquiry* (6:4), pp. 443-457.

Eleana Kim, "Korean Adoptee Autoethnography: Refashioning Self, Family and Finding Community," in *Visual Anthropology Review* (16:1), pp. 43-70.

- In-Class Screening: *First Person Plural*, dir. Deana Borshay Liem (60 min.)
- In-Class Reading: GW Bush's 2005 60th Anniversary of V-J Day speech

Short paper assignment #1 will be distributed online this week and must be posted in the ANTH 220 online drop box by **Tuesday, 3/11/08, 10 AM.**

Week 6 (3/4/08): "Tense and Tender Ties" (continued)

Prescreen: *AKA Don Bonus* (55 min), dirs. Spencer Nakasako and Sokly "Don Bonus" Ny

Caroline Chung Simpson, “ ‘Out of An Obscure Place’: Japanese War Brides and Cultural Pluralism in the 1950s,” in *differences: A Journal of Cultural Feminist Studies* (10:3), pp. 47-81.

Aihwa Ong, excerpts from *Buddha is Hiding*, E-brary book online on Wellesley Library website.

Trinh T. Minh-Ha, “No Master Territories,” in *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*, pp. 215-218.

- In-Class Screening: *Kelly Loves Tony* (57 min), dir. Spencer Nakasako

III. The Nation and its Others

Week 7 (3/11/08): Imagining the Nation

Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, pp. 1-82, 163-185.

Short Paper #1 Due at 10 AM, Tuesday, 3/11/08!

Week 8 (3/18/08): “Race” in the National Order of Things

Michael Omi and Howard Winant, pp. 1-69 in *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1980s*.

Jonathan Marks, “How People Differ From One Another,” in *What It Means to be 98% Chimpanzee*, pp. 51-71.

Micaela de Leonardo, “Human Cultural Diversity,” pp. 1-11.

- In-Class Screening: *Race: The Power of Illusion, part 1* (California Newsreel 2003)

Week 9 (3/25/08—no class, Spring Break!): Whiteness as an object of study

John Hartigan Jr., “Establishing the Fact of Whiteness,” in *American Anthropologist* 99(3): 495-505 (1997).

Mary Bucholtz, “The Whiteness of Nerds: Superstandard English and Racial Markedness,” in *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 11(1): 84-100.

Elaine W. Chun, “The Construction of White, Black, and Korean American Identities through African American Vernacular English,” in *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 11(1): 52-64.

Recommended Reading:

Elizabeth L. Krause, “The Bead of Raw Sweat in a Field of Dainty Perspirers”: Nationalism, Whiteness, and the Olympic-Class Ordeal of Tonya Harding,” in *Transforming Anthropology* 7(1): 33-52

Week 10 (4/1/08): Yellow Peril and the Politics of Public Health

Nayan Shah, *Contagious divides: epidemics and race in San Francisco's Chinatown*, Selections from book.

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

Week 11 (4/8/08): Refiguring U.S. Public Culture Through the Cinematic Life of Anna Mae Wong

Monday April 7: (This is a joint event with AMST 151!)

Lunchtime conversation with Filmmaker Elaine May Woo (Women's Studies Lounge)

Tuesday April 8

****NOTE: This is a joint session with AMST 151, 1:30-2:40 pm (classroom TBA)****

Special Guest Lecturer: Filmmaker Elaine May Woo, 1:30-2:40 pm

Readings will include pieces on Wong by Peter X. Feng, Celine Shimizu: "Chapter," and a chapter from new biography of Wong.

Mandatory Film Screening at 7pm in Collins Cinema: "Frosted Yellow Willow"

Short paper assignment #2 will be distributed this week and must be posted to the ANTH 220 online drop box by **6 PM Tuesday, 4/22/08**.

ALSO, Guidelines for Final Projects will be posted online this week. All students must see the instructor for approval for their final paper topics by **Friday, 4/25/08**.

Week 12 (4/15/08): Asian American Panethnicity and the Challenges of Coalition Politics

Yen Espiritu, "Ethnicity and Panethnicity" and "Coming Together: The Asian American Movement," in *Asian American Panethnicity: Bridging Institutions and Identities*, pp. 1-52.

Michael Omi and Howard Winant, "The Great Transformation" in *Racial formation in the United States: from the 1960s to the 1990s*, pp. 89-108.

Elaine Kim, "Between Black and White," in *The State of Asian America*, pp. 71-100.

Recommended Reading:

Bernice Johnson Reagon, "Coalition Politics: Turning the Century," in *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology*, pp. 356-368.

Gary Okihiro, "Is Yellow Black or White?" in *Margins and Mainstreams*, pp. 31-63.

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

IV. Global Re-visions and Quandaries

Week 13 (4/22/08—no class): Orientalizing Capitalism: U.S. Anxieties over Global Economic Restructuring

Pre-Screening: *Who Killed Vincent Chin?*(1988), dir. Renee Tajima-Pena, Christine Choy

Yen Espiritu, "Reactive Solidarity: Anti-Asian Violence," in *Asian American Panethnicity: Bridging Institutions and Identities*, pp. 134-160.

Paul Ong, Edna Bonacich, and Lucie Cheng, "The Political Economy of Capitalist Restructuring and the New Asian Immigration," in *The New Asian immigration in Los Angeles and Global Restructuring*, pp. 3-35.

Karen Brodtkin, "Global Capitalism: What's Race Got to Do With It?" in *American Ethnologist* May 2000, 27 (2): 237-256.

Recommended Reading:

Ted C. Fishman, "The Chinese Century," *New York Times Magazine* (July 4, 2004).

Jim McKay, "Where did all the jobs go? Try Bangalore," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* (March 21, 2004).

Short paper assignment #2 is due at 6 PM, Tuesday, 4/22/08!

Students must have approval for their final project topics by Friday, 4/25/08!

Week 14 (4/29/08): Diaspora and Transnationalism

Visweswaran, Kamala

1989 Predicaments of the Hyphen. *In Our Feet Walk the Sky: Women of the South Asian Diaspora*. T. W. O. S. A. D. Collective, ed. pp. 301-312. San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute.

Ang, Ien

1993 On Not Speaking Chinese: Postmodern Ethnicity and the Politics of Diaspora. *New Formations: A Journal of Culture/Theory/Politics* 24(Winter):1-18.

Park, Kyeyoung

1997 "I am Floating in the Air": Creation of a Korean Transnational Space among Korean-Latino American Remigrants. *positions* 7(3).

Recommended Reading;

Ong, Aihwa

Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. Selections from book.

Cha, Theresa Hak Kyung
1995 Dicter. Berkeley, CA: Third Woman Press. Read Pp. 56-57.

Week 15 (Thursday 5/8/08): Re-Mapping Asian/America(s)—Chinatown as a Case Study

****NOTE:** *This is a joint session with AMST 151* which is being rescheduled for
THURSDAY, 5/8, in lieu of the usual Tuesday class time**

Field Trip: Thursday, 5/8, 12-4 pm
Chinatown Historical Society's Tour of Boston's Chinatown (lunch will be provided!).

Final Projects must be posted in the ANTH 220 online drop box by the end of the exam period on **Monday, 4:30 PM, 5/19/08.**