

ASIAN AMERICAN STUDIES 321: ASIAN AMERICAN SOCIAL PROTEST LITERATURE

Cross-listed with ENGL 398.81

Mon & Thu from 4:10 - 5:25pm

Location: Thomas Hunter 502

Instructor: Jennifer Hayashida

Office: 1037 Hunter East

Email: jennifer.hayashida@hunter.cuny.edu

Phone: (212) 772 - 5660

Office Hours: Thursdays from 5:30 - 6:30pm and by appointment

Gradually we began to be visible, although not necessarily seen the way we wished. Then we had to discover what it meant to be in the light. (Helen Zia, "From Nothing, a Consciousness" in *Asian American Dreams*)

Check your Hunter email on a regular basis, because this syllabus is subject to change during the course of the semester!

Course Description & Objectives

Asian American Studies emerged out of the longest campus strike in U.S. history, lasting for five months and initiated by a broad-based movement of students, faculty, administrators, and community activists at San Francisco State College in 1968-1969. Coalitions that were part of this grassroots movement for a curriculum that was relevant to students of color and working-class students crossed lines of class, gender, race, sexuality, and age. One of the central principles that emerged out of this movement was the belief that Asian American Studies always remain relevant to the Asian American community's needs and experiences. As a reflection of this belief, this course seeks to provide an intellectual, practical, and discursive space for students to utilize their knowledge and skills in hands-on projects that effect change for Asian American individuals and/or communities in the New York City area.

Asian 321 utilizes literatures of Asian American social protest from the past and present as tools in the research, mobilization, and realization of student-initiated community-based projects. Literature will be the foundation of this course, and action will be its end result. To begin these projects, we must first expand the meaning of "social protest" and look at how these words both liberate and constrict us in our conception of ourselves as agents of change. Student projects are intended to effect some form of transformation, but the scope and nature of that change must be determined by the student's willingness to challenge what she or he conceives of as an "activist" effort. So, we will remain generous and flexible in our collective understandings of social protest and activist practices: some students may seek to organize a large-scale movement or develop a community-based initiative, whereas others may attempt to teach a family member how to speak English or tutor a friend in preparation for the citizenship examination. All projects have equal value: for this class, what will determine the quality of each endeavor is the student's level of engagement and thoughtfulness, as well as her/his willingness to invest not only in individual success, but also in that of the class.

Possible projects include, but are not limited to, the following:

- A community film screening followed by discussion
- Fundraising for an Asian American community cause
- Poetry reading featuring Asian American writers
- Academic tutoring in an Asia American community of your choice
- Academic, personal, or professional mentoring of Asian American youth
- Producing public art (mural, sculpture, performance, etc.) in an Asian American community
- Developing educational workshops in an Asian American community
- Addressing an important issue with your family, kin, or group of friends
- Significant, project-based volunteering with a preexisting Asian American community group
- Consciousness-raising efforts (rallies, group meetings, petitioning, etc.) on a subject of concern to an Asian American community
- Developing an oral history project around an Asian American experience or group that interests you

...and if you have other ideas, we can discuss them as a group!

HOW WILL THIS WORK?

In short, the course will follow five stages - these stages will be discussed and will hopefully evolve as the semester progresses:

1) Foundations in Asian American social protest/activism

Using *The State of Asian America*, we will examine instructive experiences and insights, as well as theoretical and methodological frameworks - for thinking about, planning, executing, and reflecting upon the "methods and meanings" of our projects. Supplemental readings and discussions will provide examples of past and contemporary instances of Asian American social protest, and will attempt to expand the definition of "activism" and challenge us in our understandings of our own interests and backgrounds.

2) Student-initiated research into individual projects

Start thinking about your project now! You are responsible for *all* aspects of your project, from its conception to its final realization - the rest of the class and I are available to you for feedback, but you are responsible for all research and decision-making. Note: the research you need to do for this project will be *in addition* to the reading you do for this class - the readings we do as a group are a starting point from which you then go on to develop your own research agenda.

During this process, some things to consider include:

- Are there particular issues that are of concern to you? (e.g. literacy, domestic violence, housing, HIV/AIDS)
- What are your skills and interests? (e.g. filmmaking, poetry, health sciences, mental health)
- What communities would you like to work with? (e.g. seniors, taxi drivers, LGBT, at-risk youth)
- What type of knowledge do you need to expand upon in order to be well-informed about your issue(s)? How will you obtain this knowledge? Do you need to visit a particular archive, conduct interviews, or do field research? Is there an "expert" whose advice you could benefit from? On that note, what makes someone an "expert," and what kind of expertise might you be sitting on that could benefit others?
- Who will you reach out to in order to strategize around your project, and how? What coalitions may you need to build?
- What are the potential power dynamics in all the relationships you will need to develop as part of this project?
- What obstacles do you anticipate confronting? (e.g. language barriers, class differences, boundaries between academia and the community)
- WHEN and WHERE would you like to realize your project?

3) Proposal and presentation of strategies and questions surrounding project (30%)

In the seventh and eighth weeks of the semester, you will all be responsible for submitting a typed four-paragraph proposal to your "workshop group." This proposal should address: 1) background on the issue/individual/community; 2) some of the questions outlined above in the second point; 3) a blueprint or flowchart for the steps you need to take in order to realize your project and change(s) you hope to effect; 4) questions you have that we as a group can attempt to help you answer. You will give me a hard copy of the 4-paragraph proposal, and you will also share your proposal with a workshop group in an *informal* 15-minute presentation: 5 minutes during which you will present, and then a 10-minute post-presentation brainstorming session. You will be graded on your proposal and presentation, but equal responsibility is placed on everyone else, where we are all graded on our level of engagement with the project being presented - i.e. our willingness to ask questions and suggest possible solutions or connections that can help in the realization of the project. **Note:** *Along with your proposal, you must also submit a bibliography with at least eight different sources (readings, interviews, films to watch, sites to visit, etc.) - three from the course, five outside sources.*

4) Mobilization and realization of individual projects (10%)

As you can see in the grade breakdown, equal weight is placed on participation, research/proposal, and post-project reflection. What this means is that, yes, you should attempt to realize the project before the semester comes to an end, but the idea is not to rush in order to just pull something off: working towards real change is a slow and oftentimes frustrating process, and we tend to glorify and romanticize that moment of protest spectacle: the masses in the street, clever signs, a packed auditorium. One of the core ideas in this class is that we need to reframe these notions and attempt to consider other moments of transformation, moments which may not typically be considered "activist," but which can effect significant change in the lives of individuals and/or groups. This class will hopefully help you build a personal foundation where you will continue to put your skills and knowledge to use for the benefit of others, and the idea is for you to continue working on these ideas long after the semester ends or you leave Hunter College. I do hope for you to have a "successful" project that effects the kind of change you're striving for, be it an English-speaking grandmother or a well-attended Open Mic night, but the main objective is for you to experience a sense of your own power to make change: that experience cannot only be measured by

the number of people whose lives are affected, press coverage, controversy, or traditional measures of "success."

5) Post-Project Reflection & Presentation (30%)

When all is said and done, I would like for you to write out (typed) an eight-page first-person reflection on all phases of your project, including the work we have done in class, knowledge you have gained outside the classroom while working on your project (research), connections you have made, obstacles you have faced, strategies you have developed to overcome those obstacles, what you would do differently, what you are proud of, and advice you would have to others who are interested in your areas of experience and expertise. This reflection will be due on the day of your project presentation, when you will tell all of us about your project, from start to finish. You may choose to show slides, read from work you produced, show video clips, perform, or do anything else that you think will illustrate the meaning of your project. **Note:** You must use at least five sources (research, interviews, field work, etc.) in your final reflection - two from the class, three outside sources.

Please note that you have the spring semester to realize your project: if your project continues after the semester is over, that's wonderful, but you must realize some aspect of your project before the semester ends on May 14.

PARTICIPATION (30%)

I would suggest that you *carefully* review the reading and meeting schedule on the following pages. You may want to consider this course more of a workshop, where we as a group can brainstorm and strategize around your interests, concerns, and plans - of course, this also means that we must all be willing to be active listeners and speakers, all the while respectful of others' opinions. Some of you may come from personal histories of extensive activism and advocacy, while others may be coming to these ideas for the first time: please bear these individual differences in mind when you engage with each other, and be mindful of the fact that we can all learn from each other, regardless of background and levels of experience.

Your efforts in this class will be continuously evaluated by your peers - not just by me - and my hope is that you will learn more from each other than you will from me. I intend to facilitate discussion (to the extent that it is necessary) and I am happily available to any and all for advice, suggested readings, contact information, or plain old feedback. I am not, however, the final authority on what we discuss or how your project will develop: you are, and as such, it is your responsibility to think about what interests you about our readings, what your skills are, who may benefit from what you know, and what type of research you need to do in order to realize your project.

Readings & Participation

As with all the classes I teach, I expect everyone to come to class having read that day's reading(s) and to be prepared to actively discuss what we have all read. Everyone is expected to contribute to class discussions by asking questions, sharing observations with the class, and actively showing interest in the topic. If you do not understand all of the readings or what is being discussed, that's perfect: we will all benefit if you have questions. If you disagree with what the author says, that's also fine - you just need to find a way to articulate your feelings so that everyone can respond. Ideally, we can try to investigate those questions as a group. Participation does not mean simply showing up and observing from the sidelines: in this class, our work is to both listen *and* respond to others' comments, and to help the group as a whole work towards understanding and applying the ideas that are being discussed.

Journal

As a means of keeping track of ideas, contacts, hopes, progress, and setbacks, you are expected to keep a running journal where you log your ideas, reflections, and activities regarding readings as well as your project. I would suggest that you buy a small notebook for this purpose, and we will (selectively) read from these journals as part of our meetings as a class and in smaller groups. The British author E.M. Forster (1879-1970) once said, "How can I tell what I think till I see what I say?" and my hope is that this idea will be realized in your journals, where you can write as part of a continuous process of understanding, even when you do not feel that you have any answers or conclusions. This class is as much about thinking as it is about doing, and in the same way that I hope you don't focus too narrowly on the realization of your project, I also don't want you to focus too closely on presenting conclusions: questions are a crucial part of developing any substantial project.

As you read for class, write down any thoughts, questions, or ideas you may have in response to what you're reading. I will occasionally collect the journals, but more importantly, I hope that

you will be willing to read from them during class. For each class, try to come prepared with at least one question you have about the reading!

If you know that writing is something you struggle with, please come see me so that I can help you do well on the written component of this class. The Reading & Writing Center (4th floor of Thomas Hunter) provides excellent services for students to help them become better writers, and I encourage you to seek them out: many of my former students have turned to the RWC for assistance, and their writing has always improved. For more information, please go to:
<http://rwc.hunter.cuny.edu/>.

Textbooks

REQUIRED

Karen Aguilar-San Juan, Editor - *The State of Asian America* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1994)
ISBN: 0-89608-476-0 • PAPERBACK
Additional readings available on e-Reserves and Blackboard

RECOMMENDED

Steve Louie, Editor - *Asian Americans: The Movement and the Moment* (Los Angeles, CA: UCLA Asian American Studies Center Press, 2001) ISBN-10: 0934052344 / ISBN-13: 978-0934052344 • PAPERBACK

Grade Breakdown

Participation: 30% (coming to class meetings on time, having completed readings & journal entries, contributing to discussion, listening and responding to others' ideas)
Research, Proposal & Presentation: 30%
Realization of Project: 10%
Post-Project Presentation & Reflection: 30%

Academic Integrity

Hunter College regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values of intellectual honesty. The College is committed to enforcing the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to the Hunter College Academic Integrity Procedure.

Please do not use Wikipedia, dictionary.com, or other online reference sites as a source in your work for this class!

Disabilities

In compliance with the American Disability Act of 1990 (ADA) and with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Hunter College is committed to ensuring educational parity and accommodations for all students with documented disabilities and/or medical conditions. It is recommended that all students with documented disabilities (Emotional, Medical, Physical, and/or Learning) consult the Office of AccessABILITY, located in Room E1124, to secure necessary academic accommodations. For further information and assistance, please call: (212) 772- 4857 or (212) 650-3230.

MEETING & READING SCHEDULE

Week 1

Monday 1/26

What will we do in this class?

Thursday 1/29

Karin Aguilar-San Juan, "Linking the Issues: From Identity to Activism" (from *The State of Asian America*)

Screening: "Yuri Kochiyama: Passion for Justice" (Dir. Rea Tajiri, 1993, 57 min.)

Week 2

Monday 2/2

Glenn Omatsu, "The 'Four Prisons' and the Movements of Liberation: Asian American Activism from the 1960s to the 1990s" (from *The State of Asian America*)

Thursday, 2/5

Richard Fung, "Seeing Yellow: Asian Identities in Film and Video" (from *The State of Asian America*)

Jessica Hagedorn, "The Exile Within/The Question of Identity" (from *The State of Asian America*)

Screening: Excerpt from "What's Wrong with Frank Chin?" (Dir. Curtis Choy, 2005)

Week 3

Monday 2/9

Robert G. Lee, "The Cold War Construction of the Model Minority Myth" (Zhou, Min, and J.V. Gatewood. *Contemporary Asian America: A Multidisciplinary Reader*. New York: NYU Press, 2007)

e-Res

Tuesday 2/10 (Thursday schedule)

Coalition for Asian American Children and Families, "Hidden in Plain View: An Overview of the Needs of Asian American Students in the Public School System" (May 24, 2004) **Bb link Report is 40 pages, so try to read over the weekend!**

Thursday 2/12 • College closed for Lincoln's Birthday

Week 4

Monday 2/16 • College closed for President's Day

Thursday 2/19 • Reading TBD

Guest Speaker: Suki Terada-Ports, Executive Director, Family Health Project

The Family Health Project (FHP) was founded in 1989 to raise awareness about the impact of HIV/AIDS on communities of color. FHP provides information to national policymakers and local public officials, conducts workshops for medical personnel, academics and funders, and organizes conferences among service providers to share resources. FHP also conducts direct outreach to low-income women of color and their families in parenting centers, schools and the streets. Each year, FHP reaches more than 500 individuals and their families with HIV/AIDS prevention information and provides referrals to services to those already infected.

FHP also assists other groups dealing with the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The founder and Executive Director, Suki Terada Ports, has helped create organizations that serve communities with distinct needs such as the Asian Pacific Islander Coalition on HIV/AIDS (APICHA), the Minority Task Force on AIDS and Iris House, the first comprehensive center for women with HIV/AIDS in New York City. She is a founder of VOW (Voices of Women of Color Against HIV/AIDS) and a member of the planning committee for the first conference held in New York City discussing issues affecting women of color.

Week 5

Monday 2/23

Vijay Prashad, "Kung Fusion: Organize the 'Hood under I-Ching Banners" (*Everybody Was Kung-Fu Fighting: Afro-Asian Connections and the Myth of Cultural Purity*, Boston: Beacon Press, 2001)

e-Res

Elaine H. Kim, "Between Black and White: An Interview with Bong Hwan Kim" (from *The State of Asian America*)

Thursday 2/26

Elizabeth Wong, "Kimchee and Chitlins: A Play in Two Acts" (Velina Hasu Houston, Ed., *But Still, like Air, I'll Rise*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997) **e-Res**

Week 6

Monday 3/2

Margaretta Wan Ling Lin and Cheng Imm Tan, "Holding Up More than Half the Heavens: Domestic Violence in Our Communities, a Call for Justice" (from *The State of Asian America*)

Thursday 3/5

Yoko Yoshikawa, "The Heat Is on Miss Saigon Coalition: Organizing Across Race and Sexuality" (from *The State of Asian America*)

R. Zamora Linmark, "'They Like You Because You Eat Dog, So What Are You Gonna Do About It?'" (8 Vignettes)" (Jessica Hagedorn, Ed., *Charlie Chan Is Dead: An Anthology of Contemporary Asian American Fiction*, New York: Penguin Books, 1993) **e-Res**

Week 7

Monday 3/9 • Entire class meets!
Presentations

Thursday 3/12 • Entire class meets!
Presentations

Week 8

Monday 3/16 • Entire class meets!
Presentations

Thursday 3/19 • Entire class meets!
Presentations

Week 9

Monday 3/23 • Half class!
Irum Shiekh, "Government Spy or a Terrorist? Dilemmas of a Post-9/11 Academic Researcher" (Amerasia Journal, 33:3, 2007, 26-40) **e-Res**
Emily Leach, "The Ties That Bind: Muslim Americans Join Japanese Americans on Manzanar Pilgrimage" (AsianWeek, May 2, 2008) **e-Res**
Screening: "11.09.01" (Dir. Mira Nair, 2006)

Thursday 3/26 • Half class!
Irum Shiekh, "Government Spy or a Terrorist? Dilemmas of a Post-9/11 Academic Researcher" (Amerasia Journal, 33:3, 2007, 26-40) **e-Res**
Emily Leach, "The Ties That Bind: Muslim Americans Join Japanese Americans on Manzanar Pilgrimage" (AsianWeek, May 2, 2008) **e-Res**
Screening: "11.09.01" (Dir. Mira Nair, 2006)

Week 10

Monday 3/30
Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, "Clio History" (from *Dictée*, Berkeley: Third Woman Press, 1995) **e-Res**
Screening: "History and Memory" (Dir. Rea Tajiri, 1991, 31 min.)

Thursday 4/2
Linh Dinh, "Prisoner with a Dictionary" and "!" (from *Blood and Soap*, New York: Seven Stories Press, 2004) **e-Res**
Barry Masuda, "Postcards Tropic of Cancer" (from *Premonitions: The Kaya Anthology of New Asian North American Poetry*, New York: Kaya Production, 1995) **e-Res**

Week 11

Monday 4/6
TBD

Thursday 4/9 • No class - Spring Recess

Week 12

Monday 4/13 • No class - Spring Recess

Thursday 4/16 • No class - Spring Recess

Week 13

Monday 4/20
TBD

Thursday 4/23
Eric K. Yamamoto and Ashley Kaho'omino'aka Kai'ao Obrey, "From Heart Mountain to Iraq: Lieutenant Watada and a Long Line of Resistance" (Amerasia Journal, 33:3, 2007, 73-94)

Week 14

* 8-PAGE REFLECTION due on the day of your presentation *

Monday 4/27 • Entire class meets!
Final Presentations

Thursday 4/30 • Entire class meets!
Final Presentations

Week 15

Monday 5/4 • Entire class meets!
Final Presentations

Thursday 5/7 • Entire class meets!
Final Presentations

Special event: Fred Ho at the Asian American Writers' Workshop, 7-9pm (16 West 32nd Street, Suite 10A - b/w Broadway & 5th Ave)

Week 16

Monday 5/11 • Entire class meets!
Final Presentations

Thursday 5/14 • Entire class meets!
Final Presentations

Final Exam date: Wednesday 5/20/2009 from 3:00 - 5:00pm (may be used if presentations run longer than expected)