

CUNY GRADUATE CENTER

SOC. 82800: Analyzing Critical Issues and Potential Solutions in Asian American Communities

Instructor: Paul Ong
Class Meeting: Tuesdays, 2:00-4:00 p.m.
Office Location:
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 1:00-2:00 p.m. and 4:00-5:00 p.m.
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Course Description

The overall goal of the course is to expose students to alternative and nontraditional styles of scholarship that is linked to real-world engagement. This course provides an opportunity to explore major issues affecting Asian American communities using an applied social science research approach, as well as the opportunity to contribute to a larger collective effort to influence the Asian American Institute's research agenda by identifying gaps in academic literature related to Asian American problems and solutions.

The semester will include two self-contained modules: (14 weeks total)

1. Introduction of the use of visual methodology in social science research as a complement to the written form (5 weeks).
2. Exposure to applied social science research in addressing critical policy and planning issues in Asian American communities (10 weeks).

The first module introduces the use of visual medium as an additional mode of research and communication. The class discusses epistemological issues (generation of knowledge), photographs as primary and secondary data, survey and interview instrument(s), content analysis, selection criteria (aesthetic, descriptive, technical qualities, representation, etc.), and presentation. Focusing on photography, the class explores how pictures can convey ideas and emotion that text alone cannot. As a communication tool, photographs have particular characteristics, indexicality, transparency, and viewer (re)interpretations. We also discuss the interplay between words and images. The class thinks through how to create perspectives and focus that consciously captures and conveys a message, with examples of effective and ineffective uses of visual materials. This course provides the opportunity for exposure to and assessment of this form of communication and analysis.

The second module uses critical issues in the Asian American community as examples of how policy-oriented research is conducted. Because of limited time, the course cannot cover every major policy issue facing the Asian American community. The module guides the class through the following steps with special attention to how each has aspects unique to the Asian American community:

1. Selecting and policy framing of the topic, identifying an audience, defining goals and objectives, and scoping out the product;
2. Identify what is specific to the Asian American community
3. Examining the nature and magnitude of the problem;
4. Looking at existing literature that uses theoretical framework to understand the issue and identify points of causal intervention (that are politically feasible, actionable, and

- sustainable);
5. Analyzing and evaluating past actions taken to address the problem, as well as understanding the framing of the issue to prescribe alternative actions; and
 6. Communicating reports, publications, informative material to the target audience.

Course Prerequisites

The instructor will assume that students have some prior knowledge of Asian American history and contemporary issues facing Asian American communities. It is suggested that you read the following readings if you have never taken an Asian American Studies course:

- Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore*. Boston, New York, London: Little, Brown, and Company. 1989, 1998.
- Min Zhou and James Gatewood, Eds. *Contemporary Asian America: A Multidisciplinary Reader*. New York: New York University Press, 2000.
- Eric Yo Ping Lai and Dennis Arguelles. *The New Face of Asian Pacific America: Numbers, Diversity and Change in the 21st Century*. 1998. Los Angeles: UCLA Asian American Studies Center Press.

Readings

Readings will be available online or in the Course Reader.

Guest Speakers

Guest speakers with practical and/or professional experience with the issues we are studying will be invited to speak on the week's topical area. They will be asked to share instances of trying to influence policy.

Academic Integrity

You will be expected to follow the college's standards on academic integrity. Guidelines can be found at: <http://web.cuny.edu/academics/info-central/policies/academic-integrity.pdf>.

Course Components

Reading critiques: A total of 5 brief summaries (1-2 pages, double-spaced) of the week's readings are required. You can select which weeks to submit a summary, so long as you submit a total of 5 summaries for the semester. They should summarize your understanding of the problems based on required readings and offer a critique or describe your reaction. They can also reflect on the differences and commonalities among past week's readings. All critiques must be directly related to the readings and are intended to be a launching point for class discussion. E-mail an RTF or DOC (1997-2003 compatible Microsoft Word document) version of the critique to the instructor the Sunday night (by 12am) before class. Hard copies are due on the day of class.

Visual Conceptualization: Use photography to depict an aspect of an Asian American issue you are passionate about. Additional details are appended.

Term Policy Project: Your term project will use applied social science methodology to delve deeper into a topic of your choice. The project is divided into four separate assignments. A further description of the project requirements is attached.

Grading: You are expected to attend each class, do the assigned readings beforehand, and come to class prepared to discuss them. A breakdown of grading is as follows:

Semester:

10% Class participation

15% Reading critiques (5 total, 1-2pp each)

Module 1. Visual Methodology (5 weeks)

15% Visual Conceptualization Exercise and Presentation (1-2pp)

Module 2. Applied Social Science Research and Critical Policy Issues (9 weeks)

10% Policy proposal paper (2-3pp)*

20% Problem definition paper (7-10pp)*

20% Policy solutions paper (7-10pp)*

10% Final presentation: PowerPoint or equivalent format

*Cumulative page length for the three papers in the Second Module should be at least 20 pages.

First Module Schedule

Week One (August 31) – Course overview: Purpose of course as an alternative form of scholarship, student interests and contributions. Concepts of theory and practice, problem versus disciplinary focus. Introduction to the power of photography: iconic images, visualizing race and protest in America, visualizing international conflict.

Due: Students bring in favorite image

Week Two (September 7) –Photography as an artifact: social definition, influences of society, technology, and practitioner. Nature of photography and human vision: transparency, indexicality, evocative. Photography versus the human eye. Physical elements of photography: definition, dynamic range, tonality, color, noise, and resolution.

Readings (selected chapters below are brief):

- Mitchell, W. “*Wunderkammer* to World Wide Web: Picture Place in the Post-Photographic Era,” Ch 12 in *Picturing Place: Photography and the Geographical Imagination*, eds. Joan Schwartz and James Ryan. Chichester: John Wiley, 2002.
- Cohen, J. and A. Meskin. “On The Epistemic Value of Photographs”, *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 62(2): 197-210, 2004.
- Stanley D., Phelps E., Banaji M. “The neural basis of implicit attitudes.” *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 17 (2), pp. 164-170, 2008.

Week Three (September 14) – **No class**

Week Four (September 21) – All Photos Lie: intentional lies, misleading lies, postmodern critique, and white lies. Search for truth and knowledge: understanding epistemology, defining truth, belief and knowledge, establishing a set of ethics and practices. Research and social science knowledge generation: specific versus general knowledge. Data collection: images as instruments or data, validity, quantitative versus qualitative, primary versus secondary.

Readings:

- Goldstein, B. M. “All Photos Lie: Images as Data,” Ch 3 in *Visual Research Methods*, ed. by Gregory C. Stanczak. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2007.
- Glowski, J. “Guide to Photographic Documentation in the Field”
- Stanczak, G. C. “Introduction: Images, Methodologies, and Generating Social Knowledge,” Ch. 1 in *Visual Research Methods*, ed. by Gregory C. Stanczak. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2007.

Optional Reading:

- Suchar, C. S. “Grounding Visual Sociology Research on Shooting Scripts.”
- Harper, D. “Talking about pictures: a case for photo elicitation.”
- Rose, G. “Researching Visual Materials: Toward a Critical Visual Methodology,” Chapter One in *Visual Methodologies*. London: Sage Publications, 2001.

Week Five (September 28) – Photography as primary data, evaluating uses: Chicago Neighborhood Observation Surveys and broken window properties in South L.A. Photography as secondary data: War Relocation Authority Photographic Section (WRAPS).

Speaker: Corky Lee, to be confirmed

Readings:

- Aron, B. “A Disappearing Community,” Ch. 4 in *Images of Information*, ed. by Jon Wagner.
- Gold, S. J., “Using Photography in Studies of Immigrant Communities,” Ch. 6 in *Visual Research Methods*, ed. by G. C. Stanczak. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2007.
- Hirabayashi, L. R.. “Reflections.” Chap. 5 in *Japanese American Resettlement Through the Lens*. Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2009.

Week Six (October 5) – Photography in Social Science Communication: text image nexus, function as communication. Applications to Asian American Studies & Ethnic Studies. Case study evaluation: Examples of past student analyses of photography in Asian American literature.

Readings:

- Cheatwood, D. and C. Stasz. “Visual Sociology,” Ch. 18 in *Images of Information*, ed. by Jon Wagner. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1979.
- Collier, John. “Visual Anthropology,” Ch. 19 in *Images of Information*, ed. by Jon Wagner. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1979.
- Wagner, Jon. “Photography and Social Science Process,” Ch. 20 in *Images of Information*, ed. by Jon Wagner. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1979.

On Reserve (Photo Essay Books, read 15 pages of each):

- Greenfield, L. & *Girl Culture*, San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2002.
- Johnson, S., Dawson, R., and G. Haslam. *The Great Central Valley: California’s Heartland*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.
- Menzel, P. *Material World: A Global Family Portrait*, San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1994.

Second Module Schedule

Week Seven (October 12) – Class Presentations of Visual Conceptualization Exercise & Introduction to the applied social science approach in Asian American Studies; Forms of engagement between the university and the community

Due: Visual conceptualization exercise and write-up; photograph is due the **Sunday before class**.

Readings:

- Omatsu, Glenn. “The ‘Four Prisons’ and the Movements of Liberation,” Chapter 3.3 in *Asian American Politics: Law, Participation, and Policy*, ed. by Don T. Nakanishi and James S. Lai. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2003.
- Lee, Sharon S. “Over-Represented and De-Minoritized: The Racialization of Asian Americans in Higher Education.” *InterActions: UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies* 2, no. 2 (2006).
- Bardach, Eugene. “The Eightfold Path,” Part I in *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem-Solving*. Washington: CQ Press, 2009.
- Soja, Ed. “Translating Theory into Practice: Urban Planning and Geography at UCLA,” expanded from chapter 5 of *Seeking Spatial Justice*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010.

Week Eight (October 19) – Selecting the problem – process, framing and selection

Speaker: Cao, AAF, 9/11 as a focusing event for Asian American communities

Readings:

- Adams, James L. "Perceptual Blocks," chapter 2 in *Conceptual Blockbusting: A Guide to Better Ideas*. San Francisco: W.H. Freeman and Company, 1974.
- "Against All Odds: The Campaign in Congress for Japanese American Redress." Harvard Kennedy School Case C16-90-1006.0. Available for purchase at: <http://www.ksgcase.harvard.edu/casetitle.asp?caseNo=1006.0>

Read at least one:

- Asian American Federation of New York. "Chinatown One Year after September 11th: An Economic Impact Study." November 2002. <http://www.aafny.org/research/OneYearAfter/ChinatownOneYearAfter.pdf>
- Asian American Federation of New York. "Asian American Mental Health: A Post 9-11 Needs Assessment." <http://www.aafny.org/research/dl/mh/MHStudy.pdf>

Week Nine (October 26) – Brainstorm problems and potential solutions with the class

Readings:

- LEAP Asian Pacific American Public Policy Institute and UCLA Asian American Studies Center, *The State of Asian Pacific America: Policy Issues to the Year 2020*. Los Angeles, 1993. Students self-select three chapters to read.

Optional Readings:

- "Language and the Melting Pot: Florida's 1988 'Official English' Referendum." Kennedy School Case C16-90-990.0 and Sequel C16-90-990.1 Available for purchase at: <http://www.ksgcase.harvard.edu/casetitle.asp?caseNo=990.0>
- "No Prison in East L.A.!' Birth of a Grassroots Movement." Kennedy School Case C14-00-1541.0 and Sequel 1541.1. <http://www.ksgcase.harvard.edu/casetitle.asp?caseNo=1541.0>

Week Ten (November 2) – Defining the problem – nature and magnitude; Overview of qualitative and quantitative methods

Due: Policy proposal memo

Tentative speaker: Margaret Chin

Readings on the working poor:

- *Beyond Asian American Poverty*. Paul Ong. Chapters 1 & 2.
- "Working Lives," Chapter One in *No Shame in My Game* by Katherine S. Newman. New York: Vintage Books, 1999.
- "Why Chinese Restaurants are Cheaper," by Victor G. and Brett de Bary Nee in *Longtime Californ': A Documentary Study of an American Chinatown*.
- "Moving On: Chinese Garment Workers after 9/11" by Margaret Chin in *Wounded City: The Social Impact of 9/11*, edited by Nancy Foner. New York: Russell Sage, 2005.

Optional readings:

- Karin Mak and Grace Meng. *Workforce Development: Its Potential and Limitations for Chinese Garment Workers*. AAPI Nexus Vol 3, No 2
- Evelyn Blumenberg, Lily K. Song, and Paul M. Ong. "Surveying Southeast Asian Welfare Participants: Examples, Challenges, and Future Directions." *AAPI Nexus* Vol 5, No. 2
- Julian Chun-Chung Chow, Kathy Lemon Osterling, and Qingwen Xu. *The Risk of Timing Out: Welfare-to-Work Services to Asian Immigrants and Refugees*. AAPI Nexus Vol 3, No. 2
- Don Mar. *Asian Americans in the Labor Market: Public Policy Issues* AAPI Nexus Vol 3, No 2

- “Working But Poor: Asian American Poverty in New York City.” Asian American Federation. Oct 2008.
<http://www.aafederation.org/research/wbp/Poverty%20Report%20Exec%20Sum.pdf>

Week Eleven (November 9) – Understanding causality and potential points of intervention; Linking problems to research on Asian Americans

Readings on health:

- Marjorie Kagawa-Singer, Annalyn Valdez Dadia, Mimi C. Yu, and Antonella Surbone. "Cancer, Culture, and Health Disparities: Time to Chart a New Course?" *CA, A Cancer Journal for Clinicians*. Vol 60, No 1. 2010
- Jeanne Shimatsu, Eric C. Wat, & Camillia Lui. “Sex and Alcohol on the College Campus: An Assessment of HIV-Risk Behaviors among AAPI College Students” *AAPI Nexus* Vol 6, No 1

Optional Readings:

- Ponce, N. et al. “The State of Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Health in California Report.” Los Angeles: Prepared for the Honorable Mike Eng and the California Asian Pacific Islander Joint Legislative Caucus by the UC AAPI Policy Multi-Campus Research Program Health Work Group (April 2009).
- Tao, Laurent S., Jini Han, and Ami M. Shah. “Measuring State-Level Asian American and Pacific Islander Health Disparities: The Case of Illinois.” *AAPI Nexus: Employment* 4, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 2006).
- Asian & Pacific Islander Coalition on HIV/ AIDS. “South Asian Immigrant Women’s HIV/AIDS Related Issues: An Exploratory Study of New York City.” 2005. Online at: <http://www.apicha.org/resources/publications/pdf/021306APICHA.pdf>

Week Twelve (November 16) – Actionable solutions to address Asian American issues

Speaker: Tarry Hum

Due: Problem definition paper

Readings on redistricting:

- Hum, Tarry, “Asian Immigrant Settlements in New York City: ‘Defining Communities of Interest.’” *AAPI Nexus* 2, no. 2 (Summer/Fall 2004): 20-48.
- Saito, Leland. “Asian Americans and Latinos in San Gabriel Valley, California: Ethnic Political Cooperation and Redistricting.” *Amerasia Journal* 2, no.1.
- Ojeda-Kimbrough Carol, Eugene Lee and Yen Ling Shek. “The Asian Americans Redistricting Project: Legal Background of the ‘Community of Common Interest’ Requirement.” Los Angeles: University of California Asian American and Pacific Islander Policy Multi-campus Research Program and the UCLA Asian American Studies Center, 2009.

Optional Readings:

- Ramakrishnan, Karthick. “Political participation & Civic Voluntarism,” Ch. 2 in *The State of Asian America: Trajectory of Civic and Political Engagement*, ed. by Paul M. Ong. Los Angeles: Leadership Education for Asian Pacifics, Inc., 2008 v5.
- Lien, Pei-te. “Political and civic engagement of Immigrants,” Ch. 3 in *The State of Asian America: Trajectory of Civic and Political Engagement*, ed. by Paul M. Ong. Los Angeles: Leadership Education for Asian Pacifics, Inc., 2008 v5.

Week Thirteen (November 23) – How to evaluate options (actionability, feasibility, and

sustainability)

Readings:

- Wong, Janelle, “Getting out the Vote among Asian Americans in Los Angeles County: the Effects of Phone Canvassing.” *AAPI Nexus* 2, no. 2 (Winter/Spring 2004): 49-65.
- Dobbie, Will and Roland G. Fryer, Jr. 2009. “Are High Quality Schools Enough to Close the Achievement Gap? Evidence from a Social Experiment in Harlem.” NBER Working Paper No.15473 (November).
- Wang, Theodore. 2004. Building Our Community: Recommendations for Supporting Asian Pacific Islander Americans in California. Sacramento: California Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander American Affairs.
- Ong, Paul and Veronica Terriguez. “Can Multiple Pathways Offset Inequalities in the Urban Spatial Structure?” Chapter 7 pp 131-169 in *Beyond Tracking: Multiple Pathways to College, Career, and Civic Participation*, eds. Jeannie Oakes and Marisa Saunders. Cambridge: Harvard Education Press, 2008.

Week Fourteen (November 30) – How to package information for particular audiences

Speaker Panel: Foundation representative, Margaret Fung from AALDEF and Alex Ru, former staff member for John Liu

Due: Solutions paper

Readings: TBA, depending on speakers

Week Fifteen (December 7) – Presentations to impact research agenda for the Asian American Institute: engaged scholarship to address critical policy issues

Guidelines for Visual Conceptualization Exercise (15%)

The first module of this course introduced students to the use of visual documentation in social science research, specifically with photography. The purpose of this assignment is to use photography to capture the dimensions of an Asian American issue that you wish to explore. It will provide exposure and practical experience in understanding how to conceptualize and idea and convey it visually. The exercise will be conducted individually. For more information on photographs as social documentary see: <http://socialdocumentary.net/>
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/usnationalarchives/>

The exercise includes the following components:

- Select an issue that you are interested in
 - Define the issue you are interested in
 - Describe the elements of the issue you want to illustrate
 - Choose how to visualize these elements
 - Think about scripting: visualize concept
- Take photographs that capture your concept (you will not be graded on your photography skills), and give your photograph an explanatory caption
- Write a brief essay accompanying your photograph (1-2pp double-spaced)
 - Why you gave the photograph a particular caption;
 - Where you took or found the picture; why you decided to shoot in a particular location/setting;
 - What technical qualities did you consider in setting up the photograph
 - Why you selected this particular image;
 - What the photograph tells us about your selected topic
 - How the photograph communicates this message (setting, mood, content, subject, expression etc.)
 - The extent to which you were able to visualize the concept that you had initially formulated and any challenges you encountered
- Present and discuss your photograph in class. **You must e-mail a digital photograph to the instructor the Sunday night prior to Week Four**, so that he can compile them into a PowerPoint presentation. The issue you choose to represent visually will provide the basis for your policy project in the Second Module.

Guidelines for Policy Paper Sequence

Purpose

The final project consists of four components. The written report gives students an opportunity to apply the three-step process for social science research as well as deepen knowledge in a critical issue affecting the Asian American community. Your issue should be a continuation of the one you used for the visual exercise. See the AAPI Nexus style sheet for formatting guidelines.

The cumulative length of the three papers should be at least 20 pages.

1) Policy proposal paper (10%) – due Week Eight

The policy proposal should be a brief (2-3 pages, double-spaced) description of your chosen topic/issue and why it is important to the Asian American community. This proposal should include the following elements based on your initial understanding of the topic:

- The issue and why it is a problem
- Explain the source of your interest in the topic (personal experience, moral/ethical, intellectual)
- Suggest causality and underlying forces of the problem
- Brainstorm potential solutions and ultimate goals of the solution (How do you know when you've achieved success?)
- Explore whether you are approaching your topic at the right level of specificity
 - Deconstruct the issue into various components and prioritize their importance
 - Frame the issue in a broader context
- Select problem and set of related alternative problems

2) Problem definition paper (20%) – due Week Ten

This paper should define the problem based on your research of available literature (7-10 pages, double-spaced, inclusive of charts, diagrams, and other visuals). Your description of the problem should draw mainly from the literature available on Asian Americans for your topic that offers a range of theory that can explain causality. You will not be penalized if you choose a topic that lacks sufficient applied research; you will be graded on how well you summarize the problem given available research, and your analysis of holes in the research. The paper should include:

- Summarize evidence of the problem
 - Scope of the issue – nature and magnitude of the problem
 - Causality and theoretical framework for understanding the issue
 - Elements of the issue that are unique to Asian Americans, and commonalities with the general population
- Recommendations for the Asian American Institute
 - Identify research deficiencies in this area – lack of available data, information, research, and any barriers to future studies
 - Relevant and appropriate conceptualization and framing
 - Recommendations for future research in Asian American Studies pertaining to your issue
- Describe how this research has enhanced and/or modified your original conceptualization and understanding of the problem (from the policy proposal)

Factors considered for Grading, based on syllabus, lectures, and discussions. Need not fulfill all, but some are more critical than others.

- Definition
 - Focused, appropriate for audience and action, relevant to AAPIs

- Establishing why important
- Nature and magnitude of problem
 - Strength of evidence, specificity to problem, timely information
 - Understanding causality and identifying intervention points based on literature
- AAPI Dimensions
 - Unique and shared aspects relative to large society
 - Unique challenges in documenting (and addressing them)
- Overall persuasiveness
- Writing (not a writing class, but graduate-level quality is required)
 - Organization (good flow, materials in right place, etc.)
 - Consistent (no extraneous material)
 - Readable (grammar, clarity)
 - Professionalism (appropriate style, citations)

3) Policy solutions paper (20%) – due Week Fourteen

This paper will present actionable solutions to address your issue (7-10 pages, double-spaced, inclusive of charts, diagrams, and other visuals). You should pick an actionable solution, or a range of solutions, that offer points of intervention and are amenable to action. These solutions must be feasible (they can actually be acted upon), and evidence-based. You may draw on other models that have been proven effective in evaluation research, and explain how models used in other racial/ethnic groups or geographical regions apply to your situation. In describing your solution, articulate the expected outcomes of the actions you propose to take and why these actions are feasible given the context of the issue. You should also describe how this work feeds back into your original conceptualization and selection of the problem.

Factors considered for grading:

- Concrete solution
 - Based on previous and/or existing proven models, initiatives or collective efforts
 - Any AAPI specific aspects
 - Critical analysis of pros/cons, tradeoffs, potentials/limitations, costs
- Vehicle or agent
 - Realistic legislation, policy, or program
 - Institution or organization (overlap with audience) that can act
- Actionable
 - Realistic implementation (action) plan
 - Reasonable expectation of success within a reasonable timeframe (based on support or openness for proposal)
 - No insurmountable barriers
- Overall persuasiveness
- Writing (not a writing class, but graduate-level quality is required)
 - Organization (good flow, materials in right place, etc.)
 - Consistent (no extraneous material)
 - Readable (grammar, clarity)
 - Professionalism (appropriate style, citations)

4) Project Presentation (10%) – due Week Fifteen or Finals Week

Students will give ten-minute presentations about their policy topic. The presentation should be directed toward Asian American Institute staff and should convincingly address the gaps in research on Asian Americans (problem, causality, and solutions) in your topic area. Grading will be based on peer evaluations; classmates will be given a rubric by which to rate how effectively and

persuasively the student conveys his/her message to the defined audience. The purpose of this assignment is to repackage information in a way that effectively communicates to a specific audience, to gain experiences using other mediums for communication, for students to gain an appreciation and ability to connect scholarship to action, and to contribute to building the future research agenda of the Asian American Institute at CUNY.