

Asian / American History

AAAS 280E/HIST 280N
CRN 23420/23875
TR 1:15pm – 2:40pm
LN G412

Spring 2016

Office Hours: TR 2:45-3:45pm (& appt.)

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This course is an introduction to Asian American history from a global perspective. We explore the broader historical developments that gave rise to the concepts “Asia” and “America” to trace their significance and consequence for later Asian (and other) migration to the United States specifically and the Americas generally. Topics we will address include: geography and geopolitics; global capitalism, diaspora, and labor migration; race, ethnicity, and culture; gender, family, and community; nationalism and citizenship; representations of race in the media and in commercial and popular culture; and the idea of “Asian American” in the civil rights and post-civil rights era.

Objectives

The course objectives are to:

- a) introduce students to Asian American history;
- b) consider historical concepts of race, ethnicity, and nationality as they relate to Asian Americans and other racial and ethnic groups in the United States, the Americas, and the world;
- c) consider other dynamics of social difference including region, religion, class, gender, and sexual orientation as they relate to Asian Americans;
- d) explore cultural representations of and by Asian Americans in literature, film, other media, and popular culture; and
- e) learn to consider critically the course subjects and themes and communicate them effectively through writing, oral presentation, and in other media.

Requirements

This course satisfies the specialized Pluralism in the U.S. (P) General Education and Harpur College writing (W) requirements. Students in specialized P courses will demonstrate an understanding of:

- a) United States society from the perspective of three or more groups that constitute that society, including at least three of the following groups: African Americans, Asian Americans, European Americans, Latino Americans, and Native Americans.
- b) how these groups have affected and been affected by basic institutions of American society, such as commerce, family, legal and political structures, or religion.
- c) an historical narrative of the United States and its institutions over a period of at least a century, including connections to prior and subsequent periods, with this narrative including several themes that have shaped the development of American

- society, such as the struggle for democracy, citizenship, racial and gender inequality, religious freedom, and civil rights; the conflicts that have erupted over these issues; and the consensus, if any, that has been reached on each of them.
- d) how the history of the United States relates to the history of at least two other regions of the world, as a means of understanding America's evolving relationship with the rest of the world.

Class Conduct and Behavior

A classroom is a place for discussion and intellectual engagement. The subjects and topics we consider are social and political issues that people may disagree about or have different opinions about. Our general guiding principles will be: a) you need not agree, but you do need to respect one another; b) remember the difference between opinions and arguments – one is a belief held *without* supporting evidence, the other is a position supported *with* evidence; c) if you make a point, be prepared to offer evidence, support, or elaboration; d) be prepared to argue, present, and consider issues from several sides.

Ideally, class discussion will be engaged and considerate – don't be afraid to be informal, colloquial and/or passionate. Remember that participation is a significant portion of your grade. Class will begin promptly at 1:15pm; please be in your seat and ready for lecture or discussion by then. Do not have side conversations or read the newspaper or things not related to class. Turn off/mute your phones and laptops. Do not text, check your e-mail or Facebook, surf the web, etc.; however, taking class notes or looking up class-related content is allowed (*within limits*). The first time something goes off, you may be subject to minor ribbing; repeat offenders may be warned. Serial offenders may be asked to deposit your devices with me until the end of class and possibly asked to leave them at home. You may bring food or drink to class, but don't make a mess or be disruptive; if what you have looks or smells good, you may be asked to share!

Assignments

You are to keep a regular journal for the class, which will count toward your participation and final grade. Written assignments include a short geography/homeland assignment, a book review, and final paper/project that collectively form a personal history project. There will also be a final, take-home exam – if you wish to avoid the final exam, you will also have option to turn in a (significantly) longer and more detailed version of your final paper/project.

You should write in your journal at least once a week, but feel free to write more often. Your entries may be informal and do not need to be lengthy. They are meant to be a way for you to record of thoughts, observations, and reflections over the course of the semester and an alternative form of class participation. In your entries, don't simply summarize the readings and the week's topics, but engage critically the information and issues they raise. Feel free to share your journal with other students in the class. You may keep it electronically if that works better for you – Blackboard has a journal feature you may want to use. If you miss an entry one week, make up for it in another; however, *do not leave your journal entries until the end of the semester, then try to make up for a semester's worth of entries*. Journals are due the last week of class, by May 10.

Your other written assignments are intended to work cumulatively toward your final paper/project, which will be a personal history paper/project. You will receive separate handouts explaining each assignment in greater detail. The book review should be approximately 4-5 pages and the final paper/project 10-12 pages (20-25 pages for those choosing the combined final option) double-spaced with appropriate margins, fonts, etc. All written assignments may be re-written for re-examination up to the end of the 13th week of the semester ***so long as you put in a good faith effort and turned them in on their original due date***. All written assignments should be submitted electronically *and* in hard-copy.

Grades and Policies

Final course grades will be determined by: attendance and participation (including course journals), 20%; country/region/homeland paper, 5%; book review, 15%; personal history paper/project, 30%; final, 30%. Grade range thresholds are: A: 95%; A-: 92%; B+: 89%; B: 86%; B-: 83%; C+: 80%; C: 77%; C-: 74%; D+: 71%; D: 68%; F: 65% and below.

As a general policy, late assignments will not be accepted – with exceptions ***only*** in case of emergencies – and all assigned work must be completed to receive course credit. If you have a schedule conflict, come discuss alternatives **before** an assignment is due; **never** assume you will be given a make-up or extension. My office hours are TTh 2:45pm – 3:45pm and by appointment. Please feel free to schedule a time or drop in to discuss any aspect of the course. *Keep a copy of this syllabus and refer to it, first, before asking questions*; do not make me wear my “It’s on the syllabus” T-shirt to class!

Academic Honesty

Binghamton University and Harpur College maintain strict academic honesty policies. You should read and familiarize yourself with these policies. They are available at:

- <http://provost.binghamton.edu/honesty.html>
- <http://www2.binghamton.edu/harpur/faculty/pdf/academic-dishonesty-form.pdf>

The library also has an online tutorial on academic honesty:

- http://library.binghamton.edu/research/tutorials/WebTutorials/web/Tutorial_1/Tutorial1_00.html

Common Texts

There is one required text for the course. Additional readings will be available electronically via Blackboard. Readings are listed for the weeks we will discuss them in roughly the order we will cover their topics; you should read them *before* we cover them.

Gary Okihiro

American History Unbound

Supplemental Texts (*choose one*):

These texts are suggestions for your book review. Choose one that also relates to your personal history project. If you want to review another book not on this list, please consult with me.

Henry (Yoshitaka) Kiyama
John Kuo-Wei Tchen, ed.
Sucheng Chan
Eric Tang
Mary Paik Lee
Eric L. Manbo, ed.
Dawn Mabalon, ed.
Mark Him Lai
Vivek Bald

The Four Immigrants Manga
Genthe's Photographs of San Francisco's Old Chinatown
The Vietnamese American 1.5 Generation
Unsettled
Quiet Odyssey
Colors of Confinement
Little Manila is in the Heart
Island
Bengali Harlem

SEMESTER SCHEDULE

Week 1

January 26
January 28

Readings:

Asian / America

Introductions

When and Where I Enter

Gary Okihiro, *American History Unbound* (University of California Press, 2015), intro.

Gary Okihiro, "When And Where I Enter," *Margins and Mainstreams* (University of Washington Press, 1994), 3-30.

add/drop deadline is Friday, February 5

Week 2

February 2
February 4

Readings:

Old, New, and Ocean Worlds

In 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue . . .

The Myth of Continents

Okihiro, *American History Unbound*, chap. 1.

Charles Mann, *1493* (Vintage, 2012), 123-193.

Week 3

February 9
February 11

Readings:

Many Thousands Gone

New World and Global Capitalism

Slavery and Race

Okihiro, *American History Unbound*, chap. 2.

Okihiro, "Is Yellow Black Or White," *Margins and Mainstreams*, 31-63.

"Is Race Real?" web forum, <http://raceandgenomics.ssrc.org>

country/region/homeland paper due, Friday, by February 19

Week 4

February 16
February 18

Readings:

European Empires

Orienting East and West

Imperial Enterprises

Okihiro, *American History Unbound*, chap. 3.

Edward Said, *Orientalism* (Pantheon, 1978), 31-49.

<i>Week 5</i>	Asian Colonies
February 23	The Great Divergence
February 26	Changing Homelands
Readings:	Okiihiro, <i>American History Unbound</i> , chap. 4. Matt K. Matsuda, <i>Pacific Worlds</i> (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 176-215.
<i>Week 6</i>	Migration, Diaspora, Work
March 1	Coolies and Cane
March 3	Gold Rushes and Gold Mountains
Readings:	Okiihiro, <i>American History Unbound</i> , chap. 5. Moon-Hu Jung, <i>Coolies and Cane</i> (The Johns Hopkins Press, 2008), 39-72. Susan Johnson, <i>Roaring Camp</i> (Norton, 2001), 237-274.
<i>Week 7</i>	American Empire
March 8	I've been working on the railroad
March 10	Continental Divides / Following the flag
Readings:	Okiihiro, <i>American History Unbound</i> , chap. 6. "Chinese Railroad Workers in North America" project, Stanford University, http://www.stanford.edu/group/chineserailroad/cgi-bin/wordpress/ Robert G. Lee, <i>Orientalism</i> (Temple University Press, 1999), 15-50. Rudyard Kipling, "The White Man's Burden," <i>McClure's</i> , XII, No. 4 (February 1899), 4. Vicente Rafael, <i>White Love</i> (Duke University Press, 2000), 76-102.
<i>Week 8</i>	Building, Growing
March 15	Iron Chinks and Lumberjacks
March 17	Truck Farms, Bing Cherries, and the "Potato King"
Readings:	Okiihiro, <i>American History Unbound</i> , chap. 7. Chris Friday, <i>Organizing Asian American Labor</i> (Temple University Press, 1994) 48-81. Sucheng Chan, <i>This Bitter Sweet Soil</i> (University of California Press, 1986), 106-157. Donald Hata, Jr. and Nadine Hata, "George Shima: 'The Potato King of California,'" <i>Journal of the West</i> , 25:1 (1986), 55-63.
<i>Week 9</i>	Community, Family, Margin
March 22	Bachelor Societies
March 24	Earthquakes, Paper Sons, and Picture Brides
Readings:	Okiihiro, <i>American History Unbound</i> , chap. 8. Erika Lee, <i>At America's Gates</i> (University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 23-46.

March 29-31

SPRING BREAK

Week 10

Impossible Subjects

April 5

Asiatic Exclusion

April 7

Racial Citizenship

Readings:

Okimoto, *American History Unbound*, chap. 9.

Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects* (Princeton University Press, 2005), 21-55.

Flash Gordon and *Buck Rogers* comic strip panels.

Further Reading:

Philip Francis Nowlan, "Armageddon—2419 A.D.," *Amazing Stories* (August 1928), 422-449.

Lorin Thomas, *Puerto Rican Citizen* (University of Chicago, 2010).

Week 11

War and Social Change

April 12

Rabbit in the Moon (film)

April 14

The "Good War"

Readings:

Okimoto, *American History Unbound*, chap. 10.

Peter Irons, *Justice At War* (University of California Press, 1993), 75-103.

Gordon Chang, "'Superman is about to visit the relocation centers' and the Limits of Wartime Liberalism," *Amerasia*, 19:1 (1993): 37-60.

John Dower, "Yellow, Red, and Black Men," *War Without Mercy*, (Pantheon, 1986), 147-180.

Further Reading:

Jeanne Watatsuki Houston and James D. Houston, *Farewell to Manzanar* (Houghton Mifflin, 1973).

Michi Weglyn, *Years of Infamy*, updated ed. (University of Washington, 1995).

Personal Justice Denied (The Civil Liberties Public Education Fund, 1997).

last week for reviews, by Friday, April 22

Week 12

Decolonization, New Nations

April 19

Containment, Dominoes, and Camptowns

April 21

Cold War Civil Rights

Readings:

Okimoto, *American History Unbound*, chap. 11.

Cindy I-Fen Cheng, *Citizens of Asian America* (New York University Press, 2013), 85-116.

Ji-Yeon Yuh, *In the Shadow of Camptown* (New York University Press, 2002), 9-41.

Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights* (Princeton University Press, 2000), 47-78.

last week for rewrites, by Friday, April 29

Week 13

Civil Rights, Social Revolution

April 26

Social Movements and Campus Radicals

April 28 *American Revolutionary* (film)

Readings: Okihiro, *American History Unbound*, chap. 12.
 Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter From A Birmingham Jail," 16 April 1963.
 Martin Luther King, Jr., "I Have A Dream," 28 August 1963.
 Glenn Omatsu, "The 'Four Prison' and the Movements of Liberation: Asian American Activism from the 1960s to the 1990s," in Karin Aguilar-San Juan, ed., *The State of Asian America* (South End Press, 1994), 19-69.
 Chris Iijima, JoAnne Nobuko Miyamoto, William "Charlie" Chin, *A Grain of Sand* (1973 Paredon recording, [sample songs here](#)).

final projects due, by Friday, May 6

Week 14
Global Asian / Americans
 May 3 New Immigrants, New Communities
 May 5 Model Minorities

Readings: Okihiro, *American History Unbound*, chap. 13.
 Yen Le Espiritu, *Asian American Panethnicity* (Temple University Press, 1992), 19-52.
 William Petersen, "Success Story, Japanese-American Style," *New York Times*, January 9, 1966.
 "Success Story of One Minority Group in U.S.," *U.S. News & World Report*, December 26, 1966: 73-76.

Week 15
Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow
 May 10 Post-racial America?

Readings: Okihiro, *American History Unbound*, chap. 14.

Reading/Exam Period

May 10 **final exam available**
 May 17 **final exam due**