SOCY 42  
A SOCIOLOGICAL INTRODUCTION TO THE  
ASIAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE  

Professor: Yvonne Y. Kwan, PhD  
Office: Society of Fellows Office - White Church  
Office Phone: 646-1091  
e-mail: Yvonne.Y.Kwan@Dartmouth.edu

Course Description  
In 2012, there were an estimated 18.9 million U.S. residents who identified as Asian (either one race or in combination with one or more additional races). Although there was a 46% growth in the Asian population between the 2000 and 2010—more than another major race group in the United States—Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) only make up approximately 5.6% of the overall U.S. population. In this course, the “minority” status of AAPIs will be examined via investigations of key historical, legal, and socio-cultural topics.

This course first considers how the migration histories and racial/ethnic experiences of AAPI groups differ significantly from other “minority” groups (e.g., Blacks and Latinos). By highlighting the contexts of global and transnational migration, this course identifies the many ways in which AAPI groups have been both excluded and differentially included in American politics and racial discourse—whether as colonial subjects, exploited labor, transnational immigrants, or diasporic groups. We will trace the multiple and heterogeneous histories, experiences, and cultural productions of AAPI groups so that we can better understand how race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, citizenship, class, age, and ability/disability have played pivotal roles in shaping the lives of AAPIs. We will engage in legal, theoretical, empirical, and cultural texts to examine how AAPI has developed both as a racial category and identity, especially in relation to other racial and ethnic groups.

In Unit 1, we will read theoretical texts about race and race relations that will help ground our later discussions about the Asian American Studies/Ethnic Studies Movement and the legal and political history of AAPI living in the United States.

In Unit 2, we will focus on how AAPIs have been contradictorily portrayed as both the “Model Minority” and the “Yellow Peril.” This unit uses historical events to help explain why certain discourses were employed at different periods of time to justify exclusion and/or inclusion. We will also explore the development of ethnic and racial consciousness—what it means to identify as AAPI and who qualifies as AAPI. Even more importantly, we must consider how AAPI groups and individuals have challenged and confronted stereotypes and narratives that have been imposed upon their bodies and communities.

Twinkies  
Paint your face red, white, and blue  
Decorate your eyes with stars and Stripes  
Insert color contacts until it gives you Cataracts  
Bleach your black hair blonde  
Don’t forget the roots  
You’ll never wash your skin white  
Consider yourself a Twinkie  
Yellow on the outside—  
Tasteful  
In between—  
White fluff.  

—Ka Vang,  
a Hmong American poet
Course Learning Outcomes
Upon successful completion of this course, including all readings, lectures, discussions, and assignments, students will be able to

1. Recognize and identify sociological contributions to Asian American Studies and the Comparative Ethnic Studies Movement;
2. Describe how socio-historical and political processes, both global and domestic, shape the migration patterns of AAPI groups;
3. Identify the immense heterogeneity and richness of AAPI intergroup and intragroup differences—particularly in relation to migration, education, health, language, and class experiences—and how such experiences may or may not affect individuals’ cultural identity development;
4. Describe how racial discourses on AAPI are informative and co-constitutive of other racial narratives created to discipline both AAPI and non-AAPI individuals.

We will have readings, writing assignments, and discussions that encourage students to develop a “sociological imagination,” as introduced by C. Wright Mills. This approach will be based on personal experience (biographies) and social history. We will also draw on the critical and contextualizing tools of sociology and social theory.

Course Format, Grading, Requirements, And Assignments
The course will include a combination of some lecture material, discussion sessions, film and other media analysis, and local community involvement. I reserve the right to adjust the syllabus as needed to reflect the needs of the students and the course—given that I will always give you fair notice if these changes arise.

Required Texts

Course Requirements and Grading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Reading Responses</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative Narrative</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Letter grades will be assigned as follows. Note: I do not round grades (e.g., 77.9% is a C+ not B-).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>500-465</td>
<td>100-93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>464.5-450</td>
<td>92.9-90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>449.5-435</td>
<td>89.9-87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>434.5-415</td>
<td>86.9-83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>414.5-400</td>
<td>82.9-80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>399.5-385</td>
<td>79.9-77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>384.5-365</td>
<td>76.9-73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>364.5-350</td>
<td>72.9-70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>349.5-300</td>
<td>69.9-60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>&lt;300</td>
<td>&lt;60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participation (60 points): Lectures and discussions complement and supplement the required readings, rather than summarize them. Be sure to complete readings before class so that we all share an informed context when partaking in lectures and discussions in class. Lectures are based on the assumption that you have done all the readings assigned for that day. Your participation will be calculated based on your regular involvement in class, including but not limited to in-class engagement and active listening.

I understand that not all students feel comfortable speaking up on a regular basis, but your weekly critical reading responses and questions should help you collect your thoughts and give you ideas to actively contribute to class discussion. You could also come up to speak to me after class or during office hours so that I can evaluate your engagement with the course. Note: It may also be possible to speak too much. Please be respectful of your peers. Remember to “step up and step back.”

Critical Reading Responses (90 points): These critical reflections will serve as writing exercises to help develop your abilities to think and write critically about the texts you read. Generally, for each day of assigned readings, you should respond to the following elements:
1. One sentence summary of the main idea for each assigned reading
2. At least two discussion questions related to the theme of that particular class and the assigned readings.
This means that you are expected to argue a point rather than simply summarize information. You may reference previous course readings and discussions if relevant, but you must focus on the assignments for that day. These responses should be no more than 300 words and will be submitted via Canvas on the morning (9am) before each class meeting.

Midterm Exam (100 points): This will be a 1.5-hour, closed book, in-class exam. It consists of short responses and an essay. Study guide will be provided beforehand.

Creative Narrative (125 points): This creative narrative project allows you to use any medium of your choice (e.g., analytical essay; empirical research; mock periodical; a collection of short stories, poems, paintings, and photographs; children’s book; performance; video; etc.) to apply what you have learned in this class and create a creative and analytical narrative about something you think is currently relevant to AAPIs. Your topic may include your family or community (however you define it), but it must reference current or historical events. Your project must include a written contextual analysis that applies a critical sociological lens to investigating and documenting the multiple and heterogenous AAPI experience. This means that you cannot simply turn in an overly individualized and decontextualized story or project. When in doubt, consider the sociological imagination and how personal biographies are shaped by social histories. This project requires that you apply your personal lives and interests to the larger narratives, experiences, and theories about AAPIs. A more detailed prompt will be provided Week 2.

Final Exam (125 points): This will be a 3-hour, essay-based, take-home exam. Exam questions will require you to synthesize and analyze the course readings, discussion and lecture material. You will be graded on how well you incorporate all elements of course material into your essay answers. Exams will be submitted via Canvas.
Guidelines and Policies

_Honor Principle_
All academic work is to be conducted in accordance with Dartmouth’s principles of academic honor (http://www.dartmouth.edu/~uja/honor/). It may also be helpful for students to read Dartmouth’s statement on sources and citations: https://writing-speech.dartmouth.edu/learning/materials/sources-and-citations-dartmouth

_Religious Observances_
Some students may wish to take part in religious observances that occur during this academic term. If you have a religious observance that conflicts with your participation in the course, please meet with me before the end of the second week of the term to discuss appropriate accommodations.

_Student Accessibility Services_
Students with disabilities enrolled in this course and who may need disability-related classroom accommodations are encouraged to make an appointment to see me as soon as possible. All discussions will remain confidential, although the Student Accessibility Services office may be consulted to discuss appropriate implementation of any accommodation requested.

_Classroom Etiquette_
By all means, treat me and your fellow students with respect. Be on time, be engaged, avoid using your handheld electronic gadgets, and do your part to help make a great learning experience. You may use tablets and laptops during class for note-taking or to access your readings.

_Course Schedule_
NOTE: Bring all texts to class. Readings are to be completed by class time on the day noted below.

_Unit 1. Situating Asian America_
Week 1, Day 1 – Theorizing Assimilation, Race, and Intersectionality

Week 1, Day 2 – Theorizing Assimilation, Race, and Intersectionality, continued

Week 2, Day 1 – The Durability of Inequality: Immigration and Empire

Week 2, X-Hour
In-class Film: “Who Killed Vincent Chin” or “Vincent Who?”

Week 2, Day 2 – The Durability of Inequality: Immigration and Empire, continued


**Week 3, Day 1 – Interrogating the AAPI Experience**


**Unit 2. Interrogating Difference through Empire and War**

**Week 3, Day 2 – War Time: Struggling to Define Citizenship**


**Week 4, Day 1 – War Time: Shadows of the Cold War**


**Week 4, X-Hour**

Film: “First Person Plural”

**Week 4, Day 2 – Midterm Exam (in-class)**

**Week 5, Day 1 – Southeast Asians and Critical Refuge(e) Studies**


**Week 5, Day 2 – Critical Refuge(e) Studies, continued.**


**Week 5, Day 2 – Critical Refuge(e) Studies, continued.**


SOCY 42 - A Sociological Introduction to the Asian American Experience (Kwan) - 5
Week 6, X-Hour
   In-class Film: *New Year Baby*

Week 6, Day 2 – Critical Refuge(c) Studies, continued.
   Critique.” Pp. 149-180 in *War, Genocide, and Justice.*
   In-class Listening: Prach Ly’s “Dalama”

Week 7, Day 1 – The Durability of Inequality: Race, Space, and Health
   Molina, Natalia. 2006 “Caught between Discourses of Disease, Health, and Nation: Public
   Health Attitudes toward Japanese and Mexican Laborers in Progressive-Era Los Angeles.”
   Pp. 46-74 in *Fit to Be Citizens?: Public Health and Race in Los Angeles, 1879-1939.* University of
   California Press.
   Chiu, Monica. “Medical, Racist, and Colonial Constructions of Power in Anne Fadiman’s *The
   Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down.*” Pp. 370-392 in AAS Now Reader.

Week 7, Day 2 – Contemporary Cultures, Politics, and Communities
   Maira, Sunaina. “Youth Culture, Citizenship, and Globalization: South Asian Muslim Youth in the
   393-404 in AAS Now Reader.
   Against Institutional Expansionism and Environmental Racism.” Pp. 565-580 in AAS Now
   Reader.
   *Due: Creative Narratives*

Week 8, Day 1 – A Sociological Inquiry: The Asian American Achievement Paradox
   “Immigration, Hyper-Selectivity, and Second-Generation Convergence,” and “The Success

Week 8, X-Hour
   Sharing of Creative Narratives, including performances, books, newspapers, scrapbooks, videos, etc.

Week 8, Day 2 – A Sociological Inquiry: The Asian American Achievement Paradox, continued
   Lee, Jennifer and Min Zhou. 2015. “Reinforcing the Success Frame,” “Comparing Success Frames,”

Week 9, Day 1 – A Sociological Inquiry: The Asian American Achievement Paradox, continued
   Lee, Jennifer and Min Zhou. 2015. “Mind-Sets and the Achievement Paradox,” “Success at All
   139-200 in *The Asian American Achievement Paradox.*

Week 9, Day 2 – Futures and Possibilities

Week 10, Day 1 – Overflow and/or Final Review. Receive Take-Home Final Exam.
   **Final Exams due during assigned final time and date via Canvas.**