

Sociology 42
Racism in Asian America

Spring 2025
Dartmouth College

Email: emily.c.walton@dartmouth.edu

Class: MWF 2:10-3:15pm, Moore 150

Office Hours: Tuesdays 2-3pm, Blunt Hall, office 306B

Description of the course

This course first identifies the historical processes through which Asian American groups have been both excluded and differentially included in the United States—whether as colonial subjects, exploited labor, transnational immigrants, or diasporic groups. Next, we consider contemporary racialized experiences of Asian Americans, as they manifest in the media, food, gender, family, pop culture, transnational adoption, affirmative action and more!

Course objectives

Students who successfully complete Socy 42 will be able to:

- Analyze the social factors shaping individual and group experiences among Asian Americans.
- Perform critical readings of assigned works, consider controversial social issues respectfully from multiple viewpoints, synthesize complex information, and articulate thoughtful and effective arguments.
- Contribute to the intellectual conversation by applying sociological research and theory to current debates in the sociology of Asian America.

Required reading

All required readings are posted as PDFs on the course Canvas site. The reading load in this course is high. I expect you to read all course material, before class on the day that we are discussing it.

Expectations and assignments

1. Participation (40 pts.)

Discussion facilitation (20 pts.) You will sign up for a facilitation slot in the first week of class. Facilitating discussion requires some preparation before class. I would suggest reading the material carefully, considering the implications (academically, personally, politically), and preparing some thought-provoking questions for the class discussion. Please upload your discussion questions to the assignment on Canvas before class. Discussion facilitators should come prepared with the following:

1. Questions that help us come to a common understanding of the readings' main arguments.
2. Outside information you bring to help us understand the topic. This can take the form of recent news articles, websites, examples of organizations that are taking up these issues in the real world, or other related materials that add depth to our understanding of the reading.
3. Questions that reflect on the greater implications of the findings.

Discussion participation (20 pts.) You must be able to demonstrate verbally that you have read the material critically and are engaged in understanding it more deeply with your peers. I will keep track of your participation in our discussions.

2. Reading quizzes (10 points each)

Every day in which we have reading for class (which is every day!), we may have a reading quiz. You will have ten minutes to respond to two straightforward, but critical questions about the reading. These quizzes are closed book, and your responses will be hand-written. All you need to do to prepare is carefully read the piece(s) for the day. There are no opportunities to make up in-class quizzes. I will drop your 2 lowest grades or, if you are absent, you will drop that day's quiz.

3. Midterm Exam (100 points)

This will be an in-class, closed-book exam. It will consist of a series of short answer questions. All your responses will be hand-written.

4. Oral history project (100 points)

Oral history is the systematic collection of living people's testimony about their own experiences. Each of you will document at least two oral histories with friends, family members, acquaintances, whomever ... about a subject that is relevant to the course. For example, you could interview your grandparents about their experiences immigrating to this country. Or, you could interview your friends about their experiences as an Asian/American on Dartmouth's campus. Or, you could interview your parents about what it means to be Asian/American. Or, you could interview your siblings about their experiences in your family growing up. Or, whatever floats your boat! Basically, I want this to be a way for you to engage with the ideas of the course outside of class. The project will consist of a series of steps:

- First, you will prepare interview protocol for each of your participants. (5 pts x 2 = 10 pts)
- Second, you will conduct interviews with each of your participants (separately). Each interview should be transcribed and coded. (5 pts x 2 = 10 pts)
- Third, you will analyze each oral history interview in the form of a 3-page, double-spaced analytic memo for each interview. Each analytic memo should have an overall argument, which is supported with multiple claims and evidence. These are an opportunity for you to begin to analyze the evidence and develop the narrative arc of your presentation. Your memos will be graded on both content and form. (15 pts x 2 = 30 pts)
- Fourth, you will prepare an outline of your final presentation. This outline should contain your argument, the claims upon which it is based, and the evidence supporting each claim. (10 pts)
- Finally, you will share your contextualized analyses of your oral history projects in a 5-7 min presentation during the last weeks of class. You may create a slide presentation (e.g., PPT) or a

short film (e.g., iMovie). Your presentation will be graded on preparation, critical thinking, clarity and rigor of argument, and time management. (40 pts)

Grading

I follow the grading conventions as defined by the Organization, Regulations, and Courses (ORC) at Dartmouth. http://www.dartmouth.edu/~reg/transcript/grade_descriptions.html

- A Excellent** mastery of course material (student performance indicates a very high degree of originality, creativity, and excellent performance in analysis, synthesis, critical expression, and independence)
- B Good** mastery of course material (student performance indicates a high degree of originality, creativity, and good performance in analysis, synthesis, critical expression, and independence)
- C Acceptable** mastery of course material (student performance indicates some degree of originality, creativity, and acceptable performance in analysis, synthesis, critical expression, and independence)
- D Deficient** in mastery of course material (student performance indicates some degree of originality, creativity, and deficient performance in analysis, synthesis, critical expression, and independence)
- E Serious deficiency** in mastery of course material (student performance clearly lacking originality, creativity, and seriously deficient performance in analysis, synthesis, critical expression, and independence)

I will determine your final letter grade according to the following percentage breakdown:

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Percent</u>
A	95-100%	C+	77-79.9%
A-	92-94.9%	C	73-76.9%
B+	89-91.9%	C-	70-72.9%
B	83-88.9%	D	60-69.9%
B-	80-82.9%	E	< 60%

Important Notes

Attendance

It is my expectation that you will attend each class meeting—and that you will arrive to each class on time and stay for the duration. I will circulate an attendance sign-in sheet at the beginning of each class meeting; it is your responsibility to make sure you sign it each day. There are no opportunities to make up missed in-class participation work. If you miss a class for any reason, please plan to get notes from another student. If you anticipate missing class meetings because of athletic team participation, religious observances, or some other reason, please email me at the start of the term to communicate the expected conflicts.

Late policy

Please speak with me at the beginning of the term if you anticipate circumstances that might affect your ability to get your work in on time. Reading quizzes are designed to help you prepare for in-class discussion; therefore, they will not be accepted late. For the component parts of your oral history project, the maximum grade you may earn will be reduced by one letter grade for each day late. In other words, if you turn your assignment in 1-24 hours after the deadline, the maximum grade you can receive is a B; if you turn your assignment in 25-48 hours after the deadline, the maximum grade you can receive is a C; if you turn your assignment in 49-72 hours after the deadline, the maximum grade you can receive is a D. I will not accept your assignment after 72 hours. If you believe you are eligible for an extension, it is your responsibility to notify me before missing the deadline to explain why your circumstances warrant an exception.

Communication

My office hours are for you. You are welcome to come in and talk with me about anything during my posted hours. I am also available by appointment if my office hours do not coincide with your schedule. I regularly check e-mail during the day (9am-4pm) and will make every effort to reply to messages as soon as possible. I expect students to regularly check their Dartmouth e-mail and Canvas for announcements and updates. Please turn on Canvas notifications, so you can ensure receipt of comments on your work.

Classroom responsibility and courtesy

All students are expected to have a voice in our class dialogue. Class participation involves thinking carefully, listening, and posing questions to others as much as it involves sharing your ideas. This requires us to be present, set aside distractions, and focus our attention on engaging with one another. Please put your cell phones on vibrate, do not text, and do not use your laptop during class. The tone with which we engage one another is also extremely important and should come from a place of mutual respect and understanding. You are free to disagree with the views raised in the material or by others in the class but must do so with a reasoned critique based on a complete consideration of their argument and evidence.

Academic honor principle

The faculty, administration, and students of Dartmouth College acknowledge the responsibility to maintain and perpetuate the principle of academic honor, and recognize that any instance of academic dishonesty is considered a violation of the [Academic Honor Principle](#).

Use of AI

There are multiple reasons not to directly copy words from AI into your own scholarship. First, this is plagiarism. Second, and most importantly, writing for class is designed to develop your skills of careful observation, creative and experimental thinking, nuanced analysis, and authentic self-expression. If you outsource thinking to AI, you diminish your own learning experience.

As scholars, we have an obligation to share with our readers the sources and tools we used in creating our scholarship. To this end, every assignment should have two features indicating our reliance on outside sources. The first should be in-text parenthetical citation paired with a reference list.

The second should be an [AI Disclosure](#), which should contain one of the following statements:

- I did not use AI in creating this assignment, or

- I used AI in creating this assignment, namely _____ (ChatGPT, Bard, etc.). I affirm I did not generate text with AI and directly copy it into my paper. I used AI in the following ways: (list which of the following *acceptable* uses were utilized)
 - Brainstorming and finding information on the topic
 - Checking grammar, style, and clarity
 - Formatting references in ASA style

Additional Support for Learning

The Writing Center: At the Writing Center, you can meet one-on-one with an undergraduate tutor to discuss a paper, research project, or multimedia assignment. <https://students.dartmouth.edu/writing-center/>

Academic Skills Center (ASC): The mission of the ASC is to assist students in achieving academic success through a wide variety of services and programs. The ASC is available to all students who wish to improve their academic skills and ability to learn, thereby maximizing their academic experience and allowing them to achieve greater academic performance and personal fulfillment.

<https://students.dartmouth.edu/academic-skills/>

Religious observances

Dartmouth has a deep commitment to support students' religious observances and diverse faith practices. 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 as soon as possible—before the end of the second week of the term at the latest—to discuss appropriate course adjustments.

Accommodations

Students requesting disability-related accommodations and services for this course are encouraged to schedule a meeting with me as early in the term as possible. This conversation will help to establish what supports are built into my course. In order for accommodations to be authorized, students are required to consult with [Student Accessibility Services](#) (SAS) and to request an accommodation email be sent to me. We will work together with SAS if accommodations need to be modified based on the learning environment. If students have questions about whether they are eligible for accommodations, they should contact the SAS office. All inquiries and discussions will remain confidential.

(student.accessibility.services@dartmouth.edu; 603-646-9900)

Mental health and wellness

The academic environment at Dartmouth is challenging, our terms are intensive, and classes are not the only demanding part of your life. There are a number of resources available to support your wellness:

- [Undergraduate deans](#)
- [Counseling Center](#)
- [Student Wellness Center](#)
- [Dartmouth Mental Health Union](#) and their [Peer Support Program](#)
- [Sexual Assault Peer Alliance](#) (SAPA)

Course Plan

Week One (Mar 31 – Apr 4)

Monday Introduction to the course

Wednesday What is Asian America? Who is Asian American?

- Pew Research Center (2013), “The Rise of Asian Americans”
- AAPIPRC (2012), “Letter to Pew Research Center”
- Siu and Noguchi (2021), “[The Asian American wealth gap, explained in a comic](#)”
- The Argument podcast (2021), “[Why Identity Politics Isn’t Working](#)” (39-min)
- To listen to the podcast, you can get [access to the NYT here](#)

Friday Mid- to late-1800s: Labor migration and early exclusion

- Lee (2010), “The Chinese are Coming.”
- Qin (2025), “This Man Won Birthright Citizenship for All”

Week Two (Apr 7-11)

Monday Early 1900s: Global yellow peril

- Gomez (2020), “The Politics of the Anti-Japanese Movement, 1908-1924”

Wednesday Pre-war 1900s: Exclusion for most

- Ngai (2004), “From Colonial Subject to Undesirable Alien”
- Choi and Kim (2025), “Early Korean Immigrants Eluding the US State”

Friday Legacies of war

- Kozen (2012), “Redress as American-style justice”
- Liem (2003), “History, Trauma, and Identity”

Week Three (Apr 14-18)

Monday NO CLASS – prof traveling

Wednesday Militarization in the Asia Pacific

- Espiritu (2014), “Militarized Refugees” from *Body Counts*
- Nguyen (2016), Selections from *Nothing Ever Dies*

Friday Discuss oral history project

Week Four (Apr 21-25)

Monday Racialization

- Kim (1999), “The Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans”

Tuesday Interview protocol(s) due

Wednesday Model minority myth

- Zhou and Lee (2017), “Hyperselectivity and the Remaking of Culture”
- Sun-Hee Park (2016), “Continuing Significance of the Model Minority Myth”

Friday Suburban inequality

- Lung-Amam (2023), “The Not-So-New South Suburbs”

Week Five (Apr 28 – May 2)

Monday Midterm exam

Wednesday Education and identity

- Warikoo (2022), *Race at the Top* (Preface and Ch5)
- Dhingra (2018), “What Asian Americans Really Care About”

Friday Affirmative action

- Poon and Sihite (2016), “Racial Anxieties, Uncertainties, and Misinformation”
- Park (2023), “Post affirmative action, Asian American families are stressed”

Week Six (May 5-9)

Monday South Asian precarity

- Shams (2020), “Successful Yet Precarious”
- Mallapragada (2016), “Curry as Code: Food, Race, and Technology”

Wednesday Sexual relationships and dating

- Zheng (2016), “Why Yellow Fever Isn’t Flattering: A Case Against Racial Fetishes”
- Chong and Kim (2022), “The Model Man”

Thursday Coded interview transcripts due

Friday American media

- La Force (2018), “Why Do Asian Americans Remain Unseen?”
- Nguyen (2020), “Vietnamese Lives, American Imperialist Views”

Week Seven (May 12-16)

Monday Food

- Mishan (2017), “Asian American Cuisine’s Rise, and Triumph”
- Chan (2021), “Lost in the Brine”
- Zhang (2019), “The Rise (and Stall) of the Boba Generation”

Wednesday Nail salons and carework

- Nir (2015), “The Price of Nice Nails”
- Kang (2003), “The Managed Hand”

Thursday Analytic memos due

Friday NO CLASS, mental health day. Enjoy the weekend!

Week Eight (May 19-23)

Monday Transnational/transracial adoption

- Sang-Hun (2023), “World’s Largest ‘Baby Exporter’ Confronts Its Painful Past”
- Laybourn (2021), “Korean Adoption as Racial Project”

Wednesday Family matters

- Cai and Lee (2022), “Intergenerational Communication about Historical Trauma”
- Tran (2021), “On Becoming Tender”
- Wei (2019), “The ‘M’ In Mother Is the End of ‘Dream’”

Thursday Presentation outlines due

Thursday “Bitter Melon”, Loew Auditorium 7pm (free, part of [AAPIHM film series](#))

- This wacky revenge comedy follows a Filipino American family eating mango cake and plotting murder over a long Christmas weekend. A celebration of family steeped in dark humor, H.P. Mendoza’s film brings attention to what is commonly swept under the rug—tackling homophobia, domestic violence, toxic masculinity and the dangers of unaddressed trauma.

Friday Mental health

- Hong (2020), “United” in *Minor Feelings*
- Eng and Han (2019), “A Dialogue on Racial Melancholia”

Week Nine (May 26-30)

Monday NO CLASS – Memorial Day

Wednesday Presentations

Friday Presentations

Week Ten (June 2-4)

Monday Presentations

Wednesday Course wrap-up

- Wang (2018), “Omakase”

References

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