

SOCIOLOGY OF THE ASIAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

Course Information

Professor	C.N. Le Department of Sociology, UMass Amherst
Office Location	Thompson 508
Office Hours	Generally before and after class and by appointment
Email & Number	le@soc.umass.edu -- 545-4074
Class Info	Fall 2006 M-W-F 11:15am - 12:05pm http://people.umass.edu/cnle/soc291a/

Summary Description

This course takes an interdisciplinary approach to examine the many histories, experiences, and cultures that shape and define the Asian American population. Using readings, class discussions, films & videos, and student-designed projects, the course explores the diversity and commonality of experiences among different Asian ethnic groups.

We will also explore themes and specific issues including immigration to the U.S., assimilation, demographic trends, community, ethnic identity, anti-Asian discrimination, socioeconomic mobility, gender dynamics, and relationships with other racial communities.

The Asian American community has received a lot of scrutiny over the years but in many ways, still remains misunderstood. One of the goals of this course is to learn about the multiple facets of life, history, and experiences of Asian Americans, along with the contributions they've made to American society and the challenges they still face in their lives here in the U.S.

Readings and Grading Criteria

Readings

There is only one required book for the course and it is available at *Food for Thought Books*, located at 106 N. Pleasant Street in Amherst (413-253-5432) -- *not* at the Textbook Annex:

- Zhou, Min and James V. Gatewood (Eds.). 2000. *Contemporary Asian America: A Multidisciplinary Reader*. New York: New York University Press. ISBN: 0814796915 ("CAA")

Grading Scale

▪ Attendance & Participation	40 pts.	(13.33%)
▪ Three In-Class Midterms (60 pts. each)	180 pts.	(60%)
▪ Research Project	80 pts.	(26.67%)
Total:	300 pts.	

300 - 270 pts. ($\geq 90.0\%$): A **239 - 230 (79.7% - 76.7%): B-** **199 - 190 (66.3% - 63.3%): D+**

269 - 260 (89.7% - 86.7%): **A-** **229 - 220** (76.3% - 73.3%): **C+** **189 - 180** (63.0% - 60.0%): **D**
259 - 250 (86.3% - 83.3%): **B+** **219 - 210** (73.0% - 70.0%): **C** **< 180: F**
249 - 240 (83.0% - 80.0%): **B** **209 - 200** (69.7% - 66.7%): **C-**

Attendance

Attendance and participation is an important part of the grading criteria. Starting Sept. 22 (after the last day to drop without a “W”), you will receive **25 points** for the course and will be allowed **two** unexcused absences during the course of the semester. Excused absences are a death in the family, court appearances, travel or athletic competition under University auspices, officially recognized religious observances, and illness. In the case of illness, verification that the student either has been seen at University Health Services or has consulted a private physician *on the day in question* or *on the previous day* and a description of the illness are required. Any other absence is considered unexcused. After your two allowed absences, three points will be deducted for each unexcused absence.

Participation

You should also be prepared to participate in class discussions. The class size is small enough to allow us to discuss the issues and readings in this course in detail among ourselves. In fact, I feel that in a class this size, some of the best learning that you’ll get will not be from me -- rather, it will come from listening to and talking with your classmates. Therefore, in order to facilitate class discussions, you need to keep up with the readings and come to class prepared with comments and questions. At the end of the course, students who consistently participate in class discussions will earn **15 points** while those who do not consistently participate will not earn any points -- there is no in between.

In-Class Midterms

As the Course Schedule describes, the course is divided into three sections and there will be a mid-term at the end of each section. Each in-class midterm will consist of four “long answer/short essay” questions (2-3 paragraphs each), of which you can choose which three to answer (however, one question will be designated as required). Each of the three questions you answer will be worth **20 points** for a total of **60 points** on each midterm. You will not be able to use your notes or books during the midterms. I will give you a list of eight questions beforehand, two questions for each sub-section, and will pick one of those two questions from each sub-section to include on the midterm.

Research Project

For the final requirement, you will conduct some original research on a social issue relating to Asian Americans where you collect and analyze your own data, which can be statistical or ethnographic. For example, you can create a questionnaire to administer to students, or use datasets like the Census or General Social Survey to tabulate your own statistics. On the ethnographic side, you can conduct interviews, analyze the content of Internet sites and message boards, films, and/or TV shows by or about Asian Americans, or conduct observations of students on or off campus, just “on the street,” or within a community-based organization.

You will then write a seven- to ten-page research paper in which you (1) discuss and analyze your research data; (2) incorporate at least one reading from the CAA textbook and at least one outside source (articles from the Internet, magazines, newspapers, academic journals, or books) that relates to your project; and (3) relate the project to your own personal experiences and views.

You can either work independently or with up to three other students on a group project. The research requirements will be the same but if you work within a team, (1) each of you only have to write a five- to eight-page report on your project and (2) as a group, do a 15 minute presentation to the class on your project. Your grade for this entire assignment (80 points) will be divided into 55 points possible for the written report and 25 points possible for the group presentation. More details on this the research project will follow.

Finally, there may or may not be extra credit assignments offered during the course. To be safe, you should assume that there will not be opportunities for extra credit.

Policies & Expectations

Completion of Assignments

Make-up exams and extensions for handing in the research and writing assignment will only be given if there is written documentation of an appropriate excuse from an acceptable source. Appropriate excuses are a death in the family, court appearances, travel or athletic competition under University auspices, and illness. In the case of illness, verification that the student either has been seen at University Health Services or has consulted a private physician *on the day in question or on the previous day* and a description of the illness are required.

Academic Honesty

Academic dishonesty, in any form, will not be tolerated. More on this later, especially as it relates to term paper. Please review the University's official policy on academic honesty at www.umass.edu/umhome/policies/honesty.html.

What You Can Expect From Me

Many professors claim to practice total objectivity in their research and teaching. Other professors think that it is virtually impossible to keep one's personal beliefs completely separate from one's research or teaching. I agree with the latter group. I feel that you as the student deserve to know what kinds of personal beliefs I may have. Specifically, my political and social views tend to be liberal in nature.

However, I will present the course material as straightforwardly as possible. The goal of the course is not for me to convince you that my beliefs are 'correct' or for me to get you to agree with everything I say. Rather, my job is to introduce you to tools and resources that you can use to make sense of the course material and to encourage you to use it to critically examine our society, the important social issues of today, and your personal experiences.

About the Issues and Course Material

In this course, we will read some texts that may include explicit language and explore sensitive topics. At times, these materials, issues, and our discussions may make you uncomfortable. However, it is important that you allow the material to challenge you. This is the first step in venturing beyond the safe, comfortable, and isolated -- toward new understandings and new knowledge.

The issues involved in this course will frequently be controversial in nature as well. Nonetheless, students are expected to show respect to all opinions and viewpoints, without exception. Inappropriate or derogatory language or behavior will not be tolerated. We all share in the responsibility of creating an environment where critical but constructive dialogue and analysis of these very important issues can take place in a comfortable and civilized manner.

Tentative Course Schedule

I. History and Identity

A. Sept. 8, 11, & 13

Early History

- CAA: Introduction and Articles 3 & 4

- B. Sept. 15, 18, & 20 **Immigration & Settlement**
 - CAA: Articles 5, 6, & 7
- C. Sept. 22, 25, & 27 **Assimilation & Ethnic Identity**
 - CAA: Articles 11, 12, & 13
- D. Sept. 29, Oct. 2, & 4 **Women and Gender Issues**
 - CAA: Articles 17 & 18

Exam #1 (Oct. 11)

II. Demographics and Socioeconomic Attainment

- A. Oct. 6, 13, & 16 **The Model Minority Image**
 - CAA: Articles 19, 20, & 21
- B. Oct. 18, 20, & 23 **Work and Employment**
 - CAA: Articles 9 & 10
- C. Oct. 25, 27, & 30 **Discrimination & Racism**
 - CAA: Articles 22, 23, & 24
- D. Nov. 1, 3, & 6 **Interracial Relationships**
 - CAA: Articles 28 & 29

Exam #2 (Nov. 8)

III. Community and Diversity in Action

- A. Nov. 10, 13, & 15 **Faith, Spirituality, & Religion**
 - CAA: Articles 14, 15, & 16
- B. Nov. 17, 20, & 22 **Sexuality & Creativity**
 - CAA: Articles 25, 26, & 31
- C. Nov. 27, 29, 1 & Dec. 1 **Social Movements & Collective Action**
 - CAA: Articles 1 & 2
- D. Dec. 4, 6, & 8 **New Paradigms**
 - CAA: Articles 32 & 33

Exam #3 (Dec. 13)