Sociology 215: Contemporary Asian American Experience
Oberlin College

Professor Pawan Dhingra
Fall, 2003
King 320-C
Tues and Thurs. 3-4:15pm
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Room: SC A255
5-5289

Course description: The goal of the course is to introduce you to a range of contemporary issues dealing with Asian Americans and immigrants generally, so that you understand the complexity involved within immigrant adaptation. The focus is less on each ethnic group's differences and more on the trends that many groups face, with a focus on how they experience challenges and claim accomplishments. The course stresses the light that studying Asian Americans sheds on other groups and for the country as a whole, including immigration, identity, religion, family, gender, race relations, and other topics. We will read from a variety of disciplines, with stress on sociology.

Required Texts:

All other readings are on electronic reserve or distributed in class. The password is SOCI215.

Office hours: Tuesday, 1-2pm; Thursday, 11am-12pm. Each student is encouraged to come by my office hours at least once during the semester. The point of office hours is to go over topics discussed in class, hear your thoughts/critiques of class, refer to assignments, and to give you an opportunity to discuss issues related to class generally. If you cannot make it to my office hours because of a class, work, or athletic requirement, we can set up another time. Email is also a convenient way to ask me questions.

Course Requirements:

Student responsibilities:
(Note: By enrolling and remaining in this class, you have agreed to these responsibilities.)

1) Regular attendance to all classes and outside events. Students anticipating lengthy absences should contact me in advance.
2) You should arrive on time for class and remain for the entire period unless you make arrangements with me prior to class. You should not disrupt the class with conversations or materials not related to the coursework.

3) Completion of each week's readings by the beginning of class. You will not be able to successfully complete this class without reading the assignments in a timely manner. Additionally, you will not be able to contribute to class discussion if you have not read the assignments.

4) Completion of all required assignments. All assignments must be completed by the beginning of class, not during or after class. If you anticipate that you may miss a due date because of illness or a personal emergency, I require a doctor's note or some other documentation before the assignment is due. If you do not supply this documentation, your assignments will be penalized one third of a grade (for example, an A will slip to an A-, a B+ to a B, etc.) starting the day of the assignment and for every calendar date past the due date.

Required assignments:

Attendance and class participation: This class depends on class discussion. You are expected to attend class regularly and to participate in group discussion so that we all learn from one another. Pop quizzes or short essay questions on the readings will be conducted to ensure that you are keeping up with the readings and to assess comprehension. Participation and pop quizzes are worth 10% of your final grade.

Short papers: There are 3 papers due during the semester, each five pages. The purpose of the paper is to give you an opportunity to expand on a topic tied to class themes. The format and specifics of each paper will be discussed in class. The papers may require a little outside research, but not much. The papers will draw from course readings and discussion. You are encouraged to see me and/or the writing center for assistance on the papers. Each paper is worth 25% of your final grade.

Collaborative Research Project: In groups of about three, pick an ethnic group and present some aspect of it not discussed in class. Your choices, in no particular order, are Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Thai, Taiwanese, Filipino, South Asian, Southeast Asian, Pacific Islanders, and others who fall into the Asian Pacific American umbrella. You can report on a historical or current condition. The point of this is to give you an opportunity to do in-depth research on a topic or group that we may not cover in detail during this survey course. You are to tie your presentation to course themes. This will require outside research. You will turn in a written copy of your report on the last day of group presentations. Presentations are to be 20 minutes. The collaborative research projects is worth 15% of your grade. Group members may receive different grades if it appears that some did more work than others.
Instructor responsibilities:

1) To present lecture and discussion material in clearly understandable language and presentation.

2) To assist students in thinking critically about concepts and ideas. This often entails challenging students.

3) To respect student opinion and value each student’s contributions equally.

4) To give feedback on student progress; to be accessible during office hours, and to return all course materials, graded, in a timely fashion.

Other notes:

1) You are assumed to follow the Honors Code. This pertains to how you write papers, read materials, talk with other students in and outside of the class, and other modes of behavior. Please consult your student handbook or see me for details. You will need to attest to your compliance to the honors code with each written assignment you turn in.

2) If you have a learning disability or other disability, you are entitled to assistance and accommodations through the university. Please register with the Jane Boomer, Coordinator of Services for Students with Disabilities, in Room G 27 Peters Hall, ext. 5-8467, for assistance in developing a plan to address your academic needs. Please do this at the beginning of the semester. Please notify me as well.

Tentative Course Outline

Sept. 2. Introduction to the course and to one another.

Sept. 4. Immigration and Nativism

Sept. 9. Greeting Immigrants

- "Rethinking Assimilation Theory for a New Era of Immigration.” By R. Alba and V. Nee.

Sept. 16. History of Asian America – before WWII

- Espiritu, ch. 2

Sept. 23. WWII – Post-1965

- Espiritu, ch. 3 and 4
- Zia, ch. 2, p.39-52

Sept. 30. Race Relations Beyond Black and White

- *Who Killed Vincent Chin?* producer, Renee Tajima ; director, Christine Choy – voluntary showing this week.
- Zia, ch. 3.
Oct. 7th. Gender and Sexual Relations
- *Slaying the Dragon*, produced and directed by Deborah Gee

NOTE: 1ST PAPER DUE OCT. 7TH

Oct. 14: Working for the Man: Class and Work Relations
- Espiritu, ch. 4

Oct. 21. Fall Break

Oct. 28: Beyond Buddha: Religion and Asian America
- "Filipino Folk Spirituality and Immigration: From Mutual Aid to Religion.” By S. Buenaventura.
- "What it means to be Christian: The role of religion in construction of ethnic identity and boundary among second-generation Korean Americans.” By K. Chong.
Nov. 4th. What’s Love Got to Do With It?: Intermarriage and Family.
- “The Significance of Race in the Private Sphere.” By S. Chow.
- Zia, ch. 9.

NOTE: 2ND PAPER DUE NOV. 6TH.

- Maira, ch. 1-3.

Nov. 18. Group Presentations
No readings

Nov. 25. Class choice
Class decides what topic we cover.

Dec. 2nd. Organizing Asian America
- Zia, ch. 5, 6, 8

Dec. 9th. Defining Themselves
Zia, ch. 10.

NOTE: 3RD PAPER DUE DEC. 11TH.