DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

Since the late eighteenth century, well before large numbers of immigrants from Asia began arriving on North American shores, “Orientals” have profoundly impacted conceptions of American national identity and character. In this course, we will historicize and examine representations of Asia (broadly conceived) and persons of Asian ancestry in American thought culture, beginning with Edward Said’s explanation of the origins of Orientalism in western thought and ending with the revival of Yellow Perilism in contemporary life. We will consider the social, political, and cultural contexts in which various perceptions, images, and stereotypes emerged and how they have changed and/or endured over time.

These explorations aim to clarify how representations of Asian people have functioned to shore up, and at times challenge, racially circumscribed notions of “Americanness” with respect to citizenship, morality, work, gender, and sexuality, among other areas. The course also aims to hone students’ skills in reading and thinking critically, working with a variety of primary and secondary materials, writing with clarity and purpose, and discussing and debating in a respectful and rigorous manner.
The course is organized topically and chronologically. Topics include the construction of the Chinese “coolie” during Reconstruction; the vilification of orientalized urban space in turn-of-the-century New York; "Afro-Orientalism"; images of Asians during U.S. military encounters in Asia; sexual deviance of both Asian men and women. In addition to secondary works, the course utilizes an array of primary materials, including political pamphlets, social science research, films, poems, and newspaper articles. The objective here is to introduce students to a range of materials used in cultural and intellectual history and to reveal myriad locations in which race and racial boundaries are developed and articulated.

REQUIREMENTS

Texts:

Moon-Ho Jung, *Coolies and Cane: Race, Labor, and Sugar in the Age of Emancipation* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006)

These books are available at Oberlin Bookstore and on reserve at Mudd Library. Other required readings are available online through Blackboard or will be distributed in class.

We will have two required film viewings of the movies *The Mask of Fu Manchu* and *The Manchurian Candidate*. These will be scheduled at a mutually convenient time.

Grading:

Final grades are calculated from a possible total of 200 points.

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**Grades will consist of the following components:**

**Attendance and in-class participation (10%)** Your attendance in this class is required and any absences, unless cleared by some documentation (e.g. a doctor’s note) or a makeup assignment, will be considered unexcused and, thus, negatively impact your grade. If you miss a class be sure to speak with me to arrange a makeup assignment. However, excessive absences, whether made up or not, will be counted against your grade. This portion of your grade will also be calculated based on your contributions to discussion, demonstrated engagement, and respectfulness to your peers and instructor.

**Class conversation/Blackboard (10%)**. For approximately the first 15 minutes of each class, a group of four or five of you and I will begin the session with an informal conversation about the day’s
reading and issues. You will sign up for your dates ahead of time, and you must do a Blackboard posting the night before class. The rest of the class is expected to read these posts as part of your preparation for our meeting.

**Primary source analysis (20%).** Five-page analysis of a key primary source related to the course’s themes. You must bring Orientalism and relevant secondary readings into your analysis. Further details on assignment will be given in a handout to be distributed in class. Due March 5 in class.

**Book review (20%).** Five-page review essay on any of the assigned texts. More details on this assignment will be given in a handout to be distributed in class. Due April 16.

**In-class midterm exam (20%).** Blue book exam will test you on key concepts and identifications covered in class and readings. March 19.

**Take-home final (20%).** Draws cumulatively on course topics and materials and will address overarching course themes (e.g., hegemony, citizenship, heteronormativity). This will be distributed on May 7, only in class.

Grades for the coursework will be based on displayed intellectual content, originality of thought, mastery of course materials, and quality of expression. Generally, I do not grant extensions or give makeup exams, and late assignments will be graded down 1/3 of a grade for each day late. I may make an exception if you speak with me well before a due date.

**OBERLIN HONOR CODE**
By enrolling in this class you are agreeing to abide by Oberlin’s Honor Code and Honor System. Be sure you have read and understood your rights and responsibilities. You can find it at this link: http://www.oberlin.edu/students/student_pages/honor_code.html

**SPECIAL NEEDS**
I will make every effort to accommodate the needs of students with physical or learning disabilities. Do see me as soon as possible to discuss what steps need to be taken and any modifications that might be necessary.

**OFFICE HOURS AND CONTACTING ME**
The best way to contact me about discussing course matters is to come to office hours. I strongly encourage each of you to visit at least once during the term, if only to introduce yourself. You may contact me via email, and I will do my best to reply in a timely manner, though I usually do not check email after 10:00PM.
SCHEDULE

WEEK 1  THEORIES OF ORIENTALISM

Feb 3:  Course introduction and expectations
Feb 5: Orientalism in Western thought
Reading: Edward Said, “The Scope of Orientalism” (Blackboard)

WEEK 2  COOLIES AND AMERICAN FREEDOM

Feb 10: The meanings of freedom in the age of emancipation
Reading: Jung, Introduction and Chapters 1-4
Feb 12: The “heathen Chinee” and American labor
Reading: Jung, Chapters 5-Epilogue

WEEK 3  AMERICAN EXPANSION

Feb 17: Benevolent assimilation: The Spanish-American War and the Philippines
Reading: Kipling, “The White Man’s Burden” and Jacobson, “Children of Barbarism” (Blackboard)
Feb 19: All the world’s a stage
Reading: Rydell, “The Louisiana Purchase Exposition” and Imada, “Hawaiians on Tour” (Blackboard)

WEEK 4  SEX AND THE CITY: QUEER AND CONTAINED SPACES

Feb 24: Bachelor societies and queer domesticity
Reading: Lui, Introduction and Chapters 1, 2, 4
Feb 26: Fear of a mixed planet
Reading: Lui, Chapters 5-7

WEEK 5  FRIENDS AND ENEMIES

Mar 3: The rise of Japan and the “Yellow Peril”
Reading: “The Yellow Peril Bogey” (1904) and “The Japanese Question from a Californian Standpoint” (1913) (both on Blackboard)
Mar 5 The “China Mystique” and gendering Orientalism
Reading: Leong, "Pearl Sydenstricker Buck" (Blackboard)
PRIMARY SOURCE ESSAY DUE
Film viewing of The Mask of Fu Manchu

WEEK 6  WARTIME IMAGES OF THE ASIAN ENEMY

Mar 10: World War II and the Japanese enemy
Reading: Dower, Chapters 1-3
Mar 12: Korea and Vietnam  
Reading: Dower, Chapters 4-7

**WEEK 7**  
**WARTIME IMAGES, PART II**  
Mar 17: From Asians’ perspective  
Reading: Dower, Chapters 8-10  
Mar 19: MIDTERM

**WEEK 8**  
******FALL RECESS March 21-29******

**WEEK 9**  
**COLD WAR ORIENTALISM**  
Mar 31: Power and reconciliation in the postwar era  
Readings: Klein, Chapters 1-3  
Apr 2: Responsibility and obligation  
Readings: Klein, Chapters 4-5  
Film viewing of *The Manchurian Candidate*

**WEEK 10**  
**DOMESTICITY AND MODEL MINORITIES IN THE 1950s AND 1960s**  
Apr 7: America’s Asians and race relations  
Reading: Klein, Chapter 6  
Apr 9: The Oriental speaks: Asian American researchers  
Reading: Sung, "Introduction" and "Chinatowns" (Blackboard)

**WEEK 11**  
**AFRO-ASIAN CONNECTIONS**  
Apr 14: Black-Asian connections in historical perspective  
Reading: Prashad, Chapters 1-3 (skim Chapter 2)  
Apr 16: Afro-Orientalism in the 20th century  
Reading: Prashad, Chapters 4-5  
BOOK REVIEW DUE

**WEEK 12**  
**YELLOW PERIL REDUX**  
Apr 21: Japan and China-bashing and its domestic repercussions  
Reading: TBD  
Apr 23: The enemy within: the model minority as the yellow peril  
Reading: TBD
WEEK 13  THE U.S. IN THE MIDDLE EAST: ORIENTALISM FULL CIRCLE?

Apr 28: Consuming the Middle East: Oil and holy places
Reading: McAlister, Chapters 1-3

Apr 30: New terrorists and mad men
Reading: McAlister, Chapters 4-6

WEEK 14  ORIENTALISM POST 9-11

May 5 The East and West in the 21st century
Reading: McAlister, Conclusion

May 7 LAST DAY OF CLASS

**The contents of this syllabus are subject to change. I will notify you in class and via discussion group of any updates.**