

Macalester College

Fall 2007

History 294-09: Asian American History

MWF 2:30-3:30PM

Old Main 011

Peter Rachleff

Rachleff@macalester.edu

Old Main 306

X 6371

Welcome to the journey of this newly designed course. “Asian American History” is an extraordinarily rich and complex topic of study, one which no single course can possibly engage to the degree it deserves. My goal is much more modest – to provide you with the intellectual tools to undertake further study of this subject. This course will introduce you to a range of analytical paradigms, a range of experiences, and a range of resources. It is my hope that you will make them part of your scholarly toolbox for years to come. If this course truly works, you will come out of it more aware of how little you know about this subject than you are now, but you will also be much better prepared to pursue this subject in both greater breadth and depth.

We will read narrative histories and analytical texts. We will explore racism and victimization, on the one hand, and resistance and agency, on the other. We will examine how the dominant culture constructed and represented Asian Americans (and particular groups within this category) and how they constructed and represented themselves. We will problematize the very category “Asian American,” testing its usefulness and validity at different times and in different places, and we will explore commonalities and differences in the social positions and experiences of members of different Asian groups. We will investigate relationships among Asian Americans of different heritages, as well as their relationships with other people of color as well as white people in US society. We will also try to maintain an historical framework which appreciates both the specificity of contexts and the significance of change over time. This is a big agenda.

This course is designed to be accessible to students with little prior knowledge of US history, but it is important (and proper) that you speak up when you feel you do not understand the particular context for our investigations at any time. While I will lecture some of the time, your participation by raising questions, responding to questions, taking part in small group discussions, and bringing your concerns into the classroom will be vital to this course’s success. So will your regular attendance in class, prepared to engage the day’s reading assignment. We will often be wrestling with emotionally difficult matters, such as racism, and it is important that we treat each other with respect inside and outside class. While there will be students from diverse Asian and Asian American heritages likely to be in the class, we will not assume that they are automatically “experts” on the subject matter at hand. At the same time, all of us must respect the emotional as well as intellectual significance that this material might have for them. Learning how to discuss, even debate, such material will serve us all well in the long run.

There will be no exams as such. On eight Mondays (see syllabus), students will be expected to turn in a “reaction paper.” This paper will be about one page long, sometimes longer, sometimes shorter. I do not expect it to present or support an argument. It is meant to be a vehicle for you to bring up questions and concerns,

connections between the readings and discussions and your work in other classes and/or your personal experiences. It is a safe place for you to express your need for greater context and background, perhaps, or for more exploration of particular topics. I do use these reaction papers to make adjustments in my plans for ensuing class sessions. They also give me a chance to see what you're thinking, even if you're not speaking up in class. These reaction papers will not be graded per se, but those which are inadequate or particularly valuable will be duly noted. They must be handed in at the beginning of the class in which they are due. Missing more than two of these papers will have a negative impact on your grade. Your class participation will be another factor in your final grade. Obviously, you must be present and you must be prepared in order to participate constructively in class discussions. Finally, there will be four papers, the first three of which will have two weeks' time for preparation, on which your grades will rest. I have no expectations that you do any research for these papers beyond our assigned course readings. I will expect you to formulate, clearly, an argument, and to organize your paper (points, well-structured paragraphs, evidence, footnotes) to support your argument. These papers should be in the neighborhood of four to six pages each. The final paper will be due at the end of the final exam period. I will allow you to rewrite and resubmit two of the first three papers, based on my comments on your initial submission, with a new grade to wholly replace the first grade. As you will see from the syllabus, I have organized class sessions to coincide with the due dates of particular papers, so I strongly prefer that you hand papers in when they are due. Should emergencies arise, we can discuss them. I hope you will come talk with me as you prepare your papers, so that I can help you get off on the right foot each time.

I have no interest in grading on a curve, on pitting you against each other in a competitive environment, or in making you feel inadequate or unsuccessful. Signing up for this course expresses a certain seriousness and commitment on your part, and I respect that. The workload, clearly, is a bit on the heavy side, but you should not find it onerous. Indeed, I am confident that you will find it so interesting and inspiring that you will enjoy keeping up.

Thank you for embarking on this journey with me and with the rest of us in this class.

The following books will be available for purchase at the College bookstore:

J. Lee, Lim, and Matsukawa, eds., RE/COLLECTING EARLY ASIAN AMERICA
Shah, CONTAGIOUS DIVIDES
Erika Lee, WITHIN AMERICA'S GATES
Takaki, STRANGERS FROM A DIFFERENT SHORE
Fowler, JAPANESE AND CHINESE IMMIGRANT ACTIVISTS
Hardin, DOUBLE CROSS: JAPANESE AMERICANS IN BLACK AND WHITE
CHICAGO
Prashad, THE KARMA OF BROWN FOLK
Lowe, IMMIGRANT ACTS

Other readings will be made available electronically or in photocopies.

Daily syllabus (subject to change)

W 9/5 Introduction to the course

F 9/7 Introduction to Asian American History

Read: Daniels, "Neglect and Distortion of Asian Americans by American Historians" (E)

Takaki, "The Centrality of Racism in Asian American History" (E)

Yanagisako, "Rethinking the Centrality of Racism in Asian American History" (E)

Ong, Bonacich, and Cheng, "Capitalist Restructuring and the New Asian American History" (E)

Hing, "What Does It Mean to be Asian American?" (E)

Matsukawa, Lee, and Lim, "Introduction" to RE/COLLECTING EARLY ASIAN AMERICA

M 9/10 *Chinatown: Creation, Representation, Experience, and Agency*

Read: Rohe, "Chinese Camps and Chinatowns: Chinese Mining Settlements in the North American West"

Teng, "Artifacts of a Lost City: Arnold Benthe's PICTURES OF AN OLD CHINATOWN and Its Intertexts"

Both in RE/COLLECTING EARLY ASIAN AMERICA

Hand in reaction paper #1

W 9/12 Read: Shah, CONTAGIOUS DIVIDES, Introduction, 1, 2

F 9/14 Read: Shah, CONTAGIOUS DIVIDES, 3, 4

M 9/17 Read: Shah, CONTAGIOUS DIVIDES, 5, 6, 7

Hand in reaction paper #2

W 9/19 Read: Shah, CONTAGIOUS DIVIDES, 8, 9, Conclusion

F 9/21 *Experience, Memory, Re-Memory, and Resistance*

Read: Srikanth, "The *Komagata Maru*: Memory and Mobilization Among The South Asian Diaspora in North America"

Hirabayashi, "Community Destroyed? Assessing the Impact of the Loss Of Community on Japanese Americans During World War II"

Both in RE/COLLECTING EARLY ASIAN AMERICA

M 9/24 *Emigration, Immigration, Migration*

Read: Ngai, "From Colonial Subject to Undesirable Alien: Filipino Migration, Exclusion, and Repatriation, 1920-1940"

Choy, "From Exchange Visitor to Permanent Resident: Reconsidering Filipino Nurse Migration as a Post-1965 Phenomenon"

Both in RE/COLLECTING EARLY ASIAN AMERICA

Chen, "Origins of Chinese Emigration to California" (E)

Hand in reaction paper #3

Hand out paper topic #1, due in class 10/8

W 9/26 Read: McKeown, "The Sojourner as Astronaut: Paul Siu in Global Perspective"

Wang, "Between Fact and Fiction: Literary Portraits of Chinese Americans in the 1905 Anti-American Boycott"

Chiu-Rinaldi, "China Latina"

All in RE/COLLECTING EARLY ASIAN AMERICA

F 9/28 *Exclusion, Illegal Immigration, and New Dynamics*

Read: Lee, AT AMERICA'S GATES, Introduction, 1, 2

M 10/1 Read: Lee, AT AMERICA'S GATES, 3, 4

Hand in reaction paper #4

W 10/3 Read: Lee, AT AMERICA'S GATES, 5, 6

F 10/5 Read: Lee, AT AMERICA'S GATES, 7, 8, Afterword

M 10/8 Discussion: *Immigration, Exclusion, Representation, Agency*

Hand in paper #1

Hand out paper #2, due 10/22

W 10/10 *Hawaii: A Different Experience?*

Read: Takaki, STRANGERS FROM A DIFFERENT SHORE, 1, 2

F 10/12 Read: Takaki, STRANGERS FROM A DIFFERENT SHORE, 3, 4

M 10/15 Read: Takaki, STRANGERS FROM A DIFFERENT SHORE, 5-9

Hand in reaction paper #5

W 10/17 Read: Takaki, STRANGERS FROM A DIFFERENT SHORE, 10, 11

F 10/19 Read: Takaki, STRANGERS FROM A DIFFERENT SHORE, 12, 13

M 10/22 Discussion: *Reconsidering the Centrality of Racism*

Hand in paper #2

W 10/24 *Orientalism*

Read: Rydell, "The Filipino Village at the 1904 World's Fair" (E)

Leong, "The Racialized Image of Anna May Wong" (E)

Both in RE/COLLECTING EARLY ASIAN AMERICA

10/25 – 10/28 Fall Break

M 10/29 Read: Roan, "Exotic Explorations: Travels to Asia and the Pacific in
& Early Cinema"

W 10/31 Matsukawa, "Representing the Oriental in Nineteenth Century
Trade Cards"

Chen, "Dissecting the 'Devil Doctor': Stereotype and Sensationalism
in Sax Rohmer's Fu Manchu"

Wood, "Footprints from the Past: Passing Racial Stereotypes in the
Hardy Boys"

Grice, "Face-ing/De-face-ing Racism: Physiognomy as Ethnic Marker
in Early Eurasian/Amerasian Women's Texts"

All in RE/COLLECTING EARLY ASIAN AMERICA

Hand out paper #3, due 11/12

F 11/2 *Activism, Transnationalism, Pan-Asianism*

Read: Fowler, JAPANESE AND CHINESE IMMIGRANT ACTIVISTS,
Introduction, 1, 2

M 11/5 Read: Fowler, JAPANESE AND CHINESE IMMIGRANT ACTIVISTS, 3, 4
Hand in reaction paper #6

W 11/7 Read: Fowler, JAPANESE AND CHINESE IMMIGRANT ACTIVISTS, 5, 6

F 11/9 Read: Fowler, JAPANESE AND CHINESE IMMIGRANT ACTIVISTS,
7, 8, and Conclusion

M 11/12 Discussion: Activism and Radicalism Among Asian Immigrants
Hand in paper #3

W 11/14 *Interactions with Other People of Color:
Conflict, Syncretism, and Solidarity*

Read: Hardin, DOUBLE CROSS: JAPANESE AMERICANS IN BLACK
AND WHITE CHICAGO, One, Two, and Three

F 11/16 Special guest: Yuichiro Ohnishi, Asst. Prof. of Ethnic Studies, U of M
Read: Ohnishi, "To Imagine Otherwise in Okinawa" (E)
Hardin, DOUBLE CROSS, Four, Five, and Afterword

M 11/19 *Recollections, Self-Representation, and Transformation*
&

W 11/21 Read: Ling, "Yan Phou Lee on the Asian American Frontier"
Marx, "'A Different Mode of Speech': Yone Nuguchi in
Meiji America"
Lee, "Asian Americans in Progress: College Plays, 1937-1955"
Cooperman, "The Americanization of Americans: The Phenomenon
Of Nisei Internment Camp Theater"
Beauregard, "Reclaiming Sui Sin Far"
All in RE/COLLECTING EARLY ASIAN AMERICA

Hand in reaction paper #7

11/22 – 11/25 Thanksgiving Break

M 11/26 *The Burden of the Model Minority*

Read: Prashad, THE KARMA OF BROWN FOLK, 1-68

W 11/28 Read: Prashad, THE KARMA OF BROWN FOLK, 69-108

F 11/30 Read: Prashad, THE KARMA OF BROWN FOLK, 109-204

M 12/3 *Cultural Activism, Self-Representation, Resistance*
Special guests: Thien-Bao Thuc Phi and Kao Kalia Yang
Read: Lowe, IMMIGRANT ACTS, 1, 2
Kao Kalia Yang, selected short stories
Bao Phi, selected poems
Hand in reaction paper #8

W 12/5 Read: Lowe, IMMIGRANT ACTS, 3

F 12/7 Read: Lowe, IMMIGRANT ACTS, 4

M 12/10 Read: Lowe, IMMIGRANT ACTS, 5, 6

W 12/12 Read: Lowe, IMMIGRANT ACTS, 7
Hand out final paper topic, due 12/19

F 12/14 *Concluding Discussion: Rethinking Asian American History*
Read: Chan, "The Changing Contours of Asian American History" (E)
Choy, "Asian American History: Reflections on Imperialism,
Immigration, and 'The Body'" (E)
Yu, "On a Stage Built by Others: Creating an Intellectual History of
Asian Americans" (E)

W 12/19 Noon Final paper due at my office