Mixing It Up: Asian American Experience, Perception and Popular Culture*
(CORE 120-15: Fall 2020)

Classroom: (Howard 205 / Zoom 969-7882-8539)
Time: Mon/Wed/Fri 2:10-3:10pm

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hours: M/W/F 3:15-4:15pm
T/Th 4-5pm

Description
This course engages with Asian American studies as way to open up new approaches to contemporary popular culture. We explore broad concepts such as identity, globalization, gender, education, and racial perception with a mixed approach that crosses boundaries of literary, social and media analysis. Class material will include fiction, memoir, film, art, social media and physical objects in addition to more conventional academic texts. Students are encouraged to use theoretical concepts and methodological approaches suggested by Asian American studies, but urged to work on specific topics of special interest to them (that is, papers do not need to focus exclusively on Asian American topics and no prior background is expected!).

Our semester is loosely divided into four sections, each investigating a different research modality. Each section will focus on connecting abstract theoretical concepts to tangible information and include a written assignment. The first segment focuses on literature — in addition to reading a novel together, students will utilize scholarly criticism to review a fictional piece of their own choice. The next segment deals with film and media — again, the class will discuss shared viewings and each student will write a critique of a specific production of their own choosing. The third section extends our study to social phenomenon — students will conduct their own mini-ethnographic study of a directly perceived social event. The fourth section investigates the role of memoir, or auto-narrative, as a form of cultural critique — this module provides an opportunity for students to engage creatively and rigorously in representing their own lives.

Each paper will be accompanied by informal class discussion on the individual topics selected and theoretical concepts utilized. Finally, students may revise, expand and combine any of their earlier essays or create an entirely new piece for their final paper and a more formal presentation.

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Learning Objectives
- Examine ideas, arguments, biases, and assumptions coming from a variety of perspectives, including our own, with an open yet critical mind.
- Analyze texts and/or quantitative information, recognizing, describing, and questioning patterns, trends, anomalies, and relationships.
- Present clear, compelling, and effective arguments and/or analysis, supported by evidence.
- Appreciate the unique and shared questions associated with “Asian-American” identity, representation and scholarship.
- Use these questions to explore new ways of approaching and presenting our own observations, experiences and learning.

Expectations & Evaluation
Participation 20%: This is a seminar, and the success of the class depends upon student participation. Critical and thoughtful discussion with your peers will be as constructive as interaction with the instructor. You will be expected to (a) attend all classes (synchronous online); (b) do all the assigned readings prior to class sessions; (c) take active part in all class discussions; (d) share your writing periodically with the class as a whole.

Assignments 20%: There will be weekly informal written Moodle posts throughout the semester. These are short submissions linking the general reading to a ‘keyword’ from our course text or another term of your choosing. This exercise is designed to (a) help you think about the reading, (b) become familiar with the conceptual approaches of Asian Studies scholarship, and (c) introduce new ideas to the class discussion. These assignments will not be graded on an individual basis, but conscientious submission each week is required for participation in the course.

Essays 60%: Four relatively short, but formal, essays will address different subject matter in each section of the course. A final essay may be based upon revision and/or combination of your earlier writing, or address an entirely new theme. The broad framework for each section and related essay follow. More precise guidelines will be provided as the semester proceeds. You will also receive feedback (and grades) for these essays and will be expected to take comments into account for further writing in the class.

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Required Texts
Thi Bui 2017 The Best We Could Do
Celeste NG 2015 Everything I Never Told You
Cathy Park Hong 2020 Minor Feelings
Cathy Schlund-Vials et al (eds) 2015 Keywords for Asian American Studies
Shalini Shankar 2019 Beeline: What Spelling Bees Reveal About Generation Z’s New Path to Success

Sections, Assignments and Essays
Weeks 1-2 Introduction: We spend the first couple weeks of class introducing ourselves, figuring out technological issues, and creating a basic tone and rhythm for the class. The first assignment is to ask a question about this syllabus on the Moodle forum. The second assignment is to watch Alice Wu’s new film, The Half of It (streaming on Netflix, but otherwise unavailable), and contribute to the Moodle forums with reference to the Keywords in Asian Studies text.

Weeks 3-5 Fiction: This section is based loosely on comparative literature studies. We read a short novel, Everything I Never Told You by Celeste Ng, as well as several critical essays to establish a baseline mode of textual critique. Weekly assignments continue to apply Keywords to our readings. For the first essay, students may review the shared text by Ng, or choose individual novels for their own review (be aware of time constraints). The emphasis here will be to move away from a “book report” format and develop a more sophisticated approach to focussed theoretical engagement. (Page range: 3-4 pages / ~1,000wds)

Weeks 6-8 Film & Pop culture: Films bears an exceptional responsibility for representing minorities in mainstream culture. This section combines a media studies approach with visual anthropology and culture studies to discuss both feature films as well as other media productions (e.g news, YouTube, video games) and popular phenomena (e.g. restaurants, consumer items). Students continue to use a critical approach enhanced by secondary scholarship to help engage with popular media in a robust intellectual mode through weekly assignments and an essay. (Page range: 3-4 pages / ~1,000wds)

Weeks 8-10 Ethnography: This section shifts from the interpretive approach of our first two sections to an empirically based study of multi-cultural education in the United

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States. Using an ethnographic approach, students are encouraged to view discrete social events as “texts” that may be described and analyzed based on particular historical, social, economic and cultural concepts (‘keywords’). Again, several assignments will lead towards a short ethnographic study of their own. (Page range: 5-6pages / ~1,500wds)

**Weeks 11-13 Personal narrative:** The fourth section addresses the prolific genre of (auto-)biography as socio-cultural representation. Again, the class will read both models and scholarly critiques of this mode and submit assignments before composing their own essay with a focus on individual creativity as well as conceptual rigor. (Page range: 5-6pages / ~1,500wds)

**Week 14-15 Final paper:** Each of the preceding sections emphasize the use of particular theoretical concepts, or “keywords”, in the analysis of selected texts, productions, events and experiences. For the final paper students may revise, expand, combine or supplement any of their previous essays into a more rigorous and comprehensive paper and presentation focusing on a primary concept of their choice. (Page range: 6-8pages / ~2,000wds)

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**Classroom / Online etiquette**

- You are expected to attend every class via Zoom meetings synchronously during scheduled times. Please make sure to join the meeting using your L&C login. Absences will affect your participation grade.

- We, as a college, academic discipline, and class are committed to engaging diverse and even conflicting views. Please treat your colleagues, myself and the subject matter with respect. *Alternative views* (disagreements) are especially valued; so please offer them whenever possible, with respect!

- Please turn off / silence / remove other devices and applications while attending class. Our class sessions will *not* be recorded and much of the material will be conveyed verbally, so you should find a way of taking notes that does not impinge on the class (I prefer pen and paper, but typing while muted should be fine).

- I prefer that all students make themselves visible during Zoom sessions unless it is overly distracting to others. You may mute/unmute yourself as needed to participate in discussion or avoid background noise. It will take us some time to become comfortable working online and we’ll figure this out together during the first couple weeks.

- Plagiarism or other forms of dishonesty will not be tolerated. If you are unsure of guidelines, please check the College ‘*Academic Integrity Policy*’ or ask me directly.

- I encourage you to communicate with me individually (online or in-person) with any questions or concerns related to the course. Similarly, if you have any personal considerations, suggestions or accommodations please contact me directly in addition to the office of ‘*Student Support Services*’.

- The best way to talk with me is during office hours either in-person or online (see Google Calendar for available times and Zoom ID). You may also email me directly and I will generally respond within a day.

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Fall 2020 Covid-19 protocol:

- Health and Safety: we will be conducting all classes remotely until there is a baseline stability that ensures that all students can attend class in-person without masks. Please follow the college ‘Health and Safety’ expectations and make sure to self-isolate if you experience any Covid related symptoms.

- Attendance: as usual, students are expected to actively participate in each and every class. However, please take extra care of your personal health in the best way possible this semester. If this means missing class sessions, that is OK! However, it is also your responsibility to make arrangements to access relevant material. I will help facilitate this, but more than three absences will effect your grade unless you make a concerted effort to stay up-to-date and complete alternative work.

- Community & communication: the current situation will present all sorts of expected as well as unanticipated challenges for us. Please try to be as kind, flexible and forgiving as possible while we develop new ways of having class. Please feel free to make constructive suggestions in or out of class to help make participation more engaging for everyone.

- Resources: There are a variety of ‘academic resources’ on campus, from Watzek library and the writing center to college advising and the registrar’s office that have changed access protocol but are still very much available for your support. Please allow extra time make use of these facilities.

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Semester Schedule*

Week 1 (31 Aug, 2, 4 Sept)
Mon: Class introduction
Wed: Raymond Williams’ Keywords (selections)
- Schlund-Vials, Võ, Wong Keywords for Asian American Studies (Introduction)
Fri: Cathy Park Hong 2020 Minor Feelings (chapt 1 ‘United’)
- Keywords ‘Identity’ (Ho)

Week 2 (7, 9, 11 Sept)
Mon: LABOR DAY (no class)
Wed: FILM - Alice Wu The Half of It (2020)
- Keywords ‘Film’ (Desai)
- (NPR interview) (IndieWire review)
Fri: Kwame Anthony Appiah The Lies that Bind (‘Introduction’ & Chapt 1 ‘Classification’)

Part I - Literature

Week 3 (14, 16, 18 Sept)
Mon: Maxine Hong Kingston Woman Warrior (selections)
- Keywords ‘Gender’ (Wu)
Wed: Jill Parrot ‘Power and Discourse: Silence as Rhetorical Choice’
- Diane Johnson ‘Ghosts’
Fri: Celeste Ng - Everything I Never Told You
- Keywords ‘Family’ (Nakano Glenn)

Week 4 (21, 23, 25 Sept)
Mon: Ng - Everything I Never Told You
- Keywords ‘Generation’ (Louie)
Wed: Ng - Everything I Never Told You
- Keywords ‘Identity’ (Ho)
Fri: Ng - Everything I Never Told You
- Keywords ‘Race’ (Rana)

Week 5 (28, 30 Sept, 2 Oct)
Mon: Cambridge Companion to Asian American Literature (Introduction)
- Helena Grice and Crystal Parikh ‘Feminisms and Queer Interventions’
Wed: New York Review of Books (selected reviews)
- Joseph Keith ‘Comparative Race Studies and Interracialisms’
Fri: DUE - Essay 1) Literature review

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Part II - Film, Media and Popular Culture

Week 6 (5, 7, 9 Oct)
- The Atlantic etc. (reviews & profile)
- Keywords
Wed: Cinema Journal IN FOCUS: Asian American Film and Media (Introduction)
- New York Times Style Thessaly La Force ‘Why Do Asians Remain Largely Unseen in Film and Television?’
- Keywords
Fri: Cinema Journal ('Gnawing at Whiteness', 'Legibility', 'Future' & 'Mixed')
- Keywords

Week 7 (12, 14, 16 Oct)
Mon: Alien Encounters (Introduction)
Wed: Martin Manalansan IV ‘Cooking up the Senses’
- Keywords 'Food' (Mannur)
Fri: Christopher Bolton Interpreting Anime ‘Introduction: Read or Die’

Week 8 (19, 21, 23 Oct)
Mon: Wendy Hui Kyong Chun ‘Race and Software’
- Keywords
Wed: Hyeri Jung ‘Transnational Media Culture and Soft Power of the Korean Wave in the United States’
- Keywords
Fri: DUE - Essay 2) Film/Media review

Part III - Social Events

Week 9 (26, 28, 30 Oct)
- Keywords
- Keywords
Fri: Shankar beeline 4) ‘Gen Z’
- Keywords

Week 10 (2, 4, 6 Nov)
Mon: Shankar beeline 5) ‘Parents’
- Keywords
Wed: Shankar beeline 6) ‘Bee Week’

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Friday: Shankar beeline 7) ‘Becoming Elite’

Week 11 (9, 11, 13 Nov)

Monday: Shankar beeline 8) ‘Making Spellebrities’ - Keywords

Wednesday: Shankar beeline 9) ‘Professionalizing Childhood’ & ‘Conclusion’ - Keywords

Friday: [No Class - participation in Ray Warren Symposium Required]

Due: Essay 3) Social event review (ethnography)

Part IV - Personal Narrative

Week 12 (16, 18, 20 Nov)

Monday: Aiwha Ong Flexible Citizenship ‘Introduction’ - Keywords

Wednesday: Hong ‘Stand Up’ & ‘The End of White Innocence’ - Keywords

Friday: Hong ‘Bad English’ - Lahiri In Other Words (selections) - Keywords

[Thanksgiving break 21-29 Nov]

Week 13 (30 Nov, 2, 4 Dec)

Monday: Thi Bui The Best We Could - Keywords

Wednesday: Hong ‘An Education’ - Keywords

Friday: Due: Essay 4) Personal narrative

Week 14 (7, 9, 11 Dec)

Monday: Hong ‘Portrait of an Artist’ - Keywords

Wednesday: Hong ‘The Indebted’ - Keywords

Friday: Review session

Week 15: Final presentations/essay - Sat. 12 Dec 1-4pm

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