Course Description
In this course, we will analyze the key ideas, people, fads, and phenomena of Asian Americans’ everyday lives, broadly defined. Using theoretical frameworks developed in the study of popular culture and the field of Ethnic Studies, we will look into the complexities, compromises, and negotiations that go into Asian Americans representing themselves and being represented through U.S. mass culture and locally based grassroots cultural production. If there is an Asian American popular culture, what is it? Who is engaging in it? Who is producing it and who is consuming it? And how does this shape our understanding of Asian American communities?

Throughout the semester, we will explore primary “texts” in emergent Asian American popular cultures, and pair them with the theoretical analyses of Asian American popular culture studies. We will consider these objects and practices in relation to Asian Americans’ pasts and presents, thinking about race at the intersection of class, gender, sexuality, and citizenship as we work through other interdisciplinary frameworks like performance studies, media studies, material culture studies, and communications. We will also be working together to share our findings in written and presentation forms.

Course Learning Outcomes
• To consider popular culture as a form of knowledge, in all of its cultural, social, and political implications
• To apply cultural theory and cultural analysis to understand meaning-making in Asian American communities and cultures at the level of everyday life
• To think critically about what constitutes an “Asian American” popular culture in terms of race, ethnicity, class, gender, cultural nationalism, diaspora, and transnationality
• To understand the ideological and material foundations of “diversity,” difference, and race
• To practice advanced reading, writing, and research skills through conceptual and creative thought

Required Texts

All other course readings will be accessible through the course ELMS site as either direct links or PDFs.

Course Expectations and Policies
Attendance and Participation: Students should attend all class meetings, be on time, and be prepared to participate on a substantive and analytical level in discussions of the readings and topics. If you miss class, contact a classmate to stay up to date. Please bring the appropriate texts to class every time we meet. UMD’s official attendance policy is available at [http://www.testudo.umd.edu/soc/atedasse.html](http://www.testudo.umd.edu/soc/atedasse.html). In case of inclement weather or a cancellation on my part, we will have class online instead.

Contacting the Instructor: A brief yet well-written e-mail is the best way to contact me. I will commit to a 24-hour turnaround, so please do not wait until the last minute if you have a pressing concern. As students of the University of Maryland, I expect your written communication to be coherent and respectful. If you have a more extensive question about an assignment
or a reading, or want to have a personal chat with me, I am available between my classes on Mondays through Wednesdays for an appointment, and can chat via Skype; please e-mail me to set up a meeting time. This post is a great guide as to how to conduct yourself: [http://thesocietypages.org/socimages/2014/08/25/professors-pet-peeves/](http://thesocietypages.org/socimages/2014/08/25/professors-pet-peeves/).

**Academic Integrity:** The University of Maryland takes academic honesty very seriously. We expect our students to uphold high standards of conduct. The University of Maryland is dedicated to ensuring academic integrity, symbolized by the Honor Code. The Student Honor Council defines the following as academic dishonesty:
- **Cheating:** intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise.
- **Fabrication:** intentional and unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise.
- **Facilitation:** intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help another to violate any provision of the Honor Code.
- **Plagiarism:** intentionally or knowingly representing the words or ideas of another as one’s own in any academic exercise without citation.

Students are responsible for conforming to these policies: [http://www.testudo.umd.edu/dishonesty.html](http://www.testudo.umd.edu/dishonesty.html)

**Classroom Etiquette:** The University of Maryland values the diversity of its student body and is committed to providing a classroom atmosphere that encourages the equal participation of all students. At all times students should be respectful of others. If you disagree with someone you should express your alternative view using the evidence that led you to your interpretation. Personalized comments, inappropriate language, insults, sleeping, and raised voices will not be tolerated. Please place your cell phone on silent or “vibrate” mode while in class. You should not be using your mobile device during class. You are welcome to use your laptop to take notes; please avoid using your laptop for purposes other than note-taking. Be aware that I may call on you to help us out if I see you with a laptop.

**Online Expectations:** I assume that the e-mail address with the university is accurate, and checked at least once a day on weekdays. If your official e-mail address is not up to date, please update it on Testudo. In addition, I expect that you will sign into Canvas in order to obtain or view course-related files or information.

**Writing Center:** The UMD English Department offers a campus writing center. I recommended that you bring your written work to the writing center so that they can help you improve your writing.

Writing Center website: [http://www.english.umd.edu/academics/writingcenter](http://www.english.umd.edu/academics/writingcenter)
Office Number: (301) 405-3785
Location: 1205 Tawes Hall

**Religious Observances:** Please inform me at the start of the semester if you are going to miss any major scheduled grading events due to religious observances so that alternative arrangements can be made.

**Other Absences:** Official information available at: [http://www.faculty.umd.edu/teach/attendance.html](http://www.faculty.umd.edu/teach/attendance.html)
- If you are missing an in-person meeting without any assignments due: keep in mind that, save for religious observances or official University-excused absences, you will not receive credit for participation.
- If you are missing a major scheduled grading event: due to University policies regarding fairness, I will not reschedule any major grading event without one of the following:
  - An official excuse from a university office signed by university personnel
  - A doctor’s note or a copy of a hospital bill
  - A note from an officer of the law or from a legal office
  - A collection of documents based on the instructor’s discretion
  - A funeral program

**Accommodations:** If you require any accommodations due to disability please inform me at the beginning of the semester so that I can make arrangements for our exams. In addition, please make an appointment with the Disability Support Services (DSS) so that you can learn the procedures and fill out the necessary paperwork.

DSS Website: [http://www.counseling.umd.edu/DSS](http://www.counseling.umd.edu/DSS)
Office number: (301) 314-7682
Location: 0106 Shoemaker Building

**Course Requirement Grading Percentages and Deadlines:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contributions</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Throughout semester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>Once during semester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assorted homeworks</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>Throughout semester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blog postings</td>
<td>8% each, 56% total</td>
<td>Throughout semester</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CLASS CONTRIBUTIONS (20% of total grade)

Class contributions can take two forms:

- **In-person:** as a small, upper-level seminar, your in-person participation is vital to our success. You must come to class having prepared discussion points for both the primary “text” and the printed readings. **My expectation is that you will say something at least twice per meeting.**

- **Online:** I respect that there are plural learning styles and modes of engagement. As such, you can participate by providing a substantial comment (75+ words?) on someone else’s blog posting. The substance of your comment is not whether you like the poster or the post; you will consider other points of analysis within that text or elsewhere, useful concepts and how they apply, respectful disagreements or reframings based in evidence, or substantive questions that you have and why. **This online participation, however, cannot take the place of in-person engagement.** I will not count online credit if you have a string of unexcused absences, and I will not count online comments that come flooding in on the final day, for example.

I will check in with your progress throughout the semester.

CLASS PRESENTATIONS (12% of total grade)

For this presentation, you will be responsible for digesting the reading and asking questions that start the discussion. To prepare for this, you will need to examine the reading for the day closely and carefully.

- First, you will need to summarize the key points of the argument: what is the author studying? How does this contribute to our understanding of “Asian American popular culture”? Why does this matter? If there are difficult theoretical terms, you will be responsible for defining and explaining those to the class (e.g. subjectivity, transnationalism, diaspora, racial formation). How can we take the reading and apply it to our primary “text(s)” of the day? What are some key points of analysis that emerge when we use the scholarly article as a lens for the primary “text”?

- Then, you will prepare at least 4 questions which will get the class to think about, process, and apply the key points of the argument. You will then moderate the class discussion for another 15 minutes or so based on these questions to get us started for the day.

This presentation should take you 8 minutes, but I will allow you up to 10. I won’t require you to have a presentation script or a Powerpoint, but you will need some cohesive talking points. Practice by yourself at least once to get a sense of time. Talk to me before your presentation if you’re having difficulties or anxieties.

ASSORTED HOMEWORKS (12% of total grade)

For more time-consuming research or tasks that I really need you to do, I have set aside a chunk of your total grade to incentivize you further. Several of these tasks have already been marked below; more may be on the way.

BLOG POSTINGS (56% of total grade)

Seven times throughout the semester, you will be responsible for contributing a 650-800 word blog posting at the course blog: [https://umdianamericanpopculture.wordpress.com/](https://umdianamericanpopculture.wordpress.com/). These blogs will consist of an argumentative thesis statement, a course concept, clear use of evidence from a course primary “text,” and clear and concise writing. They will put forth an idea that is either original in its conception, or extend a point from our course meeting; I am less interested in a summary of class discussion. These blogs are due by the Friday of the week they are due at 11:59pm (see below). They do not have to correspond with the course schedule, but they do need to be based in the primary texts that we cover in this class. If there is something that you absolutely want to discuss, chat with me to see.

Course Schedule

NB: This reading schedule may be subject to change.

[Green] = reading available in Nguyen and Tu, *Alien Encounters* || [ELMS] = reading available as PDF online

**Week 1 (1/27): Introduction to Asian Americans and Popular Culture**

| Course readings | - In-class screening of *Slaying the Dragon* (1987) and *Slaying the Dragon: Reloaded* (2011), Dirs. Deborah Gee, Elaine H. Kim |

**Week 2 (2/3): Introduction to Asian America and Popular Culture Theory**
| Course readings | - Introduction to Nguyen and Tu, 1-32. [Green]  
| Assorted homework | Sign up for a Wordpress account and send the info to dishii@umd.edu  

**Week 3 (2/10): Introduction to Asian Americans in U.S. Popular Culture**

| Assorted homework | prepare chapter  

**Week 4 (2/17): Asian Americans in Film**

| Course readings | - Revisit Lee, Chapter 5  
| Primary texts | - *Flower Drum Song*, Dir. Henry Koster (1961)  
| Blog post #1 due |  

**Week 5 (2/24): Asian Americans in Visual Culture**

|                | - Selection from Monica Chiu, *Drawing New Color Lines: Transnational Asian American Graphic Narratives* (Hong Kong, 2015) [ELMS]  
| Blog post #2 due |  

**Week 6 (3/3): Asian American Media**


**Week 7 (3/10): Asian/American Food Cultures**

| Primary texts | - Ethnography of your favorite Asian/American restaurant  
|                | - In-class screening of *The Mind of a Chef*, episodes TBD  
| Assorted homework | do ethnography  
| Blog post #3 due |  

**Week 8 (3/24): Asian American Material Cultures**

| Course | - Robyn Magalit Rodriguez and Vernadette Vicuna Gonzalez. “Asian American Auto/Biographies:
**readings**

- The Gendered Limits of Consumer Citizenship in Import Subcultures” in Nguyen and Tu, 247-270. [Green]

**Primary texts**

- Threadbared: [http://iheartthreadbared.wordpress.com/](http://iheartthreadbared.wordpress.com/)
- Articles on Asian Americans in tech, TBD
- Review the merchandise at Blacklava, available online at [http://blacklava.net/](http://blacklava.net/)

---

**Week 9 (3/31): Asian Americans on Television**

**Course readings**


**Primary texts**

- Fresh Off the Boat (on Hulu)
- All-American Girl

---

**Blog post #4 due**

---

**Week 10 (4/7): Asian/American Across Borders**

**Course readings**

- Sunaina Maira, “Indo-Chic: Late Capitalist Orientalism and Imperial Culture” in Nguyen and Tu, 221-243. [Green]

**Primary texts**

- TBA

---

**Week 10 (4/14): Asian/American Spaces**

**Course readings**

- Selection from Karin Aguilar-San Juan, Little Saigons: Staying Vietnamese in America (Minnesota, 2009) [ELMS]

**Primary texts**

- Ethnography of an ethnic enclave (e.g. DC Chinatown)

---

**Assorted homework:** do ethnography

**Blog post #5 due**

---

**Week 11 (4/21): Asian American Performance I: Sport and Comedy**

**Course readings**

- Anna Chow, “Yo! Yao!: The ‘Ming Dynasty’ and the Construction of an Asian American Identity,” in Asian American Athletes in Sport and Society [ELMS]

**Primary texts**

- Cho Dependent (2011)

---

**Week 11 (4/28): Asian American Performance II: Traditions Old and New**

**Course readings**

### Primary texts
- Attend an culture night/event from APA Heritage Month

**Assorted homework:** do ethnography

**Blog post #6 due**

### Week 14 (5/5): Asian American Students (like you)

| Course readings | - Soo Ah Kwon, “Organizing Against Youth Criminalization,” from *Uncivil Youth: Race, Activism, and Affirmative Governmentality* (Duke, 2013) [ELMS]  

| Primary texts   | - Speakers from Asian Pacific American student organizations |

### Week 15 (5/12): Asian American Music

| Course readings | - Oliver Wang, “Rapping and Repping Asian: Race, Authenticity, and the Asian American MC” in Nguyen and Tu, 35-68. [Green]  

| Primary texts   | - Blue Scholars  
|                 | - Kina Grannis / AJ Rafael / David Choi  
|                 | - Fred Ho |

**Blog post #7 due**