AAST 498Z/ASIAN AMERICANS: POLITICAL AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS  
Spring 2015 Syllabus  
Tuesdays, Thursdays 9:30AM-10:45AM  
HBK 0103

Instructor: Prof. Deepa Iyer  
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Office Hours: By appointment  
Class ELMS: https://myelms.umd.edu/courses/1129300

COURSE OVERVIEW

Asian Americans are currently the fastest growing race group in the United States. These demographic changes suggest a range of questions which our course will explore. Through the lens of legal, political, and policy frameworks, we will explore:

1. How do Asian Americans “make” race?  
2. How do mainstream legal and political systems perceive and treat Asian Americans historically and contemporaneously?  
3. What has been the role of Asian Americans in key social and political movements, such as the civil rights, immigration, worker rights, and LGBTQ struggles?  
4. How do Asian Americans complicate and build solidarity with other communities of color? In particular, we will be working through this question through the lens of Black/Asian solidarity in the “Black Lives Matter” movement.  
5. What will the role of Asian Americans be in the 21st Century when America transitions into becoming a majority-minority country?

In order to answer these questions, we will explore important movements in Asian American history and today. The course will incorporate readings from ethnic studies, law, and academic journals, as well as guest speakers, documentaries, media clips, in-class discussion, and group projects to explore these questions together. While our objectives will be focused on the themes and inquiries detailed above, additional course outcomes will include the development of your critical analytical, writing, speaking, and presentation skills. We will also undertake a class project to build a toolkit that can be used for high school and college students related to Black-Asian solidarity.

ABOUT ME

I am currently the Activist-in-Residence with the Asian American Studies Program at the University of Maryland. I have spent nearly fifteen years working with Asian and South Asian American communities in the United States on issues such as the post 9/11 backlash, civil rights, immigration reform, language access, and workplace discrimination. As the Executive Director of South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT), the only national non-profit that amplifies the voices and perspectives of South Asians for nearly a decade, I gained experience in building community networks, conducting programs and advocacy, and representing the organization as a spokesperson in ethnic and mainstream media. I have been published in The Nation, New York Times, USA Today, and Colorlines, and have been quoted in National Public Radio segments and the Washington Post.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Readings. Readings will be posted on ELMS. Please make sure to visit the chapters inside the “Syllabus” folder for these.

Course Grading. Your final grade is based on the following:

- Active participation including attendance, informed comments and engagement in discussions and in-class assignments, with a significant portion related to the class group project – 15%
- Comment Papers – 15%
- Midterm exam - 25%
- Final Paper – 30%
- Class Project - 15%

Class Participation. Class participation is an integral part of a course like this because we will be creating community through our class experiences and interactions. I will look for informed comments that reflect your depth of understanding of the readings and your analytical ability to identify patterns and trends that emerge as we move through the class. As this is a small class conducted seminar-style, I will find different ways for all students to participate.

Comment Papers. A structured component of class participation will include the required submission of three comment papers over the course of the semester. Comment papers will require you to respond in writing to a particular issue or question (included below). Comment papers should be at minimum 2 pages and no longer than 3 pages in total. Please double space and use 12-point font with 1-inch margins. Please bring a printed copy of the comment paper to the class when it is due. When writing about the assigned readings, keep in mind that your response should include the following:

- Provide a statement of position that responds to the prompt/question provided
- Support your statement of position using information gathered from the readings and in-class discussions. Follow a “rule of three” to help you identify no more than three arguments to support your statement of position.
- End the paper with a paragraph that summarizes your statement of position.

Mid-term Exam. The mid-term will be in the short-answer and essay format. The exam will be taken closed-book and closed-notes. Make-up exams are only given in extreme circumstances, with an excused absence, and proper documentation (see the UMCP policy on excused absences in the Undergraduate Catalogue; please note that examinations cannot be rescheduled to accommodate travel).

Final Exam. The final exam will be submitted in the form of a paper that is at minimum 12 pages and no longer than 15 pages long on one of three topics that will be provided by Week 5. You will need to identify the subject of your paper and set up time to discuss your outline with me. I encourage you to identify ways to conduct community-based documentation to buttress your academic research. More information about how to do so will be provided throughout the class.

Class Project. We will together identify a class project that will take the subject matter that we are discussing to the broader student body in the form of an event or discussion. The group project should occur during Week 13. This will comprise a significant portion of your class participation grade.

GENERAL POLICIES

Creating a Learning Community

“A learning community is a safe yet challenging environment composed of people who support each other as they explore their differences. Learning and community - both elements of the term are important. Only by learning can people grow. And only when provided a safe environment – in which mistakes are acceptable – can people support each other and...
In order for us to build a respectful learning environment where everyone feels comfortable to voice their thoughts, here are a few guidelines for consideration:

1. Make a commitment to your learning and the group’s development as a whole.
2. Step forward, step back: create space for everyone to share.
3. Expect and be willing to explore differences in experience and thought.
4. Let’s create an atmosphere for dialogue and inquiry.

If you ever feel uncomfortable in class, please speak with me during office hours so we can figure out the best solution to ensure that everyone is able to participate.

**Methods for Communication Outside the Classroom**

I will post information on our ELMS site if there are any changes such as class cancellation, room changes, or other timely announcements. You are responsible for monitoring the class’ ELMS site regularly.

**Limits to Confidentiality in the Classroom**

While receiving instruction, advising, or other services at the University, Maryland state law requires advisors/educators/employers to report any incident of past or current child abuse or neglect to Child Protective Services and to the University President’s Designee, the University’s Chief of Police. In addition, if an educator has reason to believe that a vulnerable adult (an adult who lacks the physical or mental capacity to provide for the adult's daily needs) over the age of 18 is in danger, the educator is required to make a report to law enforcement authorities. Health professionals, psychologists, psychotherapists, counselors and mental health professionals are not required to report child abuse neglect to the President’s Designee, but are required by law to make reports to Child Protective Services.

**Emergency Protocol**

If the University closes for an extended period of time due to an unanticipated emergency, we will continue to conduct class using online methods such as discussions of readings and written papers.

**Due Dates**

Papers and assignments are due at the beginning of class on the due date. Assignments that are turned in late will be penalized a third of a letter grade for each half day it is late. A paper will not be accepted once it is more than one week late.

**Class Attendance and Participation**

Students should attend all class meetings, be on time, and be prepared to participate on a substantive and analytic level in discussions of the readings and topics. This means that the reading assignment for each class date in the schedule should be completed before class. According to university policy, absences can be excused for illness, religious observances, participation in University activities at the request of university authorities and compelling circumstances beyond the student's control. Excessive tardiness or absences will negatively affect your grade. You are responsible for getting notes from classmates when you are absent. If you need to be absent from class to participate in a religious observance, please provide a written list of the dates you will need to be absent by the second day of class.

**Academic Integrity and the University of Maryland Honor Pledge**

Please adhere to the UMD Code of Academic Integrity and Honor Pledge (“I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this assignment/examination.”). Cheating or engaging in any form of academic dishonesty will be reported and subject to university policies regarding academic integrity. According to the UMD Code of Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to:
• Cheating (intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise),
• Plagiarism (intentionally or knowingly representing the words or ideas of another as one’s own in any academic exercise) including writing from other students, websites, and library materials,
• Fabrications of any kind (intentional and unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise) including false information in requests for assignment or examination extensions, and
• Facilitating Academic Dishonesty (intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help another to violate any provision of this Code)
• For more information on academic integrity, please refer to the Student Honor Council website, http://www.shc.umd.edu.

Students with Disabilities
Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a documented disability should inform me of such by the second (2nd) class meeting so that we can discuss making the appropriate and necessary arrangements. Please make an appointment with Dr. Jo Ann Hutchinson or her staff at the Disability Support Services (DSS) in the Counseling Center, 314 7682 (Shoemaker 0126). Students in Distress Services for students in various forms of distress are offered by the Counseling Center and the Mental Health Service in the Health Center. During evenings and weekends, the student peer-counseling hotline (4-HELP or 4-4357) is available.

Laptops and Cell Phone
As this will be a small seminar, we will need everyone to be fully engaged and present in class. Laptops are not allowed unless you have a special reason for use (please contact me if you do). Please turn off your cell phones before entering the classroom (no phone calls, texting, or taking pictures during class).
COURSE SCHEDULE

Tu, 1/27:  **Overview of Course; Developing a Shared Language**
Introduction to course content and requirements; creating a dynamic learning environment; our points of entry.
*Your Work:* Review the Syllabus; enter in deadlines into personal calendars

Th, 1/29:  Continuing Points of Entry; Race Dominoes; Racial Definitions
*Your Work:* -Review *A Shared Language Around Race, Census Race Question,* (on ELMS)

Tu, 2/3:  **NO CLASS**

Th, 2/5:  **Grounding Ourselves in Asian America**
*Your Work:*
- *A Community of Contrasts,* pages 2-8, Asian American Justice Center
- Ancheta, *Neither Black Nor White,* Introduction (1-18)
- Y. Li Espiritu, *Ethnicity and Panethnicity,* Ch 2 (19-52)

Tu, 2/10:  **Grounding Ourselves in Asian America**
*Your Work:* Same as 2/5

Th, 2/12:  **Grounding Ourselves in Frameworks and How Asian Americans “Make” Race**
*Your Work:*
- M. Omi & H. Winant, Ch. 4 and Ch. 5
- I. Haney Lopez, Ch. 5 (78-108), *White By Law*

Tu, 2/17 & Th, 2/19:  **What Makes One An American? Asian Americans and Citizenship**
*Your Work:* *Comment Paper 1 Due on 2/19*
- Ancheta, Chapter 1, *Legacies of Discrimination* (19-40)
- Spotlight on Bhagat Singh Thind and the case for naturalization (*Thind v. United States*)
- Spotlight on Min Yasui and the Japanese American Internment (*Min Yasui v. United States*)
- Hatamiya, L, Ch. 10 (146-164), *Righting a Wrong: Japanese Americans and the Passage of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988*
- From “Yellow Peril” to “Model Minority”: Ellen Wu Talks about “Model Minority Myth”
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D5H7Hw6goHQ
Tu, 2/24:  Why the Civil Rights Struggle Matters to Asian Americans  

*Your Work:*  
- Ancheta, Ch. 2 (41-61), *Discrimination and Antidiscrimination Law*  
- Nakagawa, S (*Three Things Asian Americans Owe to the Civil Rights Movement*): http://www.racefiles.com/2013/07/31/three-things-asian-americans-owe-to-the-civil-rights-movement/  
- Maeda, D, *Chains of Babylon* (Ch 2)  

Th, 2/26:  Why the Civil Rights Struggle Matters to Asian Americans  

*Your Work:*  
- See the movie *Selma*  

Tu, 3/3:  Class Project Conversations and Decisions  

Th, 3/5:  Midterm  

Tu, 3/10:  America Wants You (For Your Labor): Historical Immigration Policies  

*Your Work:*  
- Hing, B, Chs 1, 3, *Making and Remaking Asian America through Immigration Policy*  
- Ancheta, Ch. 3, 4, *Race, Rights and the Asian American Experience*  

Th, 3/12:  America Wants You (For Your Labor): Contemporary Immigration Policy  

*Your Work:*  

Week of Mar 17  

**SPRING BREAK**  

Tu 3/24 and 3/26:  Multi-racial Solidarity and Movement Building  

*Focus on Ferguson and Black Lives Matter (readings will be uploaded)*  

*Movement Building in Asian American Communities (with guest speakers)*  

Tu, 3/31:  Team Prep  

Th, 4/2:  Teams Meet with Faculty  

Tu, 4/7 & Th, 4/9:  “Go Back To Your Country!”: Hate Violence and Asian Americans  

*Your Work:*  
*Comment Paper 2 Due (on 3/31)*  
- Espiritu, Yen, Ch. 6, “Reactive Solidarity”, *Asian American Panethnicity*
- Zia, Helen, “Detroit Blues: Because of You Motherfuckers”, *Asian American Dreams*
- Abelmann & Lie, *The Los Angeles Riots: The Korean American Story*
- South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT), *American Backlash*, [www.saalt.org](http://www.saalt.org); viewing of *Raising Our Voices*, documentary about hate violence against South Asians

**Tu, 4/14 & Th, 4/16:**

**National (In)Securities: Post 9/11 America and South Asian Americans**

*Your Work:*
- V. Prashad, Ch. 2 (3-47), *Uncle Swami: South Asians in America Today*

**Tu, 4/21 and Th, 4/23:** In-Class Presentations

**Tu, 4/28 and 4/30:** **Affirmative Action**

*Your Work:*
- Comment Paper 3 Due on 4/14
- Wu, Frank, Ch. 4, “Neither Black Nor White: Affirmative Action and Asian Americans” (131-172), *Yellow: Race in America Beyond Black and White*
- Case Study: SCA 5 in California (Pick a Side to argue)

**Tu, 5/5 and 5/7:** **Political Power: Electoral and Grassroots Organizing**

- M. Das Gupta, Ch. 6 (208-254), *Unruly Immigrants: Rights, Activism, and Transnational South Asian Politics in the United States*

**Tu, 5/12:** Final Papers Due