

HIS/AMS 295-01: Asian American Activism, 1875-2010

Grinnell College, Fall 2016



Professor Joy Sales
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Office Hours: TTh, 2-4pm

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Class: MWF 9:00-9:50am, Bucksbaum 269

Course Description

The goal of this short-course is to introduce students to the history of Asian American organizing, leadership, and activism. We will use activism as a lens to examine three important themes in Asian American history. First, as a way of understanding activism beyond the nation-state, we will study how Asian Americans have challenged and critiqued U.S. imperialism and U.S. foreign relations. Second, we will explore how Asian American activists have built pan-ethnic and interracial alliances. This history is significant in disputing the model minority myth, which situates Asian Americans as “the good minority.” Third, we will trace the formation of Asian American as a political identity for different groups of Asian migrants and Asian Americans. Throughout the course, we will also investigate broad questions like, “What is activism?”, “What makes an activist?”, and “What are different types of activism (legal, labor, feminist)?” Each week follows a particular theme, and while chronological, they are not bounded to a certain timeframe. Themes and movements overlap in different eras. Finally, this course seeks to develop students’ critical reading, writing, and speaking skills through engaging secondary and primary texts.

This course is sponsored by The Wilson Program.

Meeting Outside of Class Time

On September 5, we will be discussing the documentary, *Delano Manongs*. Since the film is not available online, there will be a viewing of the film on Sunday, September 4. The film is 30

minutes long. I will send out a survey to determine the best time, and I will determine the final time and location of the film viewing by Wednesday, August 31. If you cannot attend the documentary viewing, you can contact me, and we can set up another time.

Out of class work expectations:

Our assignments are a mix of academic articles, opinion pieces, book chapters, creative writing, and film. I expect students to do all the required readings and film viewings. I expect readings for this class will take about 2 hours per week, and an equal amount of time for assignments. Optional readings are, of course, not required but highly recommended.

Required Texts

Daryl Maeda, *Rethinking the Asian American Movement*

Articles, essays, and excerpts will be uploaded on Blackboard

Course Requirements and Assessment

1. Attendance and Participation (35%) - You must vocally, respectfully, and thoughtfully contribute to discussion. Discussion is not a spectator sport; you must participate regularly to receive credit. Your contribution to discussion includes how well you listen to others, how well you can tie the discussion to the readings, and how well you ask probing questions that move our conversation and understanding of the materials forward. Please note that the quality of your contributions is more important than the quantity of your comments.
 - Note on attendance: Because this is a short course, attendance is crucial to your grade. Two unexcused absences = -10% and 3 late arrivals to class = 1 unexcused absence.
2. Statement of Topic for final project (10%) – On Friday, September 2nd by 5pm you must **email me** a 1-page, double-spaced statement describing an Asian American activist that you want to research. Provide a rationale on why this activist is significant, and briefly explain the ways they have made social and political change. Include 2-3 sources that will help you write your blog post.
3. Draft of blog post (10%) – On Monday, September 12th by 5pm, you must submit a draft of your blog post. By the end of that week, I will give you feedback and a hypothetical grade, so that you know how to improve your post.
4. Final Project: “Badass Asian Americans” Blog (35%) - Instead of a final paper, we are going to create a course blog that features Asian American activists. This can be an individual or partnered submission. Your final submission must be at least **3 single-spaced paragraphs** and speak specifically to how this person campaigned for social change. The finalized version of your blog post must be uploaded by Sunday, September 18th at 5pm. You must include:

- Historical significance of the activist
- Biographical Information and historical context of the social justice issue the activist encountered
- What kind of activism your subject engaged in, where the campaign took place, what kinds of interventions were made, what kinds of outcomes were facilitated.
- Bibliography of sources. Use Chicago Style citations.

Your activist submission must include at least 2 images:

- A photograph of the activist or an action they organized/ participated in.
- A creative work based on the research you've done.

Your activist submission must be properly cited with 3 academic sources:

- **You cannot use wikipedia.** You can use the works cited at the end of a wiki entry.
- **You cannot use class texts.** You can use works cited within those texts.
- You can use written autobiographies, documentaries, and primary sources (ie - newspapers from the time of the action).

5. Final Presentation (10%) – In the last week of class, you will give a 5 minute presentation on your chosen Asian American activist. **Do not read** from your blog post. Points will be taken off if you do. Summarize the main points listed above, and in addition, discuss why you chose the activist, and how their activism connects to (or differs from) the activism we discussed in class.

Schedule and Reading Assignments

Week One:

- August 26 - Where are the Asian American Activists?
 - YouTube Video of “Define American” debate on Asian American Activism (watch in class)
 - Kevin Cheng, “What Role do Asian Americans Have in Campus Protests?”
 - Sylvia Regan, “It’s About Time You Took an Asian American Studies Class.”
 - Optional: Glenn Omatsu, “The Four Prisons and the Movements of Liberation,” from *Asian American Studies Now: A Critical Reader*

Week Two:

- August 29 – Contesting Chinese Exclusion, 1880s-1900s
 - Lucy Salyer, *Laws Harsh as Tigers*, Part I “Judicial Justice”
 - Primary Source: United States v. Wong Kim Ark (1898) from *The Columbia Documentary History of the Asian American Experience*

- Optional: Erika Lee, “A history lesson for Donald Trump and his supporters”
- August 31 – Anti-Colonial Activism, 1920s
 - Seema Sohi’s “Repressing the “Hindu Menace”: Race, Anarchy, and Indian Anti-Colonialism”
 - Barbara Posadas’s “Transnationalism and Higher Education: Four Filipino Chicago Case Studies,” pp. 7-13
 - Primary Source: Maximo Kalaw, “The Young Filipinos and the Independence of the Philippines.”
- September 2 – Challenging Executive Order 9066, 1940s
 - Thomas Fujita-Rony, “Korematsu’s Civil Rights Challenges.”
 - Primary Source: Korematsu v. United States (1944) from *The Columbia Documentary History of the Asian American Experience*
 - **Statement of Topic due by 5pm!**

Week Three:

- September 5 - Labor activism in California, 1920s-1960s
 - Dawn Mabalon, *Little Manila is in the Heart*, Ch. 2 “Toiling in the Valley of Opportunity”
 - Watch *Delano Manongs: Forgotten Heroes of the United Farm Workers Movement*
- September 7 –The Asian American Movement, 1960s and 70s
 - Daryl Maeda, “Campus Activism” and “Community Activism”
 - Optional: Maeda, “Consolidation and Transformation”
- September 9 – Asian Americans and Black Power
 - Daryl Maeda, “Interracialism, Internationalism.”
 - Primary Source: Yuri Kochiyama, “The Impact of Malcolm X on Asian American Politics”

Week Four

- September 12 - Women of color feminism, 1970s-90s
 - Intro, Nellie Wong, Mitsuye Yamada, Merle Woo from *This Bridge Called My Back*
 - Juliana Pegues, “Strategies from the Field: Organizing the Asian American Feminist Movement” from *Dragon Ladies*
 - Optional: Yuri Kochiyama, “Trailblazing in a White World” from *Dragon Ladies*
 - **Draft of blog post due by 5pm!**
- September 14 - Vincent Chin
 - Watch *Vincent Who?*
- September 16 – Post 9/11 Activism

- Sunaina Maira, “Cross Racial Alliances,” from *The 9/11 Generation: Youth, Rights, and Solidarity in the War on Terror*
- Sunaina Maira and Magid Shihade, “Meeting Asian/Arab American Studies: Thinking Race, Empire, and Zionism in the U.S.”
- **September 18 by 5pm – Final blog post due!**

Week Five:

- September 19: Final Presentations
- September 21: Final Presentations
- September 23: Remaining Final Presentations and Reflections

Citations

Historians use Chicago Style citations. You must use this style for your bibliography. For details on how to use Chicago Style, you can go to [Purdue OWL: Chicago Manual of Style 16th Edition](#).

Academic Integrity

Grinnell College’s Academic Honesty policy is located in the Student Handbook available online for the 2014-15 academic year at http://catalog.grinnell.edu/content.php?catoid=12&navoid=2537#Honesty_in_Academic_Work.

It is the College’s expectation that students be aware of and meet the expectations expressed in this policy. In addition, in this course, it is my expectation that students may collaborate on the following assignments [add detail], but not on the following assignments [add detail]. If you have questions about how a particular assignment relates to the College’s policy, I will gladly consult with you in advance of the assignment’s due date.

Disability Statement:

I encourage students with documented disabilities, including invisible disabilities such as chronic illness, learning disabilities, and psychiatric disabilities, to discuss appropriate accommodations with me. You will also need to have a conversation about and provide documentation of your disability to the Coordinator for Disability Resources, Autumn Wilke, located on the 3rd floor of the Rosenfield Center (x3702).

Religious Holidays:

Grinnell College offers alternative options to complete academic work for students who observe religious holy days. Please contact me within the first three weeks of the semester if you would like to discuss a specific instance that applies to you.