

**Ethnic Studies 189, Section B (Spring 2014)**  
**Asian American Cinema: Past, Present, Future**

**Instructor:** Dr. Brian Hu (brhu@ucsd.edu)

**Course hours:** Wednesdays, 5-7:50pm, TM102

**Office hours:** Wednesdays, 3:45-4:45pm, SSB 243; additional hours by appointment

**Course Description:**

Asian American cinema, like so much of Asian American coalition-building, is less an organic movement than the mobilization of an idea. Historically, that mobilization began with institutions, specifically film festivals. And so it's not surprising that Asian American cinema is a work of curation, selectively and strategically drawing together lines of inquiry and pleasure across ethnic, aesthetic, and geographic lines to propose an alternative to a mainstream cinema that has long denied access to Asian American artists.

This practicum is designed to have students re-mobilize the film festival as a way of shaping Asian American cinema for the present and future. Traditions of quality in the Asian American canon will be considered, as will the roles of festivals and curatorship. Students will engage existing scholarly approaches to Asian American cinema while looking at new films in an age of online video platforms, specifically YouTube. The final project of the course is a work of curation-as-argument, whereby students select and sequence short videos from YouTube to propose an idea of how Asian American cinema can be meaningful today.

**Course Requirements:**

**Attendance:** Students are expected to attend all classes and will be graded based on in-class participation. Additionally, missing more than two classes will result in a grade penalty.

**Readings:** All readings are posted on the course website (TED).

**Short essays:** There are two short essays, the first assessing students' engagement with specific films, the second asking students to analyze a film festival screening taking place in San Diego.

**Program notes:** Toward the end of the quarter, students will turn in program notes (150-300 words) for any four feature-length or short films viewed in the class. The instructor will note which titles are available online or at the library should students need to re-watch the films.

**Final project:** Students will curate a short film program based on videos found on YouTube. There will also be a written analysis and oral presentation due during the final exam session.

**Grading breakdown:**

Participation: 20%

Short essays (2): 30%

Program notes (4): 10%

Final project (video, written, oral): 40%

## Class Schedule

April 2 – Traditions of quality and Asian American cinema

Screening: excerpts from Robert Nakamura's work; *Memories from the Department of Amnesia* (Janice Tanaka, 1989, 13 mins); excerpt from *Chan Is Missing* (Wayne Wang, 1982)

Reading: Daryl Chin, "Focus: Asian Americans and Film," *Bridge* (1978) 8-12.

April 9 – First person, plural?

Screening: *AKA Don Bonus* (Spencer Nakasako and Sokly Ny, 1995, 65 mins); *All Orientals Look the Same* (Valerie Soe, 1986, 2 mins); KevJumba videos (Kevin Wu)

Reading: Jun Okada, "Noble and Uplifting and Boring as Hell: Asian American Film and Video, 1971-1982," *Cinema Journal* 49.1 (2009) 20-40.

April 16 – Continuities and discontinuities

Screening: *Shopping for Fangs* (Quentin Lee and Justin Lin, 1997, 90 mins)

Reading: Peter X. Feng, "Introduction: Locating Asian American Cinema in Discontinuity" (excerpt) from *Identities in Motion: Asian American Film and Video* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002) 1-16; Oliver Wang, "The Class of 1997," *Chasing Chan* (2007).

### Short essay 1 due

April 23 – Festival week

We are meeting outside of class. You are required to attend the screening of any Asian American film at the Pacific Arts Movement Spring Showcase: *To Be Takei* (April 17, 6:30pm), *AKA Dan* (April 19, 3:35pm), *How to Fight in Six Inch Heels* (April 19, 6:00pm). Or you can attend *27°C Loaf Rocks* (April 23, 6:30pm), which takes place during the regular scheduled class time. See [festival.sdaff.org/spring2014](http://festival.sdaff.org/spring2014) for more details.

Reading: Roya Rastegar, "Difference, Aesthetics, and the Curatorial Crisis of Film Festivals," *Screen* 53.3 (2012) 310-17; Laura U. Marks, "The Ethical Presenter: Or How to Have Good Arguments Over Dinner," *The Moving Image* 4.1 (2004) 34-47; Ted Hope, "More Thoughts on the New Film Festival Model," *Truly Free Film* (2010).

April 30 – Histories, memories, and other imaginings

Screening: *History and Memory* (Rea Tajiri, 1992, 32 mins), *Queen of My Dreams* (Fawza Mirza and Ryan Logan, 2012, 3 mins), *Grave Goods* (Leslie Tai, 2013, 12 mins), *Bleached* (Jessica dela Merced, 2012, 14 mins), *Making Noise in Silence* (Mina Son, 2012, 19 mins), *Shoes AKA Kids These Days* (Joseph Mangat, 2011, 8 mins), *In Between My Handmade Moments* (Tiger Souvannakoumane, 2013, 5 mins)

Reading: Celine Parreñas Shimizu, "Pain and Pleasure in the Flesh of Machiko Saito's Experimental Movies," from *Filming Difference: Actors, Directors, Producers, and Writers on Gender, Race, and Sexuality in Film* (Austin: University of Texas Press) 55-72; erin Khue Ninh, "Introduction" (excerpt) from *Ingratitude: the Debt-bound Daughter in Asian American Literature* (New York: New York University Press, 2011) 1-11.

### Short essay 2 due

May 7 – Creative reassemblages

Screening: web-based experiments and other shorts

Reading: Renee Tajima-Peña, "Toward a Third Wave: Why Media Matters in Asian American Studies," *Journal of Asian American Studies* 17.1 (2014) 94-99; Alexandra Juhasz, "Learning the Five Lessons of YouTube: After Trying to Teach There, I Don't Believe the Hype," *Cinema Journal* 48.2 (2009) 145-150.

May 14 – Transnational production and Asian American cinema

Screening: *Mei* (Arvin Chen, 2007, 13 mins.)

May 21 – In the Family

Screening: *In the Family* (Patrick Wang, 2011, 169 mins)

May 28 – Patrick Wang, YouTube stars: labor, community, and "success" on the margins

Screening: *Will* (Eusong Lee, 2012, 4 mins), *Bananapocalypse* (YOMYOMF Network, 2012, 5 mins)

Reading: Christine Bacareza Balance, "How It Feels to Be Viral Me: Affective Labor and Asian American YouTube Performance," *WSQ: Women's Studies Quarterly* 40.1-2 (2012) 138-152.

**Program notes due**

June 4 – Forest for the trees, revisited

Screening: New films

June 13, 7pm – **Final presentations. Final project due.**

### **Majoring or Minor in Ethnic Studies**

Many students take an Ethnic Studies course because the topic is of great interest or because of a need to fulfill a social science, non-contiguous, or other college requirement. Often students have taken three or four classes out of interest yet do not realize how close they are to a major, a minor, or even a double major. An Ethnic Studies major is excellent preparation for a career in law, education, medicine, public health, social work, counseling, journalism, government and politics, international relations, and many other careers. If you would like information about the Ethnic Studies major or minor, please contact:

Daisy Rodríguez, Ethnic Studies Department Undergraduate Advisor

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