

## ETHN 122: Asian American Culture and Identity

Professor: Chuong-Dai Vo

Office Hours: Wednesday 11 am-12 pm, 2:30 pm-4:30 pm

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### Course Description

This course will examine Asian American culture as a site of anti-racist and anti-imperialist American social formation. We will start with film as a tool of Asian American activism, and look specifically at San Francisco, the site of the earliest mass mobilization of activists inside and outside the academy. We will transition to literature to look at how the arrival of the “refugee” transformed Asian America. We will end by looking at visual culture and poetry, two artistic media seldom associated with Asian Americans. Throughout the course, we will think about the relationship among genre, Asian American cultural formation, and Asian American community formation.

### Grade Distribution

Weekly Quizzes on Films and Readings	30%
Midterm	30%
Final	40%

### Readings (Books are available at Groundworks)

1. Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Dictee* (UC Press, 1982/2001)
2. Frances Chung, *Crazy Melon and Chinese Apple* (Wesleyan UP, 2000)
3. le thi diem thuy, *the gangster we are all looking for* (Random House, 2004)
4. Dinh Linh, *Blood and Soap* (Seven Stories Press, 2004)
5. Elaine Kim, Margo Machida and Sharon Mizota, *Fresh Talk Daring Gazes* (UC Press, 2003)
6. Essays will be available through Geisel Library’s online course reserve

### Films on reserve

1. Curtis Chow, dir. *The Fall of the I-Hotel* (1983, 58 min), FVLV 3505-1
2. Spencer Nakasako and Sokly Ny, dirs. *A.K.A. Don Bonus* (1995, 56 min), FVLV 3160-1
3. Wayne Wang, dir. *Chan is Missing* (1982, 80 min)

### Week 1: Introduction to Asian America

- Renee Tajima-Peña, dir. *My America (...or honk if you love Buddha)*

### Week 2: The beginnings of Asian American activism through filmmaking

- Curtis Chow, *The Fall of the I-Hotel* (documentary; watch in Geisel Library)
- Stephen Gong, “A History in Progress: Asian American Media Arts Center 1970-1990”, in *Moving the Image: Independent Asian Pacific American Media Arts*, Ed. Russell

Leong, Los Angeles: UCLA Asian American Studies Center and Visual Communications, 1991, 1-9.

- Renee Tajima, “Moving the Image: Asian American Independent Filmmaking 1970-1990,” in Leong, 10-33.
- John Esaki, “Back to Real Asian American Filmmaking”, in Leong, 34-37.
- Daryl Maeda, ““Down with Hayakawa! Assimilation vs. Third World Solidarity at San Francisco State College”, *Chains of Babylon: The Rise of Asian America*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009, 40-72.

Week 3: Film representations of Asian Americans

- Wayne Wang, *Chan is Missing* (watch in Geisel Library)
- Robert Lee, “Introduction: Yellowface”, in *Orientalism: Asian Americans in Popular Culture*, Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1999, 1-14.
- Robert Lee, “The Cold War Origins of the Model Minority Myth”, in *Orientalism*, 145-179.
- Robert Lee, “The Model Minority as Gook”, in *Orientalism*, 180-203.

Week 4: Film as self-representation and the new face of Asian America

- Spencer Nakasako and Sokly Ny, dirs. *A.K.A. Don Bonus* (watch in Geisel Library)
- le thi diem thuy, *the gangster we are all looking for* (the first half)

**\*\*\*Midterm essay assigned**

Week 5: The Cold War and the new face of Asian America

- le thi diem thuy, *the gangster we are all looking for* (finish)

**\*\*\*Midterm essay due at beginning of class**

Week 6: The Cold War and the new face of Asian America

- Dinh Linh, *Blood and Soap*

Week 7: Introduction to Asian American visual culture

- Mark Dean Johnson, “Uncovering Asian American Art in San Francisco, 1850-1940”, in Eds. Gordon H. Chang, Mark Dean Johnson, and Paul J. Karlstrom, *Asian American Art: A History, 1850-1970*, Stanford: Stanford UP, 2008, 1-29.
- Karin Higa, “Hidden in Plain Sight: Little Tokyo Between the Wars”, in Chang, Johnson and Karlstrom, 31-53.
- Tom Wolf, “The Tip of the Iceberg: Early Asian American Artists in New York”, in Chang, Johnson and Karlstrom, 83-109.

Week 8: Contemporary Asian American visual culture

- Elaine Kim, Margo Machida and Sharon Mizota, *Fresh Talk Daring Gazes*

Week 9: Asian American poetry

- Frances Chung, *Crazy Melon and Chinese Apple*

Week 10: Asian American poetry

- Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Dictee*