



EALL 346: Asian American Film

Winter, 2005

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Room: ???

Time: ???

Instructor: Kirk A. Denton / Hagerty Hall 375 / 292-5548 (Office)

E-mail: denton.2@osu.edu

course webpage: <http://people.cohums.ohio-state.edu/denton2/courses/c346/e346.htm>

Office hours: TBA

Goals:

This course seeks both to use film as a medium through which to get at issues relevant to the Asian American experience and to treat it as an art form in its own right, one that has had a difficult and dialogic relationship with mainstream Hollywood film. The course begins with a brief historical overview of the Asian American experience and introduces issues of Asian American identity. It then spends a week looking at "representations" of Asians in mainstream Hollywood film, which are crucial to understanding the emergence of a self-conscious Asian American cinema in the 1960s and 1970s. That cinema began with the documentary form, and the documentary continues to be central to it, so the next three weeks look at three different kinds of documentaries: family histories, social histories, and political documentaries. Reacting against mainstream representations, these films make Asians Americans subjects of history and not passive objects of it, or they draw attention to historical, social, or political issues absent in the mainstream media. We next turn our attention to feature length fictional films, pursuing through them issues of identity, generational conflict, and history, all of which are key to the Asian American experience. These films are narrated in a fairly mainstream Hollywood style, which raises the important question of whether Asian American film can be "oppositional." Finally, we look at some experimental filmmakers who have rejected that style altogether as too intertwined with racist values. Films viewed in the class treat the experience of Chinese, Koreans, Indians, and Japanese in America, although the emphasis is on Chinese and Japanese Americans (something necessitated by the availability of films).

The course will be conducted primarily in lecture/discussion format. "Primary" films will be viewed in class, but students will also be expected to view "secondary" films outside of class. Films will be put on reserve at the Cunz Hall Language Lab. A course listserv will keep students posted on film viewings and allow them to express themselves in written form.

Texts (available at SBX):

Takaki, Ron. 1998. *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans*. Boston: Back Bay Books.

Xing, Jun. 1998. *Asian America Through the Lens History, Representation and Identity*. Alta Mira Press.

Recommended Asian American Film Readings

Ang, Ien. 1993. "To Be or Not to Be Chinese: Diaspora, Culture and Postmodern Ethnicity." *Southeast Asian Journal of Social Sciences* 21, no. 1.

Chan, Jachinson. *Chinese American Masculinities From Fu Manchu to Bruce Lee*. NY: Routledge, 2001.

- Chan, Suheng. *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History*. Boston: Twayne, 1991.
- Chang, Victoria M., ed. *Asian American Poetry: The Next Generation*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004.
- Feng, Peter X. 1995. "In Search of Asian American Film." *Cineaste* 21, no. 1-2.
- , 1996. "Redefining Asian American Masculinity: Steven Okasaki's 'American Sons.'" *Cineaste* 22, no. 3.
- , 1996. "Being Chinese American, Becoming Asian American: Chan is Missing." *Cinema Journal*, 354 (Summer).
- , *Identities in Motion: Asian American Film and Video*. Durham: Duke UP, 2003.
- Garcia, Roger, ed. [*Out of the Shadows: Asians in American Cinema*](#). Locarno: Festival Intenazionale del Film di Locarno, 2001.
- Gee, Bill. 1990. *Asian American Media Reference Guide*. 2nd Ed. NY: Asian CineVision.
- Ito, Robert B. "[A Certain Slant': A Brief History of Hollywood Yellowface](#)." *Bright Lights Film Journal*
- Lee, Robert G. 1999. *Orientalists: Asian Americans in Popular Culture*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Leong, Russell, ed. 1991. *Moving the Image: Independent Asian Pacific American Media Arts*. Los Angeles: UCLA Asian American Studies Center.
- Liu, Sandra, Darrel Hamamoto, eds. 2000. *Countervisions: Asian American Film Criticism*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Marchetti, Gina. 1993. *Romance and the Yellow Peril: Race, Sex, and Discursive Hollywood Strategies in Hollywood Fiction*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Studlar, Gaylyn and Matthew Bernstein, eds. *Visions of the East: Orientalism in Hollywood*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997.
- Wu, Jean Yu-wen Shen and Ming Song, eds. 2000. *Asian American Studies: A Reader*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Links

General

- [Amerasia Journal](#) (Editor, Russell Leong, UCLA)
- [Asian American Association](#) (OSU)
- [The Asian American Cybnernauts Page](#) (excellent site, including--on the Concerns page--excerpts from texts)
- [Asian American Resources](#) (MIT)
- [Asian American Resources](#) (University of California, Santa Barbara)
- [Asian American Studies](#) (The Ohio State University Library)
- [Asian American Studies Center](#) (UCLA)
- [Asian American Studies Program](#) (OSU)
- [Asian Nation: The Landscape of Asian America](#) [one of the best sites out there]
- [Asian Pacific American Heritage Month](#) (OSU, May 1-31, 2001)

[AsianWeek](#) (The Voice of Asian America)
[Center for the Study of the Chinese Southern Diaspora](#)
[Chinese Cultures Abroad](#) (Vincent Kelly Pollard, University of Hawai'i-Manoa)
[Indian Americans](#) (links from the Embassy of India)
[Isei Magazine: Korean American Voices at Harvard](#)
[Jade Magazine](#) (strives to be the voice of English-speaking Asian women around the world)
[Japanese American National Museum](#) (LA)
[Journal of Asian American Studies](#) (John Hopkins University; Project Muse journal)
[Masala.com](#) (MASALA serves to bring the influence of the South Asian community to the American mainstream through a range of activities that include publishing, music distribution, marketing and advertising)
[Nikkei Heritage](#) (National Japanese American Historical Society)
[Office of Asian American Student Services](#) (OSU)
[Organization of Asian Americans](#)
[Peter X Feng's homepage](#) [with good links to important resources for Asian American film and cultural studies]
[Teaching Asian American Studies: A Selective Bibliography](#)

History

[Asian American Oral History Site](#) (UC, Berkeley)
[Chinatowns of the World](#)
[Chinese American History Time Line](#)
[Chinese Exclusion Act \(1882\)](#)
[Chronology of Asian American History](#) (from Suheng Chan, *Asian Americans, An Interpretive History*)
[Fair: US Immigration History](#)
[The History of San Francisco's Chinatown](#)
[Japanese Internment website](#)
[Korean Americans](#) (a brief overview of Korean immigration to the US)
[Korean Heritage Library](#) (University of Southern California)

Film

[Ancestors in the Americas](#) (Center for Educational Telecommunications, Loni Ding; and a PBS documentary)
[AsianAmericanFilm.com](#) (Greg Pak)
[Asian American International Film Festival](#) (NYC)
[Asian American Media Arts](#) [prepared by Prof. Peter Feng]
[Asian Cinevision](#) (ACV)
[Asian Education Media Service](#) (University of Illinois)
[Chicago Asian American Film Festival](#)
[Chicago Asian American Showcase 2001](#)
[Media Resources Center](#) (UC, Berkeley)
[San Francisco International Asian American Film Festival](#)
[Visual Communication](#) (Southern California Asian American Studies Central, Inc.)

Literature

[Angel Island Immigration Station Poetry](#)
[Asian American Literature: History, Classroom Use, Bibliography and WWW Resources](#)
[Asian American Writers' Workshop](#)

Grading

Students are expected to view all films (those shown in class and those on reserve) and keep up with weekly readings. Students will be evaluated on their class participation (20%), an oral presentation (30%), and a final research project (50%). Oral participation in class and participation through a course listserv counts as "participation." Students' oral project will be to lead a class discussion on a particular film shown in class. The final project will be in the form of a conventional research paper, a video production, or a website. Research papers can be, for example, analyzes of individual films, comparative analyzes of several films, investigation of some aspect of Asian American history or social experience through film. Video productions might be, for example, in the form of interviews of Asian Americans. A website, for example, might focus on visual representations of Asians in mass media.

SCHEDULE

Week One: Historical background/Film History

Readings: Takaki 1998: 3-78.

Week Two: Hollywood Representations of Asians

Viewings: **Slaying the Dragon* (60 min), and clips from several Hollywood films.

Readings: Jun Xing. 1998, 53-86.

Week Three: Identity, Personal Diary and Family Portraits

Viewings: +*Yellow Tale Blues* (30min), dir. by [Christine Choy](#) and Renee Tajima; +*Who's Going to Pay for these Donuts?* (58min), dir. by [Janice Tanaka](#).

Readings: Xing 1998: 87-124.

Week Four: Social History

Viewings: +*History and Memory* (31min), Rea Tajiri; **Sa-I-gu: From Korean Women's Perspective* (31mins), dir. by Dai Sil Kim-Gibson.

Readings: Xing 1998: 87-124; Takaki 1998: 357-405.

Week Five: Politics

Viewings: **Who Killed Vincent Chin* (83min), dir. by Rene Tajima-Pena and Christine Choy.

Readings: Xing 1998: 87-124; Athea Yip, [Remembering Vincent Chin](#)

Week Six: Identity

Viewings: **Chan Is Missing* (80min), dir. by Wayne Wang. [[Interview with Wayne Wang](#)]

Readings: Takaki 1998: 230-269

Week Seven: Generations

Viewings: **The Joy Luck Club* (139min), dir. by Wayne Wang.

Readings: Xing 1998: 125-156

Week Eight: Immigration

Viewings: **The Picture Bride* (95min), dir. by Kayo Hatta. [[The Picture Bride website](#)]

Readings: Takaki 1998: 132-176

Week Nine: Family Drama

Viewings: * *Mississippi Masala* (118min), dir. by Mira Nair [Interview with [Mira Nair](#)].

Readings: Takaki 1998: 294-314

Week Ten: Avant-Garde

Viewings: # *Surname Viet, Given Name Nam* (dir. [Trinh T.Minh-ha](#))

Readings: Xing 1998: 157-174.

* Films on reserve

+ Films on reserve in Main Library

Denney Hall Media Lab (basement)