

GWS 330
**ASIAN AMERICAN
FEMINIST AND
QUEER CULTURAL
PRODUCTIONS**

Professor: Kong Pheng Pha
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Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays,
2:30pm-3:30pm
Semester: Fall 2023
Course Days: Tues, Thurs
Course Time: 1pm—2:15pm
Course Building: Sterling Hall 2335

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course, we will examine the different ways Asian American feminists and queers have used cultural production to speak up against issues of race, class, gender, sexuality, identity, diaspora, nation, justice, art, and activism. Asian American feminist and queer critiques can bring to light the ways that structures of domination uphold and further perpetuate Asian American marginalization within the U.S. The course will tackle Asian American racial, gendered, and sexualized images and stereotypes, as well as explore in-depth the daily lives and experiences of Asian American women and queer folks. We will discuss how Asian American feminism and queerness are frameworks that actively resist systems of domination and oppression. By reading feminist and queer scholarly articles, novels, and memoirs, and watching documentaries and films about and by Asian Americans, we will see how Asian Americans themselves are navigating American society on their own terms. Altogether, students in this course will think through how systemic ideologies are reflected, challenged, and deconstructed in Asian American women's, feminist, and queer cultural productions.

COURSE DISCLAIMER

This course will tackle difficult and controversial subjects such as gender, sexuality, pornography, family, race, ethnicity, war, trauma, migration, art, and activism. I expect students to fully engage with these topics through the reading and class participation. Students are to discuss and dissect these topics and themes in a respectful manner. I will guide and facilitate discussions. By tackling difficult subjects, the course aims to engage students to think critically and actively deconstruct, question, and evaluate critical issues.

KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVES

This course is to foster critical thinking and ignite intellectual and scholarly debates about the politics of Asian American feminist and queer cultural productions and politics. Learning about these aspects of Asian American life will enhance student knowledge about social, cultural, and political issues. To this end, these are the knowledge objectives for students who are enrolled in this course:

1. Understand the historical, political, social, and cultural implications of Asian American feminist and queer cultural productions and formations as it relates to larger social issues;
2. Recognize how critical race, feminist, and queer theories can help with deconstructing taken-for-granted assumptions about race, class, gender, sexuality, identity, injustice, art, and activism more broadly;
3. Open up debates for how feminist and queer politics have changed the terrains of Asian American identities and culture.

SKILL OBJECTIVES

While creating and consuming knowledge for its own sake is crucial to student learning development, this course also seeks to foster specific skills as well. Skills will allow students to move beyond this course, and beyond the academic walls. To this end, we will be actively practicing, engaging, and developing these three important skills:

1. Foster critical thinking skills such as seeing and understanding multiple complex and contradictory perspectives, asking difficult and competing questions, and making connections around issues;
2. Improve and/or develop writing skills, such as synthesizing texts, making arguments in essays, and building on how readings connect to each other;
3. Develop leadership skills, such as leading discussions, or encouraging other students to speak and interact within the classroom;
4. Expand creativity by using digital technology to create alternative forms of knowledge through videos, photography, and multimedia.

COURSE MATERIALS

The following books are required for this class. All books are available at the University bookstore:

1. Otsuka, Julie. *The Buddha in the Attic*. New York: Random House, 2012.
2. Bui, Thi. *The Best We Could Do*. New York: Abram Books, 2018.
3. Chang, K-Ming. *Bestiary*. One World, 2020.
4. Talusan, Meredith. *Fairest*. Penguin, 2020.
5. Avashia, Neema. *Another Appalachia: Coming Up Queer and Indian in a Mountain Place*. Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2022.
6. Chin, Curtis. *Everything I learned, I Learned in a Chinese Restaurant*. New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 2023.

I will also assign other readings that can be found on Canvas.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND DESCRIPTIONS

1. Discussion Questions.....20 points
2. Class Facilitation.....100 points
3. Assignment 1: Scholarly Textual Analysis.....100 points
4. Assignment 2: Film Analysis.....100 points
5. Assignment 3: Final Photography Project.....100 points

Class Attendance and Participation: Class attendance and participation constitutes the core function of this course. While this course does not take attendance, students are highly advised and encouraged to attend lectures in order to maximize learning. Additionally, the course will be most effective, meaningful, and enjoyable for all of us if you actively participate in the small and whole-group class discussions. I may also create in-class activities and administer writing assignments that you will have to complete in order to engage with each other and with the texts. The class cannot and will not be successful if you do not show up, do not do the readings, or are not willing to participate in the sharing of ideas.

Discussion Questions: Every student is expected to post one thoughtful discussion question in response to one or both texts for each class period. These questions are meant to ensure that students have read, have understood (or not understood) the readings, and have engaged in the readings fully to assist their peers in facilitating class discussion. This also allows students to engage with each other by seeing how their peers have engaged with the material. Students are expected to post 10 discussion questions throughout the semester, each worth 2 points, for a total of 20 points. Students who wish to write discussion questions for all periods where there is a class facilitation will not be given additional points. Post your discussion question by 11:59pm the day before the next class period. All discussion questions posted afterwards will not be given credit. This ensures that I and the facilitator have ample time to examine the discussions questions before class. Unfortunately, students will not be able to make up these discussion questions.

Class Facilitation: Students learn tremendously when they take the role of leading classroom discussions. This assignment is meant to foster your leadership skills in the classroom. Students are required to lead one class session discussion. *This assignment is a class facilitation, not merely a presentation!* Every student is required to work in a group of 2 or 3 to facilitate one day of class discussion lasting a total of at least 45 minutes. Facilitators are encouraged, although not required, to thoroughly give a summary presentation of all the readings for the week, followed by a creative activity, and the facilitation of class discussion using your classmates' discussion questions. You are encouraged to meet with me ahead of time to go over your class facilitation. Please refer to the "Class Facilitation Directions" worksheet for more information.

Assignments: You are required to complete a total of three assignments over the course of the semester. Assignments are meant to be a critical analysis about the different themes and texts that the course addresses. Namely, you are expected to explore the ways in which the texts and discussions are connected to each other and explore the implications of the texts as it relates to your social environment and the social world at large. Furthermore, assignments are opportunities for you to develop your critical thinking, writing, and analytical skills as time progresses. It is expected that you will incorporate in-class discussions as part of your assignments. I will give out the assignment prompts 3 weeks ahead of time so that you may have the opportunity to think about and engage the prompt fully. Two of the assignments will be written scholarly essays, while the final assignment is a creative photography project.

UNDERGRADUATE ETHNIC STUDIES GENERAL EDUCATION OUTCOMES

The University of Wisconsin-Madison is committed to fostering an understanding and appreciation of diversity, in the belief that doing so will better prepare students for life and careers in an increasingly multicultural U.S. environment, add breadth and depth to the University curriculum, and improve the campus climate. One of the University's overarching goals is to infuse the curriculum in all disciplines with diversity, including those where traditionally it has been absent. The Ethnic Studies Requirement (ESR) is one of several key elements in reaching this goal. This is a requirement that all students take a 3-credit course that considers ethnic/racial minorities that have been marginalized or discriminated against in the U.S. Students should have met the following goals and learning outcomes after the completion of this course:

1. **Awareness of History's Impact on the Present:** Students will articulate how the past has affected present day circumstances regarding race and racial inequalities in the U.S.
2. **Ability to Recognize and Question Assumptions:** Students will recognize and question cultural assumptions and knowledge claims as they relate to race and ethnicity.
3. **Consciousness of Self and Other:** Students will demonstrate self-awareness and empathy toward the cultural perspectives and worldviews of others.
4. **Effective Participation in a Multicultural Society:** Students will apply course concepts to their lives outside the classroom by respectfully participating in our multicultural society.

The skills listed above apply to students' lives inside and outside the classroom, and by pursuing these objectives, students will further enhance their ability to participate in a multicultural society more effectively, respectfully, and meaningfully.

LATE POLICY

All assignments are to be turned in on the date *and* time that it is due. Students are allowed 3 days to turn in any assignments (excluding quizzes) but will be deducted a letter grade for each day late. *Absolutely no credit will be given for any work after it is 3 days late unless it is an extreme circumstance.* You are encouraged to speak to me if you anticipate that you will be unable to complete any of the assignments on time. I will only consider any requests for extensions well *before* the respective assignment is due, and *never* the night before and certainly never after it is already due. This is in the spirit of fairness and transparency to all other students in the course. I am more than happy to provide extensions to individual students if you speak to me ahead of time, given that the request is reasonable.

COVID-19 STATEMENT

Each of us share the responsibility for the health and safety of everyone in the classroom. Wearing a face cover/mask (optional), maintaining safe physical distances whenever possible, reporting symptomatic information, taking regular antigen tests, getting vaccinated, and staying home when sick are directives that we can follow to ensure the safety of us all. You can find more information about the university's COVID-19 updates at: <https://covidresponse.wisc.edu>

Your health and your family's health should be your top priority. Students who are sick, who are engaging in self-quarantine at the direction of a health care professional, or who suspect they may be ill due to COVID-19 exposure should not attend in-person classes, will not be required to provide formal documentation from a health care provider, and will not be penalized for absences. Students should notify instructors in advance of the absence or inability to participate in an activity, if they are able. Students will be responsible for any content missed, including exams, quizzes, labs, and other important academic activities conducted during class meetings.

DETERMINATION OF COURSE GRADE

The principle that will be used to determine grades is the following per the grading system at the University of Wisconsin—Madison:

GRADE		GRADE POINTS PER CREDIT
A	Excellent	4
AB	Intermediate Grade	3.5
B	Good	3
BC	Intermediate Grade	2.5
C	Fair	2
D	Poor	1
F	Failure	0

COMMUNICATION WITH PROFESSOR

I will do my best to reply to your inquiries via email as soon as possible, with the latest being within 24 hours. There will be times when I will be traveling to academic conferences during the semester and may delay my response. I generally do not respond to emails after 8pm or weekends. As a courtesy, please allow ample time to ask or inform me about emergencies, extensions, etc. I am more than happy to accommodate students with disabilities or those who have emergencies.

AUTHORIZED ABSENCES AND REASONS FOR LATE ASSIGNMENTS

The following policy is taken from the UW-Madison Dean of Students office. Please read the following authorized absence policy carefully. The following policies also apply for students seeking extensions for assignments (<https://doso.students.wisc.edu/guide/absences-from-class/>).

Absences that fall under one of the following categories are considered authorized in this course:

1. Title IX accommodation: sexual assault, dating/domestic violence, stalking, and sexual harassment
2. Title IX accommodation: pregnancy and parenting students
3. Disability-related accommodations
4. Victim of a crime
5. Mental health concerns
6. A significant death or other serious family emergencies

7. Illness, injury, or hospitalization
8. Religious, ethnic, or cultural observances

When absences are authorized, professors are obligated to work with students to determine the best way for students to resume participation in the class without a penalty. However, if the absences are lengthy, the student, professor, department, and/or Dean of Students Office should work together to determine if it will be possible for the student to successfully complete the course.

Examples of unauthorized absences or reasons include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Family vacations
2. Early travel for breaks

Students should communicate directly with me when an absence falls under one of the authorized categories. It is unrealistic for me to accommodate students after the event has already taken place. Students who need an extension on any assignment is encouraged to speak with me in person. As granted by the University, all professors possess discretionary power regarding all student requests for authorized absences and reasons for late assignments in respect to the abovementioned authorized/unauthorized absences. Accumulating too many absences will jeopardize the student's grade in the course.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND PLAGARISM

Academic integrity is essential to a positive teaching and learning environment. All students enrolled in university courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else's work as your own can result in disciplinary action. Academic dishonesty is defined as follows:

- Claiming credit for the work or efforts of another without authorization or citation.
- Copying another student's homework.
- Turning in work of another person and not giving them credit.
- Having a friend answer your clicker questions when you are absent.
- Using translation software when prohibited or limited by the instructor.
- Stealing an exam, or course materials.
- Uses unauthorized materials or fabricated data in any academic exercise, such as using notes for a closed-book online exam.
- Copying from another student during an exam.
- Working on an assignment with others when you are supposed to do so independently.
- Forges or falsifies academic documents or records (having a friend sign you in for attendance when you're absent).
- Intentionally impedes or damages the academic work of others (tampering with another student's experiment).
- Engaging in conduct aimed at making false representation of a student's academic performance (altering test answers and submitting the test for regrading).

Relatedly, I recognize that sharing notes and other course materials, as well as group discussions, help students learn. However, the organization, preparation, and presentation of materials in a class or other instructional setting represent the physical and intellectual labor of the professor. Broadly disseminating

class notes beyond the classroom community or accepting compensation for taking and distributing classroom notes undermines professor interests in their intellectual products while not furthering student interests in effective learning.

Plagiarism is one of the most common forms of academic dishonesty, which includes including previously published ideas, arguments, and sentences into your assignments and passing them off as if they were your own. This includes information taken from websites, books, articles, or other popular and academic platforms. To avoid plagiarism, please include internal in-text citations in all your writing. Works containing plagiarism will receive a “0” for the assignment. In extreme circumstances, a student may receive an “F” or “U” grade for the entire course. Students will be unable to make up plagiarized assignments.

More information can be found here regarding academic misconduct:

<https://conduct.students.wisc.edu/academic-misconduct/>

LAPTOPS AND CELL PHONES IN THE CLASSROOM

Out of respect for your peers and professor, please do not browse the web, use social media such as Facebook or Twitter, or use your cell phones to answer text messages in class. Using laptops for inappropriate reasons negatively affects the learning of all other students around you and contributes to an overall diminished learning environment (for example: staring at your laptop the entire time when a documentary is playing in class). I reserve the right to deduct any participation points from students whom I see using their phone or laptop for inappropriate reasons without having the need to inform the student. I *don't mind* you using a laptop in class, but *I do mind* what you use the laptop for.

All devices should be silenced. Cell phones and laptops should be put away, except in the instances that I ask you to use them for an in-class activity or do class check-ins. Please do not take pictures or videos of the lecture slides or discussions during class, as all classroom materials (including lecture slides, class handouts, etc.) are the intellectual property of the professor. If there is a serious need to leave your cell phone on, such as a family emergency, please put it on vibrate and inform me beforehand if you are expecting a call. If you leave the classroom to take an emergency call, I will understand why. *It is imperative that we strike a balance between both the benefits and perils of technology in the classroom.*

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The University of Wisconsin-Madison, through the McBurney Disability Resource Center, verifies academic services and accommodations for all students who provide appropriate documentation of the existence of a disability. In this way, we comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act and UW System policy. Please visit the following website for more information on accommodations:

<https://mcburney.wisc.edu>

MENTAL HEALTH AND STRESS MANAGEMENT

As a student, you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, suffering mental breakdowns, difficulty

concentrating, work overload, struggles with work/life balance, and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance and may reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. Counseling Services are available to assist you. You can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via University Health Services: <https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/mental-health/>

INCOMPLETES

Incomplete coursework is a major inconvenience for students and professors. An incomplete is only given when a student is unable to complete the course during its regular timeframe and has been given permission to complete it in the future by a particular date (usually no more than one semester after the course has ended). *It is used for extraordinary and exceptional circumstances only.* I expect you to do everything in your power to avoid this situation. Legitimate reasons include verified illnesses, extreme medical emergencies, and family deaths/emergencies that are documented in a timely manner. Absolutely no incompletes will be given unless you sign a written agreement with me.

WITHDRAWING FROM THE COURSE

Students may withdraw from a full-semester course up through the end of the tenth week of the semester. Please keep the following dates in mind if you do need to withdraw from the course:

Wednesday, September 12, 2023: Deadline for students to drop a course or withdraw from the university without having the course(s) appear on the transcript (after: will show as a DR grade for individual courses)

Friday, November 24, 2023: Deadline for students to drop a Fall term course (after: need academic dean approval)

SYLLABUS MODIFICATION

I reserve the right to change or modify the syllabus as we progress through the semester.

Week 1: Introduction to the Course!

Thursday, September 7

1. Class introductions and review the syllabus

Week 2: Histories of Asian American Racialization and Sexualization

Tuesday, September 12

1. **READING:** Chou, Rosalind. "Why Asian American Sexual Politics?" In *Asian American Sexual Politics: The Construction of Race, Gender, and Sexuality*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2012.

Thursday, September 14

1. **READING:** Luibheid, Eithne. "Blueprint for Exclusion: The Page Law, Prostitution, and Discrimination Against Chinese Women." In *Entry Denied: Controlling Sexuality at the Border*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002.

Week 3: Representing Asian American Women in Media

Tuesday, September 19*

1. **READING:** Shimizu, Celine Parreñas, "The Bind of Representation: Performing and Consuming Hypersexuality in 'Miss Saigon.'" *Theatre Journal*. 57, no. 2 (2005): 247-265.
2. **READING:** Marchetti, Gina. "White Knights in Hong Kong: Love is a Many-Splendored Thing and The World of Suzie Wong." In *Romance and the Yellow Peril: Race, Sex, and Discursive Strategies in Hollywood Fiction*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

Thursday, September 21

1. **IN-CLASS FILM:** *Slaying the Dragon* (1988)

Week 4: Asian American Desires and Desiring

Tuesday, September 26*

1. **READING:** Zheng, Robin. "Why Yellow Fever Isn't Flattering: A Case Against Racial Fetishes." *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* (2016): 400-419.
2. **READING:** Han, C. Winter, "Sexy Like a Girl and Horny Like a Boy: Contemporary Gay 'Western' Narratives about Gay 'Asian' Men," in *Geisha of a Different Kind: Race and Sexuality in Gaysian America* (New York: NYU Press, 2015).
3. **READING:** Ly, David. "Online Racism Makes IRL Dating Hell for Asian Men." https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/how-online-racism-towards-gay-asian-men-effects-irl-dating

Thursday, September 28

1. **IN-CLASS FILM:** *Seeking Asian Female* (2012)

Week 5: Resisting Stereotypes, Redefining Identity

Tuesday, October 3

1. **IN-CLASS FILM:** *Ali Wong: Baby Cobra* (2016)

Thursday, October 5*

1. **READING:** Kim, Euni. “‘An Impression of Asian People’: Asian American Comedy, Rhetoric, and Identity in Ali Wong’s Standup Comedy.” *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 24, no. 1-2 (2021): 307-332.

Week 6: Gendered and Sexual Imperialism in Asia 1

Tuesday, October 10

1. **NO CLASS:** Wellness Day 😊

Thursday, October 12*

1. **READING:** Cho, Grace M. Introduction and Chapter 3. In *Haunting the Korean Diaspora: Shame, Secrecy, and the Forgotten War*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008.
2. **READING:** Ahn, Christie, Terry Park, and Kathleen Richards. “Anti-Asian Violence in America is Rooted in U.S. Empire,” *The Nation* (March 19, 2021).
<https://www.thenation.com/article/world/anti-asian-violence-empire/>
3. **READING:** Mitra, Durba, Sara Kang, and Genevieve Clutario. “It’s Time to Reckon with the History of Asian Women in America,” *Harpers Bazaar* (March 23, 2021),
<https://www.harpersbazaar.com/culture/features/a35913981/its-time-to-reckon-with-the-history-of-asian-women-in-america/>

Week 7: Gendered and Sexual Imperialism in Asia II

Tuesday, October 17

1. **IN-CLASS FILM:** *Call Her Ganda* (2018)
2. **DUE AT 11:59PM:** Assignment #1

Thursday, October 19

1. **IN-CLASS FILM:** *Call Her Ganda* (2018)

Week 8: Resisting Sexual Violence and Anti-Black Racism

Tuesday, October 24*

1. **READING:** Ninh, erin Khuê. 2018. “Without Enhancement: Sexual Violence in the Everyday Lives of Asian American Women.” In *Asian American Feminisms and Women of Color Politics*, ed. Lynn Fujiwara and Shireen Roshanravan. Seattle: University of Washington Press, pp. 69-81.
2. **READING:** Pha, Kong Pheng. “Testimony as Justice: An Anti-Carceral Transformative Feminist Response to Sexual Violence and Abusive International Marriages.” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 44, no. 3 (2023).

Thursday, October 26*

1. **READING:** Chen, Jian Neo. “#BlackLivesMatter and the State of Asian/America.” *Journal of Asian American Studies* 20, no. 2 (2017): 265-271.
2. **READING:** Khastigir, Nadia. “Showing up for Black Lives Matter.”
<http://hyphenmagazine.com/blog/2014/12/18/showing-black-lives-matter>

3. **PODCAST:** Meraji, Shereen Marisol and Kat Chow. “A Letter From Young Asian Americans to their Families About Black Lives Matter.”
<https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2016/07/27/487375314/a-letter-from-young-asian-americans-to-their-families-about-black-lives-matter>

Week 9: Asian American Narratives: *The Buddha in the Attic*

Tuesday, October 31*

1. **READING:** Otsuka, Julie. *The Buddha in the Attic*. Entire book.

Thursday, November 2

1. **READING:** Wellness Day 😊

Week 10: Asian American Narratives: *The Best We Could Do*

Tuesday, November 7

1. **IN-CLASS FILM:** *Saving Face* (2004)

Thursday, November 9*

1. **READING:** Bui, Thi. *The Best We Could Do*. Entire Book

Week 11: Asian American Narratives: *Bestiary*

Tuesday, November 14*

1. **READING:** Chang, K-Ming. *Bestiary*. Entire Book.

Thursday, November 16

1. **IN-CLASS FILM OR GUEST SPEAKER:** TBD
2. **DUE AT 11:59PM:** Assignment #2

Week 12: Asian American Narratives: *Fairest*

Tuesday, November 21*

1. **READING:** Talusan, Meredith. *Fairest*. Entire Book.

Thursday, November 23

1. **NO CLASS:** Thanksgiving Break 😊

Week 13: Asian American Narratives: *Another Appalachia*

Tuesday, November 28*

1. **READING:** Avashia, Neema. *Another Appalachia: Coming Up Queer and Indian in a Mountain Place*. Entire Book.

Thursday, November 30

1. **IN-CLASS GUEST SPEAKER:** Dr. Alyssandra Abrenica

Week 14: Asian American Narratives: *Everything I learned, I Learned in a Chinese Restaurant*

Tuesday, December 5*

1. **READING:** Chin, Curtis. *Everything I learned, I Learned in a Chinese Restaurant*. Entire Book.
2. **GUEST SPEAKER:** Guest Speakers, Curtis Chin.

Thursday, December 7

1. **IN-CLASS FILM OR GUEST SPEAKER**

Week 15: Futures of Asian America

Tuesday, December 12

1. **IN-CLASS WRAP UP!**

Week 16: Finals Week

Tuesday, December 19

1. **DUE AT 11:59PM:** Assignment #3