

**Asian American Studies  
Guidebook  
for the City University  
of New York**

Edited by  
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Asian American Studies Faculty  
Development and Curriculum Project

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Asian American Studies Guidebook for the City University of New York  
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**Spring 1995 CUNY Initiative: Asian American Studies Faculty Development and Curriculum Project**

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## Introduction

CUNY established the earliest Asian American Studies program on the East Coast at City College in 1970 as a result of student demands. The program never flourished. In fact, it ended recently with the retirement of its lone senior faculty. In 1993, Hunter College established its Asian American Studies program—again as result of persistent student struggles. It and the research-oriented Asian/American Center at Queens College are now the only permanent Asian American Studies presence in the whole CUNY system.

The obstacles for the development of Asian American Studies in the CUNY system are many, not the least of which is the racial marginalization of Asian Americans reflected in the mainstream academic disciplines. Traditional academic departments generally see Asian American Studies and other interdisciplinary programs as a challenge to their academic domains. The departments often undermine the programs through non-appointment and non-tenure of faculty in interdisciplinary programs.

Continued mobilization of Asian American communities pressuring CUNY colleges to hire more Asian American Studies faculty is still the top priority, though in the 1990s we have the advantages of demography and the growing political power of Asians in our favor. Advocacy of the intellectual imperative of Asian American Studies on campuses is equally important. There is the need to consolidate the strength of Asian American Studies scholars in the New York City area to shape a uniform strategy and thus establish an effective advocacy force in this struggle.

The Asian American Studies Faculty Development and Curriculum Project is designed for that purpose. This project, funded by the CUNY Office of Faculty Development, has pooled human and intellectual resources in the system to kick-start a CUNY-wide Asian American Studies initiative.

## Editors' Note

In Spring 1995, the Core Committee of the CUNY Initiative: Asian American Studies Faculty Development and Curriculum Project conducted a series of meetings and seminars which provided the foundation for this guidebook. The guidebook Editorial Committee's readings and discussions of the initial draft generated a coherent structural framework and identified major omissions, stylistic discrepancies, and areas requiring clarification. Thus, we found it necessary to make substantial revisions, as well as rewrite portions and incorporate new material. Consequently, we take responsibility for any shortcomings.

As the first publication to provide practical and structural guidelines for the integration of Asian American Studies into the CUNY curriculum, this guidebook attempts to

- theorize Asian American Studies as an interdisciplinary field in CUNY;
- introduce and provide a history of the field of Asian American Studies;
- provide a detailed analysis of the intellectual and structural relationship of Asian American Studies to many affiliated fields and disciplines;
- address significant structural and conceptual challenges to the integration of Asian American Studies at CUNY;
- offer specific teaching approaches and pedagogical and theoretical considerations based on analyses of a wide body of Asian American Studies syllabi from institutions nationwide and teaching experiences of Core Committee members within the CUNY system; and
- indicate significant intellectual challenges facing the field.

We consider this guidebook to be a work-in-progress—one which will undoubtedly require amendments and refining, especially as Asian

American Studies becomes increasingly established on CUNY campuses.

We thank Sandy Yee and Lily Ng for helping to make the Spring 1995 seminar program a success. We also thank Robert Ku and Margaret Chin for their comments on and revisions of later drafts. Finally, we wish to acknowledge the efforts of the past and present student struggles to establish Asian American Studies at CUNY. Their spirit, courage, and commitment inspire us.

Jane Sung-ee Bai  
Alexandra Seung Hye Suh  
Co-editors  
New York City  
October 1995

## Curriculum Through the Ages

In some respects it seems long ago that we were developing some of the first Asian American Studies courses at UCLA in 1970.<sup>1</sup> There simply were no blueprints or models for us—this was not a simple task but we were afforded unusual freedom to create new paradigms of teaching and learning as well as adapt a variety of topics and disciplines to our purposes. We had only a few basic principles: first, this was to be a field that would produce, in some broad but discernible sense, information that could benefit Asian American communities; second, the field would, by definition, engage the communities of people it studied so that the long-term process would be continually reflexive and interactive; third, students would be encouraged to put their knowledge to positive use. This “applied” element made Asian American Studies differ enough from traditional humanities disciplines to make some colleagues who believed in research “for its own sake” somewhat uncomfortable. But our colleges and universities accommodate many departments and schools with a much more applied nature—Architecture, Performing Arts, Engineering, Business, Agriculture, Law and Medicine, to name but a few. And many of the social sciences do much in the way of applied research and teaching. One of the unusual facets of our approach was advocacy for Asian American communities facing socio-economic problems; in this way we were akin to fields also then emerging like Women’s Studies or Environmental Studies.

But in other respects it seems like we are still in the same place—trying to assist individual students and groups who would like to be involved in Asian American Studies but are without Asian American Studies faculty or institutional support for this work. This is especially

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<sup>1</sup> Editors’ Note: The first Asian American Studies programs were established in 1969, as a result of the Third World Student Strikes, at San Francisco State College (now a university) and UC Berkeley.

true away from the West Coast universities with fairly long traditions in this field. And yet a great deal has changed in the past quarter-century and this CUNY guidebook reflects the dramatic social, political, and intellectual shifts that have occurred. I have had the privilege of working intensely with Asian American Studies programs and initiatives in Southern California and in Hawai'i. Over the past two years I have had the pleasure of working with students, faculty, and community groups struggling with the challenges of establishing this field in New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey—the Mid-Atlantic area with dramatic increases in Asian American student and community populations. Clearly the CUNY system is now faced with resource challenges unlikely to abate in the foreseeable future. This crisis comes at precisely the time that the need for Asian American Studies is greatest and the demand likely to be most energetically articulated. It does seem to me that there will be opportunities for some gains in the midst of a generally gloomy environment.

This guidebook is evidence that there is, for example, an impressive critical mass of individuals within New York City capable of constructing interesting and challenging courses with cutting-edge material. The curriculum guidelines and reading list will be of immediate use to students and faculty anxious to institute new courses or to encourage students in the absence of established courses. The guidebook will also be of great interest to those who wish to understand Asian American Studies as a field of study and to imagine its place within the CUNY system. The topics to be studied and researched—reading assignments, documentaries, site visits, and lectures—would certainly look different in Berkeley or in Honolulu. But the basic principles of progressive education and commitment to social justice would surely find considerable resonance everywhere. It will be our major challenge to find ways to incorporate these principles and this field into the many campuses of the City University of New York.

Franklin Odo  
New York City  
Spring 1995

During the 1995 Spring semester, a core group of Asian American scholars gathered for a series of four seminars. Five consultants in different fields of Asian American Studies presented their papers. Each gave an evaluation of the curriculum development in a specialized field, and discussed the various teaching approaches, the major issues of concern and debate, and the primary texts in the field. Their presentations were based on their own teaching experience and on an analysis of syllabi used by others around the country. Much of their discussions touched not just on course content but on pedagogical and academic institutional issues relating to Asian American Studies.

After their presentations, ample time was given to participants for questioning and dialogue. For many of us, this was a rare opportunity for in-depth intellectual exchange with fellow Asian American Studies scholars—rare due to the marginal status of Asian American Studies and the relative isolation of Asian American Studies scholars on the East Coast. The series helped us to catch up with reading and follow-up on the critical debates in the field. More importantly, we have constructed a peer group struggling to make Asian American Studies a part of the CUNY academic community.

The Asian American Studies Faculty Development and Curriculum Project enabled us to call together almost all the major scholars in the New York City area in the field of Asian American Studies. The core group of approximately 15 members are full-time and adjunct faculty or graduate students in the CUNY system. During the public sessions after the core group discussions, we were able to attract scholars from Columbia, Harvard, and Rutgers universities, as well as CUNY college students and community activists.

This assembly of mostly younger scholars is the bedrock of the future for the field on the East Coast. This initiative is particularly important for the CUNY system, as it is located in the heart of one of the largest Asian concentrations in the nation, attracting ever larger number of Asian students, and housing, at present, the program that offers the largest number of Asian American Studies courses on the East Coast. CUNY colleges and the Graduate Center do and will play a vital role in the national development of Asian American Studies.

Though most of the core group members are junior faculty and doctoral candidates with busy schedules, they met willingly a dozen

times in the planning before and summary after the seminars. The participants have had an extremely positive experience with the project, for it has given us new energy, new direction and camaraderie. We have come to believe that we will be able to make Asian American Studies a vital part of the CUNY academic environment.

In closing, I would like to thank the CUNY Office of Faculty Development for funding this project. I would also like to thank Jane Bai for her intellectual leadership and her admirable administrative efforts in coordinating this successful project.

Peter Kwong  
New York City  
July 1, 1995

## **Interdisciplinary Fields in The Institution**

This opening chapter surveys issues facing Asian American Studies<sup>1</sup> as an interdisciplinary field struggling for its place in the academy. Interdisciplinary fields are fields of study which cannot be contained within one of the traditional disciplines, such as Literature, History, or Sociology, but rather draw from multiple disciplines. By the nature of their formulations and approaches, most interdisciplinary fields challenge the very notion of disciplinarity and disciplinary boundaries. This chapter discusses the major structural and conceptual barriers to the institutionalization of emergent interdisciplinary fields and analyzes the relationship of Asian American Studies to other interdisciplinary fields, such as Women's Studies and Lesbian and Gay Studies.<sup>2</sup>

### **Interdisciplinary Fields As a Challenge to Disciplinarity**

Post-secondary education in the United States and much of the world is formally divided into disciplines: classifications which designate and distinguish among objects of study. Thus, in Literature, one studies literary texts, in Sociology, human social behavior, and so forth. As the word suggests, however, disciplines also comport historically developing yet consistent, specific, and rigorous approaches to their diverse objects of study: "belonging" to a discipline traditionally means not only studying something in particular but studying it in a way that sustains and is sustained by the ways it has been studied in the past. One of the foundational components of training in a particular discipline is the assimilation of the history of that

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<sup>1</sup> Editors' Note: The field known as "Asian American Studies" has come to include Pacific Islander Studies as well. However, Pacific Islander issues continue to be marginalized within the field.

<sup>2</sup> Editors' Note: Asian Americanists and other scholars have framed this field to include Bisexual Studies. This field is also increasingly being referred to as "Queer Studies."

discipline, a mastery of its methods, and a thorough understanding of its methodological approaches. Scholarship is thus parceled into more or less mutually exclusive categories, each with methods and approaches proper to it.

Over the past few decades, a number of fields which do not follow a single discipline have developed within the U.S. university structure, fields such as Asian Studies, Latin American Studies, African Studies, and Middle Eastern Studies—"area" studies which designate a geographical region outside of Europe, and which are themselves a product of the earlier "Oriental Studies."<sup>3</sup> For ideological and political reasons too complex to address adequately here, these fields have long been able to exist alongside traditional disciplines. The core of the U.S. educational system was understood to concern Europe and European culture, so that literary studies, for example, traditionally meant the study of the literature of Europe. Accordingly, the study of Asian literature would be carried out not within the discipline of literature, but rather within the discipline of Asian Studies, a structural arrangement still in place today which manifests the ideological position that the study of Asian literature should naturally be lumped together with the study of Asian economy, Asian history, and Asian societies. The main point here is that these "area studies," though interdisciplinary, do not structurally or intellectually challenge the traditional disciplines. The overarching category of geography partitions off scholarship about a designated non-European part of the world. The geographical boundaries which define area studies have thus become intellectual barriers as well; thus, scholarship addressing the non-European world remains apart from the concerns of scholars within the traditional disciplines.<sup>4</sup>

The emerging<sup>5</sup> interdisciplinary fields such as Asian American

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<sup>3</sup>For an extended discussion of the history of Oriental Studies and its historical, intellectual, and political underpinnings, see Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1978).

<sup>4</sup>An interesting and ironic illustration of the university's historical Eurocentrism is the growing presence of American Studies. The work of Americanists continues to be marginal vis-à-vis the work of Europeanists. But even within American Studies, the treatment of Asian American Studies and other Ethnic Studies components is highly problematic. An ideological battle is being waged between Ethnic Studies

Studies, Women's Studies, and Lesbian and Gay Studies, are like area studies in that they draw from more than one of the traditional disciplines. They are also unlike area studies in a number of ways. The histories of their origins are one indication of these differences. Whereas area studies historically grew out of the needs of the state (for knowledge regarding politically and militarily important areas of the globe) and were often state-funded, interdisciplinary fields such as Ethnic Studies, Women's Studies, and Lesbian and Gay Studies arose from student and community protest movements which demanded that education directly correspond to society and to the unmet needs and interests—in all senses—of the people. Recognition and legitimation of these fields on their own terms challenges the very foundations of traditional disciplines on three primary bases: scope, methodology, and disciplinarity itself.

For the first matter, scope, note that the purview of the emerging fields is not geographically isolatable but rather bears upon the same terrain that traditional disciplines purport to study, pointing to specific lapses, biases, and distortions within what is proper to the traditional disciplines. U.S. lesbian and gay history, U.S. women's history, African American history, Native American history, Latino history, and Asian American history are all integral components of U.S. history, but these histories have been largely excluded from or distorted in traditional American historical studies. Thus, these emergent fields designate

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and American Studies. Whereas these two fields appear to cover the same terrains, with Asian American Studies as a part of either or both, the two fields are at odds politically: American Studies tends to reproduce the hierarchies and biases of Eurocentric studies, whereas Ethnic Studies emphasizes diversity within "America" and challenges such hegemony. Perhaps the growth of American Studies is a sign of higher educational institutions' recognition of the fundamental significance of areas studied within the rubric of Ethnic Studies and, thus, the academy's intention to dilute and monitor the counter-hegemonic foundation of Ethnic Studies.

<sup>5</sup>Though some of these fields, such as Women's Studies and African American Studies, have had a formal place in U.S. academic institutions for over 25 years, they are more or less without exception still marginalized in a number of ways. They are referred to as "emergent" in this structural sense only, and the term is not intended to overlook or discredit the extremely wide body of scholars and the history of scholarship in these fields.

subjects and topics which by definition should be covered by the traditional disciplines but are not covered or improperly covered.

In addition to challenging what is studied within traditional disciplines, the interdisciplinary fields carry with them methodological innovations and theoretical reconceptualizations. Filling in what is missing and correcting what was distorted is a process that cannot leave original theoretical structures intact. New material generates not only more knowledge but also different ways of thinking, which both add to and challenge the work generated within the disciplines.

Finally, the emergent interdisciplinary fields challenge the very notion of disciplinarity, or at least its sufficiency. Whereas there are contingents within each discipline fighting for the incorporation, for example, of Asian American sociological issues within sociological studies, and of Asian American literature within literary studies, the disciplines as a whole integrate only those aspects which are characteristic of the respective disciplines and do not recognize the interdisciplinarity of the field. Scholars in Asian American Studies and other interdisciplinary fields have found that much meaningful work can only be done by crossing disciplinary boundaries, and recognizing the linkages among what are normally seen as discrete disciplines.

### **Pedagogy**

It is clear that curricular transformation alone will not bring about the changes in higher education sought by students, communities, and educators. Although this guidebook is devoted to curricular issues, it should be noted that curriculum is only one cornerstone of the challenge that interdisciplinary fields bring to traditional education. Emergent interdisciplinary fields, in addition to bringing previously excluded matters to scholarly attention and challenging traditional intellectual categories, have also advocated new approaches to pedagogy. Voices within these fields have questioned traditional teacher-student relationships, structures of authority, methods of analysis and evaluation of student work, and classroom dynamics.

### **Structures and Administrative Organization: Courses, Programs, Departments, and Institutes**

Departments, courses, programs, and institutes form an

interlocking network that structures the educational dimension of the college and university system in the United States. **Departments** are the principal units in the university structure. They are generally constituted along traditional disciplinary boundaries, and hold primary sway over courses, majors, and concentrations. **Courses** must be offered and faculty must be rostered through at least one department. A **program** is a field of study often without independent faculty that offers courses in a particular field. Faculty members—permanent or adjunct—who teach within a program are generally rostered through existing departments and their courses under the interdisciplinary program are cross-listed with that department's other offerings. The Asian American Studies and Women's Studies programs at Hunter College are examples. Programs may or may not be able to offer students majors of some kind in the field, though they usually can offer concentrations. **Institutes** are generally non-teaching entities composed of scholars engaged in independent research and administrators who facilitate research and extra-curricular programming.

Often, one or more departments within an institution may offer Asian American Studies courses without an overarching structure such as an Asian American Studies program or department. These courses are generally taught by adjunct faculty or by permanent faculty without substantial experience in the field, and who may or may not be moving toward an Asian American Studies specialization. Although this is in itself a laudable attempt on the part of the individual departments to address curricular shortfalls, it must be clear that such courses, often spontaneously generated and sporadically offered, can in no way substitute for the permanent establishment of Asian American Studies at the institution. Some system must be in place guaranteeing the continuation of Asian American Studies beyond the presence of a particular course or instructor at an institution. And, only a permanent administrative structure with some control over hiring, curricular and extra-curricular programming, and long-term planning can guarantee any stability and security of the field within that institution. Only with such a structure can Asian American Studies be considered to be solidly established on a particular campus.

## **Hiring and Tenure**

Many scholars of interdisciplinary fields are themselves trained in and work within traditional disciplines because structures for the interdisciplinary fields often do not exist. With few exceptions, departments control the hiring and tenure of permanent faculty. Candidates are sought based on departmental needs, evaluated and selected by departmental search committees, and tenured based on departmental and university standards. Because departments are predicated along traditional disciplinary lines, those working in interdisciplinary fields must contend with structures—and often colleagues—inimical to their work and unprepared to evaluate it in terms of the interdisciplinary field itself. When a program is established it sometimes carries with it one or more floating lines. These are faculty positions designated for the field, not for a specific department. However, the faculty hired must be rostered through one or more existing departments and thus the departmental standards once again become relevant, with program advocates and departmental representatives favoring different candidates. Even adjunct instructors must generally work within at least one department.

## **Courses and Course Credit, Concentrations, and Majors**

Under the present system, faculty affiliation with departments is also crucial for course credit. Courses in interdisciplinary fields often also satisfy distribution requirements, which once again are determined along departmental lines. Since students often do not have the time or the financial resources to take courses outside of what is required for graduation, cross-listing courses can allow students to satisfy requirements with courses in an interdisciplinary field they are interested in. Interdisciplinary fields, when institutionalized within a program, can offer students the opportunity to concentrate in the field, and in some cases, provide a major. Both are especially difficult in fields such as Asian American Studies and Lesbian and Gay Studies which, unlike Women's Studies, do not have a critical mass of faculty already rostered through existing departments and able to teach in the field. The establishment of a major is, again, a difficult enterprise because of the same issues regarding the lack of faculty positions, control over new hires and tenure, and evaluation of the field by committees operating

along disciplinary standards.

### **Asian American Studies and Other Interdisciplinary Fields**

Whereas traditional disciplines carve out mutually exclusive niches in an institution, the boundaries of interdisciplinary fields are by nature flexible. Thus, in addition to drawing from and contributing to the many existing disciplines, interdisciplinary fields can be extremely compatible with one another and due in fact overlap in many areas. Individual courses and faculty often combine theoretical perspectives, themes, and materials from more than one interdisciplinary field. Of course, the degree to which all of these fields are institutionalized will determine the degree to which their alliance is officially recognized. For example, though there is considerable overlap between Lesbian and Gay Studies and Asian American Studies, this fact is often not recognized institutionally because, in many institutions, administrative structures have not been established for either field. On the other hand, many institutions do have Women's Studies programs, which may offer Lesbian and Gay Studies courses and/or Asian American Studies courses.

When one interdisciplinary field gains an institutional foothold, its administrators are sometimes willing and able to facilitate the entrance of another interdisciplinary field in the same college or university. However, even when there is some willingness on the part of the more established field, that field rarely, if ever, carries the resources and influence of a traditional department. Accordingly, its ability to facilitate the establishment of another interdisciplinary field is often limited to arranging an adjunct course or extra-curricular programming. Regardless, it must be kept in mind that the institution, not another interdisciplinary program within it, must be held ultimately accountable for the offering of a comprehensive curriculum. Despite budgetary constraints, a zero-sum financial argument is never an adequate response to educational imperatives.



## **Introduction to Asian American Studies**

Born out of the Third World Student Strikes which began in 1968 at San Francisco State College (now a university), Asian American Studies emerged in a climate of Third World liberation struggles against European and U.S. imperialism, a heightened awareness of the academy's role in the U.S. military-industrial-technological complex, increasing identification by Asian American students with other oppressed peoples, and an intensifying movement against the Vietnam War. As an academic field of study, Asian American Studies is the disciplined examination of Asians in the United States, and oftentimes the Americas. Its category of analysis encompasses a wide range of ethnic groups, including East Asians, Southeast Asians, and South Asians, and extends at least into the eighteenth century. Asian American Studies also includes Pacific Island Studies, and its purview accordingly involves the history and experiences of native peoples, including Hawai'ians, Guamanians, and Samoans, and their migrations to Hawai'i and the U.S. mainland.

### **General Priorities of the Field**

Asian American Studies is predicated on the basis of an Asian American panethnicity which sees Asian Americanness not only as a result of racist homogenizing but also as a basis for non-essentialist political alliance and solidarity. Throughout its twenty-six-year history, Asian American Studies has developed a flexible yet identifiable set of priorities that continues to remain central to the field. While the following priorities are not intended to be prescriptive or limiting to individual scholars, they reflect those considerations that determine Asian American Studies as a distinct field with a "critical, counterhegemonic stance."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>For elaboration on the current trends and issues that are challenging the original

### ***Asian American Studies and Asian American Communities***

Asian American Studies is accountable to Asian American communities, both narrowly and broadly defined. It is not only individual scholars and teachers but also Asian American communities who have a stake in Asian American Studies research, scholarship, and teaching, and thus their interests and input must be considered. Of course, questions can and do arise as to what constitutes “Asian American communities” and the standards for determining “community interest.” Rigid, monolithic conceptions of communities defined, for example, exclusively along ethnic lines, may ignore the stratifications of gender, class, and sexuality, and must be challenged. However, the general principle remains that knowledge is neither “for its own sake” nor should it benefit scholars if it is at the expense of the communities they have based their work on. At this point, the question of how to maintain ongoing dialogue and exchange between communities and the academy, as well as accessibility and accountability of academy to community, seem to be important issues.

### ***Contemporary Issues***

Asian American Studies is redefined and reshaped through engagement with current circumstances and issues. In designing their courses, instructors must reassess the field and their emphases in light of new developments within the field and global, national, and local current events, as well as the applicability of material to the specific needs of the campus community in which the courses are taught.

### ***Asian American Studies as a Corrective to Traditional U.S. Education***

Asian American Studies addresses not only the fact that treatment of Asians in traditional curricula has been distorted or neglected, but examines this distortion and neglect as constitutive both of the fields themselves and of the ways in which the subjects which are

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visions of Asian American Studies, see “Asian American Studies: Reevaluating for the 1990s,” Lane Ryo Hirabayashi and Marilyn C. Alquizola, *The State of Asian America: Activism and Resistance in the 1990s* (Boston: South End Press, 1994).

the focus of study are understood. Thus, for example, lack of knowledge of Asian American history, sociology, political science, and economics has made it possible for the model minority myth to become firmly entrenched in U.S. mainstream perceptions. Asian American Studies generate theoretical models must be elaborated which provide a more accurate assessment of Asian Americans' educational, economic, and social adaptation in the United States. And, in addition to misperceiving Asian Americans as a group, such lacunae in education make a thorough understanding of such crucial historical moments as the Reconstruction, during which Chinese laborers were recruited to replace Black slaves on southern plantations, impossible.

### ***Asian Americans as a Component of Ethnic Studies***

Asian American Studies emphasizes Asian Americans' historical and contemporary relationship to other communities of color in the United States. This emphasis resists dominant trends which tend to produce narratives and theories which isolate and alienate racial and ethnic groups from one another.

### ***Redefining Scholarly Material***

Asian American Studies emphasizes the importance and legitimacy of Asian American sources. It has amplified and validated the role of oral testimonies and histories, which are often the only means of access to crucial historical, cultural, and sociological insights. It has made use of archival and other material not traditionally seen as scholarly evidence, such as the poems carved into the walls of the Angel Island detention center by Chinese male immigrants.

### ***An Introductory Course on Asian American Studies***

A foundational course in Asian American Studies introduces students to the history of the field and its methodologies, and provides a general overview of themes and topics. As in other disciplinary and interdisciplinary introductory courses, "Introduction to Asian American Studies" courses emphasize breadth, coverage, and synthesis, as opposed to in-depth exploration of a specific topic. The course places the field of Asian American Studies within its historical context—arising

out of student movements of the 1960s and 1970s, and highlights the general priorities of the field. These include the field's relationship to Asian American communities, a focus on contemporary issues, a re-evaluation of traditional U.S. education from an Asian American Studies perspective, a conceptualization of the field as a component of Ethnic Studies, a consideration of the field within a global context, a redefinition of scholarly methods and materials, and new approaches to pedagogy.

### ***Teaching Approaches***

"Introduction to Asian American Studies" courses must address the ethnic diversity of Asian American populations, even if this diversity is not represented within a particular classroom. One approach has been to divide the syllabus by ethnic and/or national origin. Whereas this method fosters clarity, it also carries with it certain problems. Division by ethnicity diminishes the basis for cross-cultural comparative and synthetic analyses, promotes fragmentation, and homogenizes members of each ethnic or national group, ignoring the diversity within each group. Another approach divides the syllabus by themes, examining a selection of materials on several (but not all) ethnic groups. This approach can facilitate comparative analyses and provide a better basis for an articulation of Asian American panethnicity. Both approaches must select topics and themes judiciously, taking into account not only ethnic diversity, but also regional differences, historical processes, class and gender divisions, and other issues.

Another significant feature of "Introduction to Asian American Studies" courses is that they acknowledge that Asian American Studies is a burgeoning and vital field. While all fields are constantly evolving, the process is particularly acute for Asian American Studies and other emerging fields which are gradually gaining the institutional footholds and financial resources with which to develop a solid base of research and scholarship. Thus, "Introduction to Asian American Studies" courses must keep abreast of changes and developments, placing them within the context of the field as a whole.

"Introduction to Asian American Studies" courses bring key methods and themes of the field to bear upon the examination of both historical and contemporary issues. Part of the process of defining the

field is emphasizing the connections among the field, Asian American communities, Asian American community organizations, and local, national, and international issues.

### ***Themes/Topics***

- Overview of patterns in and effects of the Asian American presence in the United States (e.g., racial and other inequalities; community formation; activism; diverse perspectives on American history and contemporary issues)
- Construction and components of Asian American identity (e.g., racial marginalization and inequality; issues of ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, language, and generation; ethnic and cultural diversity among Asian Americans)
- Overview of basic concepts, theories, and methods of social inquiry: polishing methodological tools for not only Asian Americans but also other American “minorities” and social groups in general
- Introduction to the disciplines of Asian American/Ethnic Studies
- Impact of patterns of immigration and contemporary race relations on current configurations of family, community, political, economic, and educational issues
- Changing immigration patterns
- Refugee experiences
- Model minority myth
- Higher education/bilingual education/language rights/multicultural education
- Anti-Asian violence
- Political representation
- Interracial/interethnic/intraethnic relations
- Labor
- Health/mental health
- Domestic violence
- Gender and sexuality
- Media representations
- Prospects for the 1990s and beyond

### **Challenges Facing the Field**

Ethnic and national diversity among Asian Americans is far too

complex to address by using traditional ethnic classification methods: Chinese Americans come from Taiwan and Hong Kong in large numbers besides continued migration from the People's Republic of China, and there are Asians remigrating to the United States from their diasporic homes in Latin America, the Caribbean, and other parts of the world. New immigrants, with their backgrounds in developing countries and postcolonial societies, are bringing Asian America into a dialogue with changing global conditions and transnational identities. These demographic changes call for a re-evaluation of links between academics and community issues and of the forces of racialization, ethnicization, social class, gender, and globalization in the formation of new Asian communities.

Within the Social Sciences, most Asian American Studies programs are currently too small to offer many courses beyond the introductory level. Among the few that are more focused, oftentimes an inordinate amount of classroom time is devoted to correcting mainstream stereotypes and misconceptions of Asians and Asian Americans. Thus, the debates focus on whether Asians are a successful minority; whether the existence of ethnic enclaves provides Asian immigrants a new path towards upward social mobility; whether Asian Americans are politically passive; whether Asian Americans should be classified as an ethnic minority or a racial minority; or whether cultural rather than class assets are the causes for Asian Americans' high academic achievements.

Of course, the proclivity to emphasize more well known events and issues can be attributed to the uneven character of research agendas which tend to favor those ethnic groups with longer historical presences and larger populations in the United States. As a result of these and other factors, Asian American Studies as a field often seems to lack its own research agenda. In Asian American history,<sup>7</sup> for instance, much scholarship addresses only prominent events. For example, research is saturated by the Japanese American internment experience and devoid of any substantive attention towards the following period. There are dozens of works on the Chinese Exclusion Act but almost nothing on Chinese Americans from the 1900s to the 1960s; work on Koreans

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<sup>7</sup> Depending on the institution, History is classified as either a social science or an humanities discipline. For the purposes of this guidebook, History is considered a social science discipline as determined by the CUNY curriculum.

focuses on the African American and Korean American “conflicts” of the late 1980s and early 1990s; work on Southeast Asians, specifically Vietnamese and Cambodian, focuses on refugee policies and experiences. Moreover, research has favored earlier Asian American groups (Chinese and Japanese), indicating the field’s imperative to generate more work on the dozens of other Asian ethnic groups.

Asian American Studies has evolved from a highly ideological approach with emphasis on racial and class oppression (identifying Asian Americans as part of the “colored minorities”) to an ethnic study orientation (identifying Asians more with the “assimilation” experiences of the European immigrants). Within the academy, where class theories, community activism, and oral research are discouraged, the sharp edges of Asian American Studies are muted by research agendas based on analysis of census data and historical documents. And, given the prevalent fierce attack on totalizing discourses in the disciplines, the field has become fragmented into specializations, rendering comparative studies almost nonexistent. Increasingly, researchers are focusing on issues concerning a single national group, in a particular place, and during a specific time period. In the face of the diversity and complex nature of Asian American communities, instructors are now more concerned with the breadth of coverage than with theoretical depth and analysis. Although comparative scholarship appears to have gained more acceptance in certain academic arenas, such research is still generally marginalized.

Recent publications reflect little effort, or a seemingly intentional resistance, towards the formulation of a central theoretical axis for Asian American Studies as a unified field. In fact, with the increasing interest in Asian Diaspora Studies, the trend is to study the linkage between single national groups and their Asian “homelands,” further diluting the concept of Asian America. Most courses offered by Asian American Studies programs nationwide stretch the definition of the field far beyond the previously accepted locale of analysis (e.g., “History of South Asians Overseas”). While a course such as “United States and Philippines Relations” should have a space within the field in that it covers the colonialist relationship which clearly affects Filipino/a American experience (e.g., Filipino/a labor migration and immigration patterns to the United States), the scope of study needs to be expanded,

and thus contextualized, to include Filipino/a experience in the United States in relation to other Asian ethnic groups, communities of color, and the broader U.S. society.

Another general challenge is providing equal coverage of all Asian ethnic groups from the 1800s to the present. Such an initiative is predicated upon the concept of a collective Asian American identity. Recognizing the enduring relevancy and currency of this political construction, Asian Americanists continue to develop and generate teaching strategies that would utilize selected themes and topics to reveal patterns of experiences for Asian ethnic groups. An on-going process of critique is necessary to negotiate the often tense relationship between recognizing distinct differences among Asian ethnic groups—which tends to perpetuate an insularity that ignores the operations of systemic discriminations and the dynamics of oppressive powers—and contextualizing those experiences within broader theoretical frameworks—which would allow for significant comparative analyses. One substantive attempt to make Asian American Studies less isolated and more politically relevant has been cross-ethnic analysis, especially from labor, women, migration, and Cultural Studies perspectives.

Many of the challenges outlined above can be met through increased faculty hirings and funding for research—at least initially. The bottom line, however, is that a programmatic structure is needed to house faculty and scholars, to provide institutionalized forums for on-going discussions, and to centralize the field so that developments can be built upon rather than reinvented in isolation. An institution's recognition of Asian American Studies as an intellectual imperative must be substantiated with financial commitment. Only then can Asian American Studies remain consistent with the field's critical and counterhegemonic principles.

## **Asian American Studies Courses Within Departments**

This chapter presents general course descriptions and commonly covered themes and topics of Asian American Studies courses offered through departments. As explained in Chapter 1, within higher education institutions most departments are defined by traditional disciplines, such as English (Literature), Linguistics, History, Sociology, Psychology, Political Science, and Anthropology. Some institutions also have departments which are interdisciplinary in nature, but still retain, for the most part, discipline-specific components. An Asian Studies department, for example, is constituted by a number of discipline-specific courses, such as South Asian literature, Japanese language, and Korean history. Within a department structure, however, Asian Studies is institutionally recognized as a field of study. Given the predominance of discipline-specific departments on CUNY campuses, the offerings of Asian American Studies courses are most likely—as has been the case at Queens, Hunter, and Baruch Colleges—to emerge from such institutional structures. In other words, discipline-specific departments have hired adjunct instructors or permitted rostered faculty members to teach Asian American Studies courses within particular disciplines, such as Asian American literature and Asian American history. Prior to the establishment of the Asian American Studies program at Hunter College in 1993, adjunct courses on Asian American literature were offered through the English Department. Therefore, Asian American Studies courses can be offered in departments as an intermediary phase towards the establishment of an Asian American Studies program.

While the offerings of specific Asian American Studies courses by individual departments on campuses lacking an Asian American Studies program is a significant step forward to the full-fledged integration of the field into CUNY's curriculum, this apparent commitment can be a bit misleading. Since budgetary constraints require departments to prioritize areas of expertise, adjunct funds are commonly used to

supplement the existing departmental curricula. Most Asian American Studies courses offered on campuses without an Asian American Studies program have been funded through designated adjunct monies. There are primarily two reasons for this: 1) existing faculty are unfamiliar and/or not trained in Asian American Studies; and 2) departmental hiring priorities for full-time faculty do not include Asian Americanists. Of course, the continued offering of “adjunct” courses without a program structure—without permanent faculty members trained in the field—deems such courses as transient, non-essential elements of the departmental curriculum. Equally significant, the presence of a few discipline-specific courses ignores the interdisciplinary nature of the field from which they emerge. While the initial necessity to use adjunct funding to introduce Asian American Studies to campuses through departments is understandable, the traditional over-subscription of such courses and the ever increasing production of scholarship should designate this field a priority—an essential part of any liberal arts curriculum—for the institution.

The following sections provide an overview of disciplines and their attendant courses. Housed in departments, these courses are commonly cross-listed with interdisciplinary programs, such as Women’s Studies. Despite the absence of institutional structures for other interdisciplinary fields, such as Lesbian and Gay Studies, many of these courses incorporate their themes and topics.

### **Anthropology**

Anthropology appears in many ways to be the ideal academic location in which to investigate many Asian American issues, particularly since the categories of race and ethnicity are important intellectual and social concerns of Asian American Studies. This union, however, has not occurred: Asian American Studies has not found a niche in Anthropology. (But neither has any other Ethnic Studies component, with the possible exception of Native American Studies which has a long and complicated association with the field of Anthropology.) A possible reason for this may be the widely shared belief that Anthropology has traditionally addressed questions of race and ethnicity most vibrantly through ethnography’s assumption of the dichotomy of “primitive” or “pre-industrial” and “modern” or “post-

industrial” societies or cultures. For this and other reasons, such as the field’s relationship to orientalism and colonialism, many Asian Americanists have been ambivalent to Anthropology’s methodologies and mission. Of course, within the past two decades, the field of Anthropology has gone through an “identity crisis,” where the very nature of the discipline has been challenged both from within and outside of the field. And as such, perhaps Asian American Studies can now find a more comfortable place within the field, leading to much needed scholarship and curricular developments.

### ***Teaching Approaches***

One of the most immediate concerns in a course that explores anthropological issues pertaining to Asian Americans is the question of who exactly is an “Asian American.” What exactly is the nature of this collective category? In what ways can the various theoretical frameworks of Anthropology provide insight into this issue? This question leads to the examination of the complex relationships between race, ethnicity, gender, national identity, migration, and power. While ethnic identification might be a global phenomenon, many questions relating to Asian American ethnicities, such as Filipina/o American, Vietnamese American, and Korean American, have yet to be systematically studied. A course concerned with these types of issues may explore the socio-cultural dimensions that shape and influence ethnic identity for the individual and community—dimensions such as gender, marriage, kinship, language, religion, class, and other traditional and emergent concerns of Anthropology.

### ***Themes/Topics***

- Concepts of identity
- Ethnic groups in conflict
- U.S. nationalism and Asian Americans
- Differences between “Asianness” and “Asian Americanness”
- Challenges to Anthropology’s methodological assumptions
- Ethnographies of Asian American communities
- Oral histories
- Cultural “insiders” vs. “outsiders”
- Ramifications of “Auto-ethno-biographies”

- Culture and diaspora
- Culture of migration

### **Communication (or Journalism)**

Distinct from Media Studies, Communication courses focus on analyzing communication models and media systems, such as broadcast television and radio, the film industry, and the print and publishing industries. In addition, they train students in journalism.

#### ***Teaching Approaches***

A common approach may be to focus on the role of journalism in Asian American communities with a special emphasis on how investigative reporting can uncover and highlight critical issues. Objectives for this course may be to provide students with a new perspective on historical and contemporary issues in Asian American communities through the eyes of ethnic media; to enlarge students' understanding of U.S. mass media by focusing on the contribution of "alternative" and "advocacy" publications in U.S. ethnic communities; and to encourage students to share what they have learned in the classroom by writing articles for campus and community publications.

An overview of issues in Asian American journalism could include identifying publications in Asian American communities. Discussion could focus on why they exist, what relationship they have to media in the larger U.S. society, and what the "image" of Asians in America is and how this "image" is reflected in mainstream and community media. Examining Asian American publications and the historical development of Asian American communities could lead to an investigation of the impetus for such publications—do they exist as a response to the needs of immigrants and/or to racism from the larger society? What role do these publications play in today's communities? Exploring theories of mass media and U.S. society leads to discussion on how the media shapes our view of "reality" in America and what relationship to mainstream media Asian American publications play. If Asian American publications are seen as an "alternative" form of media, what role do these play in Asian American communities? Are they all "advocacy" publications? Regarding investigative reporting, how do journalists investigate community problems? Where do they find information?

How do they evaluate the facts they find?

### ***Themes/Topics***

- Political representation
- Labor, gender, and sexuality
- Media stereotypes and the model minority myth
- Images in mainstream culture
- Contemporary Asian American culture
- Activism and resistance around issues of media stereotypes
- Racism and anti-Asian violence
- Immigrant experiences
- Popular culture in Asian American communities
- Challenges of community publishing, broadcasting, etc.
- The history of Asian Americans in the communication industry
- Control of ethnic media and stratification within ethnic communities
- Audiences: generation, language, culture, class, gender

### **Education**

The most critical issue in establishing Asian American Studies within Education departments is the ability to address Asian American perspectives in teacher education. This is most crucial in that Asian American Studies needs to have an impact on K-12 students, schools, administrators, and practitioners. Secondly, Asian American Studies can also draw on the K-12 experiences of Asian American students in class regarding curriculum, racism, cultural awareness, and parent involvement in the schools. Using actual experiences, explicit attention can be paid to teaching methods and pedagogy.

A second important issue is the ability to train educators with a socio-historical understanding of Asian American experiences in the U.S. educational system. One focus is the role that education as an institution has played in Asian American communities. This discussion would cover desegregation, bilingual education, affirmative action, and multicultural education, thus revealing how Asian Americans have utilized the educational system and how the educational system has responded to the Asian American population.

### ***Teaching Approaches***

One possible teaching approach is to examine the experiences, needs, and concerns of Asian American students. The course could consist of two basic interrelated themes. The first part of the course can examine the history of Asians in the United States. Topics could include the effects of the migration process, the role of Asian and American cultural values and institutions, U.S. stereotypes of Asians, and the impact of U.S. domestic and foreign policies on Asian American communities.

The second part of the course can be devoted to issues specifically related to the contemporary educational concerns of Asian American communities. Topics could include school achievement among Asian Americans, equality of educational opportunity, the model minority thesis, bilingual education, and multicultural education. The course could view the Asian American education experience within the context of developments in U.S. education.

The following series of questions generated by Professor Don Nakanishi, University of California, Los Angeles, can help formulate a course on education:

- What were the major educational issues in Asian American history? Who were the significant actors in these issues? To what extent were Asian Americans effective in protecting their educational rights and interests?
- What were the purposes of the early ethnic language schools in Asian American communities? How did those purposes complement or conflict with those of the U.S. educational system?
- Do Asian Americans “value” education? Why and how do they value education?
- What educational aims did early Chinese and Japanese immigrants have in relation to their homelands? How effective were they in those aims?
- If we are to define education in the broadest possible terms (to include both formal and nonformal educational practices within and without the Asian American community), what aspects of the Asian American experience should be studied in a course of this nature?
- What are the major contemporary educational issues facing Asian Americans? What makes them major issues? Are they similar or

- different to issues facing other groups?
- How have different demographic changes had an impact on the educational needs and issues facing various Asian American groups? What, if any, impact will projected demographic trends have on the educational agenda facing Asian American communities?
  - Should the needs and concerns of recent Asian immigrants and refugees be considered separately from those of U.S.-born Asian American students?
  - What are the educational implications of the notion of Asian American success? How, if at all, does the perspective influence policies and programs aimed towards the schooling of Asian Americans? What, if anything, makes it a myth?
  - Are Asian Americans “genetically smarter” than other groups, as some contemporary researchers have argued? Are they “culturally advantaged”? What, if anything, accounts for the success that the media attributes to them?
  - Do numbers lie? Why do some Asian American scholars refute the statistics which are offered by other researchers to support the interpretation of Asian American success? Are the counter-arguments compelling?
  - Asian Americans are a diverse population. However, what do you consider to be the major variables of differentiation among Asians? What arguments are presented by scholars?
  - Does the Asian college-going population differ significantly from other groups of college-goers? How, if at all, do Asian American students differ with respect to their academic preparation, extracurricular involvement, career interests, educational aspirations, and other characteristics?
  - If Asian Americans as a group exhibit high levels of educational achievement, why do they still need affirmative action programs for undergraduate admissions, entrance into professional and graduate programs, and faculty hirings and promotions?
  - What are the policy implications, if any, associated with the dramatic rise in college enrollment among Asian Americans?
  - What allegations have Asian Americans made about admissions practices and policies towards Asian applicants at various

competitive undergraduate institutions? What have been the responses?

- What do we mean by “objective” and “subjective” criteria in the evaluation of applicants to undergraduate colleges? Why do Asian American critics believe that Asian American applicants are at a disadvantage if subjective criteria are used?
- Why did the “Asian admissions issue” become a significant item on the organizational agendas of many Asian American community organizations? What, if any, role can these groups play in the resolution of this issue?
- What, if any, parallels are there between the current “Asian quota controversy” and the pre-World War II Jewish quota debate?

### ***Themes/Topics***

- Historical dimensions
- Major educational reforms (e.g., bilingual education; desegregation)
- Education as measure of Asian American success
- Socialization patterns
- Job market
- Higher education (e.g., issues of access; quotas and affirmative action; Asian American admissions controversy)
- Asian American Studies
- Education of immigrants and refugees
- Politics and education

### **History**

History is a critical component of Asian American Studies. Many students turn intuitively to history to understand the Asian American “experience” and to wrestle with the meaning of their ethnic identity, that is, how did we/I come to be? History courses are among the most widely taught Asian American Studies courses in the university. However, owing to the persistence of Eurocentrism within many, if not all, of the History departments in the country, Asian American history is often marginalized—and still too frequently entirely excluded—from the mainstream of U.S. history. Thus, Asian American historical scholarship has often been produced outside the formal discipline of

History.

### ***Teaching Approaches***

Asian Americanists face a number of challenges in teaching Asian American history. Asian American history classes are usually limited to introductory classes. Thus, there is the general challenge of trying to cover “everything” in a survey course. Most will quickly conclude this to be impossible to achieve. Therefore, the challenges have to do with developing teaching strategies that, on the basis of selected themes and topics, illuminate the meaning of the Asian American experience and, furthermore, begin to enable students to interrogate and reconsider American history. Asian American history should ask: “How have Asian American experiences been shaped by, and in turn shaped, American history?” and “How does that history inform our perspective and agenda for our communities—and America—today?”

First, there is the challenge of covering the historical experience of dozens of Asian ethnic groups from 1800 to the present. The task is dictated by the definition of “Asian American”—a concept of identity that was constructed during the 1960s and 1970s by a self-defined “Asian American” political movement. That movement took the position that the immigrants and descendants of immigrants from various Asian and Pacific nations shared a common historical experience and trajectory in the United States. Asian Americanists accept this basic definition yet also understand that history is much more nuanced and complex. The experiences of Asian ethnic groups differ in some cases quite widely; moreover, Vietnamese, Japanese, Filipino/as, and Asian Indians historically did not—and still do not—necessarily identify with each other or even consider themselves as “Asians” or “Asian Americans.” This is not to suggest that there is no Asian American history or that Asian American history classes should not attempt to cover the experience of discrete Asian ethnic groups. The challenge is to problematize the historical meaning of “Asian American.”

One approach is to organize a course according to discrete ethnic histories—a unit on the Chinese, a unit on Cambodians, one on Koreans, and so on. The course may take up the issue of defining Asian American history through comparative analysis. One problem with this approach is that it runs the risk of mechanically covering a series of

discrete experiences. Another problem is an unevenness in quality and quantity of the literature on different ethnic groups.

Another approach is to organize a course thematically, covering selected topics such as immigration, community formation, labor market status, sex and gender relations, ethnic identity, nationalism, race relations, foreign policy, and imperialism. This approach lends itself to problematizing a definable "Asian American" experience. It also promotes an investigation of Asian American history's relation to broad economic, social, and political trends and changes in U.S. society. However, the attention paid to various Asian ethnic groups may be uneven; moreover, the experience of a specific group at a given historical moment may be selected to illustrate a specific theme without pursuing that group's historical experience more comprehensively.

Second, there is the challenge of contextualizing Asian American history within broader U.S. history. If "mainstream" history tends to exclude or marginalize Asian American history, the latter sometimes tends towards a certain insularity that ignores or plays down its connection to that "mainstream." In other words, we tend to reinforce our marginality. Nineteenth-century Chinese immigration and the exclusion movement, for example, are not fully understandable outside of general trends of nineteenth-century American history, such as Western expansion and Manifest Destiny, the sectional crisis of the 1850s, Reconstruction-era politics and race realignments, the growth of monopolies, and the labor movement. Moreover, these general trends assume greater or even different meaning when their relation to Chinese immigration is explored.

Third, there is the challenge of the literature. Scholarly research on Asian American history over the past twenty-five years has produced a fine body of work. The strengths and weaknesses of the literature articulate the two challenges discussed above. One problem is unevenness. As stated in Chapter 2, research has tended to focus on "big events," such as Japanese American internment, Chinese exclusion, and Southeast Asian refugee policies. Moreover, research material favors the Chinese and Japanese, groups that have longer histories and larger populations in the United States, whereas there is patchy coverage of Koreans, and Southeast Asian, Pacific Islander, and South Asian nationalities.

As the field develops, so does specialization. More and more monographic works dealing with specific historical moments of single ethnic groups are being produced. This adds tremendously to our knowledge of Asian American history. At the same time, the field has become increasingly fragmented. That problem reinforces the problems of both marginality and the lack of synthesis. But if the explicitly ideological emphasis on race and class oppression of the 1970s seems inadequate to many Asian Americanists today, we have not yet developed a new theoretical framework or approach. Furthermore, we do not simply lack an approach; there are emerging differences within the field itself. Some Asian Americanists choose to pursue a Cultural Studies approach to Asian American history, while others are uncomfortable with that or even oppose it. The tension between scholarship and community relevance and activism also enters the dynamic. It is a sign of healthy development that different theoretical approaches are debated within the field, but it also creates a situation of difficulty for the instructor who must fashion a course, particularly a survey course, within this context.

Thus, instructors of Asian American history today may utilize a growing body of literature that increasingly includes in-depth analytical monographic work but lacks synthesis. Instructors should be highly selective about the materials they use, but must also be more independent and self-conscious about articulating a theoretical framework. There are a number of survey texts (Chan, Takaki, Daniels) which are adequate as “textbooks” but are best used in combination with monographic work, journal articles, and primary sources. As well, fiction and autobiographical work are frequently used in Asian American history courses. Also useful are interpretive essays and books that reprint primary documents, such as Supreme Court cases, immigration statutes, and Angel Island poetry. Finally, Asian American history courses would do well to include work on important periods or themes of American history, such as westward expansion, labor movements, and imperialism, that help contextualize Asian American experiences.

### ***Themes/Topics***

- Race and stereotypes

- Political determinations of race (e.g., U.S.-Asia relations; early immigration history)
- Transformations in the U.S. economy and polity
- Immigration and labor (e.g., plantation Hawai'i; picture brides and community formation; domestic labor; U.S. colonization of the Philippines; Japanese colonization of Korea)
- Categories of race and anti-miscegenation laws
- Vietnam War and Southeast Asian refugee experiences
- World War II and Japanese American relocation and internment
- Asian American movements of the sixties and seventies
- Sojourners and immigrants
- Foreign policy and domestic racial politics
- Imperialism and Asian emigration
- Nationalism and community development
- Politics of assimilation (e.g., pre-war Asian Americans: second-class citizens vs. reluctant sojourners)
- Politics of repression and assimilation (e.g., racial politics during the Cold War)
- Immigration and segmentation of Asian America by race and class
- Model minority vs. oppressed minority
- Asian diaspora communities in the post-Cold War era

### **English (Literature)**

Asian American literature courses are perhaps the most widely taught Asian American Studies courses within higher education institutions across the country. Reasons for this are not surprising or unexpected. Due to the nonempirical nature of the field's social, cultural, and linguistic analysis, English departments traditionally have been a more viable and visible site of debate for other "nontraditional" literary studies, such as African American literature and women's literature. Perhaps entering through the narrow doors opened by these related "minority" studies, Asian American literature has in turn opened up other doors, allowing other components of Asian American Studies, such as Sociology, Film, and Media, to gain entrance into the seemingly hermetically sealed university curricula characterized by Eurocentrism. Although the 1969 Third World Student Strikes led to the creation of Ethnic Studies as a recognized field, the impact of this field has been

generally localized to campuses with strong student activist movements and progressive faculty members. Nationwide, this field continues to be absent from most campus curricula. Perhaps then, we can attribute English departments' receptivity to Asian American literature to the relative success of multiculturalism of the 1980s, a movement which has succeeded in infiltrating both the academy and broader society. This connection presumes that the publishing industry has sought to meet the mainstream public's demand for more literature by writers of color. And, with this increasing presence of published works by Asian American writers comes an academic interest in teaching and studying this work.

Due to the incredible breadth and scope of Asian American literature, it can be a daunting task to attempt to construct even an introductory level or a survey course of Asian American literature. Most often, if they are to even offer courses in the field, English departments are content to offer only a single introductory level course in Asian American literature. As a result, attempts to design a syllabus can be difficult for the individual, given that the task must take many factors into consideration. Instructors might ask themselves: Will my course be ethnically inclusive? Will it cover all or most genres (novels, poetry, short stories, autobiographies, drama, oral histories, literary criticism and theory, and even letters, diaries, and journals)? Will it focus on women's writings? Will it adequately incorporate gay and lesbian writings and themes? Will the students be required to purchase an inordinate amount of books, given that one cannot simply assign a "Norton's or Oxford's Anthology of Asian American Literature"? Hence, there is a continual need for more dialogue and thoughtful experimentation on levels of both scholarship and pedagogy.

### ***Teaching Approaches***

There are as many approaches to studying and teaching Asian American literature as there are those who study and teach it. One possible approach, outlined in detail in Elaine H. Kim's *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to the Writings and Their Social Context*,<sup>8</sup> is

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<sup>8</sup> First published in 1982 by Temple University Press, this text has stood for almost a decade as the only book-length study of Asian American literature and is, indisputably, still the most cited work in the field.

Asian American literature as historical and sociological documents. Arising from the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries, many writers have addressed themes of sojourns, migration and immigration, migrant labor, modernism, and orientalist representation of Asia. During the mid-twentieth century, writers addressed themes of war, Japanese American internment, questions of nationalism, agricultural life, and life in ethnic enclaves. During the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s, writers addressed themes such as civil rights, women's rights, Third World liberation struggles, Asian American identity, and the model minority myth. And, during the past fifteen years or so, an incredible burgeoning of Asian American writers and anthologies have begun to address various contemporary issues including conflicting nationalist identities, experiences of secondary migration, multiracial identities, and the damage of assimilation.

Another possible approach to studying and teaching Asian American literature is literature as expressions of ethnicity and nationalism. A primary concern since the origin of Asian American Studies in the early 1970s has been the dominance of the Chinese and Japanese American experience within the field. This dominance is somewhat understandable given the fact that the majority of the Asian American population, as well as writers who have published literary works, have come from these two groups. During the last decade or so, a concerted collective effort has been made by Asian Americanists to achieve a truer pan-Asian American emphasis whenever possible. For this reason, Asian American literature courses have done their best to highlight not only Chinese American and Japanese American writers, but also Korean and Filipino/a American writers, and writers of Pacific Islander, South Asian, and Southeast Asian nationalities, in addition to Amerasian, Asian Canadian, Asian Caribbean, Arab American, and Asian diaspora writers.

Obviously, it is not enough to address historical or sociological themes across the pan-Asian American experiences. Issues and approaches specific to the traditional study of literature, such as discourses of genre, style, and form, must also be considered. This, however, leads to another series of problems—the question of “art” versus “politics.” The pressure to conform to literary study's dominant notion that literary and political questions are to remain separate, poses

a special problem to Asian Americanists. How does one teach Asian American literature, which is located within a politically constructed field, apolitically? And here reference is made not just to the substance of the works but to the politics of its emergence vis-à-vis the publishing industry and presence within the academy. This precarious dichotomy of literature/politics, of course, must be deconstructed, but it is often difficult to do so under the auspices of literature because of the kind of reasons Terry Eagleton and Gerald Graff write about: it is the institutional study of English literature itself that has created the false dichotomy between the literary and the political or social spheres. As a result, the tension between form and content, between style and meaning, inevitably follows. And thus, to read Asian American literature without the consideration of political and social significance is, in essence, to return to the “dominant” mode of literary discourse where politics is removed from the question of literary or artistic endeavors. This in turn leads to the perpetuation of the problematic dichotomy of art/politics. A possible remedy, however, for addressing this problem is Gerald Graff’s suggestion that we “teach the conflict.”

And as such, another approach to the study and teaching of Asian American literature is the examination of Asian American literature as sites of literary polemics and debates. An example of this approach might include the question of (mis)representation and (in)visibility of an Asian American literary tradition, a polemic first brought into prominence by the editors of the Asian American literary anthology, *Aiiieeeee!* (first published in 1974). In their introduction to *Aiiieeeee!* and other subsequent essays, the editors insist that there is a “real” Asian American literary tradition, exemplified by writers such as Carlos Bulosan, John Okada, and Louis Chu, and a “fake” one, exemplified by Jade Snow Wong, Pardee Lowe, and Maxine Hong Kingston. This position, of course, has been widely challenged and debated by Asian American writers, critics, and audiences.

An approach for an Asian American women’s literature course could be to examine a cross-section of literary genres: poetry, fiction, biographies and autobiographies, plays, and essays. As a survey course, the focus could be around issues of Asian American women’s experiences and woman-centered narratives, both fiction and non-fiction. Critical and theoretical by nature, the approach would

investigate literature written by and about Asian American women from the early twentieth century to present day. Through an examination of these texts, the students would explore a range of issues, such as representation, identity constructs, race, ethnicity, culture, gender, nationalism, sexuality, class, and power structures; from a range of analytical perspectives, such as literary, historical, sociopolitical, economic, feminist, cultural, multicultural, postcolonial, and postmodern. Some questions raised could include “What are Asian American women’s narratives?,” “How have Asian American women writers explored and expressed Asian American women’s experiences?,” “How do patriarchal power structures impact Asian American women?,” “What are our multiple identities?,” and “What are our common struggles as women of color in the United States?” These courses should promote critical thinking about Asian American women’s experiences and literature within respective Asian American communities as well as within broader cultural and socio-political contexts.

### ***Themes/Topics***

- Constructions of identities
- Relocation and displacement
- Movement/resistance literature
- Colonialism
- Nationalisms and sexualities
- Gender and genre
- Comparative literary traditions (e.g., African American, Chicano/Latino, Native American)
- Immigration and immigrant experience
- Generational differences
- Cultural assimilation
- Notions of community
- Reconsidering the master narrative
- Lesbian/gay/bisexual issues
- Biracial issues
- The “family narrative”
- Asian diaspora
- Images of Asian American women

- Gender roles in transition
- Asian American women vs. Asian American men
- Interracial and interethnic relationships
- Postcolonial writings
- Feminism and postcoloniality
- Domestic violence
- Class
- Language
- Culture and social change

## **Media**

Within the CUNY system, Media Studies is considered a component of Communications since their areas of study are not mutually exclusive. Differing in focus, Asian American media courses seek to analyze films or videos which critique mainstream media itself and representations of Asians and/or Asian Americans in film and television. Critical and theoretical writings on media, representation issues, and film analysis may be supplementary.

### ***Teaching Approaches***

Asian American Studies media courses are often taught in an interdisciplinary manner. Films and videos are utilized as primary source materials for media analysis. Film and video analyses can be supplemented with discussions on Asian American literature, pop culture, and critical essays as well as films, videos, and theoretical writings by other people of color around issues of representation, power, and social structures.

Media Studies courses examine the production of Asian and/or Asian American images in the mainstream Hollywood film and television industries, and how Asian American producers have attempted to create more complex images of Asian Americans and Asian American experiences. The semester could be divided into themes or topics which are socially or culturally defined. Selected film/video makers' works range in terms of ethnic diversity and in media formats, such as feature narrative and documentary; short narrative and documentary; experimental and avant garde; and mainstream, independent, and alternative. It is not always possible to show feature films during a class

period, but it is effective to show various film clips from Hollywood-produced films around any given Asian American topic or issue with short films or videos made by Asian Americans as a basis for comparative analysis.

It is necessary to provide multiple contexts for analysis, since many students may never have taken an Asian American Studies course prior to a Media Studies course. Asian American experiences and Media Studies issues emerge from historical, socio-political, cultural, economic, psychological, sociological, and community-based contexts. Discussions could involve issues such as assimilation, displacement, generational differences, gender differences, sexuality, class and labor, migration, interracial relationships, multiculturalism, and racism in relationship to mainstream media representation and how Asian American producers have addressed these issues.

The goals of Asian American media courses include promoting an awareness of Asian Pacific cultures in America through media analysis and developing a more critical way of thinking about media representations, such as narrative, documentary, and experimental, and how they affect our lives.

### ***Themes/Topics***

- Media stereotypes of Asian women/men and Asian American women/men
- Influence and effects of media on gender identity and comparison of these images with those of other groups of color
- Comparison of images of Asian women with images of white women
- Asian Americans and mass media
- Capitalism and mass culture
- Media activism/self-determination
- Community-based film- and video-making
- Independent narrative film
- Experimental/avant-garde filmmaking
- Margins/fringe and mainstream media
- Diaspora consciousness
- Community-building
- Active and passive viewing

- Making images of “the other” and racism
- History of Hollywood film industry
- Television representation of Asians and Asian Americans
- Significance/insignificance of Asian ethnicities
- Is there an Asian American audience?
- Assimilation dilemmas
- Asia-born and U.S.-born issues
- Biracial issues
- Interracial relationships
- History and memory
- Who speaks for whom?
- Forms of activism, Asian American social movements
- Questions of “home”
- Gay and lesbian filmmaking and audiences
- Limits of multiculturalism

### **Political Science**

Political Science examines issues of power and the institutions that distribute and maintain it. Asian American politics is a vital field of understanding. However, Political Science Departments are often the least hospitable to Asian American Studies, in part due to the underdevelopment of this discipline in dealing with race and class issues. Concerns for political scientists have been limited to voting patterns and party affiliations of people of color. Power relationships among races and the complex internal political structures within communities of color are rarely appreciated by mainstream political scientists. This is unfortunate since a characteristic weakness within Asian American Studies is the lack of understanding of “power” and political strategies.

### ***Themes/Topics***

- Asian Americans and political institutions
- Politics and political mobilization: historical and contemporary perspectives
- Political ideologies and institutions (e.g., concepts of democracy and equality; historical transformations in the role and scope of the state)

- Racial theory and the politics of race (e.g., impact of the Civil Rights movement; racial politics in the post-Civil Rights period)
- Asian American movement (e.g., concept of panethnicity)
- Community-based politics and struggles (e.g., urban issues; race/class politics)
- Quotas and affirmative action (e.g., Asian American admissions controversy)
- Crime, the justice system, and legal challenges to institutional inequities (e.g., corum nobis cases and the redress and reparation movement; anti-Asian violence)
- Immigration reform and the smuggling of “illegal aliens”
- Panethnic organizing
- Gender, labor, and politics
- Politics of a multicultural society (e.g., Los Angeles uprising)
- Electoral politics

### **Psychology**

The field of Psychology is another area where Asian American Studies has yet to find a niche, although much progress has been made recently, especially in research-oriented institutions such as UCLA. Of all the divisions within Psychology (such as clinical, social, cognitive, community, and cross-cultural), the areas of social and clinical psychology appear to be the most developed in terms of Asian American Studies, especially as they relate to mental health issues. Psychology is a field with much potential for developing Asian American scholarship, not just within the mental health component, but within all divisions, whether it be theoretically driven (social and cognitive) or applied (clinical and community).

### **Teaching Approaches**

Because U.S. psychology still largely defines race in terms of black and white and because the notion of “culture” is often used in lieu of “race” or “ethnicity,” Asian American themes become easily trapped within the problematic and simplistic dichotomy of West-as-individualistic/East-as-collectivist. A course concerned with Asian American issues in Psychology may complicate and challenge this tendency. In the area of cognitive psychology, the course may

investigate how individuals process information and determine in what ways race, ethnicity, and/or culture become important variables. In the area of social psychology, the effects of acculturation and assimilation on the personality and identity of Asian Americans can be examined to investigate the psychological toll of “acculturation stress.” Cross-cultural issues such as the effect of race and ethnicity on an individual’s sense of self may lead to a deeper understanding of how racism, for example, impacts the self-esteem of Asian Americans. The results of such an investigation can then lead to the concerns of clinical psychology, where assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of mental health problems can be developed and debated. This in turn can lead to the discussion of many important community-related issues such as juvenile delinquency, HIV/AIDS, child care, the elderly, and countless other social concerns of Asian Americans.

### ***Themes/Topics***

- Identity/personality/concept of self
- Self-esteem
- Acculturation stress
- Mental health
- Mental health services and cultural sensitivity
- Diagnosis and treatment
- Cross-cultural similarities and differences
- Juvenile delinquency
- Cultural values or value systems

### **Sociology**

There is ample room for Asian American Studies in Sociology departments. Many scholars and students of Asian American Studies have adapted certain theories and methods available in Sociology, while others have been more critical and have challenged the standardization of such theoretical frameworks and methodology.

Within Sociology, the study of race and ethnicity may best reflect and incorporate the concerns and issues relevant to Asian American Studies. But this area of study, which includes topics like the sociology of immigration and the sociology of education, provides contending theories that delineate the perspectives and issues within the field. For

example, immigration/migration is viewed from push-pull factors that are generalized from the experiences of European immigrants and applied to subsequent immigrations/migrations from Third World countries. Contending research, on the other hand, investigates the role of imperialism, colonization, nationalism, and immigration/migration (post-1965, in general) and demystifies the generalizing tendencies of Sociology from previous examples of white European ethnics.

While there are many theories and works that can incorporate Asian American Studies within Sociology, such as the work on the construction of ethnic and transnational identities, and interracial conflict and cooperation, there are many tensions that remain. For example, theories of neo-classical human capital and individual endowments join theories of structural and economic transformations to explain racial stratification in the United States. Tensions exist because some of these very same theories—especially the individualist ones—are used to explain the relative successes of Asian Americans. Though such works can be seen as superficial by Asian Americanists, they are often used in introductory Sociology courses to explain the debates surrounding the status of the post-1965 immigrants and people of color in the United States. Alternative theories generated, such as those proposed by Omi and Winant where theoretical primacy is given to race, can be more fruitful in guiding the discussions in Asian American sociology courses.

Because of the tensions arising from diverse theories and perspectives within Sociology, it is important to keep in mind the role and influence of sociologists, particularly Asian American Studies sociologists, in defining and leading the field of Asian American Studies. There has been a troubling pattern of focusing only on those issues, such as the glass ceiling, model minority myth, and elite school quotas, that have currency with mainstream media and academics. While these issues are important, analysis stemming from such research may favor a political stand that conflicts with joint political efforts with “colored minorities” on issues of racism, health reform, education, and immigration, as well as neglects other pressing concerns.

Methodologically, one of the strengths of Sociology is its pioneering work in field methods and ethnography. These methods

seem to be the most appropriate in gaining access to contemporary Asian American communities. They are also the most suitable in giving voice—albeit ones selected by the researcher—to communities that are often not represented in scholarship, including those communities that do not speak English, are not male, and are not from the middle or wealthier classes.

In addition, although Sociology has relied on survey data and the resulting quantitative analyses, much of what has been done needs to be viewed critically. There are limits to what the census can reveal about Asian American communities. Ethnographies, oral histories, content analysis, immigrant newspapers, and other methods can and should complement statistical information to better comprehend the diversity of Asian American communities.

### ***Teaching Approaches***

Asian American Studies courses in Sociology could focus on a variety of topics including that of immigration/migration, race and ethnicity, identity formation, family, intergenerational conflicts, education, and economic adaptation and mobility. As in the other disciplines, a problem remains: how inclusive can you be in a one-semester undergraduate course?

One approach could be to focus on Asian American immigrants since 1965. Theoretical perspectives on immigration, economic adaptation, and race and ethnic relations can be examined in light of the experiences of Asians in the United States. The first half of the course could focus on the immigration and migration patterns of such ethnic groups as the Filipino/as, Koreans, Asian Indians, Vietnamese, Cambodians, Laotians, and Hmong in the United States. The second half of the course could discuss immigrant social adaptation, socio-economic adaptation and mobility—that of both the working and middle classes—and race relations with the various Asian American groups and Americans as a whole.

A second approach could be a course on Asian American communities that would include pre- and post-1965 immigrants and the community development and destruction during WW II. Again, the first half of the course can be devoted to immigration and migration patterns, plus community development of each of the Asian groups. All

of the groups can be discussed with respect to historical development and contemporary community development. The second half of the course can then focus on issues that the different ethnic groups share as Asian Americans. These include intergenerational conflict, anti-Asian violence, interracial conflict, stereotypes (including the model minority myth), socio-economic mobility, as well as working class and professional political participation.

### ***Themes/Topics***

- Race and ethnicity
- Immigration/migration within the context of imperialism and colonization
- Identity formation
- Problematizing assimilation theory vis-à-vis systemic discriminations
- Ethnographies, oral histories, immigrant newspapers, etc.
- Immigration patterns and class differences of new Asian immigrants
- Historical developments of Asian American communities
- Family
- Intergenerational conflicts
- Education
- Economic adaptation and mobility
- Immigrant and refugee social adaptation
- Anti-Asian violence
- Interracial conflicts
- Working class and professional political participation

## **Asian American Studies and Interdisciplinary Courses With or Without Programs**

At CUNY, the basic academic units are single-discipline academic departments such as Sociology, English, and History. Interdisciplinary programs, such as Asian American Studies, are the creation of academic administrations in response to perceived intellectual needs and/or external political pressures, such as student struggles. Interdisciplinary programs are given separate budgets and sometimes the authority to offer majors, but members of the programs have to be appointed through specific departments. Therefore, these programs do not have the sole power in appointment and tenure of faculty, nor the final authority in curricular approval. Relationships between departments and such programs are often tense. The departments often see these programs as a challenge to their academic domain and a threat to their budgetary allocations. The programs, on the other hand, consider the departments as obstacles to changes, innovations, and, ultimately, academic freedom. This chapter discusses Asian American Studies courses which overlap with other interdisciplinary fields. These fields may or may not have formal structures within a particular institution. Regardless, such courses must be understood and designed in the context of all relevant fields.

### **Lesbian and Gay Studies**

Because Lesbian and Gay Studies has yet to achieve a firm institutional foothold, it has been through either a course on women or a literature course with emphasis on gender that Asian American lesbian, gay, and bisexual issues have received some attention. These associations, of course, are not particular to Asian American Studies. A similar relationship can be seen within the larger academy, where lesbian, gay, and bisexual issues have been embraced primarily through Women's Studies or Gender Studies, and only nominally through gender-focused literary studies. Courses specifically designed with an

Asian American Lesbian and Gay Studies emphasis have only recently been established even at a place like UCLA, where the Asian American Studies program has been in existence for almost twenty-five years. While Asian American Studies courses, in all disciplines, are increasingly incorporating themes specific to Lesbian and Gay Studies, more courses directly focused on this field need to be established.

### ***Teaching Approaches***

An interdisciplinary survey course on, for, and about Asian American lesbians, gays, and bisexuals could discuss issues of coming out, personal relationships and family, community formation, class, cultural production, social constructions of the physical body, political struggles, and the “mappings” of identity positions. Through these discussions, the course could proceed to examine the intersections and contradictions of power relations and the possibilities for social change. In exploring some of the dimensions of Asian American lesbian, gay, and bisexual living spaces, the course could provide participants with diverse perspectives through which students will be empowered to engage in their own living spaces. As well, students can be encouraged to go beyond “learning about” Asian American lesbian, gay, and bisexual communities and to engage with these communities by working on specific issues, such as media (mis)representation and HIV/AIDS education. To facilitate this aspect of the course, community members could be invited to make presentations.

Another approach could focus on the histories, experiences, social movements, and contributions of Asian American gay, lesbian and bisexual students in keeping with the student-based, student-centered tradition of Ethnic Studies. This course could attempt to examine how Asian American gays, lesbians, and bisexuals integrate their multiple identities, cultures, and social realities. The relationships of Asian American gays, lesbians, and bisexuals to gay and lesbian movements and identities in Asia and the Pacific Islands; to the larger Asian American communities; to the white gay and lesbian community; and the various gay, lesbian, and bisexual communities of color (African American, Chicano and Latino, Native American, and so forth) could be discussed. Finally and most importantly, this course could seek to understand how racism, sexism, classism, and heterosexism—as

interrelated sets of attitudes and systems of social domination—affect the lives of gays, lesbians, and bisexuals of color and attempt to illuminate how Asian American Studies—and Ethnic Studies at large—can aid in conceptualizing and theorizing about race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, family, and identity.

### ***Themes/Topics***

- “Coming out”
- Personal relationships and family
- Scholarship from Asia and Pacific Islands
- Community formations
- Political representation
- Media representations
- Relationships with white lesbian and gay communities and with other lesbian and gay communities of color
- Relationships with the larger Asian American communities
- Intellectual and cultural production
- Social constructions of the physical body
- “Mappings” of identity positions
- Politics of HIV/AIDS
- History of gay and lesbians movements
- Activism and Resistance
- Gay and lesbian history, cultural production, and activism in Asia and the Pacific Islands

### **Urban Studies and Planning**

The interdisciplinary nature of Urban Studies and Planning programs allows them to include Asian American issues more easily than more traditional programs. Nevertheless, Asian American issues have had limited impact on the fundamental perspectives of even the most progressive Urban Studies and Planning programs, as these programs continue to be strongly influenced by approaches developed in response to the Black-white urban political struggles of the 1960s and early 1970s. Explorations of power, racism, political inequality, spatial segregation, and mobility in urban areas—when they deal with race at all—generally focus on comparing whites and African Americans, particularly when the issues are treated more broadly. The

types of policy issues studied and the approaches to studying these issues are also limited by a narrow Black-white view of race. For example, a policy course on poverty and welfare will tend to analyze in detail the situation of whites and African Americans, and provide only cursory, if any, treatment of Asian Americans, thus severely limiting the analysis of the dynamics of poverty and inequality.

Because of the growing presence of Asians in East Coast cities, however, Urban Studies and Planning programs are finding it increasingly difficult to ignore Asian American issues. Although there continue to be glaring oversights, most recent treatments of demographic change in cities include discussions on Asian Americans. Many Urban Studies and Planning programs now offer courses on immigrants and migration, which provide substantial coverage of Asian immigration flows, Asian American communities such as Chinatowns, and the role of Asian immigrants in urban labor markets.

While Asian American issues are still largely ignored in analyses of urban politics, poverty, and other social welfare issues, recent media highlights, such as conflicts between Korean grocers and African Americans, high welfare use by Southeast Asian refugees (particularly Cambodians), and the role of Asian immigrants in restructured urban economies, have made it difficult to exclude Asian American issues completely. In fact, a focus on Asian Americans in Urban Studies and Planning has contributed to advances in theories of urban economic restructuring, informal economies, urban economic development, social networks, and race and ethnicity.

### ***Teaching Approaches***

In designing survey courses in Urban Studies and Planning to include Asian American issues, it is important first to discard a Black-white approach to race. A course on urban labor markets, for example, would look not just at Black and white earnings and employment figures, but also at those for Asians, Latinos, and Native Americans. This approach would lead to many significant issues, such as glass ceilings, global economic restructuring and its impact on urban economies, immigrant labor markets, and ethnic economies. A course on welfare policy, by including an analysis of poverty among Asian Americans, will have to grapple with issues such as the nature of anti-Asian racism, the

impact of pre-migration material and human capital, and the role of ethnic community support networks. A course on land use might include an analysis of land use policies in Chinatown, and how zoning policies have been used to curtail the expansion of predominantly Asian American neighborhoods and business districts.

Some courses, such as those on immigration, will focus more heavily on Asian/Asian American issues. Topics included in an Urban Studies course on immigration may include the development and structure of ethnic enclaves/communities; the role of ethnic economies in facilitating mobility; the contribution of immigrants to urban economic development; the conflict between U.S.-born Americans and immigrants; spatial patterns of settlement and expansion; immigrants in the urban labor market; immigrant entrepreneurs; and immigrants in local politics.

### ***Themes/Topics***

- Ethnic economies, ethnic enclaves, informal economies
- Spatial patterns of Asian American community development
- The role of immigrants in urban labor markets
- Structure and function of immigrant social networks
- Second-generation adaptation
- Asian Americans in urban politics/social movements
- Anti-Asian violence
- “Middleman minorities” and racial conflict
- Asian Americans and social policy (e.g., housing, health care, and welfare)
- Zoning as a tool for curtailing the expansion of Asian American communities and business districts
- Interethnic relations among Asian Americans

### **Women’s Studies**

Women’s Studies has, in many institutions, been among the most receptive to Asian American Studies. The field of Women’s Studies has a history comparable to that of Asian American Studies. However, in many institutions across the country, Women’s Studies is more firmly institutionalized than Asian American Studies, due in part to the fact that there often exists a critical mass of faculty already rostered in

existing departments who are willing and able to develop Women's Studies scholarship and courses. Such a situation makes it much easier to establish a program or department. However, the field still struggles in many institutions over issues of autonomy in hiring, tenure, and course credit. Some institutions have programs and institutes in Gender Studies or Feminist Studies, rather than Women's Studies. The distinction among the three is significant, and indicates much about the founding philosophies of these programs, but does not seem to be significant in determining the types of Asian American Women's Studies courses taught within or through them.

### *Teaching Approaches*

Asian American Women's Studies courses often incorporate discourses on feminism, gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, class, and nationalism, and imperialism. Many highlight both race and gender as social constructs, and use this analysis to explore issues of family, generational conflict, silence, language, individual and community identity and empowerment, nationalism, and the linkages between racism and sexism. Courses examine the histories, experiences, and cultural production of Asian American women. In some cases, they explore the relationships of Asian American women's writing and experiences to those of other women of color.

Questions generally raised include: How have race, class, gender, sexuality affected and impacted the experiences and opportunities of Asian American women? How have Asian American women negotiated self-determined identities? What is "feminism" and "feminist movement"? How is gender identity shaped or influenced by family, ethnic community, interactions in the society-at-large, and by print and visual media? How are experiences and expressions of nationalism gendered within Asian American communities? What are the effects of these depictions on relationships between Asian American men and women?

In addition, these courses provide an opportunity to contest and problematize the notion that non-Western cultures are more sexist than Western cultures, with the corollary that women born or raised in the West are more "advanced" or "liberated" than women of other cultures. Thus, one component of Asian American Women's Studies

courses can be a critical analysis of traditional feminist standards of “development” and “liberation,” a process that questions whether, in fact, the liberation of women of color communities in the United States and abroad can be measured by the standards of liberation that white, liberal, middle-class, heterosexual feminists have productively determined for themselves, standards which are generally presented as race- and class-blind criteria for all women, but which ignore the priorities of women of color and especially of working class women of color. Even the term “feminist” must be redefined and disaggregated from its associations with the concerns of mainstream feminists.

### ***Themes/Topics***

- Social constructions of gender and race
- Constructions of gender in traditional and contemporary Asian societies
- Gender roles in marriage
- The family as mother
- Working women
- Asian American women and their art, film, poetry
- Women’s sexuality and sisterhood
- Asian American lesbians
- Resistance to patriarchy
- Western influences on women’s status and roles
- Gender constructions (e.g., concepts of love, family, work, marriage in the United States and Asia)
- Comparative analysis of gender relations between Asian American men and women and the ideas of romantic love in Asia and the United States
- Concepts of beauty as women of color and Asian American women
- Aging
- Race, gender, and representation (e.g., analysis of stereotypes of Asian men and women in mainstream media; influence and effects on gender identity; comparison of these images with other groups of color; comparison of images of Asian women with white women)
- Interracial relationships
- Effects of racism on Asian American gender identities

- Race, gender, and colonialism and the objectification of the Asian woman
- Family relations (e.g., mother/daughter, father/daughter, assimilation conflicts)
- Domestic violence
- Asian American women and U.S./Third World feminism
- Nationalism and feminism
- Asian American women as women of color
- Asian American women and activism
- Warbrides
- Japanese American internment (e.g., gender roles, family)
- Immigrant labor on Hawai'i plantations
- Community formation (e.g., nineteenth-century sex workers, picture brides)
- Immigrant families and experiences
- War and Asian American women (e.g., G.I. brides; military prostitution; relationships during war time)
- Refugee experiences and mental health issues
- Asian American women and labor (e.g., garment industry; domestic work; Silicon Valley; sex industry)
- Western military imperialism in Asia
- Sex Tourism in Asia and sex trafficking
- Mail order bride industry
- Expressions of identity and self-determination
- Language and identity

## **Curricular Transformation: The Infusion Model for Non-Asian American Studies Courses**

As Asian American Studies programs multiply and develop, more faculty trained in Asian American Studies join departmental rosters, and greater numbers of Asian American Studies courses fill the listings, we must look to the impact these developments can have on the CUNY educational system as a whole. New conceptual paradigms and methodological issues raised by Asian American Studies bring us to rethink theoretical and interpretive models generated both in traditional fields such as Sociology or History and in emerging fields such as Cultural Studies. This chapter addresses the infusion of Asian American Studies into relevant components of the CUNY curriculum. It will attempt to address issues of concern to faculty members not trained in Asian American Studies but interested in integrating Asian American material into their courses.

### **Current Prospects**

A wide range of courses at all levels and in many disciplines within the CUNY system stands to benefit from the integration both of Asian American sources and of the theoretical and methodological innovations of Asian American Studies. Fields that can be engaged with Asian American Studies include American Studies, Anthropology, Art History, Asian Studies (including Northeast Asia Studies, Pacific Rim Studies, South Asia Studies, Southeast Asia Studies), Caribbean Studies, Communications, Cultural Studies, Diaspora Studies, Economics, Education, Ethnic Studies, Film, Health Sciences, History, International Affairs, Labor, Latin American Studies, Law, Lesbian and Gay Studies, Literature, Media, Music, Philosophy, Political Science, Post-colonial Studies, Psychology, Religion, Social Work, Sociology, Urban Studies, and Women's and Gender Studies. The courses taught within these fields at CUNY that can incorporate Asian American Studies are extremely diverse and include both introductory/survey courses and

advanced courses on specialized topics. For example, the following CUNY courses either can or do incorporate Asian American materials: “American Social Protest Movements,” “Reimagining Gender;” “Introduction to Cultural Studies;” “Race and Class in Twentieth-Century America;” “Identity, Ethnicity, and Nationality;” and “Issues in Community Research.” A cursory review of CUNY course syllabi at the undergraduate and graduate levels indicates that of the countless courses that could fruitfully integrate Asian American materials, very few have done so thus far. The need to integrate Asian American sources and Asian American Studies scholarship within these diverse courses cannot, at this point, be overemphasized.

### **Tokenizing: Inclusion Without Impact**

One common approach to curricular change has been to “add on” or ensure “coverage” of materials previously left out of the curriculum. Not only in Asian American Studies, but in Women’s Studies, Lesbian and Gay Studies, and other Ethnic Studies fields, scholars have pointed to the problems with “adding on.”<sup>9</sup> In many cases, it is difficult to distinguish, from the syllabus, between a course that merely includes—tokenizes—Asian American sources and one that fully integrates—infuses—the sources into the course. In both cases, we are likely to find approximately one Asian American text, or reference to one Asian American issue, on a syllabus devoted to a particular theme, such as the post-Civil War Reconstruction Period in U.S. history, or twentieth-century American autobiography, or an introductory course in Women’s Studies. The difference is how that single text or source is treated in the course. If it is merely added on, it will add a little variety to existing material, and the course’s theory and methodology would not be significantly different if Asian American perspectives were omitted. If the text or source is infused, engagement with it will transform the way in which other material on the syllabus is approached, and Asian American perspectives become an integral part of the course.

The relationship between course content and course

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<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Sandra Harding, “Introduction. Is There A Feminist Method?” in Harding, ed., *Feminism and Methodology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).

methodologies and structure can never be inert. The addition of Asian American content and subject matter to the curriculum necessitates reformulations of existing theoretical and methodological paradigms as well as the development of new paradigms altogether. For example, a History or Sociology course on immigrant assimilation in the United States, if it included anything at all about Asian Americans, might do so only insofar as references to Asian Americans further corroborated existing theories about the melting pot or the process of adjustment undergone by previous waves of immigrants from eastern Europe, Italy, or Ireland. Such a course would tend to treat problems or differences in Asian American experiences as variations in degree or time period for adjustment. Asian American Studies scholarship, on the other hand, has pointed to the ways in which the traditional models of assimilation are fundamentally inapplicable to the experience of Asian immigrants—to differences in kind in the experiences of Asians vis-à-vis other immigrant groups and even among Asian groups. Such findings have brought Asian American Studies scholars to articulate new models and theories to account for these differences, emphasizing the impact of U.S. racial dynamics, class, political ideology, resettlement policies, and other factors not adequately considered in the traditional models. Such scholarship is necessarily of significance to all those engaged in studies of immigration, and if considered in light of particular course topics, can lead to new emphases, or even reformulation of the course itself.

Another problem with tokenization is that frequently a single text or source tends to appear over and over on many syllabi. Very often, an Asian American source is added to a syllabus to provide coverage or variety. It is quickly dealt with in the course period allotted to it and its relationship to other themes and sources on the syllabus is not developed. Most importantly, the source tends to serve merely as an illustration or variation of existing theoretical paradigms or sociological models that are themselves in no way altered by the inclusion and treatment of the source. With each recurrence, the tendency to regard that source as the sole and adequate representative of an extremely diverse population and its histories becomes more deeply entrenched in the mainstream curriculum.

It is in the English departments that Asian American Studies has

made the most inroads, and have emerged as the most receptive to Asian American Studies. This ostensible embrace of Asian American literature by English departments, however, can be a bit misleading. The status of Asian American literature, within even the most receptive—or most “multiculturally committed”—department not yet offering specific courses in Asian American literature, is fraught with many problems. One specific example is the tokenization of two particular Asian American writers who have received more critical and commercial acclaim than any other Asian American writers: Maxine Hong Kingston and Amy Tan. Since the publication of Maxine Hong Kingston’s immensely popular *The Woman Warrior* in 1975, this text has stood in the minds of many American literary scholars as the only worthwhile or noteworthy Asian American text until the publication of Amy Tan’s *The Joy Luck Club* in 1989. These two texts, both written by Chinese American women, have become objects of fascination for both mainstream feminists and multiculturalists, and have emerged within the U.S. academy as sole representatives of a century-long tradition of Asian American literature. In the past few years, it seems quite evident that this “Kingston phenomenon” may have been eclipsed by the “Tan phenomenon.”

Often, students are assigned Maxine Hong Kingston’s work in high school, then in multiple undergraduate classes, and rarely if ever encounter any other Asian American writer’s work. The issue, it should be clear, is not the quality of Kingston’s work, but rather the fact that no text should be selected so consistently and singularly to represent Asian American literature within the extremely broad range of survey and thematic courses in the field. Similar examples of tokenization can be found within Sociology, History, Film, and other disciplines as well.

Such a situation is problematic from a number of perspectives. In treating one work as representative of “the Asian American experience” or “the Asian American voice,” it ignores the unique characteristics of the tokenized work. At the same time, it denies students access to texts which bring up issues of form and content utterly different to those of the tokenized work. Most works are historically, ethnically, and regionally specific, among many other factors which may distinguish them even from other works within the same ostensible categories. For example, Monica Sone and Hisaye Yamamoto have written about the

Japanese American internment, but from very different perspectives. Exclusive attention to one work fixes one perception of diverse and ever-changing Asian American communities. The tokenization of Kingston and Tan, for example, has ironically—and unfortunately—kept invisible and insignificant scores of other Asian North American writers who came before, at the same time as, and after them. Finally, it must be stated that when a work is selected again and again for inclusion, it is frequently precisely because it is possible to read (or, as Kingston herself has asserted, *misread*) that particular text in ways that do not challenge mainstream theories and interpretations about Asian American cultures, communities, and production.

### **Gatekeeping vs. Identifying Priorities**

Asian American Studies is a burgeoning, vital field; one sign of that vitality is its flexibility and development into new areas of research, scholarship, and teaching, as well as theoretical and methodological innovations. These developments sometimes come about through interaction with other fields such as Transnational Studies and Gender Studies. Asian American Studies is itself undergoing changes as it transforms the landscape of education in the United States, and part of its strength is its ability to accommodate change. Therefore, there is no singular standpoint within Asian American Studies as to precisely how a particular work or history must be studied and analyzed.

At the same time, however, the field has a distinct history and grew out of a fundamental, constitutive neglect in U.S. education and curricula. Thus, turning now to Asian American history and culture means more than merely adding on to a curriculum that has incidentally neglected this area of study. It means that this neglect was indispensable to the formulation of particular narratives of U.S. history, and of particular theories about immigrants, assimilation, ethnicity, and race. The integration of Asian American Studies means revisiting and in many cases revising or transforming these narratives and theoretical models. And as understood by Asian American scholars who established the field twenty-six years ago, this neglect resulted in near total amnesia of the history of Asian American communities, a lack of understanding of Asian immigrants and immigration, and an inability to articulate Asian American sensibilities and experiences, which requires

moving beyond the black/white binary opposition. Attention to these and related questions has been central to Asian American Studies. A set of priorities, flexible yet identifiable, has held the field together throughout its formal history of twenty-six years and remains central today. Chapter 2 delineates an overview of such priorities. Scholars may indeed choose to use Asian American materials in ways that do not bear upon these priorities. However, it must be clear that programs that maintain these priorities are crucial; they may be supplemented or complemented, but not substituted or replaced by ones that do not.

The fundamental difference between tokenizing and integrating Asian American material in a non-Asian American Studies course is often not to be found on the syllabus, but in the classroom. For it is in teaching the material that we may ask whether the material is serving merely to illustrate previously elaborated theoretical models, or whether, on the other hand, the material is dialectically engaged with theoretical models.

### **An Example of Infusion**

The following is one of many possible ways in which a course on social movements in the United States might incorporate Asian American sources and Asian American Studies perspectives. Such a course might focus on the effects of these movements in historical, political, and legal institutions. It could examine such movements as the Civil Rights Movement, diverse labor organizing efforts throughout the United States and at different periods, and the first and second waves of U.S. feminism.

Asian American Studies could enter into such a course in a number of ways. Discussion of labor protests could include thorough consideration of the role of racist anti-Asian propaganda, fundamental to the establishment and consolidation of the labor unions in the early part of the century. Discussion of the Civil Rights Movement might consider the significance of the fact that in the very early stages of this movement, religious figures were prominent among the few Asian Americans involved; or it might examine how peoples' understanding of the relationship between oppression at home and imperialism abroad, as during the Vietnam War, shaped "Third World" unity and activism. The women's movements from the 1970s to the present might be

examined and questioned from the standpoint of Asian American women's involvement and issues, forcing the issue of race to be addressed in terms that go beyond the black-white binary. Finally, Asian American social movements themselves might be examined. For example, examination of Chinatown labor protests in the 1930s not only engages racial, economic, and cultural dynamics specific to the Chinese communities of that period, but also points to the relevance of which industries were involved and why, raising questions that go to the heart of U.S. labor history. The significance of infusing Asian American materials goes far beyond the principle of equal coverage.

### **Implications and Horizons**

It is crucial to place our efforts today at the infusion of Asian American Studies in the context of the goal, shared with a number of other emerging fields, to transform educational institutions in the United States. As mentioned in Chapter 1, curricular issues is a cornerstone to the challenge but there are other essential attendant components, such as pedagogy, university restructuring, and reprioritization of funding. And, these factors must be guided by newly generated and relevant philosophies and principles for the U.S. educational system. Education must be seen as one component among several crucial to any systemic, long-term change in our society.



## Editorial Committee

**Jane Sung-ee Bai**, a Ph.D. candidate at Columbia University, teaches an Asian American Women's Studies course at New York University (Fall 1995) and has taught Asian American Studies courses at Hunter and Bard Colleges. A former board member of the Association for Asian American Studies and the New York Asian Women's Center, she currently serves on the board of Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence and is a counselor/advocate for the St. Luke's/Roosevelt Rape Intervention Program.

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**Madhulika S. Khandelwal** is engaged in developing research and teaching programs on Asians in the United States and their global diaspora. As a Visiting Professor at Cornell and Columbia Universities, she taught introductory courses on Asian American Studies. At Hunter and Queens Colleges, she is currently teaching courses on the history of South Asian diaspora. She serves on the boards of the Association for

Asian American Studies, the Asian American Higher Education Council (CUNY), and City Lore.

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**Franklin Odo** is Director and Professor of the Ethnic Studies Department at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa. He is a Visiting Professor of History at Columbia University in 1995-96 and has recently been appointed as Assistant to the Provost for Asian Pacific American Research and Public Programming at the Smithsonian Institution. He taught at Hunter College in Spring 1995 and feels it is vital to increase Asian American Studies capabilities within the CUNY system.

**S. Shankar** is Assistant Professor in the English Department at Rutgers University (NJ), where he teaches courses in postcolonial theory and the literature and culture of the "Third World." He is currently working on a book-length manuscript tentatively entitled *Textual Traffic: Textual*

*Economics and Narratives of Travel in a Colonial Context*. He has published a collection of poems, *I as Man*, and is co-founder and editorial collective member of Samar (South Asian Magazine for Action and Reflection). His work has been published in various periodicals in India and North America.

**Angel Velasco Shaw**, born in Los Angeles and raised in New York, received her BFA from CalArts and a masters degree in Media Studies from The New School for Social Research. A member of Pilipino Filmmakers Pare (NYC) and recipient of artist residency appointments and grants, she has produced numerous videos and films. She has taught courses on Asian American film/media at Hunter College, Columbia University, and New York University.

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**Alexandra Seung Hye Suh** is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University. She is currently teaching courses on Asian American women's writing at Hunter College and Barnard College. She serves on the board of the Rainbow Center in Flushing, NY, and is a member of the Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence and SEORO Korean Cultural Network, both in New York City.



## Selected Bibliography

**Note:** The following annotated bibliography was generated to provide a sampling of the material available to teachers and scholars interested in Asian American Studies. It includes both Asian American Studies scholarship and sources as well as scholarship that bears directly upon the field. This list is obviously not intended to be complete or comprehensive.

Abeles, Schwartz, Hacckel, and Silverblatt, Inc., *The Chinatown Garment Industry Study* (New York: Local 23-25 International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union and the New York Skirt and Sportswear Association, 1983).

Aguilar-San Juan, Karin, ed. *The State of Asian America: Activism and Resistance in the 1990s* (Boston: South End Press, 1994).

A collection of perspectives on the current and future patterns of Asian American activism, this book includes essays on political movements, anti-Asian violence, racist inequalities, and cultural and media representations. The introduction links the various issues faced by Asian American movements and the concluding essay evaluates the current state of Asian American Studies.

Anzaldoa, Gloria, ed. *Making Face, Making Soul: Creative and Critical Perspectives by Women of Color* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Foundation, 1990).

Includes a number of Asian American women's texts in the context of writings by other women of color. See especially Kit Yuen Quan's "The Girl Who Wouldn't Sing."

Asian Women United. *Making Waves: An Anthology of Writings By and About Asian American Women* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989).

This anthology presents women-centered perspectives through critical essays, short stories, poetry, and fiction.

- Bao, Xiaolan. " 'Holding Up More Than Half the Sky': A History of Women Garment Workers in New York's Chinatown, 1948-1991," doctoral dissertation. (New York University, 1991).
- Berson, Misha, ed. *Between Worlds: Contemporary Asian-American Plays* (New York: Theatre Communication Groups, Inc., 1990).  
Collection includes the plays of Ping Chong, Philip Kan Gotanda, Jessica Hagedorn, David Henry Hwang, Wakako Yamauchi, and Laurence Yep.
- Bonacich, Edna. "A Theory of Middleman Minorities," *American Sociological Review* 38 (1973): 583-94.
- Bonacich, Edna and Lucie Cheng and Paul Ong. *Global Production: The Apparel Industry in the Pacific Rim* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994).
- Bonacich, Edna and Lucie Cheng. *Labor Immigration Under Capitalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).
- Bonacich, Edna and Ivan Light. *Immigrant Entrepreneur: Koreans in Los Angeles, 1965-1982* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).  
This book details how Koreans in Los Angeles have been channeled into small businesses. The authors describe the context of immigration—the political and economic background of South Korea and the United States—and the formation of the middle-man economic formation in contrast to the enclave economy which are both part of the ethnic economy, and the social costs of immigrant entrepreneurship.
- Bonacich, Edna and John Modell. *The Economic Basis of Ethnic Solidarity* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1980).
- Bruchac, Joseph, ed. *Breaking Silence: An Anthology of Contemporary Asian American Poets* (Greenfield Center, NY: Greenfield Review Press, 1983).  
One of the first major anthologies of Asian American poetry, a good, comprehensive representation of Asian American poets,

including Mei-Mei Berseenbrugge, Diana Chang, Eric Chock, Garret Hongo, Alan Chong Lau, Janice Mirikitani, Al Robles, and many others.

Bulosan, Carlos. *America Is In the Heart* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1973).

Originally published in 1943, considered a classic in Asian American literature. This autobiographical novel chronicles the life of a young Filipino's childhood in the Philippines and his voyage to America where he worked as a migrant laborer in California while establishing himself as a proletariat poet and labor organizer.

Bulosan, Carlos. *If You Want To Know What We Are* (Minneapolis: West End Press, 1983).

Poems, essays, and short stories from the 1930s and 1940s.

Cha, Theresa Hak Kyung. *DICTEE* (New York: Tanam, 1982).

Explodes conventions of genre and explores issues of identity, language, nation, gender, history, memory, and love, among others.

Chan, Jeffery, et al., eds. *Aiiieeeee!: An Anthology of Asian-American Writers* (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1974).

The first major anthology of Asian American literature, most noted for its controversial introduction, considered by many to be the first Asian American "manifesto." Writers represented include Carlos Bulosan, Diana Chang, Toshio Mori, Sam Tagatac, Hisaye Yamamoto, among others.

Chan, Sucheng. *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History* (Boston: Twayne, 1991).

A good introduction to the leading themes in Asian American history. Chan starts with Asian immigration patterns for each ethnic group, weaving the commonalities and distinct traits. The rest of the text is divided into chapters that study different groups under themes such as Asian communities, changing immigration patterns, and women and families. This is a solid piece of work regarding its use of sources, recognition of different groups among Asian Americans, and historical interpretation. Scant coverage of

Asian Americans in the post-1965 period.

—*This Bittersweet Soil* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

The only book dealing with the Chinese who worked as agricultural laborers in California.

—*Entry Denied: Exclusion and the Chinese Community in America, 1882-1943* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990).

Collection of essays on the era of Chinese exclusion.

—*Hmong Means Free: Life in Laos and America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994).

Chen, Hsiang-Shui. *Chinatown No More, Anthropology of Contemporary Issues* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992).

Chen, Hsiang-Shui. *Chinatown No More: Taiwanese Immigrants in Contemporary New York* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992).

This study discusses dynamics of a new Asian immigrant community that is distinguishable from traditional Chinatowns. It explores various levels of organizations and activities among Taiwanese immigrants who live in ethnically diverse areas in Queens, New York. Descriptions of scenes from daily life of immigrants provide timely information on the workings of class, community structure, and culture within an immigrant population.

Cheung, King-Kok. *Articulate Silences* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).

Perceptive critical essay of how the theme of "silence" is dealt with in the works of Hisaye Yamamoto, Maxine Hong Kingston, and Joy Kogawa.

Chin, Frank. *Donald Duk* (Minneapolis: Coffee House Press, 1991).

Set in San Francisco's Chinatown, a coming of age novel about a boy finding meaning in his Chinese American history, culture, and traditions.

—*The Chickencoop Chinaman and The Year of the Dragon: Two Plays* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981).

First produced in 1972 and 1974 respectively, these two plays deal

with fundamental questions about Chinese American masculine identity. Playwright is first Asian American to have play produced on a New York stage.

Chu, Louis. *Eat a Bowl of Tea* (New York: Carol, 1990 [©1961]).

Classic novel about New York City's Chinatown. Focuses on the turbulent lives of a young, married couple dealing with the claustrophobic and gossipy environment of Chinatown's "bachelor society." One of extremely few portrayals of mid-twentieth century Chinatown bachelor life, set in New York City.

Daniels, Roger. *Asian America: Chinese and Japanese in the United States Since 1850* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988).

—*The Decision to Relocate the Japanese Americans* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1975).

Espiritu, Yen Le. *Asian American Panethnicity* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992).

Excellent definition of the nature of challenges faced by Asian Americans. This is a study that analyzes the growth patterns of Asian Americans. Starting with the origins of the Asian American movement, it highlights issues and challenges of ethnic diversity in the pan-Asian American identity. The author studies this under sections such as electoral politics and census categorizations. Special attention is paid to changing identities and coalitions and the role of groups like Asian American women and ethnic-specific organizations. An important book to orient the field of Asian American Studies.

Fawcett, James and Benjamin Carino, eds. *Pacific Bridges: The New Immigration from Asia and the Pacific Islands* (Staten Island, NY: Center for Migration Studies, 1987).

Foner, Nancy. *New Immigrants in New York* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987).

Fong, Timothy P. *The First Suburban Chinatown: The Remaking of Monterey Park, California* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994).

Gans, Herbert. "Second-Generation Decline: Scenarios for the Economic and Ethnic Futures of the Post-1965 American Immigrants," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 15.2 (1992): 173-92.

Gibbs, J. and L. Huang. *Children of Color: Psychological Interventions of Minority Youths* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1989).

Covers a wide range of topics in child psychology. Chapters on Japanese Americans, Chinese Americans, and other Asian American groups.

Glenn, Evelyn Nakano. *Issei, Nisei, War Bride: Three Generations of Japanese American Women in Domestic Service* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986).

Grewal, Inderpal and Caren Kaplan, eds. *Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).

Hagedorn, Jessica, ed. *Charlie Chan Is Dead: An Anthology of Contemporary Asian American Fiction* (New York: Penguin Books, 1993).

Eclectic collection of fifty stylistically diverse and experimental short stories. This contemporary anthology can be used to assess the diverse range of topics and styles covered by Asian American fiction. This collection mirrors the developments in identity, images, and ethnic diversity that Asian Americans have experienced in recent years. It includes writings from more established and newer writings who are selected from a range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds. This work can be used to sample Asian American literature as well as to explore conceptual directions for the ongoing shaping of the field.

—*Danger and Beauty* (New York: Penguin Books, 1993).

—*Dogeaters* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1990).

Hatamiya, Leslie T. *Righting a Wrong: Japanese Americans and the Passage of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1993).

Hing, Bill Ong. *Making and Remaking of Asian America Through Immigration Policy, 1850-1990* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1993).

Concise general summary of immigration history, focussing on the impact of immigration policy on Asian American populations. This study is useful for understanding how immigration policies have shaped the Asian American population and its ethnic and class diversity. There are few studies on this subject with such consideration of pan-Asian issues. There is also valuable comparative data on different ethnic groups. First three chapters give the best summary of Asian immigration history. An appendix of Supreme Court cases and immigration statutes are included.

Hong, Maria, ed. *Growing Up Asian American* (New York: Avon Books, 1993).

This is an anthology of writings by thirty-two writers on their experiences with self-identity (both as individuals and as a group) while growing up in the United States. This text can be a simple and yet forceful way to introduce the students to a range of Asian American writings on a variety of issues. As the Asian American population continues to grow rapidly due to the ongoing immigration, these bicultural and crosscultural Asian American experiences speak to the formation of new communities.

Hongo, Garrett, ed. *The Open Boat. Poems From Asian America* (New York: Anchor, 1993).

Hune, Shirley et al, eds. *Asian Americans: Comparative and Global Perspectives* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1991).

This anthology seeks to define the field of Asian American Studies by engaging discussions of the field's emerging concerns and issues. Based on selected papers presented at the Sixth Annual National Conference of the Association for Asian American Studies, this collection is divided into thematic sections on the field's links with other area studies, historical explorations into lesser known case studies and methodologies, and literature and art in comparative and global perspectives. Sections may be used to define the identity of Asian Americans and their field comparatively

and provide examples of case studies into historical and contemporary communities.

Hwang, David Henry. *M. Butterfly* (New York: Plume, 1989).

1988 Tony Award-winner for best play; a tale with mistaken sexual identity as the center, an overt criticism of how the west "feminizes" the east for its own political and sexual gain.

Jennings, James. *Blacks, Latinos, and Asians in Urban America: Status and Prospects for Politics and Activism* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994).

Kang, Younghill. *East Goes West* (New York: Follett Publishing Company, 1965).

First published in 1937, an autobiographical narrative chronicling the life of the Korean-born author as he attempts to establish his American identity. A sequel to the earlier *The Grass Roof*. Considered a classic in Asian American literature.

—*The Grass Roof* (New York: Scribners, 1931).

The autobiographical narrative chronicling the life of the author from his birth and childhood to his young adulthood in Korea during the Japanese occupation. Followed few years later by *East Goes West* describing his subsequent life in America. Considered a classic in Asian American literature.

Kibria, Nazli. *Family Tightrope: The Changing Lives of Vietnamese Americans* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

Kim, Elaine H. *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to Writings and Their Social Context* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984).

A groundbreaking first book-length critical study of Asian American literature. Published over a decade ago, this text continues to provide insights into relevant topics to Asian American Studies. In lucid and forceful style, Kim guides the reader through a range of issues, from stereotypical images of Asians in white American literature to case studies of Asian women and ethnic groups. This work can be used to determine directions in both past and future readings Asian American literature. Grounded in historical and

sociological realities, the most cited Asian American literary study to date.

Kim, Illsoo. *New Urban Immigrants: The Korean Community in New York* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981).

Kim, Myung Mi. *Under Flag* (Berkeley: Kelsey Street, 1991).

Kim, Willyce. *Dancer Dawkins and the Californian Kid* (Boston: Alyson Publications, 1985).

Highly comical and fantastical novel about the adventures of three lesbians matching wits against an insidious, misogynistic Californian cult. Interesting questions arise from its ostensible focus on white characters.

Kingston, Maxine Hong. *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts* (New York: Vintage International, 1989).

First published in 1975, winner of the National Book Critics Circle Award in 1976. Undoubtedly the most read and discussed Asian American work to date. Autobiographical narrative of the author's reconciliation with her pained childhood as a Chinese American girl.

—*Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book* (New York: Knopf, 1989).

The author's first work of fiction. The novel focuses on a young Chinese American playwright and rebel in 1960s San Francisco. A wild, surreal narrative that is not meant for the uninitiated.

Kono, Juliet S. and Cathy Song, eds. *Sister Stew. Fiction and Poetry By Women* (Honolulu: Bamboo Ridge, 1991).

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A useful study of the formation and social issues within an Asian ethnic population. This study also deals with the gaps between images and realities and points to the political and structural changes. The only book dealing with the political structure of an ethnic community outside of the U.S. political system.

LEAP Asian Pacific American Institute and UCLA Asian American Studies Center. *The State of Asian Pacific America: A Public Policy Report, Policy Issues to the Year 2020* (Los Angeles, 1993).

Lai, Him Mark, Genny Lim, and Judy Yung, eds. *Island. Poetry and History of Chinese Immigrants on Angel Island, 1910-1940* (Seattle and London: University of Washington, 1991).

Poems carved into detention center walls by male Chinese immigrants and hopeful immigrants on Angel Island.

Lau, Alan Chong. *Songs For Jadina* (Greenfield Center, NY: Greenfield Review Press, 1980).

*Lavender Godzilla*. Journal published by the Gay Asian Pacific Alliance, San Francisco, CA.

Lee, Mary Paik. *Quiet Odyssey: A Pioneer Korean Woman in America* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1990).

Interesting for its insight into early immigrant Korean American agricultural workers' lives, and in its embrace of U.S. nationalism.

Leonard, Karen Isaksen. *Making Ethnic Choices: California Punjabi Mexican Americans* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992).

Leong, Russell. *The Country of Dreams and Dust* (Albuquerque: West End Press, 1993).

Collection of calmingly lyrical poetry that adeptly intertwines Buddhist insights and themes of the Asian diaspora.

Leong, Russell, ed. *Dimension of Desire—Other Asian and Pacific American Sexualities: Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Identities and Orientations*. *Amerasia Journal* 20:1 (1994).

Collection of articles seeking to forge links between questions of sexual and racial identity among Asian Americans. Writers include Dana Takagi, Kimberly Yutani, Trinity Ordonez, Lawrence Chua, among others.

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Light, Ivan. *Ethnic Enterprise in America* (Berkeley: University of

California Press, 1972).

Lim, Shirley Geok-lin and Mayumi Tsutakawa, eds. *The Forbidden Stitch. An Asian American Women's Anthology* (Corvallis, OR: Calyx Books, 1989).

Lim, Shirley Geok-lin and Amy Ling, eds. *Reading the Literature of Asian America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992).

One of few published collections of critical essays on a wide-range of Asian American literary topics. Essayists include Oscar V. Campomanes, Chung-Hei Yun, Sau-ling Cynthia Wong, Ruth Hsiao, Gayle K. Fujita Sato, David Li, among others.

Lim-Hing, Sharon, ed. *The Very Inside: An Anthology of Writings by Asian Pacific Islander Lesbian and Bisexual Women* (Toronto: Sister Vision Press, 1994).

Collection of essays, fiction, and poetry; writers include Ann Uyeda and Mi-ok Bruining.

Loo, Chalsa M. *Chinatown: Most Time, Hard Time* (New York: Praeger, 1991).

Lum, Darrell H.Y. *Pass On, No Pass Back* (Honolulu: Bamboo Ridge Press, 1990).

A highly enjoyable series of stories written in "Hawai'ian-pidgin." Stories all deal with childhood experiences of growing up in Hawaii and speaking pidgin. Audio tape of author reading the stories is available.

Miller, Stuart. *The Unwelcomed Immigrants* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969).

An important book for understanding the formation of racial attitudes through national and racial images even before Americans came into personal contact with Asians.

Min, Pyong Gap. *Asian Americans: Contemporary Trends and Issues* (London: Sage Publications, 1995).

Up-to-date sociological study of ethnic-specific Asian American groups. Coverage of issues is limited. Although a useful reference book, there is an uneven quality among the chapters regarding

some national groups.

—*Ethnic Business Enterprise: Korean Small Business in Atlanta* (New York: Center for Migration Studies, 1988).

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This political science text argues that the AFL entered the national political arena by the using immigration issues of Chinese exclusion and restrictionism and created a base for trade union politics according to race and not class.

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Mootoo, Shani. *Out On Main Street* (Vancouver: Press Gang, 1993).

Moraga, Cherr'e and Gloria Anzaldua, eds. *This Bridge Called by Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (New York: Kitchen Table Press, 1983).

Groundbreaking and uncompromising collection of prose, poetry, and personal narratives by women of color. Asian American contributors include Nellie Wong, Genny Lim, Mitsuye Yamada, Merle Woo, and Barbara Noda.

Mori, Toshio. *Yokohama, California* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985).

Originally published in 1949, a series of short stories by one of the most respected and highly regarded Japanese American writers. Subject matters include family, community, loneliness, sibling rivalries, and coming of age.

Murayama, Milton. *All I Asking For Is My Body* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1988 [© 1959]).

One of extremely few representations of pre-World War II plantation life in Hawai'i. Written in 1959 and first published in 1975, a novel about the Hawaiian sugar cane plantations in the 1930s, focusing on a Japanese family and specifically the two sons who attempt pay off their father's debt. Considered a classic text that accurately portrays the harsh realities of plantation life.

Nakanishi, Don T. and Tina Yamano Nishida, eds. *The Asian American*

*Educational Experience: A Source Book for Teachers and Students* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

This collection of essays includes historical and current debates concerning Asian Americans in education. Some of the leading specialists write on significant topics that are usually not available in one place—historical case studies of Asian Americans and education, stereotypes and myths about Asian Americans in education, and curricular and structural struggles on university campuses.

Nee, Victor G. and Brett de Bary Nee. *Longtime Californ': A Documentary Study of an American Chinatown* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1972).

Nelson, Emmanuel S., ed. *Critical Essays: Gay and Lesbian Writers of Color* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 1993).

Asian American contributors include Martin F. Manalansan IV, Alice Y. Hom, and Ming-Yuen S. Ma.

Ng, Fae Myenne. *Bone* (New York: Hyperion, 1993).

Emotionally honest and uncompromising novel about a young Chinese American woman living in San Francisco's Chinatown. A remarkable work.

O'Brien, David J. and Stephen S. Fugita. *The Japanese American Experience* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991).

Okada, John. *No-No Boy* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1976 [© 1957]).

First published in 1957, a bitterly emotional novel about a "no-no boy's" return to his Japanese American community in Seattle after his release from prison following the end of WW II. Considered a classic in Asian American literature.

Okimoto, Gary. *Margins and Mainstreams: Asians in American History and Culture* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994).

A fascinating work in challenging established perceptions and asking questions about Asian Americans in the United States. The author, an experienced Asian American Studies activist, contends

that from the margins of the American system, Asian Americans and other “minorities” have played a central role in sustaining the cherished American values of freedom and democracy. Each of the six chapters in this book take up the challenge of centralizing the marginalized groups (e.g., women, colonized societies, and “others”) and highlights the limitations of stereotypes and impermeable boundaries and their implications.

Omi, Michael and Howard Winant. *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1980s* (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986).

Ong, Paul et al. *The New Asian Immigration in Los Angeles and Global Restructuring* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994).

Park, Kyeyoung. “The Korean American Dream: Ideology and Small Business in Queens, New York,” doctoral dissertation. (City University of New York, 1990).

Portes, Alejandro and Ruben G. Rumbaut. *Immigrant America: A Portrait* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990)

Ratti, Rakesh, ed. *A Lotus of Another Color: An Unfolding of the South Asian Gay and Lesbian Experience* (Boston: Alyson Publications, 1993).

Collection of poetry, essays, interviews, and testimonies by South Asian lesbian migrations across Africa, England, Canada, and the United States. Wide-range of materials, although very little coverage of working class and lower caste South Asian concerns.

Santos, Bienvenido N. *Scent of Apples: A Collection of Stories* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1979).

Originally published in 1955, collection of short stories by the highly respected Filipino writer. His first collection to appear in the United States. Themes dealt with include pain of separation, loneliness, struggles of exiles, nostalgia, and search for “home.”

Sasaki, R. A. *The Loom and Other Stories* (St. Paul: Graywolf Press, 1991).

Series of short stories by the Japanese American author portrays three generations of Japanese Americans. More notable stories include "The Loom" and "American Fish."

Sassen, Saskia. *The Mobility of Labor and Capital* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

This Sociology/Urban Studies text provides an analysis of contemporary global economy, causes of international migration patterns, and the role of immigrants in metropolitan economies (e.g., New York and Los Angeles).

Saxton, Alexander. *The Indispensable Enemy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971).

This classic history text discusses the role of the anti-Chinese movement in the development of the labor movement in California during the late 19th Century. It includes an analysis of the role of Chinese labor in the development of California's economy.

—*The Rise and Fall of the White Republic* (New York: Verso, 1990).

This history text provides an analysis of the role of race in Jacksonian politics, Manifest Destiny, and the settlement of the West.

Siu, Paul. *The Chinese Laundryman: A Study of Social Isolation* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1987).

Sone, Monica. *Nisei Daughter* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1979 [© 1953]).

A uniquely personal autobiography of a Japanese American woman growing up in Seattle in the 1930s and her family's subsequent internment during WW II, this text is considered a classic in Asian American literature.

Song, Cathy. *Picture Bride* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983).

1982 winner of the Yale Series of Younger Poets, competition; a beautifully lyrical collection of poetry by the Hawaii-born poet.

Sue, Stanley and Nathaniel Wagner. *Asian Americans: Psychological Perspectives* (Palo Alto: Science and Behavior Books, 1973).

One of the earliest studies on Asian American psychology, this text

is dated, but the most widely cited text in the field.

Tachiki, Amy et al, eds. *Roots: An Asian American Reader* (Los Angeles: UCLA Asian American Studies Center, 1971).

This is an example of one of the earliest readers put together for teaching Asian American Studies courses. Though the conditions have changed rapidly and much more materials are available now, this reader serves as an inspiration for new programs to this day. The content—comprised of interviews, studies on communities, case studies of organizations, explorations into Asian American identity, and much more, including the struggles embedded in these topics—is very much relevant today. Many instructors have continued to create their own readers for Asian American Studies courses, and this work may be a good example of student activism and participation in shaping the origins, contents, and directions of the field of Asian American Studies.

Tan, Amy. *The Joy Luck Club* (New York: Putnam, 1989).

The most popular and commercially successful Asian American novel ever, chronicling the lives of three generations of Chinese and Chinese American women. The controversy of its commercial success is as interesting a topic of discussion as the stories in the novel.

Takagi, Dana Y. *The Retreat from Race: Asian-American Admissions and Racial Politics* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992).

Takaki, Ronald. *Strangers From A Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (New York: Penguin, 1989).

One of the most popular texts on Asian Americans, this book can serve as a good introductory read. This also encourages students to approach Asian American materials analytically. Scant coverage of Asian Americans in the post-1965 period.

Trinh T. Minh-ha et al, eds. *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990).

Trinh T. Minh-ha. *Framer Framed* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

- When the Moon Waxes Red: Representation, Gender and Cultural Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1991).
- Woman Native Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989).
- Tsui, Kitty. *Words of a Woman Who Breathes Fire* (New York and San Francisco: Spinsters, Ink: 1983).  
Currently out-of-print but selections are anthologized in numerous collections.
- Uba, Laura. *Asian Americans: Personality Patterns, Identity, and Mental Health* (The Guilford Press, 1994).  
Good, general introductory text into Asian American psychology. One of the most recently published.
- Uno, Roberta, ed. *Unbroken Thread: An Anthology of Plays by Asian American Women* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1993).  
Collection includes the plays of Genny Lim, Wakako Yamauchi, Momoko Iko, Velina Hasu Houston, Jeannie Barroga, and Elizabeth Wong. Also includes appendix with partial listing of plays by Asian American women.
- Waldinger, Roger. *Through the Eye of a Needle: Immigrants and Enterprise in New York's Garment Trades* (New York: New York University Press, 1986).  
This sociology text analyzes the contemporary garment industry, immigrant labor and entrepreneurs.
- Waldinger, R., H. Aldrich, R. Ward and Associates. *Ethnic Entrepreneurs: Immigrant Business in Industrial Societies, Sage Series on Race and Ethnic Relations* (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1990).
- Waters, Mary C. *Ethnic Options - Choosing Identities in America* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990).
- Wei, William. *The Asian American Movement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994).  
A timely assessment of the origins and nature of the Asian

American movement that started over two decades ago. This is an important exploration of the more recent Asian American experience—of fighting cultural supremacy in different parts and levels of the country, of the making of activism, and of the challenges facing Asian American political organizations and coalitions. It can be used not only as a tool for learning more about Asian American Studies and its driving forces, but also a text to encourage discussion of different perspectives and interpretations on the directions of the field. Many critics argue that this text lacks a substantive and grounded political framework.

*Witness Aloud: Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Asian/Pacific American Writings. The APA Journal. 2:1* (Spring/Summer 1993).

Collection of poetry, fiction, and nonfiction by Jee Yeun Lee, Quentin Lee, Alice Y. Hom, Mari Gonzalez, among many others.

Women of South Asian Descent Collective, ed. *Our Feet Walk the Sky. Women of the South Asian Diaspora* (New York: Kitchen Table, 1981).

Wong, Bernard. *Chinatown: Economic Adaptation and Ethnic Identity of the Chinese* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1982).

—"The Chinese: New Immigrants in New York's Chinatown," *New Immigrants in New York*, ed. Nancy Foner. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987).

—*Patronage, Brokerage, Entrepreneurship in the Chinese Community of New York* (New York: AMS Press, 1988).

Wong, Nellie. *The Death of Long Steam Lady* (Los Angeles: West End Press, 1986).

Wong, Sau-ling Cynthia. *Reading Asian American Literature: From Necessity to Extravagance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

A critical discussion of Asian American literature through the study of four themes: food and eating, the Doppelgänger figure, mobility, and play. Rigorously researched and persuasively argued.

Wong, Shawn. *Homebase* (New York: Plume, 1991).

First published in 1979, a short novel about a fourth-generation Chinese American youth searching for identity, history, and "home."

Yamamoto, Hisaye. *Seventeen Syllables and Other Stories* (New York: Women of Color Press, 1988).

One of the most highly respected and regarded Asian American writers. Collection includes stories that span nearly fifty years of her career. Stories deal with intimate lives of Japanese Americans in and out of the internment camps.

Yamauchi, Wakako. *Songs My Mother Taught Me* (New York: The Feminist Press, 1994).

Stories, plays, and memoirs by one of the most respected Asian American writers focusing on the lives of Japanese Americans as farmers, laborers, internees, urbanites, and family members.

Yans McLaughlin, Virginia, ed. *Immigration Reconsidered* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

This history text contains comparative essays on immigration, including one by Sucheng Chan on Asian immigration.

Yone, Wendy Law. *The Coffin Tree* (Boston: Beacon, 1987 [© 1983]).

Zhou, Min. *Chinatown: The Socioeconomic Potential of an Urban Enclave* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992).