

Asian American History: Processes of Movement and Dislocation

History/Asian American Studies 160 • Fall Semester 2025



Lecture Time: Tuesday/Thursday 11:00am – 12:15pm
Lecture Location: Ingraham 19

Professor: Cindy I-Fen Cheng [she/her]
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Sections: 305, 306, 307, 308
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COURSE GOALS AND OVERVIEW

The goal of this course is to spark and nurture curiosity about the world and the people in it.

Our examination of U.S. immigration history unlocks how immigration connects the United States to the world. Drawing on Asian immigration to the United States as our main case study, we explore three foundational questions that reveal why immigration remains a pressing issue today:

- Why do people move?
- How does immigration change the United States and the people in it?
- How does immigration alter our relationship with other countries and our ability to carry out foreign policies?

To enhance your learning, this course is designed to sharpen your academic skills. By thoughtfully working through the assigned readings, films, video clips, images, writing assignments, and exams, you will improve how you read, think, write, and communicate. The purpose is to promote your growth into a well-rounded individual and our collective growth into an engaged and informed society.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Discussion Attendance and Participation	20%	200 points
Lecture Attendance and Participation	20%	200 points
Assignment 1	15%	150 points
Exam 1	15%	150 points
Assignment 2	15%	150 points
Exam 2	15%	150 points
Extra Credit:		25 points
TOTAL:	100%	1000 points

Letter Grade	Point Range	Percentage Range
A	925 to 1000	92.5% and higher
AB	875 to 924	87.5% to 92.4%
B	825 to 874	82.5% to 87.4%
BC	775 to 824	77.5% to 82.4%
C	695 to 774	69.5% to 77.4%
D	595 to 694	59.5% to 69.4%
F	594 and below	59.4% and below

We will provide points to grade breakdowns and rubrics for each assignment and exam.

COURSE POLICIES

Technology-Free Learning Environment: To cultivate an engaged learning environment, History/Asian American Studies 160 is a technology-free class. Please turn your phone to silent mode and place your phone, laptop, and any other electronic devices away from plain sight. Please take class notes using a pen or pencil and a notebook.

Attendance: Regular attendance, active participation, and mature attentiveness during lecture and discussion sections are mandatory. We do not post lecture notes. If you miss lecture, please contact a fellow classmate for lecture notes.

Discussion Sections: Discussion sections strengthen your learning and provide a comfortable setting to get to know other students and your TA. Attendance is mandatory. You will not pass this class even if you attend lecture and complete all written work and exams but fail to attend your weekly discussion section. Your TA will provide additional guidelines.

Readings: You are expected to complete all assigned readings before Tuesday's lecture of each week. Please bring your readings and notes to each class meeting.

Assignments: Assignments are due during the first ten minutes of lecture. Any assignment received after the first ten minutes of lecture on the due date is late. Late assignments will receive a 15-point deduction for each day that it is late. Extensions are granted in cases of personal emergencies, contingent upon prompt notification, valid documentation, and Professor Cheng's discretion. Students are responsible for retaining a copy of all assignments.

Examinations: Exam 1 and the Exam 2 will be administered on the date indicated in the course syllabus. Make-up examinations are granted in cases of personal emergencies, contingent upon prompt notification, valid documentation, and Professor Cheng's discretion. Students are responsible for retaining a copy of all exams.

Honesty: Please read the [university policy on academic integrity and misconduct](#). Please note that all information borrowed from print sources or the web, including ChatGPT, must be clearly identified and properly credited. Any instance of plagiarism or cheating on assignments or exams will result in a "F" grade for the assignment or exam and the course. Submitting AI-generated text for class assignments is plagiarism.

Accommodations: Please contact the [McBurney Disability Resource Center](#) if you feel that you may need accommodations for this course: 608-263-274 (phone); 608-225-7956 (text); info@mcburney.wisc.edu (e-mail).

REQUIRED TEXTS

1. COURSE READER is available for purchase at <https://charge.wisc.edu/DoITDigitalPrintCenter/>.
 - The UW Digital Publishing and Printing Services (DPPS) will mail your course reader via UPS 1-day directly to your home address.
 - For instance, if you purchase your course reader during business hours on Monday, the Course Reader will be mailed to you on Tuesday, and you should expect the Course Reader to arrive at your home address on Wednesday.
2. *The Latehomecomer: A Hmong Family Memoir* by Kao Kalia Yang
 - This is a very popular book and is available for purchase, both new and used copies, at any online vendor.
 - You may also purchase a copy, new or used, at the University Bookstore on campus, <https://text.uwbookstore.com/CourseMaterials>.
 - Please purchase hard copies; any edition will work.

**** A copy of all the required texts is available on reserve at the College Library****

FILMS

- *Picture Bride*
- *Dollar a Day, Ten Cents a Dance*
- *aka Don Bonus*

COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK 1 Introduction

Th 9.4

WEEK 2 Chinese Migrant Workers and U.S. Territorial Expansion

T 9.9

Th 9.11

Readings:

- Ronald Takaki, "Gam Saan Haak: The Chinese in Nineteenth-Century America," *Strangers From a Different Shore* (New York: Penguin Books, 1990).
- Judy Yung, "Bound Feet: Chinese Women in the Nineteenth-Century," *Unbound Feet: A Social History of Chinese Women in San Francisco* (Berkeley: UC Press, 1995).

WEEK 3 The Chinese Exclusion Movement

T 9.16

Th 9.18

Readings:

- Denis Kearney, "Our Misery and Despair: Appeal from California on the Chinese Invasion, Workingmen's Address," *Indianapolis Times*, 28 February 1878.
- Erika Lee, "The Chinese Are Coming. How Do We Stop Them?," *At America's Gates* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

WEEK 4 Asian Settler Colonialism and the Plantation Economy in Hawaii

T 9.23

Th 9.25

Readings:

- Lauren Markle, "A Resource for Asia Americans: Understanding Settler Colonialism" from <https://www.cutfruitcollective.org/blogs/blog/a-resource-for-asian-americans-understanding-settler-colonialism>.
- Ronald Takaki, "Raising Cane: The World of Plantation Hawai'i," *Strangers From a Different Shore* (New York: Penguin Books, 1990).

WEEK 5 Aliens Ineligible for Citizenship

T 9.30 Film: *Picture Bride*
Th 10.2

Reading:

- Yuji Ichioka, "Struggle Against Exclusion," *The Issei* (New York: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1988).

WEEK 6 Transnational Political Activism: South Asians in the United States

T 10.7 Assignment 1 DUE
Th 10.9

Readings:

- Ram Chandra, *Exclusion of Hindus from America Due to British Influence* (San Francisco, 1916).
- Seema Sohi, "Barred Zones, Rising Tides, and Radical Struggles: The Antiradical and Anti-Asian Dimensions of the 1917 Immigration Act," *Journal of American History* 102:2 (2022).

WEEK 7 U.S. Imperialist Expansion

T 10.14 Extra Credit 1 DUE
Th 10.16 Film: *Dollar A Day, Ten Cents A Dance*

Reading:

- Mae Ngai, "From Colonial Subject to Undesirable Alien," *Impossible Subjects* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

WEEK 8 Korean Independence Movement

T 10.21 Exam1
Th 10.23

Readings:

- Erika Lee, "'We Must Struggle in Exile': Korean Immigrants," *The Making of Asian America: A History* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2015).
- Susie Woo, "Imagining Kin: Cold War Sentimentalism and the Korean Children's Choir," *American Quarterly* 67, no 1 (2015).

WEEK 9 Repeal of Asian Exclusion

T 10.28

Th 10.30

Readings:

- Gabriel J. Chin, "Were the Immigration and Nationality Act Amendments of 1965 Antiracist?," in *The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965: Legislating A New America*, eds. Gabriel J. Chin and Rose Cuison Villazor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

WEEK 10 In Search of Refuge

T 11.4 Extra Credit 2 DUE

Th 11.6

Reading:

- Shelley Lee, "The Vietnam War, Southeast Asians, and the Transformation of Asian America," *A New History of Asian America* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

WEEK 11 In Search of Refuge

T 11.11 Assignment 2 DUE

Th 11.13

Reading:

- Kao Kalia Yang, *The Latehomecomer*, 1-128.

WEEK 12 In Search of Refuge

T 11.18

Th 11.20

Reading:

- Kao Kalia Yang, *The Latehomecomer*, 129-274.

WEEK 13 Academic Migration and the Growth of Asian International Students

T 11.25
Th 11.27 Happy Thanksgiving

Readings:

- Jeanne Batalova, "International Students in the United States" from <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/international-students-united-states>.
- Yingyi Ma, "Stay versus Return," *Ambitious and Anxious: How Chinese College Students Succeed and Struggle in American Higher Education* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020).

WEEK 14 H1-B Workers

T 12.2
Th 12.4 Honors Project DUE

Readings:

- Carolyn Im, Alexandra Cahn, and Sahana Mukherjee, "What We Know About the U.S. H1-B Visa Program" from <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2025/03/04/what-we-know-about-the-us-h-1b-visa-program/>.
- "The Impact of H-1B Workers on the U.S. Economy" from <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/fact-sheet/h1b-visa-program-fact-sheet/>.

WEEK 15 Review

T 12.9 Exam 2

NEED HELP WITH WRITING?

The History Lab: The History Lab is a resource center for undergraduate students studying, researching, and writing about the past. Through individual and group tutoring, the Lab focuses on honing students' abilities to form suitable topics, conduct research, develop arguments and thesis statements, cite evidence properly, and write using an effective process. The Lab is equipped also to support challenges faced by English-language learners. For more information and appointment, please visit: <https://history.wisc.edu/thehistorylab.htm>

The Writing Center: The Writing Center supports writers within and beyond the university across [all levels](#), disciplines, and identities. Readers at the Writing Center are committed to using [inclusive](#) and [accessible](#) teaching practices. For more information and appointment, please visit: <https://writing.wisc.edu/>

DEGREE FULFILLMENTS

Ethnic Studies Requirement: By illuminating the circumstances, conditions, and experiences of racial and ethnic minorities in the United States, this “e” designated course advances three goals of the University:

- Better prepare students for life and careers in an increasingly multicultural environment
- Add breadth and depth to the University curriculum
- Improve campus climate

Asian American Studies Certificate Program: [The Asian American Studies Certificate Program](#) provides students with an opportunity to develop a sustained intellectual focus on Asian American racial formation, history, literature, and culture. Interdisciplinary in nature, the certificate can be obtained by completing 15 credits of coursework. The certificate program is open to any undergraduate student who has an interest in Asian American Studies.

The HMoob American Studies Emphasis: Within the AAS Certificate Program, students have the option to declare a [HMoob American Studies Emphasis](#). This special track promotes an in-depth examination of HMoob American history and culture and can be obtained if 6 out of 15 credits are completed by taking designated HMoob American Studies courses within the Asian American Studies curriculum.

History Major & Certificate Program: Both the [History Major](#) and the [Certificate in History](#) offer pathways for students to develop their interests in history. To study history is to study change, and these programs to empower students to examine connections between the past and the present.

Honors Optional Enrollment: This course offers Honors Optional enrollment for students who want to be challenged and complete an extra assignment beyond the course requirements.

For those who are taking this course for Honors credit, please schedule a one-on-one meeting with Professor Cheng to discuss your honors project. Please visit: <https://honors.ls.wisc.edu/> for more information.

COURSE CREDIT

This class meets for two, 75-minute class periods each week over the fall semester and carries the expectation that students will work on course learning activities (reading, writing, problem sets, studying, etc) for about 3 hours out of the classroom for every class period. The syllabus includes more information about meeting times and expectations for student work.