ASIAN AMERICAN STUDIES (ASAM)

ASAM 0010 Freshman Seminar on Asian American Lit
An introduction to writing about Literature, with emphasis on Asian American literature and culture.
Also Offered As: ENGL 0322
1 Course Unit

ASAM 0100 Introduction to Asian American Studies
According to the U.S. Census, there are approximately 21 million Asian residents in the U.S. that comprise almost 6 percent of the total population. This relatively small number disguises the critical experiences Asian American communities face in both the local and transnational context. Yet, Asian Americans constitute one of the most heterogeneous racial groups within the U.S. Over the course of this semester we will read about and actively discuss the history of Asian immigration to the U.S., the social construction and experience of race in the U.S., and the political, economic, and cultural contributions of Asian Americans. We will also examine how Asian Americans negotiate/deploy their culture and ethnicity to achieve recognition in multicultural America and how the construction of Asian American identity intersects with class, gender, and sexuality.
Fall
1 Course Unit

ASAM 0101 Asian American Communities
Who is Asian American and how and where do we recognize Asian America? This interdisciplinary course explores the multiple factors that define Asian American identity and community. In order to provide a sketch of the multifaceted experience of this growing minority group, we will discuss a wide variety of texts from scholarly, artistic, and popular (film, cinematic) sources that mark key moments in the cultural history of Asia America. The course will address major themes of community life including migration history, Asian American as model minority, race, class, and transnational scope of Asian America. In combination with the readings, this class will foster and promote independent research based on site visits to various Asian American communities in Philadelphia and will host community leaders as guest lecturers.
Fall or Spring
Also Offered As: URBS 0101
1 Course Unit

ASAM 0102 Introduction to Asian American History
This course will provide an introduction to the history of Asian Pacific Americans, focusing on the wide diversity of migrant experiences, as well as the continuing legacies of Orientalism on American-born APA’s. Issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality will also be examined.
Spring
Also Offered As: HIST 1155
1 Course Unit

ASAM 0103 Asian American Literature
An overview of Asian American literature from its beginnings at the turn of the twentieth century to the present. This course covers a wide range of Asian American novels, plays, and poems, situating them in the contexts of American history and minority communities and considering the variety of formal strategies these different texts take. See the English Department’s website at www/english.upenn.edu for a description of the current offerings.
Not Offered Every Year
Also Offered As: ENGL 1270
1 Course Unit

ASAM 0115 American Race: A Philadelphia Story (SNF Paideia Program Course)
This course proposes an examination of race with a two-pronged approach: one that broadly links the study of race in the United States with a multi-disciplinary approach and also simultaneously situates specific conversations within the immediate location of Philadelphia, home to the University. The broad historical examination advances key concepts of race and racialization, explores key theoretical methodologies, and highlights major scholarly works. For example, students will engage with the study of race through Africana Studies, Asian American Studies, Urban Studies and through Latin American & Latinx Studies. Readings and methodologies will introduce students to critical issues in education, in literature, in sociology, and with methods in oral history, archival work, and ethnography. Most importantly, this extensive approach highlights the impact of race across multiple communities including Black Americans, immigrant populations, and communities that are marginalized to emphasize connections, relationships, and shared solidarity. Students are intellectually pushed to see the linkages and the impacts of racism across and among all Americans historically and presently. As each theme is introduced a direct example from Philadelphia will be discussed. The combination of the national discourse on race, with an intimate perspective from the City of Philadelphia, engages students both intellectually and civically. The course will be led by Fariha Khan but guest instructors with varied disciplinary backgrounds and guest speakers from local community organizations. Each instructor not only brings specific disciplinary expertise, but also varied community engagement experience.
Spring
Also Offered As: AFRC 1115, ANTH 1150, LALS 0115, SAST 1115, URBS 1150
1 Course Unit

ASAM 1000 South Asians in the United States
This course investigates the everyday practices and customs of South Asians in America. Every immigrant group has its own history, customs, beliefs and values, making each unique while simultaneously a part of the “melting pot” or salad bowl” of American society. Yet how do people define themselves and their ethnicities living in a diasporic context? By taking into account the burgeoning South Asian American population as our model, this course will explore the basic themes surrounding the lives that immigrants are living in America, and more specifically the identity which the second generation, born and/or raised in American, is developing. South Asians in the U.S. will be divided thematically covering the topics of ethnicity, marriage, gender, religion, and pop culture. Reading and assignments will discuss a variety of issues and viewpoints that are a part of the fabric of South Asia, but will focus on the interpretation of such expressive culture in the United States.
Fall
Also Offered As: SAST 1000
1 Course Unit
ASAM 1010 Asian American Race Relations: Comparative Case Studies and Theories
This course provides an introduction to comparative racial frameworks and case studies in Asian American Studies. In line with an emergent body of work that considers the relational nature of racializations, we will examine how Asian American racial constructions are not only formed in relation to whiteness but also to other groups of color. Starting from the premise that the US is dynamically multiracial, we will consider how Asian Americans have been both “lumped together” with and “counterpointed” to other racially marginalized communities across historical time. Moreover, we will explore how Asian Americans themselves have articulated racial positions both in solidarity with and opposition to other people of color. Lastly, we will survey the different comparative racial frameworks Asian American Studies scholars have developed to understand the shifting terrain of race relations. The course places a particular emphasis on Asian-Black relations and Afro Asian political theory, given the unique juxtaposition of these groups in US racial discourse, the significance of “Blackness” to Asian American political and cultural identities, and the seminal place of these discussions in Comparative Ethnic Studies. Course materials include primary and scholarly readings, media, and material collaboratively gathered by members of the class. We will focus on developing diverse research methods for understanding the relational nature of Asian American racialization and community formation, culminating in individual research projects on case studies chosen by students in consultation with the instructor.
Spring
1 Course Unit

ASAM 1020 The Asian American Entrepreneur
From shopkeepers to motel owners, the Asian American entrepreneur is frequently celebrated and offered as proof that the American Dream is achievable and that the United States is a meritocracy. This seminar challenges this view. Through interdisciplinary texts, qualitative research assignments, and speakers, we will explore the transnational forces and structural limitations within the United States that produce Asian ethnic niches and the bamboo ceiling which limits the success of Asian Americans.
Fall
1 Course Unit

ASAM 1200 Introduction to Creative Writing: Writing Asian American Lives
"Kids know more about dinosaurs than they do about Asian Americans." So says Dr. Karen Su, founding director of PAACH (Pan-Asian American Community House) at Penn, and though she's talking about children's literature, her sentiment might apply to adults, too. Who are the Asian Americans? What does it mean to be non-Black POC in this country? How do religion, ethnicity, gender, class, nationality, and immigration status define this group? How do we discuss all this while being inclusive of both "us" and "them"? This course will explore these questions through the lens of an introductory fiction, nonfiction, and poetry creative writing workshop. We'll follow the traditional workshop format of critiquing each other's short stories, essays, and poems in class, along with close reading works by authors as established as Jhumpa Lahiri, Maxine Hong Kingston, and Amy Tan, and as contemporary as Lisa Ko, Bushra Rehman, Ocean Vuong, and Mira Jacob. We'll use these texts as springboards to examine representations of identity, inclusion, and exclusion, and we'll be invited to consider these representations in the media around us as well as in our local communities. Finally, we'll think through how we can contribute to discussions of these topics with our own artistic voices. This course is cross-listed with Asian American Studies.
Fall
Also Offered As: ENGL 3025
1 Course Unit

ASAM 1210 Topics in Asian American Literature and Culture
This seminar explores Asian American literature and culture intensively; specific course topics will vary from year to year. See the English Department's website at www/english.upenn.edu for a description of the current offerings.
Also Offered As: ENGL 1272
1 Course Unit

ASAM 1300 Asian American Cinema Movement: Fighting For Representation
Providing a broad introduction to the history of persons of Asian descent living in the United States, this course will specifically examine the Asian American & Pacific Islander American experience as told through the cinematic lens. Equal parts socio-political history and media studies, this course will comprehensively assess factors contributing to the historical under representation of AAPIs in mainstream American media. By contrast, the media texts that we study will reveal a cinematic history that runs parallel to the mainstream, consisting of independently produced films created by and/or starring AAPIs that feature authentic portrayals of the community they represent. Topics will include economics of film production, broadcast television ratings, film festivals as a mechanism of distribution, negative stereotyping, Hollywood whitewashing, cultural appropriation, and media activism. The course will take place once a week and will consist of a brief discussion of the previous week's readings, followed by a lecture, and ending with a full or partial film screening relating to the current week's topic. Additional out of class assignments will be given that involve attending the Philadelphia Asian American Film Festival, tentatively scheduled November 8-18, 2018. Students will have the opportunity to engage with and learn from AAPI filmmakers in attendance at the festival, with additional volunteer opportunities available for extra credit.
Fall
Also Offered As: CIMS 1302
1 Course Unit
ASAM 1400 Asian American Gender and Sexualities
This course explores the intersection of gender, sexuality, and race in Asian America. Through interdisciplinary and cultural texts, students will consider how Asian American gender and sexualities are constructed in relation to racism while learning theories and methods to study gender, sex, and race. We will discuss masculinities, femininities, race-conscious feminisms, LGBTQ+ identities, interracial and intraracial relationships, and kinship structures.
Spring
Also Offered As: GSWS 1400, SAST 1400
1 Course Unit

ASAM 1410 Asian American Women: Nation, Self and Identity
This course examines the literary constructions of Asian American Women's identity in relation to the U.S. nation state. How do the figures of the tiger mother, the Asian nerd, the rice queen, the trafficked woman, the geisha, the war bride, emerged to represent Asian American women, and how have Asian American feminists responded to these problematic racial stereotypes? How does the scholarship on such racialized representations illuminate historical and contemporary configurations of gender, sexuality, race, class, nation, citizenship, migration, empire, war, neoliberalism and globalization as they relate to the lives of Asian American women? In exploring these questions, this course examines Asian American histories, bodies, identities, diasporic communities, representations, and politics through multi- and interdisciplinary approaches, including social science research, literature, popular representations, film, poetry and art.
Spring
Also Offered As: GSWS 1410, SAST 1410
1 Course Unit

ASAM 1500 Asian Americans In Contemporary Society
This class will introduce you to sociological research of Asian Americans and engage in the "model minority" stereotype. We begin by a brief introduction to U.S. immigration history and sociological theories about assimilation and racial stratification. The class will also cover research on racial and ethnic identity, educational stratification, mass media images, interracial marriage, multiracials, transracial adoption, and the viability of an Asian American panethnic identity. We will also examine the similarities and differences of Asian Americans relative to other minority groups.
Not Offered Every Year
Also Offered As: SOCI 1140
1 Course Unit

ASAM 1510 Race and Ethnic Relations
The course will focus on race and ethnicity in the United States. We begin with a brief history of racial categorization and immigration to the U.S. The course continues by examining a number of topics including racial and ethnic identity, interracial and interethnic friendships and marriage, racial attitudes, mass media images, residential segregation, educational stratification, and labor market outcomes. The course will include discussions of African Americans, Whites, Hispanics, Asian Americans and multiracials.
Fall or Spring
Also Offered As: AFRC 1060, LALS 1060, SOCI 1060, URBS 1060
1 Course Unit

ASAM 1520 Asian American Activism
Providing a broad introduction to the history of activism in the United States, this course
Fall or Spring
1 Course Unit

ASAM 1530 Asian American Popular Culture
This course will examine the ways in which Asian Americans have constituted and positioned their identities through various mediums of popular culture, community building and activism. First, students will become familiar with major concepts relating to Popular Culture, Cultural Studies, and Asian American Cultural Studies. Second, students will have a deeper understanding of the Asian American Movement. Third, students will make connections between representations and dominant images of Asian Americans within various mediums.
Spring
1 Course Unit

ASAM 1610 Sonic Reverberations of Asia America
This is a course about music as sonic cultural practices of intercultural communication and as lived experience in which racial, ethnic, diasporic, religious, gendered, sexual, national identities are formed and transformed. This course specifically examines how various ideas and meanings of Asia America are enacted and embodied through music performances and other sonic practices. The course also considers how the production and consumption of Asian American cultural difference through music and sound impacts the making and unmaking of multiculturalism and the American self. Topics will include questions about how music and sound is mobilized within the history and stories of Asian immigration and migration to the U.S.; the impact of the transnational circulation of Asian and Asian American music; representations of AAPs in popular culture; the potentials and limits of music to mitigate social and political problems encountered by Asian American communities; and community building through sonic encounters of Afro-Asian, Asian-Latinx and Caribbean, East Asian/South Asian American solidarities. Critical and reflexive theoretical approaches from ethnomusicology, anthropology, and performance studies, among other related disciplines, will be used to examine a range of styles and genres through close listening to assigned sound recordings and music ethnographies. No previous musical training is required for this course.
Spring
1 Course Unit

ASAM 1700 Asian Am Religions
This course examines the changing religious landscape of the United States through a focus on the religious life of Asian Americans. Through interdisciplinary texts and ethnographic field assignments, students will consider how religion and race intersect to inform notions of cultural and political citizenship, community, and culture. Topics to be explored include the impact of 9/11, religious political activism, and the appropriation and commodification of "Asian" religious practices.
Fall
1 Course Unit

ASAM 1800 Psychology of Asian Americans
Using a cultural perspective, this course is intended to provide knowledge of Asian American personality, identity, and its relationship to mental well being; analyze psycho-social research pertinent to Asian Americans; and develop critical thinking skills on Asian American issues through experiential learning/discussions.
Spring
Also Offered As: SAST 1800
1 Course Unit

ASAM 1810 Asian Americans and Higher Education
Course will explore issues in higher education with an Asian American focus.
Spring
1 Course Unit
ASAM 2010 Migration and the Middle East
This reading-and discussion-intensive seminar examines the phenomenon of migration into, out of, within, and across the Middle East and North Africa. We will focus on the period from the late nineteenth century to the present, and will emphasize the cultural (rather than economic) consequences of migration. Along the way we will trace connections between the Middle East and other regions— notably the Americas, sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, the Caucasus, and Western Europe. Readings are interdisciplinary and include works of history, anthropology, sociology, medical research, literature, political science, geography, and human rights advocacy. As students develop final projects on topics of their choice, we will spend time throughout the semester discussing tactics for research and writing.
Not Offered Every Year
Also Offered As: NELC 1615, SAST 1615
1 Course Unit

ASAM 2100 Wartime Internment of Japanese-Americans
This research seminar will consist of a review of representative studies on the Japanese American internment, and a discussion of how social scientists and historians have attempted to explain its complex backgrounds and causes. Through the careful reading of academic works, primary source materials, and visualized narratives (film productions), students will learn the basic historiography of internment studies, research methodologies, and the politics of interpretation pertaining to this particular historical subject. Students will also examine how Japanese Americans and others have attempted to reclaim a history of the wartime internment from the realm of “detached” academia in the interest of their lives in the “real” world, and for a goal of “social justice” in general. The class will critically probe the political use of history and memories of selected pasts in both Asian American community and contemporary American society through the controversial issue of the Japanese American internment.
Fall or Spring
Also Offered As: HIST 3150
1 Course Unit

ASAM 2200 Asian American Literature Seminar
This course is an advanced-level seminar on Asian American culture and politics. See the English Department’s website at www.english.upenn.edu for a description of the current offerings.
Not Offered Every Year
Also Offered As: ENGL 2270
1 Course Unit

ASAM 2310 18th-Century Seminar: China in the English Imagination
This course explores the material culture of china-mania that spread across England and Europe in the eighteenth century, from chinoiserie vogues in fashion, tea, porcelain, and luxury goods, to the idealization of Confucius by Enlightenment philosophers. How was Asia was imagined and understood by Europeans during a period of increased trade between East and West? The course texts include travel writing, poetry, essays, and plays. Students will work closely with rare books and with art objects at the Penn Museum and the Philadelphia Museum of Art. The course is designed to provide historical background to contemporary problems of Orientalism, Sinophilia, and Sinophobia.
Also Offered As: COML 2031, EALC 1321, ENGL 2031
1 Course Unit

ASAM 2500 Topics in Asian American Sociology
Topics vary. Please see our website for more current information:
asam.sas.upenn.edu
Fall or Spring
1 Course Unit

ASAM 2600 Asian American Food
You are what you eat. Asian American Food explores the history, politics, and ethnic identity of food through a cultural lens. Growing food, eating, and sharing meals serve as intimate expressions of self and community. By examining the production and consumption of food, the course investigates the ways that Asian Americans navigate traditions, gender norms, religious dietary laws, food habits, and employment as they create lives in the United States. The course overviews the history of Asian American foodways, but has a particular focus on Philadelphia’s Asian American communities.
Spring
Also Offered As: SAST 2600, URBS 2600
1 Course Unit

ASAM 2610 The Asian Caribbean
Although Asians have lived in the Americas for centuries, the Asian American community and experience tends to be defined by the post-1965 wave of immigration to the United States. In an effort to correct this narrative this course will explore the histories, experiences, and contributions of some of the forgotten Asians of the Americas. In particular, we will focus on the earlier labor migrations of Chinese and South Asian individuals to the Caribbean and the United States. The experiences of these individuals, who built railroads, cut sugarcane, and replaced African slave labor, complicate our understandings of race today. By examining the legal and social debates surrounding their labor in the 19th century and exploring how their experiences are forgotten and their descendants are rendered invisible today, we will complicate what is Asian America and consider how this history shapes immigration policies today.
Spring
Also Offered As: GSWS 2610, LALS 2601, SAST 2610
1 Course Unit
ASAM 2910 Asian Human Rights / Asian American Civil Rights
The last few decades have seen mass migration and movement of people from one place to another: from South, East, and Southeast Asia in the 1970s and 1980s, from Central America in the 1990s, from Africa in 2000s, and in this decade from the Middle East. In Asia, as a result of human rights violations, North Koreans have fled to China, Tibetans to India, and over 3 million individuals fled Southeast Asia in the 1980s. More than one million refugees from Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam, fled temporarily to Hong Kong, China, the Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, before resettling in the United States. Philadelphia is host to all of these communities. Some of our own students at Penn are 1st or 2nd generation South and Southeast Asian Americans. This course provides a comparative overview of the history, ethnicity, religion, and cultures of Southeast Asia (and the deep connections with South Asia and East Asia), and their human rights, temporary settlement, and treatment in host countries in the region. The first part of the course will use an international human rights framework to explore the human rights issues that forced people to flee from their countries of origin. The course will challenge and expand students’ understandings of international human rights in the past and in the present with a focus on human rights violations such as: A. Vietnamese fleeing the war in Southeast Asia, B. North Koreans seeking refuge in China and in South Korea, C. Tibetans hoping for protection by crossing the border into India. Given the deep diplomatic and economic relations between Vietnam and India, this international portion of the course will highlight how the two countries in the region, an Asian communist country, and the other, an Asian democratic country handle human rights in similar and different ways. The second part of the course will pivot to the US and explore the civil rights of Asian Americans in the US such as the right to migrate, seek and enjoy asylum, education, housing, employment and health. The course will feature Penn professors as guest speakers so as to expose students to our own in-house experts, their fields and their departments. In addition, As part of a Asian American Studies, South Asia Center, Netter Center ABCS course, students will visit neighborhoods where Asian Americans live, work and play. South Asian neighborhoods in Jersey City, New Jersey; Korean neighborhoods in Olney; Vietnamese and Cambodian neighborhoods in South and West Philly. Students will also intern in host organizations to learn about community needs and strengths.
1 Course Unit

ASAM 3100 American Expansion in the Pacific
This class will focus on America’s expansion into the Pacific around the turn of the century with the acquisition of Hawaii and the Philippines. It can deal with various issues, including the meaning of “frontier,” colonialism, development of capitalist economies in the region, diplomacy, racism, migration, an American brand of Orientalism in encountering the “natives” and “heathens,” and histories of the West and the Pacific Islands in general.
Fall or Spring
Also Offered As: HIST 1785
1 Course Unit

ASAM 3130 The Chinese Body and Spatial Consumption in Chinatown
This is a primarily an art and planning course that centers on the representation of the oriental, specifically the Chinese, in both its historical and present contexts. The localization of the Chinese throughout the Americas within Chinatown precincts were also subject to representational imaginations that were negotiated through the lens of civic planning. This course will study the often fraught negotiation between representation and planning. The hyper-urbanization of China over the past several decades has radically altered traditional conceptions of public space in China. Mass migration from rural to urban areas has meant very high population densities in Chinese cities. Traditional courtyards surrounded by housing and other modestly scaled buildings are rapidly disappearing, incongruent with the demands of heated property development. Moreover, Chinese cities have comparatively little public green space per resident compared to equivalents in the West. Zoning in Chinese cities is also much more varied for any given area than what one would find in cities such as New York, Paris, and London. Intensifying density of urban areas precludes the construction of large public squares. Furthermore, large public squares tend to be either intensively congested and overcrowded or underused due to their oversight by government that render such spaces somewhat opprobrious in terms of use. Historically, the urban courtyards of temples, native place associations, and provincial guilds served as public spaces of gathering. They were also sites of festivals and the conducting of neighbourhood and civic business. These spaces have become increasingly privatized or commodified with entrance fees. The air-conditioned concourses of enclosed shopping malls or busy outdoor market streets have become de facto public spaces in China where collective window shopping or promenading is the primary activity rather than bodily repose as one might find in a public space in a large Western city. The seminar/studio will investigate the meaning of the term public in the constitution of Chinese space, audience and critical voice through firstly the enclave of Chinatown and secondly through examples from China. The course will look into the changing conceptualization of public space in Chinatown as it has declined in its traditional form and become reinvented in the form of high-end shopping centered districts. This flux has its roots in post 1979 China as well as the post 1997 reversion of Hong Kong to China. As such, the course will examine the situation of rapid urbanization in China and the concomitant relationship to new Chinese (and Asian) districts in the North American urban and suburban landscape ie Vancouver, Toronto, Arlington (Virginia), Oakland, Los Angeles valley and Queens (Flushing), New York. In what ways can artists and designers respond to and challenge these conceptualizations of the old and the new within the context of urban change? What of the changing formations of the Chinese subject through the experiences of embodiment? How is public space produced through an ethnically bracketed bodily presence. Findings will be translated by the student as tools for design and public art imaginings. This course will include a week’s trip to San Francisco to study how intense growth in the city has all but usurped old Chinatown while new and more vibrant Chinese centers have emerged in multiple other districts within the city and the suburbs.
Also Offered As: ENGL 2275, FNAR 3060
1 Course Unit