ASIAN AMERICAN STUDIES (ASAM)

ASAM 001 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.
For BA Students: Society Sector
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: SOCI 103
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit

ASAM 002 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 Asian American history and minority communities and considering the variety of formal strategies these different texts take.
For BA Students: Arts and Letters Sector
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: ENGL 072
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit

ASAM 003 Introduction to Asian American History
This course provides 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.
For BA Students: History and Tradition Sector
Taught by: Azuma
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: HIST 155
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit

ASAM 006 Race and Ethnic Relations
This 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 incluclude discussions of African Americans, Whites, Hispanics, Asian Americans, and multiracials.
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: AFRC 006, SOCI 006, URBS 160
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit

ASAM 100 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.
Taught by: Pillai
Course usually offered in fall term
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit

ASAM 104 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.
Taught by: Khan
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: SAST 113, URBS 207
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit

ASAM 110 Asian American Activism
Please see our website for more current information:
asam.sas.upenn.edu
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

ASAM 120 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.
Taught by: Van Do
Course usually offered in spring term
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit
ASAM 160 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.
Taught by: Khan
Course usually offered in fall term
Also Offered As: SAST 290
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

ASAM 165 The Asian Caribbean
This course complicates prevailing understandings of the Caribbean and extends the boundaries of Asian America by exploring the histories, experiences, and contributions of Asians in the Caribbean. In particular, we will focus on the migrations of Chinese and Indian individuals to Cuba, Trinidad, and Guyana as well as how their descendants are immigrating to the United States. We will examine the legal and social debates surrounding their labor in the 19th century, how they participated in the decolonization of the region, and how their migration to the United States complicates our understandings of ethnicity and race. Ultimately, through our comparative race approach, we will appreciate that the Caribbean is more than the Black Caribbean, it is also the Asian Caribbean.
Taught by: Pillai
Course usually offered in spring term
Also Offered As: GSWS 165, SAST 166
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit

ASAM 170 Psych 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.
Course usually offered in spring term
Also Offered As: SAST 170
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

ASAM 175 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.
Taught by: Daniel Woo
Course usually offered in spring term
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

ASAM 180 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.
Taught by: Khan, F
Course usually offered in spring term
Also Offered As: SAST 180, URBS 180
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

ASAM 201 Topics in Asian American Sociology
Topics vary. Please see our website for more current information: asam.sas.upenn.edu
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: SOCI 150, URBS 215
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit

ASAM 202 Topics In Asian American Literature
Topics vary. Please see our website for more current information: asam.sas.upenn.edu
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: CIMS 272, ENGL 272
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit
ASAM 203 Topics in Asian American History
Topics vary. Please see our website for more current information: asam.sas.upenn.edu
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: AFRC 229, HIST 231
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

ASAM 208 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.
Taught by: Buscher
Course usually offered in fall term
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit

ASAM 210 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.
Taught by: Rupa Pillai
Course usually offered in fall term
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

ASAM 215 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 on 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.
Taught by: Rupa Pillai
Course usually offered in spring term
Also Offered As: GSWS 215, SAST 215
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

ASAM 220 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 have 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.
Taught by: Roy
Course usually offered in spring term
Also Offered As: GSWS 220, SAST 221
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

ASAM 294 Facing America
This course explores the visual history of race in the United States as both self-fashioning and cultural mythology by examining the ways that conceptions of Native American, Latino, and Asian identity, alongside ideas of Blackness and Whiteness, have combined to create the various cultural ideologies of class, gender, and sexuality that remain evident in historical visual and material culture. We also investigate the ways that these creations have subsequently helped to launch new visual entertainments, including museum spectacles, blackface minstrelsy, and early film, from the colonial period through the 1940s.
Taught by: Shaw, Staff
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: AFRC 294, ARTH 274, ARTH 674, CIMS 293, LALS 274
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit
ASAM 313 The Chinese Body and Spatial Consumption in Chinatown
This course looks at representations of the Chinese (and Asian body) since the Limehouse district in East London and the advent of Chinese contract laborers to the Americas in the 19th century. The localization of the Chinese throughout the Americas within Chinatown precincts were also subject to representational imaginings that were negotiated through the lens of civic planning, literature and later in cinema. Chinatowns are ultimately a product of racism. They were created as a political and social support system for newly arrived Chinese immigrants. While Chinese laborers arrived into the United States in 1840 and in significant numbers into Canada about 1860, Chinese contract workers were encouraged to immigrate to the Americas as an inexpensive source of labor, especially after the end of the American Civil War. Industrial leaders in America, Canada and elsewhere in the Americas (Mexico, Cuba, Peru, etc) saw the arrival of Chinese workers as a victory for commercial interests. However, the celebration was short-lived, as anti-Chinese sentiment quickly transformed into anti-Chinese hysteria. Rather than attacking the vested interests that exploit foreign labor as embodied by the Chinese worker, racist unions with the cooperation of civic leaders and the police deemed it safer to burn Chinatowns than capitalist property. Deeply under-studied to this day is the number of mass murders of Chinese workers in the 19th century by anti-Chinese thugs. This seminar will focus in on how the body of the Chinese (and Asian) was imagined and reimagined multiple times from the middle of the 19th century to today.
Taught by: Lum/Yang
Also Offered As: ENGL 273, FNAR 313, FNAR 613
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

ASAM 354 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 Phillipines. 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.
Taught by: Azuma
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: HIST 354
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit