

AMS101: Introduction to American Studies

Not Your Model Minority: Asian Descendants of Indenture in the Americas

Course Information

Tu/Th 11:20am-12:35pm Spring 2022

Location: online and Perez Arch Center 130

Instructor: Tarika Sankar

Email: tgs46@miami.edu

Office Hours: Tues 1-2pm outside, and by appointment on Zoom

Course Description

Discussions of Asian-American identity have come to the forefront during the COVID-19 pandemic and circulate around topics of immigrant achievement, assimilation, the "model minority," and more. However, these conversations often fail to contextualize the long history of Asians in America, which dates back to 19th century migrations of South and East Asians to the Caribbean and North America as indentured laborers. This course will introduce you to the key concepts and methods of American Studies through the lens of histories of Asian indenture in the Americas and contemporary Asian identities descended from indenture. We will pair historical and contemporary texts together to explore key concepts such as migration, labor, race, and diaspora. We will focus on how contemporary Indo-Caribbean and Asian communities negotiate their identities through activism, literature, artistic production and more. By no means a comprehensive history course on Asian indenture in the Americas, we will instead seek to productively complicate and expand the definition of "Asian-American," moving beyond common stereotypes into lesser-known histories.

We will practice analyzing and discussing a range of texts, from historical documents to TV shows, performance art and literature. You will learn transferable skills such as critical reading and writing, multicultural competency, interdisciplinary research, and making evidence-based arguments. Hopefully, this course will enable you to think differently and critically about a range of social and political issues and make informed arguments and decisions as a member of American civic society.

Learning Objectives

- Students will be able to apply key concepts in American Studies to critically analyze a range of primary and secondary texts
- Students will gain a better understanding of the diversity of people, cultures, and experiences that have shaped the past and present United States
- Students will use a hemispheric perspective to analyze the interconnections of the United States, Caribbean, Latin America and larger-scale global changes
- Students will become familiar with American Studies as an interdisciplinary mode of inquiry
- Students will demonstrate the ability to directly relate themes, analyses, and methodologies they learned in their courses to their own research projects.

Course Infrastructure

All readings, assignments and materials will be found in our shared course Google Drive. You will need to log into Google Drive using your **UM email address** to access our course folder. In our Drive you will find our [Weekly Schedule](#), a folder for your journal entries, and a folder containing all the readings. I will also set up a private folder for each of you to upload assignments, which will be shared only between you and me. I suggest bookmarking or otherwise saving the link to our Weekly Schedule as this is where you will find the most updated assigned readings and due dates. I will only use Blackboard to input grades. I will communicate with you via email any changes to the weekly schedule or other important announcements.

Assignments and Grading

- Journal entries: 15%
- Participation: 20%
- Assignment #1 (close analysis): 10%
- Assignment #2 (research paper): 15%
- Final project: 20%
- Final Portfolio: 20%
- A- :90-92%, A: 93-96%, A+: 97-100%; B-: 80-82%, B: 83-86%, B+: 86-89%, etc

Each week's reading will be accompanied by a journal prompt. You will create a document for yourself in our Google drive folder titled "Journal entries" and write your journal entries there throughout the semester. Journal entries should be a minimum of 1-2 paragraphs, but feel free to write more. The journal entries are intended to spark your thinking, provide material for class discussion, and develop your ideas for the assignments and final project. I will frequently read your entries and ask you expand on them during class, but they are graded for completion, not as polished or gramatically correct final products.

When grading, I am looking for *overall improvement* and increasing sophistication in your writing and thinking. I do not expect you to know everything or be perfect on your first assignment. The final portfolio of all your work in this course will give you an opportunity to revise, reflect on what you have learned and demonstrate how your thinking has evolved over the course.

Course Policies and Expectations

Attendance and participation are essential to your success in this class, as much of the learning will we do together is through discussion. That said, given the extreme circumstances of learning during a pandemic, I will not apply an attendance policy. You should notify me of any planned absences for religious observations or university events at the *beginning* of the semester. **If you feel sick or have been in contact with a COVID positive person, regardless of vaccination status, please do not attend class. If you are unsure about whether to come to class, please contact me immediately.** You will be graded on the quality of your participation alone (contributing to class discussions and group work, paying attention), but equally, if you are hardly in class it will be difficult to participate meaningfully.

Safety Currently, University of Miami policy requires everyone (regardless of vaccination status) to wear face masks at all times in classrooms and other shared indoor settings. Please wear a surgical mask or well-fitted double-layer fabric face covering (preferably both) during class. The university also strongly encourages you

to get vaccinated and boosted against COVID-19 if you are not already. COVID-19 vaccines are safe, reliable, widely tested and constitute the best strategy for protecting yourself and your community against severe illness due to COVID-19. COVID vaccines are available through the university at UHealth and at local pharmacies. Please let me know if you would like any further information about vaccination or help accessing a vaccine. Any unvaccinated individuals are expected to comply with weekly surveillance testing from the university and if required to isolate will be responsible for the costs of their lodging. For more information and the latest updates, please visit coronavirus.miami.edu.

Electronic devices: Please use devices for class purposes only, such as accessing a reading or assignment or taking notes. Off-task use of phones, laptops or other devices will impact your participation grade.

Plagiarism is taken very seriously and may result in referral to the honor council. Please cite your sources correctly. If you need any help with this or do not believe you can complete an assignment on your own, please speak to me so I can help. Please see the [Honor Code](#) for more information.

Grades cannot be discussed via email due to federal requirements. If you have a question about grades please see me during office hours.

University values We will strive to create an inclusive space that fosters productive, critical and respectful dialogue. This course will address weighty and sensitive topics. We will agree to speak from our own perspectives, respect the experiences of others, and use reliable sources and evidence to support our arguments.

Tips for Success

- This course will require a considerable amount of reading and writing every week, so please consider that in the context of your overall schedule. Please come to class having carefully and thoughtfully done the readings and journal prompts.
- I am available via email (tgs46@miami.edu) Mon-Fri from 9am to 5pm. Outside of these hours I cannot guarantee a quick response. If you have any questions or concerns please email me *sooner* rather than later.
- Be sure to regularly check your UM email address or forward it to an address you check regularly.
- [The Writing Center](http://www.miami.mymconline.com) (www.miami.mymconline.com) is a free and valuable resource offered at the university. Tutors at the Writing Center can help you at any stage of the assignment, from brainstorming to outlining to final review. Please bring the syllabus, assignment sheet and any relevant readings or sources to your appointment to enable them to best help you.
- I encourage you to come to **office hours** either during my in-person hours or by emailing me to schedule a Zoom meeting. I am happy to meet to discuss assignments, to help you if you are struggling with participation or keeping up with readings, if you feel lost or confused in any way, or just to check in.

Course Schedule

Please see the ["Weekly Schedule"](#) Google doc

Our course will be organized around these "keywords" in American Studies:

- Indenture
- Migration
- Archives

- Labor
- C*oolie
- Race
- Intimacies
- Asian-American
- Model Minority
- Gender
- Intersectionality
- Diaspora

Resources

- [University Coronavirus Information](https://coronavirus.miami.edu) (coronavirus.miami.edu)
- [UM Libraries](http://www.library.miami.edu) (www.library.miami.edu) Writing Center, free research consultations, access to technology
- [Camner Academic Resource Center](http://camnercenter.miami.edu) (camnercenter.miami.edu) Tutoring and learning accommodations
- [The Counseling Center](#) 1307 Stanford Drive 305-284-5511
After-hours line: 305-284-5511, press 1
- [Canes Care for Canes](#) Report a concern or bias incident
- [University Ombudsperson](#) A resource to help you troubleshoot or manage difficult situations

Sources and Acknowledgements

Hemm AMS101 Syllabus

Regalado AMS101 Syllabus

Rosenberg and Francis Panama Silver, *Asian Gold: Migration, Money, and the Making of the Modern Caribbean* Syllabus

Yale Asian American Studies Syllabus

Khan Cultures and Context: Caribbean Syllabus

Chang America's Pacific: Asian American History Syllabus