Which of the following best fits you?

“I suck at math.”

“I speak English.”

“I will not love you long time.”

“I do not eat dog.”

“I am not a terrorist.”

“An ‘oriental’ is a rug.”

“A ‘chink’ is a small fissure in a wall.”

“My mom said I’d be a rock star [or insert ideal occupation].”

If you identified or had an experience with some of the choices, then you have already taken your first steps in understanding the contemporary Asian American experience. The difficult task that lay ahead is to ask why these representations and stereotypes continue to persist and dominate Asian American identity and discourse in the United States and how it impacts community organizing, electoral and political mobilization, and narratives of agency and resistance.

This course introduces the sociological research of the Asian American experience in the United States. It is devoted to the study of contemporary issues affecting Asian American communities since 1965 and how changes in the immigrant family experiences, labor and class challenges in a global era, and pan-Asian/pan-ethnic political mobilization have articulated new dimensions – and questions – about identity, culture, and politics. Specific topics include social problems with anti-Asian violence and domestic violence in immigrant communities, educational achievement and the "model minority," racial backlash and economic scapegoating of Asian Americans as the "yellow peril," multi-racial identity and politics, and media stereotypes about Asian Americans. Additionally, the Asian American contemporary experience cannot be examined without inter-related and intersectional critiques with issues of gender, class, and sexuality. Topics under this area include exploring the gendered impact of globalization on immigration and labor, analyzing the middle class dream and the working class nightmare of Asian America, and the productive tension arising from theories and practices of queer discourses about sexualized racial difference and body politics in shaping and producing Asian American identity, culture, and politics. This course lays out the terrain in which the study and lived experiences of Asian Americans (the individual) are articulated, contested, and negotiated with the community (society and culture).
In my experience, I found it useful to explicitly state for your benefit and to maintain my sanity what this course is NOT. This class WILL NOT DISCUSS OR COVER, for example: the 1,000 year historical development of Chinese pagoda architecture; the philosophical difference between Taoism and Buddhism; customs to observe during Lunar New Year celebration; signs of the Chinese Zodiac and numerology; the finer delights of Asian cooking with fried tofu, sushi, pad thai, phở, or tandoori chicken; the breakthrough performances of Jackie Chan, Jet Li, Michelle Yeoh, Chow-Yun Fat, or Zhang Ziyi; the cinematic grandeur of The Last Emperor, Seven Samurai, Hero, or Curse of the Golden Flower (or for that matter, directors such as Akira Kurosawa or Bernardo Bertolucci); martial arts styles such as wu shu, tae kwon do, escrima, or David Carradine; the fantastic artistry and narrative structure in Japanese anime and manga; robots or anything mechanized-related (that includes Sony products); the geopolitical complexity of China’s impending takeover of Taiwan; human rights violations in Myanmar (Burma), Kampuchea (Cambodia), Indonesia, China, etc.; international trade in the Asian Pacific region and the United States; the enormous influence of Korean pop singers such as SES, H.O.T., Shinhwa, or Jang Nara in Taiwan, Japan, and China; Asian-influenced fashion designer clothing in, for example, Vera Wang; the cultural, political, and social symbolism of Godzilla, Gidra, Gamera, or any other friggin’ creature that never seems to die in the genre of Japanese monster movies, and many MANY others. In short, this course is neither a manual or a “how to” guide on all things “Asian.” For those topics and interests, it is best to enroll in a course with an Asian Studies emphasis or refer to the numerous websites dedicated to pop cultural appreciation.

With these thoughts as a departure point, we have the following course objectives that we WILL COVER and accomplish:

1) To appreciate the sociological approach to the study of the Asian American experience.
2) To gain a familiarity of a broad range of scholars, activists, theories, and concepts in the field of Sociology and Asian American Studies.
3) To comprehend the social, cultural, and political utility of “Asian American” as a panethnic category as well as the intra/inter-ethnic differences and tensions that constitute it.
4) To deconstruct the effects of the “model minority” myth to the “yellow peril” and their social, economic, and political effects in public policy, law, and political decision-making.
5) To challenge and continue to define what it means to be “Asian American” as a political category, a cultural entity, and an individual choice.
6) To practice and strengthen your written and oratory skills in analyzing Asian American issues.
7) To develop a solid foundation of Asian American history, culture, and politics for a comparative analysis in broader discussions about the complexity of race relations in the United States.
8) To understand definitively why no discussion about race, difference, multiculturalism, diversity, etc. can ever occur without an Asian American perspective.

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

7. Additional handouts and readings available in the library, e-reserve, or online.
My teaching philosophy is dialogue-driven, experience-centered, and theoretically-challenging. The course format is primarily discussion based with the occasional “mini-lecture” by me when necessary. The reason for this is because sociologist Michael Omi often described the contemporary Asian American experience in the United States as a historical pendulum between the “model minority” as America’s favored immigrants to the ominous and perpetual threat of the “yellow peril.” The themes that we will engage in this course, while contemporary in nature, have roots in histories of state-sanctioned discrimination, race-based exclusion, and xenophobic hysteria. I will provide “mini-lectures” to help contextualize the week’s theme, topic, and readings. You are expected to attend all class sessions, complete the assigned readings as scheduled, and participate substantively in discussions. Please note that reading assignments can vary so be sure to pace yourself and plan your time accordingly. Some weeks have a heavy page load but are readable and accessible; other weeks have shorter loads but are theoretically dense. There will also be a selection of videos, movies, and documentaries that we will either see in class or will be assigned as homework. Because our class meets three days a week in 50 min. increments, developing a rhythm to discussion can take a bit longer especially at 8am. In order to facilitate the class in a productive manner, the week’s meetings can be structured in the following manner (of course, this is merely one example):

Monday Sessions
1) Begin with 5-10 minutes of taking care of any administrative items, announcements of events, chit chat, or simply checking in with each other. For the Fall semester, football (college and pro), the new season of Heroes, Life, and Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles, to name a few, tend to be favorite topics of mine, but I do try to keep abreast of everything (especially national and world events) but I welcome any and all topics that you desire to share.
2) Remaining class time is dedicated to presentation-discussion about one or more of the assigned readings. Each student is required to make two presentations in the course of the semester as an individual and in a team of two. Team presentations are usually reserved for weeks where the reading load is quite heavy or theoretically dense.

Wednesday Sessions
3) This session continues the presentation from Monday with discussion questions and if necessary a mini-lecture by me. The purpose of such will be to historically locate the week’s readings in context. Some topics can also include the political, cultural, and social context of the author(s) and the meaningfulness of their work. Other topics can investigate the relationship of the readings with other political, intellectual, and cultural projects and scholarship. At any rate, it will be historically based to provide a proper frame of reference.

Friday Sessions
1) The last session attempts to synthesize what has been presented thus far from the presentation, mini-lecture, and questions/items from discussions to form the “big picture” and to answer the question “So what?”

GRADING POLICY AND DESCRIPTION

CLASS PARTICIPATION & ATTENDANCE (30%)
Grading will be based upon attendance and active discussion. You are expected to complete all the reading assignments as scheduled and be ready for discussion. Show your respect to your classmates during their presentations and they will return the favor. Attendance will be regularly recorded. You are allowed three unexcused absences. Beyond that and your grade will suffer dire consequences.
PRESENTATIONS/LEAD DISCUSSANTS (20%)  
You will be required to sign up for at least one individual and one team presentation. For both presentations, you are expected to write up and print out a handout to the class. I am open and supportive of a variety of formats and approaches, but I do not want a simple rehash or summary of the content. Thus, a variety of formats are available. You might try one of the following:

1) Identify a claim, belief, or value in the selection that you dispute, and explain why you disagree with the logic, facts, opinions, or arguments of the claim.
2) Pose an interesting unanswered question and show how it follows from the reading.
3) Suggest a method for resolving an issue raised by the reading.
4) Write a poem or a story or a dialogue that captures your reaction to the reading.

Choices for individual (I) and team presentations (T) are marked accordingly on the syllabus. You are encouraged to discuss a draft of your presentation with me at least one week before your scheduled presentation so that I can provide feedback. Also, if you use outside sources or even have discussions with your friends or classmates about your upcoming presentation, it is always a nice gesture to acknowledge them in your presentation and on the handout. These are practices of civility that constitute what it means to be a positive “academic citizen.”

RESEARCH PAPER (30%)  
The research paper will consist of a 10-15 page report. The final paper will be on a contemporary topic relevant to the course. You must use a minimum of eight (8) sources for this project. Webpages as sources are not acceptable unless approved by the instructor. I am also open to different formats but you must discuss your proposal in detail with me before pursuing it. To assist you in developing your research paper, there will be three 2-3 page research memos which are due over the course of the semester. Please note the dates below and they are listed on the course schedule.

- Research memo #1: Friday, September 26, 5pm
- Research memo #2: Friday, October 31, 5pm
- Research memo #3: Wednesday, November 26, 5pm

You can use these research memos to develop your topic, refine your bibliography, or strengthen your analysis and conclusion. If you are certain about your topic, then you can use these memos to write sections of your research paper. For example, the first memo can consist of your introduction and preliminary bibliography. The second section can consist of the body of your research paper, and the third and final section can end with your analysis and conclusion. I will accept rewrites and in fact I encourage them so long as you arrange a meeting with me to discuss the best approach. It is recommended to do a rewrite as soon as possible while your thoughts are still fresh so the deadline to meet with me is two weeks after the original submission. I do not accept late memos.

ASIAN AMERICANS IN IOWA (20%)  
One of the first important steps in studying the Asian American experience is determining where and when Asians and Asian Americans have entered and settled in the United States. This class project will focus specifically on the state of Iowa. It is an attempt to focus what is in plain view but out of sight: the migration and settlement of Asians and Asian Americans throughout history, their individual and collective legacies, and the challenges they continue to face. This project goes beyond a “who’s who” of Iowan Asian Americans, but it is to grasp the rich and complex history of Iowa’s peoples.

The class will lead the definition and organization of this project in consultation with me. Each student will be responsible for a particular section to research, develop, and contribute. Some sections and topics for this project can include but are not limited to the following: the first Asian settler, the first business establishment, the first local or state politician, the first wave of Asian immigrants, the first citizen, the first Chinatown, Koreatown, Little Saigon, etc. I was made aware that our library has census data for the
state dating all the way back to 1845 which can be a potentially rich source of information. Other sources can include: local museums, personal collections, governmental archives, community libraries, etc. I am still discussing with ITS on the best format to preserve this work.

**NOTE:**
There are a number of activities and events that are related to the course themes and topics. I will do my best to keep everyone apprised of what’s going on and how best to use our time.

### GRADE DISTRIBUTION

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100 – 94</td>
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<td>93 – 90</td>
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<td>69 – 60</td>
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<td>59 and below</td>
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### MISCELLANY

I expect everyone to stay in contact with me throughout the semester. Please come by during my office hours to discuss course content, thoughts or concerns about the assignments, or to get extra assistance. My office hours are posted weekly at CARN 105. Email, texting, etc. are great tools for communication but they are not adequate substitutes for face-to-face interactions with your professor. If you cannot attend my office hours, you are encouraged to schedule an appointment with me. You can contact me by email as I am online daily. I can usually give a response within 24 hours unless I receive the email after 5pm or if it is over the weekend.

If you have a physical or learning disability that requires you to make some adaptations to this course, please contact me to discuss arrangements. All conversations are confidential. For assistance with disability services, contact Joyce Stern in the Academic Advising Office (x3700).

Any papers or assignments written for this course and others, you must abide by Grinnell College's policies on plagiarism as outlined in the Student Handbook. It requires you to “acknowledge explicitly any epxressions, ideas, or observations that are not” your own. We also have excellent writing professionals in the writing lab who will offer invaluable assistance.
**WEEK 1: WELCOME!!!**

| Aug 29 – Fri | Readings:  
|-------------|------------|
|             | 1. No assigned readings.  

Topics:
- Introduction to class.
- Course overview and design.
- Course requirements.

**WEEK 2: “Who are you?”**

| Sep 1 – Mon | Readings:  
|-------------|------------|
|             | 1. No assigned readings.  

Topics: Which one?
- Asian?
- Asian American?
- Asian-American?
- Asian Pacific American?
- Asian-Pacific American?
- Asian Pacific Islander American?
- Asian-Pacific Islander American?
- Asian and Pacific American?
- Asian and Pacific Islander American?

| Sep 3 – Wed | Readings:  
|-------------|------------|
|             | 1. Zhou & Gatewood: 25-109  

Topics:
- Activism then and now
- Birth of Asian American Studies
- Influence of Civil Rights and Black Power Movement

| Sep 5 – Fri | Readings:  
|-------------|------------|
|             | 1. Zhou & Gatewood: 1-24  
|             | 2. Espiritu, *Asian American Women and Men*: 1-18  

- The field of Asian American Studies and Sociology
- Interdisciplinarity
## WEEK 3: “From a Different Shore”

| Sep 8 – M | Readings:  
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<tr>
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<td>1. (I) Zhou &amp; Gatewood: 115-175</td>
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**Topics:**
- Immigration & migration
- Where and when Asian American history begins

**Supplemental:**
1. Frank Chin reading of *Donald Duk* (1991):
   [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zuShyQznHjw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zuShyQznHjw)
   - Ronald Takaki, “From a Different Shore: Their History Bursts with Telling”
   - Gary Okihiro, “When and Where I Enter”

| Sep 10-12 – WF | Readings:  
|---------------|----------------------------------------------------------|

## WEEK 4: The Myth of the “Model Minority”

| Sep 15-19 – MWF | Readings:  
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<tr>
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<td>1. (I) Zhou &amp; Gatewood: 469-498</td>
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</table>

**Topics:**
- The most dangerous representation

**Supplemental:**
1. Zhou & Gatewood (1st ed): 449-498
   - Lucie Cheng and Philip Q. Yang, “The 'Model Minority' Deconstructed”
## WEEK 5: Anti-Asian Violence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sep 22 – Mon</th>
<th>Readings:</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. (I) Zhou &amp; Gatewood: 425-462</td>
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</table>

**Topics:**
- Anti-asian violence
- Panethnic mobilization
- Resistance

**Documentary:**

**Supplemental:**
1. Zhou & Gatewood (1st ed): 501-517
   - Deborah N. Misir, “The Murder of Navroze Mody: Race, Violence, and the Search for Order”

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<th>Sep 24-26 – WF</th>
<th>Readings:</th>
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<tr>
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<td>1. Espiritu (AAP): Ch 6, 134-160</td>
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| Sep 26 – F | **Research memo #1 due (2-3) pages** |

## WEEK 6: Asian American Panethnicity

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<th>Sep 29 – Fri</th>
<th>Readings:</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. (T) Espiritu, <em>Asian American Panethnicity</em>: chs 1 &amp; 3 (ch 2 optional reread)</td>
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**Topics:**
- Political mobilization
- Electoral politics
- Identity at individual – local – state – national
- Census politics and racial categorizations
- Social services
- Solidarity

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<th>Oct 1-3 – WF</th>
<th>Readings:</th>
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### WEEK 7: Life, Family, & Community Issues

**Oct 6 – Mon**

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<th>Readings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. (T) Kibria, <em>Family Tightrope</em>: chs 1-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. (I) Zhou &amp; Gatewood: 243-296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Espiritu, <em>Asian American Women and Men</em>: chs 2-3 (History)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Topics:**
- Immigrant – refugee
- Family, gender, labor
- Patriarchy

**Supplemental:**
   - Paul Ong and Karen Umemoto, “Life and Work in the Inner City”
   - Jennifer Lee, “Striving for the American Dream: Struggle, Success, and Intergroup Conflict among Korean Immigrant Entrepreneurs”

**Oct 8-10 – WF**

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<th>Readings</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. (T) Kibria, <em>Family Tightrope</em>: chs 4-7</td>
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### WEEK 8: Women and Men

**Oct 13 – Mon**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Readings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. (I) Handout: Margaretta Wan Ling Lin and Cheng Imm Tan, “Holding Up More than Half the Heavens: Domestic Violence in Our Communities, A Call for Justice”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Topics:**
- Naturalization and citizenship
- Domestic Violence and cultural defense

**Supplemental:**
1. Zhou & Gatewood (*1st* ed): 413-443
   - Shirley Hune, “Doing Gender with a Feminist Gaze: Toward a Historical Reconstruction of Asian America”
   - Nazli Kibria, “Power, Patriarchy, and Gender Conflict in the Vietnamese Immigrant Community”

**Oct 15-17 – WF**

Fall Break.
### WEEK 9: Queering Asian America

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Oct 20-24 – MWF</th>
<th>Readings:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. (T) Russell Leong, ed. <em>Asian American Sexualities</em>: chs 1, 5, 6, 9, &amp; 16 [On reserve]</td>
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**Topics:**
- Intersections of queer identity and race
- Communities of belonging
- Narratives of rejection and acceptance

**Film:**

### WEEK 10: Multiethnic Asian America

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Oct 27-31 – MWF</th>
<th>Readings:</th>
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<tr>
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<td>1. (I) Zhou &amp; Gatewood: 381-419</td>
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**Topics:**
- Changing color lines
- Ethnicity
- Biracial-multiracial identity
- “the best of both worlds?”

**Film:**
- Erika Surat Andersen, *None of the Above* (1994)

**Supplemental:**
1. Zhou & Gatewood (1st ed): 589-605
   - Colleen Fong and Judy Yung, “In Search of the Right Spouse: Interracial Marriage among Chinese and Japanese Americans”

| Oct 31 – F | Research memo #2 due (2-3 pages) |

### WEEK 11: From One’s Dream ...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nov 3-7 – MWF</th>
<th>Readings:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. (T) Helen Zia: <em>Asian American Dreams</em></td>
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**Topics:**
- Coming of age in the 1980s
- Political consciousness, self-determination, cultural resistance
- Community organizing
- Intersections of gender and queer identities
### WEEK 12: ... To a Different Reality ...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nov 10-14 – MWF</th>
<th>Readings:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>1. (T) Eric Liu: <em>The Accidental Asian</em></td>
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**Topics:**
- A “different” coming of age in the 1990s
- Individual choice
- Political consciousness
- A “different” nationalist
- Ambivalence
- Assimilationist?

### WEEK 13: ... To a Nightmare

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nov 17-21 – MWF</th>
<th>Readings:</th>
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**Topics:**
- Violence
- Mental health
- Racialized terror & masculinity
- Native v. immigrant discourses

### WEEK 14: Media Representation and Popular Culture

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<tr>
<th>Nov 24-26 – MW</th>
<th>Readings:</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. (T) Espiritu, <em>Asian American Women and Men</em>: ch 5, 97-121</td>
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</table>

**Topics:**
- Yellow peril
- Model minority
- Charlie Chan and Suzie Wong
- Visible and invisible
- Gendered representations: Asian American masculinity and femininity

**Nov 26 – W**  
**Research memo #3 due (2-3) pages**

**Nov 27 – 30**  
Thanksgiving Holidays.
### WEEK 15: Revisiting APA Identity

<table>
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<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Zhou &amp; Gatewood: 331-375, 505-525</td>
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**Topics:**
- Revisiting “Asian American” identity
- Between the black/white paradigm
- Heterogeneity, multiplicity, & hybridity

### WEEK 16: Open

December 8-12

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### WEEK 17: Final Exams

December 15-19

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<th>Date</th>
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<td>Dec 16 – T</td>
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### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my thanks to the following for their contribution, encouragement, and advice on designing this syllabus: Professor Lorraine Dong (SFSU), Professor Edward Park (LMU), Professor Kent McClelland, and Professor Karla Erickson.