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AGAINST INVISIBILITY: ASIAN AMERICA, MEMORY AND THE PUBLIC HUMANITIES
AMERICAN STUDIES 2655

Asians have been living in North America since the 1600's but four centuries later Asian Americans are still virtually invisible in the narratives that define the nation. What are the spaces available to resist invisibility? The seminar will focus on ways in which Asian Americans have used vernacular photography to archive collective memory, resist state surveillances, assert subjectivity, and narrate alternate histories. We will learn to read photographs in their shifting contexts (for example, produced in the internment or refugee camp, collected in a family album or used to prove immigration status) and think about the politics of photography in Asian American narratives.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

This is a project driven seminar; the seminar will collectively construct of a digital exhibit on vernacular photography and Asian American history. We will work collaboratively to design and mount the exhibit. Individual students will choose topics to research and develop for the exhibit.

Assignments

The success of this course depends on the active engagement of the entire class. Active participation in the seminar discussion each week is expected.

Lead a discussion

Every participant will lead (or co-lead) at least one work discussion.

Post a weekly reading response and read each others posts

Seminar member will be expected to do all assigned readings and **post a 200-400 word response** to the Canvas discussion page each week. I am not interested in a summary of the book, articles or films. I *am* interested how the assignment has added to your knowledge, changed your way of thinking and generated new questions for you. You must post your comments to the Discussions Section on the course Canvas site by **midnite on the Sunday preceeding** the week's discussion. That will give everybody a chance to read all the posts before class.

Essays

Assignment 1 – Write a 200 word statement identifying and defining your topic. How does this subject relate to the exhibit mission statement? Due **2/27**

Assignment 2 - Post 400 word review of a digital history exhibit. Due **4/10**

Assignment 3 – Post photos for your exhibit and a 400-1000 word reading of the photos. Due **4/24**

Assignment 4 - Produce a 500 word digital exhibit entry based on essay 3. Due **May 1st**.

Work collaboratively to create a group project.

Contribute to one the work groups we organize to construct a digital web project.

Grading rubric

Participation in seminar discussion: 30%

Weekly responses and comments on Canvas: 30%

Collaborative project and presentation: 40%

READING SCHEDULE

We will discuss each week's reading on Tuesday and discuss our joint project on Thursdays. Initial reading responses must be posted by Monday 6pm to give everyone a chance to read them before class on Tuesday.

All readings are available as PDFs or electronic resources and linked to the Canvas site.

Week 1 1/26 Introductions

Week 2 1/31-33 History

Gary Okihiro, *Family Album History, Margins and Mainstreams*, Ch4.

Ariella Azoulay, "What is a Photograph, What is Photography?" *Philosophy of Photography*, vol.1, no.1
http://monoskop.org/images/7/71/Azoulay_Ariella_2010_What_is_a_photograph.pdf

Jennifer Tucker and Tina Campt, *Entwined Practices: Engagements with Photography in Historical Inquiry, History and Theory*, Vol. 48, No. 4, Theme Issue 48: Photography and Historical Interpretation (Dec., 2009), pp. 1-8 Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25621434>

Vivian Wong, et.al, "Archives (Re) Imagined Elsewhere, Asian American Community-based Archival Organizations" in Mary Caldera and Kathryn M. Neal, *Archives Through the Looking Glass, A Reader on Diversity and Inclusion*, Ch.5.

Week 3 2/7-9 Invisibility

Shawn Michelle Smith. Ch 4 Preparing the Way for the Train, Andrew J. Russell, , *At the Edge of Sight, photography and the unseen*, 199-227

Stanford Chinese Railroad Workers Project, <https://web.stanford.edu/group/chineserailroad/cgi-bin/wordpress/>

CPRR Photographic History, <http://cpr.org/Museum/Unknowns/index.html>

Week 4 2/14 Photography and the event (no class 2/16)

Guest lecture: Jim McGrath on Our Marathon

Our Marathon, <http://marathon.neu.edu/bca>

Ariella Azoulay, *Civil Imagination: A Political Ontology of Photography* chapters 1 and 4 k

Week 5 2/21-23 Surveillance

Anna Pegler-Gordon, *In Sight of America, Photography and the Development of American Immigration Policy*, 1-104

Deepali Dewan, We'll Take Your Artifacts but Not Your People: The *Komagata Maru* in Canada's South Asian Diasporic History *Photography and Diaspora*, Guest Edited by Anthony W. Lee, Vol. 5, No.1: Fall 2014 Permalink: <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.7977573.0005.104>

Week 5 2/28-3/2 Orientalisms

Anthony Lee, *A Shoemaker's Story, Being Chiefly About French Canadian Immigrants, Entreprising Photographers, Rascal Yankees, and Chinese Cobblers in A Nineteenth Century Factory Town*, Ch.4. What the Chinese Saw. 197-263

Arnold Genthe Photographs

Minnie Fong Lee album

Week 6 3/7- 9 Family

Laura Wexler, Techniques of the Imaginary Nation: Engendering Family Photography, *Reynold J. Scott-Childress, ed. Race and the Production of Modern American Nationalism*, pp. 359-383

Thy Phu, Diasporic Vietnamese Family Photographs, Orphan Images, and the Art of Recollection
Trans Asia Photography Review <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.7977573.0005.102>

Nina Hien, Photo Resurrections Before and Afterimages: An Ancestor Story, *Trans Asia Photography Review* [Volume 1, Issue 1](http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.7977573.0001.104), Fall 2010 <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.7977573.0001.104>

Assignment 1 due**Week 6 3/14-16 Incarceration**

Elena Creef, *Imaging Japanese Americans, The Visual Construction of Citizenship, Nation and the Body* 1-71

www.nytimes.com/slideshow/2012/06/24/sunday-review/24CAMP.html

<https://vimeo.com/46896493> 3min

<http://amhistory.si.edu/perfectunion/experience/index.html>

<http://www.densho.org/>

Week 7 3/21-23 Identities

ShiPu Wang, Going "Native" in an American Borderland: Frank S. Matsura's Photographic Miscegenation, [Volume 5, Issue 1](http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.7977573.0005.103): *Photography and Diaspora*, Guest Edited by Anthony W. Lee, Permalink: <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.7977573.0005.103>

Gauri Gill, "The Americans", Naturemorte, New Delhi, Mar. 2008.

Bakirathi Mani, Viewing South Asia, Seeing America: Gauri Gill's "The Americans," *American Quarterly*, vo.62, no 1, Mar 2010. Pp.135=150 <https://doi.org/10.1215/00131328-1214>

Kip Fullbeck, Doubles, Triples and Halves: Kip Fulbeck's Hapa Project (2002)

Trans Asia Photography Review volume 2 issue 1;
<http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.7977573.0002.107>

Assignment 2 due 3/27

Week 8 3/28-31 Spring break

Week 9 4/4-6 Assignment 3

Week 10 4/11-13

Week 11 4/18-20 Assignment 4

Week 12 4/25-27

Week 13 May 2-4 Reading Period

CREDIT HOURS

Over the 14 weeks of this course, students will spend 2.5 hours in class each week, or about 35 hours total. Although specific out-of-class time investments may vary for individual students, a reasonable estimate to support this course's learning outcomes is 150 hours total, or on average, ~11 hours weekly over a 14-week term. Out-of-class preparation will regularly include about seven hours per week of reading and writing and posting responses to reading. (92 hours total). In addition to this ongoing preparation time, students are expected to allocate approximately 38 hours over the course of the term to research and writing assignments and 17 hours to collaborative work on the final course web exhibit.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:

Any student with a documented disability is welcome to contact me as early in the semester as possible so that we may arrange reasonable accommodations. As part of this process, please be in touch with Student and Employee Accessibility Services by calling 401-863-9588 or online at http://brown.edu/Student_Services/Office_of_Student_Life/seas/index.html

- Please notify me as quickly as possible if the material being presented in class is not accessible (e.g., instructional videos need captioning, pdfs are not readable for proper alternative text conversion, etc.).
- Please notify me as early in the semester as possible if disability-related accommodations for field trips are required. Advanced notice will permit the arrangement of accommodations on the given day (e.g., transportation, site accessibility, etc.).

*Brown University is committed to full inclusion of all students. Please inform me early in the term if you have a disability or other conditions that might require accommodations or modification of any of these course procedures. You may speak with me after class or during office hours. For more information, please contact **Student and Employee Accessibility Services** at 401-863-9588 or SEAS@brown.edu*

FINALLY, A WORD ABOUT CONDUCT IN A COLLEGE CLASSROOM. To make our time together as valuable as possible, we all have to work hard at it. We will have to be respectful of the sensitivity of the content of some course lectures and readings. In addition we must be respectful of our peers and everyone's opinion. The following basic principles may give us some guidelines:

**Every student has the *right* to learn as well as
the *responsibility* not to deprive others of their right to learn.
Every student is accountable for their own actions.**