

Asian Americans in U.S. History I

AAS 33A

Fall 2025 Section 05 In Person 3 Unit(s) 08/20/2025 to 12/08/2025 Modified 08/21/2025

Section 5: Tuesday/Thursday 10:30AM-11:45AM @ DMH164

Section 6: Tuesday/Thursday 12:00PM-01:15PM @ DMH164

In Person, 3 Unit(s) 08/20/2025 to 12/08/2025, Letter Graded

Contact Information

Instructor: Akta Rao, PhD

Email: akta.rao@sjsu.edu

Office Hours: Thursdays 3-4PM in DMH 238B, and by appointment (please email me to schedule)

Course Description and Requisites

Historical and political processes shaping U.S. culture, institutions and society from before European expansion to the Civil War. Focus on the roles of workers, immigrants, and people of color from a comparative perspective.

Satisfies GE Area 4. Social and Behavioral Sciences (Formerly Area D).

Grading: Letter Graded

Note(s): Must complete the entire sequence (AAS 33A and AAS 33B) to satisfy American Institutions (US123).

Program Information

Welcome to this General Education course.

SJSU's General Education Program establishes a strong foundation of versatile skills, fosters curiosity about the world, promotes ethical judgment, and prepares students to engage and contribute responsibly and cooperatively in a multicultural, information-rich society. General education classes integrate areas of

study and encourage progressively more complex and creative analysis, expression, and problem solving.

The General Education Program has three goals:

Goal 1: To develop students' core competencies for academic, personal, creative, and professional pursuits.

Goal 2: To enact the university's commitment to diversity, inclusion, and justice by ensuring that students have the knowledge and skills to serve and contribute to the well-being of local and global communities and the environment.

Goal 3: To offer students integrated, multidisciplinary, and innovative study in which they pose challenging questions, address complex issues, and develop cooperative and creative responses.

More information about the General Education Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) can be found on the [GE website \(https://sjsu.edu/general-education/ge-requirements/overview/learning-outcomes.php\)](https://sjsu.edu/general-education/ge-requirements/overview/learning-outcomes.php).

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

San José State University is committed to supporting a diverse community guided by core values of ethical conduct and inclusion and respect for each individual. Such a community enriches the intellectual climate of the university and the educational experiences of its students, promotes personal growth and a healthy society, and supports a positive work environment. By studying issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion, students come to appreciate their rights and responsibilities in the free exchange of ideas that is the hallmark of a healthy and productive society. All Asian American Studies and Ethnic Studies courses are rooted in Access, Retention, and Community. It means that Asian American Studies is not just a subject matter based on surface representation or inclusion. Instead, it is a new consciousness. It's about combatting racism, poverty, and the misrepresentation of People of Color. Thus, this course will prepare students to accomplish the following. identify the lenses through which dominant society operates; recognize that individuals are often subject to marginalization that creates positionalities of disadvantage; engage in ways that help to mitigate societal inequities or deconstruct systems of oppression and colonization; listen, act, and speak with open minds, and understand the impact of their viewpoints on others; appreciate differing viewpoints and ways of knowing; develop skills to work together in a cooperative manner on behalf of the common good.

Asian American Studies, BA Program Learning Outcomes

PLO 1 Demonstrate a core competency in interdisciplinary knowledge of major concepts, theories, and methods in Asian American Studies (AAS). For specifics see below. Explain the sociopolitical, historical, contemporary, and comparative formations of race and ethnicity. Analyze systems of power and hierarchies associated with the intersections of race and ethnicity to class, gender, sexuality, religion, spirituality, national origin, immigration status, ability, sovereignty, language, health, and/or age to understand the diversity and complexity of Asian American populations.

PLO 2 Apply Asian American Studies theory and knowledge to the following: Addressing anti-racist and anti-colonial issues; Identifying practices and movements that have and continue to facilitate the building of a more just and equitable society.

PLO 3 Communicate knowledge in Asian American studies effectively and creatively-appropriate to purpose and audience in the following forms: written, visual and/or oral forms.

Learn more about majoring or minoring in Asian American Studies! **Email:**

yvonne.y.kwan@sjsu.edu or joanne.rondilla@sjsu.edu

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

GE Area D: Social Sciences Area D courses increase students' understanding of human behavior and social interaction in the context of value systems, economic structures, political institutions, social groups, and natural environments. Students develop an understanding of problems and issues from different disciplinary perspectives and examine issues in their contemporary as well as historical settings and in a variety of cultural contexts. The CSU requires students to complete General Education courses in the Social Sciences in at least two different disciplines. Students may meet this requirement by either 1) taking two lower-division Area D courses in different disciplines, or 2) taking two lower-division Area D courses in the same discipline and an Area S upper-division GE course in a different discipline.

GE Area D Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of an Area D course, students should be able to:

1. demonstrate understanding of the ways in which social institutions, culture, and environment shape and are shaped by the behavior of individuals, both past and present;
2. compare and contrast the dynamics of two or more social groups or social systems in a variety of historical and/or cultural contexts
3. place contemporary social developments in cultural, environmental, geographical, and/or historical contexts;
4. draw on social/behavioral science information from various perspectives to formulate applications appropriate to historical and/or contemporary social issues.

Writing Practice: Students will write a minimum of 1500 words in a language and style appropriate to the discipline.

American Institutions US1: US History, US2: US Constitution, and US3: California Government

The American Institutions (AI) requirement is based on the premise that any student graduating from the CSU should have an understanding of the history and governmental institutions of the United States and the State of California. This requirement, which was put in place by the State of California, is laid out in California State University Executive Order 1061. The original mandate appears in the State Education Code Title 5, Section 40404.

US1 Learning Outcomes >> Evaluated by AAS 33A

To fulfill the requirements for U.S. History, students should be able to explain and evaluate the principal events, developments, and ideas covering a minimum time span of approximately one hundred years in all the territories now in the United States (including external regions and powers as appropriate).

As students explore the historical development of the United States, they should be able to evaluate and synthesize different positions, support analysis with relevant evidence, and create evidence-based interpretations of:

1. major subtopics in United States history, such as Native Americans and their interactions with the U.S. government; slavery and its legacies; the foundational ideals of the American Republic; colonization and territorial expansion; economic development; political reform and reaction; immigration to the United States and the experiences of immigrants; foreign relations; wars and conflicts; and movements including religious, labor, civil rights, feminist, and environmental.
2. multiple perspectives related to, for example, diverse cultures, communities, and environments; age, gender, and sexuality; the history and experience of racial, ethnic, and religious minorities; the experiences of people with disabilities; and patterns of race and class relations.

US2 Learning Outcomes >> Evaluated by AAS 33A

To fulfill the requirements for U.S. Constitution, students should be able to explain how political decisions are made, what the consequences of such decisions are for individuals and society, and how individuals and groups may affect the decision-making process.

As students explore the meaning and content of the democratic process as it has evolved in the United States, at a minimum they should be able to evaluate:

1. the foundations of the political system, including the evolution of the U.S. Constitution, political culture, separation of powers, federalism, and relations among various levels of government. Students will also analyze the evolving institutions of government, including a study of the powers of the President, Congress, and the Judiciary as well as the bureaucracy.
2. the links between the people and the political system of the United States, including voting and other forms of participation, as well as other content areas such as tribal governments, political parties, interest/lobbying groups, and public opinion and socialization. Students should also analyze the rights and obligations of citizens, which may include the tension between various freedoms of expression, including issues related to censorship and freedom of speech, due process, and the maintenance of order.
3. connections to issues of justice/injustice, including the efforts to end racial, gender, and other forms of discriminatory practices in both the public and private sectors.

US3 Learning Outcomes >> Evaluated by AAS 33B

To fulfill the requirements for California Government, students should be able to explain how political decisions are made at the state and local level taking into account the diverse cultures, communities, and environments of California, including the impact of demographic changes on the history and politics of the state and the nation.

As students explore the operations of government at the state level, they should be able to evaluate:

1. the foundations of the California political system, the similarities and differences between the California and U.S. Constitutions, and the relationship between state and local government in California.

2. the evolving relationships of state and local government with the federal government, such as the relationship with tribal governments; the generation and resolution of conflicts; the establishment of cooperative processes under the constitutions of both the state and nation; and the political processes involved.

Course Requirements and Assignments

Journal (25%) - Over the course of the semester, you will need to produce 5 entries of a journal. Each entry must be at least one page (double-spaced). You are welcome to hand-write these! I welcome you also to be creative with them, as you voice your responses to the materials we cover. We will discuss what you can do with these more in class. We will also have designated times in class where we can work on them. **All entries will be due after the fall break (December 2nd).**

Quiz (10%) – Within the first month of the semester, we will have an in-class Quiz (hand-written!). Please let me know in advance if you will be needing accommodations. I will give a list of 5 short answer questions from which you will have to answer 3 of your choosing. We will have a chance to go over what you can expect on the quiz. I will not be giving a study guide for the quiz, but you will receive one for the midterm. **This is a warm-up for the semester and on September 11.th**

Midterm Exam (15%) – As we get halfway into the semester, we will have an in-class Midterm Exam. This will be a longer test, where I will give a list of 10 short answer questions from which you will have to answer a total of 5 of your choosing. We will have a review session the class before to make sure you are equipped where I will give you a study guide to help prepare. It will cover topics, events, and ideas from lectures and readings. If you need any accommodations for this as well, do let me know in advance. **The exam is on October 23rd.** Both the exam and the quiz test whether you can synthesize the materials, histories, and ideas we are covering in the course. If you struggle with these testing parts of the course, please meet me in office hours or email me.

Final Paper (20%) – This will be a paper that will be focused on critically analyzing United States history. **It is a 2-3 page (double-spaced) paper, due on December 15th.** It will engage with the histories and ideas we are covering throughout the course. We will, thus, not meet on exam day! Our last day of class will be dedicated to a workshop for the papers. The paper, like the midterm and quiz, will be of your choosing. I will have a list of 3 paper topics, from which you will choose one to write the paper. After the break in the last week of November, you will get all the details!

Participation (10%) - Participating in class is crucial if you want to do well with all the assignments. I often give us time and space in class to prepare for these and to give you an indication and review of what will be expected. We will often have group discussions to better understand what we are covering and I will, on occasion, give you a sheet of paper to fill out in class to offer any questions or topics that you are struggling with or what you would like to learn more about. Thus, your attendance and participation will give me a sense of how you are doing in the class *and* it will give you an opportunity to ensure that you do well in all of your assignments. Please make use of me and bring your questions!

Historical Memory Project (20%) – We will complete a great portion of this project in-class. I will give you details about this after the midterm. This project aims to explore the politics of history-writing and memory and produce an informed reflection on it. It is a 2-page (double-spaced) project, but if you choose an option (example: poetry), then you can extend the bounds of the project. **The project is due via Canvas on November 15th.**

✓ Grading Information

Grading Policy.

A+ : 97 to 100

A : 93 to 96.9

A : minus 90 to 92.9

B+ : 87 to 89.9

B : 83 to 86.9

B- : 80 to 82.9

C+ : 77 to 79.9

C: 73 to 76.9

C- : 70 to 72.9

D+ : 67 to 69.9

D: 63 to 66.9

D- : 60 to 62.9

F: less than 60

University Policies

Per University Policy S16-9 (PDF) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>), relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance, counseling, and other resources) are listed on the Syllabus Information (<https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php>) web page. Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

University Policies

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Course Schedule

Thursday August 21st

- Welcome and Introduction to the course!

Tuesday August 26th

- Gary Okihiro, "Introduction" in *American History Unbound* (2015)

Thursday August 28th

- Gary Okihiro, "Ocean Worlds" in *American History Unbound* (2015)

Tuesday September 2nd

- Gary Okihiro, "The World System" in *American History Unbound* (2015)

Thursday September 4th

- Edward Said, "Introduction," in *Orientalism* (1978)

Tuesday September 9th

- Erika Lee, "Orientalisms in the Americas: A Hemispheric Approach to Asian American History" (2005)

Thursday September 11th

- Quiz (3 Questions)

Tuesday September 16th

- Huping Ling, "Coming to America: 1765-1840s" in *Asian American History* (2023)

Thursday September 18th

- Online Forum Response

Tuesday September 23rd

- Gary Okihiro, "The United States" in *American History Unbound* (2015)

Thursday September 25th

- Gary Okihiro, "The Imperial Republic" in *American History Unbound* (2015)

Tuesday September 30th

- Michael Keevak, "Before They Were Yellow: East Asians in Early Travel and Missionary Reports" in *Becoming Yellow: A Short History of Racial Thinking* (2011)

Thursday October 2nd

- Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, "Introduction" and "Follow the Corn" in *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States* (2014)

Tuesday October 7th

- Patrick Wolfe, "Settler colonialism and elimination of the native" (2006)
- *Reference*: Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization is not a metaphor" (2012)

Thursday October 9th

- Les W. Field, Alan Leventhal and Rosemary Cambra, "Mapping Erasure: The Power of Nominative Cartography in the Past and Present of the Muwekma Ohlones of the San Francisco Bay Area," in *Recognition, Sovereignty Struggles, and Indigenous Rights in the United States* (2013)

Tuesday October 14th

- Gail M. Nomura, "Significant Lives: Asia and Asian Americans in the History of the U. S. West" (1994)

Thursday October 16th

- Sucheng Chan, "The changing contours of Asian-American historiography" (2007)

Tuesday October 21st

- Moon-Ho Jung, "Beyond These Mythical Shores: Asian American History and the Study of Race" (2008)

Thursday October 23rd

- **Midterm**

Tuesday October 28th

- Erika Lee, "Coolies," in *The Making of Asian America* (2015)

Thursday October 30th

- Matthew Pratt Guterl, "After Slavery: Asian Labor, the American South, and the Age of Emancipation" (2003)

Tuesday November 4th

- Project Workshop

Thursday November 6th

- Project Workshop

Tuesday November 11th

- Veteran's Day – Campus is Closed

Thursday November 13th

- Project Workshop
- **Projects due on the 15th**

Tuesday November 18th

- Laura Pulido, "Erasing Empire: Remembering the Mexican- American War in Los Angeles" in *Colonial Racial Capitalism* (2022)

Thursday November 20th

- Saurabh Mishra, "Violence, Resilience and the 'Coolie' Identity: Life and Survival on Ships to the Caribbean, 1834–1917" (2022)

Tuesday November 25th

- Minju Choi, Li Lucy, Patricia Bromley, and David Bamman, "'Othering" Through War: Depiction of Asians/Asian Americans in U.S. History Textbooks" (2025)

Thursday November 27th

- Thanksgiving Holidays – Campus is Closed

Tuesday December 2nd

- **Journals Due**
- Receive Paper Topics

Thursday December 4th

- Final Paper Workshop

Papers Due December 15th

Course Materials and The Assignment Submissions

All course materials are available for free via Canvas or the SJSU Library. You must be logged into your SJSU account to access course materials. The assignments will be due through Canvas, as well. Please let me know if you have any trouble with access.

Land Acknowledgement

It is important for us to acknowledge and digest how this institution occupies the land of the Ohlone. How much do we really know about the land upon which we are learning, its histories and erasures? The Ohlone are people who do not have federal recognition, which means it is our responsibility to learn and study more about what is not said or included about them. Especially in courses like this, let this be one of our class goals to better understand the politics of history-making, identity formations, and distributions of rights in the making of the United States.