

Asian American Religious History

Graduate Department of Religion (GDR), PhD Seminar

Institutional Setting

Emory University is a private research university in Atlanta, GA. Emory has nine academic divisions, including seven graduate schools. This course will be offered through the Laney Graduate School as a course in the Graduate Department of Religion (GDR). The GDR is a consortium of faculty across the university, and it draws on the resources of the Department of Religion in Emory College and the Candler School of Theology. The GDR is the second largest doctoral program at Emory, with approximately 150 students enrolled in nine courses of study. The courses of study include 1) American Religious Cultures, 2) Asian, African and Middle Eastern Religions, 3) Ethics and Society, 4) Hebrew Bible, 5) Historical Studies in Theology and Religion, 6) Jewish Religious Cultures, 7) New Testament, 8) Person, Community and Religious Life and 9) Theological Studies.

Curricular Context

Asian American Religious History is a new course in the Graduate Department of Religion (GDR). The course is primarily for doctoral students in the GDR. While the course material will be especially pertinent for students in the American Religious Cultures course of study, the course will be open to doctoral students in other GDR courses of study, other departments such as History, and upper division masters students (by instructor permission). For students training to become American historians or scholars in American religions, the methods we use in this course will be especially relevant as we will draw from historical method and religious studies. For students who may have different methodological interests, such as theology or anthropology, the course content in Asian American history, Asian American studies and Asian American religions, will be helpful for them as they gain content coverage in an area that is not usually in other doctoral or masters level courses at Emory. For upper division masters level students, the course will help them explore whether doctoral studies is of interest to them, even as they study material that is not widely covered in the Candler School of Theology curriculum.

The course is intended to move chronologically, covering key moments in Asian American history such as Chinese American exclusion and Japanese American internment, while also considering how “religion” figures into this past. Students, therefore, will study a wide range of religious movements from Buddhism to animism, Islam and Christianity, as well as study a variety of ethnic groups from Filipino Americans to Indian Americans, Hmong Americans and Korean Americans. The course also pushes students to consider how to critically study key categories such as “religion” and “race,” considering the specific histories of racialization and racialization of religions that impact the traditions and movements that have shaped Asian American religious history.

Teaching Methodology

This course will be a three hour seminar, and we will read one book a week. The course prioritizes discussion and debate on key themes related to the subfield of Asian American religious history. Discussing one book a week is also a way for students to familiarize themselves with literature they could use for their qualifying exams and their dissertation proposals. Students will also conduct research throughout the semester on a topic of their own choice. They will choose a primary source and write a midterm paper that provides a close reading of the source. Then, they will choose their own reading list of 8-10 secondary sources to write a 20 page historical research paper, building upon the primary source research from the midterm. The research paper is intended to help students explore history as a research method, and to give them space to conduct original research. Students who want to write dissertations in Asian American religious history will find the research paper a helpful way to test out prospectus ideas. Other students who want to write dissertations that are related but not directly connected to the subfield may still choose research papers that help them with their long-term research in their fields; for instance, if you are a scholar in biblical studies, you may choose to write about Asian American reception history.

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Course Description

What is Asian American religious history? What are its aims, methods, and sources? How does it reshape the fields of Asian American history, American religious history and American religions?

This historiographic debate relies on the pioneering work of Asian American historians and US religious historians. Consider Laurie Maffly-Kipp's call for a turn to the Pacific in "Eastward Ho! American Religion from the Perspective of the Pacific Rim" (1997). Note David Yoo's argument for a "reconceptualization of Asian American Studies" so that a "serious and critical treatment of religion becomes an interpretive rule rather than an exception" (1999). Tim Tseng saw in the subfield the potential to overturn reductive characterizations of Asian Americans as either the perpetually foreign religious "other" or the racially assimilated "model minority" (2003).

In light of these early conversations, how do historians of religion in America write Asian American religious history? How do they draw upon the history of race and religions, Asian American history, and the "Pacific turn"? In what ways does the subfield intersect with cognate discourses in immigration history, diplomatic history, and transnational history? We will study these questions through historical method and develop historical research skills.

Course Requirements

Class Participation and Response Papers:

1. Students are expected to participate regularly in class discussion. If you have difficulty speaking up in class, please email or come to office hours to discuss this so that we can work on strengthening your participation.
2. Students will write a short 1-2 pg. response to the readings *once a week*. Please post your papers to the "Discussion" section of Canvas by Noon the day before class. Please also respond to your colleagues before class.
3. Students will lead class discussion twice during the semester. Please send 2-3 discussion questions to me by Noon the day before class. You will not submit a response paper the week you lead class discussion.

Midterm Paper: At the end of Week 7, students will turn in one 4-5 pg. paper based on a close reading and critical analysis of a primary source related to "Asian American religious history," which they will build upon for the final paper. The purpose of this assignment is to hone your close reading skills necessary for historical inquiry. You do not need to do outside research for this paper (yet). Please email me or come to office hours so I can approve your topic. If you choose a contemporary source, you will still need to historically contextualize your source for the final paper.

Final Research Paper: Students will submit a 20 pg. historical research paper based on the primary source analysis for the mid-term. You may include more primary sources or focus on the ones that you have already analyzed. Please develop a bibliography of 8-10 secondary sources. Your essay should have a clear thesis statement. If you have questions about how

to make a good argument, consult Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams, *The Craft of Research*, Third Edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), especially Ch. 7-8.

Final Paper Workshop: In Week 15, students will engage in a Final Paper Workshop for which they will workshop a draft of their 20 pg. final paper. We will workshop student work in alphabetical order by last name, and each student will have approximately 30 minutes to workshop. *Please upload your draft to Canvas by 5 PM EST on Sunday.*

Office Hours: If you cannot make our office hours, please email us to set up another time. Please note that I typically respond to emails within 48 hours and not on weekends.

Class Attendance: Regular class attendance is required. If you need to miss a class because of illness or emergency, please send me an email.

ChatGPT: You may use technologies like ChatGPT for brainstorming purposes; if you do so, please provide attribution. However, please do not copy and paste your full paper from technologies like ChatGPT.

Technology: Please be mindful of technology use in class. Please only use technology for Zooming into class, taking notes, referencing course readings and presenting research or discussion questions in class; the use of technology for other purposes will result in a participation grade reduction. Please also request permission from Dr. Kim to take photos of the class or video/audio record class lectures/discussion.

Grading:

15% Class Participation, 15% Response Papers, 30% Midterm, 40% Final Paper

Writing and Research Support

Research: The Reference Librarians at Pitts Theology Library can help you find the best resources for your work and assist in properly citing that work (<http://pitts.emory.edu/ask>). Please also consult the subject research librarians at Woodruff Library: <http://web.library.emory.edu/research-learning/subject-librarians/index.html>

English Language Learners: If you speak multiple languages and you are an English Language Learner, I will provide a two-day extension for your mid-term and final essays should you provide evidence that you have consulted the writing center; please email or speak with me in advance.

Required Texts

Please purchase the following books or access them for free through Discovere. All other readings can be accessed at Library Course Reserves on Canvas.

Melissa Borja, *Follow the New Way: American Refugee Resettlement and Hmong Religious Change* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2023).

Stephen Cherry, *Importing Care, Faithful Service: Filipino and Indian American Nurses at a Veterans Hospital* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2022).

Andrea Jain, *Peace Love Yoga: The Politics of Global Spirituality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

Shenila Khoja-Moolji, *Rebuilding Community: Displaced Women and the Making of a Shia Ismaili Muslim Sociality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2023).

Kathryn Gin Lum, *Heathen: Race and Religion in American History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2022).

Gary Okihiro, *Margins and Mainstreams: Asians in American History and Culture* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994).

Roy Sano and Daniel Lee, *Theologies of Asian Americans and Pacific Peoples: A Reader, 1976* (Claremont: Claremont Press, 2022).

Jolyon Thomas, *Faking Liberties: Religious Freedom in America-Occupied Japan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019)

Duncan R. Williams. *American Sutra: A Story of Faith and Freedom in the Second World War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018).

David Yoo, *Contentious Spirits: Religion in Korean American History, 1903-1945*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010).

_____. *New Spiritual Homes: Religion and Asian Americans* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999).

Course Schedule

Week 1 - Introduction

No reading for this week.

Week 2 - Orientations: Asian American History

Gary Okihiro, *Margins and Mainstreams: Asians in American History and Culture* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994).

Please watch PBS Documentary Series, *Asian Americans*.

Please bring one contemporary primary source connected to Asian American history.

Week 3 - Orientations: Asian American Religions

David Yoo, *New Spiritual Homes: Religion and Asian Americans* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999).

Helen Jin Kim, "Reconstructing Asian America's Religious Past: A Historiography." In *Envisioning Religion, Race and Asian Americans*. Khyati Joshi and David Yoo, eds. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press & UCLA Center for Asian American Studies, 2020).

Laurie Maffly-Kipp, "Eastward Ho! American Religion from the Perspective of the Pacific Rim" in *Retelling U.S. Religious History*, ed. Thomas Tweed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

Please bring one contemporary primary source connected to Asian American religions.

Week 4 - Korean American Immigration and Christianity

David Yoo, *Contentious Spirits: Religion in Korean American History, 1903-1945* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010).

Week 5 - "Heathen" and the Racialization of Religions

Kathryn Gin Lum, *Heathen: Race and Religion in American History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2022).

Week 6 – Japanese American Internment and Buddhism

Duncan R. Williams. *American Sutra: A Story of Faith and Freedom in the Second World War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018).

Week 7 – Religious Freedom and Japanese Religions

Jolyon Thomas, *Faking Liberties: Religious Freedom in America-Occupied Japan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019)

Midterm Paper Due this Week: Friday 5 PM EST

Week 8 – No Class, Fall Break

Week 9 – Hmong Religions and Church and State

Melissa Borja, *Follow the New Way: American Refugee Resettlement and Hmong Religious Change* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2023).

Week 10 – Religion and the Asian American Movement

Roy Sano and Daniel Lee, *Theologies of Asian Americans and Pacific Peoples: A Reader, 1976* (Claremont: Claremont Press, 2022).

Week 11 – Catholicism and Healthcare

Stephen Cherry, *Importing Care, Faithful Service: Filipino and Indian American Nurses at a Veterans Hospital* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2022).

Week 12 – Muslim Women and Diaspora

Shenila Khoja-Moolji, *Rebuilding Community: Displaced Women and the Making of a Shia Ismaili Muslim Sociality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2023).

Week 13 – Asian Religions and Neoliberalism

Andrea Jain, *Peace Love Yoga: The Politics of Global Spirituality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

Week 14 – No Class, Thanksgiving Holiday

Week 15 – Final Paper Workshop

Please upload your 20 pg. final paper draft to Canvas by 5 PM EST on Sunday.

Final Paper Due this Week: Wednesday 5 PM EST

Statement on Plagiarism

Presentation of the words or ideas of another as one's own is plagiarism and constitutes a serious offense. Students who are confused or unsure about how to make proper citations should consult with me for guidance. A useful book is Charles Lipson, *Doing Honest Work in College: How to Prepare Citations, Avoid Plagiarism, and Achieve Real Academic Success* (University of Chicago Press, 2004).

Reading Guidelines

For primary documents, you should ask yourself the standard questions about “who,” “what,” “where” “when,” and “why.” Make sure that you answer the following questions:

Who wrote the document? How do you think the author's religion, gender, race, political loyalties, geographical location, or class shaped this document?

Where was it written? When was the document written? What historical events were taking place at that time?

Why did the author write the document? What was his or her purpose in writing? Who was the author's imagined audience?

Does the document exist only in manuscript form, or was it ever published? Who published it and why? (e.g. a denominational press, a national publishing house, etc.)

What is the “plot” of the document? Does it make an argument? Is it rhetorically persuasive?

For secondary books and articles, you should ask yourself the following questions:

What is the main argument of the book or article?

What sources does the historian use for evidence (i.e. diaries, 20th century newspapers, religious periodicals)?

Is the argument of the chapter or book sufficiently supported by the evidence?

Do you think the author should have consulted other sources as well, and if so, why? What are the major strengths of the book or article?

What are the major weaknesses of the book or article?