



On March 16, 2021, eight people were killed at Atlanta-area spa businesses -- six of whom were Asian women. Despite the fact that two of the women were Chinese and four were Korean, news media were quick to deny racist motivations. Worse yet, an official spokesperson for the sheriff's office investigating the case described the murderer as merely having "a really bad day." Yet as scholars of Asian American Studies, critical race theory, and feminism, we know that this kind of violence is deeply intertwined with long histories of anti-Asian hatred and misogyny in this country. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic there had been an alarming surge in violent attacks and hate crimes targeting Asians, and these episodes must be understood within larger discourses of disease and contagion that have long surrounded Asian immigrants and our communities. And the story goes even deeper than that -- this violence is also connected to the immigration policies that excluded and then welcomed certain kinds of Asians to the U.S., to the stereotypical portrayals of Asians in mainstream media, to the gendering and racializing of certain kinds of labor, and far more.

The #AtlantaSyllabus was designed for those who want to better understand this incident and this moment in all of their complexity. While Atlanta is a politically contentious space with rich legacies of Black activism, the presence of Asian Americans in the U.S. South has often been obscured in dominant narratives. Without reducing the city to this tragedy, this syllabus represents a starting point for understanding the incident in relation to Asian American history, culture, and political solidarity with Black communities. Its contents includes canonical and more recent scholarship from the academic discipline of Asian American Studies, as well as contemporary journalism, podcasts, videos, and documentaries from Asian American artists and writers.

While its creation was motivated from an incident of trauma and pain, this syllabus also points to the active role that Asian Americans have always played in asserting their own unique and intersectional identities, resisting dominant narratives, and fighting for liberation and justice. The list of works below is in no way exhaustive, and clearly only scrapes the surface of the vast body of Asian American writing and creative works that come together to tell our story. But it's our hope that it begins to spark a more informed and sustained conversation about the experiences of Asian Americans that builds from all of the hard work that has come before.

The #AtlantaSyllabus was created by Dr. Lori Lopez, Dr. Lisa Ho, and Dr. Erica Kanesaka Kalnay from the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Asian American Studies Program. For more information about our program, see: <https://asianamerican.wisc.edu/>

Week 1: Asian American and Pacific Islander Identities

Discussion Questions:

1. How can we think about identity through an intersectional and interrelational lens?
2. What are the different forces that challenge the cohesion and stability of Asian/Asian American Identity?
3. How can racial triangulation destabilize the Black/White binary of race?
 - Maeda, Daryl Joji. 2009. "[Before Asian America](#)." In *Chains of Babylon : The Rise of Asian America* by Daryl Joji Maeda, pp. 19-39.
 - Lowe, Lisa. 1991. "[Heterogeneity, Hybridity, Multiplicity: Marking Asian American Differences](#)." *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*. 1(1): 24-44.
 - Kim, Claire Jean. 1999. "[The Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans](#)." *Politics and Society*. 27(1): 105-138.
 - Hall, Lisa Kahaleole. 2015. "[Which of These Things Is Not Like the Other: Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders Are Not Asian Americans, and All Pacific Islanders Are Not Hawaiian](#)." *American Quarterly*. 67(3): 727-47.
 - De Luca, Antonio and Jaspal Riyait. 2020. "[What We Look Like](#)." *The New York Times*.

Week 2: Histories of Immigration and Exclusion

Discussion Questions:

1. How can we think about immigration as a technology of race?
2. Asian immigrants were excluded because of their racialization but also welcomed because of how their labor was valued—what does this contradiction reveal about how white supremacy works?
 - Lee, Erika. 2010. "[The Chinese Are Coming. How Can We Stop Them? Chinese Exclusion and the Origins of American Gatekeeping](#)." In *Asian American Studies Now*, ed. Jean Yu-Wen Shen Wu and Thomas Chen. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
 - Chiang, S. Leo, Dir. 2021. "[Episode 1: Breaking Ground](#)." *Asian Americans*. (video).
 - Dhir, Pawan. 2021. "[Racism is behind anti-Asian American violence, even when it's not a hate crime](#)." *The Conversation*.
 - Choy, Catherine Ceniza. 2003. "['Your Cap Is a Passport': Filipino Nurses and the U.S. Exchange Visitor Program](#)." In *Empire of Care: Nursing and Migration in Filipino American History* by Catherine Ceniza Choy, pp. 61-93.
 - Vang, Ma. "[Rechronicling Histories: Toward a Hmong Feminist Perspective](#)." In *Claiming Place: On the Agency of Hmong Women*, edited by Chia Youyee Vang, Faith Nibbs, and Ma Vang. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 28-55.

Week 3: Yellow Peril and the Myth of the Model Minority

Discussion Questions:

1. Where did the "Myth of the Model Minority" originate, and how is it connected to "Yellow Peril"?
2. How do contemporary fears about Asian immigrants and Asian American success connect to foreign policy and American history?
 - Wu, Ellen. 2016. "[The Invention of the Model Minority](#)." In *The Routledge Handbook of Asian American Studies*, ed. Cindy I-Fen Cheng. New York: Routledge.

- Siu, Lok and Claire Chun. 2020. "[Yellow Peril and Techno-orientalism in the Time of Covid-19: Racialized Contagion, Scientific Espionage, and Techno-Economic Warfare.](#)" *Journal of Asian American Studies*, 23(3): 421-440.
- Nguyen, Viet Thanh and Janelle Wong. 2021. "[Anti-China rhetoric leads to anti-Asian violence like the Atlanta shooting.](#)" *The Washington Post*.
- Ahn, Christine, Terry K. Park and Kathleen Richards. 2021. "[Anti-Asian Violence in America Is Rooted in US Empire.](#)" *The Nation*.
- Cerre, Mike. 2021. "[Hate is Learned](#)": Tracing the History of Anti-Asian Violence in America." *PBS News Hour*. (video)

Week 4: Disease and Contagion

Discussion Questions:

1. How can we use the theory of orientalism to explain the overlap between disease and different categories of identity such as race, gender, immigration, and others?
2. How can we use an intersectional analysis to influence how decisions about public health are made and communicated to the broader public?

- Nayan, Shah. 2010 "[Public Health and the Mapping of Chinatown.](#)" In *The Routledge Handbook of Asian American Studies*, ed. Cindy I-Fen Cheng. New York: Routledge.
- Jen, Clare Ching. 2013. "[How to Survive Contagion, Disease, and Disaster: The 'Masked Asian/American Woman' as Low-Tech Specter of Emergency Preparedness.](#)" *Feminist Formations*: 25(2): 107-128.
- Escobar, Natalie. 2020. "[When Xenophobia Spreads Like A Virus.](#)" from *Code Switch*. (podcast)
- Chong, Sylvia Shin Huey. 2015. "[Orientalism.](#)" In *Keywords for Asian American Studies*, Cathy J. Schlund-Vials, Linda Trinh Vo, and K. Scott Wong. New York: NYU Press.

Week 5: Asianizing the COVID-19 Pandemic

Discussion Questions:

1. How can we use the history of Asian immigration and exclusion to explain the ongoing anti-Asian violence and sentiment during the COVID-19 Pandemic?
2. How can we use the framework of feminism to create a system of care that addresses the heterogeneity of the Asian American community?

- Asian American Feminist Collective. 2020. "[Care in the Time of Coronavirus.](#)" (zine)
- Kuo, Rachel, Amy Zhang, Vivian Shaw, and Cynthia Wang. 2020. "[#FeministAntibodies: Asian American Media in the Time of Coronavirus.](#)" *SM +S: social media and society*. (6)4: 1-11.
- Pha, Kong Pheng. 2020. "[Two Hate Notes: Deportations, COVID-19, and Xenophobia against Hmong Americans in the Midwest.](#)" *Journal of Asian American Studies*: (23)2: 335-339.
- Martin, Nina and Bernice Yeung. 2020. "[Similar to Times of War](#)": The Staggering Toll of COVID-19 on Filipino Health Care Workers." *Pro Republica*.

Week 6: Asian Americans in the U.S. South

Discussion Questions:

1. How does the longstanding presence of Asian Americans in the U.S. South challenge dominant narratives of Southern history and culture?

2. How have Asian Americans navigated the Black-white racial paradigm, once enforced under Jim Crow segregation, that continues to frame how Southern race relations are often imagined?

- Bow, Leslie. 2007. "[Racial Interstitiality and the Anxieties of the 'Partly Colored': Representations of Asians under Jim Crow.](#)" *Journal of Asian American Studies*. 10(1): 1-30.
- Desai, Jigna and Khyati Y. Joshi. 2013. "[Discrepancies in Dixie: Asian Americans and the South.](#)" In *Asian Americans in Dixie: Race and Migration in the South*, ed. Khyati Y. Joshi and Jigna Desai. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, pp. 1-30.
- Doolan, Yuri W. 2019. "[Transpacific Camp Towns: Korean Women, US Army Bases, and Military Prostitution in America.](#)" *Journal of American Ethnic History*. 38(4): 33-54.
- Lam, Larissa, Dir. 2020. *Far East Deep South* (documentary film)

Week 7: Violence and Resistance in the Everyday Lives of Asian Americans

Discussion Questions:

1. In what ways do the experiences of violence that Asian Americans encounter in their everyday lives echo broader social-historical violences, and in what ways should they be seen as distinct?

2. What can we learn from the acts of resistance, both large and small, through which Asian American activists have responded to violence?

- Choy, Christine and Renee Tajima-Peña, Dirs. 1987. *Who Killed Vincent Chin?* (documentary film)
- Kwon, R. O. 2021. "[A Letter to My Fellow Asian Women Whose Hearts Are Still Breaking.](#)" *Vanity Fair*.
- Ninh, erin Khuê. 2018. "[Without Enhancement: Sexual Violence in the Everyday Lives of Asian American Women.](#)" In *Asian American Feminisms and Women of Color Politics*, ed. Lynn Fujiwara and Shireen Roshanravan. Seattle: University of Washington Press, pp. 69-81.
- Pegues, Juliana Hu. 2021. "[Rape Is/Not a Metaphor.](#)" *Journal of Asian American Studies*. 24(1): 9-17.
- Zia, Helen. 2010. "[Detroit Blues: 'Because of You Motherfuckers.'](#)" In *Asian American Studies Now: A Critical Reader*, ed. Jean Yu-wen Shen Wu and Thomas C. Chen. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, pp. 35-54.

Week 8: Racial Fetishism and the Hypersexualization of Asian Women

Discussion Questions:

1. How has the hypersexualization of Asian American women been shaped by patterns of immigration, global commodity flows, and histories of U.S. militarism and empire?

2. How is desire enmeshed in, and sometimes constitutive of, violence against Asian American women?

- Cheng, Anne Anlin. 2018. "[Ornamentalism: A Feminist Theory for the Yellow Woman.](#)" *Critical Inquiry*. 44: 415-46.
- Kalnay, Erica Kanesaka. 2020. "[Yellow Peril, Oriental Plaything: Asian Exclusion and the 1927 U.S.-Japan Doll Exchange.](#)" *Journal of Asian American Studies*. 23(2): 93-124.
- Kang, Miliann. 2013. "['What Does a Manicure Have to Do With Sex?': Racialized Sexualization of Body Labour in Routine Beauty Services.](#)" In *Body/Sex/Work: Intimate,*

Embodied and Sexualised Labour, ed. Carol Wolkowitz, et al. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 160-74.

- Lum, Debbie, Dir. 2012. *Seeking Asian Female*. (documentary film).

Week 9: Service Work, Sex Work, and Gendered Labor

Discussion Questions:

1. How do race and gender intersect in the exploitation and policing of service work, sex work, and other forms of precarious labor performed by Asian and Asian American women?
2. What is needed to ensure safety and justice for women who perform this labor?

- Nguyen, Yves Tong of Red Canary Song. 2021. "[I Want You to Care When People Are Still Alive](#)." (podcast)
- Pham, Minh-Ha T. 2020. "[How to Make a Mask': Quarantine Feminism and Global Supply Chains](#)." *Feminist Studies*. 46(2): 316-26.
- Putcha, Rumya S. 2021. "[White Supremacy and the Wellness Industry, or, Why it Matters That This Happened at a 'Spa'](#)." *Society and Space*.
- Raval, PJ, Dir. 2018. *Call Her Ganda*. (documentary film)
- Sharma, Preeti. 2020. "[Irresponsible State Care and the Virality of Nail Salons: Asian American Women's Service Work, Vulnerability, and Mutuality](#)." *Journal of Asian American Studies*. 23(3): 491-509.

Week 10: Media Representations of Asian American Women

Discussion Questions:

1. What are the common patterns and tropes that have limited the way that Asian American women have been represented in mainstream American media?
2. How have media genres like science fiction, romance, and pornography shaped understandings of Asian American women?
3. How have Asian American women fought to recuperate and reinterpret problematic media images of their sexuality on their own terms?

- Shimizu, Celine Parrenas. 2015. "[The Bind of Representation: Performing and Consuming Hypersexuality in 'Miss Saigon'](#)." *Theatre Journal*. 57(2): 247-265.
- Marchetti, Gina. 1993. "[White Knights in Hong Kong](#)." In *Romance and the Yellow Peril: Race, Sex, and Discursive Strategies in Hollywood Fiction*. Berkeley: UC Press, pp. 109-124.
- Lopez, Lori Kido. 2018. "[Asian American Media Studies](#)." *Feminist Media Histories*. 4(2): 20-24.
- Nishime, LeiLani. 2017. "[Whitewashing Yellow Futures in Ex Machina, Cloud Atlas, and Advantageous: Gender, Labor, and Technology in Sci-fi Film](#)." *Journal of Asian American Studies*. 20(1): 29-49.

Week 11: Black and Asian Interracial Solidarity

Discussion Questions:

1. How does the ideology of white supremacy drive anti-Blackness in the AAPI community?
2. What kind of strategies are adopted to build interracial solidarity amongst African American and Asian American communities?

- Hong, Grace. 2017. "[Comparison and Coalition in the Age of Black Lives Matter](#)." *Journal of Asian American Studies*. 20(2): 273-278.

- Fujino, Diane. "[The Black Liberation Movement and Japanese American Activism: The Radical Activism of Richard Aoki and Yuri Kochiyama.](#)" In *Afro Asia: Revolutionary Political and Cultural Connections between African Americans and Asian Americans*, edited by Fred Ho and Bill V. Mullen. Durham: Duke University Press, pp. 165-198.
- Demsas, Jerusalem and Rachel Ramirez. 2021. "[How Racism and White Supremacy Fueled a Black-Asian Divide in America.](#)" *Vox.com*.
- Bae, Minju and Mark Tseng-Putterman. 2020. "[Reviving the History of Radical Black-Asian Internationalism.](#)" *Roar Magazine*.
- *Code Switch*. 2016. "[A Letter From Young Asian-Americans To Their Families About Black Lives Matter.](#)" (podcast)

Week 12: Asian American Activism and Advocacy

Discussion Questions:

1. What values and politics have motivated Asian American activism over time?
 2. What has Asian American activism accomplished?
- Takasaki, Kara. 2020. "[Stop AAPI Hate Reporting Center: A Model of Collective Leadership and Community Advocacy.](#)" *Journal of Asian American Studies*. 23(3): 341-351.
 - Chan, Sucheng. 2010. "[Asian American Struggles for Civil, Political, Economic, and Social Rights.](#)" In *Asian American Studies Now: A Critical Reader*, edited by Jean Yu-Wen Shen Wu and Thomas Chen. New Brunswick: Rutgers University press, pp. 213-238.
 - Omatsu, Glenn. 1994. "[The 'Four Prisons' and the Movements of Liberation: Asian American Activism from the 1960s to the 1990s.](#)" In *The State of Asian America: Activism and Resistance in the 1990s*, edited by Karin Aguilar-San Juan. Boston: South End Press, pp. 19-70.
 - Kuo, Rachel, Bianca Nozaki-Nasser and Turner Willman. 2020. "[Online Formations: Asian American Digital Politics.](#)"
 - Lee, Grace, Dir. *American Revolutionary: The Evolution of Grace Lee Boggs*. (documentary film)

This syllabus lives online here:

<https://asianamerican.wisc.edu/student-resources-2/atlantasyllabus/>

The readings can all be downloaded here:

<https://uwmadison.box.com/s/8c88dttbl8wff6xtnuv84tfpr2qo6ux1>

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