

Asian American Philosophy
(Phil 275-01/ Spring 20xx)

Instructor: David Kim

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Class Time: TR 9:55-11:40am

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Course Description: This course is a philosophical exploration of the nature of the human person and its relation to Asian American experience. As we trace the movement of thought on human personhood, from earlier eras to the present, in an East-West comparative fashion, we will also track the development of Western thought on race and the “Other”. These two lines of thought – concepts of personhood and concepts of race – are entangled, informing each other in philosophically and ethically important ways. As we shall see, race, like gender and class, has been a significant principle of personhood since at least the Enlightenment period. And philosophers, for better or worse, have had much to say about our vision of race, humanity, and the modern world.

The first part of the course is devoted to a study of ancient and modern Western views of personhood. A number of classic issues will be discussed, including but not limited to the examined life, the nature of the self, virtue, happiness, community, justice, and social transformation. In a comparative and sometimes integrative fashion, some aspects of classical Asian philosophy (e.g. Confucianism and Buddhism) will also be considered. We will also study the legacy of the Western Enlightenment period (e.g. the liberal self and racial hierarchy) and reactions to it (e.g. national liberation movements and emancipatory identities). In the second half of the course, we examine Asian American history and our philosophical inheritance in action. Specifically, we will focus on how present social and political practices and viewpoints have absorbed, modified, or contested past concepts of personhood and race. Various 20th century Asian American issues will be explored: race, gender, class, modernity, U.S. imperialism, Cold War ideology, Asian anti-colonialism, immigration, citizenship, and so on. There will also be some emphasis on policy and personal implications. The course ends with a detailed examination of an important recent text in political philosophy, Ronald Sundstrom’s *The Browning of America and the Evasion of Social Justice*.

In terms of sheer number of pages, the reading load might be a little lighter than other humanities courses. The expectation then is that you spend a good deal of time grappling with the issues presented in the readings. Also, you will need to reflect on these issues in a collaborative fashion, pooling ideas together through class participation. So while I do plan to lecture often, I expect to spend more time guiding *your* discussion of the material.

Finally, I’d strongly encourage you to drop by during office hours whenever you find the readings or discussion difficult. And of course if you want to just chat more about some ideas of interest to you, please feel free to drop by too. Don’t be a stranger!

Learning Outcomes: (These are department commitments for Core D1) Students will be able to:
1) Understand the value of thinking philosophically by reflecting on the meaning of one’s own life, the conceptual foundations of human actions and beliefs, the nature of the self and of human responsibility.

2) Understand and discuss coherently central philosophical issues, such as the problem of evil, the existence of God, free will, the mind/body relation, human knowledge, and the question of being.

3) Demonstrate an ability to identify and articulate, both orally and in writing, the primary philosophical themes and issues found in the writings of the major philosophers.

4) Demonstrate an ability to evaluate philosophical arguments critically, both orally and in writing, using philosophical methods that have been developed by either historical or contemporary philosophers.

To ensure that these outcomes are achieved, the syllabus is arranged to feature classic and contemporary philosophical essays and books on the relevant themes and controversies. In addition, the in-class exam, heavy in-class participation, homework, and group work are designed so that you will be able to absorb the wide range of material covered and be able to develop and articulate your views on the various positions encountered, thereby satisfying learning outcomes 2 and 3. And, finally, you will have the opportunity to “translate” the philosophical considerations in a more personal way by writing an extended essay that defends a philosophical position on an issue relevant to the course *and* articulates how this philosophical work bears on your personal concerns or concerns at large in our society, thereby satisfying learning outcome 4. In doing these things, the more general goal of outcome 1 will be satisfied.

Grading:

All submitted work must be a new project for you and must be your own. Small parts of your work can borrow from other works so long as they are properly cited. For every assignment, an *understanding* of and *adherence* to USF standards of academic honesty is required. Study the Academic Honesty Policy at: <<http://www.usfca.edu/fogcutter/studentconduct/>>. A good rule of thumb: when in doubt, cite (including yourself)! Academic dishonesty will be handled easily: *an F grade and notification will be given to the Dean's office.*

1) CRITICAL ESSAY (20 points): A critical essay of 5 pages is due on in my mailbox in KA 113 **and** at turnitin.com. Paper topics will be given, as well as directions for submitting an electronic version of the essay to turnitin.com.

2) IN-CLASS EXAM (30 points): The exam will be taken during class period on You must bring a large unmarked blue/green book, which can be purchased at the bookstore. Most likely, I will provide you with several questions in advance and choose 3 on the day of the exam.

3) PHILOSOPHICAL APPLICATION ESSAY (40 points): A philosophical essay of 8 pages with a partially autobiographical structure. Further details will be given. The hard-copy of the paper is due ... in my mailbox in KA 113, and the e-copy is ALSO due at turnitin.com at that time/day.

4) PARTICIPATION (10 points): I will evaluate this portion of your grade on the basis of quality of participation, group-work, small writing projects, and occasional pop-quizes. Below are some important preconditions for quality participation:

A) *Attendance and Timeliness*: I will take attendance every class. I will allow *two* absences no questions asked, in case, say, you wake up with a fever bad enough to keep you in bed or you simply want to take a break from it all. **For every unexcused absence after your allowable two, I will deduct a sixth of a grade (e.g. A- to A-/B+) from your final grade.** So, you can receive an F simply by not showing up for classes. If you have a legitimate excuse and

can show **proper documentation**, your absence will not be held against you. Unforeseen emergencies will be handled on a case-by-case basis. In a similar vein, a pattern of tardiness will lead to the reduction of your final grade.

B) *Printing up On-Line Course Reader*: Rather than make you buy many books that are only partially used, an on-line course reader has been made available for you through the USF's Blackboard for your convenience and as a cost-saving measure. You are **required** to *print up* (on your own) the articles and chapters of the on-line course reader and to *bring* the relevant readings with you to class.

C) *No Laptop Computers or other Internet Devices*: The temptation to surf the internet or check email is too strong for many people. So for this class you'll have to make use of standard pen/pencil and paper, and bring printed copies of the course readings.

D) *Basic Respect toward Classmates*: Most folks know what I mean by this. So this is just a reminder. I stress it to clarify that I take this seriously.

Required Texts:

1. *Anti-Semite and Jew*, Jean-Paul Sartre
2. *The Browning of America and the Evasion of Social Justice*, Ronald Sundstrom
3. Course Reader – Blackboard

TENTATIVE Assignment Schedule:

Week 1: (1/25, 27):

- 1) Introduction; 2) Plato, "Ring of Gyges"; 3) Buddhist Scriptures, The Chariot Parable

Week 2: (2/1, 3):

- 1) Plato, *Crito*; 2) Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics* excerpts

Week 3: (2/8, 10):

- 1) Elizabeth Spelman, "Aristotle and the Politicization of the Soul"; 2) Herbert Fingarette, *Confucius: Sacred as Secular* excerpt; 3) Confucius, *Analects* excerpts

Week 4: (2/15, 17):

- 1) David Hall & Roger Ames, "Chinese Sexism"; 2) Lu Xun excerpts

Week 5: (2/22, 24):

- 1) Virginia Suddath, "Ought We Throw the Confucian Baby out with the Authoritarian Bathwater: A Critical Inquiry into Lu Xun...;"
- 2) Buddhist Scriptures; 3) Charles Goodman, *The Consequences of Compassion* excerpt

Week 6: (3/1, 3):

- 1) Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* excerpt; 2) John Locke, *Treatise* excerpt

Week 7: (3/8, 10):

- 1) Johannes Blumenbach, "On the Natural Variety of Mankind;" 2) Hegel, *Philosophy of History* excerpt; 3) Edward Said, *Orientalism* excerpt; 4) Charles Mills, "The Racial Polity"

Friday, March 11, Noon: Critical Paper is due in my mailbox in KA113 and an e-copy at turnitin.com.

Week 8: (3/14-18: No Classes – Spring Break!)

Week 9: (3/22, 24):

1) Karl Marx excerpts; 2) Lenin *Imperialism* excerpt; 3) Taft-Katsura document; 4) Root-Takahira document; 5) Rudyard Kipling “White Man’s Burden;” 6) Senator Beveridge speech, “Our Philippine Policy”

Week 10: (3/29, 31):

1) Film: Loni Ding’s *Ancestors to the Americas, Part I*; 2) Marlon Hom, *Songs from Gold Mountain* excerpt; 3) Helen Zia, *Asian American Dreams* excerpt
[Homework on Ancestry/Immigration Narrative Due: 3/32]

Week 11: (4/5, 7):

1) Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew*; 2) Lawrence Blum, “‘Racism:’ Its Core Meaning;” 3) W.E.B. Du Bois, “The Concept of Race”

Week 12: (4/12, 14):

1) Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew*; 2) Linda Martin-Alcoff, *Visible Identities* excerpt

April 14: In-Class Exam (Bring unmarked blue/green book.)

Week 13: (4/19, 21):

1) Ronald Sundstrom, *The Browning of America...*; 2) Sally Haslanger, *Resisting Reality* excerpt

Week 14: (4/26, 28):

1) Ronald Sundstrom, *The Browning of America...*; 2) Yoko Arisaka, “Asian Women and Racial Exoticization;” 3) Emily Lee, “The Meaning of Visible Differences of the Body”

Week 15: (5/3, 5):

1) Ronald Sundstrom, *The Browning of America...*; 2) Film: Jeff Adachi, *The Slanted Screen*

Week 16: (5/10, 12):

1) David Cole, *Enemy Aliens* excerpt; 2) Falguni Sheth, *Toward a Political Philosophy of Race* excerpt

Monday, May 16, Noon: Philosophical Application Paper is due in my mailbox in KA 113 and an e-copy is due at the Turnitin.com website.