

**Asian Americans and California Politics**  
**Political Science 129B**  
**Spring 2001**  
**University of California, Irvine**

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## **Course Objectives**

Political Science 129B explores the role and impact of Asian Americans in the political milieu of California. The primary purpose of this course is to understand how government and democratic institutions in the Golden State perform in representing the views and interests of Asian Americans.

The course will consistently examine Asian Americans in the context of discussions about state electoral and governmental processes. This includes political participation, party and interest group behavior, elections, political leadership, and policymaking. Within these conversations, this class will touch upon such broad themes as: the origin, success and failure of ethnic political communities; the influence of immigration conditions on political participation; inter-ethnic conflict, coalition building and panethnicity; the political strategies of small groups; the influence of money and campaign finance reform; the impact of the mass media and public opinion; the Byzantine nature of the California style of government; the decline and adaptation of political parties; the dilemma of effective representation and the declining trust in government institutions; the failure of formal policymaking and the rise of the initiative process and; the historical role of racism and reform in California politics.

## **Reading**

The reading for this course consists of six books. The following are available for purchase at the UCI bookstore:

- Baldassare, M. 2000. *California in the New Millennium*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Daniels, R. 1962. *The Politics of Prejudice*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Keene, B. 2000. *Making Government Work*. Berkeley: Institute of Governmental Studies Press.
- Preston, M., B. Cain and S. Bass, eds. 1998. *Racial and Ethnic Politics*, volume 2. Berkeley: Institute of Governmental Studies Press.
- Saito, L. 1998. *Race and Politics: Asian Americans, Latinos and Whites in a Los Angeles Suburb*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

- Zia, H. 2000. *Asian American Dreams*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

In addition, three copies of the following book are available in the Reserve Room at the Main Library:

- Phan, H.T. 1999. *Roots of Unrest*. Santa Ana: The Orange County Register.

Along with the above, students are encouraged to keep up with current events by reading the newspaper on a daily basis. The best sources for news on Asian American and California politics are: The *Los Angeles Times* ([www.latimes.com](http://www.latimes.com)) The *Orange County Register* ([www.ocregister.com](http://www.ocregister.com)) and *AsianWeek* ([www.asianweek.com](http://www.asianweek.com)). See also Dan Tsang's Compilation of Asian American Studies resources: <http://sun3.lib.uci.edu/~dtsang/aas2.htm>

## Assignments

There will be four assignments in this course. Each will be detailed in subsequent handouts.

1. Four Short Papers on Government Case Studies (1-2 pages): **Due on Mondays -- April 23<sup>rd</sup>, April 30<sup>th</sup>, May 21<sup>st</sup> and May 28<sup>th</sup>.**
2. In-Class Group Debate and Paper (5 pages): **Due exactly one week after your in-class debate.**
3. Group Campaign Strategy Exercise (10 pages + presentation): **Presentations on May 7-11. Papers due on May 11<sup>th</sup>.**
4. Group Legislative Exercise (20 pages + presentation during 10<sup>th</sup> week): Presentations on **June 4-8. Papers due on Monday, June 11<sup>th</sup> by 3:30 pm.**

## Debates

**Every Friday** between April 13<sup>th</sup> and May 25<sup>th</sup>, class will be devoted to a class debate on a controversial topic. In groups of two or three, you will take opposite sides. Debates will adhere to the following rules:

1. Each team will have 5 minutes for an opening statement and then 2 minutes each for a rebuttal.
2. Your instructor will moderate and keep time.
3. Ten minutes will be set aside for students in the audience to ask questions to the debate teams.
4. Following each debate, the class will vote, by way of secret ballot, for the side they feel presented the strongest argument. The winning side will automatically receive the full 10 points on the oral presentation component of their debate grade. Each member of the losing side will receive a score of 1-10 from the instructor.

Exactly **one week after your class debate** you will turn in a **5-page argumentative paper** WRITTEN BY YOURSELF that summarizes the viewpoint you took in class. All papers must incorporate **one (1) of your assigned readings for the week** and **at least two (2) outside sources** as evidence for the assertions that you make. Papers must include a **bibliography**.

## Grading

The final grade that you receive in this course will be based on a **100 point scale** broken down as follows:

- Case study papers (20%): In all, there will be **four** 1-2 page case study papers worth **5 points each**.
- In-class debate and paper (20%): Your debate grade will be split equally between oral and written components, **each being worth 10 points**. Those who win the most votes from their fellow students after the class debate will receive an automatic 10 points on the in-class component.
- Group Exercises (50%): The group campaign strategy exercise and group policy brief **are both worth 25 points**. Grades will be based on your paper and assigned to all members of the group.
- Class participation (10%): You must talk in this class. The extent and quality of your participation in class during debates, discussion and presentations will constitute the **final 10 points** of your grade.

**Website: <http://e3.uci.edu/01s/67230>**

Please visit the class website for the most detailed and current information about the course. It will be updated frequently during the quarter and will contain all information distributed in class as well as additional help for the assignments.

## Calendar

### **Week 1 (April 2-6): Conceptualizing Asian Americans in California Politics: Immigration, Discrimination and the Pursuit of Power.**

Themes: What framework can be employed for understanding California and the emergence of Asian American communities? How have U.S. immigration policies impacted California politics and the state Asian American population in particular? How has racism, personal and institutional, shaped the political experience of Asian Americans throughout California history?

Reading: Zia, Chs. 1-3; Daniels (all); Shockman in Preston et. al. (pp. 233-276).

### **Week 2 (April 9-13): Parties and Progressivism: California as a State of Independence.**

Themes: Is partisanship consistent with panethnicity? Are mass political parties a useful, or outdated, vehicle for political expression?

Reading: Baldassare, Chs. 1-3.

Friday Debate (4/13): RESOLVED: Let's face it – Asian Americans are too conservative.

### **Week 3 (April 16-20): Elections and Participation: Votes, Activism, Protest.**

Themes: Division and cohesion in Asian-American participation; Why, according to some commentators, do Asian Americans practice 'politics by other means'? Will future generations of Asian Americans be more or less politically active?

Reading: Nakanishi in Preston et. al. (pp. 3-44); Zia, Chs. 7 and 9.

Assignment: Short paper on Case 3 in Keene (pp. 27-37) due April 23.

Friday Debate (4/20): RESOLVED: It doesn't really matter if Asian Americans vote.

### **Week 4 (April 23-27): The Media: Advertisements and Newspapers as Educators.**

Themes: What are the consequences of the decline of TV news and the rise of newspapers in covering state and local politics? How can media coverage impact Asian Americans as a group and Asian American candidates and officeholders? What role do Asian American journalists play in representing the community?

Reading: Zia, Chs. 5 and 10; Phan, *Roots of Unrest* (all).

**Assignment: Short paper on Case 6 in Keene (pp. 77-93) due April 30.**

Friday Debate (4/27): RESOLVED: Hollywood offers a fair and accurate representation of Asian America.

### **Week 5 (April 30-May 4): Political Leadership: Running for Office**

Themes: Why do so few Asian Americans run for office? Will more leaders run for office in the future?

Reading: Saito, Chs. 1-3; Brackman and Erie in Preston et. al. (pp. 73-108).

Friday Debate (5/4): RESOLVED: It is only a matter of time before an Asian American is elected Governor of California.

### **Week 6 (May 7-11): Coalition Building and Money as the Mother's Milk of California Politics**

Themes: What are the consequences of politics driven by money? Is there any way to take money out of politics? Is the campaign finance scandal a motivator or deterrent to future political participation by Asian Americans? What is the potential for coalitions between Asian Americans and other groups?

Reading: Saito, Chs. 4-5, Zia, Ch. 11.

**Assignment: Campaign strategy exercise. Presentations on May 7, 9 and 11. Group paper due May 11.**

Friday Debate (5/11): RESOLVED: Asian Americans are too unique to form coalitions with other ethnic groups.

### **Week 7 (May 14-18): The Role of Public Opinion in Establishing Community Power**

Themes: How do Asian Americans view the political system? Is there a consensus on policy issues? How can public opinion empower Asian Americans – and shape policymaking – in our democratic society?

Reading: Baldassare, Chs. 4-6; handouts.

**Assignment: Short paper on Case 7 in Keene (pp. 97-110) due May 21.**

Friday Debate (5/18): RESOLVED: Asian Americans are too diverse to have a unified agenda

### **Week 8 (May 21-25): Representation: Local, State and National.**

Themes: Why are Asian American legislators often elected by non-Asian constituencies? How important is the concept of 'symbolic' representation to Asian Americans? What, if anything, is unique about the 'home style' of Asian American politicians?

Reading: Zia, Ch. 6; handouts.

**Assignment: Short Paper on Case 2 in Keene (pp. 13-26) due May 28.**

Friday Debate (5/25): RESOLVED: Anglo politicians represent Asian American interests as well as Asian American politicians.

### **Week 9 (May 28-June 1): Policymaking, Populism and Panethnicity: The Initiative Process**

Themes: Is California government too slow in reacting to change? How might the legislative process be reformed to facilitate responsiveness? Why is redistricting such an important issue for Asian Americans? Should the initiative process in California be reformed? Is there an Asian-American consensus on immigration? Affirmative action? Bilingual education?

Reading: Saito, Chs. 6-7; Preston and Lai in Preston et. al. (pp. 161-198).

### **Week 10 (June 4-June 8): The Future of Asian American Politics in a Multiethnic California**

Themes: What issues will dominate the state political agenda in the future and how will they impact Asian Americans? What will multiracialism mean for state politics and efforts by Asian Americans to coalesce as a political group?

Reading: Cain in Preston et. al. (pp. 457-468).

**Assignment: Legislative exercise. Presentations on June 4, 6 and 8. Final paper due June 11 @ 3:30pm.**