

As an incredibly diverse population, Asian Americans have contributed greatly to the foodscape of the United States. This course explores the rich foodways that Asian Americans have created and sustained historically and contemporarily. It also examines the impacts of such foodways on Asian American identity and community formations. The course is organized thematically and anchored in selected case studies.

### COURSE OBJECTIVES

- To understand the different social, political, and economic forces that shape Asian American foodways.
- To identify historical and contemporary racial and migration dynamics that structure Asian American food practices and vice versa.
- To understand Asian American foodways as sites of social, cultural, political, economic, and power negotiations in American society and globally.

### REQUIRED TEXTS

- Robert Ji-Song Ku, *Dubious Gastronomy: The Cultural Politics of Eating Asian in the US* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2013)
- Robert Ji-Song Ku, Martin Manalansan, and Anita Mannur eds., *Eating Asian America: A Food Studies Reader* (NYU Press, 2013)
- Robert Ji-Song Ku, Martin Manalansan and Anita Mannur eds, *Eating More Asian America: A Food Studies Reader* (NYU Press, 2025)
- Erika Lee, *The Making of Asian America* (Simon & Schuster, 2015)
- Haiming Liu, *From Canton Restaurant to Panda Express: A History of Chinese Food in the United States* (Rutgers University Press, 2015)
- Ronald Takaki, *Pau Hana: Plantation Life and Labor in Hawai'i, 1835-1920* (University of Hawai'i Press, 1984)
- Cecilia Tsu, *Garden of the World: Asian Immigrants and the Making of Agriculture in California's Santa Clara Valley* (Oxford University Press, 2013)
- Chantha Nguon, *Slow Noodles: A Cambodian Memoir of Love, Loss, and Family Recipes* (Algonquin Books, 2024)
- Grace Cho, *Tastes Like War* (The Feminist Press, 2021)
- David Chang, *Eat a Peach* (Clarkson Potter, 2020)

### FILMS

- *Off the Menu*
- *Minari*
- *Seadrift*

### GRADING CRITERIA

- **Attendance & Participation (20pts):** Students shall attend classes punctually and actively participate in discussions and activities. Each student shall identify at least one interesting/compelling passage from *each* of the assigned materials and be prepared to elaborate on their significance in class. Each unexcused absence will result in a loss of that day's attendance and participation points. Unexcused tardiness will affect attendance and participation grade.
- **Reading Responses (15pts):** For each class meeting, student must post one paragraph (200-300 words) in response to the assigned materials for that class. ***Due under DISCUSSIONS on Canvas 24 hours before class***

**meets.** Late response submitted within the week will be deducted half a point.

- **Food Event Reflection (10pts):** Students will attend and reflect on an Asian American food-related event (e.g. food truck areas, food markets, public lectures, etc.). After the event, students will write a 500-word essay on what they observed. Students must connect their essay to relevant course materials.
- **Food Presentation (5pts):** Students will sign up to present on their favorite Asian American food item/establishment/recipe/story. Presentation must be within 10 min.
- **Food Film Analysis (20pts):** Students will critically analyze a food documentary film recommended on the syllabus (5-7 double-spaced page excluding bibliography). The analysis must also substantially engage with relevant course materials. Due Class 6.
- **Final Project (30pts):** Students may choose one of two options. **OPTION A:** A research paper (no more than 12 double-spaced pages) about a topic relating to Asian American foodways. **OPTION B:** A podcast or a StoryMap exploring the history of Asian American foodways in their hometown accompanied by a paper contextualizing the project. Each student will briefly present their projects during the final class.

### COURSE POLICIES

#### Syllabus Changes

Instructor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus as needed.

#### Accessibility and Accommodations

Please contact [Yale Student Accessibility Services](#) and the instructor as soon as possible for questions about accessibility and accommodation.

#### Late Policy

Late assignments will be deducted one letter grade within a week of original due date. Late assignments beyond that will not be accepted unless accompanied by a Dean's Extension.

#### Classroom Etiquette

The classroom is a space of intellectual exploration and all are encouraged to ask questions and participate in their fullest capacity. Opinions that express different points of view are welcomed. Students are expected to engage with each other in a respectful and thoughtful manner. Class conversations shall not be recorded, unless it is for an approved accommodation request.

#### Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and will likely result in failure of the course. ***Students are responsible for knowing the definitions and penalties for Academic Dishonesty***, which include, but are not limited to, plagiarism, cheating, submitting AI generated content, etc. ***Ignorance about these standards will not serve as an excuse for infractions.*** Plagiarizers are treated as violators of the code of academic integrity.

# Asian American Foodways



Image Source: Felicia Liang

ER&M S315E  
Date: MW 9:00am-12:15pm ET  
Location: Zoom

Instructor: **Quan Tran, PhD**  
quan.tran@yale.edu

Office Hours  
Tue 9-11am ET (Zoom)

## SCHEDULE

### Class 1

#### Intro to Asian American Foodways

- Course overview
- Defining key concepts & brief histories
- John Kuo Tchen, “Porcelain, Tea, and Revolution” in *New York Before Chinatown* (John Hopkins Press, 2001)
- PA Food, “The Story of How Asian Food Conquered America,” <https://www.pa-food.com/blog/asian-cuisine-in-america/>, 2023

### Class 2

#### On the Fields (1)

- Lee, *The Making of Asian America* (selections)
- Takaki, *Pau Hana* (selections)
- Tsu, *Garden of the World* (selections)

### Class 3

#### On the Fields (2)

- Lee, *The Making of Asian America* (selections)
- Ku et al eds., *Eating Asian America* (selections)
- Natasha Varner, “How Japanese and Mexican American farm workers formed an alliance that made history,” [Densho, August 2016](#).

### Class 4

#### In the Restaurants

- Liu, *From Canton Restaurant to Panda Express* (selections)

### Class 5

#### Culinary Others

- Lee, *The Making of Asian America* (selections)
- Ku, *Dubious Gastronomy* (selections)

### Class 6

#### The Politics of Authenticity and Asian Fusion Foods

- Ku et al eds, *Eating Asian America* (selections)

### Class 7

#### Food and Community Formations (1)

- Ku et al eds, *Eating Asian America* (selections)

### Class 8

#### Food and Community Formations (2)

- Ku et al eds., *Eating Asian America* (selections)

### Class 9

#### Food and Memory (1)

- Cho, *Tastes Like War* (selections)

### Class 10

#### Food and Memory (2)

- Nguon, *Slow Noodles* (selections)

### Class 11

#### The Rise of Asian American Celebrity Chefs

- Tasha Ohren, “The Blood Sport of Cooking: On Asian American Chefs and Television”, [Global Asian American Popular Cultures](#)
- Ku et al eds, *Eating More Asian America* (selections)

### Class 12

#### Asian American Foodways in Global Contexts

- Cecilia Leong-Salobir, “The Globalization of Asian Cuisines: Transnational Networks and Culinary Contact Zones,” *Asian Studies Review*, Vol 40, 2016
- Ku et al eds, *Eating More Asian America* (selections)

### Class 13

- Student presentations & wrapping up

#### Final Assignment due