



Note to Instructors

Welcome and thank you for teaching this course.

The object of the course is simple: to educate young people about the rich history of Chinese people in America, which is often left out of textbooks. We originally designed this course to teach young Chinese Americans in Chinese Schools; however, the curriculum can be easily adapted to other educational environments. We were inspired to start teaching this course because of anti-immigrant beliefs and policies that have resurfaced in force over the past several years. Many of the same things that have happened to Chinese immigrants in the past are happening again today to other immigrants, including newly arrived Asian immigrants. Rhetoric used to justify Chinese Exclusion included arguments that Chinese immigrants could never become American because they're dirty, dangerous, and unassimilable. Contemporary parallels to this kind of language are everywhere, with the current U.S. president as the most vocal mouthpiece. These racist ideas are effectively deployed to garner widespread support for discrimination and exclusion.

Asian Americans are the fastest growing demographic among undocumented immigrants in the United States today, and we believe that the knowledge imparted by this course will resonate with our students, even as certain parts of the Chinese community grow more conservative. As such, we hope that three overarching themes of the course will help develop young people into leaders for a more just, inclusive, and colorful America.

- 1) **Social Justice.** Many of the problems that we face today as a community stem from the same fundamental problems of racism and xenophobia that plagued Chinese communities a hundred years ago. The course's topics aim to gradually introduce students to complex theories behind a progressive vision for social justice, including ideas like systemic white supremacy. We hope you will leave your students with a critical framework they can use not only to understand our current reality, but also to imagine a better future.
- 2) **Community.** In many ways, things seem to have come a long way from the time of Chinese Exclusion. Some of that is because of historical coincidence, but most of it is because of the courage of communities to take action against injustice and inequality. There is power and hope in building community, and the foundation of building pan-ethnic coalitions rests on empathy and understanding. We hope that this course will show your students

the importance of taking action, as well as the value in working with other communities.

- 3) **Voice.** The value of this course is premised on the idea that knowledge is power, and that education can unify and galvanize communities. Common experiences tie the Asian American community together, but these perspectives and voices have been silenced in mainstream history classes. We must regain the power of these common narratives by remembering them and passing them on. Ultimately, we want students to leave the course with the understanding that the history of the Chinese in America is part of their heritage, and to never doubt that their voice and their story have power. And we hope they will one day use that power to improve the world that we live in.

We wish you luck, and we hope you will find teaching this course as rewarding as we did!

Happy teaching,

Julia Wang & Kathy Lu



How to Use this Guide

Based on the needs of the pilot program in New Haven, this curriculum was built as a **semester-long class** comprising eleven class sessions, including one introductory session attended by interested parents and one end-of-semester “celebration” session, where families are invited to come see the students give final presentations. Our pilot program model used two co-teachers who jointly taught the class in a local Chinese School every week. Each class session is designed to take **45 minutes** to teach, but can be easily adapted to be shorter or longer depending on your individual educational needs.

We have found that **high school students** are the most suited to learning the class material. They have often already learned important foundational information from other parts of U.S. history, such as the Civil Rights Movement and World War II, and they tend to be mature enough to handle the more difficult topics, such as anti-Asian violence.

The start of each lesson plan begins with a **Key Ideas** section meant to summarize the most important takeaways each student should learn by the end of the lesson. The Key Ideas section is then followed by a list of **Required Materials**. Throughout each lesson plan, we include tips for instructors, such as optional details to add or questions to ask students, as **Suggestions** that are marked by the lightbulb icon.

As you will see, class sessions typically take the following format:

- 1) **Journal Reflections:** At the start of the class, students spend about five minutes sharing what they wrote in response to the previous week’s journal prompt.
- 2) **Class Presentation & Discussions:** The class then transitions into teacher-led lectures. These presentations **should not take longer than 25 minutes**, and they should be guided with visuals from a Class PowerPoint (see attached PowerPoint folder). Discussions are typically interspersed throughout the presentation.
- 3) **Journaling:** Classes will usually end with students spending 5-8 minutes writing in their journals in response to the given prompt.

General Teaching Tips

- This class is designed for **co-teachers**, which also builds in leeway for occasional absences due to illness. We have found it most effective to have co-teachers alternate between leading discussions versus giving presentations. Ex: Teacher A will give the lecture while Teacher B will lead the interspersed discussions in one week, and the positions will be flipped the next week. This kind of set arrangement keeps classes as organized as possible even with multiple teachers.

- Because discussions are a big emphasis in the class, we recommend arranging the seats into a **large circle** so that students can see each other's faces.
- Chinese Schools and other heritage language schools typically take place over the weekend or during weekday evenings, and students may find it difficult to focus. To help combat this, make the class presentations as **interactive** as possible, and ask questions of the students even when not specifically built into the curriculum.
- We find that using Powerpoint presentations with mostly **visual sources** have been effective in keeping the students' attention and inspiring questions and discussion. To that end, we have attached a visual companion of helpful images with their sources in the Appendix—but these images should only be a starting point! Take the time to search for other pictures that will make your lecture more engaging. Please cite their sources in your Powerpoint to indicate that the images' usage fall under Fair Use in the Copyright Act.
- High school students may be a little rowdy, so reference the **ground rules** (outlined in the **Introductory Session**) whenever necessary to reinforce them. Otherwise, letting things slide may make the class unmanageable later on.
- Some high school students will already be conditioned to **take notes** throughout the session. If they are, encourage them to do so, as it will help with information retention. If they do not take notes automatically, however, we recommend letting them simply listen. We have found that the class material is engaging enough to hold students' attention without forcing them to take notes, and we are hoping to make the class somewhat of a safe haven from the drudgery of high school.
- You should use your budget to obtain nice mini-size journals for the students—it's always more fun to write in something prettier. *We highly recommend collecting the journals* at the end of each class and storing them for students during the week. Otherwise, students will inevitably forget the journals at home, causing unneeded hassle.

Reading List

Instructors are encouraged to read through the following book list before teaching the course, especially if you do not have a strong background in Chinese American history already. Articles and specific chapters in each book are highlighted below as **must-reads** if time is limited and indicate for which class they would be most helpful.

- *The Making of Asian America*, Erika Lee (2015)
 - Introduction & Chapter 1 (Lesson 1)
 - Chapters 3-4 (Lessons 2-3)
 - Chapter 9 (Lessons 4-6)
 - Chapters 12-13 (Lessons 4-6)

- *A New History of Asian America*, Shelley Sang-Hee Lee (2014)
 - Chapter 2 (Lesson 1)
 - Chapter 6 (Lesson 4)
 - Chapter 8 (Lesson 5)
 - Chapters 11-12 (Lessons 6-7)
- *The Good Immigrants: How the Yellow Peril Became the Model Minority*, Madeline Hsu (2015)
- Uyematsu, Amy. “The Emergence of Yellow Power in America (an excerpt).” *Gidra*. October Issue. 1969. <https://www.dartmouth.edu/~hist32/Hist33/Uyematsu.PDF>
- Ishizuka, Karen. *Serve the People: Making Asian America in the Long Sixties*. Verso, 2016.



LESSON TWO | 19th-Century Chinese Immigration to the U.S.

Key Ideas:

- *In the 19th century, the first large wave of Chinese immigrants came to the United States.*
- *Most of them were male laborers, who came to work in the mines and on the railroads. Many of them left China because of the lack of economic opportunities and political upheaval.*
- *The western side of the First Transcontinental Railroad was built mostly by Chinese workers, yet their experiences are largely absent from mainstream history books.*
- *Life was very difficult, and Chinese workers received discriminatory treatment.*

Materials: 1) Class PowerPoint with Promontory Point railroad photo
2) Whiteboard markers or chalk
3) Student journals

I. **Journal Reflections**

(5 min.)

- Ask students to share what they wrote during last class's journaling session.



Suggestion: Pick a student to start, then go around in a circle. Pick a different starting student for each class.



Discussion Module (5 min.)

What were the reasons that your own family immigrated?

How are they different or similar to what you have learned in school about other groups of immigrants (e.g., colonists, Irish/Italian immigrants, Eastern-European immigrants, etc.?)

Suggestion: Start off by sharing instructor's own family's experience.

II. Why did the Chinese leave China?

- *Opportunities*¹
 - Most of the people who left China to come to the U.S. were from the province of Canton.
 - Canton was the province where there was most contact with the outside world because of its large port, where merchants came to trade with China. This included one very controversial product: opium.



Suggestion: Ask students if they know what opium is. Describe its effects, and link it to today's opioid epidemic to indicate its addictive and debilitating result.

- The opium trade led to the Opium Wars, because the British wanted to keep trading opium for tea, but Chinese officials did not want more import of opium into China because it was a very addictive drug and was ravaging Chinese society. The British did not want Chinese officials to interfere, because they knew that opium was addictive and therefore people would keep buying it in exchange for the goods Britain wanted, such as tea and china.
 - The British accused China of interfering with free trade and used it as justification to start a war. They were also much more advanced in their weaponry and ships, and China lost the war. The Opium Wars occurred the first time from 1839-1842 and the second time from 1856-1860.
 - When China lost the First Opium War, the officials were forced under the Treaty of Nanking to continue the opium trade and open even more ports for trading (Canton, Amoy/Xiamen, Ningpo/Ningbo, Shanghai). These new ports led to competition with Canton, which led to fewer jobs in Canton and more unemployment. People left to find more jobs.
 - During the Second Opium War, which China also lost, Britain forced the expansion of the coolie trade, which recruited, sometimes forcibly, Chinese workers to go to the British colonies, especially in the Caribbean, for very little pay. These workers were supposed to replace slave labor after the abolition of slavery in the British Empire.
- The mid-1800s was a very turbulent time for China. In addition to the Opium Wars, there were many internal wars in China.



Suggestion: If students are interested, give greater detail about the wars, especially the Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864).

- Between 1840 and 1900, 2.5 million Chinese left China. Many of them came to North America.

¹ *Note to instructor: if students are too young, briefly summarize that China had many wars during this period and high unemployment, so people left to find jobs abroad; otherwise go into greater detail as below.*

III. Why did the Chinese come to America?

- Specific events created job opportunities.
 - 1848: Discovery of gold at Sutter's Mill; start of Gold Rush; many Chinese went to California in search of gold mountain (recall San Francisco is "old Gold Mountain" in Chinese)
 - 1863: Beginning of construction for the western line of the First Transcontinental Railroad by the Central Pacific Railroad
 - 1865: 50 Chinese were hired to work, and eventually 15,000 were hired from China, making up 80% of the workforce
 - By 1870, there were 63,000 Chinese in America, 77% in California
- Note that this was something American employers facilitated. Workers were recruited from China and promised high wages and great working conditions.
 - In addition to the Transcontinental Railroad, regional companies also hired Chinese workers.
 - This was during a time when Chinese labor was considered a potential replacement for slaves as cheap labor (this was concurrent with the Civil War).



Discussion Module (5 min.)

Why did American companies want to hire Chinese workers instead of hiring from within the United States?

Suggestion: Discuss cheap labor and the potential for exploitation without consequences, as Chinese workers were effectively stranded in the United States (passage was very expensive) and largely unable to appeal to government authorities for help. You may also discuss the replacement of slavery with coolie labor and its justification for perpetuating slavery in the South.

IV. How did the Chinese get to America?

- Invention of steamships made travel much easier.
 - "Credit-ticket system": The company paid for the worker's passage, and the worker paid back fare and interest by working at the company; this often took years. (In 1865, it cost \$50-55 to go from HK to SF, which is about \$719 in 2017.)
- Journey took weeks, and people often died from illness and poor conditions on the ships.



Suggestion: Ask students to make connections to other passages to America. Ex: slavery, indentured servitude, etc.

V. What was life like for the Chinese in America?

- Discrimination and unequal treatment — Chinese workers were paid much less than white workers (white workers got \$35/month + food and lodging, whereas Chinese workers got \$26-35 with no food or lodging). They also worked the most dangerous jobs (opening up the Sierra Nevada).



Suggestion: Ask students what “a Chinaman’s chance” means. This saying used to be very popular, and is equivalent to saying “there’s no chance of [whatever].” It originated in railroad construction, where Chinese workers were forced to descend into crevices of mountains in buckets to throw lit dynamite inside, in order to widen the cracks. Many of them had “a Chinaman’s chance” of surviving because it was difficult to pull the bucket back up quickly enough to escape the explosion.

- Bachelor societies: They had no family and no spouse (very hard for women to come to the U.S.); many intended to make enough money and go home, but often ended up spending their whole lives here.



Journaling Module (8 min.)

Look at this famous photo of Promontory Point on the PowerPoint. This is the most famous photo commemorating the completion of the Trans-Continental Railroad. It was taken where the Eastern and Western parts of the Trans-Continental Railroad were connected and supposedly showcases this historical moment. What do you notice about this photo?

Why do you think no Chinese workers were included in this photograph even though they made up 80% of the workforce?

Suggestion: If needed, prompt students about how foreign/non-white workers may be “invisibilized” in American history, whereas white inhabitants are glorified. Connect this to current events.

LESSON TWO: Nineteenth-Century Chinese Immigration to the U.S.

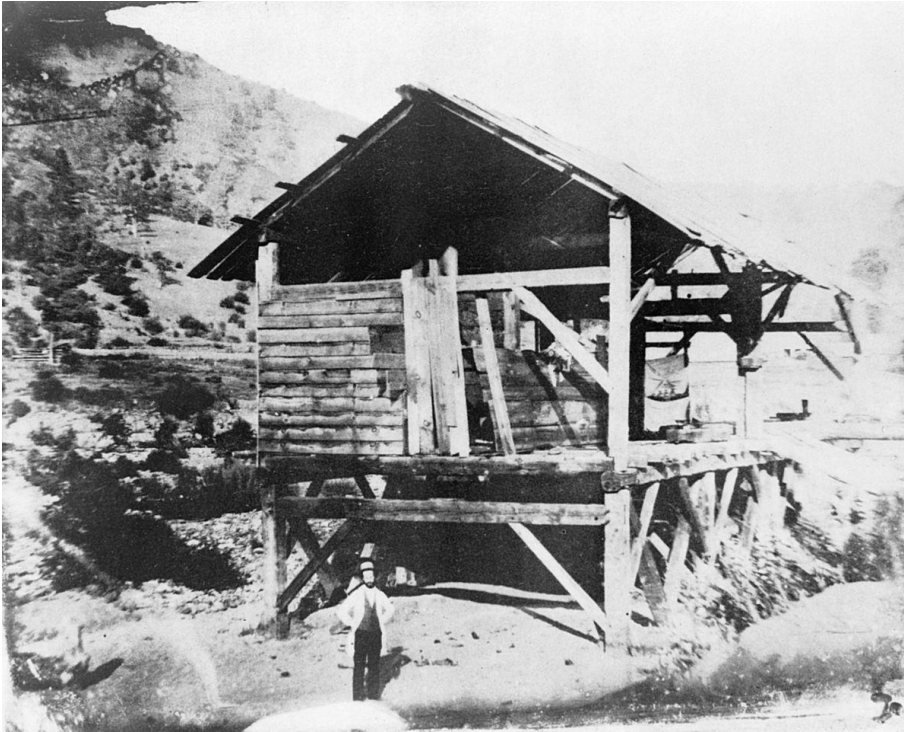
Opium Den, from Wikipedia:



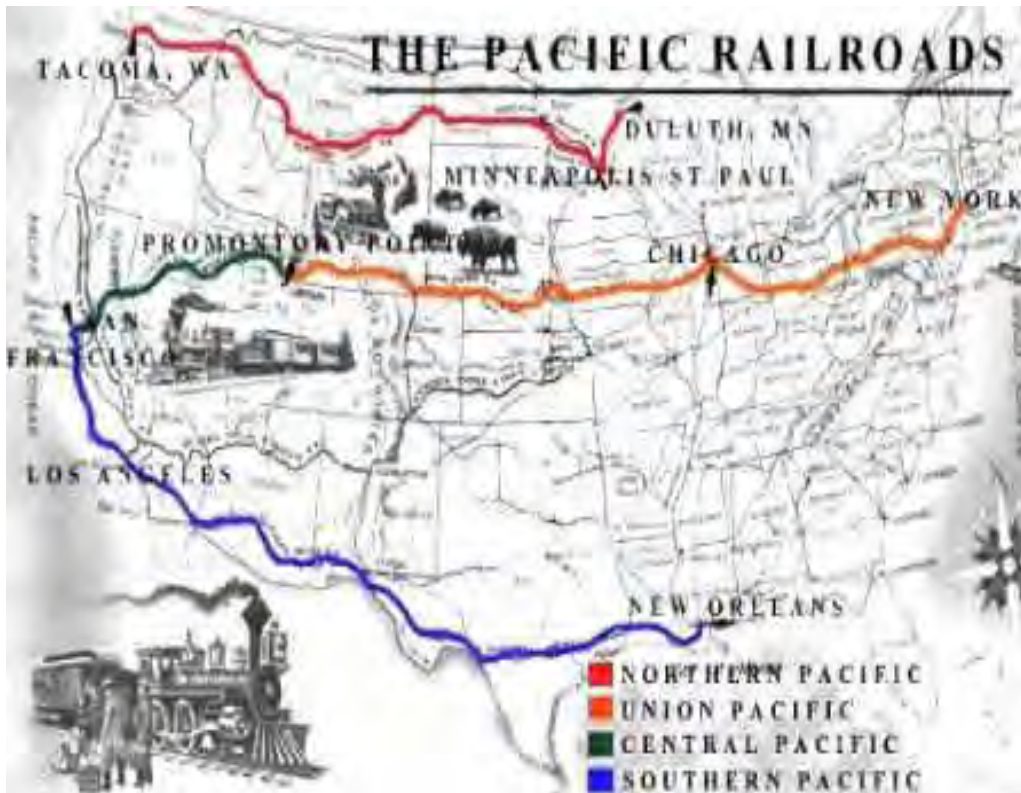
Opium trade route, from MIT Visualizing Cultures:



Sutter's Mill, from Wikipedia:



First Transcontinental Railroad, from American Historama:

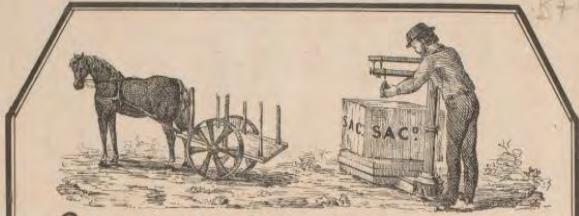


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Advertisement for Chinese laborers, from Stanford Chinese RR Workers in North America (<http://web.stanford.edu/group/chineserailroad/cgi-bin/wordpress/615/>):

Jan 3 - 1870
Received by mail from A. R.

B. R. Witho



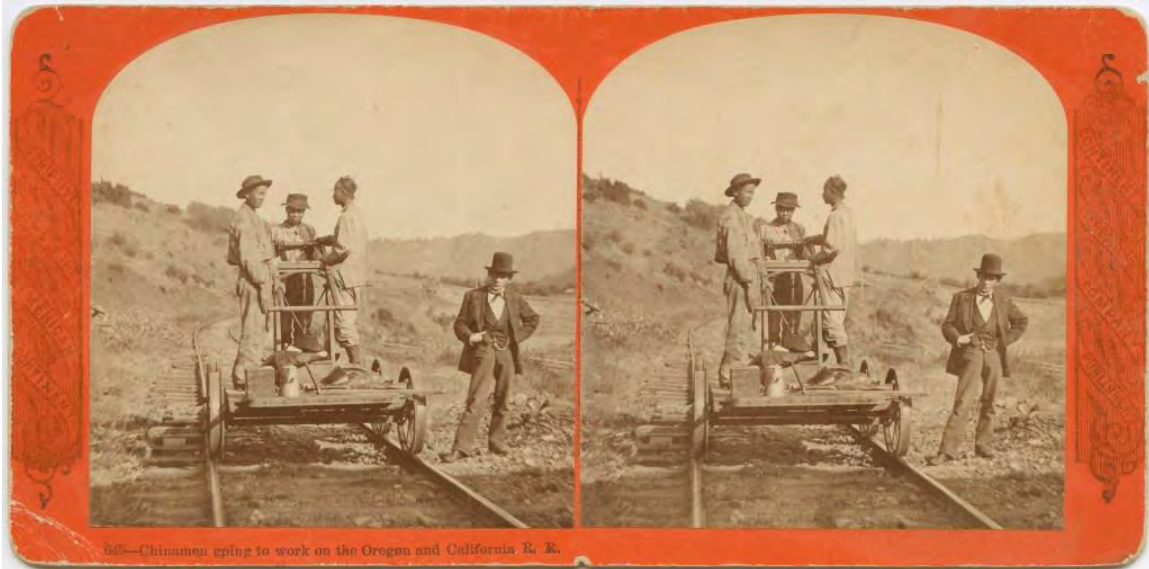
本公司之火車接裝大埠付至各坑來往之
 貨物箱之輕重亦因卸數收卸也或付貨
 之人自任卸過先至往收貨若干每一整
 限以五件為額由大埠付至各埠每整之
 收卸員身元半至拾五元有失漏即回籍並
 決不考言凡各貴客付貨在希為留心
 願本公司貨之船在拉昔街馬頭每自晚
 候四點鐘啟行

信務卑濕佛
 滑精卑濕佛
 火車公司
 決紋
 錄謹啟

T.H. GOODMAN, GEN'L FREIGHT AGENT W.P. & C.P.R.R. SACRAMENTO, CAL.	R.C. JOHNSON Through Contracting F ^o Ag ^t Local Commercial F ^o Ag ^t 415 CALIFORNIA ST. SAN FRANCISCO, CAL.	M.S. HURD, GEN'L SUPT. W.P. & C.P.R.R. SACRAMENTO, CAL.	A.N. TOWNE, GEN'L SUPT. W.P. & C.P.R.R. SACRAMENTO, CAL.
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The advertisement tells Chinese to ship freight by W.P.R.R. and how much for the freight charge. (22) How + where to ship it. A.R.

“Chinamen going to work on the California and Oregon R.R.,” from California History Room, CA State library, Sacramento (<http://web.stanford.edu/group/chineserailroad/cgi-bin/wordpress/981>):



Promontory Point, from Wikipedia:



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