



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 THREE | The Anti-Chinese Movement & Chinese Exclusion

Key Ideas:

- *The Chinese Exclusion Act was passed in 1882 and sought to exclude Chinese laborers from entering the United States. Chinese laborers made up almost all Chinese coming to the country.*
- *The Exclusion Act was passed after strong anti-Chinese sentiment swept the country.*
- *The Exclusion Act was the first law that banned a specific nation or ethnicity from the country – but it would not be the last.*

- Materials:** 1) Class PowerPoint with anti-Chinese ads from Exclusion
2) Whiteboard markers or chalk
3) Student journals



Discussion Module (8 min.)

Show the anti-Chinese ads and cartoons on the PowerPoint and ask:

- 1) What is the picture depicting? Who is the person in it?
- 2) If the picture is advertising a product, what is it advertising?
- 3) What stereotypes about Chinese people are being displayed?
- 4) Are those stereotypes the same or different from common stereotypes about Chinese people now?
- 5) Why do you think these pictures portray Chinese people in this way?

I. What led to the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act?

- Strong anti-Chinese sentiment in the two decades leading to the Exclusion Act (1860s to 1880s)
 - Economic threat to white workers: recall from Lesson 2 that Chinese workers were paid less and did more undesirable work (probably had less bargaining power).

- From 1870-1880, Chinese immigrants only made up of 4.3% of the total number of immigrants → was there any truth to claims that the Chinese were taking over?
- So what was the real reason?
- Racism and xenophobia (*define for younger students*): Chinese described as bringing “moral and racial pollution.” Refer back to the anti-Chinese ads.
 - Senators supporting the Exclusion Act compared the Chinese to “rats,” “beasts,” and “swine,” who competed with white workers with “machine-like” “muscles of iron.”



Discussion Module (5 min.)

What contemporary parallels can you think of in relation to how Chinese immigrants were perceived during this time period? Do you think these racist depictions are serving the same purposes today?

Suggestion: Discuss today’s depictions of Latinx immigrants, South Asian and Middle Eastern immigrants, and Black Americans.

II. How were Chinese people treated during this period?

- Discriminatory treatment in the law
 - As early as the 1850s, California passed anti-Chinese laws, either specifically targeting Chinese people (e.g. Chinese Police Tax) or only enforced against the Chinese (e.g. Foreign Miner’s Tax which collected \$5 million taxes from the Chinese—between 25-50% of California’s total state revenue!).
 - Federal laws in 1860s restricting Chinese immigration:
 - 1862: Coolie Trade Act
 - 1875: Page Act (effectively banned Asian women from entering—why? To prevent establishment of Chinese families and decrease likelihood of permanent settlement)
 - May 6, 1882: passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act
 - These were part of a series of laws that restricted the way Chinese people lived, worked, or married.
- Racial violence
 - White mobs often lynched Chinese people and ran Chinese populations out of the town.
 - 1871: Los Angeles, white mobs lynched 17 Chinese men after a white policeman was shot by a Chinese suspect. 500 LA residents (10% of

the city's population) formed a mob that dragged the Chinese out of their homes to gallows downtown.

- 1885: Eureka, CA – the entire Chinese community (300 in total) was rounded up after a city councilman was accidentally killed in crossfire between two Chinese people.
- 1885: Rock Springs, WY – historians have considered this the biggest lynching in American history. 28 Chinese people were killed. The rest of the Chinese population was rounded up and driven out of town into the desert.
- This was a recurring pattern. Also in 1885, a Tacoma mob forced all 800-900 Chinese residents out of the city, some of them dragged out of their houses forcibly. Many walked as many as 100 miles to find a safer city—British Columbia, Portland, OR, etc. Three days later, Seattle also demanded that all Chinese residents leave.



Suggestion: Acknowledge that these graphic descriptions of anti-Chinese violence are difficult to grapple with, but that they are important parts of history that we must not forget. Invite reflections from students if they would like to debrief this difficult material.



Journaling Module (8 min.)

This journal entry will follow the format of “head, heart, and hands.”
Head: Name one thing you learned today. Heart: Describe how it made you feel. Hands: What do you want to do in response?

Suggestion: If students seem quiet or subdued because of the nature of this lesson's material, tell them that next time, we will discuss how Chinese communities were able to resist these forms of discrimination.



LESSON FOUR | Resistance and Response: Fighting the Exclusion Act

Key Ideas:

- *In addition to Chinese immigrants, other Asian immigrants also faced racism and exclusion in the law. Discrimination and xenophobia were shared experiences of many communities, including other Asian immigrant groups.*
- *Chinese Americans and other Asian Americans used many different strategies to resist the unfair and unequal laws that targeted them.*
- *Two major tools of resistance were: 1) fighting the laws in courts, and 2) resisting the laws more informally.*

Materials: 1) Class PowerPoint
2) Whiteboard markers or chalk
3) Student journals

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- I. **Journal Reflections** (5 min.)
- Ask students to share what they wrote during last class's journaling session.



Discussion Module (8 min.)

Split the students into pairs and ask them to brainstorm methods of resistance to racist laws such as Chinese exclusion.

How would you react if you were in their shoes?

Would you leave? Would you stay and fight for equality? If so, how?

Suggestion: Encourage students to write down a list of responses, with reasons, and then ask each pair to share with the larger group.

II. How did Chinese Americans use the courts to resist racist laws?

- Chinese communities, with the help of advocates, brought cases in state and federal court arguing that the Chinese Exclusion Act and other discriminatory laws were unconstitutional.



Suggestion: You may need to briefly explain to students what the process of challenging laws in courts entails, i.e., courts have the power to strike down laws found unconstitutional, so you can plead your case in front of a judge, and it may go all the way from lower courts to the Supreme Court.

- ***Wong Kim Ark v. United States*** (1898): In 1898, Wong brought a case to the Supreme Court arguing that the Chinese Exclusion Act could not apply to him because he was an American citizen. Wong was born in the U.S. and went to China for a visit, during which the Exclusion Act was passed. Wong was denied entry back into the U.S., and he brought his case all the way to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court ruled that Wong was an American citizen and not subject to the Exclusion Act, because the Fourteenth Amendment declared all persons “born or naturalized in the United States and subject to the jurisdiction thereof are citizens of the United States.” Because of the *Wong Kim Ark* decision, even though Asian immigrants could not become citizens under the laws of the time, their children who were born in the U.S. were citizens. This is also the flagship case for birthright citizenship (likely the reason why many students in the class are citizens!).
- ***Yick Wo v. Hopkins*** (1886): Many Chinese people opened laundries in the late 1800s. However, many cities passed laws that made it difficult for Chinese people to have businesses. Yick Wo was a Chinese immigrant who owned a laundry in San Francisco, which passed a law that required a license in order to open a laundry. These licenses were distributed by the Board of Supervisors, which only rejected Chinese applicants. Out of more than 200 Chinese applicants, zero were granted licenses. Out of the non-Chinese applicants, virtually all were granted licenses. Yick Wo was denied a license and arrested for operating a laundry without the license. Yick Wo brought his case all the way to the Supreme Court arguing that the discriminatory enforcement violated the equal protection and due process clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment.



Discussion Module (5 min.)

The laundry license law in Yick Wo did not mention Chinese people or any other race or ethnicity. Remember that it was only explicitly racist in how it was enforced, rather than how it was written. Do you think that this law was racist or discriminatory? Why/why not?

What do you think is the difference between a law that explicitly prescribes discrimination (e.g., the Chinese Exclusion Act which explicitly targets Chinese), versus a law that sounds neutral but has a discriminatory effect?

III. How did Chinese Americans use other methods to resist racist laws?

- Resisting the law:
 - **Paper sons**—many people came to the U.S. even after the passage of the Exclusion Act because they used papers claiming that they were the sons of Chinese American citizens (who had been born to the citizens' wives in China). This was very risky and incredibly difficult because of the grueling interrogation of Chinese newcomers at Angel Island (the West Coast version of Ellis Island).
 - **Border smuggling schemes** – many arrived in Canada or Mexico and used guides to cross the border secretly.
 - Special agents called “Chinese catchers” were specifically instructed to track down and arrest undocumented Chinese. In 1899, the ratio of Chinese admitted to Chinese deported was 100:4. Five years later, it was 100:61.



Suggestion: Connect this to modern ICE raids targeting Latino immigrants.

- Support from the homeland
 - 1905: There was a boycott of American goods by Chinese merchants in protest of treatment of Chinese in the U.S.
- Domestic activism
 - Wong Chin Foo was a famous Chinese American activist in this time. He was the founder of the weekly newspaper called *Chinese American* in 1883. Wong also formed the Chinese Equal Rights League in 1892.



Suggestion: Ask students why founding a weekly newspaper is so important. Emphasize the importance of communication and spreading accurate information—otherwise, Chinese communities remained isolated from each other and could not band together for greater strength.

- In 1915, the Chinese American Citizens Alliance was formed to protect civil rights of Chinese Americans.



Journaling Module (8 min.)

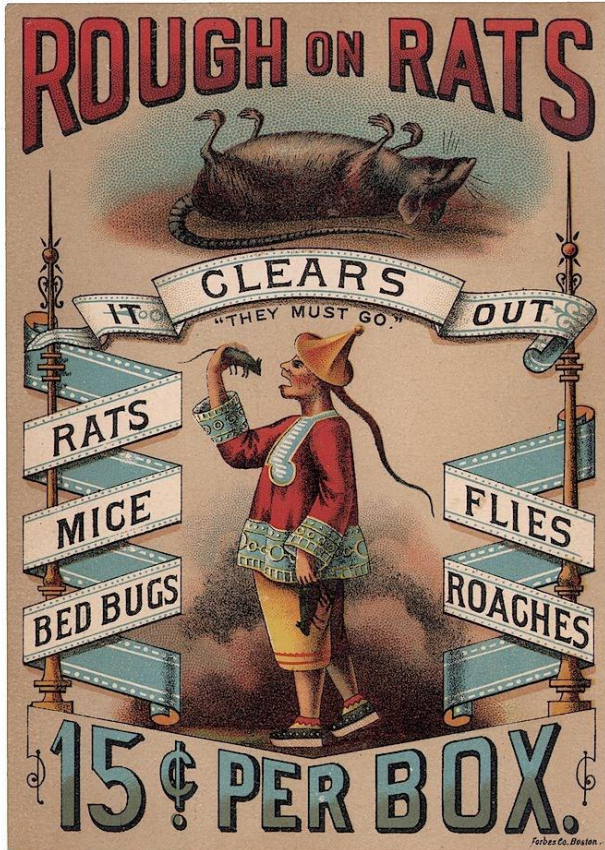
What does it mean to “resist” bad laws by breaking them? How do you feel about the paper son scheme as a way to resist discriminatory laws?

Can you connect it to other examples in history, such as civil disobedience?

Suggestion: Depending on the age of the students, you may need to briefly describe what civil disobedience entails and the role it played in the Civil Rights Movement.

LESSON THREE: The Anti-Chinese Movement and Chinese Exclusion

Anti-Chinese advertisement, from Forbes Co. Boston

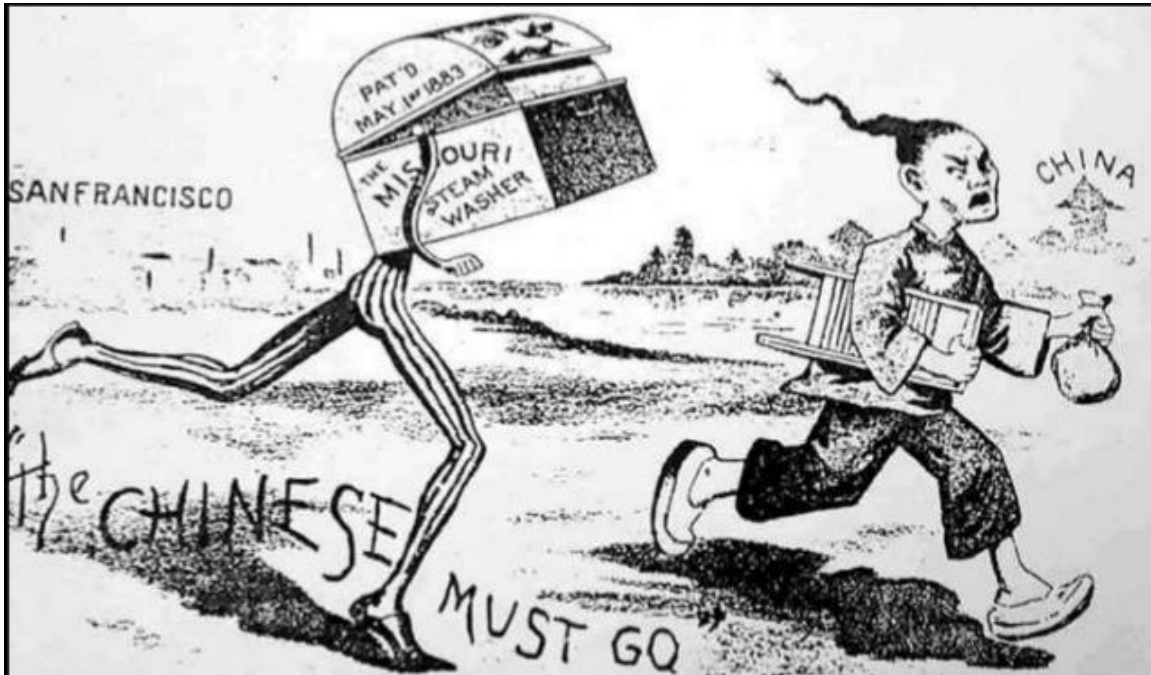


Anti-Chinese cartoon, from Harper's Weekly (7 August 1869), Thomas Nast:



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Anti-Chinese cartoon, from <https://chineselaundry.wordpress.com>:



Chinese Exclusion poster, from historicalimages.wordpress.com:

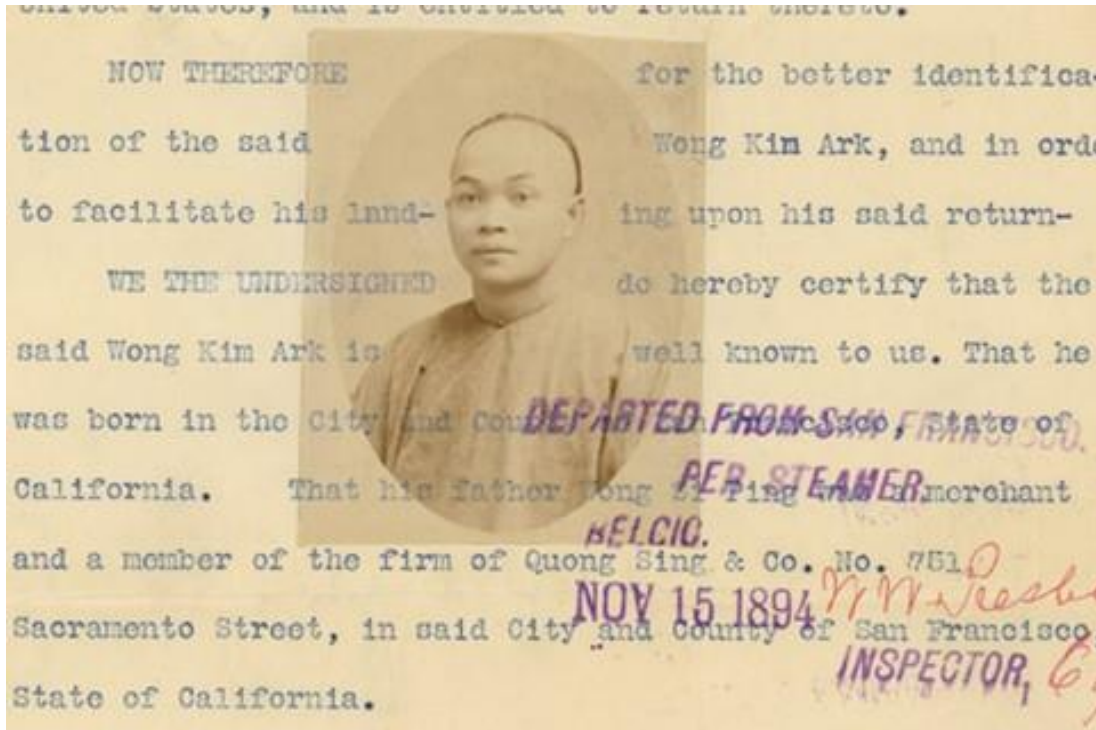


Rock Springs Massacre, WY (1885), from wyohistory.org:



LESSON FOUR: Resistance and Response: Fighting the Exclusion Act

Wong Kim Ark, from the U.S. National Archives:



Chinese Laundry (Prescott, AZ), from Chinese Laundries:



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The Chinese American, from firstchineseamerican.com:

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CHINESE AMERICAN.

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Wong Chin Foo, from firstchineseamerican.com:

