

# MODULE 1

## Orient-ing Ourselves: Asian Americans and Place-Making

**Grade level:** College

**Possible Subjects:** Ethnic Studies, Sociology, History, Humanities, English, Communications, Critical Thinking

### Module 1 Learning Objectives:

- Introduce the concept of orientalism and apply it to the representation of Asians/Asian Americans in the US
- Analyze the ways that racial/ethnic culture connects to physical spaces, such as dance halls and spas
- Research the history of local spaces associated with Asian American communities
- Evaluate one's strengths when working in groups

### DAY 1 LESSON PLAN

Topic: What Is Orientalism?

Objectives: Students learn the theoretical concept of "orientalism." They will also discuss how historic representations of "the orient" by Western authors and artists connect to contemporary examples of **orientalism**.

Activity	Detailed description
Warm-up discussion (Slide 4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Have students look up the root of the word "orientation"</li><li>• Highlight the term's connection to "the East"</li><li>• In small groups or in pairs students discuss "How does this connect to Asian American Studies?"</li><li>• Groups/pairs then share with the whole class</li></ul>
Introduction to "orientalism" (Slides 5-9)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students can read Edward Said's Introduction to <i>Orientalism</i> in preparation for class</li><li>• Highlight the quote from Said</li><li>• Pose this question for whole-class discussion: "what does it mean to say orientalism is a 'style of thought'?"</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unpack vocabulary terms: epistemological, ontological, and discourse (in Michel Foucault’s sense), being sure to connect to the main points that knowledge is power and that those who control what we can/can’t know are wielding immense power</li> <li>• Provide additional context on Said’s text</li> <li>• Using Said’s framework, understand how cultural representation is connected to systems of power</li> </ul>
<p>Group discussion (Slide 10)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students should know the difference between subject (one with agency, who <i>can act</i>) and object (one who is <i>acted upon</i>)</li> <li>• Highlight how Said was looking at European views of the Middle East</li> <li>• Then have students discuss in small groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How do people in the US today come to know about Asians and Asian Americans?</li> <li>○ What are some widespread cultural representations that inform how people think about Asian Americans?</li> <li>○ What are the limits to what people know about Asians and Asian Americans?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>This discussion will help make the concept of orientalism more relevant to the current time period and geographic location</p>
<p>Connecting knowledge, power, and place to Ethnic Studies (Slides 11-12)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review De Anza ASAM’s “Our Narrative” website</li> <li>• Highlight resources and events from the timeline, such as the connection to “epistemology” in the “Prologue” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Instructor can choose to highlight specific resources or events that are most relevant to their course</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Have students discuss as class or in small groups: How did De Anza College become a place for Ethnic Studies, or Asian American Studies more specifically?</li> </ul> <p>This discussion should help elucidate the ways that knowledge is connected to power and how physical spaces (in this case, educational institutions like De Anza) are shaped by social, cultural, political, and economic forces.</p>

## DAY 2 LESSON PLAN

Topic: Orienting toward Asian American Spaces

Objectives: Students apply their understanding of orientalism as a concept connecting race/ethnicity, physical space, and power dynamics. They will see case studies of Asian Americans defining, being defined by spaces like dance halls and massage parlors.

Activity	Detailed description
Recap (Slide 12)	Remind students of main takeaway from previous lesson: our knowledge about and representations of physical spaces are tied to power dynamics.
Video and discussion on Asian Americans and dance (Slides 13-14)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Students can read articles by Hotchkiss, Wong, and Taxin and Weber.</li><li>● In class: watch the short video embedded in the Hotchkiss reading</li><li>● In small groups, have students discuss the video, specifically: How did Asian Americans like Amit Patel reclaim dance for his cultural identity.</li><li>● Students should also link this video the other readings about the dance hall shootings, discussing the following questions:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ How did dance halls become associated with the Asian American community?</li><li>○ What role did dance halls play for the AA communities in Monterey Park?</li><li>○ What is the impact of violence in these culturally significant spaces?</li></ul></li></ul>
Video and discussion on the Atlanta spa shootings (Slides 15-17)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Students should read Uyehara and Choy readings before class</li><li>● Students can watch the PBS documentary “Rising Against Hate: One Day in March” before class or during class</li><li>● Students should discuss the first question. Important points to highlight:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Role of the Chinese Exclusion Act and the Page Act</li><li>○ The intersection of race and gender for Asian American women</li></ul></li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How the sexualization and fetishization of AA women can lead to violence</li> <li>● Students should then discuss the second question. Important points to highlight: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How power shapes the narratives that circulate about moments of violence, such as when the sheriff’s spokesperson said the shooter was “having a hard day.” Who gets humanized and who gets tokenized in narratives of violence against the Asian American community?</li> <li>○ The power of individual stories to counter harmful, dominant narratives</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>Connecting back to Lesson 1 and Said (Slide 18)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● In the interview, <i>On Orientalism</i>, which was conducted 20 years after the publication of <i>Orientalism</i>, Said elaborates on his ideas from the book, the impact <i>Orientalism</i> has had, and the ongoing struggles for peace in the Middle East.</li> <li>● Share the quote from Said and have students reflect on how stories can help us understand both ourselves and others.</li> </ul>

## DAY 3 LESSON PLAN

Topic: Introducing the “Taking Up Space” Project

Objectives: Explain the project as it connects to the previous discussions on orientalism and Asian American spaces. Have students determine the list of possible places to research and form project groups based on their individual interests and strengths.

Activity	Detailed description
Setting the foundation (Slides 20-23)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Highlight the project's guiding question: How do physical spaces connect to our knowledge and discourse about Asian American culture?<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ NOTE: Students may need a refresher on the term “discourse.”</li></ul></li><li>● Go over the required components for the project:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Research</li><li>○ Oral History</li><li>○ Narrative</li><li>○ Zine</li></ul></li><li>● Show samples of past student work to highlight the combination of research, writing, and design components required for the project</li></ul>
Show examples then brainstorm places for the project and form groups (Slides 24-29)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● In small groups or as a whole class, students should brainstorm and share: what are some spaces in your community that have been associated with Asian Americans?<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Share some possible places if they need help getting ideas</li><li>○ Write their ideas on the board</li></ul></li><li>● Once you have a good list, have students vote on which places they would be most interested in and able to research. **Be sure to note that they will have to find at least one person associated with that place who they can interview.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ The number of students in the class will help determine the number of groups and thus the number of places you decide to keep. Each group should have at least 6 students, so if you have a class of 50 students, you will have 8 groups (6 groups of 6, 2 groups of 7). If you have 8 groups, then keep the top 8 places from the ranked list.</li></ul></li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Once in groups, students should decide what role they want to take in the group. (See “Project Group Roles”)<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Tell students this requires some self-reflection and metacognition: what are their strengths and weaknesses when it comes to working in groups? In what ways do they contribute to group work? In what ways do they need to lean on others in group work?</li></ul></li></ul>
<p>Explain the written assessment (Slide 30)</p>	<p>Each group will need to conduct preliminary research on their assigned place and submit a minimum 2-page document that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Important facts about the place</li><li>● Ideas for at least 2-3 interviewees for the oral history and why they would be good to interview</li><li>● A list of preliminary questions for their interviewee</li><li>● Things students should note:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ When researching, keep track of sources in a reference list. Show APA guidelines for formatting references</li><li>○ When determining possible interviewees, think about who can tell the more personal or “lesser-told” story of the place.</li><li>○ When drafting possible interview questions, remember that the goal is to see how the space connects to the Asian American community. Their questions should encourage their interviewee to make those connections.</li></ul></li></ul>