

MODULE 3

Reclaiming Culture: Storytelling, Zines, and Alternative Media

Grade level: College

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

Module 3 Learning Objectives:

- Understand the history of Sa-I-Gu (aka the 1992 LA Uprising, aka the LA Riots) and its impact on the Asian American community
- Analyze the elements of effective storytelling, including visual representations
- Introduce the practice of zine-making
- Analyze the cultural significance of zines as a form of alternative media
- Introduce and apply concepts of visual analysis

DAY 1 LESSON PLAN

Topic: The Story of Sa-I-Gu

Objectives: This lesson will introduce the history of Sa-I-Gu, aka the 1992 L.A. uprising, aka the L.A. riots from the Korean-American perspective. Students will learn how the “model minority” myth persisted in the racialized violence that erupted in parts of Los Angeles during that time. Students will also compare/contrast reporting from the time period with later reporting that looks back on the historic event.

Activity	Detailed description
Warm-up discussion (Slide 4)	Students should read Chang and Krikorian (1992) and Constante (2017) before class. Have students discuss the following questions <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What role(s) did law enforcement play in the lead-up to and aftermath of Sa-I-Gu?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did racial/ethnic tensions between African Americans and Asian Americans contribute to the conflict? <p>Students should understand the complex role of law enforcement in enacting state violence against marginalized groups. Students can also connect back to ideas from the discussion of the model minority stereotype pitted Asian Americans against other racial/ethnic groups.</p>
<p>Different perspectives on Sa-I-Gu (Slides 5-7)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch the video clip from PBS (2020), “The 1992 L.A. Riots and Civil Unrest • Listen to Ice Cube’s (1991) “Black Korea” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Add context that N.W.A.’s (of which Ice Cube was a member) song “F*ck tha Police” (1989) became something of an anthem for the 1992 LA Uprising. • In groups or as a whole class, students should discuss: How do these two examples provide different perspectives on the causes of Sa-I-Gu? <p>Students should understand the role of music, especially rap/hip-hop songs like “F*ck tha Police” and “Black Korea” in sharing the experiences and emotions of marginalized African American communities. They can also situate the rising popularity of rap music within other social, cultural, political, and economic conditions that marginalized groups faced at the time. Finally,</p>
<p>Reflection and discussion activity (Slide 8-9)</p>	<p>The reflection portion can be done individually, in pairs, in small groups, or as a whole class. The discussion can happen in groups or as a whole class.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect: what is one contemporary example of racially/ethnically motivated civil unrest? • Discuss: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ As someone who lived through that period of unrest, discuss what your life was like before and after the period. What, if anything, changed? ○ Connecting it to the materials that look at Sa-I-Gu 25 years after, what would you want people 25 years from now to know about the period of unrest that you lived through? • Connect this reflection and discussion activity to the project

DAY 2 LESSON PLAN

Topic: Visual Culture and Reclaiming Representation

Objectives: Students will watch a film and engage with photo archives from the Sa-I-Gu time period. They will analyze forms of visual storytelling and apply these lessons to the creation of their own zine.

Activity	Detailed description
Film viewing and discussion (Slide 11)	<p>Watch Justin Chon's (2017) film <i>Gook</i>.</p> <p>Note: be sure to give a content advisory that the film contains upsetting scenes of racialized violence. It's preferable to watch the film in class as a group due to its sensitive nature and the possibility that students will want to process afterward.</p> <p>While watching students should note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How does the film represent the complicated relations between Asian Americans (specifically Korean American) and Black/African American communities in Los Angeles at the time.• What important lessons or themes do you see emerging in the film?• How does the visual aesthetic connect to those themes? <p>These questions can also be discussed after screening the film. Students can use some of the terms from Analyzing Fiction. When analyzing the film's visual aesthetics, some things to note include the use of black and white, the grainy texture, and repeated visual elements such as fire.</p>
Compare/contrast visual aesthetics (Slides 12-13)	<p>Review the archival photos of Sa-I-Gu by Hyungwon Kang, which are available on the UCLA Asian American Studies Center's website.</p> <p>Have students compare/contrast the visual components of these images with the aesthetics of Chon's film.</p> <p>In groups or as a whole class, students should discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How do the different visual representations impact you differently?

- How can you apply these insights to your own construction of visual narrative in the upcoming zine assignment?

The purpose of this exercise is not only to see how visual details contribute to the meaning of a story but also to get ideas for how to apply these insights about visual elements to their own zine projects.

DAY 3 LESSON PLAN

Topic: Race and Gender in Zine Culture

Objectives: Students will learn how zines have been used as a form of alternative media that counters the narratives promoted by mainstream media outlets. They will also be introduced to Riot Grrrl as a case study for race and gender in zine culture. For their final project, students will construct zines that capture the history they've learned through the oral history projects.

Activity	Detailed description
Warm-up discussion (Slide 15)	<p>Students should read Shania Khoo's (2021) "How to Make a Zine: Dreaming and Creating for a Better World" and Mimi Thi Nguyen's (2012) "Riot Grrrl, Race, and Revival."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To begin class, have students discuss: How do individuals use forms of alternative media to reclaim representation of Asian Americans?• Their answers do not have to be taken directly from the readings. It would be better to encourage them to think of contemporary examples.
Introduction to zines (Slides 16-17)	<p>Highlight the quote from Shania Khoo, particularly the importance of zines as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• "Noncommercial"• "Nonprofessional"• "Political education tools" <p>Highlight how zines differ from traditional, mainstream forms of publication and scholarship which can be inaccessible due to gatekeepers and paywalls.</p> <p>Also highlight the importance of zines' temporary nature, especially given their historical origin in the 1990's before the internet and social media became mainstream.</p>
Case study: Riot Grrrl (Slides 18-20)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduce the origin of Riot Grrrl within the punk scene, the role of feminism, and the importance of zines• Discuss: If feminism is understood as a movement to dismantle patriarchal systems of dominance, how does the sharing of personal stories through alternative media

	<p>like zines disrupt patriarchal power and knowledge structures?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Riot Grrrl as a radical politics of intimacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Students should first unpack how they understand “intimacy” in today’s context ○ Then highlight the two quotes from Nguyen (2012) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What is the role of girl love? How can girl love be a form of feminism that challenges the patriarchy? ▪ How is this girl love represented aesthetically in zines? What different kinds of connection happen through the creation and sharing of zines?
<p>Aesthetics then and now (Slides 21-22)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlight the quote from Lisa Darms and see how her description is supported by examples from the POC Zine Project and Riot Grrrl archive <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Have students briefly describe what DIY culture signifies and/or looks like to them • After reviewing the zine archives, have students discuss: What does the DIY aesthetic signify about intimacy and authenticity, especially in today's age of photoshop and AI-generated deepfakes? <p>This discussion should help bring the historical differences into better relief. For example, the hand-made nature of zines in the 1990s might mean something different in the 2025 context.</p>
<p>Contested histories of race and gender (Slides 23-24)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summarize Nguyen’s (2012) argument that mainstream histories of Riot Grrrl serve to marginalize the experiences of women of color in the movement • Highlight her quote about the ways that women of color were tasked to be both token (“you are here as an example”) and teacher (“teach us about your people”). <p>Final discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do race and gender intersect to create a more complex narrative of zine culture and history? • How can zines reclaim knowledge about and representations of Asian Americans. <p>Students are encouraged to connect to Module 1 which introduced the concept of <i>orientalism</i> and how orientalism shaped what knowledge and representations of Asians.</p>
<p>Module 3 assessment</p>	<p>Explain the two required components for this final module: the narrative and the zine.</p>