

## Assignment 1: Representing Asian/Americans

How have Asians or Asian Americans been portrayed in the Western popular imagination: in popular film, literature, television, or news media? In this 4-5 page essay, you will draw on our theoretical and historical texts to explore a particular representation or set of representations (e.g., Orientalism, the model minority, nineteenth-century anti-Chinese rhetoric, masculinity/femininity, tiger mothers). What is this trope? What is its history? How does it represent or misrepresent real issues? The goal of this assignment is to allow you practice in engaging with the work of others, learning to make fair, generous, and assertive use of others' arguments. With this in mind, your task is both to come to terms with another's work and to forward it by applying and assessing it against your own experience or a text of your choice. For example, you might choose to:

- Show how Sui Sin Far's experiences as a mixed-race Chinese American were affected by nineteenth-century Orientalism and/or anti-immigrant rhetoric.
- Describe your own experience with the "model minority" stereotype, then go on to define this stereotype, its origins, and whose experiences it leaves out.
- Trace the origins of the "model minority," then discuss why most Asian American scholars object to this stereotype, using data from [aapidata.org](http://aapidata.org) or the experiences of Jose Antonio Vargas or Ju Hong.
- Draw on Mira Jacob's memoir *Good Talk* to discuss how Orientalism has manifested since 9/11, especially for South Asian and Middle Eastern Americans.
- Explore how historical ideas about Chinatowns and disease have informed anti-Asian rhetoric and violence during the ongoing pandemic.
- Discuss erin Khuê Ninh's ideas about "passing for perfect" and how external or internal identification with a narrowly-defined success frame creates pressure for Asians and Asian Americans.
- Engage with an outside text (e.g., film, TV series) that resists or complicates representations of Asian masculinity or femininity as described in *Slaying the Dragon*. For example, you could watch the Marvel movie *Shang-Chi* and analyze it with respect to the stereotypes presented in the documentary.

Your final product should be 4-5 pages, double-spaced, submitted in MS Word format (.doc or .docx). You should use MLA citation style and include a Works Cited page. **You are welcome to and encouraged to use any part of your own posts in Discussions.**

Tips for a successful assignment:

- Be sure to **clearly define** a trope or set of tropes (i.e., what is Orientalism? What is the model minority?), citing the sources we have used in class. You are not expected to engage in outside research for this assignment.
- You should apply this idea to **a text or real-life experience** in a way that deepens our understanding of the trope, text, or experience. This could work either way—a text (or your experience) could help us better understand the consequences of an idea like the “model minority,” or the idea could better help us understand why the text or experience was problematic. In other words, you could start with the idea or start with the text. However, either way a reader should feel that your essay has added to the conversation.