

University of Massachusetts Boston Asian American Studies Program



AsAmSt 398 Applied Research in Asian American Studies media drama, May 2010

Graduation Celebration 2009-2010

26 May 2010

Asian American Studies Program Affiliated Faculty (expected for Fall 2010)

Ping-Ann Addo, Assistant Professor, Anthropology

Michael Ahn, Assistant Professor, Public Policy & Public Affairs

Kiran Kaur Arora, Assistant Professor, Counseling & School Psychology, Graduate College of Education

Pratyush Bharati, Associate Professor, Management Science and Information Systems, College of Management

James Dien Bui, Instructor, Asian American Studies

Connie Chan, Professor and Chair, Dept of Public Policy and Public Affairs

Elora Chowdhury, Assistant Professor, Women's Studies

Patrick Clarkin, Assistant Professor, Anthropology

Xiaogang Deng, Associate Professor, Sociology

Christopher S. Fung, Instructor, Anthropology and Asian American Studies

Charisse Gulosino, Assistant Professor, Leadership in Education, Graduate College of Education

Richard Hung, Associate Professor, Human Services, College of Public & Community Service

Eunsook Hyun, Professor, Graduate College of Education, and Associate Provost for International and Transnational Affairs

Jon Iftikar, Instructor, Asian American Studies

Kiran Kaur Arora, Assistant Professor, Counseling & School Psychology, Graduate College of Education

Sari Kawana, Assistant Professor, Modern Languages

Peter Kiang, Professor, Graduate College of Education and Director, Asian American Studies

Marlene Kim, Associate Professor, Economics

Suji Kwock Kim, Assistant Professor, English

Hae-ok Lee, Associate Professor, College of Nursing & Health Sciences

Andrew Leong, Associate Professor, College of Public & Community Service

Giles Li, instructor, Asian American Studies

Raymond Liu, Associate Professor, Marketing, College of Management

Lusa Lo, Assistant Professor, Curriculum & Instruction, Graduate College of Education

Samuel Museus, Assistant Professor, Leadership in Education, Graduate College of Education

Patricia Nakamoto Neilson, Director, Center for Collaborative Education, College of Management

Jin Ho Park, Assistant Professor, Psychology

Rajini Srikanth, Associate Professor, English; Director, Honors Program; and Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs

Lakshmi Srinivas, Assistant Professor, Sociology

Karen Suyemoto, Associate Professor, Psychology and Asian American Studies

Shirley Tang, Associate Professor, American Studies and Asian American Studies

John Tawa, Instructor, Asian American Studies and Psychology

Paul Watanabe, Associate Professor, Political Science and Director, Institute for Asian American Studies

Wenfang Yan, Professor and Chair, Graduate College of Education, Department of Leadership in Education

Zong-guo Xia, Professor, Environmental, Earth & Ocean Sciences, and Vice Provost for Research & Strategic Initiatives

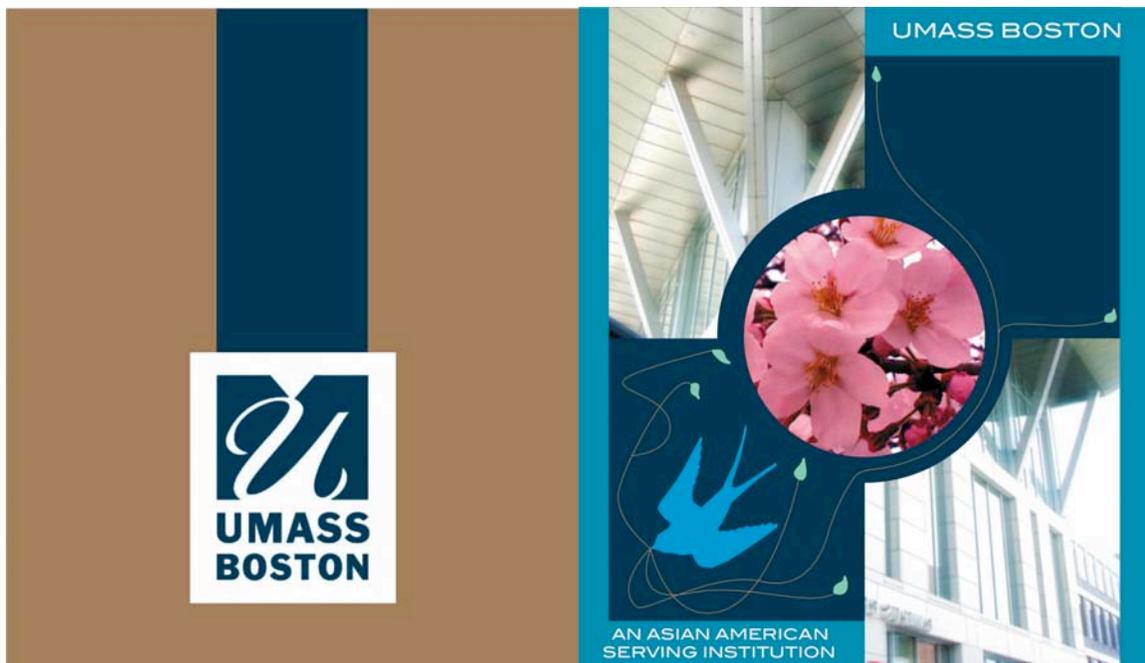
The Program

UMass Boston's Asian American Studies Program offers culturally-responsive instruction in the classroom with holistic practices of mentoring, community-building, service-learning, and advocacy to address the social and academic needs of students as well as the critical capacity-building needs of local Asian American communities. The program offers the most Asian American Studies courses, faculty, and community linkages of any university in New England. The program's alumni include teachers, social workers, health care providers, business entrepreneurs, and leaders of local Asian American community organizations. By grounding our curriculum, teaching, and applied research in the realities of local Asian American communities and by respecting the knowledge and bilingual/bicultural skills that many UMass Boston students bring to the classroom, the AsAmSt Program creates powerful learning environments for all students to gain critical understanding about the historical experiences, voices, contemporary issues, and contributions of diverse Asian populations in the U.S. Graduate students from any area who have Asian American Studies interests can serve as teaching/research assistants, mentors to undergraduates, and special project developers for the program. High school students in UMass Boston's pre-collegiate programs such as Urban Scholars and those involved with the Coalition for Asian Pacific American Youth (CAPAY) are encouraged to take advantage of the program's learning opportunities. Community members and organizations as well as alumni participate in our activities in short- and long-term ways.

Celebrating our 2009-2010 Graduates in Asian American Studies

From Fall 2009 and Spring 2010, we are proud to recognize five outstanding AsAmSt program-of-study undergraduate students — Edson Brian Bueno, Vu Minh Dao, Pratna Kem, Soning Lau, and Diane Nguyen — along with two M.Ed. graduate student teaching/research assistants — Songkhla Thi Nguyen and Jessica Ngoc Tran and two doctoral students who also served as AsAmSt instructors/researchers, Nancy J. Lin and Phuong T. Nguyen. Their accomplishments have been extraordinary, and we know their future contributions will be even more impressive.

Several other undergraduate students who have taken multiple Asian American Studies courses, though not enough to count for the formal six-course program-of-study, are also graduating, including Toai Dang, Phuc Ho, Lan Nguyen, Luci Nguyen, Kwokin Ou, Lauren Quach, Chi Tran, and My Van. We congratulate them and others not mentioned here, together with Thao Xuan Do who is representing the 2010 graduating class at UMB's June 4th official commencement ceremonies.



graphic design by Quyên Nguyen & Jason Tía, May 2010

Program-of-Study in Asian American Studies

Edson Brian Bueno



Before taking part in Asian American Studies, I identified my background as Filipino Canadian. After learning about my shared experiences of people of color, I began to identify with Asian American/Canadian. Then, one of Karen Suyemoto's classes enlightened me by learning about the intersections of identity. I feel comfortable identifying as a transnational Asian American/Canadian and Filipino mixed with Chinese and Spanish ancestry. So, my identity is more complex than just checking off one box I'm forced to choose.

I was hesitant at first—with adding Asian American Studies—because it would add a year of extra studying to my undergraduate career. But shortly after entering my second Asian American Studies class, I realized that these classes were vital to my future success— as a person of color—because it equipped me with the tools to navigate out of oppressive spaces/environments. For example, these classes empowered me with the consciousness to scrutinize situations in which people are subordinated based on their identified race, gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. Another component of Asian American Studies that was a conscious raising component of each class was the power of community activism and applied knowledge in reaching out to the community.

How my involvement impacted me was two-fold: identity and future plans for community involvement. The identity piece I think I explained above, but the future plans to connect with Asian American youth piece is also important to me because it's a way I can share the experiences that empowered me. For instance, photography is one of my hobbies that has connected me to other Asian American artists, and creates spaces where conversations about our identities happen often. So, the artistic community is definitely a place where I can exercise the tools and language Asian American Studies has equipped me with to empower fellow Asian American artists.

Vu Minh Dao

I am 25 years old. My major is Biology. I came to the United States when I was 17 years old. I graduated from Excel High School in 2005. I am Vietnamese American. I grew up in a diverse family, my father was born in North Vietnam, my mother was born in Central Vietnam, I was born in Hue (Central Vietnam), but I grew up in Sai Gon (South Vietnam). This background helps me understand more about Vietnamese culture, people, social conflict, social hierarchy, etc.

Before I became involved with Asian American Studies, I always thought I knew everything about Asian American people's issues. However, when I took the course "Asian in the United States," I realized that I knew nothing about Asian American people in the U.S. Therefore, I decided to take more courses in Asian American Studies to learn and contribute more with the Asian American Studies Program at UMass Boston.



I always want to serve this country and community where I am living. Therefore, educating myself is the most important thing I can do. Through Asian American Studies, I have more chances to get involved, understand the issues, conflicts, and struggles of my community and also other immigrant communities so that I may be able to serve and contribute.

Pratna Kem

I am second generation Cambodian American, graduating with a bachelor's degree in English. I hope to one day teach high school.

I got into Asian American Studies because I felt that it was important for me to learn about a history I knew existed, but that was not often talked about. During my time here at UMass Boston, I started discovering and exploring more literature and media production by Asian Americans—both of which I found important to providing a counter-story to mainstream ideas and beliefs. Asian American Studies was important to me because it provided a space for me to explore what it meant to be Asian American and why my experiences, and those of my peers, mattered.



Having gained so much from Asian American Studies courses, I feel that I should give back. I want to teach high school English in the Cambodian American community. The Cambodian American community faces a lot of problems and I hope that by teaching, I can be more in touch with the youth and provide them with the guidance and support they might not be receiving elsewhere. I am fortunate enough to have parents who sacrificed everything for me, and I am also fortunate enough to know that not everyone has had those same advantages. I want to be able to help those in situations I could have easily been in myself.

Soning Lau



I am a Chinese American undergraduate student at UMass Boston, majoring in Psychology. I am the first person to obtain a bachelor's degree in my family. It is not an easy accomplishment for an ESL immigrant but I have finally achieved this goal.

I've been in the US for almost ten years; however, I didn't know any Asian American issues until I took a few Asian American Studies classes here. I was surprised by most Asian American Studies professors' teaching enthusiasm, people's personal story-sharing, and sometimes different guest speakers who were invited to offer a lecture in class. These experiences hardly ever happen in other subject areas; none of my psychology courses, at least. Besides that, Asian American Studies classes actually increase my awareness in a way to pay more attention toward the issues of Asian Americans in the US. Since then, I started to join different activities in school. For example, I attended to an event of digital stories sharing offered by Professor Shirley Tang, who is teaching Asian American Media Literacy (AsAmSt 370) in the spring of 2010. The event was great because Asian American people usually would have hard time to share in public; but, the event was set in the right time to give

a space for them to express some personal but emotional stories. I was touched by the work students have contributed in that class. Furthermore, I realized that showing an appreciation means offering support for people who decide to step forward to make a try.

For my future plans, I want to apply for a master's degree in school psychology at UMass Boston. I just found out there are only three international Asian students who are currently enrolled in that program. It is uncertain whether or not the program has covered Asian Americans in the textbooks and class materials. But, it will be fantastic to have more Asian American professionals to get into the field of psychology because they already have the cultural knowledge as a backup/support to provide help in communities, schools, or clinics, etc. Apparently, this is a significant privilege in a way to reduce misunderstandings, especially for the people who speak not only English but other languages as well; more importantly, it could enhance the quality of a professional service in the unseen minority ethnic populations.

Diane Nguyen

I was born in the Philippines, but raised in America since I was two. My parents are both Vietnamese; therefore, I'm fluently speaking English and Vietnamese. Right now I live with my family in Dorchester, Massachusetts. I grew up loving to value my culture and traditions. However I wished I could also know how to speak Tagalog so I can come back to the Philippines to learn more about my birth place.

I decided to focus on Asian American Studies because it assisted me in digging further into my own identity. Somehow, along the way, I also discovered that not only my identity is explored, but others' identities and racial theories are taught to me. Each course has brought me to want to take another course because in a special way, they all connect to one another. Not to brag, but I feel good about myself, because I got a deeper understanding of what race, culture, identity, and voice I belong to. I've been involved in many student activities at UMass Boston, such as the Asian Student Center, VSA (Vietnamese Student Association), and Filipino Club. These courses and student activities helped me understand and value each individual's culture, while also encouraging members to get involved with outreach to bring awareness to others.

Asian American Studies will be useful to me in the future because I plan to stay involved in Asian American communities and with work related to Asian Americans.



It may not be soon, but I know my learning will not go to waste. I am taking advantage of this because not all universities provide students with Asian American courses. Therefore, I will try my best to spread the word about what I've learned. UMass Boston has so many great Asian American Professors; they've changed so many students' and faculties' lives.

Graduate Student Teaching/Research Assistants

Jessica Ngoc Tran, M.Ed.



I came from a very supportive family for which I am very thankful. Both of my parents were not only supportive in my schooling but also positive in the decisions that I have made and done. I have been working for many nonprofit organizations before I enrolled in college. I enjoy working with diverse populations. Not only do I get to learn about their heritages, but at the same time, I share my own knowledge about my history and traditions.

I started college in 2002. I began taking Asian American Studies courses in my sophomore year. I got very interested after taking the first course; I believe it was called Asian Minorities in America (now Asians in the US). I was beginning to understand more about my own culture and other Asian cultures as well. Before that, most of my cultural knowledge was passed down from my parents' experience and stories. Having relevant knowledge from my classes has helped me with my work in the community.

Because of what I have learned from Asian American Studies, I was able to appreciate my background more and will continue working with diverse populations in the community. Learning about different cultures will always be an ongoing process, but I am glad to have already started with my own culture.

For that I am grateful for the Asian American Studies Program. Hopefully, the next generations will contribute more courses to the program and cherish it as much as I did.

Songkhla Thi Nguyen



Songkhla T. Nguyen was born in Songkhla, Thailand to the parents of Ton Thi Nam and Nguyen Van Tay. She grew up in Rockland Massachusetts. Songkhla has earned a BS in Biology from the University of Massachusetts, Boston. She continued her education and completed a Master's in Education with Teacher Licensure in 2010...

As a child, I told myself: "once I am out of school, I am never coming back". I dreaded school, I hated class. I was never going to become a teacher; I knew that since day one in middle school. I was never a bad student; a struggling student, maybe, but not bad. I excelled in school, passed all my classes and was the angel sitting in the corner always doing what I was told. I fulfilled my job as a student. That's all I cared for, myself. I graduated high school and never looked back as I moved onto college.

It was college that changed my perspective about the importance of education. Through the Asian American Studies Program, I realized that education wasn't just one person's issue, but it influenced many things on a grander scale. Education benefits not just one person's life but the ecology of everyone and everything around us. People can show you the wonders in life, but it isn't yours until you've earned it; once earned, no one can take it away from you.

That is why I became an educator, to share the wealth of knowledge that I have obtained with the world around me, giving the asset of knowledge to every person I can influence.

Like many others, I entered college feeling lost. I didn't know what to do or where I was heading. I went through three years of undergraduate course work not knowing what my career choice was. By junior year, I declared as a Biology major because I love learning and using science. I had already taken so many Biology courses out of interest that I was nearly done with my program requirements. My hopes were to apply to medical school after my bachelors. My last year before graduation, though, I registered for an Asian American Studies course out of curiosity; that was the decision that changed my life.

During my senior year in the Biology program, I worked full time for a year as a student intern at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center performing neurology research work. I completed my last year of undergraduate work and concluded, research was not for me. What do I do now, I asked myself. I have a biology degree and opportunities for work that I am not passionate about. During my last year of completing my requirements to obtain my Bachelors in Science I was also taking Asian American Studies courses as electives out of interest. It was those electives that pointed me in the direction where I am today.

Asian American Studies taught me far beyond my expectations. In that one year I took Asian American Studies I learned and understood more about myself and the society that I am surrounded in compared to the past 22 years of life experiences I had. I started to see the injustices of color, the inequality of opportunities due to social economics and the barriers to success due the lack of language acquisition. I was selfish and so self-contained, I forgot that life co-exists with the people and society that we are surrounded by. Asian American Studies helped me figure out that education should not only be part of my own life but rather a great asset that I have attained and should use beyond academics.

I always viewed my academic education as a separate component of my life; it was just something I had to do. I always saw it as a stepping stone to better my own life, to get to a different stage. Beyond personal impacts, I didn't realize the influences it made in our communities and society. Asian American Studies helped me remove my narrow lens of education. It framed education not just as a personal issue, but as a way to influence many larger issues, and helped me understand how education plays an important role in social justice. This new outlook made me want to be an educator, to share the wealth of knowledge that I have obtained through my formal education and personal experiences. I don't want to just offer knowledge to urban youth, but to give them the tools to exert their influences in their communities, the way that Asian American Studies has inspired and helped me.

Dr. Peter Kiang is one of the professors in the Asian American Studies Program who influenced my views of education and visions for the future. Peter taught me so many things I wouldn't have learned on my own, he was my guide to find my passion. Being Asian American didn't teach me where I fit in this society or what to make of it; Asian American Studies taught me that. After taking classes with Peter, I realized that education wasn't just the attainment of academic knowledge but rather how to use it efficiently beyond the classroom walls. Peter assigned many service learning projects as well as taught with the grace of letting students learn to the best of their development. He let students optimize their zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 2005). Peter knew me as a student and as a person; he knew my skills and abilities, strengths and weaknesses, as well as my goals and passion. Peter suggested that I continue with graduate studies in Education. I looked at Peter in doubt, questioning him, "I can teach?" "Of course you can," he replied. This was the first instance when anyone ever told me teaching could be a career choice. Growing up, I did not have any role models who reflected this; I didn't see any educators who looked like me or understood what I was trying to articulate, who understood where my family came from, etc. I was never told that there were Asian American educators, much less any who were Vietnamese American. More than that, though, Peter explained the needs for Asian American teachers; then, it all made the sense to me. Suddenly, I clearly understood my place in this society, I understood why things were the way they were, and because of that, I decided to further my education, to improve education.

Five years ago, I wasn't certain what my goals and aspirations were, but today I can confidently claim: I am an educator. I am serious and passionate about my work; I seek ways to improve my teaching and pedagogy for the betterment of students. Asian American Studies along with my Teacher Education training program has prepared me to do so. I will always be working on bettering my skills and abilities to become a more qualified teacher. I teach to circulate knowledge, influence positive actions, and increase social justice.

I thank Asian American Studies for providing me the opportunity to do so!

Doctoral Student Instructors/Researchers

Nancy J. Lin, Ph. D.

I was born in Taiwan to a Taiwanese father born in Japan and a Chinese mother born in Dongbei Province. We moved to Japan at a young age, later immigrating permanently to the U.S. I consider myself Taiwanese American.



I specifically came to UMass Boston for graduate school in order to better understand and work with the Cambodian American community living in and around Boston. Few clinical psychology programs in the country offer its students support to connect with ethnic communities who are underserved and often misunderstood. When I met with Drs. Karen Suyemoto, Peter Kiang, Shirley Tang, and Pat Neilson, I knew I had found a learning environment where I would have strong allies to help me really learn what it means to be both a psychologist and an advocate for underserved Asian American communities. I came to UMass Boston because I wanted to surround myself with others who had figured out how to

integrate advocacy for Asian American issues into their academic work and personal commitments. I learned that education is not just about taking it all in but also giving back and seeing those relationships grow and feed you. Thanks to my teachers and many other role models at UMass Boston, I am now constantly asking the question, “How can I integrate issues of culture and social justice into this?” whenever I am faced with a new job or environment.

My future plans are to continue to help build bridges between groups who perhaps do not yet see how they may be connected. For instance, I spent the past two years providing psychological treatment for Veterans now living in San Diego, CA, who have been deeply affected by their experiences of combat. When I really got to know the individuals who served in the Armed Forces, I found myself marveling at how similar many of the issues faced by them are to people who have experienced traumatic immigrant and refugee experiences; in fact, many Veterans with whom I worked had both military and immigrant/refugee family legacies. From their identities and coping strategies developed in war, to the lack of access to education and job opportunities, it became clear that two groups that had originally been separate in my mind were becoming much more relatable. Hence, my hope is to continue to use these insights to develop services and conduct research that will be effective in helping people suffering from loss and trauma by paying attention to the similarities across groups as well as the specific cultural and individual understandings of each survivor. My goal is also to mentor future generations of psychologists and others in the helping professions to have the awareness, knowledge, and skills to work with an increasingly diverse and complex world where people occupy multiple categories and spaces.

Phuong T. Nguyen, Ph.D.

I see myself as a Vietnamese American refugee. I was born in Kien Giang Province, a coastal province on the southern most edge of Vietnam, a few months after the fall of Sai Gon. My family (mother, father, & older brother) and I fled Viet Nam by boat when I was two years old. After spending eight months in a refugee camp in Malaysia, my family and I were sponsored by a Christian organization in Nebraska to come to the United States. My younger brother was born in Nebraska a few months after we arrived. My family and I spent a couple of years living in Nebraska, a few more in Louisiana, but we spent most of my childhood living in different parts of Texas. After many years of moving around, we finally settled in Houston where my family is today. I consider myself a Texan at heart.

I was initially introduced to Peter Kiang and the AsAmSt Program during my first year at UMass Boston through Prof. Karen Suyemoto. I came to UMass Boston to work with Karen because of her strong interest in better understanding the psychological experiences of Asian Americans. I too had a strong interest in better understanding the mental health issues that Asians/Asian Americans experience, especially the experiences of Vietnamese and Vietnamese Americans. So naturally, Karen felt it was important to connect me with Peter and the AsAmSt Program. I was immediately struck by how committed and involved the program was, not only with its students, but also with the Asian communities in the greater Boston area. Through Peter I was able to establish connections with people in the community who shared similar clinical and personal interests as me. In particular, I was able to develop better understandings of the resiliency and struggles that members of the Vietnamese community experienced.



On a more personal note, through its students, faculty, and courses, the AsAmSt Program provided me a safe space and a community where I was free to explore my racial and ethnic identity. I think it fostered my growth and understanding in who I was and the kind of person I wanted to be. I was able to take courses that were personally meaningful to me, but I was also able to teach courses that I felt were important for students. It was through the AsAmSt

Program that these kinds of interpersonal interactions and personal moments were possible, and I feel very fortunate to have been able to experience them.

In moving forward, it is hard to imagine living my life without thinking about the lessons I've learned and the connections that I've made through the AsAmSt Program. Till this day I still hear Karen's voice in my head about particular issues and the meanings and implications of my choices and decisions. I'm constantly reminded of the hard work and commitment that Peter has made to making the university, community, and world a better place for disenfranchised and disempowered folks. I'm honored to have been a part of such an amazing program and will greatly miss all of the students and teachers that make it what it is.

My hope is that when I arrive at my new position in Houston, I will be able to connect with other like-minded individuals. But if I don't, I will not lose heart because I've learned that even one person armed with knowledge, experience, and ambition can make a world of difference. I only need to think about the folks I've met through the AsAmSt Program at UMass Boston for proof of that.

2010 John F. Kennedy Award Recipient — Thao Xuan Do

Thao Xuan Do, a Chemistry major and Honors Program member, is receiving UMass Boston's highest award for student academic achievement and civic engagement. As the John F. Kennedy Award recipient, Thao will serve as the student speaker -- representing the class of 2010 -- at UMB's Commencement on June 4th.

During her first semester at UMass Boston in Fall 2006, Thao took AsAmSt 200 Intro to Asian American Studies. In her final reflection at the end of the semester, she wrote:

"When I look at the list of requirement for general education at UMass, I tried to pick out the courses which are easy to get "A". But after taking this "Introduction to Asian American" course, my choices were changed. My priority when looking for a course is that course will help me gain knowledge about my community, help me identify myself, and further more it will help me make the most distribution to the community. The course is over but the lessons I had learned will never be old. They will be always fresh and improved everyday when I used it in my own life. I won't afraid to fight for my right, I won't afraid to let my voice be heard even I speak "broken English". After the course, I had more confidence in what I intend to do which is take my summer to be volunteer AIDS education in Vietnam. I also can be a volunteer working in Louisiana helping Vietnamese American rebuild after Katrina. So many things I wanted to do before, I can do it now..."



The Asian American Studies Program congratulates Thao for her outstanding achievements and we are proud to have been part of her education at UMass Boston.

As part of that same Fall 2006 AsAmSt 200 concluding reflection memo, Thao also composed the following letter to then-Chancellor Michael Collins. With her permission, we thank Thao for sharing her voice with us:

Friday December 15, 2006

Dear Dr. Michael Collins, Chancellor of UMass Boston

My name is Thao Xuan Do. I'm a transfer student from Vietnam, and this is my first semester at UMass Boston. This semester has been a very good experience for me. I had a chance to learn from many great teachers with very exciting subjects. Among those, AsAmSt 200 (Introduction to Asian American Studies) stood out and had a large distribution on my first semester experiences.

"How can you keep what you had learned in your mind?" I had seen this question in a forum couple years ago. And at that time I answered: "You just need to practice the lesson a lot by doing as much exercises as possible". A week ago, when I wrote the research memo for the classroom observation, I had a different answer: "You need to involve in the lesson". And now when I'm writing this letter, the answer once again has been changed: "In order to turn the information which was given by the professor into your own knowledge, first you must involve into the lesson, be part of it, and second you must practice what you had learned." I would never be able to say this if I didn't take Asian American Studies. It's an interesting class for me not because I'm an Asian, and it would be easier for me to study about my ethnicity. In fact, in this class, I have to see what I don't want to see; I have to face what I was always afraid to talk or think about; I have to hear the dark side of the story which I was always ignore. And I was very lucky to have a professor who was very much was described by Einstein. As he said: "I never teach my pupils; I only attempt to provide the conditions in which they can learn".

The first day of class, we were doing the small quiz, explaining every word in the name of the course. It wasn't difficult to explain those words but it was difficult to get the explanation out on paper right. And that was our first lesson; we consider ourselves as Asian American but how much do we understand about that word or thinking larger, how much are we concerned about Asian American community? Those questions were like the arrows that stroke very hard into my heart. I was like being woken up after a long sleep. I was like the blind that had

his sight back. I started to ask myself the questions which I thought is not important before. Where do I stand in the Asian American community? What can I do to improve our community? I have never missed a meeting of this class because those questions always haunted me. Each day of this class gave me a new possible answer for the questions. I remember my elementary teacher used to tell me that each person is like a living book. To gain knowledge, we not only learn from the textbook but we must also learn from other people. With this Asian American Studies class, I had a chance to learn from my classmates which I had always thought very hard to do. Some personality and behavior stereotype assert that Asian American students are "quite". This statement was proved to be wrong because in this class where majority is Asian, it's the students who do the talking. We talked about ourselves, our experiences as being Asian American, our problem. Everybody listened, commented and asked questions. The professor had created a friendly environment for us to open up and share our stories: we sit as a big circle. No matter who you are- black, white, American born Asians, immigrants or international students- no matter how fluently you speak English, your voice was heard, your problems were concerned. Assignment for this class is not something that challenge students, but instead it pushes students to think hard, "to get out of their comfort zone" to get the exercises done. The assignment does not fix in a particular type, it can be writing an essay, a reflection memo. It can be a project which requires you to go out and interview somebody or design a foam core board. These projects require a lot of effort combine with personal experiences. My sister asked me: "You are Chemistry Major, but still, why do you spend a lot of time in the projects for this class which belongs to Liberal Art?" Yes, I'm Sciences Major, but I would be a useless person even when I become an expert in my field if I don't know anything about what happen around me. And I think that's the reason why either you are Sciences Major or Liberal Art Major; there are certain required courses which the students need to take.

Did the course reach my expectation? Yes, I'd learned more than what I expected. The semester is over, but it doesn't mean I won't continue to learn about Asian American. Because it's "Introduction to Asian American Studies", the course introduced me to the field of Asian American, opened many opportunities to apply what I had learn to real life, around my neighborhood, my community. Now, I understand what I could do to improve my community. I had learned how much rights, voice and spaces affected people's life. The most meaningful assignment of this course to me is designing a foam core board about what you had learned in this class about Rights, Spaces and Voices. This project gave me a chance to think hard and look back the experiences I had with this class. I went through all the reading about Asian American and faced many hurtful situation in which Asian was discriminated, harassed, prejudiced, marginalize. I was so angry about the way Asian Americans were treated. So I decided to design my foam board as two parts: the fact and what we should do. But as I read

through several essays of Frederick Douglass, James Thomas Jackson and Richard Wright, I realized that I didn't look at the problem from two sides. Nothing ever comes without people go after it. If you want to have your Rights, Voice and Spaces, you need to fight for them. I asked myself: "Did Asian American really fight for them?" And I changed my theme to "American is the place you can have your rights, voice and space, but you have to be in action!!" The second thing I like about this project is everybody's foam boards were mounted on the wall. Together all the students in this class make a big picture, a perfect picture. This picture is our voice to everybody about Asian American: what are their problems, their strengths and weaknesses and it also our hope, a hope about a better world where everybody will be treated equally. The foam boards were put together delivered a strong message: "Together we can!" The only regret I have is the location where all the foam boards were mounted. If they were put at another place where students go by every day, the meaning of them will be multiplied many times.

From the class I had learned many things but I also grew up a lot. I'm not a shy person anymore but instead a strong person who is not afraid of challenge. I have become a person who knows her position, her role in community. Every student in this class has different experiences and has different lessons for himself. The class also slowly transformed me: from a person who was lost, I was helped to find my own way. Thanks to my professor who had created a wonderful opportunity for me and my classmate to discover ourselves, to wake up the sleeping part in my soul. He is my best teacher because it's very hard to provide twenty-five different lessons to twenty-five different person!

One of three essay questions for undergraduate admission essay is "What does the phrase 'university community' mean to you? How would your background and experience help contribute to the UMass Boston community?" I think this course should be included in the requirement in the first semester for freshman and transfer especially Asian students because this course is the place where you can learn the real meaning of the word "community".

At the end of this letter, I wish you all the luck and health.

Sincerely,
Thao Xuan Do

Thank you to our graduates for their reflections, voices, and visions.

and thank you to retiring Professor Esther Yae Iwanaga for *Bold Words* and many years of dedicated AsAmSt teaching



The Asian American Studies Program also recognizes with appreciation:

- our AsAmSt undergraduate students who received awards in 2009-2010, including: Richard Sann, recipient of the second annual 2009 Grace Paley Award from the William Joiner Center; Ray Chiu, Soning Lau, Yan Hua Liang, Richard Sann, and Matt Seto who each received support for their community service commitments in Boston Chinatown; Linda Nguyen who was awarded the Mary Doyle Curran Poetry Scholarship Prize; Linda Cheng and Kevin Tan who received study-travel awards from UMB's Office of International & Transnational Affairs for their collaborative service learning project with affiliated faculty Haeok Lee in Cambodia.
- former CAPAY youth Molly Higgins who served as a 2009-2010 Transmission Project VISTA Member working with Tri Quach and CAPAY, and who has renewed her service commitment with VISTA support for one additional year through 2010-2011; CIRCLE director and UMB student advisor Elaine Ward who completed her Ed.D.
- Affiliated faculty and IAAS director Paul Watanabe who led the Fall 2009 study travel trip to Manzanar with colleagues Karen Suyemoto and Shirley Tang, and students Frances Chow, Laura Ng, and Charlie Vo; affiliated faculty Elora Chowdhury and Rajini Srikanth who, with Leila Farsakh, completed the new video, "Islamic Feminisms" funded by the Ford Foundation and featuring many UMass Boston students;
- Affiliated faculty who played campus-wide leadership roles, including Zong-guo Xia, Vice Provost for Research and Strategic Initiatives; Rajini Srikanth, Associate Provost of Faculty Affairs; Eunsook Hyun, Associate Provost for International and Transnational Affairs; and Peter Kiang, recipient of the 2010 Chancellor's Distinguished Service Award.
- Our many AsAmSt faculty, staff, and students who taught our courses and whose work appeared in print/on-line or who received grants in 2009-2010;

We are especially thankful to our alumni, community partners & donors as well as to our affiliated faculty, staff, and dedicated AASO students. We offer our warmest wishes to all graduating students who have taken AsAmSt courses with us during their time at UMB.

For more information, visit the Asian American Studies Program in W-2-097, call 617-287-5658, or see: www.asamst.umb.edu and <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Boston-MA/UMass-Boston-Asian-American-Studies-Program/46642856725>