

Chinese Immigrants in America

Where to Supplement the Curriculum?

- U.S. History Survey Courses
 - Largest history course enrollments on campus
 - 43 sections in fall
- Comprises two semester-long courses:
 - U.S. History to 1877
 - U.S. History since 1877

Plan: Add Sections on Chinese Immigrants to Both Courses

- Will also add sections on other students' origins.
- Sections will consist of readings, lectures, discussions, and brief writing assignments

Chinese Immigrant Sections Will Be Added at Following Points

- U. S. History to 1877
 - Gold Rush and building of transcontinental railway (“Gold Mountain” immigrants, 1849-1877)
 - Immigrants also worked in agriculture and urban businesses, especially restaurants and laundries
- U.S. History Since 1877
 - Growth of Gold Rush population to the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882)
 - New Chinese immigrants (c. 1980s-present)

U.S. History To 1877:
Chinese Immigrants during the
Gold Rush Period

Economic, Social Background, and Political Background

- Prior to c. 1750 China the largest, richest, and most technologically advanced country in the world.
 - Had invented printing, paper, gunpowder
 - In 1800 per capita income equal to any country in the world.
 - According to some estimates, 40%-50% of men literate
- Most Chinese were farmers, although some were merchants.
- In 19th century China an empire ruled by the Qing Dynasty.

Cultural and Religious Background

- Confucianism
 - Filial piety
 - Importance of extended family
 - Daoism
 - Buddhism
 - Several varieties of Buddhism
 - Guanyin, bodhisattva of mercy
- [Readings not yet identified]

“Gold Mountain”

- Gold discovered in 1848 in Sierra Nevada foothills.
- Led to a world-wide emigration to California.
- Non-native population increased from 1,000 to 100,000.

Turmoil in China

- Opium War
- Taiping Rebellion
- Pearl River flood

Chinese Immigrants

- By 1851 25,000 Chinese had arrived in California.
- Most came from the Guangdong province
- Mostly men
 - Planned to return to families in China as soon as possible.



Map of China

Chinese Culture and Religion in California

Temples evidence of religious continuity

- Oroville
- Weaverville
- Lahaina, Hawaii



Chinese temple, Oroville, Calif.

Work in America

- Encountered intense prejudice
 - California passed foreign minors' tax.
 - Effectively barred from any occupations
- Typical work was in fishing, laundries, restaurants, agricultural labor.



Chinese Temple, Weaverville, Calif.

The Transcontinental Railroad

- Major workforce building railway through rugged Sierra Nevada mountains
- Sometimes used skills from China.

