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.
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.