

# Integrating New Media Technology and Asian American Studies

Melinda L. de Jesús

## Overview

In Fall 1998 I revised both sections of my lower-division Ethnic Studies course, *ETHS 210: Aspects of Asian American Culture*, to

**Name:**

Dr. Melinda L. de Jesús  
Department of Asian American Studies, SFSU

**Field(s):**

Asian American literature and culture, American Literature, Ethnic Studies, Women's Studies,

**Course(s):**

ETHS 210: Aspects of Asian American Culture

**Context:**

--lower-division course satisfies requirements for the Asian American Studies major and minor as well as General Education requirements. San Francisco State University is an urban, commuter university with an undergraduate population of over 27,000. Diverse student body: in Fall 1998 its undergraduate population was over 40% Asian American.

**Intention:**

--to introduce web-based pedagogies to stimulate student interest in web design and technology as it relates to the assessment and critique of Asian American cultures; -- to create with students a permanent resource: *The Online Directory Of Asian American Artists*.

include a series of student-authored web assignments. The summer prior, I received a research grant from San Francisco State University's (SFSU) Center for the Enhancement of Teaching to develop new media pedagogy for this class, and I felt confident in transforming my course pedagogy after having attended a series of California State University (CSU) New Media Technology workshops the previous semester. For my new class I created a course page which included links to my syllabus, course assignments, sample course pages, a class list linking my students' pages/assignments, web authoring links and tips, and Asian American art/culture sites; also linked were the class message board (created with CGI script) and *The On-line Directory of Asian American Artists* [to view these links please go to

**WORKS AND DAYS 31/32, Vol. 16, Nos. 1&2, 1998**

<<http://home.pacbell.net/~bobtins/melinda/portfolio/index.htm>>.

As I redesigned my course I was well aware that I was embarking upon a risky venture and that the chance of failure was very real—complete with real consequences. I had taught ETHS 210 for two years, and my section had a reputation for being “fun” and “different”; my student teaching evaluations were high. “Excellence in teaching” is the primary criteria for tenuring within the CSU system, and I worried that my teaching scores would drop once I incorporated the new web-authoring requirements. The changes I wanted to implement this semester were substantive, and while I had been developing a homepage for over a year, I had no experience in using new media technology in the classroom—thus I began the course with mixed feelings: excitement and fear, trepidation and anticipation. Ultimately my endeavor proved to be challenging, surprising but satisfying.

Below I outline my pedagogical intentions and strategies in redesigning *ETHS 210: Aspects of Asian American Culture*, and offer an assessment of the successes and failures of my first venture into using new media in the Asian American Studies classroom.

#### **What Is *Aspects of Asian American Culture*?**

“Aspects of Asian American Culture” is a one-semester course which focuses on defining and exploring the parameters of the Asian American aesthetic as expressed in a diverse selection of cultural forms: theatre, fine art, literature, music, dance, and film. We read theoretical texts on the construction of Asian American culture and aesthetics by Fred Ho, David Mura, Lisa Lowe, and Augie Tam; acted out scenes from *M. Butterfly*, *Walls*, and *And the Soul Shall Dance*; critiqued fiction and poetry by Marilyn Chin, R. Zamora Linmark, Lois-Ann Yamanaka, Chitra Divrakaruni, Lisa Park, Albert Saijo, Bay Area Pilipino American Writers (BAYPAW), Peter Bacho, Nora Cobb (nee Okja Keller); and analyzed films like “The Forbidden City,” “Slaying the Dragon,” “Kelly Loves Tony,” “Aka Don Bonus,” “Another America,” “The Kiss,” and “Sally’s Beauty Spot.” Guest lecturers/performers included representatives from Asian American Dance Performances and The 18 Mighty Mountain Warriors (a skit comedy troupe) as well as an Asian fusion guitarist-composer, Matthew Grasso, who presented an in-class concert.

In the past I required my students—usually freshmen and sophomores—to write five critical, analytical response papers (about every two weeks) on five different aspects of Asian American

art/culture studied, to develop and present an original group project/performance on any aspect of Asian American aesthetics/culture, and to develop a final research project that explores Asian American aesthetics in the life and work of an Asian American artist of their own choosing. For my technology-intensive class, I required each student to create a homepage, and to compose each response paper as a web page linked to her homepage by a certain date and time; in addition, the final project profiling the life and work of an Asian American artist became a student-authored web site linked to a permanent on-line resource, *The On-line Directory of Asian American Artists*, housed on my homepage. I envisioned the On-line Directory as a perpetual archive, a dynamic and ongoing Asian American Studies web project featuring the work of students in current and subsequent ETHS 210 classes.

However, I must underscore that utilizing new media technology was not an end in itself. My incorporating student web authoring in ETHS 210 must be understood as an aspect of contemporary Asian American Studies theory and pedagogy today, which I outline below.

#### **Pedagogical Considerations: New Directions in Asian American Studies**

Asian American Studies in the 1990's has been radically transformed by thirty years of institutionalization, professionalization and program development; by post-structuralist, postcolonial and postmodernist theory; and by cross-fertilization with other interdisciplinary fields like ethnic, women's and queer studies. It has moved from earlier essentialist/cultural nationalist leanings to theorizing the intersections of racial formation, gender, class, and sexuality—problematizing the constructedness of Asian American subject positions, and emphasizing the "heterogeneity and hybridity" of Asian American cultures and experiences: as Dana Takagi reminds us, "The interior of the category of 'Asian American' ought not be viewed as a hierarchy of identities led by ethnic-based narratives, but rather, the complicated interplay and collision of identities" (33). In short, the discipline has been transformed by efforts to critique the ascendance and the efficacy of the term "Asian American" itself.<sup>1</sup> Underlying this theoretical shift is a reconsideration of the discipline's commitment to linking intellectual discourse, community activism and social justice—a very tall order.

For example, in "Beyond Railroads and Internment: Comments on the Past, Present, and Future of Asian American Studies" Elaine

Kim underscores the constructed and changing nature of the Asian American subject position and outlines three pedagogical goals for Asian Americanists in the 1990's:

Those of us who teach Asian American studies need to focus on three primary responsibilities. First we can try to *present students with an array of the best readings and educational materials* we can possibly find through our own concentrated searches. . . . Second, we can provide examples for students, not in the goody-goody moral sense, but in the sense of showing them *how our knowledges are situated* and how our own thinking has been moving, haltingly, in fits and starts, often stymied by terrible moments of self doubt, through revision after revision so that they might profit from what we might have been through. Third, we can *try to provide students with opportunities to address in their writing questions they need to answer for their lives*. We can tell them that they have to conceptualize, shape, and articulate their questions so that the materials in their classes can be used to address these questions. . . . We can tell them to always look for what has not been seen, for what has not been written. *Our overall goal can be to do what we can to help students equip themselves with the weapons and tools they will need for the rest of their lives.* (15-16; emphasis added)

Similarly, Keith Osajima in "Pedagogical Considerations in Asian American Studies" maintains that current Asian American Studies pedagogies must address rapidly changing demographic and immigration patterns, the professionalization of discipline, the place of Asian American Studies within multiculturalism, and the realities of teaching Asian American studies to largely non-Asian student populations. In the wake of these changes, Osajima describes the challenges facing Asian Americanists in the following way:

We are left, then, with the need to think more about how to teach Asian American courses in a shifting and complicated terrain. Can we clearly organize our courses while emphasizing complexity in our analyses? Can we inspire a social activism appropriate to the changing political climate and sensitive to the increasing complexity of the Asian American experience?

What teaching methods help us to realize our learning goals? . . . *It is more useful to think about Asian American studies pedagogies—the fashioning of teaching strategies sculpted to fit the contingencies of the local situation.* (278; emphasis added)

### Intentions

The challenge, in my case, was to incorporate Kim's and Osakima's ideals into my classroom: specifically, to make the technology work *for me—for the goals of Asian American Studies within my specific teaching location at SFSU, not the other way around.* Thus my goal this past fall was to utilize new media technology to further my own political/pedagogical interests: to foster intellectual inquiry in the discipline, to resist the anonymity of a largely commuter school by valorizing intimacy and interactivity throughout the course, to foster intensive personal investment in and ownership of the discipline itself, and to build community simultaneously in real-time (in the classroom) and in cyberspace. Moreover, I wanted to emphasize Asian American agency and creativity as expressed in its art and cultural forms, and to underscore my classes' efforts an important example of the creation of a literal web of Asian American culture itself.

Additionally, I wanted to nurture and develop the sense of my classroom as a community of colleagues engaged in critical and creative work, and thereby foster a stronger sense of communal investment in cultural work itself. The class worked in different small groups on a weekly basis; moreover, my requiring and assigning group projects early in the semester and building in-class time for group project work simultaneously enabled class intimacy and fostered a deepened sense of responsibility to classmates and to the course itself. I intended the new media requirements to add to this sense as well.

Theoretically, then, the key areas I hoped to tackle in this class echoed Kim's and Osajima's concerns:

1. To incorporate the most recent scholarship in order to challenge my students to think critically about the "Asian American" subject position and the inherent diversity of its expressions;
2. To emphasize the political expedience of the term Asian American itself, even as we evaluate the art and culture this term has generated;
3. To highlight newer writers/artists from more diverse

Asian American cultures: non-East Asian, non-Californian, feminist, queer, Pacific Islander, Asian Indian, Southeast Asian;

4. To foster an appreciation for and knowledge of Asian American art and artists, as well as informed, critical analyses of the origins, usefulness and efficacy of Asian American aesthetics in relation to the individual artist and the Asian American community at large;

5. To underscore Asian American art and culture as an example of resistance, agency and creativity, not victimhood.

Additionally, I wanted to begin to develop a strong relationship between web/computer competency and Asian American Studies in order to enable students to become familiar with and be able to critique Asian American resources on the internet. Likewise, I developed web authoring projects to emphasize both writing as process and as community: working together as a class to gain mastery of web authoring skills, critiquing each other's pages, and collaborating on interactive assignments underscored writing as a communal experience and the web itself as an important example of community building.

Finally, I wanted to be sure that I used the technology to serve my goals. Rather than changing my course into an on-line format of "distance education" or "distributed learning" (something that the CSU system seems to be advocating as a way to cut educational costs via the "teacher-in-a-box" or "teacher-less classroom"), I wanted to use new media technology to intensify and develop more dynamic, meaningful relationships as a class: ultimately, to foster a cyber-community within/in conjunction with our classroom, but one that also existed outside it in its own terms. In sum, rather than incorporating new media into my classroom to signify my "jumping on the technology bandwagon," or emphasizing web authoring as merely another skill set that would enhance student marketability post-graduation, I wanted to underscore that community building in the classroom and on-line is an integral part of Asian American Studies as a *discipline*, and that the internet provides an important medium by which to connect all of us doing Asian American studies around the world. In this way I intended to enact Elaine Kim's ideal of "do[ing] what [I] can to help students equip themselves with the weapons and tools they will need for the rest of their lives" (16).

### Challenges

The obstacles I faced can be broken down into the following categories:

1. *Personal*: Little hands-on experience and first time jitters;
2. *Cultural*: Having to work against the assumption by many students on my campus that Asian American Studies is a “gut” discipline. They expect course requirements to be quite easy;
3. *Institutional*: While the upper administration at SFSU continues to value “distance learning,” the university in general and my college specifically lack adequate funding for computer labs, training and new media resources. Students coming into SFSU usually have little experience with computers and the internet; moreover, the campus has no requirement for students to have their own computers, and computer accessibility is a very real concern;
4. *Departmental*: My department is lukewarm at best in supporting web-based curriculum. Colleagues have cautioned me that “Asian American students are too poor to buy books—let alone buy their own computers” and that web-based requirements would create a real hardship for them. Additionally, senior faculty’s lack of experience in new media technology can translate into dismissal or disdain, few (if any) opportunities for course relief to develop on-line content and sound pedagogy, and resistance toward considering or developing criteria for evaluating web-based technology as part of the department’s retention, tenure and promotion process (more on this below).

### So, What Happened?

#### My Web Assignment Rationale and How Students Responded

In converting conventional response papers (usually two-to-three page short essays) to web assignments, I designed each assignment to build upon the technical skills learned in the previous assignment. To begin, I designated the second class meeting a “crash course” in web authoring (via Netscape Gold). Michael Hornbuckle, the College of Ethnic Studies computer consultant, visited each of my sections and taught my students how to obtain an SFSU account, create a homepage, incorporate links, save files, use FTP to upload documents, and web surf. I also made sure to

build in web tutorial time into my syllabus (one session right before each web assignment was due). During tutorial time, students could either come to my office for help or visit Michael in his lab.<sup>2</sup> Initially, tutorial times were flooded with students; as they became more confident and proficient, students came sporadically.

In order to “weed out” less serious students and to bring my enrollment down to about 40 students, I had always required the initial response paper for this class to be handed in shortly after the first class meeting (students had the weekend to purchase the reader and write the assignment). However, by making the first web assignment due by the third class meeting, I dissuaded far more students than usual: now, in addition to writing a critique of Fred Ho’s and David Mura’s articles on Asian American art, and a brief reflection on what they wanted to learn from my class, students also had to set up their homepage and post their essays by 7pm. The essays themselves were very similar to what students in previous classes had written; the mitigating factor here was the need to get the page up and running to obtain credit. For example, Angelica Bayani’s first assignment was a particularly fine example of a thoughtful reflection on Mura’s and Ho’s writing as well as her own goals for the course <<http://home.pacbell.net/bobtins/melinda/portfolio-/angelica1.htm>.>

In short, my course had a very rocky beginning: in addition to the anxiety of getting into the class, students had to deal with the stress of using new technology, finding and getting on the computer, and then getting their documents to post. Most students felt the one-day in-class web introduction with Michael was insufficient; my web tutorial times were filled to overflowing as were Michael’s. And because more than half the students had trouble getting their pages uploaded, I felt compelled to extend the assignment’s deadline by 24 hours to give students more time to complete the assignment (pages up by the original date/time received an extra point).

Assignment Two required students to adopt the persona of a theatre reviewer for *The Yellow Journal*, the SFSU student journal of Asian American Studies, and to develop a critique of one of the plays/performances studied in class. They were to analyze the work in regards to their own conception of Asian American aesthetics; moreover, they were also required to locate and include at least one relevant hypertext link which would deepen the reader’s understanding of the play’s historical, thematic or theatrical strengths. The technical requirement (finding and adding links) gave students an opportunity to try different web search engines, to develop a sense for what makes a good, informative link, and to

experiment with how best to use links in their writing. Additionally, it impressed upon the class how few good links on Asian American art and culture are currently available in cyberspace. Overall, this second crack at web authoring went more smoothly: students presented insightful analyses of the parameters of Asian American theatre, often utilizing the playful, persuasive tone of the theatre reviewer; they found and incorporated good links, and posted their assignments on time. Good examples included Dien (Jennifer) Magno's critique of *M. Butterfly*, which explored aspects of Orientalism, exoticism and homosexuality in Hwang's play (<<http://home.pacbell.net/~botins/melinda/portfolio/dien2.htm>>) and Kitchie Ramos' review of Jeannie Barroga's *Walls*, which offers a good context to the uproar surrounding the awarding of the Vietnam Memorial design to Chinese American architect Maya Lin (<<http://home.pacbell.net/~bobtins/melinda/portfolio/kitchie2.htm>>)

Assignment Three originally entailed a critique of one writer's work from the literature section of the Course Reader and an analysis of said writer's incorporation of an Asian American aesthetic. However, because my students expressed so much anxiety about my grading of the web responses—"Did I value content over style or both?"—I added another requirement to the assignment: students were to visit the homepages and second assignments of other students enrolled in my course, pick the five best sites, and explain their choices. This exercise really changed the dynamics of my course in a variety of ways: first, it forced students to reflect upon what information values they deemed most important—values quite different from traditional expository essays. Moreover, the "best sites" exercise underscored the public nature, indeed the hyper-visibility of student web work (and its role as community writing): their web responses were readable by *anyone* with the right URL, unlike traditional essays which were typically read and graded by me alone. Secondly, students began to spend much more time checking out their classmates' sites, and having perused each other's work, they rapidly began to "borrow" graphics and formats from one another. I noticed a distinctive redesigning of student homepages after this assignment; additionally, students seemed to take more time in crafting well-written, well-designed assignments once they knew fellow classmates were viewing their work. The following pages are particularly fine examples of incisive writing on personal web aesthetics and on the parameters of Asian American literature:

Kyle Moore <<http://home.pacbell.net/bobtns/melinda/-portfolio/kyle3.htm>>,  
Ingrid Perez <<http://home.pacbell.net/bobtns/melinda/-portfolio/ingrid3htm>>,  
and St Trinh <<http://home.pacbell.net/bobtns/melinda/-portfolio/melinda/portfolio/so3.htm>>

Assignment Four required students to team up with another classmate to create a joint site which presented each of their conceptions of Asian American aesthetics. Basing their stance on the theoretical position adopted by one of five prominent Asian American artists and critics (Meena Alexander, Margo Machida, Paul Pfeiffer, Rene Tajima, and Andrew Pekarik) represented in Augie Tam's seminal article, "Is There an Asian American Aesthetics?" students were to apply this thesis to a specific musical, visual or dance form discussed in class. They were free to disagree or agree with their partners and to choose different theoretical points of view, even different art forms in their projects—their goal was to create some kind of dialogue, and to focus on how their viewpoints diverged and converged around these issues. In preparation, as a class we reviewed the article thoroughly and discussed in small groups the theorists with whom we felt the most affinity; students then picked their partners for the assignment.

I purposely left the format/structure of the project as open as possible to allow for creativity; this distressed a few students, but ultimately it enabled an amazing student response. Overall, this assignment was by far the most exciting and impressive: my students developed quite original ways of integrating the many elements of the assignment: differing viewpoints, differing critics, different art forms. Their work for this assignment demonstrated the real range of possibilities that hypertext allows: truly unique, collaborative and interactive forms. Fine examples include work by Grace Bautista and James Ko (<<http://home.pacbell.net/bobtns/melinda/portfolio/grace4htm>>), Yonder Buslon and Bernadette Ramos (<<http://home.pacbell.net/bobtns/melinda/portfolio/yonder4htm>>), Arthur Villanueva and Annabelle Adona (<<http://home.pacbell.net/bobtns/melinda/portfolio/annabell4htm>>) and Kyle Moore and Richard Nguyen (<<http://home.pacbell.net/bobtns/melinda/portfolio/kyle4>>).

Interestingly, for this assignment very few pages were posted late—something that had been a problem with previous assignments. Additionally, practically every project received the maximum number of points. When I asked them why this assignment

worked so well my students ventured that it was a combination of factors: not wanting to let their partner down/wanting to do their best for their partner, the fact that everyone had already completed three previous web assignments and felt comfortable with the technology, and that working with a partner really sparked creativity.

The fifth assignment—using the class message board to comment on Asian American films screened in class—was rooted in expedience and desperation: in the final section of the course I usually show seven one-hour films. This semester I was given three 50-minute periods instead of two 75 minute periods; I wanted to show all the films *and* have some kind of discussion. Thus I set up a message board and point system for response: respond to five of seven films within 48 hours of screening in class for a total of 10 points (<<http://home.pacbell.net/bob/tins/melinda/wwwboard/index.htm>>). We screened videos like “Aka Don Bonus,” “Kelly Loves Tony” and “Another America,” and also clips from TV shows like “King of the Hill” and “Ally McBeal.” Although students did not respond to one another’s responses as much as I would have liked, I think this exercise was important because it enabled a more level playing field for shy students and for students whose command of spoken English was not as good as others. Students could read classmates’ comments at their leisure and draft more reflective, analytical responses on their own time. Indeed, the sheer act of composing a written response (rather than a verbal one) that everyone could read prompted students to slow down and craft their critiques carefully, resulting in more personal, detailed analyses of the films and their relevance to Asian American Studies and to Asian American aesthetics. Overall the class message board facilitated class discussion well and enabled students to know even their most reticent classmate’s thoughts.

For example, the following are thoughtful reflections on Sokly Ny’s “Aka Don Bonus:”

**Posted by Vantha U on November 15, 1998 at 10:46:40:**

I’ve watched this film about five times already. It seems as though everytime I watch it, it gets more and more emotional. I’m a Cambodian immigrant and I understand what Don Bonus is going through. Cambodians come to America escaping a terrible and horrific war that killed millions of innocent people. It’s hard keeping my emotion inside. I want to just express my pain.

Watching this film informed many other Asian Americans about the struggle of the Cambodian Americans. The whole time in class I was watching everyone's emotion. At first I had thought everyone was laughing at how Cambodian lived. I thought that everyone was thinking that this film was a joke. I swear to god if anyone would of made fun of my people I would of started an argument and would of been really mad. This film is very serious and very informative. It explains the everyday struggle of being Cambodian in America. Don bonus was the most emotional films yet. I'm glad that everyone was able to realize that Cambodians don't have it easy. I think that the whole class were really caring and felt the pain. I felt the whole class understood the film. I felt the class got something out of the film. I'm glad that everyone took this film very seriously. In the beginning of the film I was kind of embarrass. I was embarrass of the film in the beginning but later realize that this is what we go through and this is how we deal with the problem. I really like this film a lot.

**Posted by Byron Chew on November 15, 1998 at 20:19:56:**

This film was a autobiography in the life of a Cambodian teenager living in San Francisco. The trials and tribulations that Bonus had to go through, hit very much close to home as it reflected a life which could very well have been mine. To see how Bonus and his family lived made me appreciate the life that I have right now. From the robberies to the vandalism and to his little brother being arrested, it certainly was a lot to take in. After i watched it, i imagined the what i would feel if i were in Bonus' shoes and i cringe. The film was a very well shot autobiog-raphy as it gave a very deep insight into his way of life, the things he did in his spare time, the thoughts he had at the moment and the emotion-al turmoil that showed in his expressions and his family's as well. This film was asian american in the sense that it concentrated on an asian living life over quite a long period of time. With that in

mind, this film was therefore a film that i could identify with and think about hard and long...and maybe learn to appreciate the situation i am in a little bit more than yesterday.

The final research project assignment (worth 25% of the course grade) was the student-authored entry for *The On-line Directory of Asian American Artists*.<http://home.pacbell.net/bobtins/melinda-artists.htm>. Students chose subjects like skating champion Michelle Kwan, comedienne Margaret Cho, writers Maxine Hong Kingston and Louis Chu, artists George Tsutakawa and Pacita Abad, and local stars Jocelyn Enriquez, Rex Navarrete, DJ Q-Bert (Richard Quiteves) and evaluated their artistic output in light of the Asian American aesthetic. Overall these projects were terrific. They represented the culmination of the critical/analytical and web authoring/technical skills my students had developed during the semester: conceiving and designing an informative site, writing a good narrative, locating biographical and other information about an artist—both on-line and in print—and critiquing her relevance in terms of the highly contested term “Asian American art.” My students seemed to grasp the necessity of increasing visibility for Asian American arts and culture on the internet, and they rose to the occasion. Innovative sites in the directory include Leilani Reiskane’s page on costume designer Eiko Ishioka (<http://home.pacbell.net/bobtins.melinda/210entries/leilani.htm>), Grace Bautista’s page on architect Maya Lin (<http://home.pacbell.net/bobtins/melinda/210entries/graceb.htm>), Tien Ha’s page on comedian Margaret Cho (<http://home.pacbell.net/bobtins/melinda210entries/tien.htm>), Richard Nguyen’s page on visual artist Nam June Paik (<http://home.pacbell.net/bobtins/melinda/210entries/paik.htm>), and Jeffrey Ponferrada’s page on hip-hop artist DJ Qbert (<http://home.pacbell.net/bobtins/melinda/210entries/qbert.htm>).

I enjoyed creating this archive with my students and look forward to developing it further each semester (I’m teaching this course at Stanford in Spring 1999 and look forward to additional entries from these new students).

### Conclusions

1. *What did I learn?* I learned that adding web authoring to my courses is not too difficult and that it is effective: it enhances student comprehension of Asian American art and culture, and

transforms student writing, engagement and participation. I also learned that introducing new technology does not necessarily mean lower teaching scores. To my great surprise, my course evaluations for this class were just as high or higher than any other semester—1.55 and 1.64 (with 1 as highest, 5 as lowest).

2. *What will I do differently next time?* This experience reinforced the need to teach this class in a computer classroom at least every other week—assuming that there is a teaching lab available. I will also spend much more class time at the beginning of the semester to teach students how to create their pages and how to use web authoring tools, to enable the class as a whole to feel more comfortable and proficient. Finally, the ease of use and the quality of the communication engendered by the class message board has convinced me to incorporate it fully into future classes.

In fact, to get more feedback from my students about their course experience, I developed a brief technology survey to document my fledgling effort. Its results and those of my student evaluations reflect the same story: my students felt they learned something important—they gained knowledge of Asian American Studies and of web authoring. Overall they asked for a more explicit, detailed, technical introduction at the beginning of the semester and that class be conducted in a computer lab to facilitate hands-on learning. Most importantly, they felt they learned about themselves and about Asian American culture itself, as these excerpts demonstrate:

Hek yeah, before this class I haven't ever touch on this subject of Asian Americans and aesthetics and stuff. But now, jeez, all this stuff is running through my head, and I'm all, "Asian Pride, Baby!!" (ETHS 210 Technology Survey)

I didn't realize how complex Asian art really is, & the subject of Asian American aesthetics is interesting, complex & somewhat annoying but good to know nonetheless. (ETHS 210 Technology Survey)

3. *How did web authoring change student work/interaction?* It encourages students to explore aspects of visual design and develops an appreciation for visual communication. Web authoring allows students to develop a different kind of creative logic: because hypertext transcends the parameters of the traditional essay format, it enables a new kind of creativity, a different kind of writing. For example, students whose forte may not be writing tra-

ditional expository essays (i.e., ESL students or visual arts students) can use new media technology to create web pages that highlight their understanding of and appreciation for the visual, the graphic, etc. Sometimes students can get too carried away with the technological or graphic design side and neglect to develop the critical/analytical aspects; nevertheless, instructor emphasis on *web-authoring as process* will go a long way towards creating a balance here (as will having students rate each other's sites).

Also, collaborative web projects allow students to gain familiarity with the medium but also with each other. Collaborative work (like my Assignment #4) provides for a different kind of give and take between students, encouraging them to develop original, distinctive projects, often resulting in more creative, original ways of completing the assignment. Collaborative student work was edgier, riskier, and more interesting: not necessarily better written, but it engaged in the material and the subject in often deeper, different ways.

Also, web authoring allows students to become part of the cyber-community: they cruised the web to find images, clips, other media, references, and created their own sites on the internet. Their pages enabled them to make real contributions to current debates about Asian American culture; in this way, web publishing offers a more egalitarian mode of dialogue because few (if any) undergraduates get published in Asian American Studies' journals.

Another question that kept coming up this semester was the following: Does the public nature of web-based assignments change fundamentally student writing? In a way it demystifies the grading system—students can see for themselves what their peers are producing, and will often recognize the strengths and weaknesses they share. Having the class rate each others' pages did allow my students to develop their own criteria for "good" web pages, but it also seemed to "up the ante" in terms of creativity/design—which created a bit of anxiety for students who believed themselves to be "non-artsy" or complete web neophytes. Collaborative web projects might be one way to alleviate this anxiety. I intend to incorporate this concept earlier next semester and to pair more experienced web authors with less experienced ones.

4. *How did it transform my pedagogy?* This experiment gave me confidence in using new media technology in my classes; it also made me more aware of cyber-dynamics, reinforcing my feeling that on-line interaction will never substitute for real-time, close personal interaction, but can enable the development of different kinds of community. For example, new media technology

enabled my students and I to make a real contribution to Asian Americans Studies on the internet via our creation of the artist directory. Finally, my work in the Fall 1998 whetted my appetite: I want to become more proficient in using and presenting new media technology in my future classes.

5. *What implications does this have for Asian American Studies? How will this transform the discipline itself?* Asian American Studies teachers must take the time to become familiar with and adept at introducing new media technology. We need to delve into this area and *define* its parameters before the technology itself defines our discipline *for* us! One way to start would be to address the dearth of good web sites and multimedia in Asian American Studies by requesting grant money/course relief to develop good, scholarly sites and media for classroom use.

Faculty members need time and incentives to develop new media proficiency and pedagogies; we need to be rewarded for our efforts too. In terms of faculty development and evaluation, this experience reinforced the urgency of incorporating web design, utilization and pedagogy not only into the discipline but also into the research, tenure and promotion (RTP) process. It forced me to think about documenting my own work and to think about how I would like it to be evaluated. Clearly, we must integrate web pedagogy into our student teaching evaluations; moreover we need to develop methods for documenting development of web pedagogy as curriculum development for our RTP files. For example, I found out that SFSU has no mandate for web curriculum; moreover, my RTP chair and department chair admitted to being at a loss in terms of evaluating the web sites I created and developed for this class.<sup>3</sup>

In sum, my experiment in introducing new media into my classroom was a surprisingly pleasant, transformative and successful endeavor. I continue to be amazed at how well the semester went, considering that each one of us was a neophyte in terms of utilizing new media in the classroom. My course technology survey included the following question: "What advice (if any) would you offer to students taking this class in the future?" Most of my students' responses can be summarized in the following ways: "Be open minded," "At first it seems intimidating but you get used to it," and "Take a chance; it's not that hard." As a recent convert to using new media in the classroom, I heartily second their advice. We teachers know what it is like to take chances—we put ourselves, our hearts on the line every day. By taking a risk and incorporating new media technologies into our pedagogy arsenals and into our classrooms, we will enable our students and ourselves to

develop new ways of understanding, communicating with and transforming the world.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>For example see the following three articles from *Amerasia Jjournal*, 21:1&2(1995): Sau-Ling Wong's "Denationalization Reconsidered:Asian American Cultural Criticism at a TheoreticalCrossroads" (1-28), Kent Ono's "Re/Signing 'Asian American:' Rhetorical Problematics of a Nation" (67-79), and Shirley Hune's "Rethinking Race: Paradigms and Policy Formation" (29-41) ;also Lisa Lowe's "Heterogeneity, Hybridity, Multiplicity: Marking Asian American Differences" in *Diaspora* 1 (1991):24-44.

<sup>2</sup> My students and I were very lucky to be able to use the services of Michael Hornbuckle, Ethnic Studies Computer technology resource person and aspiring comedic actor. Students were impressed and flabbergasted when Michael came to class to run a down and dirty tutorial on how to create web pages in Netscape Composer and then returned a week later to guest lecture about his Asian American skit comedy troupe, the 18 Mighty Mountain Warriors. Throughout the semester Michael was an important resource: many students came to work with him in the lab, and some stayed there the entire semester! His dedication was invaluable to the students, and was a significant factor in the success of my course.

<sup>3</sup> Below are notes from a peer evaluation of my class by a senior colleague who was discouraged by the RTP and department chair from evaluating my Website in lieu of a class visit:

14. Dr. de Jesus provides lectures, presentation and requires student group presentations to summarize class discussions. An unusual feature in this curriculum that deserves attention from her evaluating committee, indeed, the entire university, is her use of computer technology to enhance the learning experience. Both instructor and students were obviously very well versed in the use of web pages, that students were required to construct on their own, that the information for all class activities were posted on Dr. de Jesus' web page were surmised in their interaction [sic].

15. Along with her incorporation of extended learning

devices, i.e. web page, Dr. de Jesus was clear about expectations when answering queries regarding paper lengths, examples established on the web pages. The students' incorporation of vocabularies demonstrating their knowledge of web page vocabulary attests to a level of comfort with the new technologies Dr. de Jesus introduced . . .

16. I would also urge the committee to suggest to the Academic Senate that web pages be considered in the evaluation of faculty members as part of their curriculum design. [Jeff Chan, 12/1/98].

### Works Cited

- Kim, Elaine. "Beyond Railroads and Internment: Comments on the Past, Present, and Future of Asian American Studies." *Privileging Positions: The Sites of Asian American Studies*. Ed. Gary Okihiro et al. Pullman, WA: Washington State UP, 1995. 11-19.
- Osajima, Keith. "Pedagogical Considerations in Asian American Studies." *Journal of Asian American Studies* 1.3 (1998): 269-92.
- Takagi, Dana. "Maiden Voyage." *Asian American Sexualities*. Ed. Russell Leong. New York: Routledge, 1996. 21-35.