

As a South Asian woman growing up in largely homogenous Vermont, there were little mentions of Asian America in my high school courses, outside of brief references to Chinese labor on the railroads and Japanese internment...Taking Professor Kim's class showed me the depths to which API individuals have been a part of the fabric of this continent for decades...Within my concentration in Sociology and Government... there has been almost no mention of the Asian American community and its unique set of needs. The lack...has prevented me from building the knowledge I need to advocate on behalf of my community after graduation, as an aspiring lawyer and policy-maker. In my opinion, this situation perpetuates long-running cycles of disproportionately low API representation in politics, government, law, and media, as we never have a chance to understand our own story. - *Avni Nahar '17 Sociology & Government | Mather House*

I'm lucky to have taken nearly every course on Asian American studies at Harvard, and have worked with many thoughtful and brilliant professors in the process of doing so. On the other hand, it was extremely difficult to pick up on Asian American theory, history, historiography, major literary developments, etc. in the few short classes—most of my undergraduate work consisted of Google searches and self-study to immerse myself in this information. This is certainly not for lack of trying on the part of many professors, but I would also point out that Asian American studies itself was not conceptually introduced to me until halfway through college, and also that the professors themselves were tasked with dealing with a huge influx of student interest but not proportionately supported with resources...I am confident my research could have been more nuanced and detailed given the time and guidance to delve further into a field I discovered slightly later than I would have liked. - *Anita Lo '16 History and Literature | Mather House*

I concentrated in government with a secondary in Ethnicity, Migration, Rights. During my four years at Harvard College, I was only able to take one course related to Asian American Studies, lecturer Allen Lumba's course titled Asian America in the World...In a seminar room of 8 of my peers, many of us, including myself, encountered Asian American global history for the very first time. It's odd and strange that in my government courses I never heard about United States v. Bhagat Singh Thind...I never considered the relationship between colonization, globalization, capitalism, and race together until taking Asian America in the World...Today, I am still eager to learn about these relationships and plan to pursue these lingering questions. I am in the process of applying to a masters of education with the intention of teaching high school history through the lens of Asian American/Ethnic Studies in low income communities of color, similar to the one I grew up in...The lives of Asian Americans have not only been instrumental in the development of our nation, but the relationship of the nation to Asian migrants reveals the complicated, messy, and even dirty process of creating a nation.

As a first generation student who had mediocre grades and struggled with the anxiety of my intellectual capacity at Harvard, this course made me feel comfortable trying out new ideas and speaking vocabulary I never used before. I went to office hours; I connected with my peers; this class felt like the CLASS I should have taken as a first year!...I wanted to write a thesis after this class! Ultimately, I didn't because of the lack of faculty

familiar with Asian American political communities...More Asian American Studies courses and faculty will naturally lead to a stronger Asian American academic, social, and political community that produces rigorous research. - *Diana Nguyen '15 Government | Quincy House*

Even more so than with the Women, Gender, and Sexuality courses I've taken, being able to participate in rigorous classroom discussions on Asian American scholarship and issues has been a fundamental and pivotal experience in my undergraduate career...Exposure to ethnic studies in general has reshaped my navigation of the world because of its insistence on the field not as an identity-obsessed subsidiary to traditional academic disciplines but as a distinct framework, lens, and analytic... [It] has concretized and affirmed the importance of Asian American studies through the presence of Asian American scholars on Harvard's campus, without whose time, encouragement, and support I would have never reached the point where I stand now, a senior about to graduate with hopes of pursuing a PhD that will allow me to continue to delve into Asian American studies...The personal fulfillment I have received from pursuing this academic trajectory should not be underestimated, and I am certain that without both the symbolic and material importance of Asian American classes that I have taken this semester, I would've been more likely than not to characterize my experience at Harvard as unpleasantly white-washed and utterly insensitive to the specific needs of a woman of color. - *Ashley Zhou '17 Studies of Women, Gender, and Sexuality | Mather House*

During my senior year at Harvard, I took Anthropology 1606: Being Asian American with Professor Christine Yano. This course provided me with a structured and academic approach to examining many of the questions that had been swirling around my mind throughout my time at Harvard. Discussing the same issues, but in a classroom, made these issues more "real" to me...I find that I am much more cognizant of the social, political, and psychological forces that Asian Americans face, and feel more compelled and qualified to address them... [Asian American Studies] sends a message that Asian American experiences are worthy of academic study and that the struggles that we face are an important part of the social fabric and global narrative. -*Shannen Kim '15 Neurobiology | Winthrop House*

...as a result of the few ethnic studies courses that were offered at Harvard...I began to realize that Asian American Studies, along with African American Studies and Latinx Studies, etc., is not merely about expanding your "world view" or of "building perspective." It involves the transfer and discovery of knowledge similar to learning that $1+1=2$. You hear voices that never made it into the archives and learn about events that the history textbooks ignored. It is about continuing the long-running humility of social science that one cannot know all and that "truth," as an ongoing project, will and should always remain subjective to an individual learner... All disciplines, no matter how much we've grown to take them for granted, are inherently and necessarily political and "activist" in favor of their own underlying assumptions.

All of this led me to partner up with a few likeminded peers on campus and lead the effort in rekindling a very old movement to institute Asian American Studies (along with

other ethnic studies) on campus. Every challenge that we've encountered on the way—skeptical peers that have not been trained to think critically about knowledge systems and the reticence of our five-century-old institution to institute what they see as a political and "activist" field while it approved a secondary in European History, to name only a few—has reaffirmed the convictions and the reasons that we desperately need to succeed, all as laid out above. - *Respectfully submitted, Jenny Choi C'16 Social Studies | Winthrop House*