

Chinatown in DC - (Im)migration and Cultural Identity

**DUE DATE: Saturday following the trip by midnight (90 points)
(either November 6 or November 13)**

For this experiential learning assignment, you will be traveling with your study group to Washington DC's historic Chinatown and participate in the following activities:

- 9:15am Meet in front of Wah Luck House (800 6th Street, at 6th and H)
- 9:30-11:00am: Join a walking tour led by historian Alice Stewart and learn about the history of Chinese immigration, the history of Washington's Chinatown, and information about current plans for Chinatown's revitalization.
- 11:00-12:30am: Explore the streets surrounding the Chinatown Gate (7th and H) with your group members. Identify and record what stand out to you (using photography, drawings, voice recordings, videos, notes, or all of the above):
- 1) Architectural landmarks, shops, organizations, corporations, facilities, institutions, etc.
 - 2) Pedestrians, street vendors, shop owners, customers, police, staff, tourists, etc.
 - 3) Signs, logos, symbols, brand names, etc.

(The order of the above may be reversed depending on your seminar. If you have done the walking tour prior to this activity, you should make connections with what was covered in the tour. If you are yet to join the walking tour, you should prepare a list questions to ask the guide during or after the tour.)

- 12:30-1:30pm: Visit a restaurant with your group members and have lunch there. Below is a recommended list:

1. Full Kee (509 H Street)
2. Eat First (609 H Street)
3. New Big Wong (610 H Street)
4. Jackey Café (611 H Street)
5. Chinatown Garden (618 H Street)
6. Tony Cheng (619 H Street)
7. Tai Shan (622 H Street)
8. Chinatown Express (746 6th Street)
9. Szechuan House (748 6th Street)

(Your group should designate a Chief Financial Officer (CFO) prior to the trip and s/he will be given \$40-50, i.e. \$10 maximum per group member, as the lunch fund. The CFO

will also be responsible for submitting the receipt and the remaining money, if any, to the seminar leader in a signed envelope. Group members are individually responsible for any amounts that exceed the \$10/person limit.)

During lunch, keep a record of the restaurant, paying attention to the following:

- the restaurant's location, architecture, surroundings, outer appearance, interior décor, atmosphere, etc.
- group decision making process in choosing the restaurant
- people patronizing or working in the restaurant and their interactions
- see if it is possible to find out the geographical origins of the foods that you ordered (DC, other parts of the United States, China, or other parts of the world)?

Learning Objectives

- Further understand globalization concepts, particularly “deterritorialization” and “hybridization”
- Identify and analyze signs and symbols of global and historical impacts on a local space
- Demonstrate the relationship between food and cultural identity
- Comprehend the processes of network formation and community building

Competencies and Skills

- Observation skills
- Communication
- Group interaction

Requirements:

Before the fieldtrip, read Chapter 11, “From Pennsylvania Avenue to H Street, NW: The Transformation of Washington’s Chinatown,” by Esther Ngan-ling Chow, in *Urban Odyssey: A Multicultural History of Washington, D.C.*, edited by Francine Curro Cary

Part I: INDIVIDUAL REPORT (500 words, post to PebblePad gateway, 45 points).

Reflect on the walking tour and consider the following questions:

- 1) How does the notion of “network” figure into the history of Chinatown? Do you consider Chinatown a local or a global community? Why?
- 2) What was the most interesting aspect of the presentation and why?
- 3) What themes/texts/discussions from 101 can you relate to during the Chinatown trip? What are the connections and why are you making them?

Part II: GROUP REPORT (1000 words, post to PebblePad gateway, 45 points).

Reflect on the following three aspects:

1. The urban exploration:

- 1) Where do you think Chinatown begins and ends? (Consider a way to represent this visually.
- 2) What kinds of people did you see in Chinatown? How are they different from one another, in terms of profession, class, nationality, race, ethnicity, gender... and reason to be in Chinatown?

- 3) Who are the agents shaping the visual, commercial, and institutional makeup of Chinatown, and why? Have they changed over time?
- 4) Who are the restaurants, shops, organizations, and corporations catering to? Who are the patrons and customers that you observed?
- 5) Where and how has globalization had an impact on Chinatown? Describe at least three examples, and analyze how and why these changes have taken place.
- 6) How did your group members' responses differ during the exploration? What may these differences be attributed to?

2. *The restaurant visit:*

- 1) How would you describe the restaurant's physical, culinary, and atmospheric characteristics? What might be the reasons for it to have the current looks, taste, customer base, staff, etc.?
- 2) Who were the customers/servers/staff? How would you describe and explain their interactions?
- 3) How do issues of personal and cultural identity play out in choosing the restaurant, reading menus, ordering, and sharing (or not sharing) food? Did your group have differing reactions to the foods, the service, the place, the restaurant staff, and the other patrons? What were the significant differences and how would you explain them?
- 4) Have you or your group members had Chinese food and/or been to a Chinese restaurant before? If so, how would you describe the difference between your previous experience(s) with this visit? If this is the first encounter of Chinese food for you or any of your group members, how would you describe the experience?
- 5) How would you describe the process of finding out where the foods came from (DC area, other parts of the U.S., or elsewhere)? What were your findings and what do they tell you about globalization?
- 6) What examples of homogenization, heterogenization, or hybridization did you observe during lunch? Describe in detail at least three instances that illustrate one or more of these concepts.

3. *The group interaction:*

- 1) How did your group decide on shared and individual responsibilities? How effective was the group-decision making process? What have you learned about your group dynamics that will affect future group interaction?
- 2) What else did you learn from this assignment?