
Cambodian American Experiences (Syllabus)

Course #:

Session Dates & Times: Summer 2025

Instructor: Dr. Vichet Chhuon

Website: <https://jdavies613.wixsite.com/cambodianamericans>

Course Description

Most Cambodian refugees fled their homeland due to experiences with war, violence, and genocide in the 1970s, and many have settled in the United States. Unfortunately, the experiences of Cambodian Americans are not understood. The history, contributions, and needs of Cambodian Americans are often invisible in the U.S. school system. To understand the educational experiences of Cambodian Americans, it is important to know about the group's histories and immigration contexts, as well as socioeconomic conditions and circumstances.

The Cambodian American Experience course is designed to support K-12 teachers to learn about the experiences and contributions of Cambodian people in the United States. Nearly 350,000 Cambodian Americans live in the United States and over half reportedly have less than a high school education. Moreover, only 6.9 percent of Cambodians in the U.S. have earned a 4 year degree, far below the national average of 24 percent. U.S. educators routinely come into contact with Cambodian American children. Given the group's challenges, this course aims to increase K-12 teachers' knowledge and ability for serving this unique community. Overall, this course provides ways that teachers can better engage multicultural learners through culturally relevant materials and pedagogy.

Objectives

Cambodian American Experiences has two principal objectives:

1. To help teachers to better understand the perspectives of Cambodian students and families
2. To help teachers to develop an understanding of culturally responsive and culturally sustaining teaching, including arts integration and strategies that support multilingualism

To achieve these objectives the program consists of a balance between:

- Presentations by experts from the Cambodian community on history, geography, culture and the experience of Cambodian students and families
- Hands-on art activities that help participants to synthesize information and learn concrete strategies for arts integration
- Modeling of a range of active-learning strategies such as jigsaw reading protocols, gallery walks and object-based learning opportunities to build background knowledge through texts and film

Session Schedules

Pre-course Assignments

Due: TBD

Assignment	Approx. Time to Complete
Pick up materials sent to you (<i>anchor text</i> & sketch journal)	
Procure and have ready your art materials (see list below)	
Review Syllabus / Assignments	10-15 mins
Read anchor text: <i>Koan Khmer, A Novel</i>	1-2 hour(s)
Suggested: Watch Justin Davies's presentation on why and how to integrate the Visual Arts into your classroom PPT / Recording	30 mins
Optional: Justin's Prerecorded See Think Wonder video	13 mins

Session 1

Time	Activity	Description
20 mins.	Overview and Goals	Brief description of the purpose, format, history and goals of the course; introduction to instructors
10 mins.	Opening Questions	To help participants get to know one another they will rotate through 1 - 2 online pairings with other participants and discuss a new question with each new partner.
20 mins.	Sketchbook Intro and Watercolor Pencil Demo	Introduction to the practice of sketchbook journaling that will be utilized throughout the course to gather and synthesize new information; brief artistic demonstration of how to use watercolor pencils
30 mins.	See, Think, Wonder	Participants watch a short video (or observe a cultural artifact) and use drawing and writing to record observations, inferences and questions about the objects, events and places depicted. The absence of contextual information and the sensory nature of this protocol aims to generate curiosity and to empower participants to take an active approach to the course material.
15 mins.	Break	
45 mins.	Visual Notetaking and Gallery Walk	Participants use visual notetaking to gather information from a range of texts, graphs, photos and videos; discussing what they have found with a partner midway through the gallery walk and at the end.

Session 1 (continued)

1 hr.	Presentation: Cambodian Americans	In this presentation, Cambodian Scholar(s) provides background information on the migration of Cambodians to the United States and adaptation to life in the US.
40 mins.	Teacher Panel	In this panel, speakers will share their insights and experience in working with Cambodian students and families.

Session 1 Homework Assignments

Due: TBD

Assignment	Approx. Time to Complete
Session 1 Reflection	30 - 45 mins.
Gathering (Oral) Stories	1 hr 20 mins.
Map Drawings	1 ½ hours
Portrait of a Memory	3 hours

Session 2

Time	Activity	Description
25 mins.	Tabletop exhibit of "Portrait of a Memory"	Participants will have an opportunity to view each other's artwork and accompanying narrative on Padlet, as well as to discuss their work and process in break-out groups.
1 hr.	Presentation: Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy	In his 2012 essay, "Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy: A Needed Change in Stance, Terminology, and Practice," Django Paris advocated the ideal of culturally sustaining pedagogy that supports "young people in sustaining the cultural and linguistic competence of their communities while simultaneously offering access to dominant cultural competence (p.93)." Learn about culturally and linguistically sustaining pedagogy for Cambodian students with specific strategies, lessons and activities that can be adapted for students of other cultural and linguistic backgrounds.
40 mins.	Cambodian Student Panel	Students discuss their successes and challenges in navigating education in the US.
15 mins.	Break	

50 mins.	Personal Dictionaries	Participants learn about the use of personal dictionaries as an adaptable strategy for students to visually communicate understandings in a variety of disciplines.
35 mins.	Presentation: Visual Arts Integration	This presentation will explore how the visual arts can be integrated with other curricular areas such as Social Studies and Science; and how this integration can benefit both the Arts and the partner subject within the context of culturally sustaining pedagogy.
15 mins.	Introduction to P4C Assignment	We will explain steps involved in preparing for the P4C inquiry that will take place during the final session

Session 2 Homework Assignments

Due: TBD

Assignment	Approx. Time to Complete
Session 2 Reflection	30 - 45 mins.
Read articles for Jigsaw Reading protocol	1 hour
Develop a draft of lesson plan	2 - 3 hours
Revisit <i>Koan Khmer, A Novel</i> , submit questions for P4C	30 mins.- 1 hour

Session 3

Time	Activity	Description
30 mins.	Participant Lesson Feedback	Participants present their lesson plan and receive feedback from fellow participants in a breakout group.
40 mins.	Jigsaw Reading Groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same-Topic Groups • Teaching Groups 	Participants first discuss their article with others in same-topic discussion groups. Then participants join a new break-out group to teach other participants about their topic and to learn about the topics that the other representatives in their group researched.
40 mins.	Parent Panel	Cambodian parents share insights with teachers to support them in their work with Cambodian students.
15 mins.	Break	
40 mins.	Presentation: Building Community through Public Art	In this presentation, students will gain an understanding of how artists can build community awareness of Cambodian American culture through public art including the Cambodia Town Mural Project. Students will also learn how artists use community engagement to highlight experiences of others.

50 mins.	P4C Inquiry	Following the Philosophy for Children methodology (P4C) participants select a question to investigate as they discuss the anchor text, <i>Koan Khmer, A Novel</i> .
15 mins.	Website Resources	Participants will get to explore a range of resources on the course website to support their work with Cambodian students and families.
10 mins.	Course Survey	Using a Google Form, participants will have the chance to provide feedback on the course sessions.

Session 3 Homework Assignments

Due: TBD

Assignment	Approx. Time to Complete
Session 3 Reflection	1 hour
Implement lesson and prepare observations, lesson learned, and student samples of this lesson to share with the class	3 hours
Documentary: " Home Court " and post a response on the discussion board (OPTIONAL)	1 ½ hours

Session 4

Time	Activity	Description
9:45 am - 10:00 am	Opening	Feel free to log in early to "talk story" and/or test out your devices.
10:00 am - 10:50 am	Participant Sharing	Participants present their final lesson plan, lesson reflections & student samples and receive final feedback from fellow participants.
10:50 am - 11:10 am	Culminating Reflections	Participants write/share final take-aways from the course and future commitments to supporting their Cambodian / multilingual students.
11:10 am - 11:30 am	Course Survey	Using a Google Form, participants will have the chance to provide feedback on the course sessions.
11:30 am - 11:45 am	Completion Paperwork	Submit any remaining paperwork.
11: 45 am - 12:00 pm	Closing / Thank you!!!	

Supplies

Included with your registration, we will be mailing you two items for the course: a sketchbook and the anchor text *Koan Khmer, A Novel*.

As artmaking is central to this course, we also encourage you to get some additional art supplies. We are providing two lists, one of recommended items and one of optional items to extend artmaking. The recommended items can all be purchased for under \$30. You will not be penalized in any way if you don't purchase these recommended supplies, but they will allow you to hopefully explore some new artistic media, which will, in turn, help you provide your students with new avenues for artistic expression. On the supply lists, you will find links to online retailers. However, many of these items may be available locally as well.

Recommended supplies

Item	Notes
Watercolor Pencils	Crayola, 12 ct (Amazon : \$4.27, Blick : \$3.73 + shipping) Faber-Castell, 12 ct (Amazon : \$10.46) Derwent, 12 ct (Amazon : \$16.62, Blick : \$16.49+shipping) The quality of color and control increases with the price, but the Crayolas are perfectly fine if you are looking to save. These don't come with a brush, however you can provide your own or use the brush that accompanies the water-soluble graphite pencils (see below)
Watercolor Paper	Canson Watercolor Pad, 140 lb, 11" x 15" (30 sheets) From Amazon (\$9.97, free shipping with Prime) or Blick Art Materials (\$9.72 + shipping) We will not be using all of this paper, so if you know other teachers participating in this course, feel free to divide a pad amongst 2 - 3 teachers.
Micron pens	Sakura Pigma set of 3 (Amazon : \$7.78, Blick : \$7.59 + shipping)
Water-soluble graphite pencils with brush	Staedtler Mars Lumograph Aquarell Pencil from Blick \$5.70 + shipping or Faber-Castell Graphite Aquarelle Pencils from Amazon : \$12.71

Optional Supplies

Item	Notes
Detail watercolor brush	Princeton, Round, Size 3 (Amazon : \$6.37, Blick : \$6.37 + shipping) This is a smaller brush, which allows you to work on a finer level with watercolor or water-soluble graphite pencils.
Dust-free eraser	Faber-Castell dust-free eraser (Amazon: \$2.88 or pack of 4 for \$5.39 ; Blick : \$1.45 + shipping)
Pencil sharpener	Staedtler (Amazon : \$4.70; Blick : \$4.72 + shipping)
Black paper	Faber-Castell Black Paper Sketch Pad, 9" x12" (Amazon : \$10.58, Blick : \$6.73 + shipping)
Colored pencils	Prismacolor Scholar, 12-count (Amazon : \$9.34, Blick : \$9.99 + shipping)
Drawing pencils	Staedtler Lumograph Graphite drawing pencils, set of 6 (Amazon : \$8.50, Blick : \$8.40 + shipping)

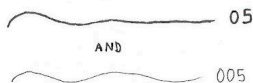
Here is a visual guide to supplies which you might want to purchase:

ART SUPPLIES ★

MEET THE MICRON!



★ SAKURA PIGMA MICRON PENS COME IN A RANGE OF LINE THICKNESSES LIKE:



ONE GREAT THING ABOUT MICRONS IS THAT THEY ARE WATERPROOF ONCE THE INK DRIES, MEANING YOU CAN COMBINE THEM WITH WATERCOLORS, AND THEY WON'T BLEED.



★ WATERCOLOR PENCILS LOOK LIKE AND BEHAVE LIKE ORDINARY COLOR PENCILS, EXCEPT THAT THEY ARE WATER SOLUBLE.

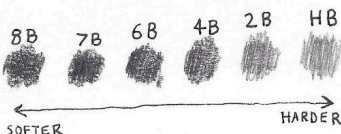


YOU CAN DRAW WITH THEM WITHOUT WATER FOR A DRY EFFECT LIKE THIS

OR YOU CAN USE WATER AND A BRUSH TO SPREAD AND COMBINE COLORS LIKE THIS



★ DRAWING PENCILS COME IN A RANGE OF HARDNESSES ALLOWING YOU TO CREATE A RANGE OF VALUES IN YOUR ART.



YOU CAN ALSO ACHIEVE A SMOOTH TRANSITION OF VALUES BY CHANGING THE PRESSURE YOU APPLY AS YOU DRAW.

HIGHER QUALITY ★ COLOR PENCILS, SUCH AS PRISMACOLOR, PRODUCE NICE SATURATED COLORS.



UNLIKE MARKERS, YOU CAN CONTROL THE VALUE OF THE COLOR BY CHANGING THE PRESSURE YOU APPLY.



★ DUST-FREE VINYL ERASERS DO A BETTER JOB THAN PINK ERASERS AT REMOVING GRAPHITE FROM THE PAGE WITHOUT LEAVING SMUDGE MARKS.



★ WATERCOLOR BRUSHES COME IN A RANGE OF SIZES. HAVING A SMALLER SIZE ROUND BRUSH LIKE A 2 OR A 3 WILL ALLOW YOU TO CAPTURE FINER DETAILS. LARGER SIZES LIKE 7 OR 8 ALLOW YOU TO QUICKLY COVER LARGER AREAS. IF YOU HAD TO CHOOSE JUST ONE SIZE, 4 IS PRETTY VERSATILE FOR CREATING A RANGE OF LINE WEIGHTS.



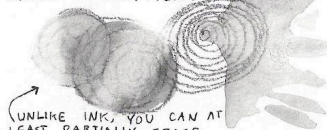
COLOR PENCILS, WATER-COLOR PENCILS, DRAWING PENCILS AND WATER-SOLUBLE GRAPHITE PENCILS ALL HAVE SOFTER LEAD THAN NO. 2 PENCILS, AND THEY BREAK EASILY IN CONVENTIONAL SHARPENERS. A SMALL



★ HAND-HELD SHARPENER WILL ALLOW YOU TO GET A GOOD POINT AND TO EXTEND THE LIVES OF THESE SOFTER PENCILS.



★ WATER-SOLUBLE GRAPHITE PENCILS BEHAVE LIKE WATERCOLOR COLOR PENCILS BUT ALLOW YOU TO CREATE WASHES OF GRAY TONES.

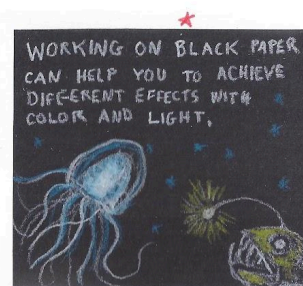


UNLIKE INK, YOU CAN AT LEAST PARTIALLY ERASE WATER-SOLUBLE GRAPHITE.

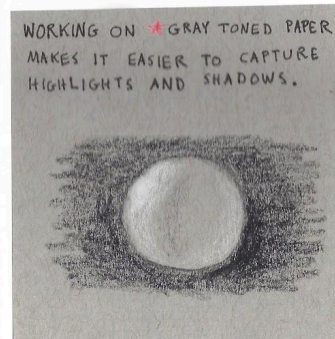
PAPER



WATER COLOR PAPER ★ CAN HOLD WATER, ALLOWING YOU TO WORK WITH WET MEDIA, FLUIDLY COMBINING COLORS. THE HEAVIER THE PAPER, THE THICKER IT WILL BE, AND THE MORE WATER IT WILL BE ABLE TO HANDLE WITHOUT BUCKLING OR PILING. PAPER THAT IS RATED 140 LB OR MORE WILL HOLD UP WELL FOR A VARIETY OF USES.



★ WORKING ON BLACK PAPER CAN HELP YOU TO ACHIEVE DIFFERENT EFFECTS WITH COLOR AND LIGHT.



★ WORKING ON GRAY TONED PAPER MAKES IT EASIER TO CAPTURE HIGHLIGHTS AND SHADOWS.

THERE ARE AN ALMOST INFINITE NUMBER OF WAYS YOU CAN COMBINE THESE VARIOUS MEDIA. YOU WILL LIKELY GRAVITATE TOWARDS PARTICULAR MEDIA, AND FIND YOU HAVE NEW THINGS TO SAY AND THAT YOU ARE ABLE TO EXPRESS DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF YOURSELF AS YOU TRY OUT DIFFERENT MEDIA.

Attendance

This course meets for three 4-hour sessions. Missing any one of these sessions, or an activity during these sessions, amounts to missing a significant portion of the course. While we understand that unexpected circumstances may arise, we encourage you to only register for this course if you are able to attend all sessions.

Meet the Instructor



Dr. Vichet Chhuon

I earned a PhD at the University of California, Santa Barbara in culture and teaching. My research has broadly focused on the experiences of immigrant youth and students of color to understand how school institutions might better help them realize their promise. For example, some of my work has focused on the academic and ethnic identities of Cambodian-American students. My other writing has examined how notions of belonging and being known matter for young people's identities and relationships with teachers and other significant adults in school.

Currently, I am interested in how immigrants and families navigate immigration policies, school systems, and other opportunity structures in pursuit of meaningful lives in the United States and abroad.