

Teaching Community- Engaged Research

Reflections &
Learnings from
ACAM 320J



UBC Asian Canadian and Asian Migration Studies

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LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

On the Land

The shared work of this course is situated and takes place on ancestral, traditional, unceded and occupied Indigenous territories, including the territories of the hə́ŋqəmiŋə́n speaking xʷməθkʷə́yəm (Musqueam), sə́lilwə́taʔ (Tsleil-Waututh), qiqé́yt (Qayqayt), qʷa:ŋ́l'ə́n (Kwantlen), kʷikwə́ləm (Kwikwetlem), sə́waθən (Tsawwassen), qíćə́y (Katzie), and Skwxwú7mesh Sníchim speaking Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) Nations.

This land was never surrendered, relinquished, or handed over by these nations to Canada or British Columbia through a treaty or other means. It is sovereign and unsurrendered.

On the Institution

As the University of British Columbia is located on the traditional, unceded, and occupied territory of the xʷməθkʷə́yəm (Musqueam) people, we must recognize that our ability to conduct this work is part of the political and colonial project to dispossess the Indigenous peoples that have taken care of this land since time immemorial.

Therefore, our discussions of equity, reciprocity, and community organizing cannot occur without the work of Indigenous resurgence, especially the Musqueam Nation on campus. Indigenous contributions to the literature, advocacy, and practices surrounding these topics interrupt settler colonialism amidst the state's historical and ongoing attempts to systematically erase and depoliticize Indigenous communities.

On the Work

Our work with ACAM 320J is inspired by a desire to teach Asian Canadian community organizing as a way to grow feminist, anti-racist, anti-imperial, and anti-colonial work in the university. Therefore, ACAM 320J has important resonances with the continuous work of Indigenous leaders and their communities to decolonize the academy, while existing in important tension with these struggles, given the ways that Asian migration and community-building can be used to entrench multiculturalism as a settler-colonial project.

As such, we recognize the responsibility that we carry as settlers to ensure that in advancing equitable community-engaged research practices, we not only advocate for Indigenous communities, but support and uplift Indigenous sovereignty and agency, in solidarity and alignment with principles of reciprocity and #LandBack.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE FOLLOWING REPORT documents the planning and delivery of ACAM 320J, an upper-year community-engaged research course at the University of British Columbia (UBC), offered within UBC's Asian Canadian and Asian Migration Studies (ACAM) program. The course pilot was co-designed and co-delivered by a faculty member (Dr. JP Catungal, Assistant Professor, UBC Social Justice Institute) and a community course partner (Christina Lee 李嘉明, Hua Foundation, director of community capacity + strategic initiatives) in order to address gaps in formal instruction on community-engaged research. Students in the course had the opportunity to work on multiple projects that offered community-engaged learning opportunities, including: producing a community charter to guide researchers interested in working with Asian Canadian communities; partnering with a community organization to co-design and produce research; and sharing the knowledge with the community and institutional audiences through two showcases.

Collective Learning in Community

The course prioritizes community in both its values and content, challenging hierarchies of knowledge by creating an environment where students are encouraged to learn from each other as well as from a range of community practitioners. Students from the course valued the opportunity to undertake projects in



ACAM 320J students and teaching team after the Community Showcase (2023, ACAM)

collaboration with their peers and community partners that had practical benefits outside of the classroom. They noted that the course taught them skills that could inform their future careers and that they were proud of producing projects that had clear benefits to the community. Similarly, community partners appreciated the opportunity to collaborate with the students, and pointed out the value of the community projects that students came up with, as well as their appreciation of the opportunity to learn alongside students through the mentorship process.



Celebrating end of term with the inaugural ACAM 320J cohort (2023, ACAM)

A longer history of community relationships and networks was central to being able to encourage the participation of so many community members and to ensure the course practices were consistent with community values and needs. This report should guide other university units looking to design courses that teach community engagement; this type of teaching cannot occur without larger institutional commitments and resources that value relationship-building with community members.

Community Engagement in the University

As a community-engaged research course which is co-taught by a community partner and engages community organizations as mentors, ACAM 320J is such a unique offering that there lacks an existing blueprint. This both provided opportunities for the teaching team to innovate, but also meant clashing with existing

university structures that were not designed to easily facilitate the teaching team's ambitions. For example, ACAM 320J requires more resources than typical undergraduate courses, both in terms of staff time and programming funds, in order to sufficiently support community partners and students. Whether intentionally or not, existing university structures, which tend to resource classes based on cost-per-student, typically under-value courses that are pedagogically innovative and work towards the university's aims to increase community-engaged research. There were some other instances in which it was unclear how the course fit within the university bureaucracy and so it is the hope of the teaching team that sharing these insights can help university administration become more aware of ways that university structures could be transformed to better support community engaged research in practice.

Future Directions

Based on the feedback from staff, the teaching team, students, and community partners, the course will run again in the Winter 2024/5 session, with adjustments based on the learnings from this course pilot. Key goals for the course include finding sustainable pathways towards converting ACAM 320J into a permanent offering within ACAM and expanding the project to further involve more community partners.

INTRODUCTION

WITHIN UNIVERSITIES, there has been increased recognition of the importance of community-engaged learning, where students are taught to work with communities, and undertake research and study that responds to community needs and has purpose outside of the classroom. A community-engaged approach has the goal of both bettering communities and increasing community involvement, intentionally combating the extractive histories of academic research that have treated communities as objects of study. This context identifies a gap in coursework that formally trains students in these skills. It is from this need that led UBC Asian Canadian and Asian Migration Studies (ACAM) and hua foundation to collaborate on the conception and delivery of the pilot course ACAM 320J: Asian Canadian Community Organizing that ran from September to December 2023.

This report summarizes the experiences and learnings from the ACAM 320J ‘course community’ (teaching team, community members, and students). It is meant to serve as a resource for others interested in creating community-engaged research courses as well as to guide refinement and improvement of the course’s future iterations. The report is one piece of an iterative process to ensure that the course is community-driven and responsive to feedback. By providing a summary of the labour and processes needed to produce a community-engaged research course, this report reveals how university structures could be adapted to better support the processes needed to engage community partners in academic research.



ACAM 320J Community Showcase (2023, Jenny Lu)

Overall, the pilot of ACAM 320J was extremely successful in developing and maintaining deep partnerships with local community groups to give students the opportunity to model and practice meaningful collaborative work. Throughout the course, students gained confidence in their project planning and research skills, and created projects that had clear, tangible benefits to community. Instructors created a classroom environment that encouraged students to be thoughtful in their interactions with community partners; in turn, students demonstrated a strong desire to ensure the work they undertook provided reciprocal benefits. Existing long-term community relationships and histories of community



Members of Chinatown Today and project group, ACAM 320J Community Showcase (2023, Jenny Lu)

organizing were critical to the core functioning of the course. These connections meant that community relationships were valued, prioritized, and tended to throughout the course. Understanding and appreciating community partnerships as something that takes time and resources was crucial to creating a positive experience for all those involved.

A lot of the lessons learned in this first iteration of the course involve navigating the challenges and opportunities that come with creating an original, inventive course within rigid university structures. The university bureaucracy meant that the staff and teaching team often had to figure out creative solutions to fit the ambitions and needs for the course within existing structures. The course community and teaching team also offered



Students presenting at the ACAM 320J Community Showcase (2023, Jenny Lu)

several suggestions for future iterations of the course, including reconsidering the timing of certain aspects of the courses, adding additional activities or speakers that would further enhance connections to community, and planning for the long-term sustainability of resources for the course.

The findings in this report are organized into three main sections. The first section provides the background context of the course, including information about the format and content as well as how it came to be conceived and designed. The second section shares feedback from the course community: students, community partners, staff, and the teaching team, sorted by each group's perspective. Finally, the third section provides a detailed summary and overview that synthesizes the feedback.

BACKGROUND CONTEXT

History of the Course

The foundations for the development of ACAM 320J are embedded in long-term relationships between community members and the UBC Asian Canadian and Asian Migration Studies (ACAM) program. In this way, the process of building the course reflects what is already known about community-engaged research: that the most meaningful community-engaged projects are often connected to long-term reciprocal relationships with communities that extend beyond a single project. Therefore, the history of ACAM provides important context into how the course was built and its key values.

ACAM is a multidisciplinary undergraduate minor at the University of British Columbia that was [developed as part of the acts of redress](#) undertaken by the university in response to the Canadian government's forcible removal of 76 Japanese Canadian UBC students in 1942. In 2008, Mary Kitagawa, a retired school-teacher who had been interned as a child, wrote a letter to UBC's President suggesting that the university should grant degrees to each of the Japanese Canadian students who were prevented from completing their degrees in 1946 (UBC ACAM).

After several years of organizing by Mary, her husband Tosh, and other members of the Japanese Canadian community, UBC's Senate finally passed three motions to respond to this history in 2011. The Senate motions: i) granted 76 previously interned students with their degrees; ii) committed to developing initiatives to educate students on the history of internment; and iii) committed to preserve historical records from the time of



Mary Kitagawa and Inaugural ACAM Director Christopher Lee at the first ACAM Graduation (2015, ACAM)

internment. The second of these three motions [led to the development of the UBC Asian Canadian and Asian Migration studies](#).

This history is important for understanding the foundations of ACAM as rooted in Asian Canadian community organizing. For the purposes of this report, 'Asian Canadian community organizing' is defined as the actions undertaken by Asian Canadian communities which work to address community-defined problems, often responding in particular to structures of racism and racialization.¹ This report uses the term 'Asian Canadian' with the knowledge that this terminology is complex, political, and imperfect.² Yet even though there are these complicated associations with the term 'Asian Canadian,' its usage in this report and through the program name (ACAM) is meant to gesture to long histories of scholarship and organizing that have emerged under this category alongside these complications.³

NOTES

- 1 Contemporary Asian Canadian community organizing is connected to a longer history of collective actions and social movements that have challenged racial injustice, and defines ‘community’ not as a monolith but something necessarily complicated by varying experiences of ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, politics, location, generation, nationality, religion, and other factors. While Asian Canadian community organizing can involve large-scale protest and advocacy, it also extends to include smaller-scale actions that help address community needs and capacity in more direct ways.
- 2 While there has been wide-ranging work and discourse addressing these complexities, one of the key considerations is that who gets to define and shape the category ‘Asian Canadian’ has always been related to questions of power. For instance, ‘Asian Canadian’ is a category used by Statistics Canada in collecting demographic data, yet we can interrogate what it means for the state to be involved in the classification and labeling of racialized communities. As well, the focus of Asian Canadian literature and discourse has often been skewed towards East Asian communities while much less attention is given to South, Southeast, Central, and West Asian communities. Furthermore, using the term ‘Asian Canadian’ must come with the recognition that the concept ‘Canadian’ is caught up in problematic legitimization of settler colonialism, citizenship, and borders, all processes which are predicated upon the ongoing dispossession of Indigenous lands.
- 3 As a discipline, Asian Canadian Studies is separate but connected to Asian American Studies, which developed as a field in relation to social movements in the 1960s. Its usage in this report is therefore meant to speak to a capacious understanding of Asian Canadian communities and this lineage of actions connected with racial justice organizing.

Given community has been central to ACAM’s mandate and programming over the years, ACAM 320J is an extension of this ongoing community work. Specifically, ACAM 320J was conceptualized through evolving conversations between staff at ACAM and hua foundation (a local non-profit with a long history of collaboration with ACAM) about the need for institutionalized support and a structure for training skills for ethical and equitable community-engaged research. Community networks that both ACAM and hua foundation have built over many years were necessary for signing community partners onto the course and to have ACAM 320J connected to a range of other Asian Canadian community organizers. It is crucial to note that these foundations of community organizing are what made it possible to create a community-engaged research course from within the traditional structures of the university.

Part of the work of ACAM 320J then is about honouring this legacy of community organizing by uplifting community organizations. As Szu Shen, ACAM Program Manager, described:

[ACAM] 320J really built on what ACAM has been doing for the past ten years, but in a classroom setting, a more structured setting. ACAM from the get-go was very much about community organizing, community partnerships, and accountability to our community partners and members.

This sentiment was shared by ACAM director Dr. Laura Ishiguro who stated, “I think it’s an incredibly special course; [...] it represented to me the best of what ACAM’s core values can do.”

Course Planning Background

The pilot of ACAM 320J was conceived in relation to the Community-University Engagement Support (CUES) fund, which hua foundation had previous experience applying for as part of their [Language Access Project](#). The idea for the course came from discussions that took place many times between ACAM and hua foundation staff as they thought through how to structure and institutionalize community relationship building training for students in ways that align with hua foundation’s mandate for community capacity building. Previous ACAM courses have encouraged community-engaged research, but relationship-building was not taught explicitly in any of the courses, meaning that ACAM students who undertook community-engaged research projects often relied on ad-hoc support from individual instructors. A purpose of ACAM 320J is to eventually create a more sustainable and intentional structure for students to learn about community-engaged partnerships so that these values and opportunities could be supported through staff and faculty changes.

ACAM 320J ran its pilot from September to December 2023 as an upper-level project-based studio course co-taught by Dr. JP Catungal (Assistant Professor, UBC Social Justice Institute) and



Dr. JP Catungal addresses students of ACAM 320J (2023, christina lee)

christina lee 李嘉明 (director of community capacity + strategic initiatives, hua foundation). In addition, two graduate students, Kayley Hirose and Elaina Nguyen, were hired to respectively support Partnerships & Programming and Documentation & Reporting (See [Appendix 1](#) for short descriptions of their roles). In addition to their roles behind the scenes, Kayley and Elaina attended most of the classes as part of the teaching team through participating in and facilitating class discussions, although they were not responsible for grading. The course was also supported by ACAM Program Manager Szu Shen, ACAM Director Dr. Laura Ishiguro, and hua foundation co-founder and executive director Kevin Huang 黃儀軒. Currently, ACAM 320J is run as a special topics course within the program. While the hope is to convert the course into a permanent annual offering by ACAM, this would require creating a new 400-level course code through application to and approval by the UBC Senate. Such a process would take time and labour.

The timeline of university bureaucracy is a recurring factor that impacted many practical decisions within the course infrastructure. For example, the team was initially told that their CUES grant application was unsuccessful in March 2023, but were then informed in late May that additional funds had been secured to support the course. This ended up compressing the timeline to plan the course and secure the participation of community partners. Some practical decisions for the course were therefore made with this tight timeline in mind. For example, as a co-instructor for the course, Christina's official designation within the UBC teaching structure is an 'unpaid adjunct' (their time is paid through Hua Foundation) in part because it was practically easier to approve within the university. Kayley and Elaina were employed directly by Hua Foundation rather than ACAM or UBC because of the longer and more detailed processes involved in approving job appointments through the university. These details are important for understanding how planning a course like ACAM 320J, which in many ways operates differently than traditional university courses, often requires outside-of-the-box solutions that creatively navigate existing university structures. These solutions are often more easily facilitated in partnerships with community organizations external to the university. It also speaks to the reality that comes with how more innovative courses often get resourced; often these boundary-pushing pedagogical approaches are funded through granting processes, yet the unpredictable and unstable nature of grants can also create additional time pressures and uncertainty.

“I think it’s an incredibly special course; [...] it represented to me the best of what ACAM’s core values can do.”

One of the key factors that makes ACAM 320J a distinct offering in the university is that the course was co-designed and co-delivered by a community partner (Christina) and a UBC faculty member (JP) with extensive experience working with community organizations. JP has prior experience collaborating with Hua Foundation, Tulayan Filipino Diaspora Society, the Kababayan Academic Mentorship Program, and Vancouver Heritage Society. He has been a part of a range of community projects including the [c19 Response Coalition](#), [In My Day](#), and Kuwentong Pamamahay: Stories of Making Home. Christina has a range of experience working on community-engaged research projects at Hua Foundation, including the [Vancouver Chinatown Social Cohesion Report](#), City of Vancouver Broadway Ethnocultural Business Study & [Climate Emergency Action Plan Equity Review](#), and [Language in Practice: A toolkit for equitable communications](#). Christina is also an ACAM alumni (BA 2018), and had previously worked with JP as part of the c19 Response Coalition. These histories help demonstrate the long-term networks, relationships, and community experiences that sustain the course.

As the faculty instructor for the course, JP shared several key reasons that co-teaching the course with christina was critical to its success:

I've worked with community a lot, but I'm primarily an academic. And that comes with certain limitations in working with community just because I come at it from a very specific place/location. Christina comes to the course with a different, but overlapping, set of experiences and knowledge that enrich the course in profound ways. And so being able to teach as a team is great because we were able to bring different histories, experiences, forms of knowledge into the classroom [...] Student learning was enriched because christina was there to offer not just their expertise, but also their networks and connection and history with being in community.

JP's description highlights how having a community partner involved in the course design and instruction was necessary for keeping the course grounded in community knowledge and interests.

When designing the course, christina drew from their history working on UBC student projects as a community partner, including collaborating with UBC Land and Food Systems, UBC Urban Ethnographic Field School, and the UBC's Centre for Climate Justice (CJRC). These prior experiences meant that christina was already aware of a lot of the different pain points that come with community-engaged partnerships,

which informed their support for community partners during the course. For example, when being approached to be a part of ACAM 320J, community partners were provided a brief that clearly explained the organization's role, including detailing the time commitment, honorarium, and expected outcomes (See [Appendix 2](#)). This document borrowed heavily from a similar document that was produced by UBC CJRC which christina found useful when they were on the community partner side of a collaboration.

This background demonstrates how community partnership work within the university cannot just be parachuted into any unit; longer-term relationships and connections create the foundation to meaningfully engage in community.

Course Values, Structure, & Design

Broadly, ACAM 320J had three main objectives: 1) building on ACAM's relationships with and responsibilities to Asian Canadian communities; 2) increasing the institutionalization of community-engaged research; and 3) combatting the extractive histories of research with Asian Canadian communities. Final enrollment for the course was nine students. The students and teaching team for ACAM 320J met from 12:00-1:20pm (80 minutes) twice a week, with classes consisting of a mixture of lecture content, discussion, active learning activities, and studio time.

3 MAIN MODULES

1 principles & values



2 community-engaged research projects



3 knowledge mobilization



In the introduction to the course, JP and Christina led a discussion on course values, with students and instructors discussing and creating a living community agreement that established the values and principles for class interaction (See [Appendix 3](#)). This included framing the role of instructors as being cheerleaders and resources for students rather than as ‘experts’ who were transmitting their knowledge to students. It was reiterated that their roles were to listen, supervise, remind people of deadlines, and help find solutions. The instructors discussed how students were expected to be prepared to be a part of community learning, and that the course was not operating from the mindset of scarcity where students are in competition, but from a place that encourages peer support and collaboration. The class discussed how this could be practiced by encouraging active listening, calling in instead of calling out, a culture that is generous, and the acknowledgment that we are all enmeshed in systems of oppression at different stages of learning and unlearning. The point of the agreement being a living document was to emphasize fluidity and the opportunity to revisit these principles as needed. Reflecting these values, the content and deadlines in the Syllabus were adjusted to mirror the interest and engagements of students (see [Appendix 4](#) for Syllabus). For example, more time ended up being devoted to working on the community charter assignment as students had a lot of ideas and interest in the project.

Throughout the course, a main priority was building in class time for active learning and participatory activities to ensure that the course was not just about theory and abstract concepts, but rather, was tied to putting theory into practice. These activities included having students reflect on their positionality and relationships to community, as well as programming in dedicated studio time to plan, implement and troubleshoot projects.

The delivery of the course was structured around three main modules. In the first module, students learned about the key principles and values of community-engaged research from scholarship; the history of Asian Canadian studies and community engagement; the importance of acknowledging their positionalities as researchers; and considerations for research design. This module culminated in the development of a community charter (See [Appendix 5](#)), a collective class project where students produced a resource for practitioners looking to conduct community-engaged research in the field of Asian Canadian studies. This project allowed students to distill the scholarship around community-engaged research into key principles, encouraging them to reflect deeply on how these ideas can be applied to research practice and relationships, and take ownership of their learning. It also gave students some opportunities earlier in the term to get to know each other as classmates and as collaborators before moving into the future modules that also contained substantial group work.

In the second module, students partnered with a community organization to co-design and undertake a small research project. Students ranked their preference for partnering with each community organization based on descriptive blurbs (see [Appendix 6](#)) and were then assigned into groups of 2-3 based on their rankings. Within class time, there were two in-person classes set aside as studio sessions for students to work with community partners on conceptualizing the project. Outside of class time, there were a range of ways that students kept in touch with community partners: some groups set up regular weekly check-ins while others kept in touch through messages with the occasional meeting time as needed. Figuring out these details was left to the discretion of each group. Giving groups the flexibility to choose how they engaged allowed students to actively be involved in figuring the dynamics that worked best for their research team, which is an important skill that can be applied across collaborative work.

The project deliverables varied in focus and output, as the projects were conceptualized collaboratively based on the interests and needs of the students and community partners. The four organizations were Love Intersections, Chinatown Today, Roundtable Education Society and Sliced Mango Collective:



LOVE INTERSECTIONS

A research report and zine that investigated how Canadian liberal multicultural policy produces a disconnect between the practice of arts-based non-profits and the expectations of funding agents. The report drew from existing literature and interviews with the community organization.



ROUNDTABLE EDUCATION SOCIETY

A document with solutions-orientation suggestions for funders interested in making funding more accessible. The group also participated in community consultations that their partner organization was conducting with different grassroots organizations.



CHINATOWN TODAY

An engagement plan with recommendations to help the community organization build a strategy to further engage young people in Chinatown. The plan drew from survey data and a roundtable discussion with UBC students.



SLICED MANGO COLLECTIVE

An art installation with stories about Filipinx placemaking. The group collected stories from Filipinx participants aged 18-30 and designed signs with art inspired by jeepneys (an iconic and regionally specific form of public transportation in the Philippines).

ACAM also offered extra funds to optionally support further development of these projects after the conclusion of the course. One group did further expand on their project, but none of the groups requested access to these additional funds.

The third module was dedicated to the public engagement component of community-engaged research, with students learning about different forms of knowledge mobilization and having the opportunity to present the outputs of their research project through two avenues: one institutional showcase and one community showcase. This portion of the course was crafted with the recognition that event planning and embodied knowledge is a key part of community work, with these showcases providing students with the opportunity to consider what forms public knowledge sharing can take. The goal of holding two showcases was to encourage students to find ways to tailor the sharing of their projects to suit each respective audience, which taught students the necessity of considering multiple audiences and using different modalities of knowledge mobilization as key skills in community-engaged research.

The institutional showcase was held during class time at UBC with an audience of institutionally based stakeholders whose work is connected to community-engaged research, such as funders, academics, policymakers and community organizations. Attendees included people from various UBC departments, the Vancouver Foundation, City of Burnaby, and BC Cooperative Association. Some invitees, for example, from the City of Vancouver,

expressed interest in the showcase but were unavailable during the time.

The community showcase was held a week later on a Saturday in lieu of class at a community centre and was open to the public and engaged community organizations, ACAM alumni, and community networks. This decision to hold the community showcase outside of class time and off campus was made collectively by the class, recognizing that asking community partners to travel to UBC (geographically separate from the rest of the city) on a weekday at noon would make it less accessible for a lot of community members who have other commitments during the week.

This change reflects some of the negotiations that occur when building a community-engaged course from within a traditional and rigid class structure. There were discussions among the teaching team about how to account for community needs while also respecting students' schedules and commitments outside of the biweekly class slots, yet by having a discussion with the students to find a date and time that worked for all of them, the community showcase was able to be held at a time and location that was more convenient for community members while respecting student availability, agency, and autonomy.

The final component of the course was a mock funding application for a dream project involving research with Asian Canadian communities. Students were asked to fill out a funding application template modeled off of UBC Community Engagement's Partnership Recognition and Exploration (PRE) Fund and to complete a

short reflection on the kinds of relationship building, labour and scaffolding that would be necessary to succeed in their pursuit of their dream project. One of the assignment's main goals was to help students think about how to articulate and apply their course learnings to a project of their own design. The intention of modeling the assignment after an existing fund was so that students could a) see the work as possible and achievable and b) have the scaffolding of a realistic and tangible project that they are eligible for, should they wish to immediately pursue funding.

The final class ended with a 'course feast' in which the class debriefed on reflections, experiences and learnings over food. Due to available budget from course grants and hua foundation, students were offered the option of being reimbursed up to \$20 for food if they wanted to bring a contribution to the course feast. This was optional to account for the busy end of term; students primarily ended up suggesting to the teaching team what types of food they were interested in having.

The overall structure of the course meant engaging a course community beyond the core teaching team and students, with community partners, guest speakers, and showcase attendees forming a crucial part of the course. On Week 4, for example, there was a guest panel composed of Stephanie Lim (former Community Relations Manager, UBC Land and Food Systems), Jennifer Lu (former Community Engagement Manager, UBC Centre for Asian Canadian Research and Engagement; current Assistant Academic and Operations Manager at UBC St. John's



ACAM 320J Course
Feast and Debrief
(2023, christina lee)

College), Sharanjit Sandhra (former Coordinator, UFV South Asian Studies Institute current Sessional Instructor UFV History), and Nicole Yakashiro (Landscapes of Injustice, current UBC History PhD student) who shared their experiences as community practitioners with community-engaged research experience. Then, on Week 7, Kevin Huang 黃儀軒 (hua foundation) and Vincent Tom (Manager, Community Learning & Engagement, Vancouver Foundation) shared their knowledge and experiences about obtaining grant funding for community projects. Kevin and ACAM Director Dr. Laura Ishiguro also each dropped in on a class during the term to share their insights and be in conversation with students, in an unstructured format. This engagement with a range of community members was to put in practice one of the goals of the course, which is to encourage broader learning about community engaged research from a broad swath of experts and practitioners, including those not formally from the university.

COURSE FEEDBACK AND DOCUMENTATION

Methods

The primary method for gathering feedback from community partners, guest speakers, staff, and the teaching team was through exit interviews conducted by Kayley and Elaina at the end of term. Student interviews were facilitated in small groups during the last week of class and exit interviews with community partners were conducted following the end of term. The feedback process was something that was outlined at the outset to community partners as part of their role in the course. Guest speakers were all offered the opportunity to share feedback, yet given a desire not to ask for too much of their time, this was made completely optional; one of the guest panel speakers shared their feedback. Interview quotes have been edited for clarity.

There were also opportunities for course participants to provide more informal feedback throughout the term. Students could share feedback with instructors during office hours and through an optional anonymous midterm feedback survey. Community partners and guest speakers also gave more informal feedback through check-ins and conversations with christina.

Student Perspectives

Most of the student feedback from the course came from the final interviews at the end of term, although the midterm feedback check-in (see [Appendix 7](#) for questions) provided some insight into student feelings and attitudes during the course. The mid-term feedback was collected over Google Jamboards, as the same platform had been used for in-class activities, so it was familiar to students and gave them the opportunity to build upon each other's feedback if desired. Likely owing to the busy time in the semester when the feedback was collected and their optional nature, there was minimal response to the questions, with zero to three responses to each question.

Students shared that they were interested in taking the course because they wanted to learn about community organizing from an Asian Canadian lens and that they were proud of contributing to the community charter, with one response stating that: "I think our Community Charter was exciting. I had never made a full class document that was regarded so officially." In terms of feedback that was useful to keep in mind for the rest of the semester, a student noted sometimes feeling intimidated about participating given students from ACAM come from different disciplinary backgrounds and therefore some students have more prior experience with the class content. This student expressed that small group discussions are often easier to participate in. As this had been a part of the class already, it continued to be implemented to ensure students had a range of opportunities to participate.

For the end-of-term interviews, students were asked to informally share feedback within small group conversations during the final week of classes, responding to six key questions (see [Appendix 8](#)). Elaina facilitated these conversations with students as she was not involved in grading student work, and so students could share more critical feedback if desired, without the fear that it would impact their grades or standing in the class. Several common themes emerged in response to the questions.

The course provided students with rich opportunities to connect with community partners and allowed them to translate academic learnings into practical applications. Students really valued the opportunity to work with people in real-life situations, when so much of academic work is often theoretical and removed from interpersonal interactions; a student described how this type of skill and learning is valuable beyond the realm of ACAM because it can be applied to multiple contexts. Several students also cited the panel involving community members as a key class highlight because of how much practical knowledge and experience these guests were able to share about the challenges, considerations, and possibilities of community-engaged research.

Students enjoyed being able to work on a tangible project that left them with concrete, practical deliverables that benefitted community interests. Students took particular pride in the production of the community charter, citing the usefulness of having produced a tangible resource that demonstrates their learnings from the course and that could be referenced by

community-engaged researchers. In addition, students discussed the value of the outputs from their community collaborations because of how it solidified learnings from the course and was actually helpful to the community organizations. One student mentioned that working on the community charter taught them to have more confidence in their own expertise, as they found the process of proofreading the community charter to be an empowering affirmation of their skills. This lesson demonstrates the success of the teaching team's intention to challenge hierarchies of knowledge by not necessarily trying to impart 'expertise' about community-engaged research to students, but rather, teaching them that they already have the capacity to do community work. As Christina described, their role as an instructor is about curating the course without overmanaging it, as there is something powerful that happens when students realize they can figure things out on their own. By providing a space for students to practice these skills in an environment where they have the support of a community of instructors and students, this course helped empower them to feel confident in their existing abilities.

Students also cited a range of other skills and considerations that the coursework helped teach them, including the skill of interacting with other people on projects and balancing capacity and the project expectations. A student mentioned how the course taught them about the possibility of doing meaningful work within the community even within the short timeline of a semester. They shared that they had learned a lot from planning

the research project in conversation with community partners, given that it required figuring out what was both possible during the semester and what would be meaningful to the community partners. These learnings demonstrate how the practical experience of planning projects in conversation with community members' needs and scoping a project to fit timing and resource constraints builds skills that students will be able to carry forward beyond the course and apply to future projects that occur in collaboration with community members.

The small studio class environment and facilitation by the teaching team was helpful for creating a safe environment to participate and co-learn. One student discussed how much their experience in the course was positively shaped by their classmates' energy, where seeing how motivated and passionate their peers were to seriously engage in this work marked a contrast from previous classroom experiences. They cited the small class size as something that made them feel comfortable participating. This demonstrates the benefits of having a small studio course, many collaborative projects, and a collective agreement that allows students to connect, engage with and feel accountable to each other. Students also mentioned appreciating the role that the course instructors took in making sure all students had the opportunity to engage, including by looking around and asking if anyone else who hadn't spoken had anything they wanted to add. One student mentioned that even if they didn't have other things to share, they appreciated always having space made for their contributions.



ACAM 320J students
working on the Community
Charter assignment
(2023, christina lee)

Students reflected on how much they were able to learn about the substance of community work and community care, and how this course encouraged them to think about research differently. One student mentioned that they previously thought of research as experimental or closely tied to academic readings, yet through this course, they saw how much research is intertwined with storytelling and activism. Another student mentioned that they had entered the class a bit insecure about their academic background, but being able to work with everyone had taught them about community and care that they hope to bring into other aspects of their life and work. Others mentioned how the projects they undertook have inspired projects that they want to explore in the future.

Students engaged in ideation processes for future iterations of the course, and had many suggestions to expand and deepen external engagement. This included having place-based visits or class trips within the community, more engagement with community members rather than just community-based researchers, and the opportunity at the end of the class to further check in with community partners.

- One student suggested having site visits to restaurants in different neighborhoods, like Powell Street, Punjabi Market, and Joyce-Collingwood. Another student mentioned that while they were working with a community partner based in Chinatown, they had only been to Chinatown a handful of times, mostly in the context of shops and businesses and so having class time to be present in these places could enrich these connections to the community. Because there was flexibility in how students connected with their community partners, some groups did meet in-person at community locations outside of class time, but that differed between groups.
- Students pointed out that guest speakers for the course were mostly individuals who currently worked at the university in some capacity, often though with previous experience working in other more community-facing roles. They suggested that it would be valuable to hear more from community members who had experiences being on ‘the other side’ of university research to get a wider range of perspectives.

- Students were interested in supporting community partners beyond the course, and wanted to be involved in feedback collection so they could better understand experiences of community partners and reflect on their responsibilities as researchers. This suggestion from students demonstrates how they embodied the course learnings by taking seriously the responsibilities and relationships with community partners beyond the ‘start’ and ‘end’ dates of projects. While in this first version of the course, the teaching team is involved in processes of feedback collection with community partners, there were less formal mechanisms that engaged students in these processes.
- Another suggestion was to have the community partners (RES, Love Intersections, Chinatown Today, Sliced Mango) come in as guest speakers before students had to rank the organizations they wanted to partner with. Some students expressed wanting to get a better understanding of the problems that community partners were trying to address in their organization before conceptualizing a shared project.

Students also desired more co-learning opportunities between and across project groups. At the end of certain studio courses, students were asked to share a short summary of their project to the class, but this feedback demonstrates a desire for more programmed studio time to exchange information and learn from each other, particularly during the data collection stages of their research project.

Balancing assignment timing with group and individual work weighting and evaluation was challenging. Students mentioned that while the mock funding application assignment was useful, it felt like a pivot given the community partner projects seemed like the major course output and there suddenly was an additional assignment to complete at the end of term. On the instructional side, this mock funding application was meant to provide students with the opportunity to envision community-engaged research projects beyond the course and also give students another assessment through which they could be evaluated individually, as it brought the course weighting to 50% group work and 50% individual work. The teaching team intentionally aimed for this weighting in case issues arose within groups; this way, students were not wholly dependent on group work for their grades. It is worth considering how these aims of the mock funding application might be achieved while also providing students with enough time during the course to complete their assignments.

Students recommended spending more class time going through specific sections of the readings, particularly sections that could be relevant to the class charter. There was a mixture of responses to the specific readings of the course, with several students sharing comments about the [Community-Based Research Toolkit](#) produced by Access Alliance, a resource that was revisited multiple times throughout the course. Some students felt it was a very dense text that was difficult to read

because it was written in the form of a textbook/manual, while another student found the reading to be very helpful for informing the charter because of its practical focus. Ultimately, despite some differing experiences with readings, students generally wanted a bit more time in class to collectively unpack the readings. Another student mentioned feeling that there could be a bit more opportunity to discuss their positionality throughout the course, although they noted that their sickness meant they missed several classes, so their experience might be skewed by missing some early classes that did discuss positionality.

Students felt stretched for time and wanted in particular to have more time to plan the community project and showcases. This feedback marks a recurring tension of the course, which is that a course that goes beyond traditional academic teaching can also be more of a time commitment for students. Students cited that it would be useful to start project-planning earlier in the semester and perhaps have a bit more scaffolding around skills they needed for their particular projects. One group, for example, discussed teaching themselves data collection and analysis, but shared that it would be useful to have more resources to guide what techniques they should use. A student also mentioned wanting more time than a week in between the community and institutional showcase to make appropriate changes, but also that presenting at the institutional showcase without having a finished project was difficult. The timing of the showcase was described as difficult given it overlapped

with a particularly busy time of the semester (final project and exam season), although this student recognized that while this was a difficulty that they experienced, it is challenging to actually implement changes that would address it because of how courses within the university are structured. The other time-related suggestion was to have fewer housekeeping items and preamble within studio time to fully provide students with the ability to take advantage of course time as an opportunity to work on their projects.

There were several creative ideas that students came up with as suggestions to address the time-pressure of the course, including potentially having a year-long course where students spend the first semester putting together the community charter and spend the second semester working on the community project. A different student mentioned it might be interesting to have the course delivered as a summer course because the longer slots of class time might allow for more off-campus learning and site visits. These larger-scale changes are a bit more challenging to implement in the short-term given university structures (see [Staff and Team Feedback](#)); notably, in its second year (Fall 2024), the class will be a single three-hour time slot, one day per week. Having a longer slot of time for the class was also suggested by several students to allow for more discussions with guest speakers and longer studio sessions.

Community Partners and Guest Perspectives

Following the conclusion of the course, Kayley and Elaina conducted interviews with community partners and a guest speaker (see [Appendix 9](#) and [10](#) for questions, respectively). Community partners belonging to a shared organization conducted their interviews jointly. One of the community partners requested to submit their feedback in writing given they were at the end of their contract with their affiliated organization and did not have as much capacity. Having this flexibility around collecting feedback is necessary to adapt to the needs of community partners and ensure opportunities of participating in the course take into account various employment situations.

One of the aims of the interview was to gain insight into the motivations, expectations, hopes, and goals that community partners had at the start of the course in order to better understand how these collaborations can be mutually beneficial for community organizations. **All of the community partners and course guests cited similar reasons for and benefits of being involved in the course, several of which were notably connected to relationship building and that demonstrate the importance of long-term relationships with community for creating a sustainable course.**

The team from Love Intersections (LI) described how a key reason for their involvement in the course were longer-term relationships with Christina, JP, and ACAM because that gave them confidence in the project. Their feedback shows the importance

of trust in creating community-engaged research courses; by necessity, this course requires instructors who have deep connections to community and can bring partners on board. Similarly, one of the guest speakers for the course agreed to participate in the course because of “who was asking,” given they had previously worked with both Christina and JP. They also wanted to be involved in the panel because of who else was speaking, describing: “it’s like sharing with friends, being in the company of people I very much look up to and learn a lot from as well.” They recounted how valuable it was that the panel was composed of community practitioners who had a range of approaches and experiences to working in community, given this meant they were all able to learn from and appreciate each other.

Other groups wanted to participate in the project in part due to the ability to develop important connections through UBC as an institution. For Chinatown Today (CT) and Sliced Mango Collective (SMC), both of their organizations were looking for opportunities to connect with youth, so building these connections with UBC students aligned with the audiences they were hoping to reach.

Community partners also cited how their involvement in the course connected them with a broader community. For example, Spencer (Roundtable Education Society [RES]) discussed how as a new, emerging organization, they had hoped to build connections with other members of the community within the course. In practice, the community showcase was a great opportunity to share information about RES and their current work with folks in the industry and community.

Community partners wanted to participate in the course to build capacity and/or because it was aligned with their organization’s goals, with the project deliverables described as a key benefit. For instance, Love Intersections described their work as emergent and that their participation was informed by the opportunities for mutual growth and learning together within the course. Chinatown Today and Roundtable both cited how this project provided them with the opportunity to expand their team’s capacity. For Spencer, this project was helpful in diversifying the type of community work under their portfolio; they mentioned that working on this project helped demonstrate to RES board members the wide range of community work accomplished in that quarter.

Community partners cited how their involvement in the course connected them with a broader community.

Projects were valuable and meaningful to both the students as well as their organizations. Chinatown Today noted that the engagement plan that students produced would help inform future directions of their organization, which will be especially helpful as they move back to more in-person events.

After the end of term, the student group that collaborated with Sliced Mango Collective started a fundraising campaign, selling stickers from the artwork and stories that they produced from the course, with 60% of proceeds going to jeepney drivers in the Philippines. Speaking about the strengths of the course, Gabrielle (SMC) noted:

I think one of the biggest benefits was [that Kung Saan Saan, the students' art project] is continuing past the course. And I think that's because the project they chose to do was interactive with folks outside of SMC. I think the art that they made and the stories that they gathered is one concrete benefit because it kind of puts into practice the things they've been learning in the course and utilizes our own skills and connections. So that was something really cool, to see it as something which can continue on and continue engaging folks within their community.

Gabrielle's reflections demonstrate how the project provided these opportunities for students to draw from Sliced Mango Collective's insights and resources to practice community work. The community showcase in particular was where many community members asked how they could support and buy the stickers, and demonstrates an additional co-learning benefit of community-engaged knowledge mobilization.

Community partners also wanted to engage in the course because of the opportunity to help mentor and learn from students, and described the positive relationships that emerged from these collaborations. Several community partners mentioned valuing the opportunity to take project-based or community-engaged courses when they were students, which made them want to be a part of similar offerings for current students. Community partners mentioned valuing the opportunity to serve as mentors. As Audrey (SMC) stated:

Normally we host events for youth and we engage with them in a different way, whereas here we were more equal community partners and they were learning what it was like to have a non-profit or to do grassroots organizing. [...] I think we both learned a lot from one another.

Love Intersections discussed how this collaboration had particular value because it helped them get a sense of what students are currently passionate about and could benefit from, since students have their ear to the ground in a different way. David (LI) described the value in being able to witness students "connecting the dots." He appreciated the opportunity to help teach students that "it's not just this lofty thing that we're learning in academia. There's actually really specific things that we can do in community." Ultimately, community partners discussed

the mentorship opportunity the course provided as something that is mutually beneficial, as they also learned from the experience how to be good mentors.

Similarly to students, most of the challenges cited by community partners were connected to timing, both in terms of the difficulty of traveling to UBC during a weekday at noon and wanting more time to work with students. Particularly because UBC is geographically distant from the rest of the city, several community partners mentioned the challenges of a course that was held midday on weekdays, given that some were not involved in the organization full-time and/or had other full-time jobs or commitments. For instance, Pearl (CT) was not able to attend classes so Russell attended all of the in-class components on behalf of their organization; as a pair, they also had meetings with students outside of class time. The community partners acknowledged that, although scheduling was a challenge, it was not a major barrier and is difficult to practically address because it's more broadly a limitation of university schedules. Jen (LI) proposed that community organization offices could serve as meeting locations, or that the term could begin with a gathering over food on site in the community. Practically, holding class off campus regularly would need to consider the university's policies around liability as well as the possibility that students might have back-to-back commitments on campus; however, hua foundation recently acquired a downtown office space (in collaboration with the UBC Centre for Asian Canadian Research and Engagement [ACRE]) which could

be an opportunity to facilitate some meetings and/or programming off campus going forward.

The short timeline of the course—just four months—was a challenge for community members as well because it meant they needed to figure out a project that was feasible in that timeframe and would be beneficial to both students and the organization. There was interest in being involved in a full-year course if this was logistically possible, given a full year would allow for more time for relationship building and broaden the scope of projects that they could undertake. Similarly, one of the guest speakers mentioned that they would appreciate more time to connect with students after the panel (the panel discussion was structured so that panelists first spoke and then had the opportunity to connect with students in small groups/pods). Given the next iteration of the course will be in a 3-hour time slot, it will be easier to provide ample time for students to connect with guest speakers after the panel in a way that was more difficult in the 1.5 hour class slot. This guest speaker also mentioned that perhaps providing a structure for guest panelists to connect with students beyond the course could be helpful.

Striking a balance between supporting students through the project ideation process and experiencing the practical realities of maneuvering collaborative work was challenging. The community partners mentioned that there were sometimes difficulties coming up with a project given it needed to balance both students' strengths, interests, and course requirements while also being

something that aligned with the organization's work. While Spencer (RES) cited that figuring out the project as a challenge, they mentioned appreciating how the instructors helped guide students to make things as seamless as possible. Sliced Mango Collective's partner project went smoothly for the most part; however, the open-ended nature of the brief made it difficult at first to figure out what to do. They suggested a couple of areas for further guidance: providing more concrete examples of projects that would be suitable or asking partners to come to the class having brainstormed ideas for projects.

From the perspective of the teaching team, there is an important balance to strike between ensuring there is enough guidance provided to community partners and students while also not overdetermining project parameters in a way that would limit opportunities for groups from taking on creative and innovative projects. So while the teaching team is creating a project archive now that there is a history of projects associated with the course, there have been discussions about how to provide a broad enough range of examples to ensure that it becomes a point of inspiration for new projects rather than a template that is duplicated. In addition, JP mentioned that there is potentially an opportunity to invite past students involved in the course as guests to share their experience. Sliced Mango Collective also discussed some project ideas that they had that ended up not coming into fruition for various reasons, including their desire to put up the stories and artwork produced around the city

running into timing and legal considerations. They had the idea of getting students involved in event-planning processes as well, but this was too difficult with the amount of time that event planning would take and the restrictions on fitting that within the semester.

Different interpretations of 'research output' and 'deliverable' sometimes impacted the type of project that groups decided upon.

Members of Chinatown Today mentioned that the research framing of the course limited the types of projects that they put forward. This was not the only factor that impacted the type of project they pursued, however, as they also mentioned that the timing of the academic calendar did not align well with the seasonality of their work, so they moved away from proposing some projects that were more deeply embedded within the Chinatown community that would require more labour from their team.

Notably, a lot of the work that organizations believed did not align with the requirements of a 'research-project deliverable' (e.g, having students help plan or participate in a community event) actually fit well within the teaching team's conceptualization of 'deliverables.' For example, JP cited that something like planning a community dinner would also have been considered an excellent 'research deliverable' as it is both community-engaged work and knowledge production. The research part can come through in the scholarly considerations behind the event planning, as questions, discussions and analysis related

to hosting, serving, and inviting guests, can be scholarship. In fact, part of the reason that the teaching team left the idea of ‘research output’ and ‘deliverable’ quite open was to encourage the subversion of these concepts and to challenge the rigid frames through which ‘academic work’ is often viewed.

Yet seeing that some students and community partners were stuck on creating a ‘research-focused project’ and ‘big enough output’ is a reminder of the need to be clearer and more explicit about what is meant by ‘research output.’ The mismatched understanding around what ‘counts’ as a research deliverable is a reminder of the ingrained and narrow lens that research is often viewed through, and the reality that many community partners working with the university have the valid expectation that these frames might constrain the work that they can undertake within the university. Moving forward, these lessons are instructive for the teaching team to reiterate that deliverables can be ‘small,’ or practices that work outside of what is typically considered ‘academic work,’ because the goal of the course is for community relations and collaborations to inform what is considered scholarship. This practice forms part of the broader work needed to address ongoing disconnects between institutional and community approaches to ‘community-engagement.’⁴ Moreover, at a values-level, both JP and Christina stated that they were more interested in the process and work of collaboration, over the actual output of the student projects. There is ongoing discussion within the teaching team around whether or not this

should be stated more explicitly to students and community partners, and how to strike a balance between providing enough structure for students to succeed without overdetermining group project outcomes.

Having more communication between groups about their projects, as suggested by both students and Love Intersections, could also positively inform project conceptualization. Love Intersections expressed that if they had known that two groups were pursuing policy-based projects, they might have steered their group towards more grassroots work.

NOTE

- 4 Another example that speaks to differences between community and university understandings of ‘community’ is Chinatown Today’s reflections on their relationship to community. The team mentioned that their organization is still one that is trying to develop deeper relations to Chinatown itself, including through navigating the complexities that arise from the diverse groups within Chinatown. Their feedback is an important reminder that some institutional understandings of ‘community’ as an entity to consult and engage with can treat communities as a monolith and gloss over the nuanced relationships that exist within communities.

Community partners all felt that the students and teaching team were very receptive and cognizant of their organizations' needs and open to comments and suggestions. The Love Intersections team explicitly mentioned that being invited to participate in the course with a clear description of the required commitments and anticipated outcomes left less room for ambiguity (See [Appendix 2](#) for Community Partner Project Brief). As Jen (LI) described during an interview:

It's also a real testament to the thoughtfulness that [the teaching team] have curated because it is, of course, in collaboration with community organizations and in community that there are these very thoughtful steps that were incorporated into the course—[both] leading up to the course and then [in closing]. [For example,] this interview, even our less formal interview with christina. Like these kinds of check-ins: extremely important to relationship building and piloting anything together is the debrief, right? So, to me, as a facilitator, that is already half the work. I couldn't be more thrilled.

Jen's comments help reiterate how relationship-building was prioritized as part of the course and how this helped center the needs of community partners.

This attentiveness is something that community partners also experienced while working with students. Spencer (RES) mentioned that when the students sat in on consultations with RES's stakeholders, they “demonstrated a strong level of

commitment honouring the boundaries of the stakeholders.” Spencer noted that students created a document expressing their intentions and transparency about the use of consultations in their work and showed thoughtfulness throughout the process. Audrey (SMC) shared similar sentiments about their collaboration with students:

It really did just feel like partnership. It was kind of confusing at first to navigate the hierarchy of, “Do we tell you what to do? Do you give us suggestions? Or how does this reality work?” But by the end, it just felt super reciprocal, like they were doing some [contract] work for SMC. We were also very much supporting them and their experience trying to learn about grassroots organizing, so it just felt like genuine partnership.

Audrey's response helps illuminate the types of mutual learning and support that occurred within the class.

Community partners also appreciated that the community showcase was held off-campus, within the community, and on the weekend as it made it more accessible for them. One of the guest speakers who also attended the community showcase echoed observations of how deeply embedded the course was in community, how grounded the course was in relationships, and how the community partners seemed happy to be involved in the project.

It is in collaboration with community organizations and in community that there are these very thoughtful steps that were incorporated into the course—[both] leading up to the course and then [in closing].

Staff and Teaching Team Perspectives

Interviews were also conducted with Szu Shen (ACAM Program Manager), Dr. Laura Ishigiro (ACAM Director), christina lee 李嘉明 (Co-instructor, hua foundation), Dr. JP Catungal (Co-instructor, UBC Social Justice Institute), and Kevin Huang 黃儀軒 (Co-founder and Executive Director, hua foundation). The interviews with ACAM staff, hua foundation staff, and the teaching team helped provide important considerations related to the internal infrastructure and strategy of the course. These insights are important for informing the future of the course and in understanding the processes required for long-term sustainability (See [Appendix 11](#), [12](#), & [13](#) for interview questions).

Relationships are integral to the course to build overall capacity, opportunities, and supportive structures for students to learn about how to apply and get involved in systems of activism and social change. When discussing his motivation for designing this course, JP mentioned having previous good experiences working with christina and hua foundation, and his desire to grow that work through ACAM 320J. He wanted to imagine a practice-based course in the scope of ACAM's offerings as well, given that community-centered knowledge production is a core tenet of the ACAM curriculum.

As an organization, hua foundation's work lies at the intersections of cultural heritage and social change. As Kevin summarized:

[Our approach has been that] we should actually invest in supportive structures that work collaboratively, instead of hua foundation becoming a big brand that does everything ourselves. If you see a lot of our work, you'll notice it's often in partnerships. We're often involved in a capacity that maybe the public doesn't know about and that's okay with us.

As such, ACAM 320J aligns well with hua foundation's organizational goals around building capacity for youth and supporting other community organizations.

Outside of the organization's capacity building mandates, christina mentioned a specific desire to reimagine learning environments to make space for vulnerability and shift student understandings of 'failure.' Instead of understanding failure



ACAM 320J teaching team members Szu Shen, christina lee, and JP Catungal speak at an event hosted by UBC Community Engagement (2024, Joanna Yang)

through its negative and static connotations, christina aims to reframe failure as a jumping off point for further learning: ‘where do we go from here?’. While the negative connotations of ‘failure’ often reflect the realities of organizing and the systemic pressures that they operate under, this has the unintended consequence of reproducing manufactured urgency and pressure that often lead to negative mental health impacts and burnout. Another main lesson that christina tried to teach students was the value of undertaking smaller projects that fit

within their capacity and the timeline of the course. This goal was informed by their experiences and expertise working in community and witnessing how sometimes advocacy work can undervalue smaller-scale work and push people to the point of burnout. While not a stated learning outcome of the course, this points to attempts to shift systemic sector-wide challenges from a values and practical standpoint.

Understanding the motivations for participating in the course from hua’s perspective is useful for building a course that is mutually beneficial for the academic unit and partner organizations. Further, this demonstrates ACAM’s long track record of sharing these values about fostering community work.

It was also clear from interviews that christina’s history and relationships to the organizations were important for the course. Chinatown Today and Roundtable Education Society both were incubated by hua. Hua has also supported Sliced Mango Collective’s strategic planning in the past. JP and christina both have worked quite closely with Love Intersections. This intimate knowledge of the community organizations and their needs and resources allowed christina to offer ideas for community projects that would both fit the class parameters and the organizations. One of christina’s long-term hopes is for ACAM to become an anchor to these community partners that develops and maintains their own networks, so the success of the course is not reliant on a singular person’s (or even two people’s) relationships.

Given that these pieces related to relationship-building were fundamental to the course, JP's advice for others who might be interested in similarly designing a community-engaged research course is to start early, because relationship-building and the recruitment of project partnerships takes time and trust. For others imagining what a course like this could be like in their context, JP suggested reflecting on what relationships and history they already have as a starting point for building this work.

ACAM 320J is a unique offering in the context of the university, and this uniqueness both provided rich opportunities to craft the course as well as some challenges in navigating university bureaucracy. According to Szu, the course successfully builds on ongoing and intentional work that ACAM as a unit has been undertaking to develop more accountability to community partners, by solidifying this work in a UBC-coded course offering. As Laura described:

We've never done a course exactly like this before, though it builds very logically on things that we have been doing. To my knowledge there are no other courses that do precisely this kind of work, and so I think some of this is finding the places where we can innovate in the possibility.

Because there is no pre-existing path or answer about how to run the course, there is also an opportunity to thrive in this place of not fitting into existing structures.

Christina's role as a course designer, instructor and community expert was fundamental to the course's success, yet the university's systems for classifying professors and instructors can be difficult to apply to community practitioners. Given the short timeline between receiving grant funding and the delivery of the course, it ended up being easier to appoint Christina as an 'unpaid adjunct' receiving payment through their organization (Hua Foundation) rather than through the university. It is worth further acknowledging that most, if not all, existing teaching positions at UBC are designed with the expectation that the instructor will have, at minimum, some level of graduate degree. This existing structure, which over-emphasizes university credentials and devalues community experience and knowledge, can make it difficult to envision how community practitioners can fit within the university as instructors. Thinking more broadly about these implications, there is a higher administrative burden on units when creating courses like ACAM 320J because the university is not structured to facilitate teaching from community experts.

These frictions between the university's expectations and community partners' needs also came up in questions raised by students during the course about data storage. UBC policy recommends that research data be stored on Canadian servers, which would mean that applications such as Google Drive and Gmail should not be used for research purposes; however, many

community organizations use these platforms, and it is important for researchers to avoid imposing institutional norms on community organizations. Given the complexity of this case, the teaching team inquired with a staff member from UBC's Office of the Vice-President, Research and Innovation about what they thought would be appropriate. They first clarified that FIPPA no longer has it as a hard and fast rule to store data on Canadian servers; instead, legislation requires a risk assessment be conducted. They also mentioned that their recommendation depends on data ownership and control. So if a UBC researcher is leading the project, they should use the institutional tools, but if the community partner is leading the research, the data would count as theirs and they could use any tool they want provided they have an agreement with the researcher about secure data storage. While the teaching team was able to eventually get clarity on this issue, this case helps represent a lot of the formal, institutional structures dictated by the university which can be complicated when brought into collaboration with community partners. Further, this information was only available upon seeking out clarification, and not explicitly stated.

At the same time, the collaborative nature of the work created opportunities that otherwise would not have existed, owing to the resources and infrastructure that hua foundation has as an organization. For example, hua foundation paid for UBC parking for guest speakers, community partners, as well as

graduate student staff ahead of time, rather than requiring them to navigate UBC Finance's reimbursement processes. Therefore, the unique nature of this collaboration provided opportunities to do things differently even as it posed additional challenges.

There are no other courses that do precisely this kind of work, and so I think some of this is finding the places where we can innovate in the possibility.

ACAM 320J offers an example of the best types of collective work and teaching that are possible within the university. Laura discussed how the course represents an example of an expansive and reciprocal partnership on multiple levels, as it includes community members, hua foundation, instructors, students, and the university as participants in collective, collaborative work that is a legitimate and legible part of the academy. Szu also described how the course is unique in its activation of group and team teaching, with the teaching team embodying the work of being in relationship and community with each other.

Laura cited several elements of the course design that were innovative and demonstrated how the course lived up to its aims of community-engagement. Reflecting in particular on the community charter, she described:

I talk about the community charter all the time: my copy of it is right here. I think in terms of a concrete deliverable, I'm astounded by the students' ability to develop [something like] that. It's an incredibly rich, nuanced, thoughtful, grounded piece that I refer to all the time. [...] As an instructor, getting students to do that work collectively and collaboratively at all is a phenomenal accomplishment, and it's a phenomenal accomplishment for the students as well: to [not only] have it be good, and to have it be something that is not [part of a] capstone end of the course, but part of this iterative development of their thinking that they then applied and practiced in their projects. That was an excellent representation of what I see in a course that was about more than just outcomes, but still had measurable, concrete outcomes that were also incredibly impressive.

Laura's account is a reminder of what an accomplishment it was to have students not only work well together, but to collectively produce a project that researchers find valuable and that the students themselves were proud of.

Christina also reflected on the community charter as something that built the confidence of students and set them up to

succeed in their community projects. Because ACAM is interdisciplinary, there is no guarantee that students had existing relationships with one another, so the community charter functions as a way to build students' trust in each other to do this collective project work.

As another recurring guest to the course, Kevin appreciated the different learning opportunities and environments students had within the course. He praised that the course centers around students' reflections rather than just lectures, given this format teaches students the skills to think critically rather than getting them to passively absorb content. Kevin also described how the course was set up to help transfer institutional knowledge and experiences about organizing that are typically lost across generations. As Kevin put it:

There have always been generations of [this organizing]. But I wonder where and how mentorship, knowledge exchange, institutional memory, [and] community memory can be passed on in a better way. This is why we as an organization are very interested in investing in structures and systems that are hopefully a little more permanent.

Creating these structures within a larger course community that students could speak with and learn from allowed these kinds of knowledge exchange.

Holding space for student initiative

In the middle of the semester, a member of the course community who had shared their expertise with students was abruptly laid off from their staff position at UBC. They had been responsible for facilitating community-engaged research projects, yet university administrators deemed their community networks and expertise unnecessary to their position. Instead, administrators decided that this role of facilitating community partnership could be managed by a standard coordinator-type position. As Kevin shared, this decision is indicative of the hypocrisy of the institution, where UBC outwardly champions community engagement and yet undervalues the work of people who are in these critical positions and who build the relationships and trust that are necessary to actually sustain this work. That is another reason why it is important to emphasize the relationships and process that underpinned ACAM 320J: often institutions want the outcome of ‘community-engaged research’ without knowing or valuing and background work required to facilitate the success of these projects.

When the students heard about this unjust firing, they were motivated to take action and decided to collectively write and send a letter to the responsible unit expressing their disappointment and frustrations with the decision, affirming the need for these experts who can serve as bridges between community and the university.

This was not a planned component of the course, but it evolved organically because of students’ interest and because the issue resonated with the course themes and discussion. By that point, the class had held many conversations about the devaluing of community knowledge in the university, the importance of relationships in sustaining community work, and responsibilities to community partners, so students were able to connect the dots, and were keen to find ways to support this member of the course community.

Laura was present as a class guest the day when students were finalizing the letter and observed:

I was really struck by how motivated the class was to take action on something that wasn't actually part of what they were being asked to do, but was absolutely something that, as I understood it, came out of the culture and the learning that they'd already done in the course where they saw that it was relevant and important to do. And to me that really speaks to the learning, culture, environment, and community.

She also commented on how inspiring it was to see Christina guide and make space for them to do this work in the context of the class. It's telling of the growth and learning that students underwent during the course that, when there was an opportunity to come together and support a community member, they took a lead on the process even though it was not a course requirement.

Laura and Szu both also commented that the showcase at the end of the term showed them not only how much the students had learned, but also how they took ownership of their learning; the event was evidence of the transformative effect of the course on the students. As an instructor, Laura mentioned how clever it was to have two showcases because it really allows students to figure out how to translate their knowledge into these different contexts.

One of the main challenges that these interviews highlighted was the question of sustainability and funding when a course like ACAM 320J deviates from the typical scripts of the academy. Several members of the staff and teaching team pointed out that funding and budget is an important question, given that ACAM 320J needs to be a smaller classroom environment by design, but this makes it an expensive course to produce, especially in terms of properly funding and resourcing the range of people part of the course community (e.g., honorariums for community partners, budget for community programming). In essence, the cost-per-student is substantially higher than an average undergraduate course.

JP summarized the reasons why these resources are necessary to ensure the course lives up to its values as a community-engaged research course:

We need to pay people, compensate people properly for their contributions—community partners, but also folks like Christina, as a co-instructor for the course—because that is part of how

we [embody what we teach] in this course. Reciprocity is an important principle in this course: not exploiting people, not extracting labour from people, appreciating them well and properly. Even things like making sure there is food at our community showcases so that people come and they come not hungry. Those are really important considerations, right? That requires resources.

He pointed out that we exist in an institutional context where the neoliberal university requires a certain number of students enrolled to get sustainable funding. Yet having this course scaled up would take away from the intimate learning environment necessary for students to feel comfortable being vulnerable in their questions, concerns, and problems as well as to receive adequate consultation and advice on their projects.

Having a smaller class size also ensures that community partners have enough support. As JP mentioned, “We need to be able to ensure that we recruit community partners that we are in good relationships with, that we can steward those relationships. But also so that they don’t feel like they’re just a part of a large factory of community-engaged research projects.” While the university tends to value numerical impact and scale, it is important that the course does not expand in a way that would undermine the principles and values that make it special and successful.

*Reciprocity is an important principle
in this course: not exploiting people,
not extracting labour from people,
appreciating them well and properly.*

ACAM specifically is also an interdisciplinary minor program, which comes with certain specific limitations on resources that informs how the course can function in its current format. ACAM does not have its own faculty, meaning that faculty contracts need to be bought out from other units. This has implications for trying to expand the course, particularly into a year-long course. As Szu described:

There are certain departments or units that we have stronger ties with, which means we are buying out their [faculty] a lot. And we don't want to cannibalize that—so how to navigate that with other departments? That's one challenge if we want to expand our course offerings, especially in terms of more resource intensive or time-intensive teaching.

Szu's comments are a reminder that there are also relationships within the university that are important to tend to, with

the teaching needs of other units forming an important consideration when trying to expand ACAM offerings. This is one of the things that makes it difficult to implement ACAM 320J as a full-year course, as having a single faculty member teach for two semesters requires buying out two courses from their course loads in their home units.

There is agreement that ACAM 320J functions well as a small course, and is worth these resources, yet the challenge is often in storytelling the course to the university and granting bodies to secure sustainable funding. Part of this storytelling involves seeing the course in relation to other ACAM courses. For example, both the Community Charter assignment and community showcases offer opportunities for touchpoints with concurrent and future ACAM courses that have higher student enrollment. Szu suggested having the community showcase coordinated to involve other ACAM classes as well. These are pathways to highlight the potential wide-ranging impacts of ACAM 320J beyond its own smaller class size. Moreover, there are several ways that ACAM 320J fits within strategic plans and goals for community-engaged research put forth by the university that can be used to communicate its importance to overall student experience.

Iteration and responsiveness are key principles and values of the course. Taking into account feedback from across the broader course community are key next steps for the course. These include: ironing out the timing and pacing of the course,

having a more expansive list of community partners, growing enrollment up to 25 students, and having the course as a capstone for ACAM.

JP, Christina, and Kevin all expressed a desire for a more expansive set of community partners involved in the course. Christina noted that, for various reasons (including timing, capacity, etc.), they didn't have a 100% success rate when recruiting community partners into the project, but there is potential to build and connect the class with different networks in future. JP noted that enrollment can likely grow up to 20 students while providing the same support and benefits. As well, there have been several discussions about having the course eventually run as a capstone that summarizes the skills learned throughout the ACAM program. One element to consider, however, is that ACAM is currently a flexible minor where students have a lot of choice in terms of their schedule and course selection and since making it a capstone would require all students to take the course, the minor might become a bit less flexible for people trying to fit it into their existing schedules.



Community visioning activity from the ACAM 320J Community Showcase (2023, christina lee)



ACAM 320J Community Showcase (2023, christina lee)

CONCLUSIONS

OVERALL, THERE WERE many consistent themes shared in feedback offered by students, community partners, a guest speaker, staff, and the teaching team. This section combines this feedback for easy reference under the following themes: learnings from pilot, key course strengths, key suggestions, and future directions.

Learnings from the Pilot

- **Relationships are fundamental to the creation and delivery of the course.** Having long-term community relationships was key to the conception of the course, helped with initial buy-in from community partners, allowed the teaching team to provide helpful, specific feedback, and meant the projects undertaken were mutually beneficial for students and community partners.
- **Creating a course that expands beyond traditional university offerings often requires the creative navigation of rigid university structures.** The non-traditional nature of the course can create additional administrative work, although there are often solutions to ensure the execution of the course vision from within these frames.
- **Having clear asks and multiple check-ins for community partners is important.** Community partners appreciated knowing in advance what their commitments to the course would be and

the responsiveness of the teaching team through multiple check-ins along the way.

- **By necessity, a community-engaged studio course will be resource-intensive.** Having a well-resourced course in terms of staff and funding is necessary to embody the course's values of honouring labour and community relations. This can be at odds with the expectations of the neoliberal university, but ultimately, challenging systems of valuation in the academy is a key part of championing equitable partnerships.

Key Course Strengths

- **The course provides a unique learning opportunity for students to engage in hands-on research projects that provide mutual benefit to community partners.** There are no other current course offerings at UBC that bring students and community partners in relation to co-conceive and collaborate on projects in this way.
- **Having the course co-designed and co-delivered by a community partner provides access to knowledge and resources that greatly enrich the classroom experience.** Hua foundation's involvement in the course provides perspectives, expertise, and relationships that are necessary to bridge the university and community.

- **Community partners appreciate the opportunity to mentor and work with students and other community members.** This course demonstrates how community-university collaborations can provide organizations with important connections to youth and community networks that ultimately help build community organizing capacity.
- **Collective work and learning is a key strength of the course.** In practice, the course decenters hierarchies of knowledge, providing opportunities for students to learn from the teaching team, guest speakers, and each other. This environment helped teach students to think critically and take ownership over their learning.
- **The project-based nature of the course teaches students a range of practical skills that they can apply to their various fields of interests.** Students cited gaining interpersonal/relationship-building skills, teamwork skills, project management skills, communication skills, and grant writing skills that they can take outside the classroom.
- **The small class environment creates a setting where students feel safe to co-learn.** Having a small class size allowed the teaching team to provide the necessary mentorship to support student work and created an environment where students could experiment and make mistakes knowing they had the support of a course community.

Key Suggestions

- **Navigating timing for the course (both in total length and in pacing) was the greatest challenge.** Several people mentioned feeling stretched for time near the end of the course and offered a range of suggestions, including starting some assessments sooner and modifying the course to be year-long, in the summer, or longer classroom sessions.
- **Students desired more frequent and earlier engagement with community partners for their projects.** Both community partners and students expressed wanting to meet earlier, perhaps through a guest panel by community partners.
- **Students desired more opportunities to engage with community during instructional time.** Students and community partners suggested having more off-campus site visits, more speakers whose work is primarily outside of the university, and having a gathering over food at the beginning of the course.
- **Guidelines and expectations for student projects, and the course's openness to expansive definitions of 'research' could be further clarified.** Some community partners and students assumed that their deliverable needed to fit within traditional definitions of 'research.' Clarifying the range of deliverables that fit within the teaming team's understanding of 'research' would help challenge the ways community work (e.g., events, relationship building) is often undervalued within the academy.

Future Directions

- **Explore pathways for the long term sustainability of the course.** There are several aspects within this pilot (e.g., christina's connections, reliance on grant funding, the course's status as a special topics course) that would need to be transitioned into more permanent structures to ensure the course's longevity.
- **Explore possibilities for transitioning to a fourth-year course and/or capstone that is required for all ACAM students.** Considerations include potential impacts on class size and the flexibility of the current minor program; however, the course incorporates many of the program's core teachings that would make it suitable as a capstone.
- **Hua foundation's new office as a potential site for off-campus learning opportunities.** One of the difficulties of having off-campus instructional time surround questions of liability for the university; however, because hua foundation has its own space in community, in partnership with UBC's Centre for Asian Canadian Research and Engagement, this could be used to create more opportunities for learning in community.
- **Expand the breadth of community partners involved in the course and the enrollment (up to 25 students).** Several staff and teaching team mentioned a desire to expand the community partners engaged in the course and incorporate the community showcase with other ACAM classes.
- **Test different classroom formats, pacing, and time slots.** The next iteration of the course will be 3 hours and begin engagement with community partners earlier. Having a 3-hour time slot helps cut down on weekly housekeeping time and provides more flexibility for longer studio sessions and guest panels. The honorarium will also be increased for community partners to account for their earlier engagement in the course.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: TEACHING STAFF ROLE DESCRIPTIONS

Partnerships & Programming (Kayley)

Kayley will be heading up a lot of the external-facing work associated with this course, including liaising with course community partners for student projects and supporting programming for the two showcases at the end of the semester.

Documentation & Report (Elaina)

Elaina will be leading the documentation and synthesizing of the entire project process, with specific focus on capacity building functions of the project. The final report will be used to build a baseline of documented knowledge for future community-academic partnerships.

APPENDIX 2: COMMUNITY PARTNER PROJECT BRIEF

ACAM320J: Asian Canadian Community Organizing Studio

Course Overview

ACAM320J: Asian Canadian Community Organizing is a new studio course for UBC 2023 Winter Term 1 (September to December), co-developed and co-led by Dr. JP Catungal (Assistant Professor Institute for Gender, Race, Sexuality and Social Justice; Co-Director Centre for Asian Canadian Research and Engagement) and Christina Lee 李嘉明 (operations + special projects @ hua foundation).

Academic institutions have increasingly expressed growing interest in community-based learning initiatives, and a desire to engage with communities through less extractive research practices. However, students are not always adequately prepared for how to approach and build these equitable and reciprocal relationships with communities outside the university.

UBC's Asian Canadian and Asian Migration Studies (ACAM) program and hua foundation are working collaboratively to develop a community charter and upper-level undergraduate course to provide formalized training and mentorship on community-based research and engagement.

- *How do we engage in ethical, equitable, reciprocal, and collaborative research practices?*
- *How can we facilitate meaningful research that is grounded in and accountable to community?*

This Asian Canadian Research and Engagement (ACRE) Studio balances academic and community knowledge, in partnership with local community partners, to support students in designing and facilitating community-centred research projects.

In this course, students will learn about and practice ethical and collaborative research with and for Asian Canadian communities. Along with lectures, discussions and readings, students will engage directly with and learn from community research partners who have worked with Asian Canadian studies faculty at UBC. The course will enable students to implement research projects in collaboration with local community partners and to collaborate on a 'community charter' that articulates what it means to do meaningful research for Asian Canadian communities, by and with Asian Canadian communities.

Community partnerships and participation for this studio are funded in part by the University of British Columbia Community-University Engagement Support (CUES) Fund.

Key Outcomes

The studio coursework is split into three stages:

- 1 For the first stage of the course, students will learn about core values and principles of community-based research, and work towards a collaboratively developed ‘community charter’ for engaging in equitable and reciprocal research practices.
- 2 The second stage of the course will be dedicated to implementation: putting into practice these values and principles, by working with community partners to co-design and undertake a small research project.
- 3 The final stage of the course will provide opportunities for learning about different styles and formats of knowledge mobilization and dissemination, and to showcase the outputs of their community-based research project.

Program Roles

- **Community partners** are key members of the program, as teachers, advisors, facilitators, and research partners. This course seeks to leverage student research skills to serve community needs and build capacity for community partners, such that they are able to build and continue momentum for ongoing work.
- **Undergraduate students** that are enrolled in this course are keen to build and sustain reciprocal research partnerships, and conduct research that supports broader community capacity building, while gaining upper-level university credits. Students will be working in small teams of 3-5, in collaboration with community partners to understand the context of their work and deliver the final project.
- **Course co-leads JP & christina** will provide both academic and community guidance, oversight, and ongoing support to both students and community partners throughout the course of the partnership.
- **UBC ACAM & hua foundation** jointly provide administration, funding, coordination, and liaising with internal and external partners to facilitate the course and coursework, as well as maintaining accountability to community partners and students.

Community Participation

Being a community partner for ACAM320J means that you will help shape the research focus, deliverables, and/or questions, such that the outcomes of student projects support ongoing work that is happening in *your* community. This means that any report, deliverables, and data from this project can be used by your organization to serve your community needs. We anticipate that this would involve approximately 10 hours of your time over the course of one semester (3.5 months), specifically:

- **Project administration, coordination, and communications (1-2 hours)** with the ACAM & hua team to ensure that scheduling and capacity are a good fit for the semester. These functions can be more or less handled virtually and/or asynchronously.
- **Community meetings and project guidance (2-5 hours)** with students to conduct research projects.
 - **Initial context setting**, ideally in-person at UBC Point Grey campus during Week 7 (Tuesday October 17th, 12-1:30pm) of the course. Community partners will have the opportunity to meet with their student team to share organizational goals, values, and interests, and work collaboratively towards a common research vision.
 - **Follow-up, check-in's, and correspondence** with students to ensure that research outcomes continue to align with organizational goals. These may entail short in-person or Zoom meetings, and/or emails.
 - **Final project review**, ideally in person at UBC Point Grey campus during Week 10 (Thursday November 9th, 12-1:30pm) students will share the outputs of the project with community partners for final review prior to publication.
- **Attending the community showcase (2 hours)**, in-person at UBC Point Grey campus during Week 13 of the course (Thursday November 30th, 12-1:30pm). Join us to celebrate the work that we've completed together over the course of the semester, and see what other projects were produced with other community partners!
- **Program feedback (1 hour)**: check-in with ACAM & hua team at the end of the semester regarding your satisfaction with the program and any suggestions you have for the future.
- **Optional (tbc): Presentation during instructional time (1 hour)** to share about your past experiences (good and not so good) participating in academic research. Please note that this option is pending confirmation of the course syllabus.

The intention of this studio course is not a student work placement, as we acknowledge that—while well-intentioned—these often become make-work projects for community organizations. Rather, our goal is to ensure that student work undertaken for this course is complementary to the mission, vision, values, and ongoing work of community partners. Therefore, precedence is placed on the initial context setting sessions, such that students are able to gain a good grounding in the needs of community, and to reflect what they learn from those sessions into their final projects, more or less independently from community partners.

In recognition of the labour that is placed on community members to support this partnership, we are able to provide an honorarium of \$750, upon confirmed participation in the program. We are also happy to cover parking/transit costs for in-person sessions.

Please note that we will not know for certain the exact number of community partners required until student registration is confirmed, but are reaching out in advance such that organizations are able to determine and/or set aside capacity where required. Confirmation will be provided following the UBC Add/Drop deadline (Monday, September 18th), when student registrations are finalized.

Potential Project Deliverables

UBC ACAM strives to ensure that knowledge production and dissemination occurs in ways that are accessible beyond the academic sphere. Therefore, we imagine that potential project deliverables could include:

- A short film (e.g. *Finding Community: Connecting with Other Chinese Immigrants in Richmond*, UBC INSTRCC for the Richmond Museum)
- A podcast (e.g. *The ACAM Dialogues Podcast*)
- A zine, or other print publication (e.g. *climate justice & the Asian diaspora in Metro Vancouver: a zine for reflection*, UBC Climate Hub CJRC for hua foundation)
- A social media campaign

* Please note that some of the projects linked above were produced for internships and work-learn placements. The implementation period of this course is relatively short, and the scope of work for these projects will reflect this accordingly.

APPENDIX 3: COMMUNITY AGREEMENT

THE FOLLOWING community agreement is a democratically and collaboratively developed living document that sets the tone for how we interact with each other, the course material, and the broader course community. The agreement establishes mutually shared values and principles and creates accountability to each other.

As active participants in ACAM320J, we adopt the following values and principles, as our responsibility to ourselves and to each other:

- We acknowledge that we operate within structures and systems that often perpetuate racism, ableism, classism, cisheteropatriarchy, and other forms of violence and oppression, and commit to unlearning these ‘-isms’ in ourselves;
- We acknowledge good intentions but remain attentive to the effects of our words and our actions;
- We work together to maintain a culture of growth, learning, reflection, and reciprocity:
 - We prioritize relationships over productivity, speed, or transactions;
- We strive to create welcoming and responsive spaces where conflict is natural, and vulnerability is met with compassion;
 - We call in (as opposed to calling out), and ask ourselves what we are trying to accomplish as we address conflict, and
 - We receive feedback with gratitude and self-reflection;
- We approach discussions using a framework of ‘take space / make space’:
 - We are conscious of the balance of speaking time, while welcoming different ways of contributing to the conversation,
 - We are active listeners to each others’ ideas, while recognizing that active listening can look different for everyone, and
 - We invite each other to be brave with sharing their insights, while accepting that it is okay to not have anything to say some days;
- We have agency to listen and respond to our bodies, so long as we do our best not to disrupt other people’s experience of the classroom; and,
- We honour each other’s time and labour, and all that it takes to show up for each other.

APPENDIX 4: SYLLABUS

ACAM 320J final course syllabus.pdf (9 pages)

blogs.ubc.ca/acam320j/files/2024/09/ACAM-320J-final-course-syllabus.pdf

Asian Canadian Research and Engagement Studio

ACAM 320J: Special Topics in Asian Canadian and Asian Migration Studies (Community Organizing)

Instructor: Dr. JP Catungal
Location: LS Klinck Rm. 462

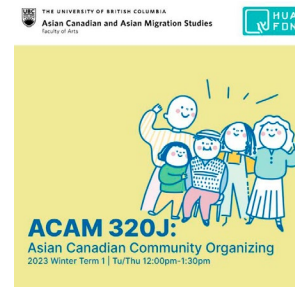
Course community partner: christina lee 李嘉明 (hua foundation)
Time: Tue/Thu, 12:00-1:20pm

Office hours: Thursdays, 330pm to 430pm (BuTo 1020) (By sign-ups)

Course overview

How does community engaged research expand scholarly and public understandings of Asian Canadian politics, cultures, histories and communities? How do we ensure that practices of community engaged Asian Canadian studies research are ethical, equitable, reciprocal, and collaborative? How can meaningful research be grounded in, accountable to and meaningful for community?

Academic institutions have increasingly expressed growing interest in community-based learning initiatives, and a desire to engage with communities through less extractive and more collaborative research practices. This course will prepare students of Asian Canadian studies to engage in community engaged research, emphasizing in particular how to approach and build equitable, reciprocal and accountable relationships with Asian Canadian communities and organizations outside the university. Students will learn about theories and methods of community engaged Asian Canadian studies. They will also have the opportunity to apply these theories and methods to envision and implement projects in partnership with community organizations.



The course has been co-developed and will be co-led by Dr. JP Catungal (Assistant Professor and Co-Lead, UBC Centre for Asian Canadian Research and Engagement) and christina lee 李嘉明 (operations + special projects @ hua foundation). Offered as a studio course, ACAM 320J will involve hands-on, project-based learning and emphasize a balance between academic, community and practical knowledge. Along with lectures, discussions and readings, students will engage directly with and learn from community research partners who have worked with Asian Canadian studies faculty at UBC. The course will enable students to implement research projects in collaboration with local community partners and to work together on a 'community charter' that articulates what it means to do meaningful research for Asian Canadian communities, by and with Asian Canadian communities.

Page 1 of 9

Note: This course has received funding support from UBC's Community-University Engagement Support (CUES) Fund and the Center for Community Engaged Learning Teaching Fellows Program.

Course learning objectives

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Discuss what community engaged research is and how it expands the field of Asian Canadian studies politically, epistemologically and methodologically
- Explain the institutional organization and governance of research, as well as how these impact community perspectives on and participation in research
- Unpack the ethical, relational and political challenges that can arise from community engaged Asian Canadian studies research
- Navigate institutional pathways towards conducting community engaged Asian Canadian studies research
- Apply lessons from the course to design and implement community engaged research projects in collaboration with community partners
- Come up with effective strategies for communicating community engaged research results to broader public audiences

Summary of graded deliverables

Completion of TCPS 2: CORE-2022 (5%) You will work through and complete the CORE 2022 online tutorial on research ethics, which serves as an introduction to *The Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (TCPS 2). You will submit your Certificate of Completion for an automatic 5%.
(Due: Sept. 28, Thur., before class)

Portfolio of personal reflections (20%) You will submit three reflections (~600 words) on the ff. topics prior to the start of the community engaged project:
1. Positionality and social identity (due: Sept. 21, Thur., before class)
2. Collaborating w/ community partners (due: Sept. 28, Thur., before class)
3. Group work (due: Oct. 10, Tues., before class)
You will also submit a fourth reflection (~600 words) in class looking back at your three reflections in light of your experience working in groups and with your community partner. (due: in class, Dec. 5, Tues.)
More specific prompt questions for each of the above will be given to you by the instructor to guide your reflections.

Participation (5%) Participation in the course community will be evaluated based on substance, depth and quality of engagement.

Community charter (15%)

The community charter is a class-wide project. Our collective task is to produce a resource for prospective practitioners of community engaged Asian Canadian studies research. The resource must articulate key principles and practices that prospective practitioners should consider when engaging in research with Asian Canadian communities. You will draw on course readings, other readings and resources, and perspectives offered by current practitioners of CE ACS research. The entire class will decide on the format and content of the community charter.

In preparation for the class-wide development and planning of the community charter, you will also individually prepare a one-page handout, in bullet point, identifying what you think are some key principles and practices that should be part of the community charter. This portion will be submitted for grading and will account for 5% of your final mark and 1/3 of the weight of the community charter (i.e., 5% of the 15% weight for this assignment is your handout).

(Due: Oct. 17, Tues., end of day)

Community engaged research project (20%)

In groups, you will collaborate with a community partner to envision, plan and implement a community engaged project related broadly to Asian Canadian studies. The goals, methods, format and content of your project will be decided in collaboration between your group and your community partner. (Due: Dec. 7, Thur., end of day)

You will also submit a two-page project brief (proposal) that describes what issue or topic your research project addresses, why the project is important, as well as how you will approach the implementation of the project.
(Due: Oct. 26, Tue., before class)

Audience engagement assignment 1 (10%)

In your community engaged research project groups, you will envision and implement an engagement strategy that communicates your research project to an institutional audience of your choosing (e.g., policymakers, funding bodies, university administrators, government officials). In groups, you will present your engagement strategy publicly to an assembled audience of institutional actors that will be invited to 'showcase #1'.

(Due: in-class, Nov. 23, Thur.)

Audience engagement assignment 2 (10%)

In your community engaged research project groups, you will envision and implement an engagement strategy that communicates your research project to a general audience of ACAM community members at a project showcase public event. In groups, you will present your engagement strategy publicly at a project showcase (#2) that will be open to the broader ACAM community within and beyond UBC.

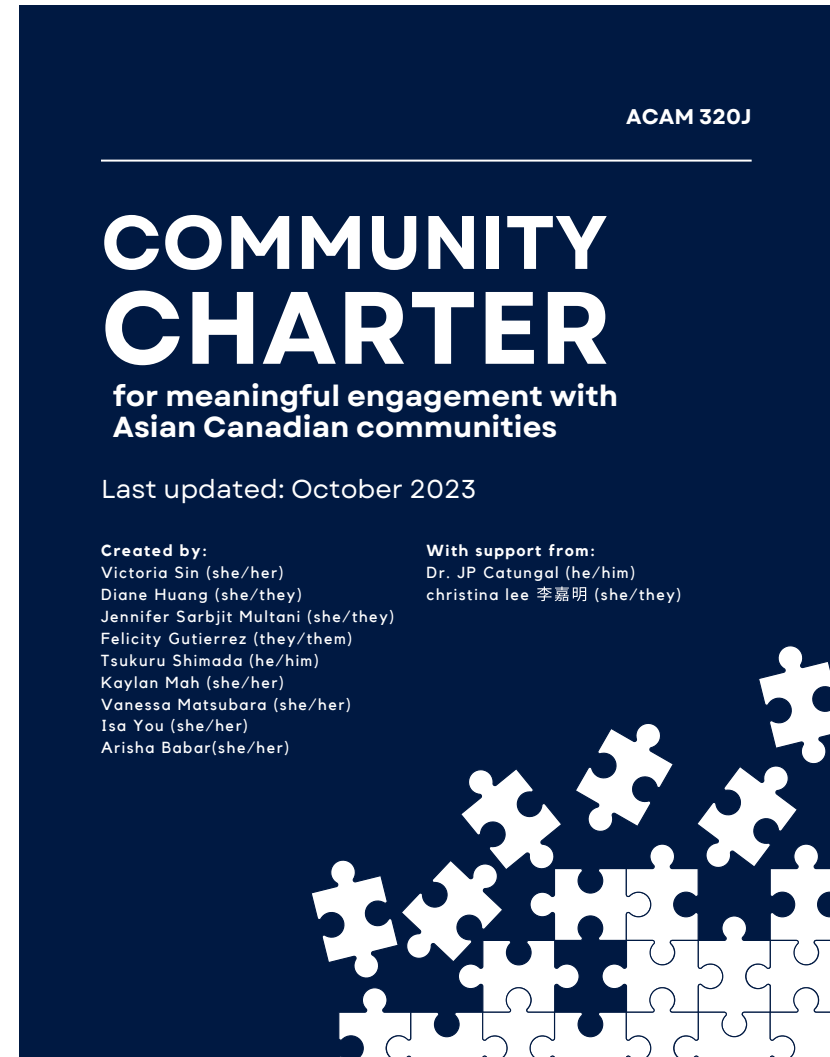
(Due: in-class, Nov. 30, Thur.)

APPENDIX 5: COMMUNITY CHARTER

ACAM 320J Community Charter.pdf (25 pages)

blogs.ubc.ca/acam320j/files/2024/09/

[03-2023-ACAM-320J-Community-Charter.pdf](#)



Preamble

This community charter is a living document meant to foster reciprocal and ongoing conversations about conducting research with Asian Canadian communities.

It is initiated by ACAM 320J students, who are situated in a number of different yet overlapping communities. When reading this Community Charter, you will encounter the terms "we," "our," and "us." While these terms refer to us ACAM 320J students, we do not aim to speak for other members of the communities we belong to. We hope that this will be a starting point for you to join in the conversation.

In fact, the ideas in this document are also informed by conversations we've had with community members, and academic conversations we've read about as part of the course. We express our gratitude to Stephanie Lim, Jennifer Lu, Sharanjit Sandhra, and Nicole Yakashiro.

As students and researchers at the University of British Columbia, we want to acknowledge the harms that academic institutions have caused marginalised communities. Our hope with this Charter is to help build better reciprocal relations between academia and Asian Canadian communities. As well, we acknowledge that the university doesn't exist in isolation. It is influenced by and also influencing that which may be interpreted as outside the scope of academia.

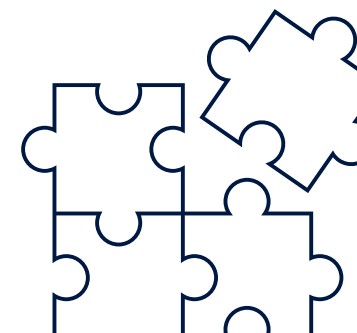
The majority of the class identifies with the Asian and/or Asian Canadian labels. This positions us as members of both academia and community. We want to bring to light the multiple identities and intersections within and across the communities we belong to.

Our interest in engaging with Asian Canadian communities is rooted in our position as academics in the field of Asian Canadian studies (ACS). The creation of ACS was informed by the [Third World Liberation Front](#), a multiracial coalition of students from UC Berkeley which included African Americans, Asian Americans, Chicanos/Chicanas, and Native Americans. This movement led to the establishment of Ethnic Studies as an interdisciplinary field in the United States and set precedents for similar programs across the world. We carry that legacy to this day by remaining critical about the intersections of race and academia.

Being Asian Canadians on Turtle Island, we acknowledge that we are guests on this land. Even though we gather on unceded xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) land, we acknowledge that members of our class have grown up in different parts of Turtle Island as well as the world. Therefore, we bring varied, nuanced relationships with Indigenous communities and space. It is important that we recognize our duality of being oppressed by, as well as complicit in, the ongoing settler-colonial project that oppresses Indigenous communities. This requires a perpetual process of learning and listening to the ancestral caretakers of this land, and implementing those values into our work.

Note: We have chosen to not hyphenate "Asian Canadians," as the hyphen makes statements about who belongs and who does not (Jiwani, 2011). Many news organisations and style guides have also dropped the hyphen.

In addition, we keep "white" lowercase to delegitimize and decenter whiteness as the norm and standard. See the Associated Press' announcement on ["Why we will lowercase white"](#) by John Daniszewski (2020).



APPENDIX 6: COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION DESCRIPTIONS

TO GET MATCHED with community organizations, students were asked to rank the organizations they would like to work with based on the following descriptions. Also included was contact information and information about working hours/general response time.

Love Intersections

Description

Love Intersections is a media arts collective of queer artists of colour with a mandate to use art practices for social change. We are dedicated to sharing intersectional and intergenerational stories of queer people of colour, as well as working with grassroots communities on projects that serve communities. We are currently working on a collaborative project with the Lim Association in Chinatown, where we have recorded oral history interviews with elders, and produced some art prints for an exhibit called the House of 9 Dragons, that was exhibited in 2022. It is being remounted at Massy Gallery from Dec to end of Feb, 2024. Our arts practice is social practice based, meaning relationships, collaboration and partnership are core to our practice. We move at the speed of trust.

We are also doing a collaboration with the DTES Heart of the City Festival in October (film screenings, a building tour, a public art display on community solidarity), as well as a collaboration with Nadine Spence's "Honouring our Grandmothers Healing Journey" project, that will be shown at Bill Reid gallery at the end of October.

Challenges/Areas for support

Outreach and community engagement are always places we could use support. We would love for the broader Chinatown and DTES community to be connected to the Massy exhibit, the Heart of the City collaboration, and Nadine's project as well.

Helpful links

Love Intersections Website: loveintersections.com

DTES Heart of City Festival: heartofthecityfestival.com/honouring-our-grandmothers-healing-journey-2022/#:~:text=Honouring%20our%20Grandmothers%20Healing%20Journey%20is%20a%20multi-year%2C%20multi,%2C%20watersheds%2C%20mountains%20and%20salmon

Roundtable Educational Society

Description

Roundtable Educational Society is a registered charity and our mission is to explore and build a new model for charities that provides more equitable access to resources for grassroots groups working to improve the lives of their communities in BC & Canada. We envision a world where equity-deserving and systemically marginalized individuals or groups are supported in their agency to challenge, transform, and fully participate in society.

Since January 2023, RES has conducted a baseline scan of existing charitable operations guidelines and the Canadian philanthropic sector. We've created two different resources:

[Navigating the Charitable Sector](#) and [Guide to Building Equitable Charitable Relationships](#).

RES' current community engagement project focuses on bringing together a network of shared knowledge that centers those who have experienced barriers within current funding structures, supports the direction of their work, and identifies collaboration opportunities to pilot more equitable and reciprocal processes.

Challenges/Areas for support

The current challenges that RES are facing is building internal capacity among the board, building staff and resource capacity to develop strong assessments of what Roundtable can do for the community in the coming year.

RES is open to students' bringing their ideas and skills in a way that makes the most sense for them and our current needs. For example, students can take creative routes developing materials for the community engagement project if that aligns with their goals and skills.

Helpful links

[RES Website](https://roundtablesociety.org): roundtablesociety.org

[Navigating the Charitable Sector](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1yk72RZ65_6DoHyXFZGAd1nIpiHET6ISR/view): drive.google.com/file/d/1yk72RZ65_6DoHyXFZGAd1nIpiHET6ISR/view

[Guide to Building Equitable Charitable Partnerships](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1pMg76nc92ugFbTEAJwhRUMTaoeb_u5g1/view): drive.google.com/file/d/1pMg76nc92ugFbTEAJwhRUMTaoeb_u5g1/view

Note: Legal information in these resources will soon be reviewed by a lawyer and should not be considered legal advice!

Chinatown Today

Description

Chinatown Today is a non-profit based in Vancouver's Chinatown, on the unceded territories of the xwməθkwəyəm, Skxwú7mesh, and səliłwətaʔi nations. Through its signature print publication, *Chinatown Stories*, as well as its website and events, Chinatown Today seeks to help highlight community needs, educate the public, and share Chinatown's stories—past, present, and future.

Challenges/Areas for support

One of our main challenges at this point is our organizational capacity. One area where research skills could be helpful would be in researching similar community news or arts/culture organizations that exist or have existed either in Vancouver's Chinatown or elsewhere, to help us get a sense of best practices to emulate or mistakes to avoid as we hope to sustain Chinatown Today into the future. Other areas we have been developing in which we could use support include helping to develop and refine our organizational policies and practices, or in researching or curating stories. We're happy to serve as a platform for students to express their particular interests, whether in more research-heavy or community engagement-oriented projects!

Helpful Links

Chinatown Today Website chinatown.today

Chinatown Today Instagram [instagram.com/chinatown.today](https://www.instagram.com/chinatown.today)

Sliced Mango Collective

Description

Sliced Mango Collective is a youth organization that centers Filipinx identity and cultures. We are composed of Filipinx youth whose collective values include cultivating a sense of belonging and providing a space for Filipinx youth to connect with one another and their heritage. Through creating zines and hosting low-cost community events, we hope to engage Filipinx youth in celebrating their culture and identity through art and performance—specifically through the lens of decolonization, anti-racism, and intersectional feminism.

Challenges/Areas for support

As for challenges, considering that the collective is run by volunteers, it's hard to balance team member capacities with the growth of the organization. Additionally, being a grassroots organization with the mandate of providing low-cost and low-barrier events for the community, the question of funding is a persistent one. We have to write grants quite often to fund our projects and it can be challenging to operate without a consistent stream of income.

Helpful Links

Sliced Mango Linktree linktr.ee/slicedmango

Sliced Mango Instagram [instagram.com/slicedmangoco](https://www.instagram.com/slicedmangoco)

APPENDIX 7: MID-TERM JAMBOARD QUESTIONS

- 1 What motivated you to take this course on community-engaged research?
- 2 What is something from this course that you have found particularly interesting or exciting so far?
- 3 Of the things that have been taught until this point in the semester, what can be expanded upon or explained more thoroughly?
- 4 Do you generally feel encouraged to ask questions and participate? If so, what has encouraged you most? If not, what could we do to make it easier for you to participate in class?
- 5 Looking forward to the rest of the semester, do you have any suggestions for content, activities, or support that you would find useful?
- 6 Is there any additional support or guidance we could provide in helping you complete the assignments?
- 7 Any other feedback that you want us to consider?

APPENDIX 8: END OF TERM STUDENT COURSE FEEDBACK QUESTIONS

- 1 What motivated you to take this studio course on community-engaged research?
- 2 What is something from this course that you have found particularly interesting or valuable?
- 3 Of the things that we covered in this course, is there something that could've been focused on, expanded upon, or explained more thoroughly?
- 4 Do you generally feel encouraged to ask questions and participate? If so, what has encouraged you most? If not, what could we do to make it easier for you to participate in class?
- 5 For the next time the course is running, do you have any suggestions for content, activities, or support that you think would be useful?
- 6 Any other feedback that you want us to consider?

APPENDIX 9: COMMUNITY PARTNER FEEDBACK QUESTIONS

- 1 Thinking back to the start of this project, what were some of the motivations, hopes, and goals that you had when you signed on to be a community partner for this course?
- 2 What are some benefits and positive takeaways that you have from working on this course as a community partner?
- 3 What would you say were the most challenging parts of your participation in this course as a community partner?
- 4 A large part of the teachings of this course are about the importance of reciprocity in community partnerships, and ensuring community voices are centered. To what extent do you feel like community perspectives, goals, and needs were centered through your work as part of the course community?
- 5 Are there suggestions that you have for how the teaching team or students could be better responsive to your needs as a community partner, or the communities you work with?
- 6 Reflecting on how the collaboration was scheduled into the course itself (i.e., through the studio classes), do you feel like that structure was helpful for the work? Do you have any suggestions for other structured support that the teaching team could provide to facilitate relationship-building with the students?
- 7 What are you hoping your future relationship with ACAM, hua, and the students in this course could look like? Is there anything you would appreciate on our end moving forward beyond this course to continue these relationships?
- 8 Do you have any additional comments or feedback that we didn't address in our questions?

APPENDIX 10: GUEST SPEAKER QUESTIONS

- 1 What were some of your motivations and goals in agreeing to be a part of this course community?
- 2 What are some key takeaways, reflections, and learnings that you've gained from your involvement in this course?
- 3 Are there any ideas or pieces of constructive feedback that you would offer for future iterations of this course based on your observations and participation in the course?
- 4 A large part of the teachings of this course are about the importance of reciprocity in community partnerships, and ensuring community voices are centered. To what extent do you feel like community perspectives, goals, and needs were centered from your observations as part of the course community?
- 5 Are there suggestions that you have for how the teaching team or students could be better responsive to your needs as a community member or the communities you work with?
- 6 Reflecting on how your participation was scheduled into the course itself (e.g., through the guest panel with some time for discussion afterwards), do you feel like that structure was helpful? Do you have any suggestions for other ways you would be interested in engaging with the course in the future?
- 7 What are you hoping your future relationship with ACAM, hua, and the students in this course could look like? Is there anything you would appreciate on our end moving forward beyond this course to continue these relationships?
- 8 Do you have any additional comments or feedback that we didn't address in our questions?

APPENDIX 11: ACAM STAFF QUESTIONS

- 1 From our perspectives as the teaching team, we don't see a lot of the behind-the-scenes work involved in the course. We would love to hear more about how your role connects with the course planning if you could share a bit about some of the tasks that you undertook to support ACAM 320J?
- 2 We've heard some comments from christina about how putting together a non-traditional studio course like ACAM 320J involves navigating complicated university and bureaucratic structures (e.g., negotiating teaching contracts with other units). From your perspective, what does helping to facilitate the delivery of non-traditional courses like ACAM 320J within traditional university structures look like?
- 3 What are some key takeaways, reflections, and learnings that you've gained observing the delivery of this course (e.g., attendance in class or at the community showcase)?
- 4 From your perspectives and insights into ACAM as a unit, how do you see ACAM 320J as a course fitting into ACAM's broader goals and mandate?
- 5 What are your hopes for the future of this course and community-engaged learning more broadly in ACAM? Are there any suggestions or ideas you have about what future iterations of this course could look like or projects that may be offshoots of this course?
- 6 What are some challenges that you anticipate in trying to implement these goals for ACAM 320J and community-engaged learning in ACAM?
- 7 Do you have any additional comments or feedback that we didn't address in our questions?

APPENDIX 12: ACAM TEACHING TEAM INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1 I was interested in hearing some of the storytelling pieces about your involvement in the course. How did you initially get involved in the course as an instructor? What were your motivations for being a part of this course?
- 2 I was wondering if you could walk through a bit of the intention and thought process in the big picture design of the course (e.g., modules, project/assignment structure) as well as some of these smaller considerations (e.g., paying for parking, holding the community showcase off-campus) and how they contributed to centering community-engagement?
- 3 Taking a bit of a step back and reflecting on the delivery of the ACAM 320J, what would you say were the key strengths of the course?
- 4 If you were giving advice to someone else interested in designing a community-engaged research course, are there particular learnings or lessons that you would offer now that you can look back on the first iteration of ACAM 320J?
- 5 Could you speak about ways you built and maintained relationships with community members throughout the course and beyond?
- 6 Something that came up quite often in discussing feedback was figuring out timing for the course—in terms of having enough time to build relationships, fulfill complex projects, but also learn the key academic/theory pieces. I'm curious about your reflections on how to balance and prioritize the wide range of things that can be taught about community-engaged research given the limited time scope of a semester?
- 7 Another interesting thread that came up was these tensions between research, policy, and grassroots organizing, especially as we saw from the exit interviews that students tended to lean towards thinking about research/policy while community partners had more experience with grassroots organizing. I was thinking about how ACAM 320J is important for navigating the space and overlap between these goals and approaches, and I was wondering if you had reflections on the course as something that can explore all of these interests in the space of the academy?
- 8 What are some changes you see for the course in the short-term and also your longer-term hopes and goals for the course?
- 9 Any other insights that you want to share to include in the report that we didn't get a chance to cover?

APPENDIX 13: HUA STRATEGY QUESTIONS

- 1 In terms of hua foundation's broader strategy, could you speak a bit about how involvement in ACAM 320J fits within the organization's broader mandate and goals (e.g., thinking specifically about the capacity building portfolio)?
- 2 Where do you see the future of the course headed and potential opportunities for hua moving forward?
- 3 As someone who was part of the course community and came in as a guest speaker, are there any key takeaways, reflections, and learnings that you've gained observing the delivery of this course?
- 4 Any other thoughts we didn't get to that would be useful to chat about?



UBC Asian Canadian and Asian Migration Studies
