**THE MEXICAN-AMERICAN BORDER**

**LNAM 280/ECON 280/BUS 280/SPANISH 201/IR 280**

Instructors:

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As the only place where the so-called First and Third worlds touch, the Mexican-American border is unique. This course will focus on the border and how its unique location in the world has created a culture, language, politics, religion and economy that reflect the interdependence between these two neighboring countries.

This course takes a multidisciplinary approach to border studies. In terms of anthropology, we will read ethnographic accounts of the lives of undocumented immigrants living in Chicago, a case study of life and work in Nogales, as well as various accounts of the experience of crossing the border. From a philosophical standpoint, we will examine the nature of Hispanic/Latino Identity, the effects of border policy on immigrants’ identity, and the question of whether U.S. citizens should be held collectively responsible for our government’s border policies. From a political perspective, the course considers the “push” and “pull” factors that affect immigration, the use of the border and border security as a “performance” strategy for politicians seeking reelection, and the effects of NAFTA on Mexico, the U.S, and the border region. We will examine economic issues, including the industrialization of the border, the maquiladora sector (assembly plants), drug smuggling, and the reintroduction of forced labor in the United States. Finally, we will consider one of the unique musical traditions of the border region: the *corridos* or ballads celebrating the exploits of *los narcotraficantes.*

**Required Texts**: The following books have been ordered through the LFC Bookstore:

Andreas, Peter. BORDER GAMES: POLICING THE U.S.-MEXICO DIVIDE, Second Edition. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009.

Davidson, Miriam. LIVES ON THE LINE: DISPATCHES FROM THE U.S.-MEXICO BORDER. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2000.

Ellingwood,David. HARD LINE: LIFE AND DEATH ON THE U.S-MEXICO BORDER. NY: Vintage Books, 2005.

Gomberg-Munoz, Ruth. LABOR AND LEGALITY: AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF A MEXICAN IMMIGRANT NETWORK. NY: Oxford UP, 2010.

Urrea, Luis Alberto. THE DEVILS’ HIGHWAY – A TRUE STORY. NY: Little, Brown and Company, 2004.

**There is a three week immersion experience at the Mexican-American border from May 9-27. All students must participate in this trip to receive credit for the course. NO EXCEPTIONS will be made.**

**Grades**: The following components will make up your course grade:

Test 1 (2/28) 10%

Test 2 (4/25) 15

Research Paper 10

Journal 25

Final paper 25

Participation 15

TOTAL 100%

**Test 1 (2/28)**: Covers all readings, lectures, and class discussions since beginning of course.

**Test 2 (4/25):** Covers all readings, lectures, and class discussions since Test 1.

**Research Paper:** This will be a research paper on a topic of your choice. (We will shortly pass out a set of possible topics.) IMPORTANT: This paper will be directly linked to your final paper (see below).

Length requirements: approximately 1800-2000 words (6-8 pp.). Use 12 pt. font, 1” margins all around. PLEASE MAKE TWO COPIES (one for each professor). Hard copy only – no electronic versions.

Due date: April 18

**Journal:** You will be required to keep a journal during the 3-week immersion experience at the border. Journal entries should contain your reflections on the various experiences you have in Mexico (scheduled visits with various people from migrant shelters to border patrol, day-to-day activities in your homestay and trips to community service organizations).

**Final Paper**: Instead of a final exam you will write a final paper based on your observations and reflections of a particular aspect of border life. This paper is linked to the research paper in the sense that (1) these two papers should be topically related, and (2) the research paper should “lay the groundwork” for the final paper. That is, the research paper should provide background, historical context, and a “frame” for your research paper. For example, your general topic could be “Maquila Work: A Step Up or a Step Down for Mexicans and Mexico?” The research paper could examine the maquila sector from a broad perspective: history, employment patterns, working conditions and wages, fiscal impact on local communities, etc. The final paper could then study a specific maquila in Agua Prieta, with interviews with managers, workers, your host family, etc.

Length requirements: approximately 2000-2200 words (8-10 pp.). Use 12 pt. font, 1” margins all around. PLEASE MAKE TWO COPIES (one for each professor). Hard copy only – no electronic versions.

Due date: June 1

**Participation:** Regular attendance and active participation are expected. This is a seminar style class that depends on lectures and discussions of the readings. Your grade for this component will also be determined by your performance in a class debate.

**CLASS SCHEDULE:**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

Jan. 17 Discussion of syllabus

Reading: Urrea, THE DEVIL’S HIGHWAY, pp. 1-105

Jan. 24 Introduction (cont.)

Reading: THE DEVIL’S HIGHWAY, pp. 106-220

**II. HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

Jan. 31 Historical Context I: Mexican history, politics, and economics; NAFTA

Reading: Ellingwood, HARD LINE, pp. 3-55

Feb. 7 Historical Context II: Hispanic Identity

Reading: HARD LINE, pp. 56-136

Gracia and Tammelleo on Hispanic Latino Identity

Feb. 14 Immigration Policy and Collective Responsibility

Reading: Larry May, Collective Responsibility, pp. 105-124

Selections from The Latino/a Condition: Gilbert Paul Carrasco 77-85;

Rodolfo Acuna 86-91; Gerald P. Lopez 92-98; Ronald Takaki 152-157;

Rodolfo Acuna 171-174

Debate #1: Since it was launched in 1994, NAFTA (North American Free Trade

Agreement) has, on balance, benefited both the U.S. and Mexico.

**III. ECONOMICS OF THE BORDER**

Feb. 21 Industrialization of the Border: the Maquiladora sector

Reading: Carolyn Tuttle, AMERICAN FACTORIES IN MEXICO,

selections

Davidson, LIVES ON THE LINE, chap. 1

Guest: Prof. Carolyn Tuttle

**IMPORTANT NOTE**: On Thursday, Feb. 24 at 7 p.m. in the Chapel, Luis Alberto Urrea will present the Annual Latin American Studies Lecture. Attendance is required. Further details forthcoming.

**IV. POLITICS OF THE BORDER**

Feb. 28 Modern Slavery?

Reading: John Bowe, “Nobodies”; Andreas, BORDER GAMES,

chaps. 1-3 (pp. 3-50)

Video: “The 800 Mile Wall”

Test #1

Mar. 7 Mid-Semester Break

Mar. 14 Policy or Performance?

Reading: BORDER GAMES, chaps. 4-5 (pp. 51-112)

**V. THE LIVES OF IMMIGRANTS**

Mar. 21 Meeting Your Busboy

Reading: Gomberg-Munoz, chaps. 1-4, 7 (pp. 1-79, 124-136)

Video: “Second Generation Stories: Growing Up Latino/a in Chicago

Guest: Prof. Gizella Meneses

Mar. 28 Survival Strategies

Reading: Judith Adler Hellman, A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE, selections

Debate 2: Illegal immigration to the U.S. from Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America is out of control and is hurting U.S. citizens as well as the immigrants who have come to this country legally. Therefore, the U.S. government should do everything possible to control its borders against illegal immigration and to find, prosecute and/or deport those who are in this country illegally.

Video: “POV: Farmingville”

**VI. THE DRUG ECONOMY**

April 4 Subjectivity of Horror

Reading: Julia Kristeva, “Powers of Horror,” pp. 1-13; Charles Bowden, MURDER CITY, selections

April 11 Drug Cartels

Reading: William Finnegan, “In the Name of the Law” (on-line access)

Guests: students from last year’s class

Debate 3: The U.S. "war on drugs" coming from Latin America has been, on balance, positive. It should be continued and even reinforced.

**VII. LIFE ON THE BORDER**

April 18 Case Studies of Nogales

Reading: Davidson, LIVES ON THE LINE, chaps. 2-5 and Conclusion

April 25 Music on the Border; Course conclusions

Test #2