
ETHN 1750U

The U.S.-Mexico Border and Borderlands: Experiential Learning on the Ground and in the Field.

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Coordinator at San Diego: Hector Peralta (Brown ’16) PhD student, Dept. of American Studies, Yale University; Hector is a native of San Diego, bilingual, and bicultural, who grew up on both sides of the border.

Collaborating professors in Mexico:

In Tijuana, Colegio de la Frontera Norte (Colef): Profs. Laura Velasco, Guillermo Alonso and Luis Escala.

In Mexicali: Universidad Autónoma de Baja California (UABC), Mexicali campus: Prof. Mario Magaña.

Description: The Importance of Knowing the U.S.-Mexico Border

The modern border between the United States and Mexico was established in 1848 when the United States defeated Mexico after invading our neighboring country not long after its independence from Spain in 1821. In the ensuing Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848), Mexico lost almost half of its national territory, meaning the border which once reached as far north as Utah was pushed much farther south to the Rio Grande River. By then, Spanish language and culture and a mixed-race mestizo (Spanish and indigenous) population resided on both sides of the new border, in the region we now call the “borderlands.” Americans from the East and Midwest, new immigrants and settlers from Europe—white people or “Anglos”—rushed westward to the border in the name of “Manifest Destiny” to claim homesteads in Native American territory, while others grasped investment and business opportunities on the land and resource-rich borderlands. The mestizos who remained on the US side of the new border developed an identity of their own, first as Mexican Americans and increasingly as Chicanos/Chicanas (Chicanx). Mexicans from all over the
country also migrated to the border looking for more land to work, and seeking other kinds of economic opportunities, such as wage labor in the assembly plants (maquiladoras) of post-WWII 20th century fueled by investors from the U.S., Europe, and Asia. Meanwhile, the booming global capitalist economy of the US empire beckoned Mexicans to cross the border to work in jobs in the US West, Southwest, Midwest, Northeast and into the South, taking low-paying, arduous, dirty jobs in agriculture, constructions, factories, jobs that few Americans find desirable.

In the present moment in mid-2019 as we issue this syllabus, President Trump of the United States has ramped up rhetoric of the border as a dangerous place that threatens the very security of the United States because of criminally inclined immigrant and asylum seekers from Mexico and Central America, and of nefarious drug and human traffickers. He demands to build a 2000 miles wall to keep out the evil he perceives.

In doing so, Trump has made the border and the borderlands a touchstone of our national identity, and of our national anxiety about race, changing demographics, national security, globalization and other fears. How the U.S.-Mexico border was formed and continues to evolve reflects the formation of the United States nation as a whole, the diversity and dynamics, controversies and contradictions.

Course Program and Schedule

In an intensive three week study, in the classroom and most of all, on the ground and in the field, we will attempt to achieve a real and realistic understanding of what exactly is this border and the regions along the border on both sides, the borderlands: California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas on one side, Baja California, Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila and Nuevo Laredo on the other. As we do not have time to study this entire border in one wintersession, we will concentrate on the California- Baja California stretch, anchored on both ends by the U.S. cities of San Diego and Calexico, and the Mexican cities of Tijuana and Mexicali.

We will study this border and the borderlands historically as well as its present condition, from multiple transborder and transnational perspectives—physical, political, cultural, social, economic. We will explore the construction and representations of border communities—lives, cultures, identities—and pay particular attention to the movements of peoples—workers and families—in both directions. Although we will spend a few days in Providence studying the history and present situation on the border using readings, media material, videos, there is no substitute for visiting and experiencing the border in person, which we will do with the expert guidance of scholars and activists in San Diego, Tijuana and Mexicali. Our students will also have the opportunity to interact and exchange views with peers, Mexican university students.

Readings will be selected from the following:
Primary text/Document reading:

The Original Text of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo of 1848 that created the modern border and defined U.S. citizenship for residents in the incorporated territory (Digital copy will be provided)

Secondary sources: (ebooks are available at the Rock, accessible from your residence, using your Library Card)


Velasco Ortiz, Laura and Oscar F. Contreras. *Mexican Voices of the Border Region.* (2011)

Videos and films:
Orson Wells, *Touch of Evil* (feature film)
*Chulas fronteras* (documentary)
*De ida y vuelta* (documentary)
*Maquilapolis* (documentary)

Writing Assignments:

1. Book Review essay due at end of December, before students return to campus.

2. Daily blog entries from January 4 through 16.

3. A 750-1000 word Op-ed piece/Commentary on “The US-Mexico Border” [add your own subtitle] to submit to your hometown paper, or submit online to an established site, e.g. HuffPost.

4. A brief (400 words) Self Evaluation before and after visit to the border.

Important Dates and Meetings:
1) Shortly after students have been chosen, there will be an organizational meeting. Place and Time TBA. During this meeting, important details such as Passport, Visa, Vaccinations; Safety and Security; Proper Attire, Attitude and Comportment; Cell Phones and Contact Information; and other information will be provided, as well as time for Questions, such as how much money to bring, use of credit cards, etc. (All travel and daily expenses will be covered, except for gifts and incidentals.)

2) The course begins with dinner on January 2 and class work begins promptly at 9 AM on January 3, so students must arrive on campus by noon on January 2 at the latest. We leave from Providence to San Diego on January 6, and returns to Providence overnight late on the 16th, arriving Providence on January 17, very early. We will work on campus from Noon January 17 to 5 PM on January 18.

3) Pre-term Assignments (December homework):

**Document reading:** The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, 1848, which forced Mexico to cede half her national territory to the United States. A digital copy will be sent by email.

**Book Readings:** Read the following books from the list above, all available as e-books on Josiah, in this order. They all have to be read by the time we arrive in San Diego; a Book Review will be due at end of December.

--Castillo Muñoz, *The Other California*
--Hendricks, *Wind Doesn’t Need a Passport*
--Chávez, *Border Lives*
--Velasco Ortiz, *Mexican Voices*

Book Review of all the books in one essay of 750-1000 words will be due by Email at end of December, before students return to Providence.

**Tracking news sources:** From the point of selection and throughout the course to January 18, students will track news stories and commentaries on the US-Mexico border and related issues (immigration, border wall, relations with Mexico, etc.) in major US newspapers, internet news sites (e.g. New York Times, Washington Post, Politico, Salon, Axios, Huffpost), Cable news networks (e.g. Fox, MSNBC, CNN), international press (if you read Spanish or another language), even podcasts, and keep a brief log noting source, headline and brief summary of each item.

**Map reading:** Using google map, students will familiarize themselves with the entire US-Border (about 2,000 miles) from the Pacific to the Atlantic coast, using the Hendricks book as a guide to locate important place names.

**Writing Assignments:**
1. Book Review essay due at end of December, before students return to campus. See Pre-term assignment above.

2. Daily blog entries from January 4 through 16.

3. A 750-1000 word Op-ed piece/Commentary on “The US-Mexico Border” (add your own subtitle) to submit to your hometown paper, or submit online to an established site, e.g. HuffPost.

4. Self-Evaluation before and after border visit.

Assessment:

Attendance each day is mandatory, and you are expected to arrive on time and be prepared for active participation. This applies equally to the days in Providence and in Mexico. 30 points

Book Review Essay due at end of December: 10 points

Daily Blog Entries from January 4 through 16 (13 days), and finished work on Blog: 30 points

Op-ed Essay/Commentary, due January 20, 5 PM: 25 points

Self-evaluation: 5 points

Total: 100

Program:

A. In PROVIDENCE, Brown campus, with Professor Hu-DeHart and TA René Cordero

January 1 and 2 (Wed. and Thur): Students arrive on campus on January 1, by noon on Jan 2 at latest. Residence halls will be open Jan. 1 for those living on campus and meals provided for those on meal plans. Students living off-campus move into the housing they have rented. First group meeting will be dinner on January 2, 6 PM, in Prof. Hu-DeHart’s home near campus.

January 3, 4, and 5: 9 AM-4/5 PM (Place TBA) Coffee, juice, snacks and lunch.

January 3 (Friday):

Breakfast on your own; there will be coffee, tea and snacks in the meeting room.
9-10 AM: Discussion of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which students will have read and studied at home; bring your copy to class.

10-1 PM: Construction of a border culture and identity. View and discuss: View Orson Welles’ 1958 feature film “Touch of Evil” and Mexican documentaries “Chulas fronteras” and “Maquilapolis” (Spanish with subtitles) (If time permits, we will view and discuss “De Ida y Vuelta” as well.)

1-2 PM: Working lunch

2-4 PM: Discussion with Prof. Mónica Martínez of American Studies about border violence and her “Mapping Violence” digital project. Brief selection from Prof. Martínez book on anti-Mexican violence in Texas will be assigned.

Homework: continue to read the assigned books, which will be discussed and led by the authors in San Diego and in Tijuana.

January 4 (Saturday): 9-Noon: Class divides into 6 working groups, to discuss each of the border cities in Hendricks, which class will have read during December. Each group will also make a map presentation based on work done individually in December.

Noon to 1:30 PM: Lunch and break

1:30 to 4 PM: Class will create a class blog, with help from an expert. In addition to creating the site, class will also decide what kind of material to enter each day.

Homework: begin to make entries in the blog according to the class guideline established.

January 5 (Sunday): 9-Noon. Students bring to class their logs of news and commentaries of the border tracked since selection to the course and up to present moment. The discussion will focus on the main topics covered, how they are covered, any hidden, subtle or overt biases. The discussion will conclude with the class formulating a list of key questions they seek answers and perspectives when we travel to the border.

Noon-1:30 PM: lunch and break

1:30 to 4: Brief discussion of books by Castillo-Muñoz, Chavez and Velasco Ortiz, based on the Book Review Essay submitted at end of December (see Pre-Term assignments above) in preparation for our conversations with the authors in San Diego and Tijuana. Final preparation and check-off for travel to San Diego on January 6. (Departure from Providence and flight TBA). Group cell phone list and contact persons in SD and Mexico will be distributed.
6-8 PM: Pre-departure group dinner

Homework: write First Part of Self-Evaluation: Expectations of visit to border, and email to Prof. Hu-DeHart.

**B. In SAN DIEGO,** with Prof. Hu-DeHart, and Hector Peralta, who will be waiting for us and guiding us through several days in San Diego, from January 6 through January 9 (3 full days after arrival)

*January 6* (Monday): Travel Day. Arrive SD around 6 PM. Dinner in Barrio Logan and visit nearby Chicano Park, an Chicano community that was bifurcated by urban renewal and highway construction in the 1960/70s. The protest has produced some of the richest display of public art in the US, with Chicano Park designated a historical landmark. Today the area is undergoing gentrification and revitalization. The struggle for Chicano Park is one of the founding moments of the Chicanx movement.

8/9 PM: check into hotel.

Homework: write entry for Blog; review book by Castillo-Muñoz, whom we will meet on Tuesday

*January 7* (Tuesday):

8-9 AM: breakfast in hotel, ready to be picked up in Lobby at 9:30

9:30-11:30 AM: Visit to the Kumeyaay Indian Reservation in east county San Diego. Meet with representatives of the Tribal Educational Center and Tribal Council.

11:45 AM-1PM: visit the Viejas Casino and Resort, to learn about casino economics on Indian reservations

1:30-3PM: Lunch in El Cajón, dubbed “Little Baghdad on the Border” for the many Iraqi immigrants who have settled here.

4-7 PM: Travel to UC San Diego, to meet Prof. Verónica Castillo-Muñoz who will lecture on her book on Baja California’s multicultural heritage and present. Students will have read her book.

7-9 PM: Dinner with Prof. Castillo-Muñoz

Homework: write entry for Blog; finish reading Chávez and Velasco Ortiz

*January 8* (Wednesday):
8-9 AM: Breakfast in hotel; ready to be picked up in lobby by 9:30 AM


Noon-1 PM: quick lunch

1-3 PM: Visit Otay Detention Center with San Diego Immigrant Rights Consortium

5-8 PM: Dinner in Chula Vista/Eastlake, a town near the border.

January 9 (Thursday):

7-8 AM: Breakfast at hotel; be ready for pick up at 8:30 in the Lobby

8:30 to 10/11 AM: Visit with Supervisor Nathan Fletcher of the San Diego County government; the country is divided into 5 districts, each represented by an elected supervisor.

11:00 to Noon: lunch

Noon to 4PM: drive to Imperial Beach to see the beach/water border fence at Tijuana Estuary from the U.S. side; drive through Silver Strand to see the US Naval Base en route to Coronado Island

5:30-7 PM: dinner at Coronado

7:30: Return to hotel

Homework: Blog entry; finish reading Chávez and Velasco Ortiz books, which we will discuss in Tijuana.

C. In TIJUANA, Baja California, Mexico, January 10 through January 13 (4 days)

January 10 (Friday):

7 AM-10 AM. Arrive at San Ysidro border checkpoint to cross by foot from San Diego to Tijuana, Baja California, Mexico. Prof. Hu-DeHart, Hector Peralta and Rene Cordero will cross the border on foot with the students.

We will be met at Tijuana by driver from the Colegio de la Frontera Norte (Colef) and taken to campus to meet Professors Alonso, Velasco and Escala of Colef, our hosts and lead professors in Tijuana.
10-Noon: Welcome to Colef and Tijuana by Colef President Dr. Alberto Hernández; introduction to the professors and overview of the Tijuana program; tour of campus.

Noon-1 PM: Lunch at Colef.


5-7:30 PM: Dinner

8 PM: Return to hotel for the evening, and in bed by 10 PM.

Homework: write Blog entries

January 11 (Saturday):

8-9 AM: Breakfast at hotel; ready to be picked up at Lobby at 9:30

9:30 to Noon: Visit Casa de la Cultura (Altamira); Lectures, video and fotos on the border, migration and mobilities; Lectures and workshop with Profs. Luis Escala and Laura Velasco, and local activists (in English and Spanish with necessary translation). Students will have read books by Chávez and Velasco on peoples of the border and border-crossers.

Noon to 1:30 PM: Visit to border wall, lighthouse and migrant shelter in Playa de Tijuana

1:30-2:30 PM: Lunch

2:30 to 5 PM: Visit to maquiladora (assembly plant) cluster in Otay and Tijuana), with Prof. Oscar Contreras of Colef. Students will have viewed documentary “Maquilapolis.”

5-6 PM: Return to hotel for brief break

6-8:30 PM: Dinner at craft beer factory (one of Tijuana’s key industries), tour and lecture on craft beer production in Baja California

8:30 PM: return to Hotel for the night

Homework: write entries to the Blog

January 12 (Sunday):

8-9 AM: Breakfast at hotel; ready to be picked up at Lobby at 9:30
9:30-1 PM: Visit to Centro Cultural de Tijuana and Ciné Tonalá; Lecture by Prof. Guillermo Alonso on “A cultural view of Tijuana’s history,” including discussion of Orson Welles' film “Touch of Evil.” Students will have viewed Orson Welles’ film in Providence.

1-2 PM: Lunch at Ciné Tonalá

2-5 PM: Visit Mercado Hildago (popular market), Plaza Rio, Zona Norte (Students can pick up small gifts here)

5-6 PM: Quick taco dinner

6-10:30 PM: Visit to Las Pulgas Dance Hall, to enjoy norteño music—singers, instrumentals—and join locals in dancing.

10:30 PM: Return to hotel

Homework: Blog entries

January 13 (Monday):

9:30-1 PM: Discussion on water, energy and other environmental issues in Tijuana. Lecture on water and energy crisis at the border with Colef Prof. Gabriela Muñoz. Visit Ecopark.


1-2 PM: Lunch at Colef with Colef students

2-5 PM: The city and the urban perspective. Visit colonias (low income, working class neighborhoods) of Tijuana and Project La Esperanza. Lecture by Prof. René Peralta, Project Director and Professor at UC San Diego.

5-6 PM: Return to hotel for brief rest. (Can use time to write Blog entry)

6:30-10:30PM: Dinner and free night with Colef students, until 11 PM

11 PM: Bus returns to hotel

Homework: Blog entries
D. In MEXICALI, Baja California, Universidad Autónoma de BC (UABC), Mexicali campus. January 14 through 16 (3 days)

January 14 (Tuesday):

7:30-8:30 AM: Breakfast at hotel; ready to be picked up in Lobby at 9 AM

9 AM-Noon: Travel by bus from Tijuana to Mexicali, across the state of Baja California. We will be met by Prof. Mario Magaña of the Museum and Instituto de Investigaciones Culturales (IIC), UABC Mexicali, our host professor in Mexicali.

Noon-1:30 PM: Lunch at Chinese restaurant downtown Mexicali. (Note: Mexicali has an old and vibrant Chinese community; Chinese restaurants are the most popular eating places for locals, especially if there is a large group.)

1:30 to 5/6 PM: Visit Old Cuauhtémoc School, which is the Casa de la Cultura Municipal. Lecture in English about the history of Mexicali with Prof. Alejandro Piembert of UABC. Guided walking tour to the Historical District (Centro Antiguo) from Madero Ave. to the Old International Cross Border station (Garita Antiguo). Prof. Piembert joined by Prof. Tatiana Lara San Luis will lecture on current migrant situation in this border town. End with walking tour to the Chinesca (old Chinatown) and Mariachi Park, which has a support program for migrants, with lecture by visual anthropologist Prof. Paulina Sánchez Barajas.

6PM: Dinner

8 PM: Return to Hotel

Homework: good day to catch up on Blog entries and to start sketching your Op-ed/Commentary piece on the border (see Writing Assignments at beginning of this syllabus.)

January 15 (Wednesday):

7-8:30 AM: Breakfast in hotel; be ready for pick up in Lobby at 9AM

9 AM – 5 PM: Travel to the border town of Algodones, Baja California, to learn about medical tourism. A local expert will accompany the group and guide visits to clinics, pharmacies, and other health facilities.

5-7PM: return to Mexicali for dinner

7-10 PM: Evening of music with local singers and composers in the gardens of the Instituto and Museum. The program is coordinated by Prof. Julio Morales Rodriguez, psychologist, sociocultural studies scholar and singer-songwriter.
January 16 (Thursday):

7-8:30 AM: Breakfast in hotel; ready to be picked up in lobby at 9 AM. Bring Luggage on board bus.

9-Noon: Visit Institute of Cultural Research and Museum for meeting and discussion with Prof. Mario Magaña and MA students in Sociocultural Studies about experiences in border life and with the administration of Mexican president Andrés López Obrador (AMLO).

12-1 PM: Guided tour of the exhibitions of the Museum and the Institute.

2 PM: Drive to the New Checkpoint from Mexicali to Calexico in university bus.

10 PM: take overnight flight from San Diego to Providence, arriving around 9:30 AM July 17

E. In PROVIDENCE, Brown campus, January 17 and 18 (2 days)

January 17 (Friday):

9:30-10:30: Arrival in Providence; return to residence

Noon: light lunch on campus (Place TBA)

Noon to 4 PM: Finish Blog entries; organize and share fotos, etc. Clean up any of your blogs; add fotos and videos.

Homework: Review all the Blog entries, yours and others, as preparation for group Debriefing on January 18

January 18 (Saturday): in Mayori Conde Reading Room, Nicolson

Breakfast on your own

9 AM-Noon: We will spend half the day debriefing ourselves about this intense visit to the border: San Diego, Tijuana, Mexicali/Algodones, Calexico. We will discuss how best to use the Blog we created to disseminate knowledge, information, visuals, analyses, and perspectives about the US-Mexico border and borderlands on both sides.

Noon-1 PM: working lunch
1-5 PM: Complete Self-Evaluation on border visit and submit by Email to Prof. Hu-DeHart. Draft Op-ed/Commentary essay on the border.

6-8 PM: Final group dinner.

You can submit your Op-ed/Commentary to me by Email anytime up to 11:59 on Jan. 20. Grades for Wintersession are due on Jan. 21, and classes of Spring semester begin Jan. 22.

I would like to gather the group together sometime in mid Spring semester to share thoughts and activities since the visit to the border; how it has affected the course of our education at Brown; how the visit has impacted our lives and worldview; what actions have we taken since then, and other questions.)

Time to spend on course:

Pre-term homework in December, 10 days at 4 hours daily: total 40 hours

5 days on campus, 9 hours/day in class plus homework: total 45 hours

11 days on site in San Diego and Mexico, 8 hours/day (incl. writing blog entries): total 88 hours

Final op-ed/commentary essay: 7 hours

Self Evalutation: 3 hours

Total: 183 hours