**SOCL B235/Mexican American Communities**

Praxis Introductory Course

Department of Sociology

Bryn Mawr College

Fall 2019

Class Meeting: Tu & Th 12:55 – 2:15 p.m. / Taylor Hall D

Professor: Veronica Montes

Email: vmontes@brynmawr.edu

Phone: (610) 526-5059

Office: Dalton Hall 200B

Office Hours: Thursday from 3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. or by appointment

**Course Description**

For its unique history, the number of migrants, and the two countries’ proximity, Mexican migration to the United States represents an exceptional case in world migration. There is no other example of migration with more than 100 years of history. The copious presence of migrants concentrated in a host country, such as we have in the case of the 11.7 million Mexican migrants residing the United States, along with another 36.3 million Mexican descendants, is unparalleled. The 1,933-mile-long border shared by the two countries makes it one of the longest boundary lines in the world and, unfortunately, also one of the most dangerous frontiers in the world today. In this participatory course, we will examine the different economic, political, historical, social and cultural forces that have shaped this centenarian migration influx. We will undertake a macro-, meso-, and micro-levels of analysis. At the macro-level of political economy, we will investigate the economic interdependency that has developed between Mexico and the US over different economic development periods of these countries. Particularly, we will examine the role the Mexican labor force has played to boosting and sustaining both the Mexican and the American economies. At the meso-level, we will examine different institutions both in Mexico and in US that have determined the ways in which millions of Mexicans migrate to this country. Last, but certainly not least, we will explore the impacts that both the macro- and meso-processes have had on the micro-level, by considering the imperatives, aspirations, and dreams that have prompted millions of people to leave their homes and communities behind in search of better opportunities. This major life decision of migration brings with it a series of social transformations in family and community networks, this will investigate the cultural impacts in both the sending and receiving migrant communities. In sum, we will come to understand how these three levels of analysis work together.

**Course Objectives**

By the end of this course, each student is expected to be able to demonstrate:

1. Knowledge of the different migration eras that compromise the longstanding migratory history between Mexico and the United States and how distinctive eras have been shaped by U.S. migration policy.
2. An understanding of how macro-level forces in the form of political economy have determined the migration flows of Mexicans into the United States and how this migration has become a major factor of economic interdependency of the two countries
3. Comprehension of social transformations that Mexican migration has had in both the communities of origin and the communities of reception, particularly by understanding the intersection of the three levels of analysis described above.
4. A capacity to articulate some of the major challenges facing Mexican migrants, as well as the strategies that are employed when confronting those challenges.
5. A solid comprehension of the different socioeconomic and political factors that have shaped some of the current challenges faced by the Mexican immigrant communities in the US.

**Course Pedagogy**

My pedagogical approach relies on three principles:

1. Developing a learner-centered approach in which the student is the one responsible for learning.
2. Organizing a series of interesting, engaging and appropriately challenging in-class activities that lead to creating a class setting where learning becomes a socially shared constructive process
3. Creating an emotional environment that facilitates student learning

**Required Books**

1. Frey, John Carlos. (2019). Sand and Blood: America’s Stealth War on the Mexico Border. New York, Bold Type Books.
2. Truax, Eileen. (2018). How does it feel to be unwanted? Stories of resistance and resilience from Mexicans living in the United States. Boston. Beacon Press.
3. A set of additional readings are available on Moodle

**Course Requirements**

1. Class discussion participation ……………………………………………………………10%
2. Journals ………………………….………………………………………………………20%
3. Critical Thinking Exercise (2 worth 10 % each) ….…………………………………… 20%
4. Midterm ……………………………………………………………………………….... 15%
5. Final Creative Project ………………………………………………………………….. 15%
6. Final Exam ………………………………………………………………………………20%
7. **Class discussion participation:** This course seeks to engage students in a fruitful collective learning process, which is mainly based on all students’ class discussion participation. During the semester, I will facilitate a series of class discussion sessions where students will work mainly on groups to collectively address questions draw from either assigned readings or documentaries screen in class. For each class discussion, each student will require to write a brief reflection of her/his/their learning process during the class discussion. This reflection will consist of answering some questions, which I will distribute at the end of each class discussion. Students will turn in their class discussion reflections the following class session. Thus, it is your responsibility to read all course materials before class. We have the privilege of having this class be an undergraduate seminar, so please come to class prepared to engage with the material.

1. **Journals:** The aim of it is twofold: (a) to systematize the most striking facts you learned in lecture and readings; and (b) to keep track of your personal reflections on the reading material, group discussion, documentaries and lectures. Specifically, I want you to let your emotions emerge, and freely express what you feel rather than what you rationalize. This writing exercise will be useful toward the end of the semester, as you may be using some of the material in these journal entries to do your final creative project. Beginning with the first week of classes, you are required to send out a journal entry each Friday by midnight. You are not required to turn in a journal entry on the Thanksgiving week. In total, there are thirteen weeks in which you may submit a journal entry; however, only TEN are required being the last week one of them. A one-page journal entry is enough to turn in a thoughtful piece.
2. **Critical Thinking Exercise (CTE):** You will have to turn in two written CTEs, which are basically an analytical response to a specific question. The question and all the specific instructions (including a grading rubric) will be distributed a week before the CTE is due. Please refer below to the week-by-week schedule, which indicate the due dates. Each CTE should be approximately three double-spaced typed pages.
3. **Exams:** The midterm will consist of a combination of short answers, fill-in-the-blank, multiple choice questions, and essay questions. Please refer below to the week-by-week schedule, which indicate the date of the midterm exam. Likewise, the final exam will consist of a combination of short answers, essay questions, fill-in-the-blank, and multiple-choice questions. I will distribute the exam the last day of classes. Both examinations will be take-home exams.
4. **Final Creative Project (FCP)**: For this assignment you will need to get into groups. By the third week you need to select your group. The aim of the project is to afford students the opportunity to explore either a topic addressed in the course, or unexplored, but related one and to prepare a presentation using a digital platform. For students with less expertise with digital platforms, LTIS staff will offer support. The range of possible topics is endless; for instance, you may choose to design and deliver a 10-minute documentary addressing the interplay of migration and family relations, or you may choose to create a blog that explores the dynamics of Mexican migrants in the US labor market. I strongly suggest reviewing my blog at <http://veronicamontes.blogs.brynmawr.edu/>, to which I have uploaded former students’ projects from recent courses.

**Praxis Component: Field Trip to the Aquinas Center**

To better understand the complexities associated with Mexican migrant communities settling in a new society, we will take a field trip to the Aquinas Center (<https://staquinas.com/aquinascenter/>). The Aquinas Center is in the heart of South Philadelphia, which is an area where in recent years a significant number of migrants have arrived. One of the Center’s missions is to build unity in diversity, and its actions accordingly revolve around hospitality, solidarity, responsiveness, and transformation. This field trip will be an over-night experience in which we will have the opportunity to participate in a series of activities led by community organizers working directly with the Mexican migrant community in the area. As part of this immersive experience, we will stroll through the neighborhood visiting migration-related murals, the South Street, and, most importantly, chatting with migrants who work to make Philadelphia more welcoming to other migrants. Although this field trip is not mandatory, I highly recommend taking advantage of this opportunity. For those students unable to make this fieldtrip, I will ask them to do some additional readings about local issues/organizations or writing a short research paper. We will be leaving on **Friday, November 15 at 4 p.m. and returning to campus on Saturday at noon**. All the costs associated with this trip will be underwritten by LAILAC. On the first day of class, Nell Anderson will provide additional details about this field trip.

Class Policies

As with any class, students should behave in a professional and respectful manner. Below are the class policies.

1. **Respect others’ opinions and comments**: Respect is integral to the class as this course deals with controversial topics about which people have strong views and assumptions. **This course is about facts, theories, and arguments drawn from cutting edge, peer- reviewed research.** I welcome discussion but I expect you to be courteous, respectful, and professional in your conduct always. I will work to make sure that all students enjoy a distraction-free, civil, and supportive environment in which to learn and express their ideas—this means listening to others’ ideas and addressing them respectfully.
2. **Come to class prepared**: I expect you to read the assigned readings and that you come to class prepared to participate in class discussion. You must bring the required book, a hard copy of the articles or chapters posted on Moodle to every class session.
3. **Communication**: It is the student’s responsibility to frequently check their email and Moodle for any class communications. Do not contact me with last minute questions about exams and assignments or other matters relating to the class. I spent so much time organizing this syllabus with the only aim that you find as much detailed information as possible here. So please before emailing me go back to the syllabus and make sure that what you are looking for is not here. If you need further clarification on an assignment, please stop by during office hours. I will not answer substantive questions related to tests or assignments via email. I do not check and much less reply to students’ emails over the weekend.

# Honor Code, Collaboration, and Plagiarism

I take academic integrity and Bryn Mawr’s honor code tradition seriously and expect you to adhere to the policies concerning academic work in that code. At the same time, I strongly believe collaboration is essential to learning. I welcome and encourage you to work together when reading and studying for this class. Feel free to help each other with the readings, to discuss readings, topics, themes, questions, assignments and strategies outside of class, and to review together when preparing for exams.

Written work that you hand in is assumed to be original unless your source material is documented appropriately. Copying the ideas or words of another person, even a peer, a friend’s published or unpublished article, or a website, as if it were your own, is plagiarism. Plagiarism of any type will result in the student’s dismissal from or failure in the course. Even though you may discuss the take-home exam or journal or paper with a classmate, it is not acceptable to copy each other’s work! Becoming a good scholarly writer involves learning to draw and comment on other’s work without plagiarizing or presenting another author’s ideas or findings *as if they were your own.*

# Campus Resources You Might Find Helpful

**Each other:** If you find the reading overwhelming, it may help to form a reading group to divide and conquer it. Remember: Learning is a collective process and knowledge is built upon collaborative effort.

**Me:** I hold regular weekly office hours and can also make appointments if you have a conflict. E-mail is generally the best way to reach me, but some time constraints may apply such as last-minute questions for an assignment which due date is the following day.

**Tech Bar:** If you have any difficulties with Moodle, please ask for help at the Tech Bar on the first floor of Canaday.

**Writing Center:** The writing center on the second floor of Canaday can help you at any stage of any kind of writing project, from course papers, to application letters, to short stories. *All* writers benefit from feedback on their work, and this is a good place to start.

**Peer Mentor:** College can be a big change from the academic environments you have experienced previously. If you are feeling overwhelmed or want advice on things like taking notes, reading more efficiently, etc., try talking with a peer mentor. See here: <http://www.brynmawr.edu/pms/index.html>

**Your Dean:** If you are struggling academically or facing a prolonged illness, a family emergency, or any other issue affecting your academic work, please contact your dean for advice and assistance.

**Access Service:** Bryn Mawr College welcomes the full participation of individuals with disabilities in all aspects of campus life. The Access Services office in Guild Hall provides support and reasonable accommodations for eligible students, employees, and guests with disabilities. Individuals who think they may need accommodations because of a learning, physical, or psychological disability are encouraged to contact, Deb Alder, Coordinator of Access Services (610-526-7351 or dalder@brynmawr.edu) as early as possible to discuss their concerns. I strongly encourage you to reach out to Deb Alder if you would like to verify your eligibility for reasonable academic accommodations. I would appreciate it if you would contact me *early* in the semester as well knowing that I will keep whatever we discuss confidential.

**Weekly Reading Schedule**

The following illustrates the weekly subjects/topics and the required readings. The dates for screening documentaries/films also are shown here. Readings should be completed prior to the class lectures. All dates are approximating and subject to change. Students will be adequately informed should any scheduling changes occur.

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| **Week 1: Introduction to the course**  |
| **Date** | **Daily Reading Schedule** | **Film Dates / Assignments Due** |
| 9-3 (Tu) | * Introduction to course and Students’ Introductions
 |  |
| 9-5 (Th) | 1. Prologue: America’s Changing Colors in Mexicans in the Making of America by Neil Foley @ Moodle
2. Chapter 1: The Genesis of Mexican Americans in Mexicans in the Making of America by Neil Foley @ Moodle
 |  |
| **Week 2: The Great Migration**  |
| **Date** | **Daily Reading Schedule** | **Film Dates / Assignments Due** |
| 9-10 (Tu) | 1. Chapter 2: No estás en tu casa in Foley, N. (2014). Mexican in the Making of America @ Moodle
 | * The conquest of the North and the first Mexicans in the US – screening 1st part
* <http://brynmawr.kanopystreaming.com/video/latino-americans-foreigners-their-own-land>
 |
| 9-12 (Th) | 1. Chapter 5. The Great Migration: 1900 – 1930. Gonzalez, M. 1999. Mexicanos: A History of Mexican in the United States @ Moodle.
 |  |
| **Week 3: Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the 1930s**  |
| **Date** | **Daily Reading Schedule** | **Film Dates / Assignments Due** |
| 9-17 (Tu) | 1. Reisler, Mark (1996). Always the Laborer, Never the Citizen: Anglo Perceptions of the Mexican Immigrants during the 1920 in Gutiérrez, David G. (editor). *Between Two Worlds: Mexican Immigrants in the United States* @ Moodle.
 | * Group selection for the Final Creative Project
 |
| * 1. (Th)
 | 1. Chapter 6. The Great Depression: 1930-1940. Gonzalez, M. 1999. Mexicanos: A History of Mexican in the United States @ Moodle.
 | * Deportation of Mexican Americans during the 1930s.
* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UE9DbivsjkE>
 |
| **Week 4: The Bracero Program and the beginning of Mexican Transnational Families** |
| **Date** | **Daily Reading Schedule** | **Film Dates / Assignments Due** |
| 9-24 (Tu) | 1. Chapter 1. Agriculture, State Expectations, and the Configuration of Citizenship in Cohen, D. 2011. *Braceros: Migrant Citizens and Transnational Subjects in the Postwar United States and Mexico* @ Moodle
 | * Screening of *Harvest of Loneliness: The Bracero Program*.
 |
| 9-26 (Th) | 1. Rosas, Ana E (2011). “Breaking the Silence: Mexican Children and Women’s Confrontation of Bracero Family Separation, 1942-1964.” *Gender & History* 23(2): 382-400 @ Moodle
 | * 1st CTE prompt distributed in class. This assignment is due next Thursday, October 3rd.
 |
| **Week 5: US Immigration Policy and IRCA**  |
| **Date** | **Daily Reading Schedule** | **Film Dates / Assignments Due** |
| 10-1 (Tu) | 1. Alarcón, Rafael. (2011). “U.S. Immigration Policy and the Mobility of Mexicans (1882-2005)”. *Migraciones Internacionales*, Vol. 6 No. 1. @ Moodle
 | * Visit of María Ocando Finol from LTIS
 |
| 10-3 (Th) | 1. Durand, Jorge, Massey, D.S. and Parrado, E. A. (1999). The New Era of Mexican Migration to the United States. *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 86. No. 2. Pp. 518-536 @ Moodle
 | * **1st CTE due today**
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| **Week 6: Militarization of the Border**  |
| **Date** | **Daily Reading Schedule** | **Film Dates / Assignments Due** |
| * 1. (Tu)
 | 1. Chapter 2: The War Begins – Again in Frey, John Carlos. (2019). Sand and Blood: America’s Stealth War on the Mexico Border.
2. Chapter 3: The Military Arrives at the Border in Frey, John Carlos. (2019). Sand and Blood: America’s Stealth War on the Mexico Border.
 | Screening *Life in the shadow of US-Mexico border wall*<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r9Gd-axMMbM> |
| 10-10 (Th) | 1. Midterm exam
 | * FCP proposal – Questions will be posted on Moodle. This proposal will be due on October 22nd.
 |
| **Week 7: Fall Break**  |
| **Date** | **Daily Reading Schedule** | **Film Dates / Assignments Due** |
| 10-15 (Tu) |  No Class |  |
| 10-17 (Th) | No Class |  |
| **Week 8: Death and Violence at the Border**  |
| **Date** | **Daily Reading Schedule** | **Film Dates / Assignments Due** |
| 10-22 (Tu) | 1. Chapter 5: Death as Deterrent in Frey, John Carlos. (2019). Sand and Blood: America’s Stealth War on the Mexico Border.
 | * Screening 1st part of *Who is Dayani Cristal?*
* FCP proposal due today
 |
| * 1. (Th)
 | 1. Doty, Roxanne L. (2013). Bare Life: Border-Crossing Death and Spaces of Moral Alibi in U.S.-Mexico Border in Dowling, Julie A. and Jonathan X. Inda. (2013). *Governing Immigration through Crime* @ Moodle
2. You have to pay with your body: The hidden nightmare of sexual violence on the border @<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/03/us/border-rapes-migrant-women.html>
 | * Screening 2nd part of *Who is Dayani Cristal?*
 |
| **Week 9: How Mexican Immigrants Became “Illegal”**  |
| **Date** | **Daily Reading Schedule** | **Film Dates / Assignments Due** |
| 10-29 (Tu) | 1. De Genova, Nicholas. (2004). The Legal Production of Mexican/Migrant “Illegality”. *Latino Studies*, 2, (160–185).
 | * Screening 1st half of *Documented*
 |
| 10-31 (Th) | 1. Montes, Veronica. (2019). Deportability and Manifestations of Suffering of Immigrants and their Families. Apuntes, 84, 5-31.

  | * Screening 2nd half of *Documented*
 |
| **Week 10: Mexican Transnational Families**  |
| **Date** | **Daily Reading Schedule** | **Film Dates / Assignments Due** |
| 11-5 (Tu) | 1. Chapter One: Sacrifice in Dreby, Joanna. (2010). *Divided by Border: Mexican Migrants and their Children*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press @ Moodle.
2. Chapter Three: Gender and Parenting from Afar in Dreby, Joanna. (2010). *Divided by Border: Mexican Migrants and their Children*. @ Moodle
 | * Screening *Lupe under the sun*
 |
| 11-7 (Th) | 1. Chávez, Sergio et al. (2016). Life on the Edge: Balancing Gendered and Occupational Identities among Unauthorized Mexican Migrant Roofers. *Qualitative Sociology*. Vol. 2, pp. 126-145 @ Moodle
 |  |
| **Week 11: Making Home and Sense of Belonging** |
| **Date** | **Daily Reading Schedule** | **Film Dates / Assignments Due** |
| 11-12 (Tu) | 1. Chapter 3: La Casa Vacia. In Debra Lattanzi Shutika. 2011. *Beyond the Borderlands: Migration and Belonging in the United States and Mexico*. Online book found at <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/brynmawr/detail.action?docID=730040>
 | * Screening *Adelante*
* <https://vimeo.com/69344601>
 |
| 11-14 (Th) | 1. Montes, Veronica. (working paper). *Haciendo Hogar (Making Home): How Community Building Helps Migrants to Achieve Belonging and Social Agency.*
 | * Guest Speaker – Carmen Guerrero
* 2nd CTE prompt distributed today. This assignment is due next Thursday, November 21.
 |
| **Week 12: The Political Economy of the Nostalgia:**  |
| **Date** | **Daily Reading Schedule** | **Important Dates / Assignments Due** |
| 11-19 (Tu) | 1. Irazábal, Clara and Macarena Gómez-Barris. (2007). Bounded Tourism: Immigrant Politics, Consumption, and Traditions at Plaza Mexico. *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change*. Vol. 5. No. 3.
 |  |
| 11-21 (Th) | 1. José A. Vázquez-Medina and F. Xavier Medina. (2015). Migration, nostalgia and the building of a food imaginary: Mexican migrants at “La Pulga” Market in San Joaquin Valley, California. *Journal for Communication Studies*, Vol. 8. No. 1(16): 133-146. @ Moodle
 | * **2nd CTE due today**
 |
| **Week 13: Mexican Immigrant Entrepreneurs**  |
| **Date** | **Daily Reading Schedule** | **Important Dates / Assignments Due** |
| 11-26 (Tu) | 1. Montes, Veronica. (working paper). Mexican Immigrant Women Entrepreneurs @ Moodle
 |  |
| 11-28 (Th) | Thanksgiving Break |  |
| **Week 14: Resistance and Resilience from Mexicans Living in the US**  |
| **Date** | **Daily Reading Schedule** | **Important Dates / Assignments Due** |
| 12-3 (Tu) | 1. Truax, Eileen. (2018). How does it feel to be unwanted? Stories of resistance and resilience from Mexicans living in the United States. Boston. Beacon Press.
 | * FCP questionnaire – A set of questions will be distributed in class for you to address during your presentation
 |
| 12-5 (Th) | 1. Truax, Eileen. (2018). How does it feel to be unwanted? Stories of resistance and resilience from Mexicans living in the United States. Boston. Beacon Press.
 | * Screening of *The Hand that feeds*
* <https://video.alexanderstreet.com/watch/the-hand-that-feeds>
 |
| **Week 15: Final Remarks and Student Presentations**  |
| **Date** | **Daily Reading Schedule** | **Important Dates / Assignments Due** |
| 12-10 (Tu) | 1. Students’ Presentations
 |  |
| 12-12 (Th) | 1. Students’ Presentations
2. Final Remarks
 |  |
| **\*I reserve the right to amend this syllabus**\* |

**[[1]](#endnote-1)**

1. Please note: The reading material and structure of this syllabus was highly improved by borrowing ideas from other colleagues’ syllabi. These include: Emir Estrada, Sociology 142: Social Trends and Social Problems, Fall 2014; and Jennifer Spohrer, History 230: Europe since 1945, Spring 2010. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)