

English 3659W
Vanderbilt University, Fall 2022
MWF 1:25PM – 2:15PM
Classroom: Furman Hall 007

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CULTURES OF THE US–MEXICO BORDERLANDS

In recent years, the US has built a multi-billion-dollar wall along the Mexican border. While the wall may appear to be an anomaly, it rests on longstanding legacies of settler colonialism and racial capitalism. In this seminar, we will look at these legacies through the eyes of the Natives, Latinxs, whites, and others who have lived in the US–Mexico borderlands. Within the confines of literature, we will read novelists like Willa Cather, playwrights like Cherríe Moraga, and poets like Simon Ortiz (Acoma Pueblo). Meanwhile, across the more capacious category of culture, we will engage with promoters who encouraged whites to claim homesteads, periodistas who emboldened Latinxs to protect pueblos, and leaders who helped Natives fight for sovereignty. By blending literary studies and ethnic studies, we will gain a thorough grasp of the territories that have taken shape since the US–Mexico War (1846–48), especially the ones that we currently call Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Texas. From these concrete contexts, we will ask and answer more abstract questions: What are borders—are they physical boundaries, or are they psychosocial conditions? Similarly, what are nations—are they stable and homogeneous groups, or are they flexible and diverse communities? Ultimately, what are human beings—can they be branded as illegal aliens, or do they have inalienable rights? During the semester, we will work through these questions both collectively and individually: to enrich our in-class discussions, each student will complete a four- to five-page close-reading essay, a twelve- or thirteen-page research essay, and a multimedia borderlands map.

Course Objectives: As we explore the US–Mexico borderlands, you will cultivate a variety of skills:

- A. *Writing:* Through individual assignments and in-class exercises, you will learn how to design, draft, research, and revise academic essays. While we will base ourselves in the borderlands, you will be able to apply these writing skills to any academic or professional field.
- B. *Reading:* By looking at, listening to, and experimenting with a range of media, you will become a more confident critical reader. Whether you are faced with a contemporary film or a hundred-year-old letter, you will be able to analyze its style, structure, and significance.
- C. *Speaking:* In our collaborative discussions, you will practice talking through difficult subjects, especially the construction of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and other identity categories.
- D. *Historical Reasoning:* As we study the ways that different communities have reimagined and reshaped the same spaces, you will gain insight into the past, present, and future.
- E. *Intercultural Understanding:* By engaging with Natives, Latinxs, whites, and other groups, you will experience both the similarities that unite peoples and the differences that define them.

Course Structure: Our course will be divided into three units:

- I. *Creating and Contesting the Borderlands (Weeks 1–4):* As we analyze archives from the mid and late nineteenth century, we will learn how the US, Mexico, and several Native nations used various forms of violence to shape their shared environments.
- II. *Reimagining the Borderlands (Weeks 5–9):* By reading literature and art from the early and mid twentieth century, we will see how the inhabitants of the borderlands tried to solve the problems of their shared past—and how they developed different visions for the future.
- III. *(Un)documenting the Borderlands (Weeks 10–16):* In texts, images, and other media from the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, we will explore how border communities in general, and migrants in particular, have responded to and reshaped contemporary culture.

READING AND ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE

Week 1 **Introductions**

- Wed, Aug 24 • Ofelia Zepeda (Tohono O’odham), “Proclamation” (2008) (circulated in class)
 • Alberto Ríos, “The Border: A Double Sonnet” (2015) (circulated in class)
- Fri, Aug 26 • Gloria Anzaldúa, “Preface,” “The Homeland, Aztlán/El otro México,” and “Movimientos de rebeldía y las culturas que traicionan” from *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987)
 • For background on the borderlands as both an actual place and an academic field, you can check out the recommended readings: “Conquerors and Victims” from Juan Gonzalez’s *Harvest of Empire: A History of Latinos in America* (2000) and “Borderlands,” “Chicana, Chicano, Chican@, Chicano,” and “Indigeneity” from *Keywords for Latina/o Studies* (2017). If you engage with two or more of these readings in an extra entry to your reading journal, you will receive a 2/3 grade boost on your close-reading essay.

Week 2 **Competing Colonialisms**

- Mon, Aug 29 • Brian DeLay, “Independent Indians and the US–Mexican War” (2007)
 • *Borderlands Maps* (1778–2022)
- Wed, Aug 31 • Laura Gómez, “Introduction,” “The US Colonization of Northern Mexico and the Creation of Mexican Americans,” and “Where Mexicans Fit in the New American Racial Order” from *Manifest Destinies: The Making of the Mexican American Race* (2007)
- Fri, Sep 2 • John Russell Bartlett, Selections from *Personal Narrative of Explorations and Incidents in Texas, New Mexico, California, Sonora, and Chihuahua...* (1854)
 • Mescalero Apaches, Pictographs from the Hueco Tanks (1700–2020)

Week 3 **Cultures of Violence**

- Mon, Sep 5 • John Rollin Ridge (Cherokee), *The Life and Adventures of Joaquín Murieta: The Celebrated California Bandit* (1854) (1–43)
 • Hsuan Hsu, “Introduction” to the Penguin Edition (xv–xxx) (2018)
- Wed, Sep 7 • John Rollin Ridge (Cherokee), *The Life and Adventures of Joaquín Murieta: The Celebrated California Bandit* (1854) (44–94)
 • Articles from the *Daily Alta California* and the *San Joaquín Republican* (1853–54)
- Fri, Sep 9 • John Rollin Ridge (Cherokee), *The Life and Adventures of Joaquín Murieta: The Celebrated California Bandit* (1854) (95–137)
 • Los Madrugadores, “Corrido de Joaquín Murrieta” (1934)

Week 4 **From Deadly Desert to Capitalist Cornucopia**

- Mon, Sep 12 • Geronimo (Bedonkohe Apache) with S.M. Barrett, Selections from *Geronimo, His Own Story: The Autobiography of a Great Patriot Warrior* (1906)
- Wed, Sep 14 • John Wesley Powell, Selections from *The Exploration of the Colorado River and Its Canyons* (1875/95)

- Close-Reading Essay Assigned

- Fri, Sep 16
- Advertisements and Brochures by the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad and the Southern Pacific Railroad
 - Manu Karuka, “Preface,” “Railroad Colonialism,” and “Continental Imperialism” from *Empire’s Tracks: Indigenous Nations, Chinese Workers, and the Transcontinental Railroad* (2019) (read this first)

Week 5 Belonging in the Borderlands

- Mon, Sep 19
- Américo Paredes, *George Washington Gómez* (1940/1990), Parts I and II
- Tue, Sep 20
- **DUE BY 11:59PM: Close-Reading Essay First Draft. Sign up for professor conferences.**
- Wed, Sep 21
- Américo Paredes, *George Washington Gómez* (1940/1990), Part III
- Fri, Sep 23
- Américo Paredes, *George Washington Gómez* (1940/1990), Parts IV and V

Week 6 New Mexico Modernism I: Lands of Enchantment

- Mon, Sep 26
- Willa Cather, *Death Comes for the Archbishop* (1927) (1–78)
 - Georgia O’Keeffe, Selected Paintings (1929–49)
- Tue, Sep 27
- **DUE BY 11:59PM: Close-Reading Essay Final Draft.**
- Wed, Sep 28
- Willa Cather, *Death Comes for the Archbishop* (1927) (79–172)
 - Research Essay Assigned
- Fri, Sep 30
- Willa Cather, *Death Comes for the Archbishop* (1927) (173–297)
 - In-Class Writing Workshop: Primary Sources

Week 7 New Mexico Modernism II: Pueblos Olvidados

- Mon, Oct 3
- Fabiola Cabeza de Baca, “The Night It Rained,” “The Rodeo,” and “The Drought of 1918” from *We Fed Them Cactus* (1954)
 - Patrociño Barela, Selected Sculptures (1931–1964)
- Wed, Oct 5
- In-Class Writing Workshop: Secondary Sources
- Fri, Oct 7
- N. Scott Momaday (Kiowa), *House Made of Dawn* (1968) (1–60)
- Sun, Oct 9
- **DUE BY 11:59PM: Preliminary Research Essay Proposal. Sign up for professor conferences.**

Week 8 Indigeneity Across Borders

- Mon, Oct 10
- N. Scott Momaday (Kiowa), *House Made of Dawn* (1968) (61–120)
- Wed, Oct 12
- N. Scott Momaday (Kiowa), *House Made of Dawn* (1968) (121–185)
- Fri, Oct 14
- No Class: Fall Break

Week 9 Conflicting Countercultures

- Mon, Oct 17 • Joan Didion, “Slouching Towards Bethlehem” (1967)
- Wed, Oct 19 • Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales, “I Am Joaquín” (1967)
- Fri, Oct 21 • Simon J. Ortiz (Acoma Pueblo), Selections from *Fight Back: For the Sake of the People, for the Sake of the Land* (1980)
- Sun, Oct 23 • *DUE BY 11:59PM: Revised Research Essay Proposal and Annotated Bibliography*

Week 10 The US–Mexico Food System

- Mon, Oct 24 • Mae Ngai, “Braceros, ‘Wetbacks,’ and the National Boundaries of Class” from *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (2004)
- Listen to one Oral History and view three Images in the Bracero History Archive
- Wed, Oct 26 • United Farm Workers, *The Wrath of Grapes* (1986)
- Cherríe Moraga, *Heroes and Saints* (1994) (88–99)
- Curtis Marez, “César Chávez’s Video Collection” (2013) (do this reading first)
- Fri, Oct 28 • Cherríe Moraga, *Heroes and Saints* (1994) (99–149)

Week 11 Free Trade, Unfree Bodies

- Mon, Oct 31 • Hugo García Manríquez, Selections from *Anti-Humboldt: A Reading of the North American Free Trade Agreement* (2015) (for context, read the review on Brightspace)
- Alyshia Gálvez, “Introduction” and “NAFTA: Free Trade in the Body” from *Eating NAFTA: Trade, Food Policies, and the Destruction of Mexico* (2018)
- Wed, Nov 2 • Vicky Funari and Sergio de la Torre, *Maquilapolis* (2006)
- Fri, Nov 4 • Class cancelled—the professor is presenting at the Annual Meeting of the American Studies Association. With your extra time, finish drafting!
- Sun, Nov 6 • *DUE BY 11:59PM: Research Essay First Draft*

Week 12 Telling Border Stories

- Mon, Nov 7 • In-Class Writing Workshop: Peer Revision
- Wed, Nov 9 • In-Class Writing Workshop: Peer Revision
- Fri, Nov 11 • In-Class Writing Workshop: Peer Revision

Week 13 Prevention Through Deterrence

- Mon, Nov 14 • In-Class Writing Workshop: Peer Revision
- Wed, Nov 16 • Jason de León, “Introduction,” “Prevention Through Deterrence,” “Dangerous Ground,” “Necroviolence,” and “Memo and Lucho” from *The Land of Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail* (2015)

Fri, Nov 18 • Luis Alberto Urrea, “Author’s Note” and “Cutting the Drag” from *The Devil’s Highway: A True Story* (2004)
 • Javier Zamora, “To Abuelita Neli,” “Saguáros,” and “El Salvador” from *Unaccompanied* (2017)

Sun, Nov 20 • *DUE BY 11:59PM: Research Essay Final Draft*

Week 14 No Class: Thanksgiving Break

Week 15 (Un)documenting the Borderlands I

Mon, Nov 28 • Valeria Luiselli, *Lost Children Archive: A Novel* (2019) (1 – 108)

Wed, Nov 30 • Valeria Luiselli, *Lost Children Archive: A Novel* (2019) (109 – 212)

Fri, Dec 2 • Valeria Luiselli, *Lost Children Archive: A Novel* (2019) (213 – 302)

Sun, Dec 4 • *DUE BY 11:59PM: Multimedia Map or Other Creative Project*

Week 16 (Un)documenting the Borderlands II

Mon, Dec 5 • Valeria Luiselli, *Lost Children Archive: A Novel* (2019) (303 – 376)

Wed, Dec 7 • Multimedia Map Presentations
 • Concluding Conversations

Fri, Dec 9 • *DUE BY 11:59PM: Optional Research Essay Revision*

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

In Fall 2022, “Cultures of the US–Mexico Borderlands” is coinciding with a global pandemic of COVID-19, a national fight for racial justice, and other unprecedented situations. Because we experience these situations in different ways—and crucially, because we arrive at them with disparate resources—we will need to be flexible with each other. As professor, I look forward to helping you with any challenges that may arise during our time together, but as a starting point, I ask that you try your best to meet the following course requirements:

Attendance, Participation, and Communication: This course is a seminar; it should be collective, collaborative, and convivial. Please come to each of our sessions prepared to talk and listen: if a text is interesting (or not), explain why; if an idea is confusing (which is totally fine), ask a question; and if you agree or disagree with another comment, describe your own position. Throughout, treat one another with respect: since we are coming to this course from different contexts, we will need to value our unique identities, and since we are engaging with some intense and perhaps irresolvable problems, we will need to maintain a culture of mutual understanding. In short: over the semester, we will disagree on many points, but we will not make disrespectful comments against one another.

To participate in our community, you must be present, so unless you experience a medical problem (which could be either mental or physical, but which should be documented by a doctor’s note or an approved alternative) or family emergency, your “attendance and participation” grade will

affect your overall grade as follows: if you miss one to two sessions, you will suffer a small penalty, but will remain eligible for an “A”; if you have three or four non-emergency absences, the highest grade you can earn in the course will be an “A-,” and if you have five or six such absences, it will be a “B+”; finally, if you have seven or more non-emergency absences, you will likely fail the course.

While we convene on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, we can continue our conversations during other parts of the week. If you would like to review readings, think through assignments, or simply chat, please get in touch to set up a meeting. To normalize this practice, I will take the initiative of scheduling two mandatory one-on-one conversations over the course of the semester.

Reading: Set aside enough time to read carefully and think deeply. As you work, annotate passages and take notes, and in ten of the semester’s fifteen weeks, add an entry to the “Reading Journal” on Brightspace. Due each Friday by 10:00AM, these entries should be 300- to 400-word engagements with one or more of the week’s readings. Whether they answer questions the professor asks in his initial thread, address arguments other students advance in their responses, or go in a completely different direction, these entries should not be polished: instead of scintillating sentences and perfect paragraphs, they should be experiments with interesting ideas or questions without easy answers.

During the discussions themselves, you are strongly encouraged to stay off laptops and smart phones. To that end, please print as many of the readings that are posted to Brightspace as you are able to afford. In turn, please spend a grand total of \$60 on five physical books:

John Rollin Ridge, *Life and Adventures of Joaquín Murieta* (Penguin, 2018). ISBN 9780143132653.

Américo Paredes, *George Washington Gómez* (Arte Público, 1990). ISBN 9781558850125.

Willa Cather, *Death Comes for the Archbishop* (Vintage, 1990). ISBN 9780679728894.

N. Scott Momaday, *House Made of Dawn* (Harper, 2018). ISBN 9780062909954.

Valeria Luiselli, *Lost Children Archive* (Penguin, 2019). ISBN 9780525436461.

Writing: In addition to the informal reading journal (see above), you will complete three formal assignments. First, you will write a four- to five-page close-reading essay about a single item from our syllabus. Next, you will develop a twelve- or thirteen-page research paper about several sources of your choosing; to arrive at this polished product, you will proceed through a collaborative process that includes a preliminary proposal, a revised proposal, an annotated bibliography, a first draft, a final draft, and one-on-one and small-group meetings. Finally, at the end of the semester, you will review the things that you have learned by making a multimedia borderlands map or other small creative project. Your formal assignments will be due by the following deadlines:

First Draft of Close-Reading Essay	11:59PM on September 20
Final Draft of Close-Reading Essay	11:59PM on September 27
Preliminary Research Essay Proposal	11:59PM on October 9
Revised Research Essay Proposal w/Annotated Bibliography	11:59PM on October 23
First Draft of Research Essay	11:59PM on November 6
Final Draft of Research Essay	11:59PM on November 20
Multimedia Map or Other Small Creative Project	11:59PM on December 4
Optional Revision of Research Essay	11:59PM on December 9

Grading: All grades are non-negotiable. They will be calculated as follows:

Attendance and Participation	20%
Reading Journal	20%
Close-Reading Essay	15%
Research Essay	35%
Multimedia Map	10%

COURSE POLICIES

Language: This course does not require preexisting knowledge of any language other than English. When we read texts that were written in Spanish, you will have the option to work with either the original or a translation. Similarly, when we engage with media that contain short passages in Spanish, you will be able to understand them through contextual clues or, if worst comes to worst, a crude but convenient online translator. If at any point you feel intimidated by these challenges, you will be able to address your feelings with your classmates and/or your instructor.

Formatting: All essays should be double-spaced, with one-inch margins, in a nice-looking twelve-point font (a few good choices: **Georgia, Cambria, or Times New Roman**; some bad ones: *Mistral, HERCULANUM, DESDEMONA*). The first page should have a header in the upper left-hand corner that includes your full name, my full name, the course title, and the date. Each subsequent page should have a header in the upper right-hand corner with your last name and the page number. The file should be titled as follows: “Name_Assignment_Date,” i.e. “Nugent_Research Essay_090817.” The rest of the essay should be formatted in Chicago Style as defined in the most recent edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style* (<https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org>).

Submissions: Informal reading journal entries should be pasted directly into the “Discussions” section of Brightspace. Essays and creative projects should be uploaded under “Assignments.” One of these formal assignments is eligible for a forty-eight-hour extension, no questions asked. Except in cases of emergency, any other assignment that is late will be marked down one third of a grade per day (from an ‘A’ to an ‘A-,’ from an ‘A-’ to a ‘B+,’ and so on). If an assignment is more than forty-eight hours late, the professor may provide a grade but withhold more substantive feedback.

Academic Integrity: Among other things, this course will teach you how to engage productively with scholarly research. In this context, appropriating another scholar’s words or ideas without proper documentation is incredibly disrespectful, both to them and to yourself. Therefore, any instance of academic dishonesty (especially plagiarism, but also unauthorized collaboration) will be grounds for failing the assignment and, in all likelihood, the course. If you have any questions about citing sources, attributing ideas, or avoiding plagiarism, please get in touch. In addition, please see Vanderbilt’s guides at (<https://www.vanderbilt.edu/studentaccountability/academic-integrity>) and (<https://researchguides.library.vanderbilt.edu/plagiarism>).

Resources: In the context COVID-19, we must all look out for one another, and during our time together, I stand ready to support you in whatever ways I can. In addition, I encourage you to take advantage of Vanderbilt’s many other resources. The Equal Opportunity and Access Department (<https://www.vanderbilt.edu/coa/>) helps students secure the academic accommodations that they need in the context of one or more disabilities, so reach out to them early in the quarter if you could use their assistance. The Student Health Center (<https://www.vumc.org/student-health/>) employs a range of physical and mental health practitioners, and even if you are away from campus, you can access their resources on sexual violence, alcohol and drug use, adjusting to college culture, and many other areas. On an academic level, the Writing Studio (<https://www.vanderbilt.edu/writing/>) offers individual writing consultations and other programs, while the Jean and Alexander Heard Libraries (<https://www.library.vanderbilt.edu>) have many ways of helping you with your work.