

Latina and Latino Studies 2201  
Vanderbilt University, Spring 2022  
TR 2:45PM – 4:00PM  
Classroom: Stevenson 1 (Math) 214

Carlos Alonso Nugent  
Assistant Professor of English  
carlos.nugent@vanderbilt.edu  
Office: Benson Science Hall 422

## INTRODUCTION TO LATINX STUDIES

In the U.S., Latinxs are often treated in quantitative terms—as checkmarks on census forms, or as data points in demographic surveys. However, Latinxs have always been more than mere numbers: while some have stayed rooted in traditional homelands, and while others have migrated through far-flung diasporas, all have drawn on and developed distinctive ways of imagining and inhabiting the Americas. In this course, we will explore a wide range of these Latinx lifeways. Through readings in the humanities and social sciences, we will learn how Latinxs have survived amidst and against settler colonialism and racial capitalism. Meanwhile, through the study of literature and art, we will see how Latinxs have resisted and/or reinforced these social systems. With our interdisciplinary and intersectional approach, we will determine why Latinidad has manifested differently in colonial territories (especially Puerto Rico), regional communities (especially the U.S.–Mexico borderlands), and transnational diasporas (of Cubans, of Dominicans, and of a variety of Central Americans). At the same time, we will understand how Latinxs have struggled with shared issues, such as (anti-)Blackness and (anti-)Indigeneity, gender and sexuality, citizenship and (il)legality, and economic and environmental (in)justice. During the semester, we will practice Latinx studies both collectively and individually: to enrich our in-class discussions, each student will complete a reading journal, a five-page paper, a creative project, and a digital timeline.

**Course Objectives:** As we learn about Latinx lifeways, you will cultivate a variety of skills:

- A. *Writing:* Through individual assignments and in-class exercises, you will practice designing, drafting, and revising academic prose. With Latinxs playing increasingly prominent roles in public life, you will also hone your ability to present ideas in alternative styles.
- 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 discussions, you will get better at talking through difficult subjects, especially the construction of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and other identity categories.
- D. *Historical Reasoning:* As we explore the ways that Latinxs have responded to and participated in historical struggles, you will gain insight into our planet's past, present, and future.
- E. *Intercultural Understanding:* By comparing how different Latinxs have survived and thrived, 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. *Keywords for Latinx Studies (Weeks 1–4):* To lay a foundation for Latinx studies in particular and ethnic studies in general, we will bring together literary and scholarly texts to understand six keywords: “Race,” “Indigeneity,” “Gender,” “Sexuality,” “Citizenship,” and “Language.”
- II. *Creating and Contesting Latinidades (Weeks 5–9):* As we analyze archives from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, we will learn how “Latin Americans” became “Latinxs” as they were colonized by or forced to migrate to the U.S. While we will study well-known wars, we will focus on the under- or un-recognized ways they were resisted and reshaped by Latinxs.
- III. *Latinx Cultural Politics (Week 10–15):* By engaging with literature, art, and other media from the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, we will see how Latinxs have developed both critiques of and alternatives to settler colonialism and racial capitalism.

## READING AND ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE

- Week 1**  
**Introductions**
- Tu, Jan 11 • El Teatro Campesino, “Los Vendidos” (1967) (screened in-class)
- Th, Jan 13 • Frances R. Aparicio, “(Re)constructing Latinidad: The Challenge of Latina/o Studies” (2007)  
 • Nicole Guidotti-Hernández, “Affective Communities and Millennial Desires: Latinx, or Why my Computer Won’t Recognize Latina/o” (2017)
- Week 2**  
**Keywords for Latinx Studies I: Race and Indigeneity**
- Tu, Jan 18 • Laura Gómez, “Introduction,” “We Are Here Because You Were There,” and “Idealized *Mestizaje* and Anti-Black and Anti-Indian Racism” from *Inventing Latinos: A New Story of American Racism* (2020)
- Th, Jan 20 • 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)  
 • Maylei Blackwell, “Indigeneity” from *Keywords for Latina/o Studies* (2017)
- Week 3**  
**Keywords for Latinx Studies II: Gender and Sexuality**
- Tu, Jan 25 • Selections from Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherríe Moraga (ed.), *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (1981)  
 • Sandra K. Soto, “Gender” from *Keywords for Latina/o Studies* (2017)
- Th, Jan 27 • Carmelita Tropicana, “Chicken Sushi” (1987)  
 • José Esteban Muñoz, “Introduction” to *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (1999) (read this first)
- Week 4**  
**Keywords for Latinx Studies III: Citizenship and Language**
- Tu, Feb 1 • Leo Chavez, “The Latino Threat Narrative” from *The Latino Threat: Constructing Immigrants, Citizens, and the Nation* (2008)  
 • Karla Cornejo Villavicencio, “Introduction” and “Staten Island” from *The Undocumented Americans* (2020)  
 • *During Class, Start the Five-Page Paper and Sign up for Next Week’s Professor Conferences.*
- Th, Feb 3 • Richard Rodriguez, “Middle-Class Pastoral” and “Aria” from *Hunger for Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez* (1982)  
 • Rosina Lozano, “Introduction” to *An American Language: The History of Spanish in the United States* (2018)
- Week 5**  
**Building the U.S.–Mexico Borderlands**
- Tu, Feb 8 • In-Class Writing Workshop. *By 1:00PM, Submit the First Draft of the Five-Page Paper.*
- Th, Feb 10 • Anthony Mora, “Introduction” and “‘Yankeelandia’ and ‘Prairie-Dog Villages’: Making Sense of Race and Nation at the Local Level, 1850–1875” from *Border Dilemmas: Racial and National Uncertainties in New Mexico, 1848–1912* (2011)

- Borderlands Maps, 1778–2020

**Week 6****Imperialism and Anti-Imperialism in the Caribbean**

Tu, Feb 15

- “Political Encounters” and “New York’s Hispano Landscape” from El Museo del Barrio’s *Nueva York, 1613–1945*
- Jesse Hoffnung-Garskof, “Prologue,” “Beginnings,” and “The Public Square” from *Racial Migrations: New York City and the Revolutionary Politics of the Spanish Caribbean* (2019)
- *During Class, Start the Creative Project. By 11:59PM, Submit the Five-Page Paper.*

Th, Feb 17

- José Martí, “Coney Island” (1881), “The Lynching of the Italians” (1891), and “Nuestra América” (1891)

**Week 7****Banana Republics**

Tu, Feb 22

- Rubén Darío, “A Roosevelt” (1904)
- Pablo Neruda, “La United Fruit Co.” (1950)
- Marixa Lasso, “Introduction” and “The Canal Zone in 1904” in *Erased: The Untold Story of the Panama Canal* (2019) (do this second)
- Explore “Visualizing the Americas” (do this first)

Th, Feb 24

- Class Cancelled—the Professor is Lecturing at Arizona State University. With your extra time, begin reading Julia Alvarez.

**Week 8****Dictatorships and Diasporas**

Tu, Mar 1

- Julia Alvarez, *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents* (1991), Parts I and II
- Laura Gómez, “The Elusive Quest for Whiteness” from *Inventing Latinos: A New Story of American Racism* (2020)

Th, Mar 3

- Julia Alvarez, *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents* (1991), Part III

**Week 9****No Class: Spring Break****Week 10****Latinx Environmentalisms**

Tu, Mar 15

- Helena María Viramontes, *Under the Feet of Jesus* (1995), Parts I and II
- Curtis Marez, “César Chávez’s Video Collection” (2013) (do this reading first)

Th, Mar 17

- Helena María Viramontes, *Under the Feet of Jesus* (1995), Parts III, IV, and V

**Week 11****Chicanx Movements**

Tu, Mar 22

- Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales, “I Am Joaquín” (1967)
- Randy J. Ontiveros, “Introduction” to *In the Spirit of a New People: The Cultural Politics of the Chicano Movement* (2013)
- *During Class, Start the Digital Timeline. By 11:59PM, Submit the Creative Project.*

Th, Mar 24

- Creative Project Presentations

**Week 12****Nuyorican Movements**

Tu, Mar 29

- Creative Project Presentations

- Th, Mar 31
- Pedro Pietri, “Puerto Rican Obituary” (1969)
  - Johanna Fernández, “Introduction,” “Beginnings,” “Coming of Age in the 1960s,” and “The Garbage Offensive” from *The Young Lords: A Radical History* (2020)
- Week 13 Globalization and its Discontents**
- Tu, Apr 5
- Arlene Dávila, “Introduction,” “‘Don’t Panic, I’m Hispanic’: The Trends and Economy of Cultural Flows,” and “Images: Producing Culture for the Market” from *Latinos, Inc.: The Marketing and Making of a People* (2001)
  - Lucia Hierro, “Bodegón Series” (2015–20) and “Mercado Series” (2017–19)
- Th, Apr 7
- Gregory Nava (dir.), *Selena* (1997)
  - Frances Negrón-Muntaner, “Jennifer’s Butt: Valorizing the Puerto Rican Racialized Female Body” from *Boricua Pop: Puerto Ricans and the Latinization of American Culture* (2004)
- Week 14 Life Beneath and Beyond Borders**
- Tu, Apr 12
- 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)
- Th, Apr 14
- Valeria Luiselli, *Tell Me How It Ends: An Essay in 40 Questions* (2017)
- Week 15 Latinx Futures**
- Tu, Apr 19
- Javier Zamora, Selections from *Unaccompanied* (2017)
  - Laura Gómez, “Conclusion” to *Inventing Latinos: A New Story of American Racism* (2020)
- Th, Apr 21
- Concluding Conversation and Digital Timeline Workshop
- Tu, Apr 26
- BY 11:59PM, Submit the Digital Timeline.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

In Spring 2022, this course 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 you may encounter, but as a starting point, I ask that you try your best to meet the following 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 non-emergency absences, the highest grade you can earn in the course will be an "A-," and if you have four such absences, it will be a "B+"; finally, if you have five or more non-emergency absences, you will likely fail the course.

While we convene on Tuesdays and Thursdays, 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 a mandatory one-on-one conversation early in 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 Thursday by 1:00PM, 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 \$60–65 on five physical books:

Laura Gómez, *Inventing Latinos: A New Story of American Racism* (The New Press, 2020). ISBN 9781595589170. \$22.00.

Julia Alvarez, *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents* (Algonquin, 2010) ISBN 9781565129757. \$14.50.

Helena María Viramontes, *Under the Feet of Jesus* (Plume, 1996). ISBN 9780452273870. \$12.00.

Valeria Luiselli, *Tell Me How It Ends: An Essay in 40 Questions* (Coffee House Press, 2017). ISBN 9781566894951. \$12.50.

**Writing:** In addition to the informal reading journal (see above), you will complete three formal assignments. First, you will write a five-page paper on two or three of the texts that we read in our first four weeks together. Next, you will produce and present a creative project about concepts we study over the course of the semester. Finally, you will develop a digital timeline that will be a lasting record of your work in Latinx studies. Formal assignments will be due by the following deadlines:

First Draft of the Five-Page Paper	1:00PM on February 8 <sup>th</sup>
Final Version of the Five-Page Paper	11:59PM on February 15 <sup>th</sup>
Creative Project	11:59PM on March 22 <sup>nd</sup>
Digital Timeline	11:59PM on April 26 <sup>th</sup>

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

Attendance and Participation	20%
Reading Journal	20%
Five-Page Paper	20%
Creative Project	20%
Digital Timeline	20%

## 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 papers 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\_Short Paper\_090817.” The rest of the paper 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/EOA/>) 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.