

SYLLABUS

Chicano/Latino Studies 160
Social Science 1731
International Studies 179
Perspectives on the U.S.-Mexico Border
Fall 2009
Tuesday-Thursday, 5:00-6:20

Ricardo Chavira
Office: SST 705
Office Hours: T-TH, 12-2 and 3:30-4:45 or by appointment
****Preferred address: ricardochavira50@yahoo.com**

And: chavirar@uci.edu

Telephone: 949.502.5260
Cellular: 562.704.9610

COURSE OVERVIEW

The United States-Mexico border is drawing more attention than usual today, because the region is engulfed in extreme drug violence. There are complex reasons for this tragic turn of events, and our class will examine them. However, this course promises more. Students will explore and assess the U.S.-Mexico border, a unique and critically important region. This study will encompass border history and the many controversies that animate and define the 2,000-mile divide between the two nations. The economy and labor, security, immigration, culture and the environment will be examined in depth. A portion of the class will be devoted to placing the U.S.-Mexico border in a global context, comparing it to the frontiers that separate other nations. Conflict traditionally has infused the border, a characteristic common to many other international boundaries.

The course goal is to develop an understanding of the border that goes beyond the stereotypical depiction of the region as exclusively a point of conflict. To be sure, violence is a daily part of the borderlands, as reflected in the current drug war. But it is a multi-faceted region. Alone among the world's frontiers, our southern border is the only place where the first and third worlds meet. It is the physical gateway to Latin America, a region of enormous importance to this country.

San Ysidro, just to our south, is the world's most heavily trafficked land crossing. Some forty million people and fourteen million vehicles annually enter the United States at this sliver of San Diego. More broadly, the nearly 2,000 mile border region is home to some eleven million people.

In 2003, there were some 9.1 million pedestrian border crossings in Arizona alone; 2004: \$10 billion road commerce. At San Diego/San Ysidro there were 32 million crossings in the same period.

From 1993 to 1997, the U.S. border population grew twice as fast as the US average, while Mexico's border population grew three times as fast as the Mexican average. U.S. border counties would be the 2nd youngest state with almost 29 percent of its population under the age of 18. It would have the 3rd highest concentration of Hispanics of all states, almost 3.36 million percent of its population. By 2020 the combined border population is expected to top 20 million.

In the last 15 year the number of commercial vehicles crossing the border has increased by 41 percent.

Two-way trade has almost tripled since passage of the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement and totals some \$350 billion annually.

Each day, cross-border trade averages about \$795 million, two-thirds of which comes through ports of entry in Texas. Trade between the two countries reached \$290 billion in 2005. The United States is Mexico's largest trading partner, and Mexico is the United States' second-largest trading partner.

US exports alone to Mexico in 2005 were \$120 billion, and US imports from Mexico were over \$170 billion. Exports to Mexico have more than doubled since the passage of NAFTA in 1994, when US exports to Mexico were over \$50 billion.

U.S. farm and food exports to Mexico alone exceeded \$11.5 billion in 2007 -- the highest level ever under NAFTA. From 2001 to 2006, U.S. farm and food exports to Mexico climbed by \$3.6 billion to \$10.8 billion. U.S. exports of soybean meal, red meats, and poultry meat all set new records in 2006.

Mexico in 2007 exported some \$15.3 billion worth of goods to the U.S.; again, most of that trade occurred at the border.

With an estimated 2,700 maquiladoras, or mainly U.S.-owned twin plants, the border is the focal point of commerce between the neighbors.

* Meanwhile, Mexican cartels smuggle some \$40 billion worth of illegal drugs every year into the United States, the world's biggest market for narcotics. The drug gangs arm themselves with huge arsenals of smuggled U.S. weapons.

* Some 5,700 people were killed in 2008 by drug cartels in turf battles with rival gangs and fights with the Mexican military, sent in by Calderon to try to stop the violence. U.S. officials worry the killing could spill over the border into the United States.

ASSIGNMENTS

Four components will determine your final grade.

They are:

A 2,500-word (excluding bibliography) research paper

An essay midterm

An eight-week exam

An essay final exam

Extra Credit

Group presentations on selected topics can earn you a maximum of 40 extra points. Details will be provided

A visit to the San Diego Border Patrol office sector and Tijuana will count for an 20 extra points.

This extremely worthwhile trip will take place on Friday, October 23rd and November 6th. We will make two trips to accommodate all those who wish to visit the border. I will provide details as they become available.

EXPECTATIONS AND STRUCTURE

By the quarter's end you should have a deep, detailed and sophisticated understanding of the border. To help achieve this goal, I will present information, insights and guidance. Students, for their part, should be prepared to devote substantial time to study and full participation in class discussions.

Consequently, the class will function much like a seminar. Lectures should stimulate discussion and debate.

The paper should reflect ample research and incisive analysis. I encourage you to use me as a resource; I'm happy to advise you in researching and preparing the final project. You will receive a written prompt to aid you in completing your paper.

I will be as accessible as possible. So, please be in touch as often as you'd like. You will see listed above a variety of ways to reach me.

I expect you to be in class unless you are ill or have an emergency. Please let me know as soon as possible if you will not attend class. **Irregular attendance will unavoidably lower your final grade. My lectures supplement text readings, and much of the final will reflect class discussions. Assigned class readings should be completed by the date listed.**

GRADING

TERM PAPER: 150 POINTS

MIDTERM: 100 Points

EIGHT-WEEK EXAM: 75 Points

FINAL EXAM: 200 Points

Extra Credit

Group presentations: 40 points

Border trip: 20 points

POSSIBLE TOTAL: 525, excluding extra credit

REQUIRED TEXTS

Troublesome Border

By Oscar J. Martinez

Copies of selected studies and articles are posted on the class site. They provide supplemental information of use in better understanding the course and in preparation for your written reports.

US-MEXICO BORDER WEBSITES

These websites contain a wealth of border data and links to other sites.

<http://www.nacla.org/>

<http://www.kidon.com/media-link/index.php>

<http://www.coha.org/about-coha/>

<http://www.nmsu.edu/~bho/>

http://www.borderhealth.org/california.php?curr=border_region

http://kellogg.nd.edu/outreach/US_Mexico.shtml

<http://www.utep.edu/border/>
<http://www.afsc.org/about/default.htm>
<http://www.zonalatina.com/>

colegio de la frontera norte

Notes:

Zona Latina is a media site with a great link to Mexican newspapers, including those on the border. Similarly the second one listed, kidon, is a site that links to English-language newspapers worldwide. Among them are all of those in Mexico. It has some not included in Zona Latina.

This last one, obviously, is not an address. It's so long, that it's much easier to Google this name. You'll be directed to the site.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Zero Week

September 24th: Welcome to La Frontera: Are Borders Still Relevant in a Globalized Society?

Week One

September 29th: Introduction to class and discussion of syllabus and assignments. Who are we?

Read: Martinez, introduction, chapters one and two

October 1st: Border History, Early American Intrigue to War and Beyond

Week Two

October 6th: The Border's Boundaries and Identity: Survey of key issues

Read: Martinez, chapter four

October 8th: Mexico-U.S. relations: Still Distant Neighbors?

Week Three

October 13th: *Frontera* Politics: A Tale of Two Countries

October 15th: *Los Fronterizos*: Identity and Conflict

Read: Martinez, chapter four.

Week Four

October 20th: The Economy and Workers

October 22nd: Maquiladoras, China and the Role of Women

****October 23rd, First Border Trip**

Week Five

***Research paper proposals due**

October 27th: Midterm Essay Exam

October 29th: Militarization of the Border: Contradictions and Consequences

Read: Martinez, chapter seven

Week Six

**November 2nd and 4th: Violence and Drugs: Narcos and the War on Mexico
History and the Future**

***November 6th: Second Border Patrol and Tijuana trip**

Week Seven

**November 10th: Mexico-United States Immigration and How It has Shaped
the Border**

November 12th: Presentation of film, *Crossing Arizona*

***November 13th: Second Border Patrol and Tijuana trip**

Week Eight

November 24th: Week Eight Exam

Global Migration

Read: Martinez, chapter six

November 26th: Thanksgiving Holiday

Week Nine

Dec 1st: Health and the Environment: The Border's AIDS epidemic

Frontera Sur: Similarities and Contrasts

Dec 3rd:

*** Research papers due**

Class summary and final exam review

Final Exam

Thursday, Dec 10th, 4-6 pm