Geography 383.16/705.05: Border Wars
Monday/Thursday 2:45-4:00 PM
Hunter North 1022

Fall 2012

Instructor: Prof. Hunter Jackson
Office: 1032 HN (ring the doorbell)
Email: hunter.jackson@hunter.cuny.edu (Please include ‘Border Wars’ in the subject line, and sign with your full name or I will not respond.)
Office hours: Thursday 1:30-2:30 and by appointment
Black Board web site: http://bb.hunter.cuny.edu/
(Email bb@hunter.cuny.edu if you have technical problems)

Required pre-requisite: Geography 101 or permission of instructor.

Course Description

Every Sunday night at 10:00 PM, National Geographic’s television series Border Wars brings the often invisible spaces of the US/Mexico borderlands into the living rooms of hundreds of thousands of viewers. Told from the perspective of the US Border Patrol, the show dramatically depicts Border Patrol agents working in a dangerous warzone as they protect both the citizens of the US and helpless migrants. Starting from this common depiction of the border region, in this class we will critically examine common understandings of immigration, border enforcement, territory, race, criminalization, and the nation-state. Through a mixture of historical and contemporary theories and examples drawn from popular media and academic research, we will bring a geographical perspective to bear on the following questions: If there is a war on the border, who exactly is it between, and why? What social, economic, and political processes led to the construction of the US/Mexico border these agents are patrolling? What forces lead immigrants to risk their lives crossing through such remote and hostile terrain in the first place? And what are other, less spectacular ways this “border war” plays out far from the actual international boundary line, such as here in New York?
Course Objectives

This course has four primary and interconnected objectives:

1) To learn how to “think geographically” about the US/Mexico border and migration to the United States;
2) To critically examine the political, social, and racial construction of the US/Mexico border, both historically and in the present;
3) To conceptualize the US/Mexico Borderlands as not simply the edges of two nation-states, but rather as a “place” in its own right, with its own history, culture, politics, and economy;
4) To explore ways the immigration and border enforcement has steadily moved from something that occurs along the international boundary line to a set of practices that take place in the internal spaces of the country (such as here in New York City).

With these four goals in mind, by the end of the semester students will have a dynamic, complex, and historically situated understanding of the different “borders wars” the have been taking place for the last two hundred years in the United States. Furthermore, students will gain critical thinking skills that will enable them to think carefully and geographically about current conflicts and struggles over migration and border enforcement in North America.

Course Materials

Required books:


Both books are available at Shakespeare & Company (939 Lexington Avenue), as well as used online.

Other readings will be posted on the course’s eRes site, [http://hunter.docutek.com/eres](http://hunter.docutek.com/eres).

Course Expectations

As noted below, this class is structured as a seminar and participation is expected. Failure to do the readings, show up for class on time, turn off your cell phone, and participate in discussions will result in a lower grade in the class.

Some people have very strong feelings about and/or personal experiences with some of the topics we will cover in this course. While I expect everyone to participate to the best of their ability, I also expect you to be respectful of each others’ perspectives and opinions. Please do not interrupt
each other, and please to not ridicule or attack those you may not agree with—such behavior will not be tolerated. Rather, do your best to listen carefully to each other and to speak from your own ideas and experiences. This classroom will be a space where together we can explore some difficult topics, and I expect each of you to respect this space.

I will not accept late assignments, and I will not give incompletes unless there are exceptional and well documented circumstances. If you have an excellent reason that you must miss class, let me know in advance.

**Evaluation Structure**

**In-class presentation—10%**
Each student will be responsible for at least one presentation during the semester. We will begin each class with a short (10 minute) presentation on the readings for that day. This could entail summarizing key points in the readings, comparing and contrasting different readings, pointing out their relation to other week’s readings or discussions, or whatever else you see fit. But it is required that you bring three discussion questions for the class to consider, and that you post them to Blackboard by 6:00 pm the day before class so everyone has a chance to read and think about them beforehand. We will make the presentation schedule the first day of class.

**In-class participation—15%**
This course is structured as a seminar. Rather than give lectures, I will primarily facilitate discussion in the classroom. Each of you, therefore, is expected to participate fully. This means doing all the reading beforehand, showing up on time for class, taking part in the discussions, and seriously considering the discussion questions that others have posted on Blackboard.

**Critical analysis exercise—25%**
As a mid-term assignment, you will each write a 3-5 page (double-spaced) critical analysis of a contemporary piece of media that discusses or represents immigration and/or border enforcement in the United States. This could be a news article, a movie, a book, a song, or whatever you want. Using the critical thinking tools we will develop in this course, you will apply a geographical lens to the object you have chosen to examine both the roots and implications of its portrayal of migration issues. **Due Monday, October 29 in class.**

**Final project proposal—10%**
Each student is also expected to write a final paper. To make sure you are on the right track and don’t wait too long to get started, you will submit a short (1-2 page) proposal of your topic for me to review. The proposal should include a clear statement of your topic, a plan for how you will complete the project, and a beginning bibliography. **Due Monday, November 19 in class.**
**Final project—40%**

For the final project, you will have a choice between writing either a) a standard research paper on a topic of your choice (but which is related to the subject matter we have discussed in the course); or b) a field project in which you locate and observe a site of “border enforcement” inside New York City. Regardless of your choice, you will need to first submit the proposal (described above) and turn in an 8-12 page (double-spaced) paper. More information on the options will be presented in class. Due Monday, December 17, by midnight. To be submitted by email.

**Hunter College’s Statement on Academic Honesty**

“Hunter College regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values of intellectual honesty. The College is committed to enforcing the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to the Hunter College Academic Integrity Procedures.”

**Hunter College Office of AccessABILITY**

In compliance with the American Disability Act of 1990 (ADA) and with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Hunter College is committed to ensuring educational parity and accommodations for all students with documented disabilities and/or medical conditions. It is recommended that all students with documented disabilities (Emotional, Medical, Physical, and/or Learning) consult the Office of AccessABILITY, located in Room E1214B, to secure necessary academic accommodations. For further information and assistance, please call: (212) 772-4857 or (212) 650-3230.

**Class Schedule**

*Part I: Introduction, Key Concepts, and Thinking Geographically*

**Week 1: Introduction**

Monday August 27—Introduction to the course
Thursday August 30—Borders and Borderlands

Anzaldúa, Gloria, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Chapter 1.

Nevins, Joseph, “Pat Nixon at the US-Mexico Border,”
http://news.newamericamedia.org/news/view_article.html?article_id=555f6a6f5b0c8684b9e0451c9d85f5b1

Dunbar-Ortiz, Roxanne, “Stop Saying This is a Nation of Immigrants!” *Counterpunch*, 2006. http://www.counterpunch.org/ortiz05312006.html
Week 2: Introduction: Life on the Border

Mon September 3—NO CLASS
Thu 9/6—The Border is the Place Where We Live

Cantu, Norma E, “Living on the Border: A Wound That Will Not Heal,”

Section 1: “The Borders is the Place Where We Live,” in Puro Border, pg. 21-44.

Zepeda, “Where the Wilderness Begins,” in Puro Border

“US-Mexico Border Environment by the Numbers,” in Puro Border

Bowden, “This is the Center of my World,” in Puro Border

Week 3: Space, Geography, and Migration

Mon 9/10


Massey, Doreen, “A Global Sense of Place,” in Space, Place, and Gender, 1994, pg. 146-156.

Thu 9/13

Nevins, “Author’s Note on Language” and “Chapter 1: The Bodies,” in Dying to Live, pg. 13-27.


Part II: Establishing the Border and Producing Migrants

Week 4: Establishing the Border

Mon 9/17—NO CLASS
Thu 9/20


Nevins, Joseph, “Chapter 3: The Border,” in Dying to Live, pg. 75-121.
Supplemental:

Acuña, Rodolfo F., “Chapter 3: Legacy of Hate: The Conquest of Mexico’s Northwest,” *Occupied America*, 2011, pg. 39-58 (a bit dry but very comprehensive)

**Week 5: Race and the Production of Migrant Illegality**

Mon 9/24


Thu 9/27


**Week 6: Operation Gatekeeper and NAFTA**

Mon October 1


Thu 10/4

Akers Chacón, Justin, “From the Maquiladoras to NAFTA: Profiting from Borders,” in *No One is Illegal*, pg. 115-129.

Supplemental:


INS, *Building a Comprehensive Southwest Border Enforcement Strategy*, 1996

*Part III: Life and Death in the Borderlands*
**Week 7: Militarizing the Borderlands**

Mon 10/8—NO CLASS  
Wed 10/10—Classes follow Monday schedule

Draper, “Soldiers of Misfortune,” in *Puro Border*

“Mexican-Americans and the Militarization of the Border,” in *Puro*

Byrd, “The Border as a Looking Glass,” in *Puro Border*

“Driving While Mexican vs. the 4th Amendment,” in *Puro Border*

Marmon Silko, “The Border Patrol State,” in *Puro Border*

Thu 10/11


**Week 8: Las Maquiladoras and the Missing Women of Ciudad Juárez**

Mon 10/15

Nathan, “Double Standards,” in *Puro Border*

“Women on the Border,” in *Puro Border*

“US-Mexico Border Economics,” in *Puro Border*

Quinones, “The Dead Women of Juarez,” in *Puro Border*

Borden, “Juarez Center Fights for Forgotten Women,” in *Puro Border*

Thu 10/18

Week 9: Drug Trafficking and the War on Drugs

Mon 10/22

Poppa, “La Plaza,” in Puro Border

“Corridos,” in Puro Border

“Who’s Running the Plaza?” in Puro Border

“How Much Does it Cost?” in Puro Border

Thu 10/25


Week 10: Post Gatekeeper/Post NAFTA Border

Mon 10/29—Critical Analysis Paper due in class


Thu November 1

Nevins, “Chapter 4: Juchipila, MexUSA,” in Dying to Live, 122-163.

Nevins, “Chapter 5: Beyond the Boundary,” in Dying to Live, 165-199.
**Week 11: Crossing the Border and Rethinking Trafficking**

Mon 11/5

Vasquez Mendoza, “The Shadow of the Polleros,” in *Puro Border*

“Polleros: A Dictionary of Slang,” in *Puro Border*

Vazquez Pimentel, “Na a ta ka ani mai: What Will Be in my Heart,” in *Puro Border*

Cardona, “People Migrate,” in *Puro Border*

“Ramon Castillo,” in *Puro Border*

Thu 11/8


**Week 12: Gender, Sexuality, and Migration**

Mon 11/12


Thu 11/15


**Part IV: The Border Migrates North**

**Week 13: Criminalization and Interior Enforcement**

Mon 11/19—**Final Project Proposal due in class**

Escobar, Martha, “No One is Criminal,” in *Abolition Now!* 2008, pg. 57-70.


Thu 11/22—NO CLASS

**Week 14: Localizing Enforcement**

Mon 11/26


Thu 11/29


**Week 15: SB 1070 and Contemporary Immigration**

Mon December 3


Thu 12/6


“Immigrants for Sale” [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vuGE1VxVsYo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vuGE1VxVsYo) (video)


**Week 16: Resistance: No Borders and Freedom of Movement**

**Mon 12/10—Last day of class**


*Final Project due Monday, December 17 by midnight*

Except for changes that substantially affect implementation of the evaluation (grading) statement, this syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advance notice.