Course Overview

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. But it is a multi-faceted region.

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.

With an estimated 2,700 maquiladoras, the border is the focal point of commerce between the neighbors. The United States is Mexico's largest trading partner, and Mexico is the United States' second-largest trading partner. Trade between the two countries reached $290 billion in 2005, averaging about $795 million a day. US exports 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.

Assignments

You will have two major assignments. One is a 40-minute oral group presentation on an aspect of the border. The other is an eight page paper on a contemporary issue that will constitute your final exam. I will immediately provide prompts for these assignments. We will also have a midterm essay exam.
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. Group oral presentations, a vital component, similarly ought to spark questions and lively exchanges.

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. **Assigned class readings should be completed by the date listed.**

GRADING

Your final grade will be based on three activities. They are the group project, the midterm exam and your term paper, which also counts as your final.

GROUP PROJECT: 35%

MIDTERM: 25%

TERM PAPER: 40%

Required Texts

**Troublesome Border**
By Oscar J. Martinez
Women and Change at the U.S.-Mexico Border
Edited by Doreen J. Mattingly and Ellen R. Hansen

Copies of selected studies and articles will also be distributed.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Week One
April 3rd: Introduction to class and discussion of syllabus
Read: Martinez, introduction

April 5th: The Border’s Boundaries and Identity: Survey of key issues
Read: Martinez, chapters one and two

Week Two
April 10th: Border History, Early American Intrigue to War

April 12th: Border History, Revolution and Conflict
Quiz
Read: Martinez, chapter four

Week Three

April 17th: Los Fronterizos: Identity and Conflict
Read: Martinez, chapter four; Mattingly and Hansen, part two

April 19th: The Economy and Workers
Read: Mattingly and Hansen, Part One
First oral presentation

Week Four

April 24th: Maquiladoras and the Role of Women

April 26th: Midterm Essay Exam

Week Five

May 1st: Militarization of the Border
Second oral presentation
Read: Martinez, chapter seven
May 3rd: Immigration  
Third oral presentation  
  Week Six

May 8th: Violence and Drugs  
Fourth oral presentation  
Read: Martínez, chapter six

May 10th: The Environment  
Final paper proposals due  
Fifth oral presentation  
  Week Seven

May 15th: Sixth and Seventh Oral Presentations

May 17th: Political Activism in the Borderlands  
  Week Eight

May 22nd: Eighth Oral Presentation

May 24th: When Countries Collide: A Survey of Other Borders  
  Week Nine

May 28th: Frontera Sur: Similarities and Contrasts

May 30th: Health and the Border  
  Week Ten

June 5th: The Border’s Future

June 7th: Class Summary

Final Papers Due: June 15th, 10:00 a.m.