

La Frontera: Crossing, Policing, and Resistance at the U.S.-Mexico Border

Undergraduate course

Dr. Britta Anderson



Ana Teresa Fernández, *Borrando la frontera*, 2011

“We didn’t cross the border. The border crossed us.”

-Gloria Anzaldúa, Borderlands/La Frontera

Course Description:

In a moment of amplified political rhetoric, militarization, and violence, the U.S.-Mexico border demands renewed critical attention. The border region is a crucial site of labor, exchange, possibility, the construction of citizenship, and discourses of otherness. In this course, we will examine linguistic, gendered, bureaucratic, physical, and spiritual obstacles to mobility, and will approach the border both as figurative trope and material reality. Our texts will privilege local voices from both sides of the border, and will include short stories, novels, poetry, theater, policy analysis, and historical documents, along with songs, murals, performance and graffiti.

Course Requirements

Language: While our course readings will be in Spanish, English, and Spanglish, all class discussions and written work must be in Spanish.

Attendance and Participation: Your active presence in class is essential to your success in this course. Your participation grade will be based not only on your contributions to discussions, but also on your ability to listen, make space for other voices, and thoughtfully respond to ideas that differ from your own. Each absence after your second will reduce your final grade by 2 percentage points.

Blog posts: Short response (less than 300 words) posted to our class blog, due every class by midnight the night before. Responses may include your reactions to the readings, questions and concerns you want to address in class, and responses to those who post before you.

Intervention reflection paper: The border acts upon migrants and residents in such a way that demands an active response. You will take one political or artistic action that—from here—intervenes in border reality, in whatever way you choose. This could be a letter to a politician, a donation to a non-profit, a blog or social media post, a performance, an artistic installation, or another action. You will submit a one-paragraph proposal for my approval before taking the action, then afterwards, will turn in a 3-4-page practitioner’s statement that reflects on your motivation for the action. See handout for details and deadlines.

Literary analysis paper: In a 6-8-page paper, you will analyze the trope of the border in one literary text covered in this class, using at least three peer-reviewed academic articles to support your argument. You will submit your thesis statement and outline for feedback. See handout for details and deadlines.

Final exam: In our final take-home exam, you will identify the central arguments of the critical texts covered through the semester, and will demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the vocabulary needed to address legislative, theoretical, and humanitarian concerns at the U.S-Mexico border.

Grade Breakdown

Attendance and Participation: 20%

Blog posts: 20%

Border intervention paper: 20%

Literary analysis paper: 20%

Final Exam: 20%

Course Schedule

La frontera: definiciones

Week 1

Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo (1848)

Guillermo Gómez-Peña, “The Border Is...(A Manifesto)”

Mary Louise Pratt, “Arts of the Contact Zone”

Week 2

Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, excerpts

Klahn, Norma, “Writing the Border: The Languages and Limits of Representation”

Julia Alvarez, “La Gringuita: On Losing a Native Language”

Maria Socorro Tabuenca-Cordoba, “Viewing the Border: Perspectives from ‘the Open Wound’”

El muro: la arquitectura de crisis

Week 3

Vanda Felbab-Brown, “EL MURO: El verdadero costo de la barrera entre Estados Unidos y México”

Timothy Dunn, *Militarization of the U.S. Border*

Josue David Cisneros, *The Border Crossed Us: Rhetorics of Borders, Citizenship, and Latina/o Identity*, Introduction

Week 4

Rael, Ronald. *Border Wall as Architecture: A Manifesto for the U.S.-Mexico Boundary*.

Lawrence Herzog, *From Aztec to High Tech: Architecture and Landscape Across the Mexico-United States Border*, excerpts

Casey, Edward S. *Up Against the Wall: Re-Imagining the U.S.-Mexico Border*, Introduction

La violencia del viaje

Week 5

Luis Humberto Crosthwaite, *Instrucciones para cruzar la frontera*

Stephanie Elizondo Griest, *All the Agents and All the Saints: Dispatches from the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands*, excerpts

Week 6

Luis Alberto Urrea, *The Devil's Highway*

In class: Deliliah Montoya migrant campsite photography, Border Film Project, No Más Muertes video, Richard Misrach and Guillermo Galindo *Border Cantos*

Week 7

Valeria Luiselli, *Los niños perdidos (Un ensayo en cuarenta preguntas)*

Alice Driver, "Los mutilados y los desaparecidos"

La violencia más allá del estado

Week 8

Luis Humberto Crosthwaite, John William Byrd, and Bobby Byrd. *Puro Border: Dispatches, Snapshots, & Graffiti from La Frontera*

Alicia Gaspar de Alba, *Making a Killing: Femicide, Free Trade, and La Frontera*, Introduction

Rosina Conde, “Señorita maquiladora,” performance

Cruces psíquicos

Week 9

Juan González, “Immigrants Old and New: Closing Borders of the Mind”

Santiago Vaquera-Vásquez, “Notes from an Unrepentant Border Crosser.”

Guillermo Gómez-Peña, “Documented/Undocumented”

Alicia Schmidt Camacho, *Migrant Imaginaries*, excerpts

Cruces espirituales

Week 10

Yuri Herrera, *Señales que precederán al fin del mundo*

Luis Humberto Crosthwaite, “Misa fronteriza,” performance

Week 11

Helena María Viramontes, *Under the Feet of Jesus*

Theresa Delgadillo, *Spiritual Mestizaje*, excerpts

Cruces de género

Week 12

Rosario Sanmiguel, *Bajo el puente: relatos desde la frontera*

Debra A. Castillo and María Socorro Tabuenca Córdoba, *Border women: writing from la frontera*, excerpts

In class: poems from Lucha Corpi, *Máscaras* and Ana Castillo, *My Father Was a Toltec*

Week 13

Cristina Rivera Garza, *Cresta de Ilión*

Lila McDowell Carlsen, “Te conozco de cuando eras árbol”: Gender, Utopianism, and the Border in Cristina Rivera Garza's *La cresta de Ilión*”

In class: poems from Francisco Alarcón, *Del otro lado de la noche*

Resistencia: arte público, protesta y performance

Week 14

Works discussed in class will include:

Ana Teresa Fernández, *Borrando la frontera*

Installation: *Paseo de la humanidad*

San Diego Overpass Light Brigade, light graffiti

Buchel, Christoph. Make Art Great Again. Prototype Monument Proposal and Open Letter from artists condemning Buchel's proposal

JR, border baby and border picnic installations, instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/jr/?hl=en>

Hair braiding protest-performance, El Paso-Ciudad Juárez
