

ER&M S369 (Session A)
Cultural Politics of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands
Summer 2024
Room TBD
Tuesdays & Thursdays 9:00a – 12:15p
Professor Deborah R. Vargas

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Description

This course will address literature and music in the context of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. Cultural texts chosen for this course will be approached as sites of cultural politics with particular attention to social class, sexuality, gender, and race. The course will introduce you to key visual, narrative, and sonic texts from the turn of the twentieth century to our contemporary moment by addressing key political events in the histories of Mexican presence in what is now called the United States. We will survey iconic novels, music, and literary texts in order to consider place, (un)belonging, mobility, and representation.

Learning Objectives

The goals of the class will include learning key cultural texts written by foundational authors in the field of U.S.-Mexico cultural studies and have formed unique narrative forms, theories for analyzing racialized subjectivities, and vernaculars. Each week will be devoted to a particular historical moment where literature, visual productions, and musical sound convey the cultural politics of the time.

Academic Integrity

A central purpose in this class is to be curious, think critically, and support our arguments and questions with sound research. To have an opportunity to learn I believe we must respect each other, the work we engage with, and the learning environment we will inhabit this semester. This work requires trust and honesty among us all. If we do not approach the work with respect and rigor our learning and the ability to produce bold ideas will be impaired. Therefore, I expect all students to understand what plagiarism is and why it is unacceptable. Any student considering plagiarism should recognize the consequences and consider alternatives. Students uncertain about what constitutes plagiarism may request help from me, other faculty or from appropriate University services.

Be aware that the University defines academic integrity as “the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest, and responsible manner. All students should act with personal integrity, respect other students’ dignity, rights, and property, and help create and maintain an environment in which all can succeed through the fruits of their efforts” (Faculty Senate Policy 49-20). The Policy continues: “Dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated in this course. Dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing, fabricating information, or citations,

facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students. Students who are found to be dishonest will receive academic sanctions and will be reported to the University's Judicial Affairs office for possible further disciplinary sanction." *Ultimately, I want you to trust in yourself and in your own powerful ideas because I certainly have that confidence in you.*

Student Accessibility Services

The mission of Yale Student Accessibility Services is as follows:

Student Accessibility Services (SAS) at Yale is committed to promoting equitable access to education and student life for students with disabilities, and to fostering a campus environment of belonging, inclusion, and respect. SAS determines reasonable accommodations for all students with disabilities, and works collaboratively with Yale faculty, staff, and students to provide accessible and equitable educational access.

Please see their website and let me know if there is any support that I can provide in helping you connect with these resources at <https://sas.yale.edu/> or you may also call: 203.432.2324

Mental Health Services

Yale University offers tremendous support for our mental health. Please see me if you need support in connecting with these support services. You may call: 203.432.0290 or see the website: <https://yalehealth.yale.edu/directory/departments/mental-health-counseling>

Honoring the Space

- Preferred Personal Pronouns: Everyone will be supported in choosing their preferred pronouns and names. All choices will be honored in our classroom.
- I hope that we will all share a commitment to honoring the space of our classroom with compassion, focus, and respect.
- Technology in the classroom: Research suggests that taking hand-written notes of class lectures provide a cognitive advantage over typing into your computer, see this [essay](#) for more information. Therefore, I encourage you to bring a notebook and pen to class to take notes and to make margin notes on hard copies of our reading material. With that said, I do not have a rule preventing you from taking notes or reading by utilizing a media device while we are in class.

Organization of the Course

The course is organized in part around a weekly "keyword" in order to create an entry point for engaging with weekly readings and to offer a common starting point for our discussions. Most "keywords" are shortish essays from the award-winning series *Keywords for Latina/o Studies* (New York University Press). This series contains keyword essays by the most preeminent scholars in their respective interdisciplinary fields.

Assignments and Grading

Weekly Assignments (5 assignments X 15pts each)	75
Lead discussion	15
Attendance and Participation	10

Weekly Writing Assignments

The assignment will be in the form of a response to a question I will pose regarding the theme/readings for the upcoming week.

- ◇ Responses will require you to address a minimum number of readings and close readings of a cultural text (e.g. song, film, novel)
 - Your responses should be 500-700 words in length.
 - Written assignments must be typed, double-spaced: 1-inch margins. 12 pt. fonts. Reader friendly font e.g. Times, YaleNew. Upload to the "Assignments" portal via Canvas.

Participation

Preparation and participation in a seminar is key to your learning experience as well as to the overall learning environment in the class. Attendance will be taken daily.

Required Materials

All course books can be purchased from an online vendor of your choice. I recommend <https://bookshop.org/> because part of the revenue from purchases is directed to supporting local bookstores. All other reading materials will be posted on Canvas. There may be other items that will be placed on reserve at the library based on student interest in themes as we move through the semester. In addition, there are some documentaries/films that are assigned and can be screened through your personal streaming account (e.g., Prime Video, Netflix). If you do not have the appropriate streaming system/are unable to obtain it, please let me know so we can find a solution to this. We will also engage videos, movie clips, and sound recordings in class for discussion.

- Americo Paredes. *With His Pistol in His Hand: A Border Ballad and Its Hero*
- George Sanchez. *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945.*
- Bernadine Hernández and Karen Roybal. *Transnational Chicana Perspectives on Ana Castillo*
- Alejandro Madrid. *Transnational Encounters: Music and Performance at the U.S.-Mexico Border.*
- Justin Akers Chacon. *Radicals in the Barrio: Magonistas, Socialists, Wobblies, and Communists in the Mexican American Working Class.*
- *Some readings listed here may change before class begins and the list of books to be purchased will be released via Canvas announcement a few weeks before classes begin*

Schedule (May 27-June 28)**Week 1**

Tu 05.28

- Americo Paredes. *With His Pistol in His Hand: A Border Ballad and Its Hero*

Th 05.30

- Americo Paredes. *With His Pistol in His Hand: A Border Ballad and Its Hero*
Screen: "The Ballad of Gregorio Cortez"

Week 2

Tu 06.04

- George Sanchez. *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945.*

Th 06.06

- George Sanchez. *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945.*

Screen: "La Bamba: Ritchie Valens"**Week 3**

Tu 06.11

- Justin Akers Chacon. *Radicals in the Barrio: Magonistas, Socialists, Wobblies, and Communists in the Mexican American Working Class*

Th 06.13

- Justin Akers Chacon. *Radicals in the Barrio: Magonistas, Socialists, Wobblies, and Communists in the Mexican American Working Class*

Screen: "Salt of the Earth"**Week 4**

Tu 06.18

- Alejandro Madrid. *Transnational Encounters: Music and Performance at the U.S.-Mexico Border*

Th 06.20

- Alejandro Madrid. *Transnational Encounters: Music and Performance at the U.S.-Mexico*
Screen: "Los Tigres Del Norte at Folsom Prison"

Week 5

Tu 06.25

- Bernadine Hernández and Karen Roybal. *Transnational Chicanx Perspectives on Ana Castillo*

Th 06.27

- Bernadine Hernández and Karen Roybal. *Transnational Chicanx Perspectives on Ana Castillo*

Screen: "Mosquita y Mari" and "Quinceañera"