

Migration – People & Policy on the US-Mexico Border

LACB 3020 (4 Credits)

This syllabus is representative of a typical summer program. Because courses develop and change over time to take advantage of unique learning opportunities, actual course content may vary from summer to summer.

Course Description

This course focuses on the ways in which diverse individuals and communities are impacted by high levels of migration to the United States. Participants will examine the various characteristics of both modern and contemporary migration including the impact border enforcement and stricter immigration policies have had on different groups of migrants, including children, youth, women, LGBTQi+ and indigenous peoples.

The ongoing development of militarized borders and the criminalization of migration will also be a major focus of this course. Students will visit Nogales, Arizona, a major port of entry where thousands of migrants risk and lose their lives trying to get across the desert that divides Mexico and the United States. While in Tucson, participants will learn about state and federal efforts to restrict human mobility across this border and how these efforts can generate greater levels of vulnerability for migrants. Online sessions with activists, community leaders, academics, and migrant advocates from Mexico and the United States will provide meaningful opportunities for students to learn about the many factors that force Mexicans and Central Americans to leave their homes.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- *Discuss* key political and economic moments in the history of Latin America that have forced migration to the United States mainly from Mexico and Central America;
- *Describe* how border enforcement strategies aimed at curbing unauthorized immigration to the US have changed in recent years and what consequences have resulted from these efforts;
- *Analyze* how changes in US immigration and border policy have shaped and reshaped migration from Central America and Mexico to the United States;

- *Evaluate* social and cultural values that can help challenge stereotypes often used to misrepresent migrant groups and to devalue their identities and resilience;
- *Identify* and *Explain* policy changes that could address the causes of consequences of undocumented migration;

Language of Instruction

This course is taught in English. Some readings, lectures, and discussions may be in Spanish with translation and interpretation support, depending on the context.

Instructional Methods

Meaningful learning is one that allows all participants in the process to collaboratively create opportunities to exchange information, share experiences, discuss pertinent issues, and enhance our understanding of what we are studying. The hybrid nature of this course, one that combines online sessions with experiential learning, will provide the best of two learning approaches that have proven to be successful in collaborative and meaningful learning. Online sessions will allow participants to hear from a diverse group of people located in different places in Mexico and in the United States. These interactions will help participants to better contextualize migration as it is lived by advocates, activists, community leaders, and migrant organizations. Their experiences and knowledge will serve as a foundation for a deeper understanding of what participants will get to experience while in Arizona. The trip to Tucson allows participants to see first-hand and experience the places, institutions, and organizations whose existence is directly and indirectly linked to the large and diverse communities of migrants.

Course Schedule

Module I: The Causes and Consequences of Migration to the United States (Weeks 1 & 2 – online sessions)

This module includes ten online sessions focused on Mexican and Central American migration to the United States. Students will learn how the strengthening of border enforcement is happening on a global scale and how enforcement at the southern and northern border of Mexico has developed and changed. Speakers will discuss the efforts to formalize Mexico's southern border and restrict Central American migration through the country and how this has reshaped the landscape for undocumented migrants. Several classes will also focus on the causes of undocumented migration from Mexico and Central America and the very different experiences migrants face in their attempts to cross into the United States. Students will also hear about the experiences faced by migrant farmworkers and the numerous obstacles and hardships faced by them and their families. Finally, students will discuss how Covid-19 has had a dramatic and disproportionately negative impact on the lives of migrants in the United States.

Required Texts

- Chomsky, A. (2014). *Undocumented how immigration became illegal* (pp. 64-70). Boston: Beacon Press. Selected Section: “Guatemalan Mayans: A History of Migration”
- Nevins, J., & Aizeki, M. (2008). *Dying to live: a story of U.S. Immigration in an Age of Global Apartheid*. San Francisco: Open Media/City Lights
- Segura, D. A. & Zavella, P. (Eds.). (2007). *Women and Migration in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands: A Reader*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. Chapter 14: “Transborder Families and Gendered Trajectories of Migration and Work”, Ojeda de la Peña, N.
- Vogt, W. A. (2013). Crossing Mexico: Structural violence and the commodification of undocumented Central American migrants. *American Ethnologist*, 40(4), 764-780.

Audiovisual Material

- Ramírez, M. (2018) How can we make space for marginalized communities to tell their stories? Listen:
https://www.ted.com/talks/monica_ramirez_passing_the_mic_to_migrant_farmer_workers#t-14702
- Yates, P., & Sigel, N. T. (1986). *When the mountains tremble [film]: the astonishing story of Rigoberta Menchú, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize* (No. 972.81 W). California, US: Skylight Pictures Production.

Module II: The Human Crisis at the U.S – Mexico Border (Weeks 3 & 4 – Tucson, AZ)*

Module II will take place in Tucson, Arizona. Students will examine how the immigration and federal penal systems operate in the United States by attending removal proceedings in an immigration court and “Operation Streamline” hearings in the Federal District Court in downtown Tucson. A trip to the physical border with Mexico will give the students the opportunity to observe the militarization operations that are occurring in plain sight in this area as well as see the communities that have been divided by the border. Students will visit several non-profit organizations and hear from speakers who work to educate and diminish the harmful effects of the rapidly increasing and changing border enforcement policies. Students will be able to actually see these policies being implemented at the border and in the community and will gain, through their own experiences, a deeper understanding of how these policies affect human lives.

**Please be aware that topics and excursions may vary to take advantage of any emerging events, to accommodate changes in our lecturers' availability, and to respect any changes that would affect student safety. Students will be notified if this occurs.*

Required Texts

Bacon, D. (2013). *The right to stay home: how US policy drives Mexican migration* (Bacon, D. author). Boston: Beacon Press. Chapter 7: "The Right to Not Migrate and Radical Reform"

Green, L. (2019). Seeking Safety, Met with Violence. *The Border and Its Bodies: The Embodiment of Risk Along the US-México Line*.

Klein, N. (2007). The shock doctrine: The rise of disaster capitalism. New York: Allen Lane. (Introduction and chapter 1)

Miller, T. (2014). *Border Patrol Nation: dispatches from the front lines of homeland security*. City Lights Publishers. (whole book)

Miller, T. (2017). *Storming the wall: Climate change, migration, and homeland security* (pp. 71-105). San Francisco, CA: City Lights Books. Chapter 3: "The 21st Century Border"

Newspaper Articles:

Schatz, B. (2017) A Day in the "Assembly-Line" Court That Prosecutes 70 Border Crossers in 2 Hours

<https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2017/07/a-day-in-the-assembly-line-court-that-sentences-46-border-crossers-in-2-hours/>

Gabbat, A. (2019) Fear, confusion, despair: the everyday cruelty of a border immigration court

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/jul/26/el-paso-texas-immigration-court-us-mexico-border>

Gupta, A. & Fawcett, M. (2020) Refugees in the Time of Covid19: *Fleeing gangs and stalked by violence, thousands of asylum-seekers trapped in Mexico now face the pandemic* <https://www.thenation.com/article/society/refugees-asylum-coronavirus-mexico/>

Green, E., (2020) U.S. and Mexico are blocking kids from asking for asylum because of coronavirus

<https://theintercept.com/2020/04/16/coronavirus-mexico-border-children-asylum/>

Roug, L. (2017, October 26) "Our Backyard Has Become A Graveyard": Saving Lives On The U.S.-Mexico Border". Retrieved from <https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/saving->

Evaluation and Grading Criteria

Description of Assignments:

Participation: Every student is expected to join all online sessions, do all assigned readings and share notes and/or reflections as indicated by instructors. Participants will be prepared to discuss assigned readings, to listen attentively to any lectures, to seek to understand the perspectives of their peers, to share thoughts and opinions about the topics of the course, and to otherwise engage in healthy exploration of the course themes in order to contribute to the collective learning of the group. (10%)

Timeline Exercise: Students will be assigned a key political and economic moments in the history of Latin America that have forced migration and be required to do a brief written and oral presentation on it to be shared during the timeline exercise. (10%)

Policy Brief: Students will be required to prepare a policy brief or border enforcement strategy to be shared during the online session with the other participants. These policy briefs must include background information, description and an evaluation of its effectiveness, briefs must be written to be shared with others, and also presented orally. (10%)

Reflection Papers: Individually, students will write two five-page essays reflecting on the information that is being shared and the experiences the students are having throughout the program. These reflections will require the students to explore how their previous knowledge, biases and assumptions are challenged and/or affirmed throughout the course and the implications of such exploration for their professional and personal growth. (20% per reflection = 40% total)

Final Project: Each student will choose a final project for this course that examines a topic related to migration or borders. The final project must be approved by the instructor and may take the form of a short research paper or a polished presentation based on research. (30%)

Assessment:

Timeline Exercise	10%
Policy Brief	10%
Informed Reflection 1	20%
Informed Reflection 2	20 %
Final Project	30%
Participation	10%

Grading Scale

94-100%	A	Excellent
90-93%	A-	
87-89%	B+	
84-86%	B	Above Average
80-83%	B-	
77-79%	C+	
74-76%	C	Average
70-73%	C-	
67-69%	D+	
64-66%	D	Below Average
below 64	F	Fail

Expectations and Policies

- Show up prepared. Be on time, have your readings completed and points in mind for discussion or clarification. Complying with these elements raises the level of class discussion for everyone.
- Have assignments completed on schedule and done accordingly to the specified requirements. This will help ensure that your assignments are returned in a timely manner.
- Ask questions in class. Engage the lecturer. These are often very busy professionals who are doing us an honor by coming to speak.
- Comply with academic integrity policies (no plagiarism or cheating).
- Respect differences of opinion (classmates', lecturers, local constituents engaged with on the visits). You are not expected to agree with everything you hear, but you are expected to listen across difference and consider other perspectives with respect.

SIT Policies and Resources

Please refer to the [SIT Study Abroad Handbook](#) and the [Policies](#) section of the SIT website for all academic and student affairs policies. Students are accountable for complying with all published policies. Of particular relevance to this course are the policies regarding: academic integrity, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), research and ethics in field study and internships, late assignments, academic status, academic appeals, diversity and disability, sexual harassment and misconduct, and the student code of conduct.

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad Handbook and SIT website for information on important resources and services provided through our central administration in Vermont, such as [Library resources and research support](#), [Disability Services](#), [Counseling Services](#), [Title IX information](#), and [Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion](#) resources.