

Department: HIST/PRLS

Course No.: 3674 [278] / 3220 [220]

Credits: 3

Title: History of Latinos/as in the US

Contact: Blanca G. Silvestrini

Content Area: CA 1 Arts and Humanities and CA4 Diversity and Multiculturalism

Diversity: CA4 Non-International

Catalog Copy: History of Latino/as in the United States. Either semester. Three credits. Silvestrini. Settlement and growth of Hispanic-origin populations in the United States today, from Spanish and Mexican settlement of the western United States to the growth of Latino communities. Student oral history project.

Course Information: This course is an in-depth study of the settlement and growth of Latinos or Hispanic-origin populations in the United States today. It looks into the historical processes that resulted in the growth of Latinos/as as the largest ethnic group in contemporary American society. It compares the Latino experience with other immigrant groups and looks into the change over time dimension of Latino's place in American history.

The course covers the Spanish and Mexican settlements in Western US, the effects of the US-Mexico War (1845-48) on issues of property and citizenship, the impact of the US expansion into the Caribbean after the Spanish American War (1898), the political action of the Hispanic population in the early 20th century, the immigration process from Latin America and the Caribbean through the 20th century, and the growth of Latino communities in American cities their interaction with other ethnic and racial groups.

Main Objectives

- To inquire into the multicultural nature of US society, focusing on the Latino experience
- To understand the territorial issues involved in the history of Latinos in the US
- To study the consequences of the US-Mexico War and the Spanish-Cuban- American War in creating the Latino borderlands and the ways native peoples from the regions affected by the US expansion constructed these processes
- To understand the stages of political and economic participation of Latinos in key cities in the US and compare it to other cultural groups, such as African and Asian-American peoples
- To analyze gender issues in the Latino labor force and their mobilization as part of the migration experience in the US - - To delineate some of the problems afflicting the lives of new Latin American migrants in the US in terms of their relationship with the original society and their perception of the new
- To appreciate the role that music and the fine arts have played in the cultural identity process of Latino groups

Course requirements

Mid-term and final exams, two reflection essays (3-5 pages) and class group presentation. The students read, analyze and discuss assigned materials, analyze and compare themes in films, literature and other fine arts forms and work in an oral history interview.

Major themes:

- The annexation of lands in WesternUS and the definition of peoples as settlers or migrants
- Demographic trends among Latinos in the US and patterns of geographic settlement
- The consequences of the US-Mexican War (1846-48) in the Mexican population of the West
- The problem of citizenship—Mexicans and Americans, a choice
- The making of the border in the Southwest
- The new borders in the Caribbean after the Spanish-American War (1898)
- Cultural changes through education and public health—local vs. transnational perspectives
- Transporting worldviews across borders—the challenges of constructing new worlds
- The Mexican Revolution and the movement North—the creation of the new Mexican migrants
- Mexican industrial workers in American cities

- The worlds of agricultural workers in New York and California
- The Growth of Los Angeles and the race-gender classifications
- The invisible worlds of the Central American workers
- Exiles or migrants—issues of Cuban migration to the US
- Latino identities in Conflict—cultures of the Salsa and Santeria

Meets Goals of Gen Ed.: This course helps the students acquire intellectual breadth and versatility by challenging their conceptions about the formation of the United States as a nation and expanding their understanding of the historical process. The course analyzes American history as a contested process in which groups, such as the Mexicans living in the Southwest, lost their lands, citizenship and had to redefine their world as a product of the Anglo expansion to the West. It makes the students more aware of the human dilemmas that historical processes such as war impose on people by analyzing the consequences of the US-Mexican and the Spanish –American Wars in constructing new national borders and building new interrelationships among diverse peoples. In these course the students also become more aware of the diverse nature of the human culture and experience by understanding the diverse worlds of the migrants as they relocate across national boundaries and they relate in various ways to the new and old worlds. By engaging the students in a research experience—through an oral history project—they become part of the process of creation of knowledge and learn about historical research methods.

CA4 Criteria: This course looks at a segment of US history from a non-traditional way—by focusing on the experience of Latino groups that either became American citizens as a consequence of wars (the U.S.-Mexico War, 1846-1848 or the Spanish American War (1898) or as part of the political and economic processes that resulted from the American expansion to Latin America. It analyzes these process from the perspective of those involved in changes, such as becoming American citizens because of the land taking in the West, or as relocating as a product of economic expansion into the Caribbean.

Goal 1. The course compares the experiences of different Latino groups as they moved and established themselves in the continental US. It deals, for example, with the ways the city of Los Angeles developed as a migration locale, in which Anglos, Mexicans and other groups defined cultural spaces.

Goal 2. By reading testimonial literature and studying literature and the fine arts the students understand different ways of constructing the worlds of the migrants and their relationship with the values of their place of origin and their new homes.

Goal 3. The course provides a setting to compare the experience of different ethnic groups by studying the ways peoples from different cultural background relate and define their lives in multicultural settings in the US, such as agricultural and industrial work, religious organizations, political mobilization, etc.

Goal 4. A large segment of the course is devoted to the study of migration from different Latin American regions to the US and the ways migrants construct their new communities and networks of action. Human rights claims are study through examples of political and labor organizations, participation in civil and human rights movements, etc.