GOVT 490-013

U.S.-Mexico Border Policy

George Mason University
Fall 2019
M 4:30 –7:10 p.m.
Mason Global Center 1320C

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Almost 2,000 miles long, the U.S.-Mexico borderlands stretch across coastal, desert, and tropical climatic terrains of varying altitudes. The lengthy U.S.-Mexico border is a region of multiple contrasts. Enormous demographic, socioeconomic, political, and cultural differences can be found across the nearly 2,000 mile-long border. There are also multiple issues to resolve along this extremely diverse and unequal region. These issues slide along the scale of the legal and the illegal in a fluid border constantly moving to a hardened state and populated by actors with specific interests.

The U.S.-Mexico borderlands have been in constant change for decades, and particularly since the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement or NAFTA in 1994 (now the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement or USMCA). The events of September 11, 2001 also reconfigured the conceptualizations of the U.S.-Mexico border, its management and related public policies. In the present era, the border is at the center of U.S.-Mexico relations. The 2016 U.S. presidential campaign and election of Donald Trump placed the U.S.-Mexico border directly in the national political discourse of each country.

This course examines the political dynamics and the main policy issues in the Mexico-U.S. border region today. For this purpose, we will first review the historic, geographic, demographic, cultural, economic, social and political dimensions of the Mexico-U.S. border region. We will particularly assess the economic conditions, institutions, governance
structures, social policy issues, and binational relations in the border region. Then, we will analyze border politics and policy in the areas of economic development, labor, immigration, public health, the environment, and security. Special attention will be given to the subjects of undocumented immigration, immigration policy and particularly to border security issues and policies.

Through the readings and discussion in the course, students will understand that the relationship between the United States and Mexico should not be treated as monolithic throughout the borderlands. A multiple-borders perspective is crucial to understanding the U.S.-Mexico border and border relations in this area, as well as related economic, social and political dynamics.

Note: The material for some sessions of the course will be complemented by presentations of guest speakers who are specialists or practitioners in key areas of public policy and security in the U.S.-Mexico border region.

**STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Upon completion of this course, student should have:

a) Understood the history and socioeconomic complexities of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands.

b) Identified the main issues to be solved at the U.S.-Mexico border region.

c) Identified the main legal and illegal, licit and illicit, economic activities at the U.S.-Mexico border region.

d) Analyzed the main areas of border policy designed and implemented for/at the U.S.-Mexico borderlands.

e) Understood all aspects of undocumented immigration and analyzed issues with current U.S. and Mexican immigration policies and border enforcement.

f) Assessed the state of border security (on both sides of the border) and examined current border security policies and measures of border security cooperation.

**Writing-Intensive (WI):**

This course has a specialized designation: Writing Intensive in the Major.

More information about Writing Intensive courses is available at Mason’s Writing across the Curriculum website: https://wac.gmu.edu/wi-course-resources/wi-course-criteria/.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Critical summaries (20%)  
A one-page critical summary of each topic (assigned readings) should be prepared for every class. It must be typed and finished prior to coming in to the relevant class. These assignments will be graded randomly.

“Pop” Quizzes (20%)  
To make sure that everyone keeps up with the readings, there will be an undisclosed number of pop quizzes during the term (probably 3-5). There are no make-ups for missed quizzes.

Final exam (30%)  
An in-class final exam is scheduled on December 2.

Final paper (30%)  
A semester-long research project will be required of each student. This project should examine one border policy initiative in the area of your choice (security, the environment, public health, etc.). The final essay should be approximately 10 pages long, in scholarly format, with an introduction, sub-sections, conclusions, and properly referenced bibliography. This paper is due for submission on December 16.

Papers will be evaluated according to their insight, clarity, and the effectiveness with which they answer the specific question. Writing style matters. Be clear and concise.

Please note that you can miss examinations and quizzes only for medically certified incapacity or for the gravest adequately documented, crisis in your immediate family. Make-ups will be given only in the case of an illness or emergency that is properly documented.

GRADING

Your final grade in the course will be assigned based on the following scale:

97-100 A+  
93-96 A  
90-92 A-  
87-89 B+  
83-86 B  
80-82 B-  
77-79 C+  

STUDENTS’ ACADEMIC RESPONSIBILITIES

Students are expected to be diligent in their studies and attend class regularly and on time. Students are responsible for all class work and assignments. On recommendation of the instructor concerned and with the approval of the Dean, students may, at any time, be dropped from the course. This may result in an “F” on the student’s permanent record.

*** Important:

Please provide a respectful learning environment for your fellow students. Repeated tardiness, cell phone disruptions, reading materials unrelated to the course, and web browsing and texting during class will adversely affect your grade. Repeated disruptive behavior may result in your involuntary withdrawal from the course.

Please arrive at class on time and mute (or switch off) cell phones, pagers, and alarms during class.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The integrity of the University community is affected by the individual choices made by each of us. GMU has an Honor Code with clear guidelines regarding academic integrity. Three fundamental and rather simple principles to follow at all times are that: (1) all work submitted be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for clarification. No grade is important enough to justify academic misconduct. Plagiarism means using the exact words, opinions, or factual information from another person without giving the person credit. Writers give credit through accepted documentation styles, such as parenthetical citation, footnotes, or endnotes. Paraphrased material must also be cited. A simple listing of books or articles is not sufficient. Plagiarism is the equivalent of intellectual robbery and cannot be tolerated in the academic setting.
UNIVERSITY HONOR CODE

Mason shares in the tradition of an honor system that has existed in Virginia since 1842. The code is an integral part of university life. On the application for admission, students sign a statement agreeing to conform to and uphold the Honor Code. Students are responsible, therefore, for understanding the code’s provisions. In the spirit of the code, a student’s word is a declaration of good faith acceptable as truth in all academic matters. Cheating and attempted cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing of academic work and related materials constitute Honor Code violations. To maintain an academic community according to these standards, students and faculty members must report all alleged violations to the Honor Committee. Any student who has knowledge of, but does not report, a violation may be accused of lying under the Honor Code. (See http://oai.gmu.edu for more information)

The complete Honor Code is as follows:

To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the university community, have set forth this honor code: Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work.

SPECIAL NEEDS OF STUDENTS

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the DRC.

READING MATERIALS

The required readings listed below each class are essential to understand the course. The recommended readings list provides supplementary materials to pursue topics in greater depth for your final papers, oral presentations and independent study. The online links represent additional sources of information.

Books can be ordered directly from the publishers, or from Amazon.com, Barnes & Noble, etc. There is a book order of the required texts for this course.


RECOMMENDED READINGS:


ADDITIONAL READING MATERIAL:

In addition to the required and recommended texts, there are a number of articles available on-line through GMU library website. Further readings will be posted on Blackboard, so be sure to check the website often [Note: These materials will be posted one week in advance of the relevant session].

See also:

- U.S.-Mexico Border Issues: A Selected Bibliography from the Smithsonian Institution Libraries' Collections: (Compiled by Celia C. Perez; Smithsonian Institution Libraries Intern; University of South Florida; School of Library and Information Science; Summer 2000:
  http://www.sil.si.edu/silpublications/us-mexico-border-issues.htm

- UCSB Border Studies Bibliography:
  http://research.ucsb.edu/ccb/biblio.pdf
DISCUSSION TOPICS AND READINGS PER CLASS
(DRAFT-subject to change)

Week 1: August 26

Road map of the course - Introduction and explanation of course requirements
“The U.S.-Mexico Border”

Week 2: September 9

The U.S.-Mexico Border and Borderlands Today


Week 3: September 16

The U.S.-Mexico Transborder Region I

- Vélez-Ibáñez and Heyman, eds. (2017): Part I and Part II

Week 4: September 23

The U.S.-Mexico Transborder Region II

- Vélez-Ibáñez and Heyman, eds. (2017): Part III and Part IV.

Guest speaker: (TBA)

Week 5: September 30

The U.S.-Mexico Transborder Region III

- Vélez-Ibáñez and Heyman, eds. (2017): Conclusion.
• Huntington, Samuel. “The Hispanic Challenge,” in Foreign Policy (March 1, 2004).

Week 6: October 7

The U.S.-Mexico Border: Policy Dynamics


Week 7: October 15 (Tuesday)

The Multiple U.S.-Mexico Borders


Week 8: October 21

The Future of the U.S.-Mexico Border


Guest speaker:
(TBA)
**Week 9: October 28**

*Immigration Policy I*


**Week 10: November 4**

*Immigration Policy II*


  **Guest speaker:**
  (TBA)

**Week 11: November 11**

*U.S.-Mexico Border Security and Border Security Cooperation*


**Week 12: November 18**

*The Three U.S.-Mexico Border Wars: Drugs, Immigration, and Homeland Security*

- Payan (2017): Chapters 3-5.

**Week 13: November 25**

*Asylum Seekers and a “Humanitarian Crisis” at the Border*
• Readings: TBA

Week 14: December 2

Final Exam

Week 15: December 16

Final paper due

*** The professor reserves the right to make reasonable changes to this syllabus as needed ***