

## **BORDERS AND DIASPORAS**

Spring 2021

New York University

Thursdays, 3:30-6:30pm EST

via Zoom

<https://nyu.zoom.us/j/91524929070>

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### **Course Description**

This online seminar considers the concepts of border and diaspora as they are deployed, recalibrated, visualized, and reimaged by scholars, writers, artists, archivists, activists, cultural workers, and others in and beyond the interdisciplinary field of Latinx Studies. In addition to readings of classic and contemporary texts from Latinx and cultural studies (including authors such as Juan Flores, Gloria Anzaldúa, Lorgia García Peña, Emma Pérez, Stuart Hall, Paul Gilroy, Norma Alarcón, Alán Pelaez Lopez, and others), the class will feature interactive guest presentations by practitioners whose work is remapping our understanding of borders and diasporas. Because this seminar is aligned with NYU's Public Humanities Initiative, students will have the option of undertaking a final project with a public humanities orientation, and the course syllabus and discussions will make room for emerging modes of public engagement, including digital archives and activism.

While this seminar approaches borders and diasporas largely through the field of Latinx Studies, students are welcome and encouraged to engage borders and diasporas in ways that align with their own research and public humanities interests. Our seminar aims to introduce students to historical and ongoing border and diasporic conversations inside and outside the academy, and to explore how Latinx Studies--understood as a self-reflexive field at the complex intersection of theory and public practice, subaltern and imperial histories, and community and institutional imperatives--can both expand and challenge the discourse and practice of the public humanities in the corporatized research university.

As a Departmental Public Humanities offering, this course aims for students to gain an appreciation of the distinctive public contributions to be made by their specific disciplines. Therefore, in putting together our list of speakers and presenters, we have focused on figures working in or alongside it the field of Latinx Studies, thereby highlighting the public-facing and community-oriented dimensions that have characterized the field since its inception. These guest presentations will also have a workshop-style skills component and/or will be structured as proper workshops on things like digital mapping and using social media to bridge academic and public identities. In the spirit of the public humanities, we view the course readings not as ends in themselves but as providing a theoretical, historical, and literary foundation that is inseparable

from the praxis element the speakers and workshops will bring. Our midterm and final try to bridge the conventional academic paper (which MA and PhD students still typically need to make progress toward degree) and more creative alternatives that allow for public-facing options. Public humanities approaches also inform our attention to Latinx digital archives, both out of necessity (given the pandemic) and in an effort to think about how the turn toward the digital requires from us different research practices and literacies and also creates spaces for scholarship that can take graduate study in other directions.

### **Books and Materials**

Lorgia García Peña, *The Borders of Dominicanidad: Race, Nation, and Archives of Contradiction*, Duke University Press, 2016

Jesús Colón. *The Way it Was and Other Writings*, eds. Edna Acosta-Belén and Virginia Sánchez-Korrol, Arte Público Press, 1993.

Nalo Hopkinson, *Midnight Robber*, Warner Aspect, 2000

Alán Pelaez Lopez, *Intergalactic Travels: Poems from a Fugitive Alien*, The Operating System, 2020 [available as a pdf from the publisher at <https://www.theoperatingsystem.org/os-open-access-community-publications-library/> with request of direct donation to the author]

Leticia Hernández Linares, Rubén Martínez, and Héctor Tobar, eds., *The Wandering Song: Central American Writing in the United States*, Tia Chucha Press, 2017

Kelly Lytle Hernández, *City of Inmates: Conquest, Rebellion, and the Rise of Human Caging in Los Angeles, 1771–1965*, University of North Carolina Press, 2017

Additional materials will be made available via NYU Classes.

Note: Instead of Amazon, consider purchasing books through [Bookshop](#). Bookshop orders can take time, especially for backordered books, and the pandemic can delay delivery, so order your books as soon as possible. We have structured the schedule so that all readings for the first few are shorter and already uploaded under “Resources” on NYU Classes

### **Grading**

--class participation: 15%

--weekly forum posts on NYU Classes: 20%

--midterm: 30%

--final: 35%

### **Class Participation and Forum Posts**

This seminar will be held on Zoom. As this is an intensive, weekly graduate seminar, it is expected that students will be present remotely on audio and video for the duration of each session, except for short personal breaks. Students may miss one weekly session with no explanation and no consequences. Further unexcused absences may result in a lower participation grade. Students in need of accommodations should reach out to the instructors as soon as possible. Every reasonable effort will be made to work with students, especially given that these are tremendously challenging times for all of us.

Students should post to the forums on NYU Classes for at least 12 weeks during the semester. All posts should go up by 11pm the night before class and should respond briefly (analytically, creatively) to the assigned materials for that week's class. Students may focus on one reading or text or may write posts that compare and contrast, theorize, or ask a question. The recommended length for posts is around 100 words, long enough to allow for a sustained reflection but short enough so that everyone can read each other's posts before class. Students are welcome to connect their posts to their own research and public humanities interests.

### **Midterm Assignment**

The midterm assignment will consist of an essay of 5-7 pages based on digital archival research related to the course topic. Students will be provided with a list of digital collections related to U.S. Latinx literatures and cultures at a range of institutions (such as the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The University of California system, The Dominican Archives at City College, Florida International University, and the Center for Puerto Rican Studies at Hunter College) but are free and encouraged to seek out and write about alternative digital resources relevant to their own interests. Since this seminar is aligned with NYU's Public Humanities Initiative, students are welcome to approach this essay as the draft of an academic conference paper but also as part of other public humanities practices, from the curatorial and the journalistic to the activist and the creative. Students will be provided full guidelines early in the semester, and we will examine specific digital collections and discuss methodological, theoretical, and political questions regarding working with digital archives.

### **Final Assignment**

There will be two options for the final assignment.

1) Longer final essay (15-20 pages). This essay may (but need not) be a continuation of the mid-term essay. If it is a continuation, it should substantively address the feedback received on the midterm.

2) Hybrid option consisting of a public humanities project accompanied by a framing essay (circa 5 pages). The exact nature of the public humanities project will be up to individual students but should be relevant to their training, interests, and expertise. The project should be accompanied by a short essay (circa 5 pages) that briefly contextualizes and describes the project while also outlining its relevance to the student's work and to the course topic and readings.

Regardless of the option chosen, all students should meet individually with the instructors via Zoom to discuss their final projects. Full guidelines, examples, and meeting dates will be provided later in the semester.

### **Language**

While the course will be conducted in English, the midterm and final may be written in English or Spanish.

### **Accommodations**

Academic accommodations and support are available to any student with a disability. Students with disabilities should register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (<https://www.nyu.edu/students/communities-and-groups/students-with-disabilities.html>; [mosescsd@nyu.edu](mailto:mosescsd@nyu.edu); 726 Broadway, 3rd Floor; tel. 212.998.4980), which can arrange for things like extra time for exams. The instructor must also be notified at the beginning of semester for special accommodations regarding assessment and assignments.

### **Provisional Course Schedule** (full-length books in bold)

Week 1: Jan 28: Introduction (optional readings)

Trinh T. Minh-ha, "Foreignness and the New Color of Fear," from *Elsewhere, Within Here: Immigration, Refugeeism and the Boundary Event*, 2010

Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," 1990

Robin D.G. Kelley, "How the West was One: The African Diaspora and the Re-Mapping of US History," from *Rethinking American History in a Global Age*, 2002

Background reading: Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, "From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in Between in North American History," *American Historical Review* 104:3, 814–41, 1999

in-class exercise: *The First Blacks in the Americas* (digital archive, Dominican Studies Institute)

Week 2: Feb 4: Borders, Diasporas, and the Shaping of Latinx Studies in the U.S.

Arturo Alfonso Schomburg, "The Negro Digs Up His Past" (1925)

Américo Paredes, introduction to *With a Pistol in His Hand*, 1958

Jack D. Forbes, from *Aztecas del Norte: The Chicanos of Aztlán*, 1973

Juan Flores, "The Diaspora Strikes Back: Reflections on Cultural Remittances," *NACLA*, 2007

in-class exercise: Schomburg Center digital archives

possible conversation with Bridgett Pride (Schomburg Reference Librarian, Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Books)

Week 3: Feb 11: Borders, Diasporas, and the Shaping of Latinx Studies in the U.S. (continued)

Norma Alarcón, "Chicana Feminism" In the Tracks of 'the' Native Woman," *Cultural Studies* 4: 3 (248-56), 1990

Silvio Torres-Saillant, "Diasporic Disquisitions: Dominicanists, Transnationalism, and the Community" (CUNY Dominican Studies Institute report), 2000

Alicia Schmidt Camacho, "Migrant Modernisms: Racialized Development under the Bracero Program," from *Migrant Imaginaries: Latino Cultural Politics in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands*, 2007

Ana Patricia Rodríguez, introduction to *Dividing the Isthmus: Central American Transnational Histories, Literatures, and Cultures*, 2009

in-class exercise: University of California digital archives

Week 4: Feb 18: Diasporic Borders, Border Diasporas

Emma Pérez, "Diasporic Subjectivities and Post-Revolution Identities," from *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas Into History*, 1999

performances by Josefina Báez

**Lorgia García Peña, *The Borders of Dominicanidad*, 2016**

in-class exercise: *archipelagos/Small Axe*, Hemi video library (Hemispheric Institute), *Interventions* (The Latinx Project)

Week 5: Feb 18: Third-World Marxist and Feminist Genealogies

Jesús Colón, selections from *The Way It Was and Other Writings* (optional for readers of Spanish, selections from *Lo que el pueblo me dice*)

Jesús Colón digital archives at Center for Puerto Rican Studies

Chela Sandoval, "U.S. Third World Feminism: The Theory and Method of Differential Oppositional Consciousness in the Postmodern World," *Genders* 10 (1-24), 1991

Lorena Oropeza, "Viviendo y luchando: The Life and Times of Enriqueta Vasquez" from *Enriqueta Vasquez and the Chicano Movement: Writings from El Grito del Norte*, eds. Lorena Oropeza and Dionne Espinoza, 2006.

pdfs of *El Grito del Norte* and *Palante* newspapers

Darrel Enck-Wanzer, ed., first two sections and one item from each of the remaining sections of *The Young Lords: A Reader*, 2010

Week 6: Feb 25: Borders and Diasporas in Latin American Studies

Ruth Behar, introduction to *Bridges to Cuba/Puentes a Cuba* (1995) and blog

Néstor García Canclini, "Latins or Americans: Narratives of the Border," *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies / Revue canadienne des études latino-américaines et caraïbes* 23:46 (117-31), 1998

Pedro Cabán, "The New Synthesis of Latin American and Latino Studies," from *Borderless Borders: U.S. Latinos, Latin Americans, and the Paradox of Interdependence*, 1998

Yolanda Martinez-San Miguel, introduction to *Coloniality of Diasporas: Rethinking Intra-Colonial Migrations in a Pan-Caribbean Context*, 2014

Sayak Valencia, "The Breakdown of the State as A Political Formation," from *Gore Capitalism* (translated by J.D. Pluecker), 2018

#### Week 7: March 4: Indigenous Geographies

Guillermo Bonfill Batalla, introduction to *México Profundo*, 1987 (tr. 1996)

Tiffany Lethabo King, introduction to *The Black Shoals: Offshore Formations of Black and Native Studies*, 2019

Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, "Indigenous Queer Normativity," from *As We Have Always Done*, 2017

Mary Louise Pratt, "Afterword: Indigeneity Today," from *Indigenous Experience Today*, eds. Marisol de la Cadena and Orin Starn, 2007

Reid Gómez, "They Killed the Word," *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 15: 3/4 (Fall 2003/Winter 2004)

Emil Keme, Adam Coon (translator), "For Abiyala to Live, the Americas Must Die: Toward a Transhemispheric Indigeneity," *Native American and Indigenous Studies* 5:1, Spring 2018

James Clifford, "Varieties of Indigenous Experience: Diasporas, Homelands, Sovereignties," from *Indigenous Experience Today*, 2007 (background reading)

#### Week 8: March 11: Mapping Puerto Rican/Latinx NYC

STAR archives at Pratt Institute

excerpt from the *Memorias* of Bernardo Vega and poems by Julia de Burgos

mapping workshop and conversation with Monxo López of the Museum of the City of New York

## **midterm due**

Week 9: March 18

Spring Break

Week 10: March 25: Borders and Diasporas in/and/as Speculative Fictions

**Nalo Hopkinson, *Midnight Robber***

Gloria E. Anzaldúa, "Nepantla" and "Interface" (audio from reading at the University of Arizona Poetry Center, 1991) and "Tilli, Tlapalli: The Path of the Red and the Black Ink" from *Borderlands/La Frontera*;

Curtis Marez, "Introduction: Farm Workers in the Machine," from *Farm Worker Futurism: Speculative Technologies of Resistance*, 2016

Week 11: April 1: Afro-Atlantic Diasporas

Paul Gilroy, "The Black Atlantic as a Counterculture of Modernity," from *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, 1993

Cedric Robinson, "The Historical Archaeology of the Black Radical Tradition," from *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*, 1983

Yomaira C. Figueroa-Vásquez, introduction to *Decolonizing Diasporas: Radical Mappings of Afro-Atlantic Literature*, 2020

short fiction by Trifonia Melibea Obono and interview with Aracelis Girmay

Week 12: April 8: Unsettling Latinidad: Fugitivity, Migrancy, and the Limits of Institutional Borders

Alán Pelaez Lopez, "The 'X' in Latinx is a Wound, Not a Trend," 2017, selections from *To Love and Mourn in the Age of Displacement*, 2020, and *Intergalactic Travels: Poems from a Fugitive Alien*

conversation with Alán Pelaez Lopez

Alex Rivera and Cristina Ibarra, dir., *The Infiltrators*, 2017

possible conversation with Alex Rivera and Cristina Ibarra

Week 13: April 15: Digital Borders and Diasporas in the Age of Social Media

Micha Cárdenas, "Dark Shimmers: The Rhythm of Necropolitical Affect in Digital Media," in *Trap Door: Trans Cultural Production and the Politics of Visibility*, 2017

Nicole M Guidotti-Hernández, "Affective Communities and Millennial Desires: Latinx, or why my computer won't recognize Latina/o," *Cultural Dynamics* 29.3, 2017

Paul Joseph López Oro, "Digitizing Ancestral Memory: Garifuna Settlement Day in the Americas and in Cyberspace," in *Indigenous Interfaces: Spaces, Technology, and Social Networks in Mexico and Central America*, 2019

Janel Martínez, "When it comes to Latinidad, Who Is Included and Who Isn't?," *Remezcla*, 2019

conversation and social media workshop with Janel Martinez of The Latinx Project and Ain't I Latina

Week 14: April 22: Border and Diaspora as Evolving Poetics

**Leticia Hernández Linares, Rubén Martínez, and Héctor Tobar, eds., *The Wandering Song: Central American Writing in the United States*, 2017**

Jennifer Tamayo, from *Red Missed Aches Read Missed Aches Red Mistakes Read Mistakes*, 2011

Karma Chávez and Eithne Luibhéid, introduction to *Queer and Trans Migrations: Dynamics of Illegalization, Detention, and Deportation*, 2020

Week 15: April 29: Carceral Borders

**Kelly Lytle Hernández, *City of Inmates***

Daniel Nemser, introduction to *Infrastructures of Race: Concentration and Biopolitics in Colonial Mexico*, 2017

possible conversation with Kelly Lytle Hernández

Week 16: May 6: Art and Activism

Amy Sara Carroll, selections from *REMEX: Toward and Art History of the NAFTA Era*, 2017

Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, “Rasquachismo: A Chicano Sensibility,” 1989

videos of performances by Guillermo Gómez Peña, Carmelita Tropicana, Mariposa, Tahitun  
Mariam, and Afua Ansong

**final assignment due: Tuesday, May 18th**