

MAS252 Comparative Ethnic Studies

Wednesdays
6:00-8:45pm

Clark 318

3 units



course overview

In this course, we will analyze and discuss the meanings and functions of ethnicity and race in contemporary American society. Our discussions will focus on three particular groups: Mexican Americans, Native Americans, and African Americans. We will approach comparative analysis of ethnicity by examining particular concepts central to each group--border crossing, genocide and survivance, and legacies of slavery and

incarceration--and engage these core concepts in a critical dialogue.

Our readings are multidisciplinary scholarly works, creative writing, and films. Thus, an additional aim this semester is to compare and contrast how various genres and forms explain and represent the core concepts and experiences of the ethnic groups we study.

instructor info

Dr. Magdalena L. Barrera, Associate Professor, Mexican American Studies

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office hours: Mondays 3:00-5:00pm; Tuesdays 10:00-11:45am; and by appointment

required textbooks

The following books are widely available online and in local bookstores:

1. Douglas Massey, Jorge Durand, and Nolan Malone, *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors: Mexican Immigration in an Era of Economic Integration* (Russell Sage Foundation, 2003)
2. Luis Alberto Urrea, *The Devil's Highway: A True Story* (Back Bay Books, 2008)
3. Andrea Smith, *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide* (South End Press, 2005)
4. Deborah Miranda, *Bad Indians* (Heyday, 2013)
5. Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (The New Press, 2012)
6. Octavia Butler, *Kindred* (Beacon Press, 1988)

All other readings can be found in our course reader (marked “CR” on the syllabus), which is available for purchase from [San Jose Copies](#) (109 E Santa Clara St; 408-297-6698). **You must purchase a reader for this class and bring it with you to each class session.** Please order and pick it up ASAP, as readings in it are due by the second week of class. San Jose Copies business hours are 9:00am to 6:00pm Monday through Friday, and 10:00am – 5:00pm on Saturdays. The reader costs ~\$17.00.

Please note: I highly recommend that you purchase a writing manual, such as Kate Turabian's *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 7th edition). Moreover, I encourage you to take advantage of the resources at [SJSU's Writing Center](#) (located in Clark Hall 126), which offers tutoring services to all students. See page four for more details.

course promises and expectations

This course will enable you to

- Identify the processes by which ethnicity is defined, acquired and expressed;
- Become familiar with key historical traumas or concepts that ethnic communities see as central to their collective experience; and
- Compare and contrast the experiences of different ethnic groups so as to formulate new insights into the nature and effects of ethnicity and race in contemporary US society.

This course can fulfill these promises only if you promise the following in return:

- **To attend class and be an attentive participant.** It is your responsibility to arrive on time and actively engage in our discussions. Please respect the learning experience of others: Laptops, cell phones and other electronic devices must be turned off and stowed away for the duration of our meeting.
- **To read the assigned materials.** The assigned readings provide us with a common background so

that we can proceed together to new understandings. If you do not keep up with and/or do not complete the readings, you will have little chance of doing well in this class.

- **To complete the required assignments on time.** The writing assignments offer you the opportunity to articulate in your own words your engagement with our materials and themes, not to mention also to strengthen your writing skills. Please note that assignments submitted late will receive only half-credit; those submitted more than one week late will not be accepted at all.
- **To communicate with me.** If you have any questions or concerns about the readings and assignments, please let me know. This is particularly important if you experience a family or medical emergency that interferes with your performance in the course. On a more positive note, if you have suggestions for course-related materials that you would like to share or a topic that you would like to hear more about, I definitely would like to hear that, too.

assignments and grades

You will be graded on the following components:

1. Class Participation (15%)

This course is organized as a seminar. On occasion, I may provide a brief lecture in order to share contextual information or historical overviews; however, the class will rely most heavily on student-driven discussions. As such, your educational experience will be a communal one: you will get out of it what you put into it. Please arrive on time, having read and reflected on the assigned text(s) and thoughtfully prepared for discussion. While we can expect disagreement at times, please remember to treat your classmates with respect; respond thoughtfully to their comments and ideas; and share the stage.

2. Thought-pieces (15% each; 45% total)

Due Dates: March 18, April 15, May 6

Throughout the semester, you will write three brief (2-3 paged, single-spaced) thought-pieces that explores what you see as the most significant connections and themes among our textual and film materials for each segment of the course. It is a chance for you to synthesize your “take away” points from our materials and to put them into conversation with our background readings on ethnicity and race.

3. Scholarly Essay Selection (10%)

Due Date: April 22

Our final class session will consist of readings selected by students in the course. At some point before April 22, you should undertake independent research and locate a scholarly article on some aspect of ethnicity and race that you think would enhance and/or complicate our understandings of these concepts. Download or create a .pdf version of the article to share electronically with the class. You should include a 1-page (single-spaced) write up that explains why you chose this reading and the contribution it would make to our discussions.

4. Final Essay (30%)

Due Date: May 20, 10:00pm

The final essay is a 10-12 page (double-spaced) essay that explores the themes and issues from our course which you find most significant. As with all of our assignments, we will discuss the parameters of this essay well before the due date and brainstorm ideas together, so do not be concerned if this description seems rather open-ended. Outside research is not a requirement for this essay, but you are welcome to do so. I urge you to create an outline of this essay no later than May 14 so that you can meet with me one-on-one for feedback and support.

“Black and Third World people are expected to educate white people as to our humanity. Women are expected to educate men. Lesbians and gay men are expected to educate the heterosexual world. The oppressors maintain their position and evade their responsibility for their own actions. There is a constant drain of energy which might be better used in redefining ourselves and devising realistic scenarios for altering the present and constructing the future.”

- Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider*



official policies

Preparing for Class

Success in this course is based on the expectation that students will spend, for each unit of credit, a minimum of forty-five hours over the length of the course (normally 3 hours per unit per week with 1 of the hours used for lecture) for instruction or preparation/studying or course related activities. Other course structures will have equivalent workload expectations as described in the syllabus.

Academic Integrity

Your own commitment to learning, as evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University, and the University's Integrity Policy require you to be honest in all your academic coursework. Instances of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Cheating on exams or plagiarism (presenting the work of another as your own, or the use of another person's ideas without giving proper credit) will result in a failing grade and sanctions by the University. For this class, all assignments are to be completed by the individual student unless otherwise specified. If you would like to include in your assignment any material you have submitted or plan to submit for another class, please note that SJSU's Academic Policy F06-1 requires approval of instructors.

Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the Office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development. The website for Student Conduct and Ethical Development is available at http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/judicial_affairs/index.html.

SJSU Writing Center

The Writing Center in Clark Hall 126 offers tutoring services to San Jose State students in all courses. Writing Specialists assist in all areas of the writing process, including grammar, organization, paragraph development, coherence, syntax, and documentation styles. For more information, visit the Writing Center (<http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter>) or call 924-2308.

A Note about Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a serious offense and will not be tolerated. All references must be cited. Penalties for plagiarism range from an "F" in the course to

expulsion from SJSU. Students suspected of plagiarism will be asked to demonstrate that the work submitted is original and may be reported to the Office of Judicial Affairs for disciplinary action. You can find further information and even take a tutorial about plagiarism at (<http://tutorials.sjlibrary.org/tutorial/plagiarism/index.htm>).

On Recording Lectures and Publicly Sharing Course Materials

Common courtesy and professional behavior dictate that you notify someone when you are recording him or her. You must request via email our permission to make audio or video recordings in this class, no later than one week prior to the date of the lecture you wish to record. Such permission allows the recordings to be used for your private, study purposes only. The recordings are the intellectual property of the instructors; you have not been given any rights to reproduce or distribute the material. Moreover, in this course, the active participation of students or guests will be on the recording, which means that permission of those students or guests should be obtained as well.

Course material developed by the instructors is their intellectual property of the instructor and cannot be shared publicly without his/her approval. You may not publicly share or upload instructor generated material for this course such as exam questions, lecture notes, or homework solutions without instructor consent."

Campus Policy in Compliance with the Americans with Disability Act

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need to make special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with either one of us as soon as possible, or see us during office hours. Presidential Directive 97-03 requires that students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with the [AEC](#) (Accessible Education Center) to establish a record of their disability.

course schedule

subject to change with fair notice

date	readings and assignments	
Week 1	1/28	Introductions to each other and to the course
Week 2	2/4	I. Defining Ethnicity and Race Selections from Stephen Cornell and Douglas Hartmann, <i>Ethnicity and Race</i> : (CR) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Mapping the Terrain: Definitions” • “What They Bring: Group Factors in the Making of Identities” Joane Nagel, “Constructing Ethnicity: Creating and Recreating Ethnic Identity and Culture” (CR) Anthony Ocampo, “Are second-generation Filipinos ‘becoming’ Asian American or Latino?” (CR)
Week 3	2/11	Michael Omi and Howard Winant, “Racial Formation” (CR) Paula Moya and Hazel Markus, “Doing Race” (CR) Philip Kasinitz, “Race, Assimilation, and ‘Second Generation,’ Past and Present” (CR)
Week 4	2/18	In-class writing and discussion activity on ethnicity and race
Week 5	2/25	II. Border Crossings Massey, Durand, and Malone, <i>Beyond Smoke and Mirrors</i>
Week 6	3/4	Urrea, <i>The Devil’s Highway</i>
Week 7	3/11	Film: <i>Alambrista</i>
Week 8	3/18	III. Genocide and Survivance Smith, <i>Conquest</i> ➤ Due: Thought-piece on Border Crossings
Week 9	3/25	No class: Spring Break

course schedule (con't)

subject to change with fair notice

date		readings and assignments
Week 10	4/1	Miranda, <i>Bad Indians</i>
Week 11	4/8	Film: <i>Smoke Signals</i>
Week 12	4/15	IV. Legacies of Slavery Alexander, <i>The New Jim Crow</i> ➤ Due: Thought-piece on Genocide and Survivance
Week 13	4/22	Butler, <i>Kindred</i> ➤ Due: Reading selection & write-up for final course meeting
Week 14	4/29	Film: <i>Fruitvale Station</i>
Week 15	5/6	V. Relating ethnicity and race to our own work [Readings chosen by students] ➤ Due: Thought-piece on Legacies of Slavery
Week 16	5/13	[Readings chosen by students]
Finals	5/20	➤ Due: Final Essay (no later than 10:00pm)