Immigrants as Aliens:  
Difficult Dialogues About Immigration Throughout American History

Course Number: UGS 303  
Unique Number: 60735  
Semester: Fall 2020  
Meeting Time: TTH 9:30am-11:00pm  
Course Mode: Internet (synchronous: class attendance is required)  
Zoom Mtg ID: 945 240 8744  
Instructor: Dr. Suzanne Seriff (she/her/hers)  
E-mail: sseriff@austin.utexas.edu  
Office Hours: T TH 11-12:30 (by appt)

Signature Course Mission: The Signature Courses at the University of Texas at Austin are designed to connect students with distinguished faculty members in unique learning environments. By way of this rigorous intellectual experience, students will develop college-level skills in research, writing, speaking, and discussion through an approach that is both interdisciplinary and contemporary.

Course Description: From Benjamin Franklin’s tirades against German immigrants in the mid-18th century, to the Chinese Exclusion Act in the 19th, the National Quota Act in the 20th, and the proposed Muslim Ban in the 21st, our nation has demonstrated a consistent history of tension over who we collectively regard as “real Americans” and who we allow into this country. More often than not, the debate centers around stereotyped and often racist representations of particular groups of people who want to come to the United States, and contrasting—“privileging”—representations of those who are already here. This course is designed to engage students in a meaningful dialogue about the changing rhetoric and resultant laws affecting the nationalities, races, genders, sexual identities, ages, marital statuses, and incomes of people allowed into the country. Students will have a unique opportunity to engage directly with a number of different “stakeholders” on the topic of immigration, including contemporary
immigrants, immigration lawyers, community advocates, immigrant workers and employers, and descendants of immigrants who came to this country over a century ago. Students will also engage with each other in an active conversation about enduring questions facing our country as a “nation of immigrants” including “Who should be an American?” and “Who gets to decide?”

Course Objectives:

- Learn to identify, document and analyze the rhetoric around which our nation’s politicians, pundits, and popular media have waged public discussions over key immigration issues in our nation’s history.
- Become proficient in the method of dialogue as a form of scholarly and civic exchange and conflict negotiation.
- Improve critical thinking, reading, analyzing, and writing skills through interdisciplinary explorations of academic texts, public political speeches, film, art, popular media, and first person oral histories.
- Formulate and present original research in interpretive, analytical essays, oral presentations, and multimedia projects.

Signature Course Essentials:

- Information Literacy: Acquire basic research and information evaluation skills of a number of interdisciplinary media—from academic texts to popular news and entertainment media to visual arts, theatre, and film, to first person oral testimony.
- University GEM: Explore campus and community resources—virtually—through the lens of our class curriculum, including the Blanton Museum of Art, and the UT Racial Geography Tour.
- Writing: Develop a solid platform of skills to improve college-level writing, including techniques for planning, drafting and revising assignments.
- Oral Communication: Develop competency in a range of oral communication skills including individual presentations, group presentations, and dialogue. As this course is part of the Difficult Dialogue program of the Humanities Institute, special emphasis will be put on learning, practicing, and engaging a number of dialogue techniques designed to connect a student’s personal issues to the larger community of which we are a part.
- University Lecture Series: Interact with renowned faculty and/or civic leaders around a topic of relevance and significance in American public life. Our class will fulfill this requirement by attending at least one online lecture or symposium (date TBD) and one additional lecture specifically on the topic of immigration and immigrant narratives of who belongs in America. After attendance, students will write a blog about what they learned and its relevance to our class.

Cultural Diversity in the United States Flag: In addition to the signature course
essentials, this course also carries the flag for Cultural Diversity in the United States. Cultural Diversity courses are designed to increase your familiarity with the variety and richness of the American cultural experience. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from assignments covering the practices, beliefs, and histories of at least one U.S. cultural group that has experienced persistent marginalization, especially as this relates to their immigrant experience in the United States.

**Writing Flag:** Writing Flag courses are designed to give students experience with writing in an academic discipline. In this class, you can expect to write regularly during the semester, complete substantial writing projects, and receive feedback from your instructor and TA to help you improve your writing. You will also have the opportunity to revise one or more assignments, and you may be asked to read and discuss your peers’ work. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from your written work. Writing Flag classes meet the Core Communications objectives of Critical Thinking, Communication, Teamwork, and Personal Responsibility, established by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. Please note, if you would like additional assistance with your writing assignments, you may make an appointment with the UT Writing Center, which hosts one-on-one appointments with student writers. You may visit up to three times per assignment. The consultants are well trained, and the cost of the service is covered in your tuition. (In other words, you are already paying for this service!) The Writing Center is located at PCL 2.330 or by apt at uwc.utexas.edu. 512 471-6222.

**POLICIES**

**CLASSROOM POLICIES:**

*Classroom Expectations*

- Regular attendance in class
- Coming to class prepared to discuss the assigned material
- Thoughtful and respectful engagement in class activities
- Openness to learning about a variety of perspectives on controversial issues
- Prompt communication with the professor or TA if expectations cannot be met

*Personal Pronoun Use (She / He / They / Ze / Etc)*

Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student’s legal name, unless they have added a “preferred name” with the Gender and Sexuality Center (http://diversity.utexas.edu/genderandsexuality/publications-and-resources/). I will gladly honor your request to address you by a name that is different from what appears on the official roster, and by the gender pronouns you use (she/he/they/ze,
Grading Policies: This course emphasizes student-driven learning through reading, dialogue, written work, original oral history research, oral presentations, group projects, dialogues, and community engagement. You are expected to complete all readings and projects, engage meaningfully in class dialogues and guest lectures, pose questions, and reflect critically on the issues they raise. You should come to class prepared to actively participate. Grades are based on attendance, class preparation and participation, weekly questions/comments, mandatory goal setting sessions, two written papers, and a final multimedia group project and oral presentation. All assignments must be completed on time. Late assignments will not be accepted unless you have received prior consent from the instructor. All written assignments (including paper drafts) are to be turned in as electronic submissions via Canvas.

Final grades will be determined on the basis of the following university-prescribed plus/minus rubric. Please note: to ensure fairness, all numbers are absolute, and will not be rounded up or down at any stage. Thus a B- will be inclusive of all scores of 80.00 through 83.999. The University does not recognize the grade of A+.

A = 94-100; A- = 90-93; B+ = 87-89; B = 84-86; B- = 80-83; C+ = 77-79; C = 74-76; C- = 70-73; D+ = 67-69; D = 64-66; D- = 60-63; F= 0-60

Grading Breakdown:

Class Attendance and Participation (15%): Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class. In addition to our weekly classes, this course includes special guest lectures, virtual museum field trips, and university-wide lectures, all of which are mandatory. You are expected to attend every class on zoom, arrive on time, and remain throughout the session, when possible. Timely arrival is essential to avoid inconveniencing guest speakers, detracting from presentations, or disrupting our virtual trips. If an absence is anticipated, please notify your instructor or the TA prior to the class. In the event of an emergency, or serious illness, please contact the instructor via email.

In addition to class attendance, students will be required to participate fully in class discussion, dialogue, and guest events. If at all possible, you are expected to participate with both audio and visual components of zoom. If you do not have access to a camera, please notify the instructor immediately and we will try to secure one for you through the University. There will also be two mandatory individual conference sessions with the instructor or TA during the semester. These sessions involve discussion and evaluation
of written personal goal statements for the class both at the beginning and midway through the semester. Failure to attend these sessions, or prepare the one page goal statement, will result in a reduction of your class participation by ½.

**Discussion Blogs (15%)**: You are responsible for posting a response to a prompt question posed by the instructor in the Discussion section on our Canvas site each week **by 11:59 pm, Monday evening**. There will be 15 posts, worth 1 point each. These postings will help guide our class discussions and dialogues for that week. This will require all readings for the week to be completed in advance of our Tuesday class period. The prompt for the post will be uploaded by Thursday afternoon of the week before. You should find freedom in your responses to react honestly, creatively, and thoughtfully to the week’s materials. As you read the articles or book chapters for the week, consider the following questions:

- What questions do these scholars raise?
- What types of evidence do they use to investigate their questions?
- What kinds of persuasive language do they use to make their points?
- What methods do they employ to analyze their evidence?
- What conclusions do they try to draw?

**Family Immigration Paper (15%)**: 4-5 pages. A full description of the assignment will be available on CANVAS two weeks before the due date.

**Analyzing Political Rhetoric Paper (20%) 5 pages**: A full description of the assignment will be available on CANVAS two weeks before the due date.

**University Lecture Post (5%)**: Students will be required to write a personal reflection piece in response to the University Lecture on October 23rd. If you are unable to attend the lecture because of an officially excused reason, the instructor will offer an alternative lecture for your attendance and reflection.

**Final Group Project (30%)**: Instructions for final group project will be available on CANVAS in early November.

**Required Texts**:

Our three required books will be available in PDF or scanned versions on CANVAS. You may also want to purchase them on your own via amazon or some other online source so that you have a physical copy which, if you’re like me, is one of the real pleasures of reading!. You will also be responsible for a number of readings (articles, book chapters, etc) throughout the semester which will be uploaded to the Canvas website or listed as URLs in your syllabus. These readings will form the basis of your weekly discussion blogs as well as our dialogues for the week. All readings are mandatory.

Chomsky, Aviva. *“They Take Our Jobs!” and 20 Other Myths about Immigration*. Beacon Press. 2007.


**UNIVERSITY POLICIES:**

**Academic Integrity:**
Each student in the course is expected to abide by the University of Texas Honor Code: “As a student of The University of Texas at Austin, I shall abide by the core values of the University and uphold academic integrity.”

*Plagiarism is taken very seriously at UT.* Therefore, if you use words or ideas that are not your own (or that you have used in previous class), you must cite your sources. Cutting and pasting, without credit, from any published source, including Wikipedia, is one common form of plagiarism. It is the student’s responsibility to be familiar with all of the rules on plagiarism and other forms of scholastic dishonesty. Otherwise you will be guilty of plagiarism and subject to academic disciplinary action, including failure of the course. You are responsible for understanding UT’s Academic Honesty and the University Honor Code which can be found at the following web address: https://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct/standardsofconduct.php

**Q Drop Policy:**
If you want to drop a class after the 12th class day, you’ll need to execute a Q drop before the Q-drop deadline, which typically occurs near the middle of the semester. Under Texas law, you are only allowed six Q drops while you are in college at any public Texas institution. For more information, see: http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/csacc/academic/adddrop/qdrop

**Religious holy days:** A student who misses classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day should inform the instructor as far in advance of the absence as possible, so that arrangements can be made to complete an assignment within a reasonable time after the absence.

**Accessibility, Inclusivity, and Compliance:**
The university is committed to creating an accessible and inclusive learning environment consistent with university policy and federal and state law. Please let your instructor or your TA know if you experience any barriers to learning so we can work with you to ensure you have equal opportunity to participate fully in this course.
If you are a student with a disability, or think you may have a disability, and need accommodations please contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD). Please refer to SSD’s website for contact and more information: http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/. If you are already registered with SSD, please deliver your Accommodation Letter to me as early as possible in the semester so we can discuss your approved accommodations and needs in this course.

OTHER IMPORTANT POLICIES AND INFORMATION RELATED TO THIS CLASS

**COVID-19 Updates:**

*“Keep Learning” Resources*
This course may be offered in a format to which you are unaccustomed. If you are looking for ideas and strategies to help you feel more comfortable participating in our class, please explore the resources available here: https://onestop.utexas.edu/keep-learning/

*Zoom Etiquette*
- Dress professionally for class and conference sessions.
- Be mindful of your surroundings when on camera. We want to make sure we avoid as much distraction as possible.
- Mute yourself unless you are speaking. This will cut down on background noise and limit any distractions.
- Use the “raise hand” button to indicate a desire to speak.
- Use the chat only to initiate or participate in classroom-related discussions.
- Turn off your camera if you are leaving the meeting temporarily.
- If the video or audio is choppy, try turning off your video. Please always use reliable private or enterprise WiFi.

*Sharing of Course Materials is Prohibited*
No materials used in this class, including, but not limited to, lecture hand-outs, videos, assessments (quizzes, exams, papers, projects, homework assignments), in-class materials, review sheets, and additional problem sets, may be shared online or with anyone outside of the class unless you have my explicit, written permission. Unauthorized sharing of materials promotes cheating. It is a violation of the University’s Student Honor Code and an act of academic dishonesty. I am well aware of the sites used for sharing materials, and any materials found online that are associated with you, or any suspected unauthorized sharing of materials, will be reported to Student Conduct and Academic Integrity in the Office of the Dean of Students. These reports can result in sanctions, including failure in the course.

*Class Recordings*
Class recordings are reserved only for students in this class for educational purposes and
are protected under FERPA. The recordings should not be shared outside the class in any form. Violation of this restriction by a student could lead to Student Misconduct proceedings.

Additional University Resources for Students

Counseling and Mental Health Center
Do your best to maintain a healthy lifestyle this semester by eating well, exercising, avoiding drugs and alcohol, getting enough sleep and taking some time to relax. This will help you achieve your goals and cope with stress.

All of us benefit from support during times of struggle. You are not alone. There are many helpful resources available on campus and an important part of the college experience is learning how to ask for help. Asking for support sooner rather than later is often helpful.

If you or anyone you know experiences any academic stress, difficult life events, or feelings like anxiety or depression, we strongly encourage you to seek support. http://www.cmhc.utexas.edu/individualcounseling.html

The Sanger Learning Center
Did you know that more than one-third of UT undergraduate students use the Sanger Learning Center each year to improve their academic performance? All students are welcome to take advantage of Sanger Center’s classes and workshops, private learning specialist appointments, peer academic coaching, and tutoring for more than 70 courses in 15 different subject areas. For more information, please visit http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/slc or call 512-471-3614 (JES A332).

Undergraduate Writing Center: http://uwc.utexas.edu/
Libraries: http://www.lib.utexas.edu/
ITS: http://www.utexas.edu/its/
Student Emergency Services: http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/

BeVocal
BeVocal is a university-wide initiative to promote the idea that individual Longhorns have the power to prevent high-risk behavior and harm. At UT Austin all Longhorns have the power to intervene and reduce harm. To learn more about BeVocal and how you can help to build a culture of care on campus, go to: https://wellnessnetwork.utexas.edu/BeVocal.

Important Safety Information:
Behavior Concerns Advice Line
If you have concerns about the safety or behavior of fellow students, TAs or Professors, call BCAL (the Behavior Concerns Advice Line): 512-232-5050. Your call can be anonymous. If something doesn’t feel right – it probably isn’t. Trust your instincts and share your concerns.

Title IX Reporting
Title IX is a federal law that protects against sex and gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual assault, sexual misconduct, dating/domestic violence and stalking at federally funded educational institutions. UT Austin is committed to fostering a learning and working environment free from discrimination in all its forms. When sexual misconduct occurs in our community, the university can:
1. Intervene to prevent harmful behavior from continuing or escalating.
2. Provide support and remedies to students and employees who have experienced harm or have become involved in a Title IX investigation.
3. Investigate and discipline violations of the university’s relevant policies (https://titleix.utexas.edu/relevant-policies/).

Beginning January 1, 2020, Texas Senate Bill 212 requires all employees of Texas universities, including faculty, report any information to the Title IX Office regarding sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking that is disclosed to them. Texas law requires that all employees who witness or receive any information of this type (including, but not limited to, writing assignments, class discussions, or one-on-one conversations) must be reported. I am a Responsible Employee and must report any Title IX related incidents that are disclosed in writing, discussion, or one-on-one. Before talking with me, or with any faculty or staff member about a Title IX related incident, be sure to ask whether they are a responsible employee. If you would like to speak with someone who can provide support or remedies without making an official report to the university, please email advocate@austin.utexas.edu. For more information about reporting options and resources, visit http://www.titleix.utexas.edu/, contact the Title IX Office via email at titleix@austin.utexas.edu, or call 512-471-0419.

Although graduate teaching and research assistants are not subject to Texas Senate Bill 212, they are still mandatory reporters under Federal Title IX laws and are required to report a wide range of behaviors we refer to as sexual misconduct, including the types of sexual misconduct covered under Texas Senate Bill 212. The Title IX office has developed supportive ways to respond to a survivor and compiled campus resources to support survivors.
WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Week 1 – Introduction to “Immigrants as Aliens” – Aug 27
- Get to know each other in ways that relate to themes of the course.
- Explore issues related to belonging and dialogue about that experience
- Overview of class syllabus and requirements

Week 2 – Dialogue as a Technique for Civic Engagement – Sept 1- 3
- Understand the elements of effective dialogue
- Experience dialogue: exercise around question of belonging
- Synthesis and closure

Readings: To be completed before Tuesday, Sept 1. These readings can be located in a folder under File marked “Week 2: Dialogue”)

Tammy Bormann. What is Dialogue? Principles and Core Assumptions


Assignment: Sign up under Canvas Calendar for Personal Goal Conference next week.

Week 3 – Family Immigration Stories in Historical Context – Sept 8-10
- Introduction: Our Names; Our Stories
- Where does my family’s immigration history fit on the immigration timeline?
- What key issues intersect with immigration, in general, and the immigration of my family, in particular: labor, race, gender, business, world events, and human rights?
In-Class exercise: Placing your family member’s story on the Immigration Timeline

Personal Goal Assignment: Bring a one-page personal goals statement to your conference this week with the Instructor or TA. Goal statement instructions under Assignment on Canvas.

Readings:


Week 4 – Understanding the Visual Discourse of Immigration – Sept 15-17
Virtual Fieldtrip: Sept 15: Blanton Museum of Art

Assignment, Sept. 17: Thesis and Outline of Family Immigration Paper Due; Class Peer Review Workshop of Paper Development

Readings:


- Leo Chavez, Ch.2 “Developing a Visual Discourse on Immigration,” (pgs. 19-23), and Ch. 4 “A Lexicon of Images, Icons and Metaphors for a Discourse on Immigration and the Nation.” (Pgs. 53-81) In *Covering Immigration: Popular Images and the Politics of the Nation.*

Week 5 – Immigration and Race: The First Exclusions – Sept 22-24

Guest Speaker: Irwin Tang

Required Readings:

- Aviva Chomsky. “Myth 10: The United States is a melting pot that has always welcomed immigrants from all over the world.” Pgs. 77-90

- Aviva Chomsky. “Myth 11: Since We Are All Descendants of Immigrants Here, We All Start on Equal Footing. Pgs. 91-102


Recommended:


Week 6 – Immigration and Race: The Latino Threat Narrative – Sept 29-Oct 1

Required Readings:

- Aviva Chomsky. “Myth 12: Today’s Immigrants Threaten the National Culture Because they are Not Assimilating. Pgs. 103-109.

Film Clip:

ABC Primetime Live: What Would You Do? Segment about Hispanic day laborers at a New Jersey Deli.

Assignment Sept. 29 – Family Immigration Paper Due: To be turned in to Canvas by midnight

Week 7 – Immigration and the Economy: Immigration as Big Business – Oct 6-8
Who are the stakeholders who have benefited from immigrant labor in American history?

Readings:

Upton Sinclair. The Jungle. 1906. Chapters 2, 3, and 6. (Canvas)


Week 8 – Immigration and the Economy: “They Take Our Jobs” and other Myths about Immigration – Oct 13-15

Guest Speakers: Workers Defense Project or Casa Marianella

Readings:


Juan Tomas Ordoñez, “Boots for my Sancho: structural vulnerability among Latin American day labourers in Berkeley, California” http://www.tandfonline.com/eprint/NK9FY9MvFcyzkTF5fcii/full

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Film: *Los Trabajadores* (The Workers) by Heather Courtney

**Assignment Oct 15**: Thesis Sentence and Texts of Political Rhetoric Paper Due


**Readings:**


*Chomsky, Aviva*: “Myth #7: The Rules Apply to Everyone, so New Immigrants Need to Follow Them Just as Immigrants in the Past Did” Pgs. 53-57

*Aviva Chomsky*: Myth #8: The Country is Being Overrun by Illegal Immigrants.” Pgs. 58-63

**Assignment Oct. 22**: Full Outline and Annotated Bibliography of Political Rhetoric Paper Due by 11:59pm


**Guest Speaker**: University Leadership Initiative representative or TBD Child Advocate

**Readings:**


*Valeria Luiselli*: Tell Me How It Ends: An Essay in Forty Questions

**Recommended Reading:**


**Assignment Nov. 3 – ELECTION DAY! Political Rhetoric Paper Due**

Film: Crossing Arizona (Benson Collection LAC-Z Rare Books DVD 6230) or TBD

Readings:


*Jason de Leon, Excerpts from *Land of Open Graves*.*

**Guest Speaker:** Melissa Biggs: Undocumented Migration Project

Nov 5: Assemble Groups for Final Project: Select Topic

Nov 3-5  Student Conference #2: Midterm Review of Goals; Bring new one page goal statement to your conference

Week 12 – Immigration and National Security: Detention and Criminalization of Asylum Seekers – Nov 10-12

**Guest Speakers:** Kate Lincoln-Goldfinch, Immigration Attorney; Director, Grassroots Leadership, [www.grassrootsleadership.org](http://www.grassrootsleadership.org)

Film: “The Least of These: Family Detention in America: A Documentary” Film by Clark Lyda and Jesse Lyda (FAL DVD 8213) or TBD

Readings:

*Aviva Chomsky: Myth #9: The United States Has a Generous Refugee Policy. Pgs.64-76*


**Assignment Nov. 14:** Two Page Group Proposal Due: Final Topic and Dialogue Questions

Readings:


Tram Nguyen, “Separated by Deportation: Minneapolis,” In We Are All Suspects Now: Untold Stories from Immigrant Communities after 9/11. Beacon Press 2005 pgs. 20-44. CP

Nov. 21: Group Work on Final Projects

Week 14 – Review and Group Project Workshops – Nov 24

Note: No class on Thanksgiving, Nov. 26th

Week 15 – Final Group Project Presentations – Dec 1-3