

Trinity College, History 204

Central American Immigration to the U.S: A History

Instructor: Professor Cristian J. Padilla Romero (he/him)

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Classroom: MCC - 246

Fall 2022 Tuesdays & Thursdays (9:25-10:40am)

Office Hours: Seabury Hall, basement, N-045 Tu, & Th: 1:15-3:15pm

Course Description

This course will survey the history of immigration patterns from the five countries of Central America to the U.S. between the early 19th century and the current decade in the context of Latin American & Caribbean history. The countries that will be surveyed are, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica. The methodological emphasis in the discussions, films, documentaries, and some podcasts will be comparative. The main learning objective is for students to grasp the deep historical context for engaging with the contemporary issues and debates current in public U.S. policy concerns with immigration from Central America to the U.S. during the last thirty years.

Learning Objectives:

“When one teaches two learn” was what my high school teacher always repeated to me. In the case of this class, the goal of this course is for students to work collaboratively and develop their critical thinking skills as we learn about Central American migration to the U.S. Students will learn how to ask insightful and thought-provoking questions that will enhance their own understanding and that of their peers. Students will be asked to provide their own input into the historical, social, cultural and political themes discussed in class. Students will be encouraged to ask questions and learn how to deepen their inquiry skills.

My goal is to teach students about history but in a way that is doable, interesting, and challenging. I do not expect students to have prior historical knowledge about Central America and immigration and I understand that each student comes to the class with different historical and personal backgrounds.

Unlike what it is often told, history and the social sciences in general, are not objective fields that produce universal truths that must be upheld unconditionally. Instead, History, as an academic discipline as developed in the Western tradition, is a deeply subjective field. It developed as a subset of a few privileged voices who intentionally and unintendedly shaped the way knowledge is produced and reproduced, often in ways that uplifted Euro-American white supremacist and capitalist interest. The consequence of that history resulted in the marginalization people of color and the Global South. Therefore, I acknowledge that there will be overt and covert biases in the material due to the lens in which it was written or produced. Integrating a diverse set of experiences is important for a more comprehensive understanding of History. I encourage students to contact me or submit anonymous feedback if you have any questions or suggestions to improve the quality of the course material.

Evaluation

The evaluation for this course originates in different types of assessments, from class participation to in-class exams and two essay-papers. One of these will be a writing assignment submitted as the

“final exam”. Class participation will count for 30% of the final grade, with half posted at mid-term and the second half posted at the end of the semester. The nature of class participation will be discussed the first day of class. Class attendance every scheduled session is required. However, if consistent attendance is not within your capacity, please come discuss with the instructor to find other ways to facilitate your learning. Medical and other explanations for absences must be discussed with the instructor. The remaining class valuation will originate in two exams and a final writing assignment explained the first day of class.

Exam 1, scheduled for 10/12, will count for 15% of the grade; and **Exam 2**, worth 15% of the final grade, is scheduled for 10/27 by mid-might. A “**reflection essay**” on three films due 11/09, a Sunday, no later than mid-night. It will be worth 10% of the final grade. This essay will be between 4 and 6 pages. Finally, the second writing assignment will be the **Final** that will be submitted on 12/15 by midnight. It will be valued at 20% of the final grade. The nature of class participation, writing assignments and exams will be discussed the first day of class.

Accommodations Policy

Your success in this class is important to me. We will all need accommodations because we all learn differently. If there are aspects of this course that prevent you from learning or create barriers to your learning, please let me know. I encourage you to visit Trinity’s Student Accessibility Resource Center: Lori.Clapis@trincoll.edu. If you have approval for academic accommodations, please notify me.

Office Hours:

Weekly office hours are a dedicated time that I am available to answer your questions, discuss course content, and generally be of support. Please drop into my office at Seabury N-045. If there is a scheduling conflict, please email to arrange a different time or zoom meeting—I look forward to speaking with you. To decrease the barrier to office hours, I am inviting each of you to attend office hours (individually or small groups—in fact I encourage group meetings) during the first few weeks of class as part of your participation grade. There is no need to prepare anything beforehand.

Intellectual Honesty

“In accordance with the Trinity College Student Integrity Contract, students are expected to abide by the highest standards of intellectual honesty in all academic exercises. Intellectual honesty assumes that students do their own work and that they credit properly those upon whose work and thought they draw. It is the responsibility of each student to make sure that he or she is fully aware of what constitutes intellectually honest work in every examination, quiz, paper, laboratory report, homework assignment, or other academic exercise submitted for evaluation in a course at Trinity College.” (Trinity College Student Handbook, p. 13).

Having said that, please let me know if you are struggling with your assignments, especially with your writing, in this course. We can come up with a game plan together. Learning is not derived only from the lectures and materials covered in the course. Part of the learning process is developing diverse sets of skills that allow you to not only think and analyze material. Part of the process is how to put your thoughts on paper which is not an easy process. As you will notice in the reading material, academic writing is too often filled with jargon and unnecessarily complex syntax, please do not feel like you must replicate that. Effective writers communicate in short, precise, and straightforward ways. I want YOUR voice to shine through.

Policy on A.I:

Generative AI systems (like ChatGPT), if used correctly, can serve as powerful tools for learning and idea refinement. In this course, you can use generative AI systems to learn about concepts iteratively through a conversation (much like you would have a conversation with a peer, TA or an instructor). However, you cannot ask these systems to directly give you answers or write for you. One reason for this is because the answers that the system generates can be inaccurate (no matter how confident the system might sound). But more importantly, I believe the intellectual growth you can get from working through a difficult problem and discovering the answer for yourself cannot be replicated by just reading a pre-generated answer. Having said that, to be clear: any attempt to pass off A.I. writing as your own in this class constitutes a violation of Trinity College's intellectual honesty policy. As the Student Handbook explains, "Intellectual honesty assumes that students do their own work and that they credit properly those upon whose work and thought they draw" (28-37; 28). Failure to abide by the policy may result in censure, suspension, or even expulsion.

Books required:

John Chasteen, *Born in Blood and Fire: A Concise History of Latin America*, 4th edition (New York: W.W. Norton, 2016).

Tom Wainwright, *Narconomics: How to Run a Drug Cartel*, paperback edition (New York: Public Affairs, 2017).

Noelle Kateri Brigden, *The Migrant Passage: Clandestine Journeys from Central America* (Cornell University Press, 2018).

Roberto Lovato, *Unforgetting: A Memoir of Family, Migration, Gangs, and Revolution in the Americas* (New York: Harper/Collins, 2020).

Schedule: (Always subject to changes, communicated by the instructor in person or via email. Students are responsible for reviewing emails from the instructor daily during the semester).

I. Introduction: Central Issues, Historical and Contemporary

- Tu 9/05 Class Introduction. For 9/07 read pp. 1-93, in Chasteen, *A Concise History of Latin America*, including its Study Questions. Also read, Aaron Pollock, "From Kingdom to Republics, 1808–1838 [in Central America]," in the Oxford University Press's History of Central America (2020) on Moodle.
- Th 9/07 What is "Central America"? The Colonial Context within Latin America and the Caribbean, Part 1. For 9/12 read pp. 95-159, in Chasteen, *A Concise History of Latin America*, including its Study Questions. Also read, Diaz-Arias, "State-Making and Nation Building in Central America," in the Oxford University Press's History of Central America (2020) on Moodle.
- Tu 9/12 What is "Central America"? The Colonial Context within Latin America and the

Caribbean, Part 2.

Th 9/14 For September 19, read Ivan Molina in the Oxford University Press's History of Central America on Moodle.

Tu 9/19 Central American Independence & the Idea of "Progress"

II. Listening and Talking with Central American Immigrants to the U.S.

Th 9/21 Conversation with Nicaraguan immigrant to the U.S. Gilda Cordero. For September 29, read Dario A. Euraque, (2020) in the Oxford University Press's History of Central America on Moodle.

Tu 9/26 Conversation with Honduran immigrant to the U.S.: Josselyn Zaldivar. For 10/4, read Carey in the Oxford University Press's History of Central America on Moodle.

Th 9/28 Guest Speaker Hispano Duron

Tu 10/03 No Class; Attendance to Hispano Duron Event Thursday Sept 28th during common hour required.

Th 10/05 Conversation with Costa Rica immigrant to the U.S.: Randall Mena. For September 22, read Eric Ching in the Oxford University Press's History of Central America on Moodle.

III. Modern Patterns of Central American Immigration to the U.S. in Latin American Context

Tu 10/10 FALL BREAK NO CLASSES

Th 10/12 Exam 1. For 10/17, read pp. 161-356 in Chasteen, *A Concise History of Latin America*, pp. including the Study Questions for each chapter in those pages. These pages constitute Chapters 6 through 11.

Tu 10/17 Screen documentary, "Gringo in Mañana Land"

Th 10/19 Discuss pp. 161-356 in Chasteen, *A Concise History of Latin America*, pp. including the Study Questions for each chapter in those pages. These pages constitute Chapters 6 through 11.

Tu 10/24 Immigration to the U.S. from Nicaragua and Costa Rica

Th 10/27 Immigration to the U.S. from the "Northern Triangle of Central America: Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras.
Exam 2 Due at Midnight

IV. Central American Immigration in Films and Documentaries

- Tu 10/31 Screen Film, “Maikol Yordan de Viaje Perdido.” Costa Rica.
- Th 11/02 Screen Film, “El Norte” Mayan Indians in the U.S. Guatemala.
- Tu 11/07 Screen Documentary, “La Manplesa: An Uprising Remembered.” El Salvador.
- Th 11/09 Essay on films due via email, no later than mid-night. Read Tom Wainwright, *Narconomics: How to Run a Drug Cartel*, paperback (New York: Public Affairs, 2017).
- Tu 11/14 NO CLASSES
- TH 11/16 Guest Speaker Katy Maldonado Dominguez, PhD Student in American Studies at Yale University Katy Maldonado Dominguez is a Honduran first-generation graduate student. She received her bachelor’s degrees from UCLA in Chicana/o Studies and Geography. Her research interests are shaped by her experiences as a Central American immigrant from Honduras and DACA recipient. Her dissertation explores how Central American students think about identity, belonging, and kinship within a context of displacement. She challenges the homogenization of Latine student experiences by highlighting the specific lived academic realities of Central American students. Outside of Central American student experiences, she also examines how Undocumented Queer parents create and navigate family as they resist the twin pressures of xenophobia and homophobia. Her work appears in the anthology *We Are Not Dreamers: Undocumented Scholars Theorize Undocumented Life in the United States* edited by Leisy Abrego and Genevieve Negrón-Gonzales.

V. “Refugees, Asylees, Tepesarios, DACAS, and Dreamers”: Survivors from the Northern Triangle Countries in the U.S.

- Tu 11/21 Guest Speaker Nancy Escalante PhD Student in History at Yale University. Nancy Escalante graduated with a B.A. and M.A. in History from California State University, Los Angeles and is a PhD candidate in American Studies at Yale. Escalante’s research focuses on the process of U.S. Central American community-based archiving in Los Angeles to explore how cultural and historical memory is embodied, performed, and transmitted. By attending to the process of archiving, Escalante highlights alternative forms of knowledge production and meaning-making that are oftentimes difficult to capture within traditional interpretations of archives. In addition to community archiving, she curates exhibitions in both community and academic spaces. Begin reading Roberto Lovato, *Unforgetting: A Memoir of Family, Migration, Gangs, and Revolution in the Americas* (New York: Harper/Collins, 2020) for discussion on 11/29.
- Th 11/23 THANKSGIVING BREAK
- Tu 11/28 Discuss Tom Wainwright, *Narconomics: How to Run a Drug Cartel*, paperback (New York: Public Affairs, 2017). Beginning reading Noelle Kateri Brigden, *The Migrant Passage: Clandestine Journeys from Central America* (Cornell University Press, 2018) for discussion 11/16.

11/30 Discuss Roberto Lovato, **Unforgetting: A Memoir of Family, Migration, Gangs, and Revolution in the Americas** (New York: Harper/Collins, 2020) for discussion.

VI. U.S. Immigration Policy and Central American Immigration, 2016-2020

Tu 12/05 Guest Speaker, Adriana Ceron, PhD student in Sociology at Yale University. Adriana Ceron is a PhD student in sociology at Yale University, where she studies how Central American immigrants fare in the U.S. and in their home countries. Her research, in particular, investigates how Central American immigrants negotiate life after deportation, with a focus on who returns to the United States. Her scholarly interests are heavily influenced by her background as a Central American immigrant, as well as her community in Los Angeles.

Th 12/07 Screen and discuss segment 1 of documentary, Immigration Nation, “Installing Fear”.

Th 12/8 Screen and discuss segment 2 of Immigration Nation, “Maintaining Vigilance”.

Tu 12/12 Screen and discuss segment 3 of Immigration Nation, “Power of the Vote”.

Mo 12/15 Final Paper Due at Midnight