

# ENG 468|568: Border Theory

<b>Quarter:</b>	Winter 2019	<b>Instructor:</b>	Dr. José Manuel Cortez
<b>Location:</b>	DEA 306	<b>Office:</b>	PLC 319
<b>Time:</b>	TR 10:00 – 11:20pm	<b>Office Hours:</b>	TR 12:00 – 2:00pm
		<b>Contact:</b>	jcortez3@uoregon.edu

## Course Description

This course will examine the cultural and literary discourses emerging from the locus of the US/Mexico border, a space of postnational political conflict that has extended deep into many nations. The course will survey non-fiction, literature, and political theory as avenues for thinking through this postnational condition. Students will become familiar with the history of the border, beginning with the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo in 1848 and extending through NAFTA and up to the current political climate.

One of the analytical goals of this course is to look through the category of culture as a prism to describe the power relations of the social text. As such, this course intends to provide students with a broad theoretical foundation for thinking and writing about challenges to power relations. Informed by readings in critical theory, the course will offer not only an examination of categories like identity, subjectivity, and politics but will also provide an analytic for accounting for political subversion. To this end, students will be introduced to a variety of critical theoretical approaches frequently used to study the topos of the border.

## Learning Outcomes

In addition to examining the work of others, you will be challenged to explore your own beliefs. You should become sufficiently familiar with the work of various scholars and theorists to articulate and assess their views. Ideally, you will also begin to engage in your own analysis by synthesizing compatible elements of different theories, entertaining original ideas, and adopting a theoretically viable and personally satisfying account of rhetoric for yourself. Finally, as with any course, you should continue to strengthen your clarity, coherence, and consistency of thought and expression.

In this course, students will

- Develop rigorous practices of reading literary and theoretical texts
- Develop a deeper understanding of the critical trends within the field of border studies
- Develop advanced textual analysis skills
- Develop working definitions of the category of *border*
- Compose focused, analytical writing in clear prose, drawing upon primary and secondary texts

## Texts

Luiselli, Valeria. *Tell Me How It Ends: An Essay in Forty Questions*. 2017.

Martínez, Óscar. *The Beast: Riding the Rails and Dodging Narcos on the Migrant Trail*. 2013.

Urrea, Luis A. *The Devil's Highway: A True Story*. 2004.

Additional texts required for this course will be available on Canvas. **Please print and bring a copy of these readings to class on the day these readings are assigned.** If you do not have a printer, or would not like to use your printer for class readings, printing services are available at Knight Library.

## Grading and Assessment

Discussion papers	60%
Reading summaries	20%
In-class assignments	10%
Attendance	10%

### **Discussion papers**

60% of your final grade will be determined by your grades for three discussion papers in which you compare, contrast, and comment on two or more perspectives from the assigned readings. If you would like to write three separate papers, each 5-page paper will be worth 20%. Or, if you would rather, your second and third papers may build and expand upon your first paper. In this case, your first paper (3 pages) will be worth 15%, your second paper (3 pages) will be worth 10%, and your third paper (5 pages) will be worth 25%. Refer to the paper guidelines for additional information about discussion papers.

### **Reading summaries**

20% of your final grade will be determined by your 6 best (out of 7 possible) scores for weekly summaries of the assigned readings. Reading summaries should consist of a brief overview (at least 400) of the reading assigned for that class period, along with one or two questions for class discussion. Reading summaries will be loosely graded as good, good enough, or not good enough. Reading summaries are due at the beginning of class. If you are unable to attend, you can earn credit for reading summaries submitted prior to the beginning of the relevant class period, but you will not earn credit for late reading summaries. To receive full credit, your response paper needs to:

- 1) address the reading
- 2) be at least 400 words (unless otherwise indicated)
- 3) present a thesis or claim with at least two paragraphs that support this claim
- 4) synthesize at least 2 citations from the text

### **In class written assignments**

An additional 10% of your final grade will be determined by your best two (out of 3 possible) in-class written assignments. Missed in-class assignments cannot be made up.

### **Attendance & participation**

The remaining 10% of your final grade will be determined by your attendance and participation. Your attendance grade will be calculated as a straightforward percentage of the classes you attend. Your participation grade will reflect the degree to which you enhance the quality of the course by asking appropriate questions, offering relevant insights, and supporting your classmates in their efforts to learn the material.

# Course Policies

## **Content**

This course will openly engage texts about migration, gendered and racialized sexual violence, violence toward children, dispossession, incarceration, death, institutional racism, settler colonialism, and other existentially horrifying conditions of political life. The course will engage these topics without censorship. I will not offer alternative arrangements for content, so please consider whether this is the right course for you.

## **Attendance**

Show up. This course requires student attendance. Should a student miss the equivalent of 5 class sessions this semester, they will not pass the course. Beyond that, this: because the success of this course depends upon the success of our interaction as a class, attendance is absolutely necessary. Expect your grade to suffer if you fail to fully participate. If you must miss a class, check with one of your classmates about what you missed before the next class.

## **Deadlines**

Meet them. If you must miss class, your work will need to find its way there on time if it doesn't want its grade to suffer (one letter grade for each day it's late).

## **Students with Disabilities:**

The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. Please notify me if there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability-related barriers to your participation. You are also encouraged to contact the Accessible Education Center in 360 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or [uoaec@uoregon.edu](mailto:uoaec@uoregon.edu).

## **Plagiarism**

Don't do it. While collaboration and cooperation are encouraged, cheating is legally and morally wrong. If you do not know the difference, please see me immediately. Should the need arise, I will determine the appropriate response to academic dishonesty, or suspicion thereof, on a case-by-case basis. I may elect to act at the university level, and I may impose consequences up to or including a failing course grade.

# Course Schedule

## Week 1— Introductions

- T 4/02— Introductions  
 TH 4/04— Anzaldúa: *Borderlands/La Frontera* (selections)  
 (RS #1 due)
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## Week 2— Borderlands

- T 4/09— Culpepper: [“The Debt We Owe Central America”](#);  
 Faux: [“How US Foreign Policy Helped Create the Immigration Crisis”](#)  
 Tseng-Putterman: [“A Century of US Intervention Created the Immigration Crisis”](#)  
 Kinzer: [“The Shameful History of US Intervention in Latin America”](#);  
 TH 4/11— Danner: [“The Truth of El Mozote”](#)  
 (RS #2 due)
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## Week 3— The Violence of Neoliberalism

- T 4/16— Guidotti-Hernández: *Unspeakable Violence* (selections)  
 (RS #3 due)  
 TH 4/18— Guidotti-Hernández: *Unspeakable Violence* (selections)  
 In-class written assignment
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## Week 4— The Devil’s Highway

- T 4/23— Urrea: *The Devil’s Highway*  
 TH 4/25— Urrea: *The Devil’s Highway*  
 (RS #4 due)
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## Week 5— Los que nunca llegarán

- T 4/30— Agamben: *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*  
[Arizona Open GIS Initiative for Deceased Migrants](#)  
 (RS #5 due)  
 TH 5/02— Acosta: “Hinging on Exclusion and Exception”  
 First Discussion Paper Due
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## Week 6— Passing

- T 5/07— Cárdenas: “Subjects in Passing”  
 (RS #6 due)  
 TH 5/09— NO CLASS
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## Week 7—La Bestia

- T 5/14— Martínez: *The Beast*

TH 5/16— Martínez: *The Beast*  
(RS #7 due)

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**Week 8— Politics**

T 5/21— Rancière: *Disagreement* (selections)

TH 5/23— TBD

Second Discussion Paper Due; In-class written assignment

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**Week 9— Knowledge**

T 5/28— Luiselli: *Tell Me How it Ends*

TH 5/30— Luiselli: *Tell Me How it Ends*

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**Week 10— How does it end?**

T 6/04— TBA

In-class written assignment

TH 6/06— NO CLASS

**Finals Week**

TH 6/13: Third Discussion Paper Due