Spanish 4931/5931  
Dr. Pilar Bellver

“Border Stories: Identity, Community, and Conflict in U.S. and Mexican Literature on the Border”

Office: Lalumiere Hall #494  
Office hours:  T & TH 3:30-5:00 or by appointment  
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Phone: 288-6837

REQUIRED TEXTS AND MATERIALS

- Novels and short story collections:
  - Tomás Rivera, *y no se lo tragó la tierra*
  - Carlos Fuentes, *La frontera de cristal*
- Movies (on reserve at Raynor Library):
  - *Espaldas mojadas*, Alejandro Galindo
  - *Backyard/El traspatio*, Sabina Berman
- Materials on electronic reserve
- Materials on D2L

RECOMMENDED DICTIONARIES

- *Diccionario de la lengua española* (RAE) y *Diccionario panhispánico de dudas*. Access these dictionaries at the following link: [http://www.rae.es/rae.html](http://www.rae.es/rae.html).
- A good Spanish bilingual dictionary, for example the *Collins Spanish Dictionary* (2006), or the *Oxford Spanish Dictionary* (2003).

RECOMMENDED SITES

3. The Borderlands Encyclopedia: [www.utep.edu/border](http://www.utep.edu/border)

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** *Border Stories* will explore the ways in which artists have depicted the experience of crossing, settling or living in the border regions between the U.S and Mexico. The course will include writers from both countries, and we will read original texts both in English and Spanish. The course will focus on fiction, poetry, essays, and films from the end of the Mexican American War (1846-
48) to the present day. Our readings, viewings, and discussions will seek answers to several crucial questions:

- How have representations of the border changed overtime?
- How are political, social and economic shifts in the region reflected in its literature?
- How does national identity, and differences pertaining to class, race, religion, gender, sexuality, and language shape individual identity and communal interaction?
- What alternate visions of past, present, and future developments emerge from the imaginations of border artist?

**GOALS:**

- Gain general knowledge of U.S.-Mexico border literature and culture.
- Discuss common themes and rhetorical strategies in fictional representations of the U.S.-Mexico border from its creation to the present time, taking into account works by both U.S. and Mexican writers.
- Gain a perspective on how fictional representations of the U.S.-Mexico border have changed overtime.
- Gain an understanding on how fictional representations of the U.S.-Mexico border are driven by specific historical, political, economic, and cultural forces at play in the region.
- Explore the region’s ties to Mexican history and introduce Mexican voices and perspectives into our current debates on the issues affecting this region.
- Reflect on the ways in which literature can inform our knowledge of social issues.
- Reflect on our own views and values on such important issues as racial and gender violence or immigration by exploring the many perspectives that have informed the representation of these issues in border literature and film.
- Stimulate creative analysis, advanced critical thinking, and both oral and written communication in Spanish.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

At the end of this course, the student should be able to:

- Identify and discuss key works of literature and film on the U.S.-Mexico border.
- Discuss the cultural and historical forces driving common fictional representation of the border in U.S. and Mexican literature.
- Explain common themes and tropes used by border writers and filmmakers from 1848 to the present.
- Discuss how national identity, race, gender, religion, and language use can shape literary representations of border life.
- Think, discuss, and write about abstract topics in Spanish with increased fluency and ease of expression.

**EVALUATION**

**Spanish 4931**

- 1 Research essay: 30%
- 2 Exams: 40%
- Written homework: 10%
- Oral report: 10%
- Participation: 10%
Spanish 5931

1 Research essay 30%
2 Exams 35%
Written homework 10%
Oral report 15%
Participation 10%

GRADE SCALE

A  100-95  B  89-85  C  79-75  D  69-65
AB  94-90  BC  84-80  CD  74-70  F  64-0

COURSE COMPONENTS AND REQUIREMENTS

A. Research essay (dates specified in the calendar; topics and instructions posted in D2L).
You will need to write a research essay for this class. The essay will be on a topic of your choice and the
topic will be researched throughout the course. Essays will be written in different stages closely monitored
by me:
1) Topic selection and bibliography. In this first stage, you will choose a topic and compile a
bibliography. You will need to justify your choice of topic in the context of the course. You will also
need to explain what you expect to learn and which questions you are trying to answer by researching
and writing this essay. (5% of final grade)
2) First draft and peer evaluations. You will share a first draft of the essay with an assigned peer and
become a peer reviewer for one of your classmates in turn. Peer reviewers will provide comments on
content and organization, and will highlight passages and/or arguments that are difficult to follow or
understand. As far as it is possible, you will be paired with a classmate working on similar topics or
issues, so you can exchange approaches and ideas.
3) Second draft. A second draft of the essay will be turned in class a few days after having discussed
your first draft with your assigned peer. If you did not turn in your first draft of the essay and/or if did
not peer reviewed another student’s essay, you will not be able to turn in this second draft and will miss
the opportunity to receive my feedback and suggestions before turning in your final version. (65% of the
grade).
4) Final version. You will need to turn in a final version of the essay after reading my comments and
suggestions. (30% of the grade)

B. Oral report (dates specified in the calendar; topics and instructions posted in D2L). All students in
the class will have to prepare an oral report on a topic assigned by me. Undergraduate students reports
will be five minutes long. Graduate students reports will be 10-15 minutes long. All students will need to
turn in a Power Point version of the report that will be posted in the course D2L site.

C. Exams. There will be two partial exams during the course of the semester. The second exam
will take place during the week of finals. The topics covered by each exam are specified on the
syllabus. The study guides for the exams will be posted on D2L. The exams will include
identifications of authors, movements, and works discussed in class. There will also be short
essay questions in which you will be expected to discuss the readings in terms of structure, style,
and historical/literary context, and to draw parallels between different authors and works, as well
as distinguish differences. No make-ups will be given for these exams. Emergencies will be
handed on an individual basis (other exams, plane reservations, etc. are not emergencies).
**D. Homework:** Written homework assignments are designed to help you think critically about the course’s readings before coming to class. They will involve reading the assigned texts and answering specific questions about them. They will serve as the base for oral participation and discussion in class. They will also serve as a guide for the kinds of questions you should be asking yourself when preparing for exams and the research essay. Written homework assignments will be turned in during class and/or posted in the “Discussion” section of D2L. The evaluation criteria for these assignments are posted on D2L. Because of the demanding pace of this course, it is essential that you stay up-to-date with your readings and with these assignments. Late assignments lose one letter grade for each day that they are late. Assignments may be shared with other class members for peer editing, group projects, and class discussion. **Assignments must be handed in in class on the day that they are due.** Homework assignments cannot be sent via e-mail.

**D. Participation:** Class participation is **essential** in the form of contributions to class discussions. Such contributions will be evaluated as to quantity and quality. Learning is not a passive activity; you must demonstrate that you are thinking and generating ideas from the material given. Readings are to be fully digested at home in order for you to get the most out of them during class discussion. Simply stating that you "didn't understand" is not a sufficient excuse for not participating in class discussions. You can improve your participation by preparing questions and/or comments about the readings and by sharing them during general class discussion and in group or pair activities. Due to the interactive nature of this course, this may be the element most crucial to your interest and, therefore, to the class’s success.

**ATTENDANCE**

Regular class attendance is critical for your success. **The maximum number of absences is 4.** All absences, excused or unexcused, will be counted as absences. Each absence over the maximum will result in your final grade being lowered one-half letter grade (e.g. A>AB). If you must be absent one day, you are responsible for both the material covered that day as well as the work for the following class. **Be sure to request e-mail addresses and phone numbers from two peers.**

**ACADEMIC DISHONESTY**

Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Acts of academic dishonesty may include but are not limited to the following:

- Cutting and pasting material from another paper or a web page and submitting it as one’s work.
- **Quoting or paraphrasing extensively from a document without making proper references to the source.**
- The illegitimate use of materials in any form during a quiz or an exam.
- Copying answers from the quiz or examination paper of another students.
- Plagiarizing (submitting as one’s own ideas the work of another) or falsifying materials or information used in the completion of any assignment which is graded or evaluated as the student’s individual effort.
- Submitting the same work for more than one course without the consent of the instructors of each course in which the work is submitted.
### Calendar
* (Homework posted weekly on D2L)
* ER (Electronic reserves)
* D2L (Materials on D2L course site)
* RR (Raynor Reserves)

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<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Exams and research essay dates</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 (8/29-0/1)</td>
<td>Introduction to the course: What is a border?</td>
<td>Rufus B. Sage, “Degenerate Inhabitants of New Mexico” (D2L)</td>
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<td>2 (9/6-9/8)</td>
<td>Narratives of Annexation and Racial Conflict</td>
<td>Mariano Guadalupe Vallejos, <em>Los recuerdos históricos y personales</em> (selección) (D2L)</td>
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<td>“El corrido de Joaquín Murieta”, “El corrido de Gregorio Cortez” (D2L)</td>
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<td>4 (9/20-9/22)</td>
<td>Narratives of Identity and Immigration</td>
<td>José Vasconcelos, <em>Ulises criollo</em> (selección) (D2L)</td>
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<td>John Reed, “McAmerican”, “Mexican Pictures” (ER)</td>
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<td>5 (9/27-9/29)</td>
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<td>Octavio Paz, “El Pachuco y otros extremos” (ER)</td>
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<td>6 (10/4-10/6)</td>
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<td>Alejandro Galindo, <em>Espaldas mojadas</em> (RR)</td>
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| Week 7 | Tomás Rivera, 
*y no se lo tragó la tierra/And the Earth Did not Devour Him* |
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<td>Week 8</td>
<td>EXAMEN 1</td>
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<td>No class on 10/20: Midterm Break</td>
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<td>Week 9</td>
<td>The Border as Metaphor</td>
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<td>El Plan espiritual de Aztlan (D2L)</td>
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<td>Gloria Anzaldúa <em>Borderlands/La frontera</em> (selección) (RR)</td>
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<td>Research Essay: Topic and bibliography</td>
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<td>Week 10</td>
<td>Guillermo Gómez Peña, “Documented/Undocumented” (D2L)</td>
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<td>Semana 11</td>
<td>Carlos Fuentes, <em>La frontera de cristal</em></td>
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<td>Research Essay: First Draft (for peer review)</td>
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<td>Semana 12</td>
<td>Narratives of Belonging and Denunciation</td>
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<td>Federico Campbell, “Tijuanenses”</td>
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<td>Luis Humberto Crosthwaite, “Instrucciones para cruzar la frontera”, “La fila”.</td>
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<td>Luis Alberto Urrea, “A Lake of Sleeping Children” (ER)</td>
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<td>Research essay:</td>
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<td>Semana 13</td>
<td>Second Draft</td>
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<td>(11/22)</td>
<td>Hugo Salcedo, <em>El viaje de los cantores</em> (D2L)</td>
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<td>No class 11/24: Thanks Giving</td>
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<th>Second Draft</th>
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<td><em>Backyard/ El Traspatio</em>, Sabina Berman (RR)</td>
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<th>Semana 15</th>
<th>Second Draft</th>
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<tr>
<td>(12/6-12/8)</td>
<td>Border music: Nortec, Los Tigres del Norte (selección) (D2L)</td>
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<td>Research Essay: Final version</td>
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