Taught in conjunction with HISP-201 (Brutal Borders LxC; co-taught by Patrick O’Connor: Wednesdays, 1:30-2:20; King 327) and LATS 201 (Ciudad Juárez; taught by José Reyes Ferriz: October 10-13; King 337)

NOTE: This course has a separate Spanish language section (HISP-201) that meets on Wednesdays (1:30-2:20) in addition to the regular class times. Its purpose is to allow students with at least an intermediate proficiency in reading, comprehension and speaking Spanish to engage with Spanish-language course materials and to discuss them in Spanish. In order to integrate the Spanish section into the main class, each week, the syllabus will note the readings required for everyone in the class [ALL]; readings for only students NOT enrolled in the Spanish language section [ENGL]; and readings for students enrolled in the Spanish language section [SPAN]. In class discussions, the ENG students and the SPAN students will be able to discuss perspectives on the various texts (written, aural, visual) which were assigned. The Wednesday classes on the syllabus are only for those enrolled in the Spanish Language Section.

Course Description and Goals:

“Brutal Borders: The United States and Mexico in an Age of Globalization” is designed to provide us an intellectual space in which we can approach a set of contentious issues that seemingly have been produced by the interactions between the United States and Mexico. These include the topics of (internal) migration and (unauthorized) immigration; the production, organization, marketing, and use of illegal drugs; the organization, movement, regulation, and resistance of labor; and the production and consumption (via popular media outlets) of violence. The question that this class will raise (and that we all will consider over the course of the semester) is whether some, most, or all of these “problems” (for each is represented

Course Websites
Main course: https://sites.google.com/a/oberlin.edu/hist201f11-brutal-borders/
Spanish (LxC) Section: https://sites.google.com/a/oberlin.edu/hist201f11-brutal-borders/home/hisp201-lxc--spanish-section
to us as media consumers as a "problem," and most as a "crisis") are produced by a larger, more systemic set of events. If so, then we will also need to consider these larger systems such as changing modes of accumulation and the impact of climate and environmental changes on the generation of human crises.

Within our examination of the interaction between the United States and Mexico, we will be aware of the many ways that the United States, as the most powerful state in the world, has imposed its interests on Mexico. But, by foregrounding larger systemic changes, we will be able to understand how larger systems are reshaping both the United States and Mexico, favoring some and prejudicing others in both national spaces.

The Border

As the title of the course suggests, this class employs the "border" as the lens which will bring these issues into focus. That means that consideration of "the border" will continually crosscut our examination of labor/capital, migration/immigration and drug supply/demand. And that means that we will begin with (and repeatedly question) what we mean by "the border." As any traveler to the United States knows en carne propia, the border is not an imagined construction but a very real line which defines millions of lives. Considered as a part of the very definition of the state (a bounded area), this type of border exists not only along the lines which separate the United States from Canada and Mexico, but wherever State agents can control the movement of people who look like they "don’t belong." As individual (U.S.) states pass their own laws intended to control the movement of "outsiders," that space has spread far beyond the U.S.'s two land borders.

At the same time, as we will discuss, the border is a zone of cultural interaction which defines a historically rich and deep process of influence and exchange. This "border" defines the U.S. Southwest, for example, but it is also present in Atlanta, and Lorain, Ohio, and Postville, Iowa. This concept of the border draws attention to the ways in which the state (imperialism), which can literally move borders, and a mobile labor force have reshaped and are continually reshaping political, economic, and cultural spaces. While our examination will pertain particularly to the "border" which connects and separates Mexico and the United States, we will continually be aware of other (similar) borders which exist in the world today.

"Borders" have been defined as transgressive zones within which the norms that have come to define central zones are absent, ignored, or violated with greater impunity. The promise of (cheap) sex and (plentiful) drugs has long lured U.S. tourists to Tijuana or Ciudad Juárez. Similarly, the border has become a space where the "normal" types of negotiation between labor and capital have been replaced by "free" zones where other types of regulations are enforced. Increasingly, one can find such "border" zones not only deep inside Mexico, but also in the United States where methamphetamine use is at epidemic levels in rural communities in the
Ozarks and elsewhere, and where massive labor reserves work outside the legal framework of labor regulations.

**Content and Analytic Goals:**

This course has been designed with a number of goals in mind:

- To help students determine whether a complex set of subjects and matters of public debate/concern (immigration, drugs, violence, unemployment, migration, climate change) are parts of a more general system;
- To suggest some analytic tools to enable the understanding (explaining and interpreting) of complex and dynamic subjects;
- To provide students the ability to apply what is learned in the classroom to the real world beyond; and to adapt what has been (or is being) learned outside the classroom to a forum of discussion inside the classroom;
- To provide some access to some of the voices of those for whom the border is not an academic topic, but the reality of their lives;
- To encourage perspective taking and empathy as a means of understanding;

**Skills Goals:**

- To help students become more effective writers and speakers;
- To develop better strategies for textual (written, aural, visual) understanding;

**Behavioral Goals:**

- To provide students opportunities to collaborate;
- To encourage students to take more ownership over their learning;
- To enable students to reflect not just on what they are learning, but how they are learning.

**Course Organization**

This course is based on an “active-learning” design. Briefly, rather than lectures with a modest amount of discussion, this course will be structured so that students can construct their own understandings of the content material (and of themselves as learners). There are many reasons why the course will be organized this way, but here are just two: (1) I believe that students learn best (that their understandings are deeper and their learning more significant) when they construct their own knowledge. This theory (constructivism) has been around in many different forms for nearly a century – from educational philosophers (John Dewey), to psychologists (Jean Piaget; Lev Vygotsky); to activists concerned with social change (Paulo Freire; Donald Macedo; Henry Giroux). (2) In most courses I teach, I am an “expert” in the subject matter – I have studied (and taught) the material for many years. While I have studied and written on this topic for some years, I am more “novice” than
"expert." This seems a good occasion for us to learn together, to raise our own questions and attempt to answer them. I also hope to use the knowledge and experience of students who have spent time on the border, and/or have worked with labor, migrant, or immigrant populations. In short, if you want a traditional lecture class, this is probably not for you.

**Assignments, Grading, Your Responsibilities**

Your primary responsibility is to be ready for class and prepared for discussion. That means that you have done the readings, prepared notes from them and have come up with a number of questions you want answered. You also will be responsible for the following assignments. You will get further information on each approximately two weeks or more before the due dates.

**1st Assignment:** Due October 4: Globalization Podcast (collaborative project): groups of three, a recorded presentation of the theme of globalization that is designed for an audience of residents in Lorain County, Ohio (i.e., people whose news comes from local newspapers, USA today, Fox News or CNN; who don’t read news weeklies; and who are likely to be more conservative in outlook than you are). Your task is to present “globalization” in a way they can understand – it is not to be an argument designed to get the audience to “like” or “dislike” globalization, but only to understand it. You will work in groups of 3 people. Your final product will be a podcast (i.e., an audio track; although if you want you can do a short YouTube video), along with the script for your session. You will sign an honor code that you did not “borrow” segments from podcasts/videos that are accessible on the internet.

**2nd Assignment:** An informed present – Five blog posts generally due every other week from Sept. 20 to Nov. 15 (Sept. 20, Oct. 11, Oct. 18, Nov. 1, Nov. 15) Posts will be based on current news emerging from the (broader) border and your commentary based on what you are learning from the class. Each blog will be approximately 2-3 pages in length. You’ll get more instructions later. Let me know if you would like to broaden this out to a regular spot on WOBC.

**3rd Assignment:** What Was Left Out: Due Dec. 6. Design a course unit for the next time around. (Collaborative project: groups of 2)

**Final Paper:** Due December 19. Research paper on any topic that is a logical part of this course. The paper, which will be based on primary and secondary sources, is due Dec. 19 at 11am. Please note the interim dates at which point you will be turning in your topic, beginning bibliographies, and extended thesis statements.

**Your final grade will be determined on the following basis:**

- A+ (99-100)  
- B+ (87-89)  
- C+ (77-79)  
- D+ (67-69)  
- A (95-98)  
- B (83-86)  
- C (73-76)  
- D (63-66)  
- A- (90-94)  
- B- (80-82)  
- C- (70-72)  
- F (below 63)
Late papers turned in without prior permission — you must request an extension before the due date of the paper — will be reduced by one grade-step for each day that an assignment is late. For example, a paper due on Tuesday, Oct. 4 turned in on Oct. 5 will get a “B-” instead of the “B” that it merited; if it is turned in on Oct. 6, it will get a “C+”, etc.

Two additional points to keep in mind:

(1) **You may request an Incomplete in the class ONLY to complete the final paper.** To be counted, all other work which had yet to be turned in must submitted by 4:30 PM on the last day of the Reading Period, December 16.

(2) **All work must be completed for you to receive a passing grade in the class; this is true whether you are taking the course for a letter grade or the Pass/Fail option. In other words, to pass the course, you must do all the assignments.**

**Plagiarism and the Honor Code:**

All students must sign an “Honor Code” for all assignments. This pledge states: “I affirm that I have adhered to the Honor Code in this assignment.” For further information, see the student Honor Code which you can access via Blackboard> Honor System (bottom of main page). If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, particularly in the context of joint or collective work, please see me or raise it in class.

**Attendance, Tardiness, Class Behavior, Accommodation**

I expect that you will attend the class regularly because you understand that you can’t take ownership of your learning if you’re not there, and because you understand that in a class of this nature you have a responsibility to your classmates to contribute. I also understand that you may have to miss an occasional class. I take attendance every day as a way to learn your names and to keep track of absences. While I don’t have a specific policy on numbers of “allowed” absences, I do reserve the right to factor excessive absence from class into your final grade.

As for coming in late, texting in class, surfing the internet, loudly slurping your morning coffee, etc., I have one central rule: be considerate to those around you and to me. If you would rather use class time to update your Facebook status, that’s up to you. But if your actions are distracting to those around you, than it’s up to more than you, so don’t do it.

**Finally, if you have a documented disability and wish to discuss academic accommodations, please contact me as soon as possible.**
Books Recommended for Purchase:


NOTE: All readings except those from books recommended for purchase (noted in the syllabus with an *) can be found on Blackboard (not EREs). Books recommended for purchase will be on reserve in the library.

**Syllabus**

**Part I: Specifying Systems**

**Sept. 6-8: Introduction to the Course: Thinking Systemically**

Sept. 6: Introduction to the Course

**Sept. 7: Introducción (sin lectura)**
September 8: Problematizing Borders

Andrew Rice, “Life on the Line,” *New York Times Magazine*, July 28, 2011. The “Border” (a shorthand use which we will discuss) is produced for us on a massive and continual basis. Andrew Rice’s recent long-form piece in the *New York Times* is neither the best nor the worst. Read it to see the way in which he produces the border. [ALL]

**Sept. 13-15: Accumulation: Capital and Labor**

Sept. 13: Defining Modes of Accumulation

*Jefferson Cowie, Capital Moves. RCA's Seventy-Year Quest for Cheap Labor (New York: New Press, 2001), Chapter 1, 2. [ALL]


Sept. 14: Los Braceros


Sept. 15: Accumulation in the Cross-Border Context


Néstor García Canclini, Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity, trans. Christopher L. Chiappari and Silvia L. López (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), pp. 228 (bottom) – 241 (bottom) [ENGL]

Part II: Neoliberalism Re-makes the US and Mexico.

Sept. 20: First Blog post due

Sept. 20-22: Neo-liberalism: Capital and Labor in the Late 20th century

Sept. 20: Accumulation and Crisis in Mexico


Sept. 21: Neoliberalismo


Sept. 22: Neoliberalism

Finish reading Harvey;

Heather Boushey, Shawn Fremstad, Rachel Gragg, and Margy Waller, Understanding Low-Wage Work in the United States (Center for Economic Policy and Research and the Mobility Agenda), 2007: read quickly and mostly look to look at the data in the charts. [ENGL]

Optional (for those with economics background):


Sept 27-29, Oct. 4-6: Neoliberalism and the Border [NOTE: There is no class the 29th (Rosh Hashana); students who can are invited to a campus-wide lecture on Friday, Sept. 30 at 4:30 PM; see below]

Sept. 27: The Crisis of State-Led Industrialization and Fordism


*Jefferson Cowie, Capital Moves. RCA’s Seventy-Year Quest for Cheap Labor, Chapter 2 (pp. 41-72). [ALL]

Sept. 28: Lo moderno y México

Carlos Monsiváis,”Lo marginal en el centro,” en Entrada libre: Crónicas de la sociedad que se organiza (México DF: Ediciones ERA, 1987), pp. 11-15. [SPAN]

Sept. 29: No Class
Sept. 30: Replacement class for those who can make it: Wendy Call, author of *No Word for Welcome: The Mexican Village Faces the Global Economy* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), 2011. Mudd 050 at 4:30 PM.

**Globalization Assignment: Due Oct. 4**

Oct 4: Maquiladoras: Political Economy of “Cheap” Labor in Mexico


*Jefferson Cowie, *Capital Moves: RCA’s Seventy-Year Quest for Cheap Labor*, Chapter 4-6 (pp. 100-179). [ALL]

**Oct. 5: Trabajando en una maquiladora**


Oct. 6: Gender and Border Industrialization


**Second Blog: Due Oct. 11**

**Oct 11-13: NAFTA. Institutionalizing Neoliberalism. [NOTE: This week coincides with Reyes Ferriz’s Mini-Course on Ciudad Juárez]**

Oct. 11: The Politics which Created NAFTA


Optional: You can find the text of the agreement on the NAFTA Secretariat website, WorldTradeLaw.net and the Trade Compliance Center of the International Trade Administration. Draft negotiating texts of Chapter 11 are available on the websites of the U.S. Trade Representative and the Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

Oct. 12: TLCAN [NAFTA] y el trabajo en maquilas

Entrevista de David Bacon con Julia Quiñones; KPFA/El programa matutino (Berkeley, California), Mayo 4, 2005 (transmitido el 8 de junio de 2005): http://www.cfomaquiladoras.org/david_con_julia.es.html [OJO: El artículo empieza después de un espacio blanco.] [SPAN]

Oct. 13: The impact of NAFTA: Agriculture and agricultural labor


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**Third Blog due Oct. 18**

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**Oct. 18-20: NAFTA and its Consequences**

Oct. 18: The impact of NAFTA: Manufacturing and Industrial Labor


**Oct. 19: Mujeres, hijos, y el impacto de la inmigración**


Oct. 20: Overview of immigration issues since NAFTA


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**Fall Break**

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**Part III: Violence, Criminalization, and the Production of the “Border Crisis”**

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**Fourth Blog Post due Nov. 1**

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**Nov. 1, 3: Criminalizing Immigration, Criminalizing the Immigrant**

Nov. 1: Towards a theory of the “Illegal”

**Nov. 2: Desde la perspectiva del inmigrante**

Emigrantes. Historias Enlazadas: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=74-ePrUW3RE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=74-ePrUW3RE) [SPAN]

**Nov. 3: Immigrants in a Neoliberal World**

*Margaret Regan, The Death of Josseline. Immigration Stories from the Arizona Borderlands* (Boston: Beacon Press), 2010. [Read whole book: start over fall break] [ALL]


**Nov. 8: Final Research Paper Topic due**

**Nov. 8, 10: Violence and the Maquila: Femicide and the Border**

Nov. 8: Violence. NOTE: We will meet at the Allen Memorial Art Museum at 9:30am


Nov. 9: Violencia, género, y el nuevo modo de acumulación

Carlos Fuentes, “Malintzin de las maquilas,” La frontera de cristal (Punto de Lectura, 1995); pp. 121-150. [SPAN]

Nov. 10: Discussion of Violence and Gender in a Neoliberal Mode of Accumulation

Reading from above.

Fifth Blog post due Nov. 15

Nov. 15-17: The Drug Trade: The Historical Context of Demand and Supply

Nov. 15: Historical Background - Supply


Nov. 16: La historia del narcotráfico en México


Nov. 17: Historical Background – Demand [NOTE: I will be out of class that day; either you will organize a discussion yourselves or I will have another option prepared.]

Steve Suo, 5-part series in the Oregonian (Oct 3-7, 2004). [ALL]

War on Drugs: Report on the Global Commission on Drug Policy (June 2011). [ALL]

“The Altered States of America,” Mother Jones, July 2009. [Chronology] [ALL]
Nov 22, 29: The Mexican Cartels: Public and Private Drug Wars [NOTE: No Spanish section on Nov. 23; No class on Thanksgiving, Nov. 24]

Nov. 22: The Cartels


Nov. 29: Annotated Bibliography for Final Research Paper due

Nov. 29: Violence and Narco-Enterprise


Nov. 30-Dec. 1, 6, 7: Normalizing Violence

Nov. 30: La narcocultura

Voz de Mando, Escolta de Guerra y Jorge, "La Hummer y el Camaro,"
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=--FZxM7h0KxQ&feature=related

Los Tigres del Norte, "Contrabando y Traición,:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jiw5ERlW_0 [SPAN]

Dec. 1: Narco-culture: The Production and Consumption of Violence


NPR segment on narcocorridos (via YouTube):
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ziyD6nDIUX [ENGL]

YouTube clips:
http://www.wired.com/magazine/2011/01/pl_narcocorridos/ [ENGL]

What's Left Out Assignment: due Dec. 6

Dec. 6. Femicide: Solving Murder in the Popular Culture


Dic. 7: Género, trabajo, y violencia en la cultura popular

Discutir "La Malintzin de la Maquila" de Fuentes (ver el 9 de noviembre) y el artículo de Volk/Schlotterman. [SPAN]
Dec 8, 13: Remapping the Terrain: Rethinking Border “Security” and Establishing Cross Border Solidarities

Dec. 8: Cross-Border Solidarities


*Jefferson Cowie, *Capital Moves. RCA’s Seventy-Year Quest for Cheap Labor*, Ch. 7 (“The Distances In Between”), pp. 180-201. [ALL]


Dec. 13: Concluding discussion.

**Final Research Paper due: Dec. 19, 11:00 AM. NOTE: You must apply for (and get) and official Incomplete if you want to turn in your paper after this time; if you don’t have an official incomplete, I won’t read your paper.**

(Photograph: David Bacon)