HIST/CAST 256: IM/MIGRATION IN AMERICAN HISTORY

Oberlin College
Professor Shelley Lee
Fall 2011

Cartoon published in The Wasp in 1881 invokes fears of Chinese immigration through San Francisco

Deaconess Katharine Maurer at Angel Island immigration station with immigrants from Russia and Central Europe ca. 1922

Class time and location:
MWF 10:00-10:50
King 237
4 credits

Professor office hours and location:
M 11:00-12:00 and W 1:00-2:30
King 141-F
shelley.lee@oberlin.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

It is a trite observation that the United States is a “nation of nations,” or a “nation of immigrants.” Such phrases invoke images such as the “melting pot” and Ellis Island and celebrate America as a beacon of freedom and opportunity for all. Bringing a critical approach to these perceptions, this course explores major developments, frameworks, and debates in U.S. immigration history, with a chronological emphasis on the nineteenth to early twenty-first centuries. We will consider the international context of migration, newcomers’ encounters in American society, nativism, immigration policy, and representations of immigration in American culture. While another aim of the course is to explore the significance of the movement and migration of people with respect to issues of national identity and belonging, it also seeks to interrogate and unsettle unidirectional, U.S.-centric understandings of migration, by considering phenomena such as internal and return migrations and immigrant transnationalism. In challenging the idea that there is a standard or typical immigrant experience, we will take a comparative approach that explores the experiences of Asians, blacks, Europeans, and Latinos, and also considers the varied circumstances under
which migration occurred. Given ongoing debates about immigration and immigrants in the United States today, the course will also give students an historicized understanding of an important contemporary issue.

In terms of methodological objectives, the course provides students with an introduction to the craft of history, with particular attention on the reading of secondary and primary sources and use of biographies and oral histories. Life histories, with their richness of detail from people’s daily lives, have become an indispensable part of doing immigration history, and students will have an opportunity to write about immigrant biographies and narratives in reconstructing immigration history as well as produce their own oral histories based on interviews. The course also seeks to hone students’ skills in critical reading and thinking, writing with clarity and purpose, and debating in an informed and courteous manner. In addition to completing assigned readings for class, you are expected to stay on top of course deadlines and requirements and conduct yourself in a respectful and non-disruptive manner.

If you have any problems or questions regarding the course expectations or requirements, do speak with me as soon as possible.

**REQUIREMENTS**

These books are available at Oberlin Bookstore and on reserve at Mudd Library. Other required readings will be available on Blackboard or distributed in class.


Course grades will be calculated from a possible total of 200 points.

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<th>Score Range</th>
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<tr>
<td>193-200</td>
<td>A+</td>
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<td>181-192</td>
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<td>180-185</td>
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<td>174-179</td>
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<td>167-173</td>
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<td>160-166</td>
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<td>140-146</td>
<td>C-</td>
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<td>120-139</td>
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<td>0-119</td>
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Your grade will be based on the following:

**Attendance and participation (10%).** Attendance and participation are required. Please show your respect for the class by being on time, prepared and attentive. Punctuality is crucial, as I will start class at 10:00 sharp. Regarding absences, unless you provide documentation (doctor’s note, flat tire repair bill, etc.), you must make up missed classes with an extra assignment(s). It is your responsibility to arrange this with me, before or immediately after an absence, otherwise each unexcused absence will result in a deduction of three points from your final grade. Excessive tardiness and disruptiveness will also negatively affect your grade.
On participation, you should be a thoughtful discussant, active contributor, and attentive listener. Though this is a lecture-based class, I approach lecturing in a way that invites dialogue, and there will also be regular opportunities, especially during Friday sessions, to engage in discussion with classmates (in pairs, small groups, and as a class).

**Blackboard/Start of class conversation (5%).** A group of you and I will begin each class with an informal conversation about the day’s reading and issues. You will sign up for your dates ahead of time, and over the semester, you will have participated in these two times. Prior to the meeting for which you are signed up, you must do a Blackboard posting on the assigned reading by 11:00 PM the day before class. Your posts need not follow a particular format or address a fixed set of questions, but you should demonstrate that you have done a close, thoughtful reading of the material and can relate them to the course’s broader themes. What did you find interesting, helpful, and/or problematic about the reading? What additional questions do they raise? Your classmates will read these, and I will draw on them for our start of class conversations. This requirement is not graded, but posts and comments fail to demonstrate substance, thoughtfulness, and engagement will not receive credit.

**Three reading and lecture quizzes (30%).** These in-class exams will test you on content from readings and lectures, and each constitutes 10% of your final grade. These will be on September 30, November 11, and December 9.

**Paper #1: Memoir (15%).** For this 5-6 page paper, you will write about a published memoir or book-length primary source detailing an immigrant experience told from the first or second generation point of view. Recalling the themes introduced in the *Major Problems* essays by Handlin, Bodnar, Higham and Conzen et. al., how does your book illustrate or otherwise comment on immigration as an experience defined by uprooting, transplantation, assimilation, and/or ethnicity? In what ways (if any) does the book transcend the themes? How do the details of an individual’s life story add to the study of U.S. immigration? Do they complicate dominant ideas about immigration in American history? You may draw from the list provided, and if you would like to read something else, you must let me know in advance. Further instructions will be given in class. **Due Monday, October 10 in class.**

**Paper #2: Oral history (25%).** Building on the memoir paper, you will produce an 8-10 page oral history essay based on an interview with a first or second-generation immigrant. You will get a primer as well as additional materials in class on how to conduct interviews for oral histories. Because the paper you will produce will be relatively short, you should present a brief overview of the subject’s life while focusing on and developing a particular theme that stands out in the subject’s experience. Stepping back, relate your subject’s life to the broader narrative of U.S. immigration history. How are the themes we are studying in the course highlighted by your subject’s life history? In what ways, if any, does your oral history suggest new frameworks of understanding? **Due Friday, December 2 in class.**

**Final exam (15%).** Cumulative, in-class exam consisting of short answer and essay questions. December 19 2:00 – 4:00 PM, location TBD.

*Grades for coursework are based on displayed intellectual content, originality of thought, mastery of materials, and quality of expression. For all written assignments, you must turn in hard copies. I do not give extensions on papers, and any late assignments will be graded down 1/3 of a grade for each day late.*
**HONOR CODE**

By enrolling in this class, you are agreeing to abide by Oberlin’s Honor Code/System. This means that you will refrain from plagiarizing and cheating, and that on all assignments you will write and sign the honor pledge (“I affirm that I have adhered to the Honor Code in the assignment”). Failure to adhere to the Honor Code may result in a grade penalty, withholding of a grade, and/or reporting to the Student Honor Committee. Oberlin’s honor policy can be accessed at [http://new.oberlin.edu/students/policies/](http://new.oberlin.edu/students/policies/)

**DISABILITY SERVICES**

The college will make reasonable accommodations for persons with documented disabilities. Students should notify the Office of Disability Services located in Peters G-27/G-28 and their instructor of any disability related needs.
SCHEDULE

WEEK 1
APPROACHES AND INTERPRETATIONS
Sept. 7  Class introduction
Sept. 9  Major frameworks of U.S. immigration history
  Reading: *Major Problems*, Chapter 1, all

WEEK 2
PRE-NINETEENTH CENTURY MIGRATIONS
Sept. 12 Economic and involuntary migration in the re-peopling of North America
  Reading: *Major Problems*, Chapter 2, documents on Olaudah Equiano (31-34); William Moraley (37-38); essay by Menard (55-67)
Sept. 14 Race and citizenship in early America
  Reading: *Major Problems*, Chapter 3, documents on Benjamin Franklin (70-73); J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur (75-77); Congress Restricts the Rights of Aliens (81)
Sept. 16 Discussion
  Reading: *Major Problems*, Chapter 3, essays by Kettner and Mann (82-95)

WEEK 3
EUROPEAN IMMIGRATION AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF WHITENESS
Sept. 19 Anglo-Saxons and “others”: patterns of migration from Europe in the 19th to early 20th centuries
  Reading: Jacobson, Chapters 1 and 2
Sept. 21 Ethnicity, becoming American, and the limits of inclusion
  Reading: Jacobson, Chapter 5
Sept. 23 Discussion
  Reading: Jacobson, Chapter 6

WEEK 4
LABOR, ALIEN BODIES, AND THE RACIALIZED BOUNDARIES OF INCLUSION
Sept. 26 Shifting borders and the shadows of empire: Migration from Mexico
  Reading: *Major Problems*, Chapter 7, essay by Almaguer (229-236); Chapter 11 document on Carlos Almazan (349-350)
Sept. 28 Yellow perils and cheap labor: Asians in industrial America
  Reading: Lee, Chapter 1; *Major Problems*, Chapter 11, document on Mary Paik Lee (345-347)
Sept. 30 Test

WEEK 5
XENOPHOBIA AND AMERICANIZATION IN PROGRESSIVE AMERICA
Oct. 3 “Go After the Women”: Women reformers and gender in immigrant communities
  Reading: *Major Problems*, Chapter 8 document on Jane Addams (242-244); essays by Diner and Ruiz (252-271)
Oct. 5 Immigration and the contradictions of Progressivism
  Reading: *Major Problems*, Chapter 9, essay by Higham (291-299); Chapter 10, documents on Theodore Roosevelt (316-318); Randolph Bourne (318-321)
Oct. 7 Discussion
  Reading: Jacobson, Chapter 7
### WEEK 6
**CLOSING THE GATES, 1882-1924**

Oct. 10  
Qualities of a citizen: gender, the body, and ethnicity in the formulation of immigration policy  
Reading: Lee, Chapters 3-4  
PAPER #1 DUE

Oct. 12  
The Johnson-Reed Act and the triumph of nativism  
Reading: Ngai, “The Johnson-Reed Act and the Reconstruction of Race in Immigration Law” (Blackboard)

Oct. 14  
Discussion  
Reading: TBD

### WEEK 7
**MIGRATION AND THE MAKING OF THE AMERICAN WEST**

Oct. 17  
Manifest Destiny and the “American invasion”  
Reading: White, “The Transformation of Western Society: Migration” (Blackboard)

Oct. 19  
Guest lecture: Alex Olson, University of Michigan, “Im/migration in Alta California, 1796-1851”  

Oct. 21  
Discussion  
Reading: Limerick: “The Persistence of the Natives” (Blackboard)

### WEEK 8
**FALL RECESS**

### WEEK 9
**MIGRATION AND IMMIGRANT LIFE DURING THE ERA OF EXCLUSION**

Oct. 31  
Shoring up the borders and Illegal Immigration  
Reading: Lee, Chapters 5-6

Nov. 2  
Ethnic institutions and repatriation during the 1930s  
Reading: *Major Problems*, Chapter 11, essay by Cohen (360-370); Chapter 12 document “Documents and Reminiscences Recall the Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s” (383-385)

Nov. 4  
Discussion  
Reading: Lee, Chapter 7 and Epilogue

### WEEK 10
**THE SOUTHERN DIASPORA AND INTERNAL MIGRATION IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY**

Nov. 7  
African Americans and the “Great Migration”  
Reading: Gregory, Chapters 2-4

Nov. 9  
White Southerners and the Dust Bowl Migration  
Reading: Gregory, Chapters 5-6

Nov. 11  
Test

### WEEK 11
**SHIFTING DISCOURSES IN THE MID-TWENTIETH CENTURY**

Nov. 14  
Re-opening the gates during World War II  
Reading: *Major Problems*, Chapter 12, essay by Gleason; Gregory, Chapter 7
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 16</td>
<td>Ethnic revival and the new “American way”</td>
<td>Reading: <em>Major Problems</em>, Chapter 12, document “An Eminent Sociologist Analyzes the ‘American Way of Life’” (391-394); Jacobson, Chapter 3</td>
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<td>Nov. 18</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>Reading: Jacobson, Chapter 8 and Epilogue</td>
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<td><strong>WEEK 12</strong></td>
<td>REFORM AND RESURGENCE</td>
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<td>Nov. 21</td>
<td>Dismantling exclusion and the 1965 Immigration Act</td>
<td>Reading: Hoffnung-Garskoff, Chapters 1-3 (skim 3)</td>
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<td>Nov. 23</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
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<td>Nov. 25</td>
<td><strong>THANKSGIVING RECESS</strong></td>
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<td><strong>WEEK 13</strong></td>
<td>MIGRATION SINCE 1965</td>
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<td>Nov. 28</td>
<td>Globalization, deindustrialization, and the post-65ers</td>
<td>Reading: Hoffnung-Garskoff, Chapters 4-5</td>
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<td>Dec. 2</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
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<td><strong>PAPER #2 DUE</strong></td>
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<td><strong>WEEK 14</strong></td>
<td>THE NEW NATIVISM AND IMMIGRATION POLITICS</td>
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<td>Dec. 5</td>
<td>“Too Many Asians,” “Build the Dang Fence,” and other discontents</td>
<td>Reading: <em>Major Problems</em>, Chapter 14, document on Santiago Maldonado (454-455), essay by Fong (475-485)</td>
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<td>Dec. 7</td>
<td>New DREAMs and objectives: immigrant rights and activism today</td>
<td>Reading: Jose Antonio Vargas, “My Life as an Undocumented Immigrant” (Blackboard)</td>
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<td>Dec. 9</td>
<td>Test</td>
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<td><strong>WEEK 15</strong></td>
<td>IMMIGRATION AND THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY</td>
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<td>Dec. 12</td>
<td>Final thoughts and review</td>
<td>Reading: TBD</td>
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Final exam Monday, December 19 2:00 – 4:00 PM