HIST/CAST 256: IMMIGRATION IN U.S. HISTORY

Oberlin College
Professor Shelley Lee

Fall 2014


Class time and location:        Office hours and location:
TR 9:30-10:50         King 141-G
King 101        Monday 1-3 or by appointment
This class counts toward the cultural diversity (CD) requirement

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

It is a common, indeed trite, sentiment that the United States is a “nation of immigrants.” This phrase evokes the longstanding and still powerful notion (illustrated in the images above) that America is a land of freedom and opportunity for all. On the other hand, histories of nativism and recent events—deportations, incarcerations, and other measures—paint a different picture, that is, of a nation that has been less than unwelcoming toward would-be newcomers.

Starting from the position that immigration and migration are centrally important subjects in American history that require a critical lens, this course provides an introduction to the history and study of migration to and within the United States, with a focus on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. We will examine developments that gave rise to major migrations, analyze the political debates they triggered, and explore the experiences of migrants themselves. Additionally, our study will attend to how scholars have approached the subject of migration and how their approaches have changed over time and across fields. While we will study immigration in relation to issues of national identity and belonging, we also seek to unsettle unidirectional, U.S.-centric understandings of the subject by including in our study internal and return migration, transnationalism, and migration through the lens of diaspora. Further, toward challenging the notion 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 over varied contexts and time periods. Although this is a history class, contemporary concerns will inform our studies; not only will we study present-day immigration reform and the immigrant rights movement, we will also reflect on the importance of historical knowledge and perspectives to engage soundly and effectively on the issue of immigration. Toward facilitating the latter, we will often begin classes by discussing current events, so I encourage you to think about how history informs the present (as well as its limits) and bring your own items to class.
By the end of the semester, you should emerge from the course with the following:
- basic narrative and understanding of key milestones in U.S. immigration history (laws, events, etc.)
- familiarity with concepts and immigration keywords (e.g., citizenship, “push-pull,” transnationalism, diaspora, borderlands)
- critical perspective on the popular myths about America’s immigrant past
- ability to think comparatively about migration experiences across different groups
- ability to apply historical knowledge to contemporary debates about immigration and to write about it cogently

Historical methodology will ground much of the course; most of the readings are works of historical scholarship, and through assignments and discussion we will hone our skills in making and evaluating historical arguments, reading primary sources, and thinking historiographically. As such, the course will help build a disciplinary foundation for History majors, while giving CAS majors familiarity with the study and practice of history. At the same time, because this is a cross-listed course with CAS, we will read from other fields and discuss the importance and contributions of different disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches. With regard to writing assignments, I have developed these in response to current debates about the relevance of scholarly research for the general public as well as my belief that the salience of immigration is all around us. Rather than write conventional history papers (e.g., book reviews, primary source analyses, research papers) you will all compose short op-ed pieces in which you draw on course material to make historically informed interventions into contemporary debates about immigration. A longer paper assignment will give you the option to write a longer op-ed style piece or an oral history based on an interview you have conducted.

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 concerns or questions regarding the expectations or requirements, do speak with me as soon as possible.

REQUIREMENTS

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

Catherine Ceniza Choy, Global Families: A History of Asian International Adoption in America (NYU, 2013)
Kelly Lytle Hernandez, Migra! A History of the U.S. Border Patrol (University of California, 2010)
Stephanie Smallwood, Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to America Diaspora (Harvard, 2007)

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

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<td>193-200</td>
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Final grades will be based on the following:

Attendance and participation (10%). Attendance and participation are required. Do show your respect for the class by being on time, prepared, and attentive. Punctuality is important, as I will start class promptly at 9:30. Also at the start of each class, I will circulate a sheet that you will sign as a record of your attendance. Because this is a larger class, I will not remember everyone who attended a given session, so will rely on these sheets for this requirement. Missed classes must be made up with an extra assignment(s), and it is your responsibility to arrange these 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 to engage in discussions with your peers (in pairs, small groups, and as a class).

**Blackboard/Start of class conversation (10%).** A small group will begin each class with a brief 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 three times. Prior to the meeting for which you have signed up, you will post to Blackboard a short paragraph on the reading by 11:00 PM the day before class. You should demonstrate that you have done a thoughtful reading of the material and can relate them to the course’s broader themes. You can focus on a particular chapter or essay, but do begin by characterizing the readings as a whole. Was there a unifying theme? If you read pieces by different authors, did they have different takes on the subject? If you read chapters from a book, what is the argument the author is developing? In addition to these questions, you should feel free to share any other impressions and questions. Others who are also assigned to post for that day should feel free to respond to one another. I will draw on them for our start of class conversations. This requirement is not graded, but posts and comments that fail to demonstrate substance, thoughtfulness, and engagement will not receive credit.

**Take home exams (20%).** These will test you on reading and lecture content through short answer and essay questions. While you may review your notes with classmates, you must complete the exam on your own. It is open book; you may use your notes and readings, but do not consult any non-course materials, including Wikipedia. Any kind of collaboration in completing the exams is a violation of the honor code. The exam will be made available 24 hours before they are due. Each constitutes 10% of your final grade.

**Paper #1: Op-ed (20%).** You will write an op-ed of no more than 800 words, focusing on a particular issue concerning immigration in the United States. It should draw from an historical perspective and demonstrate your knowledge of immigration history while being linked to a contemporary debate or issue. More details on this assignment will be provided in class. Due Oct. 9 by 5:00 PM to Blackboard.

**Paper #2: Editorial or oral history essay (30%).** Thinking about what kinds of historical methodology most appeals to you, you will write either an editorial essay or oral history paper. The editorial essay is essentially an extended version of the op-ed assignment but should take the format of a feature essay in a national publication. The oral history assignment will require you interview someone—an immigrant, second generation American, internal migrant—and write up the interview as an oral history essay. We’ll discuss both options in class and I will hold outside sessions on both genres to assist you in your preparation. Length of final papers should be 2500 words. Due Tuesday, December 4 by 5:00 PM to Blackboard.

**Take home final (10%).** This will take the same format as the take home exams.

Grades for coursework are based on displayed intellectual content, originality of thought, mastery of materials, and quality of expression. Due dates are firm and the Blackboard threads to which you will upload your papers will disappear after the deadline. 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 SYSTEM**

By enrolling in this class, you agree to abide by Oberlin’s Honor 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”). For papers, you must cite all written sources that you consulted, whether you quote directly or paraphrase. This is true whether you are using electronic or printed materials. Incomplete or improper citations are a form of plagiarism. If you are unfamiliar with proper citation formats, or have questions please consult me, a reference librarian, a writing tutor and/or a style manual. Failure to adhere to the Honor Code will result in a grade penalty, withholding of a grade, and/or reporting to the Student Honor Committee. Oberlin’s honor policy can be viewed at [http://www.oberlin.edu/studentpolicies/honorcode/](http://www.oberlin.edu/studentpolicies/honorcode/).
CLASSROOM RULES AND ETIQUETTE

Learning Community. While individual students bring their varied backgrounds, we are also a learning community, brought together by a common interest and desire to learn about and better understand immigration history. I expect you to acquire, reflect upon, and digest knowledge, develop an understanding of why history has played out the way it has, and form your own historically grounded opinions on the issues, but not for you to think that there is any “right” way to think about immigration. I also understand that course materials may sometimes raise issues that are controversial or evoke strong feelings. The history of immigration, after all, is seldom pretty. Therefore, I ask that everyone commit to making this classroom a space for people to explore new ideas, take intellectual risks, and engage in open and honest debate.

Additionally, do be aware that some issues discussed in this course may present personal “triggers.” I cannot always anticipate those triggers, but will always respect any student’s need to take care of themselves in response to them.

Courtesy. Related to the above, we will conduct class in a spirit of mutual respect. We may hold differing opinions, and I encourage you to question and debate with one another and me. I will not tolerate disruptive or disrespectful behavior that includes interrupting others, badgering, and making ad hominem attacks, and nor should you. It is also distracting and rude to engage in personal conversation or other diversions unrelated to class activity. Students who persist in such behavior may be asked to leave the class. Leaving the room during class is distracting to the instructor and your classmates, so please take care of your needs before class to avoid this disruption. I understand that compelling personal needs may force you to leave the room, so if this is the case, do inform me of any concerns. Otherwise, habitually leaving the room without explanation will be counted as absences.

Technology. The use of cell phones and other mobile devices in class is disruptive and disrespectful, and therefore prohibited, except in emergencies. Turn off your devices or put them on silent mode. Students are permitted to use computers for note-taking purposes or reading reference only. Although recent studies show that students absorb knowledge more effectively when writing notes by hand and having a laptop open during lectures often inhibits the learning of both the laptop user and students around them, I am not instituting a laptop ban at this time. I do strongly encourage you to take hand notes. If I receive complaints from students and others that computers in class are creating a disruptive learning atmosphere, I will have no choice but to enforce a ban.

ACADEMIC INCOMPLETES

If you find that you will be unable to complete the class for any reason, the College does allow two kinds of incompletes, educational and emergency. To find which applies to you, consult the Dean of Studies website:
http://new.oberlin.edu/office/dean-of-studies/policies/incompletes.dot

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 (440-774-5588) and their instructor of any disability related needs.
### SCHEDULE

#### WEEK 1  MAJOR APPROACHES AND INTERPRETATIONS
- **Sept. 2**  The centrality and meanings of migration in the American experience
- **Sept. 4**  The changing world before migration and the migrant subject  
  Reading: Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery* Introduction – Ch. 2

#### WEEK 2  PRE-NINETEENTH CENTURY MIGRATIONS
- **Sept. 9**  Economic and forced migration in the re-peopling of North America  
  Reading: Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery* Ch. 3-5
- **Sept. 11**  Race and citizenship in early America  
  Reading: Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery* Ch. 6-7

#### WEEK 3  EUROPEAN IMMIGRATION AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF WHITENESS
- **Sept. 16**  Anglo-Saxons and “others”: European immigration in the 19th to early 20th centuries  
  Reading: Kenny, “The Famine Generation” (Blackboard); Pickle, “Arriving, Settling In, and Surviving” (Blackboard); Gabaccia, “When the Migrants are Men” (Blackboard)
- **Sept. 18**  Ethnicity, becoming American, and the limits of inclusion  
  Reading: Parker, “State, Citizenship, and Territory” (Blackboard); Goldstein, *Price of Whiteness* Intro-Ch. 1

#### WEEK 4  EMPIRE AND LABOR
- **Sept. 23**  Migration and displacement in the wake of expansion  
  Reading: Hernandez, *Migra!* Introduction - Ch. 1; Limerick, “The Persistence of Natives” (Blackboard)
- **Sept. 25**  Immigrant labor in industrializing America  
  Reading: Peck, “Reinventing Free Labor” (Blackboard); Glenn, “Race, Labor, and Citizenship in Hawaii” (Blackboard)

**TAKE-HOME EXAM DISTRIBUTED. DUE SEPT 26 BY 10:50 AM**

#### WEEK 5  XENOPHOBIA, ANTI-RADICALISM, AND AMERICANIZATION IN PROGRESSIVE AMERICA
- **Sept. 30**  Urban and labor politics  
  Reading: Gordon, “To Make a Clean Sweep” (Blackboard); Barrett, “Americanization from the Bottom Up” (Blackboard)
- **Oct. 2**  The many contradictions of Progressivism  
  Reading: Goldstein, *Price of Whiteness* Ch. 2-4

#### WEEK 6  CLOSING THE GATES, 1882-1924
- **Oct. 7**  The qualities of a citizen: race, gender, and ethnicity in the formulation of immigration policy  
  Reading: Leong, “A Distinct and Antagonistic Race” (Blackboard); Lee, “The Chinese Exclusion Example” (Blackboard)
  **EXTRA CREDIT OPPORTUNITY: KUNAL PARKER LECTURE**
  *Turn in a 1-page write up on the talk for 2 points extra credit. Due Oct. 9.*
- **Oct. 9**  The Johnson-Reed Act and the triumph of nativism  
  Reading: Higham, “Closing the Gates” (Blackboard)

**PAPER #1 DUE**

#### WEEK 7  SHORING UP THE SOUTHERN BORDER
- **Oct. 14**  The transformation of Mexican immigration in the early 20th century  
  Reading: Hernandez, *Migra!* Ch 2-4
- **Oct. 16**  Session on writing history editorials  
  Reading: TBA
**WEEK 8**  **FALL RECESS**

**WEEK 9**  MIGRATION AND IMMIGRANT LIFE DURING THE ERA OF EXCLUSION
Oct. 28  Borderland communities and illegal immigration  
Reading: Delgado, “Neighbors by Nature” (Blackboard); Goldstein, Price of Whiteness Ch. 5-6
Oct. 30  Ethnic institutions and repatriation during the 1930s  
Reading: Goldstein, Price of Whiteness Ch. 7

**WEEK 10**  INTERNAL MIGRATIONS IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY
Nov. 4  African Americans and the Great Migration  
Reading: Grossman, “Tell Me About the Place” and “Bound for the Promised Land” (Blackboard)
TAKE HOME EXAM DISTRIBUTED. DUE OCT. 5 BY 10:50 AM
Nov. 6  White Southerners and the Dust Bowl Migration  
Reading: Gregory, “Out of the Heartland” and “The Okie Problem” (Blackboard)

**WEEK 11**  THE TRANSFORMATION OF CITIZENSHIP IN THE MID-TWENTIETH CENTURY
Nov. 11  Wartime contradictions  
Reading: Hernandez, Migra! Ch. 5-7; Goldstein, Ch. 8
Nov. 13  Re-opening the gates during World War II  
Reading: Choy, Global Families Ch. 1

**WEEK 12**  REFORM AND RESURGENCE
Nov. 18  Adoptees and refugees during America’s Cold War  
Reading: Choy, Global Families Ch. 2-3
Nov. 20  A “civil rights act for immigrants”: The Hart-Celler Act of 1965  
Reading: Ngai, “Oscar Handlin and Immigration Policy Reform in the 1950s and 1960s” (Blackboard)

**WEEK 13**  MIGRATION SINCE 1965
Nov. 25  War, globalization and the post-65ers  
Reading: Choy, Global Families Ch. 4-5
Nov. 27  **THANKSGIVING**

**WEEK 14**  THE NEW NATIVISM AND RECENT REFORM
Dec. 2  Refugees and reform  
Reading: Lipman, “A Refugee Camp in America” (Blackboard); Pena, “Obvious Gays and the State Gaze” (Blackboard)
Dec. 4  Race and ethnicity in the late 20th century  
Reading: Goldstein, Epilogue; Cheng, “The Changs Next Door to Diazes” (Blackboard)
PAPER #2 DUE

**WEEK 15**  IMMIGRATION AND THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY
Dec. 9  New DREAMs and objectives: immigrant rights and activism today  
Reading: “Immigrant Rights Movement on the Net” Jose Antonio Vargas, “My Life as an Undocumented Immigrant” (Blackboard)
Dec. 11  Paradigms, final thoughts and review  
Reading: Gabaccia, “Is Everywhere Nowhere?” (Blackboard)

***CLASSES END DECEMBER 12***
Final exams due Friday, December 19 by 11:00 AM

The contents on this syllabus are subject to change. I will notify you in class or email of any changes