Honors 108: Syllabus

Transnationalism, Diasporas, and Homeland-Hostland Politics

At the turn of the 21st century, “globalization” is the order of the day. With international migration bringing the alien “other” from third world to first, and worldwide trade and communications amplifying the feedbacks traveling in the opposite direction, the view that nation-state and society normally converge has waned. Instead, social scientists are looking for new ways to think about the connections between “here” and “there.” Observing that migration produces a plethora of connections spanning “home” and “host” societies, as well as linkages among migrants criss-crossing the globe, today’s scholarship emphasizes the limits (or possibly obsolescence) of assimilation, contending instead that a transnational or diasporic pattern offers the key to understanding the contemporary immigrant phenomenon.

This course seeks a critical encounter with the rapidly burgeoning literature on immigrant transnationalism and diasporas. We will seek to ask:

- Do immigrant loyalties, attachments, and behaviors remain home-country oriented? Or are immigrants instead turned into host-country nationals, committed to societies in which they have settled?
- How have immigrant long-distance attachments changed over the course of the past 100 years? How does the current age of mass migration differ from the age of mass migration at the turn of the 20th century?
- What are the impacts of home country attachments, whether “here” or “there”? What sorts of positive and negative effects do they produce?
- Can home country and host country attachments be reconciled? Or are they mutually exclusive (as so often argued)?

We will explore these questions through an ongoing encounter with an interdisciplinary social science literature, drawing readings from anthropology, history, political science, and sociology. Though we will principally focus on the experience of contemporary international migrants to the United States, we will extend our reach backwards in time as well as across to other places of relevance.

Readings: There is no textbook: readings involve journal articles, online reports or papers, or selected chapters from individual books. Most readings are available on-line,
via UCLA library. Some readings are directly available on the web: please use the online syllabus to access those readings. Other readings can be accessed via the course website.

Requirements:

Weekly memo: To facilitate your preparation, I will post discussion questions prior to every session. In addition, I will ask you to write a weekly, two paragraph memo in response to a question that I will send you the previous week. The memos will be ungraded; each completed memo will receive one point toward your final grade.

Exams: There will be two take-home exams, a midterm, and a final. The midterm will be due on February 13; the final will be due on the day that our final is scheduled. Each exam will ask you to write a number of essays, synthesizing readings and lectures. I will specify length later, though I am likely to ask you to write a total of 10-12 typed pages for each exam. I will post the midterm the week of January 28; I will post the final exam by March 7. Exams will be due on time; your grade per exam will drop half a point (e.g., from A to A-) for each day that any particular exam is late. Each exam will be worth 35 points toward your final grade.

Book review: Please read and review a book on immigrants’ transnational, trans-state, or diasporic experiences. A list of recommended books, as well as a guideline to the review, is provided at the end of the syllabus. The book review is due the last day of class. The book review will be worth 20 points toward your final grade.

Week 1: Introduction

Week 2: Theoretical Perspectives

Robert Smith, *Mexican New York*, Chapter 1


Peggy Levitt and S. Khagram, “Constructing transnational studies, “ 2008 (on course website)

Week 3: Mexico and “its” Diaspora
Special session with Regents Lecturer, Carlos Gonzalez Gutierrez, Executive Director of the Institute for Mexicans Abroad at Mexico's Ministry of Foreign Affairs

in preparation, consult institute website: http://www.ime.gob.mx/

and read:


David Ayon, “Mexican Policy and Émigré Communities”, 2006 (available on course website)

Robert Smith, Contradictions of Diasporic Institutionalization in Mexican Politics: The 2006 Migrant Vote and Other Forms of Inclusion and Control, 2007 (available on course website)

Stephane Dufoix, *Diasporas*, chapter 4

James McCann et al, “Transnational Political Engagement and the Civic Incorporation of Immigrants in the United States,” unpublished paper, 2007 (on course website)


Week 4: **Communities and lives across borders: evidence from Mexico and Mexican immigrants in the U.S.**

Robert Smith, Mexican New York, Chapters to be assigned


Week of 1/28: Midterm posted

Week 5: Historical Perspectives


Donna Gabaccia, *Italy’s Many Diasporas*, Chapters 1, 4, 5

Nancy Foner, *From Ellis Island to JFK* pp. 169-176

**Midterm due: 2/13**

**Week 6: Diasporas and Development**


El Salvador, United Nations Development Program, *A look at the new “US”: The Impact of Migration*


**Week 7: Diasporas between homeland and hostland politics**


Susan Eckstein, “Cuban Americans and the Making of a Modern Political Machine,” 2006 working paper, on course website

Ruud Koopmans, et al., *Contested Citizenship: Immigration and Cultural Diversity in Europe*, chapter 3 (on course website)

Stephane Dufoix, *Diasporas*, Chapter 4 & conclusion

**Week 8: Diasporas: for “bad”?**

Yossi Shain, “The role of diasporas in conflict perpetuation or resolution,” *SAIS Review* 22.2 (Summer-Fall 2002): p115-144, (available via UCLA library)


**Week 9: The second generation and beyond**

Robert Smith, *Mexican New York*, chapters to be assigned


**Week 10: One world? Telecommunication and “digital diasporas”**

Readings to be specified

OR

**Week 10: Citizenship: Dual or Exclusive?**

Jonathan Fox, “Transnational Citizenship”


Book review assignment

Write a review of a recent book on immigrants’ transnational, trans-state, or diasporic experiences. Below you will find a list of acceptable candidates; as the list is quite varied, and many of the books are available in paperback I suggest that you pick from this list. If, however, you have another book in mind, you may proceed, contingent on my approval. To obtain approval, please submit the name and author on a 3 x 5 card no later than February 3.

The review should accomplish the following objectives:

- describe the intellectual question that the author seeks to answer: what is the issue at stake? is there a debate with which the author engages and if so, what is the nature of that debate? what is the author’s point of view?

- briefly summarize the book: describe the nature of the research, the types of evidence that the author brings to bear on the question, and the main conclusions;

- assess the book: does it answer the question it poses? is the evidence convincing? is the argument consistent and logical? are there unanswered questions left to pursue?

Though you may use quotations where appropriate, making sure to provide proper references, the paper must be written in your own words.

Books for review:


Gamburd, Michele, Transnationalism and Sri Lanka’s migrant housemaids: the kitchen spoon’s handle, New Delhi, 2002


Laguerre, Michel, Diaspora, politics, and globalization, New York: 2006


