Migration has shaped the Americas in powerful ways, creating immigrant communities and diasporas that transcend national boundaries. As people continue to move across borders, the relationship between identity and place has been reimagined, offering new possibilities for connection. Yet, this has also sparked political anxieties about belonging and citizenship for both individuals and nations, rendering some immigrants as perpetually outside the “imagined community” of the nation, effectively living on the borderlands of belonging. How do those on the borders navigate belonging, citizenship and identity in the Americas? What are the implications of these struggles for understandings of nations and selves? This seminar explores the lived experience of those moving across national borders as they negotiate various borderlands in their search for home. We turn to testimonial accounts and ethnographies to explore life on the borderlands, also drawing on key conceptual frameworks in migration and diaspora studies related to borders and identity. Readings primarily draw on ethnographies of diaspora groups (Caribbean, Latin American, Jewish, and Asian communities), as well as testimonial accounts in various genres—including fiction, memoir, and the narrative testimonies of undocumented migrants and Dreamers in public protests.
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

There are several learning objectives for our seminar, including:

- Develop a comprehensive understanding of contemporary questions related to national borders, belonging, migration, and citizenship, from the perspective of scholars as well as from the lived experience of migrants.
- Develop the ability to write critical analyses and reflections about sources, including a meaningful literature review.
- Develop the ability to write research-based essays that offer an interpretive argument that contributes to the scholarship and thoughtfully incorporates a range of the sources and evidence.
- Learn to assess a range of sources, both primary and secondary, and understand the value of different forms of representation, including scholarly literature, filmmaking, memoir, or ethnography.
- Learn how to use databases and available archives to conduct research with primary and secondary sources.
- Learn methodologies for original qualitative research, including participant-observation and interviews.
- Develop the ability to formulate an original argument in writing as well as through speaking and presentations.

READINGS

The following books are required for the course:

- José Antonio Vargas, Dear America: Notes of an Undocumented Citizen (2018)
- Debra Lattanzi Shutika, Beyond the Borderlands: Migration and Belonging in the U.S. and Mexico (2011)*
- Susan Coutin, Exiled Home: Salvadoran Transnational Youth in the Aftermath of Violence (2016)*

*All books will be available for purchase at the NYU Bookstore. Books marked with an asterisk (Chávez, Coutin, and Shutika) are also available electronically via the NYU Library online (so you may choose not to purchase those, if you prefer). The books which are not available electronically (Vargas) are also available via Course Reserves at the NYU Library.

*All other readings will be posted on NYU Classes.
ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADES

Reflection – Diaspora and Desire (3 pages double-spaced): 10%
Prepare a reflection analyzing the key themes explored in the first four weeks of the course (belonging, memory, home, diaspora), incorporating evidence from readings to help support your analytical insights.
Due Friday, February 21st

Midterm Essay (5-6 pages double-spaced): 25%
Building on the central themes in the first half of class (the lived experience of diaspora communities and the implications for thinking about citizens and nations), develop a 5-6 page essay focusing on one specific migrant community discussed in the readings. (You may only use the in-class readings for this essay.)
Due Friday, March 13th

Literature Review (3-4 pages double-spaced): 10%
Prepare a review of the key textual sources you will be using for your final research essay. You are also encouraged to do original fieldwork, using interviews or participant-observation, which you can then incorporate into this review. (Additional instructions will be provided for doing such research.)
Due Friday, April 17th

Final Research Essay (9-10 pages double-spaced): 35%
For the final essay, you will develop an original interpretive argument about a contemporary migrant community, specifically focusing your analysis on any of the themes we explored in class (such as belonging, citizenship, memory, violence, agency, etc.). Though you may reference readings and materials from class, you are also expected to include research (secondary and primary sources outside of the course readings); you are also welcomed to include personal narrative and fieldwork. Due Monday, May 11th

Presentations: 10%
Present your research paper (as a work-in-progress) in an in-class symposium; you will present your work in panels organized around intersecting themes. In Class Thursday, April 30th

Participation: 10%
Since this is a discussion-based seminar, active, engaged participation in class sessions is integral to the course. Please come prepared for every class having read the assigned readings, and ready to engage in discussion. Throughout the semester, students will be asked to present a reading, which will also count towards the participation grade. In addition to class meetings, we will have some optional activities outside of class connected to our coursework (this may include visiting a museum, attending a performance, or a visit to the field); you will be required to attend at least one of these optional activities.
Attendance Policy
Since this is a discussion-based seminar that only meets once a week, your attendance and engaged participation is critical to your ability to succeed in the course. If you know you will have to miss class for reasons of religious observance or for documented illness, please e-mail me in advance; if you are experiencing extenuating circumstances which cause you to miss class, please contact me and your advisor right away. Having more than one unexcused absence will have a significant negative impact on your grade.

Submission of Work
All work should be submitted via NYU Classes, using Times New Roman 12-point font, double-spaced. MLA Citation Style should be used unless otherwise indicated.

Disability Disclosure Statement
Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. The Moses Center website is www.nyu.edu/csdl. Please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu) for further information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance.

Academic Integrity
This university is “a community of scholars who value free and open inquiry” (CAS Academic Integrity). In this class, we work with ideas and language, and you will develop your thinking and writing through a series of intellectual exchanges and dialogues with various sources. It is deeply important to keep track of which of those you have developed (in dialogue with classmates, sources, professors, friends, and so on) and which of those have come to you from others (classmates, sources, professors, friends, the internet, and so on).

Support and Resources
Additional resources that may be helpful include:
- NYU Libraries [http://library.nyu.edu]
- Resources for Commuter and Off-Campus Students [https://goo.gl/ij50NS]
- The Wellness Exchange [http://goo.gl/hZ9tg3]
- The Writing Center [nyu.mywconline.com]
- The Academic Resource Center [http://www.nyu.edu/students/undergraduates/academic-services/undergraduate-advisement/academic-resource-center/tutoring-and-learning.html]

A Note on Respectful Dialogue
As a discussion-based seminar, much of our time will be focused on reading and discussing the texts assigned; but we will also be building a community. We will strive to always be respectful of others with the language and tone of our comments. In addition, we will strive to be patient with one another as we explore new territory, as we all have different levels of cultural competency, and strive to be constructive listeners in our exchanges. Each of you brings a unique personal history into the classroom, all of which are valuable; realizing the value of the particular subjectivity you bring to this work will make you a better student, writer, reader, critical thinker, and classroom citizen. If at any point in the semester, you are offended or troubled by something in the classroom or reading, please let me know. You are always welcome to voice such concerns in class discussion and/or free to reach out to me privately, either after class or in an email, if you prefer. You will never be penalized in any way for calling my attention to a problem regarding respectful dialogue in the class.
SCHEDULE

INTRODUCTIONS: BORDERLANDS
Thurs Jan 30
Week 1: Welcome to the Borderlands
   Film Shown in Class {Excerpts}: Beyond Borders (2016)

DIASPORA AND DESIRE
Thurs Feb 6
Week 2: Borders and Belonging
   • José Antonio Vargas, Dear America, pp. 1-44
   • Léo Chávez, Birthright Citizenship, Prologue pp. 1-7

Thurs Feb 13
Week 3: Imagining Community and Diaspora
   • José Antonio Vargas, Dear America, pp. 45-106
   • Salman Rushdie, Imaginary Homelands, pp. 9-21
   • Benedict Anderson, “Introduction” in Imagined Communities, pp. 1-7

Thurs Feb 20
Week 4: Memory, Nostalgia, and Home
   • José Antonio Vargas, Dear America, pp. 107-174
   • Dorinne Kondo, “The Narrative Production of ‘Home,’ Community, and Political Identity in Asian American Theater,” pp. 97-117
   • Ruth Behar, “While Waiting for the Ferry to Cuba: Adio Kerida and the Goodbye That Isn’t a Farewell,” in Homecomings: Unsettling Paths of Return, pp. 199-210
   • Lok Siu, “Migration Stories: Serial Migration and the Production of Home and Identity in Diaspora,” pp. 86-112
   Film Shown in Class {Excerpts}: Adio Kerida (2002)

Reflection Due Friday, February 21
CITIZENS AND NATIONS

Thurs Feb 27

Week 5: Nations and Transnationalism

- **Leo Chávez, The Latino Threat**, “Introduction,” pp. 1-16
- Steven Vertovec, “Transnationalism and Identity,” pp. 573-582

Thurs Mar 5

Week 6: Flexible Citizenship

- **Susan Coutin, Exiled Home**, “Introduction,” pp. 1-20
- **Debra Lattanzi Shutika, Beyond the Borderlands**, Ch. 4, “In the Shadows and Out,” pp. 91-135

Thurs Mar 12

Week 7: Crossing Borders

- **Debra Lattanzi Shutika, Beyond the Borderlands**, Ch. 6, “There and Back Again,” pp. 117-140

Film Shown in Class {Excerpts}: Return to El Salvador (2010)

Midterm Essay  Due Friday, March 13th

*******SPRING BREAK*******
VIOLENCE AND DIFFERENCE

Thurs Mar 26

Week 8: Negotiating Identity and Difference

- José Antonio Vargas, Dear America, pp. 175-230
- Bakirathi Mani, “Beauty Queens: Gender, Ethnicity and Transnational Modernities at Miss India, USA,” pp. 122-162
- Gene Luen Yang, American Born Chinese, pp. 23-40

Thurs Apr 2

Week 9: Threat and Danger: Bodies Out of Place


Thurs Apr 9

Week 10: Silence and Fear

- Susan Coutin, Exiled Home: Ch. 1, “Violence and Silence,” pp. 21-34
- Gloria Anzaldúa, Borderlands/La Frontera: Ch. 6, “Tlilli, Tlapalli/The Path of the Red and Black Ink,” Ch. 7, “La conciencia de la mestiza/Towards a New Consciousness,” pp. 87-113

Film Shown in Class (Excerpts): Don’t Tell Anyone (No Le Digas a Nadie) (2015)

Research Essay Topic Due Thursday, April 9th in class
AGENCY AND BELONGING

Thurs Apr 16

Week 11: Memory and Testimonies of Survival

- Susan Coutin, “Place and presence within Salvadoran deportees’ narratives of removal,” pp. 323-336
- Fieldwork Testimonies

Literature Review Due Friday, April 17th

Thurs Apr 23

Week 12: Contesting Citizenship

- Debra Lattanzi Shutika, Beyond the Borderlands, Ch. 5, “Bridging the Community: Nations, Activism, and the Politics of Belonging,” pp. 136-165
- Renato Rosaldo, “Cultural Citizenship in San José, California,” pp. 57-63

Thurs Apr 30

Week 13: Agency, Protest, and Belonging

- Susan Coutin, Exiled Home: Ch. 3, “Dreams,” pp. 95-127

In-Class Presentations Thursday Apr 30th

CONCLUSION: CHALLENGING BOUNDARIES

Thurs May 7th

Week 14: Back to the Borderlands

- Khachig Tololyan, “Rethinking Diaspora(s): Stateless Power in the Transnational Moment,” pp. 3-36
- Gloria Anzaldúa, Borderlands/La Frontera: pp. 216-217

Final Research Essays Due Monday, May 11th