Border Ethnographies: The U.S. - Mexico Borderlands.
Ethnic Studies 289:

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This is a course about exploring and doing ethnographies of the U.S. Mexico Border. Ethnography has long been a principal mechanism in representing and interpreting life on the border, yet this has often been isolated as a form of “community study” or focused on the transnational processes that bypass the border and its places. Our principle objective will be to explore ethnography and social interpretation that aims at capturing the complex social-cultural texture and arenas of life on the US-Mexico border-line. The paradox of a “first” world state (the U.S.) buttressed against/on Mexico illustrates and imposes structural (national) hierarchies in the economic, political (often imperial), and social-cultural. In addition to the national narrative, hierarchy is also played out in local and regional expressions of power, inequality, stratification, race, social process and culture. Ethnography provides a specific tool to expose and investigate this social reality from the perspective of border people and border sites.

Although our principal objective is understanding and interpreting this border (land), a central tenet here is to identify and interrogate specific sites that spill into divergent realities on both sides of the geo-political line. Our goal here will be a critical reading of the ethnographic, in an effort to reveal and construct relevant methodologies that capture the fluidity and multi-sited nature of this border. This reading will include both literature about the ethnographic and actual ethnographies, film and music. The task here is to attempt new imaginations of this particular border, and multi-sited explorations of the ethnographic.

Requirements for the Course: This is a seminar in which reading and discussion are the basis of our exploration. All participants are expected to be prepared each class period to discuss the assigned readings.

Course Assignments:
1) Reading response papers. For each week’s assigned reading, class participants will write a response paper not to exceed two pages (double-spaced with one inch margins). These assignments are to be handed in at the end of each class on the day that reading is scheduled for discussion. Late papers will not be accepted.

2) Term Paper. Each student will be required to undertake a research project and to identify specific readings and other non-assigned material that adds to our exploration of the ethnographic on the Border. You are responsible for a term paper of about 15 pages in length on a topic that is pertinent to the ethnography of the border. The paper is due on the final day of class Thursday June 5.
Schedule of Classes

April 3- Introduction- Ethnography and the U.S. Mexico Border.
   Film: Chulas Fronteras

          Heyman and Campbell 2004; Vila 2003 (Border Ethnographies) pp.- ix- xxxiii; Gille,
          Film: New World Border

April 17- Maquiladoras: Reading: Fernandez-Kelly 1983
          Film: Señorita Extraviada

April 24- Gender, Identity, and Space: Reading: Vila 2003: 1- 182
          Film: The Border Part I

May 1- Border Control, Activism: Reading: Vila 2003: 182- 343
          Film: The Border Part II

May 8- Music and Class: Reading: Edborg 2004:
          Peña 1996- From Ranchero to Jaitón Ethnicity and Class in Texas-Mexican Music
          Musical tidbits
          Film: (partial screening) Una Vida de Peligros

May 15- Cultural Poetics: Reading: Flores 2002
          Jose Limon TBA
          Film: Lone Star

May 22- Nationalism, identity and the local: Reading: Klein 1997
          Film: Ballad of an Unsung Hero.

May 29- Nation and State. Reading: Donnan and Wilson 1999; Lugo 2000; Grimson and Vila
        2003

June 5- Term Papers due. Reading: TBA – Class Selection:

Required Texts:
Donnan, Hastings and Thomas M. Wilson
Edberg, Mark
Fernandez-Kelly, Patricia
   1983 For We Are Sold, I and My People. Women and Industry in Mexico’s Frontier.
Flores, Richard R.
   2002 Remembering the Alamo: Memory, Modernity and the Master Symbol.
Klein, Alan M.
Vila, Pablo

**Required Readings** (all readings are on PDF files and will be made available by Dr. Alvarez)

Alvarez, Robert R.

Cunningham, Hillary

Kearney, Michael

Mintz, Sidney

Heyman, Josiah McC. and Howard Campbell

Lugo, Alejandro
2000 Theorizing Border Inspections. Cultural Dynamics 12(3) 353-373

Gille, Zsuza and Sean O. Riain

Grimon, Alejandro and Pablo Vila

**Films**
*Chulas Fronteras*
*New World Border*
*Ballad of an Unsung Hero*
*The Border (part 1 and 2)*
*Lone Star*
*Señorita Extraviada*
*Ballad of Gregorio Cortez*

**Recommended Texts**

Cook, Scott
College Station: Texas A & M