

Narratives of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands Syllabus

Charles Tatum, Emeritus Professor of Spanish, The University of Arizona

Required Reading

Tom Miller. *Writing on the Edge. A Borderlands Reader* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2003, or any later edition)

Luis Alberto Urrea. *The Devil's Highway. A True Story*. (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2005, or any later edition)

Selections from the following PDFs are available on the course website:
Herencia PDF, Canícula PDF, Border Readings PDF, Almanac of the Dead PDF

Session One (October 3)

Introduction and course overview (see attached description)

Early Narratives of the Borderlands

Readings:

Herencia PDF: Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca. *The Account* (35-39); Fray Marcos de Niza. *Discovery of the Seven Cities of Cibola* (39-46); Juan Nepomuceno Seguin. *Personal Memoirs* (106-109); Francisco P. Ramirez. Editorials (109-111); Juan Nepomucena Cortina. *Proclamation* (112-115); Aurora Lucero White. "Plea for the Spanish Language" (139-142); P.G. "The Spanish Language: A Plea to the Hispanic Legislators" (139-142); Jovita Idar. "For Our Race: Preservation of Nationalism. We Should Work" (142-145)

Session Two (October 10)

The Borderlands in Mexican Narratives

Readings:

Herencia PDF: Anonymous. "Joaquín Murieta," "The Ballad of Gregorio Cortez (115-120); Daniel Venegas. *The Adventures of Don Chipote* (367-372); Anonymous. "The Dishwasher" and "The Deportee" (379-385)

Border Readings PDF: *Ringside to a Revolution*

Writing on the Edge: Mariano Azuela. *The Underdogs* (161-162); José Vasconcelos. *A Mexican Ulysses* (179-183); Agustín Yáñez. *The Edge of the Storm* ((255-258); Brianda Domecq. "Two Faces, One Reality" (109-112); Ricardo Aguilar Melantzón. "Cloister" (201-207); Miguel Méndez. *Peregrinos de Aztlán* (17-20)

Session Three (October 17)

Living on the Border Narratives (Part I)

Readings:

Canícula PDF: Norma Cantú. *Canícula*; Alberto Alvaro Ríos. *Capirotada*; Richard Yáñez. "Desert Vista"

Writing on the Edge: Gloria López Stafford. *The Trouble with English* (83-86); Gloria Anzaldúa. "To Live in the Borderlands. This Means You" (91-92); Benjamin Alire Saenz. "Journeys-El Paso Juárez" (97-98); Pat Mora. "Legal Alien" (103)

Session Four (October 24)

Living on the Border Narratives (Part II)

Readings:

Border Readings PDF: Sergio Troncoso's *Borders. Personal Essays*: "Literature and Migration" (5-10); "Latinos Find an America on the Border of Acceptance" (75-79); "This Mixed Patch of Dust" (125-138); "Finding Our Voice: From Literacy to Literature" (169-193); *New Border Voices: An Anthology*: Rolando Hinojosa-Smith. "The Writer's Sense of Place" (16-21); René Saldaña, Jr. "Popeye Was an American Citizen and So Am I" (178-181);

Canícula PDF: Sandra Cisneros. "Woman Hollering Creek"; Helena María Viramontes. "The Cariboo Café"

Border Readings PDF: *A Decade of Young corridistas*

Session Five (October 31)

Immigration Narratives

Readings:

Luis Alberto Urrea. *The Devil's Highway. A True Story*

Writing on the Edge: Víctor Ochoa. *Border Dictionary/Diccionario Fronterizo* (141-144); Alicia Gaspar de Alba. "La Frontera" (232); Oscar Martínez. "La frontera" (233-234); Luis Spota. *Murieron a mitad del Río* (128-133)

Almanac of the Dead PDF

Narratives of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands

Charles Tatum

The U.S.-Mexico borderlands that extend from Chula Vista/Tijuana on the West Coast to Brownsville/Matamoros on the Gulf Coast for over four hundred years have been the focus of numerous Spanish, Mexican, Mexican American, Native American and Anglo American writers and artists. Beginning in the sixteenth century, Alvar Núñez Cabeza Vaca, the Spanish explorer, published an account of his seven-year trek across Texas, New Mexico, and northern Mexico. Since then, writers—and more recently, filmmakers, photographers, musicians, and others--have created narratives about this geographic area's diverse cultural, social, linguistic, demographic, and geopolitical dimensions. The establishment of the U.S.-Mexico border in the mid-nineteenth century greatly intensified the tension between the two countries, a development that is amply reflected in the works of those who resided on both sides of this international line of demarcation. On the U.S. side there was a concerted effort to defend the culture and status of thousands of new citizens of Mexican descent mainly through the publication of hundreds of Spanish-language newspapers, a few of which are still being published today. Poetry, short stories, and essays by dozens of writers appeared in these newspapers. The burgeoning of a vigorous oral tradition in the form of *corridos* (ballads) also reflected the fraught status of

Mexican Americans as well immigrants from Mexico. Mexican and Mexican American writers, filmmakers, musicians, and other artists have continued to explore the complex dynamic that has characterized the U.S.-Mexico borderlands.

This course will include a few representative narratives from earlier periods but will focus on Mexican, Mexican American, and Native American narrative fiction and non-fiction, poetry, film, and music, for the past two decades. A few contemporary writers whose works we will read include Sandra Cisneros, Leslie Marmon Silko, Luis Alberto Urrea, Alvaro “Tito” Ríos (Arizona’s first poet laureate), and Norma Cantú. All selections will be in the original English or in translation.

Charles Tatum is Emeritus Professor of Spanish at The University of Arizona. He served as dean of the College of Humanities from 1993-2008. Tatum has published several books including *Chicano Literature* (1982), *Chicano Popular Culture* (2001, revised 2017), *Chicano and Chicana Literature: Otra voz del pueblo* (2006), and *Lowriders in Chicano Culture: From Low to Slow to Show* (2011). He co-authored with Harold E. Hinds, Jr. *Not Just for Children: The Mexican Comic Book in the Late 1960s and 1970s* (1992). Tatum and Hinds are co-founding editors of the journal, *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture*. Tatum has edited or co-edited several anthologies on Mexican American literature and popular culture. He served as editor for a 3-volume *Encyclopedia of Latino Culture* that was published in November 2013. Tatum retired from The University of Arizona in May 2014. He continues to serve as a founding member of the Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage Project that is housed at the University of Houston.