History 350 - American Immigration: Newcomers and Gatekeepers

This new course examines a burning issue of our time through historical analysis of immigrant experience, immigration policy, and nativist movements for immigration restriction since 1840. We will analyze and compare immigrants’ opportunities and struggles in relation to other racial-ethnic groups in America. These dramas, large and small, will be understood within the context of U.S. and world capitalism, imperialism, and communism. We will examine changing cultural assumptions about what constitutes American national identity, who merits citizenship, and who belongs in the circle of “We the People.”

The United States has been compared to a melting pot that compels drastic transformation of immigrants, even as it offers freedom and social mobility. Recent scholars and immigrant rights advocates have stressed how the U.S. has persistently been defined by colonialism, empire, and “race making,” a process of admitting “foreigners” that dramatically favors white people of European descent over peoples of color. At least since World War II, in popular culture and official commemoration, the nation has been compared to a salad bowl that allows for cultural identities even as it demands national allegiance and adherence to common ideals.

More ideallyistically, the U.S. is a mosaic of separate ethnicities, a mestizo nation that blends and mixes traditions.

At times in different contexts, these metaphors served to illuminate human experience and power, and at others they served to obscure uncomfortable truths about hierarchy, inequality, and exclusion. As you will discover, we inhabit a nation continually and profoundly at odds with itself over fundamental questions: Does immigration threaten national decline or promise national renewal? To ensure the latter, who should be admitted and on what terms?

The first part of the course examines U.S. territorial conquest and immigration in the first 130 years of the Republic, especially the “Great Wave” of mass immigration from 1870 to 1924.

At that point the government sharply limited immigration, especially from nations thought to be sending “inferior” peoples, not only Asian countries that already were subject to exclusion, but people from Southern and Eastern Europe.

The years 1924-1952 are defined by processes of assimilation and Americanization, but also continued subordination and confinement: internment in the case of Japanese Americans; mass deportation in the case of Mexican Americans.

Starting in the 1960s, we see a process of liberalization and wider acceptance of a “plural” American identity, together with a system that rewarded newcomers with valuable skills or facilitated family unity. But that had sharp limits. We will look at the genesis and profound impact of the immigration reform Act of 1965.
The subsequent period, 1965-2020, constitutes a second Great Wave of newcomers. Many of the “gatekeeping” debates about whom and how many people should be allowed into the United States are strikingly similar if you compare the two “waves” of greatest immigration -- 1890-1924 and 1986-2019. Yet we also see some profound differences, not only in the composition and origins of the newcomers, and not only in the extent of globalization and possibilities for “bi-national” or “trans-national” life, but also in the acceptable terms of debate and the complexity of the state apparatus of gatekeeping.

Here are most of the themes that inform this course. The meaning of all these terms should become familiar to you in the course of the first half of the semester. Theories can quickly become jargon heavy! But clear understanding of analytical concepts is essential to any kind of explanation – as long as the concepts help explain change by organizing evidence. Your reports and your final research project comparing specific issues in both “waves” will use these concepts to help you focus on something manageable.

**Ethnic Politics, Ethnic Coalitions**
**Migration Decisions: Changing International Economy, Political Repression, Kinship and Communications Networks**
**Individualism and Community-- Competing Claims**
**Women’s Roles, Women’s Freedoms**
**Marriage, Marital Choice, and Intermarriage**
**Family and Kinship Survival Strategies**
**First Generation, Second-Generation, Third-Generation, 1.5 Generation-- Old World Parents, New World Kids**
**Cultural Retention and Cultural Change**
**Ascriptive Identity (Oppression, “Race Making,” Colonialism) and Forging New Panethnic Affinities and Identities (Culture, Politics, Choices)**
**Transnational Migration: Global Diasporas, Transnational Villages, and Return Migrants**
**Transnational Politics (such as support for Israel or Irish Independence)**
**Race Making and White Assimilation-- Working toward Whiteness**
**White Backlash against “Identity Politics” – Common Features**
**Nativism and Immigration Policy – The Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion**
**Refugees and Human Rights, the Undocumented, the Unauthorized, Deportation**
**Life in the Cracks, Between Aspiration and Official Policies**
**Economic Class, Work, and Social Mobility**

**Some Guidelines for Civil Democratic Debate in an “Uncivil” Time:** Though the vast majority of what we study precedes the year of your birth, these issues are sharply debated today. Congress has failed for the last 20 years to reach a compromise on comprehensive immigration reform, and the current Administration profits from and stimulates popular opposition to many forms of immigration and refugee resettlement. So I offer these guidelines, and I will ask the class for your input on others I may have missed:

1. **When examining past actors, it is most important first to “take historical perspective”** before we render judgments that make us feel better about our morality or wisdom. Everyone is largely shaped by their culture and their personal history. Only if we fully understand them can we hold them accountable for actions, and understand the range of actually choices before them. Historical understanding involves a leap of imagination and an attempt to step outside our comfortable assumptions. *Our* past was in fact *their* future – they knew as much about today’s past as we know about what the world will look like in 2120.

2. **Listen-to-understand and express your views, in equal measure.** Students have different styles of speaking and thinking. Talkers and listeners constitute distinct personality types. Quite often I see more than a few listeners who are in fact more thoughtful and better prepared than talkers, who feel much more comfortable and free expressing themselves before they have figured everything out. Exercise empathy and accord respect for differing interpretations. But stick to your convictions when warranted, and above all, make sure you have command of relevant evidence and are open to changing your views.
Learning Goals for History: Thinking in Time – Consult these for LG references --
https://his.uncg.edu/undergraduate/learninggoals.html

HIS 350 Student Learning Outcomes
Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to:
Analyze competing and changing interpretations of immigration, assimilation, and “race making” since 1840.
[LG2 Analysis]
Describe and explain the significant changes and continuities in immigration and immigration policy as newcomers from vastly different countries arrived in America, and as gatekeepers developed increasingly elaborate laws and enforcement agencies. [LG1 Comprehension]
Evaluate and report on the main ideas and key pieces of evidence in both primary (original to the historical actors) and secondary sources (scholarship and after-the-fact popular writing and film) [LG2]
Pose a focused comparative question and answer it regarding two groups or events in two eras (19th–early 20th century and Late 20th Century–Present. [LG3 Research; LG4 Interpretation].

This course has been developed with generous support from the UNCG Undergraduate Research and Creativity Office and the Andrew Mellon Foundation. Dr. Jackson is a URSCO Faculty Fellow for 2019–2020. Final part of the course will involve guided collaborative student research into comparisons of past and present.

Assignments and Evaluation

Required Readings (Available in Campus Bookstore and from Online Sellers)
Assortment of curated primary sources and scholarly articles and book chapters, both required and optional (for student reports).

Graded Assignments:
Class participation (20%)
Discussion Posts (25%)
Primary source analysis and oral presentation – Individual Deadlines and Sign Ups (15%)
Secondary source analysis and oral presentation – Individual Deadlines and Sign Ups (15%) NOTA BENE: One of these presentations and reports is due before spring break, and the other after. Submissions for each are dated the last day of class in Canvas.
Final project, research paper that answers a question (25%).

A note on written work: This class has no quizzes, midterms, or final examinations. It does have “formative assessment” assignments along the way, which are mainly semi-formal writing exercises in response to specific questions. It also has two short and one longer formal writing assignments requiring in-depth inquiry. Reading, viewing, listening, writing, and speaking are all essential and organically part of historical thinking. See guidelines and rubrics. Remember basic rules of writing: complete sentences, good word choice, appropriate use of quotation marks, paragraphs that have controlling ideas and some development. Format: 10, 11, or 12 pt., Times New Roman or equivalent, double spaced, with no greater than 1” margins, and Word Count. All formal writing should have a thoughtful Title, your name at the top of each page, and appropriate citations in Chicago Manual of Style 17th, or Turabian, style, in footnotes or endnotes.

I. Class participation (20%): Regular and punctual attendance is required. More than 3 absences for whatever reason will affect your grade. I evaluate the clarity and pertinence of your comments and questions. Quality is as important as quantity of expression. Stay on topic and respond to your peers or me. Preparation, active speaking, cooperation, and respectful debate, are essential. I will lecture some and show films, but will also provide a framework of questions, then orchestrate discussions, synthesize your statements, spur you all to deeper reflection.
II. Discussion Posts (25%): Generally 400 words of formal but not polished writing. Respond to any of the prompts once a week except when reporting, with thoughtful reflections supported by good examples and evidence. Your best eight will count for your grade. Late submissions will NOT count, because the whole point is to have you prepare for and contribute to class, not summarize it afterwards based on thinking others have done. This is your chance to practice writing in a less pressured way, and it is my chance to help you with your writing and do “formative” assessment along the way. It also helps me calibrate the class based on what you are and are not getting.

Guidelines: These are “thought pieces” that do not require citations, but do require page references. I’m not looking for generic descriptive summaries of the factual material, or extensive personal responses using the “I” pronoun, or wholly abstract reflections on freedom, opportunity, and oppression. I am looking for a mix of analysis and evidence, interpretive concepts and examples. Practice a skillful mix of paraphrasing various views on the one hand, and directly quoting historical actors, attending to language that simply can’t be paraphrased because it so vividly captures experience or vernacular language. Imagine your audience as one of your classmates familiar with some of the basic terms and themes, but someone who missed class, didn’t do the reading, and needs updating. I comment on these extensively to help you with writing and historical thinking, so upload as a .docx, .rtf., or .pdf file that allows for in-text comments.

NOTA BENE: One of these two next presentations and written analyses is due before spring break, and the other after. Submissions for each are dated the last day of class in Canvas. There are therefore FOUR assignment pages, but you only need to submit to the two written ones. A SIGN UP SHEET FOR EACH DAY WILL SOON BE POSTED ON CANVAS. LOOK FOR AN EMAIL FROM ME WITH A LINK.

III. One written primary source analysis 4-5 pp. and oral presentation 5 minutes with time for questions (15% -- 10% for written work and 5% for oral presentation, graded separately) INDIVIDUAL DEADLINES: You will sign up for one day and topic and source on a Google Doc sign-up sheet. I hope to select the most readable, concise, jargon free scholarship in article or chapter-length form for you. Find under “optional scholarship” often with links to Google folders. I ask each of you to inform the class of things they have not read or considered. So, again, this requires that you know the assigned readings for that day extra well -- enough to not simply repeat information that is already familiar to the class. Evaluation: These call for a skillful combination of succinct paraphrase in your words, and judicious choice of the very best quotes, contained within your own analysis and contextualization. Evaluate in terms of text, subtext, context (see rubric).

IV. One written secondary source (scholarly) analysis, 4-5 pp., and oral presentation, 5 minutes with time for questions (15%--10% for writing; 5% for speaking) INDIVIDUAL DEADLINES: I try to select the most readable, concise, jargon free scholarship in article or chapter-length form for you. Find under “optional scholarship” often with links to Google folders. I ask each of you to inform the class of things they have not read or considered. So, again, this requires that you know the assigned readings for that day extra well -- enough to not simply repeat information that is already familiar to the class.

V. Final project, research paper that answers a comparative question about each of the two “Waves”, 8-10 pp. (30% -- 5% on Working Bibliography, 5% on oral report of findings, 20% on Final Written Paper). I allow and in fact encourage collaboration among students doing research. But the body of what you write should reflect individual research in primary and secondary sources in equal measure. (There is actually some leeway here for jointly written and presented projects, and projects that are geared to public history or education. Ask me). (SEE CANVAS FOR DETAILED INSTRUCTIONS AND RUBRICS. I EXPECT TO SUPERVISE THESE AND GUIDE YOU TO BEST RESEARCH PRACTICES.

Academic Integrity: Plagiarism is a serious offense of the academic code and is treated as such by faculty. Do your own work and clearly cite any sources you rely upon for your information. Familiarize yourself with my options and
responsibilities: http://sa.uncg.edu/handbook/academic-integritypolicy/  Conferences precede any actions. Watch: Plagiarism 2.0: Information Ethics in the Digital Age Plagiarism 2.0 Video (Beware specifically 'Patch Writing' starting at 4:30). I use “Turnitin” software, which alerts you to problems.

**Strategic Reading and Writing with a Purpose:** Expect to read about 40-60 pages per week — allow quiet time for careful preparation and focused analysis. The quality of your learning depends upon me, but probably as much or more so on how you and your peers view the class. Can you count on your fellow students’ to contribute to a common fund of insight? Are each of you willing to share, agree, and disagree with honesty? Please commit to reading, preparing, discussing, presenting, and answering weekly questions. Employ your skills of previewing, reading, highlighting, note taking, reviewing and of course, writing. Good writing consists of accurate **paraphrase**, summary, and selective quotation. I expect grammatical sentences, coherent paragraphs (each with one controlling idea), and overall essay coherence or idea development (frequently evident in good **transitions** between paragraphs).

**Class Etiquette:** This is not a class where you can sit in the back and hide behind a laptop or simply take notes and pass exams. It requires your best attention and efforts to help others sustain attention. Please do not bring food unless you have enough to share. Non-alcoholic drinks welcome. **Cell phones should be on “silent” and stowed.** Arriving late, leaving early, using computers for non-class activities, all suck energy from the class. **Laptop computers are for taking notes and referring to pdfs, and occasionally searching online information sources.** I advise you to print out the relevant sections of readings or bring paper notes to class for discussion. (I may make a class “reader” for purchase). One way or another, the common reading materials should be readily accessible and retrievable to you (cell phones don’t work for pdfs). If I see technology distracting you and your classmates, I will discuss with individuals how to lessen these distractions.

**Your UNCG account:** You must use this to get into Canvas and access the essential Google Folders and library databases. **Only email me through your Google UNCG Account or Canvas, please.** Other emails from gmail may end up in my spam folder. I ignore requests to access Google folders from non UNCG accounts.

**Email etiquette and file naming:** I try to answer emails within 24 hours of receiving them, but often do not read them until the evening. If you do not get a response, try again. Please always in the Subject line list "HIS 350," and enough information that I can know what you are asking, such as "documented excuse," or "where’s the damn source you assigned!?" All written material submitted to canvas should have your name, the course and a title, as in “Jackson_HIS350_Chinese Exclusion Analysis." That way I can in fact download them and do some digital editing without having to rename them!

**Grading Scale:**
A (93 and above), A- (90-92); B+ (87-89), B (83-86), B- (80-82); C+ (77-79), C (73-76), C- (70-72); D+ (67-69), D (63-66), D- (60-62); F (less than 60, unacceptable work).
You are entitled to timely feedback, clear criteria and explanations for my assessments.

**Class Schedule and Assignments**
(ALL questions, links, sign-up opportunities, and modifications will be on the Canvas syllabus page. Always check Canvas before preparing for class. Second half of semester still UNDER CONSTRUCTION with my Graduate Assistant—CANVAS will reflect final decisions in two weeks. This paper syllabus is set until 2/27).

1/14: Introductions
What is identity, layers and components, facets and determinants? Ascriptive, and self-made, segregation and congregation. Do you have a race? Do you have an ethnicity? Mini-lecture on “a nation of immigrants.”

1/16: Theories
Optional: Randolph Bourne, “Transnational America”
1/21: Peopling British North America
Spickard, *Almost All Aliens*, 47-62, [start “Several assumptions.”], and 72-78. [start “From Igbo . . .” but skim material in this chapter on Indians and Africans if time permits.]
Optional: Benjamin Franklin, *Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind, Peopling of Countries*, etc. (Tarrytown, NY: William Abbott, reprinted 1918)

1/23: An Anglo-American Republic or a New America?
In Class: New York, a documentary film. [Episode 2], Order and disorder, 1825-1865; on famine Irish, violent competition with Blacks, ethnic hatreds fueled by profiteers hiring scabs. VIEW in class: 24:57-41

1/28: “Free Land” and its Steep Price – Mexican and Indian Dispossession and Violence
Spickard, *Almost All Aliens*, 129-133, then skim and resume reading first full paragraph on 141-157 (you may also skim details of the Mexican-American war, but understand the legacy), 169-170, 212-218. (25pp.)
Film in Class: *Foreigners in Their Own Land* (1565-1880): The Latino Americans—10 minute segment created on conquest California, lynching of Latino prospectors, land dispossession through legal challenges.

1/30: Chinese Migrants and “The Chinese Must Go!” Popular Vigilantism and Federal Policy

2/4: The Lucky Ones? Northern Europeans, Social Capital, and the Class System
Spickard, *Almost All Aliens*, 115-121, 171-184, 228-233. (22 pp.)
Carnegie, Andrew. *Autobiography of Andrew Carnegie*. Boston, 1920, excerpts on his rise to success. What is the common element in each episode in his advancement toward wealth and independence?
Carnegie, Andrew. *Triumphant Democracy; or, Fifty Years’ March of the Republic.*, New York, 1887, 18-22, on limitless opportunity.

2/6: Italians and Greeks
Spickard, *Almost All Aliens*, 184-190, 246-250 (Whiteness several colors) (10 pp).

2/11: Gender and the Second Generation
Spickard, *Almost All Aliens*, 233-238 (Gender), 293-297 (Second and Third Generations).


**Optional Primary Source:** Jane Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull House*, excerpts on second generation.

---

2/13: Jews and Polish Catholics

Spickard, *Almost All Aliens*, 111-114, 192-204, 287-289. (16 pp.)

Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives*, “the Sweaters of Jewtown.”


---

2/18: Overseas Empire and Colonial Labor – Filipinos, Hawaiians, Puerto Ricans


---

2/20: Eugenics and Restriction: The Nadir of Racial Nativism in the 1920s


---

2/25: Human Rights (1) Mexican American Deportation in the 1930s


John C. Box, Rep. TX, “Restriction of Mexican Immigration,” Speech to Key Men of America, Jan 19, 1928, in *Congressional Record* (Feb 9, 1928), 2817-2818.


---


---

Spring break – Think about what comparative themes or issues you want to take on in the “past and present” final research project.

---

3/10: Hot War, Cold War -- World War II, Anti-Communism, and the Beginnings of Reform


Franklin D Roosevelt argues for the end to Chinese exclusion. Canaday book chapter on INS war on Communists and homosexuals. Cuban-Americans and the flight from Fidel. The rationale for skill preferences and family reunification.
3/12: The Hart-Celler Immigration Act of 1965: Was It Egalitarian? For Whom?  

3/17: War Refugees – Vietnamese and Other Southeast Asians  
Viet Than Nguyen; Le Lie Haislip; Oral histories from Santoli, *New Americans*

3/19: Koreans, Chinese, South Asians, and the “Model Minority” Story  

3/24: Esta Fruta es Producto del Trabajo de los Inmigrantes: Mexicans, Cubans, Caribbean Migrants  

3/26: Trans-border Identities and International Politics  
Israel, Ireland, Bosnia, Dominican Republic

3/31: A New Mean Season: White Identity and Immigration Restriction in the 1990s  

4/2: 9/11, The USA PATRIOT Act, and Newcomers from Arab and Islamic Places  

4/7: The New Transnational Knowledge Elite – And the New Vulnerable Working Class  

4/9: Walls and Mirrors: The Contested Border and the New Latinx Politics  

4/13: 6 PM Working Annotated Bibliography and Statement of Analytical Problem, 5%  

4/14: A Multi-Racial Democracy?  

4/16: Strategizing Research

4/21: Presentations of Findings and Working Hypotheses  
4/23: Presentations of Findings and Working Hypotheses


5/7: Final paper is due. This is a week after the final exam period, my usual deadline. You’re welcome!