



Competing Narratives and Human Security at the Border

GOVT 319–1 Credit

Spring Break Study Trip to Juárez, Mexico and El Paso, U.S.

Spring 2024 (March 3 - March 9)

29 February 2024 Draft

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[Office Hours By Appointment \(Bookings Link\)](#)

Course Description

Participants will have the opportunity to explore the causes and consequences of competing information narratives first-hand during the 2024 spring-break trip to El Paso and Ciudad Juárez. El Paso and Juárez, home to 2.5 million people, is an urban community that straddles the US-Mexico border. It is also a community that figures prominently in narratives about migration in the Americas. Participants will study the origins of migration narratives, the extent to which these narratives are empirically grounded, and how information and disinformation about the flows of humans in both directions across the border shape national and, indeed, global understandings of migration and human security.

Students will visit natural, historical, and political landmarks integral to the interconnected communities of El Paso and Ciudad Juárez. Students will also meet with representatives of governmental and non-governmental organizations, collaborate with faculty and students from institutions in Ciudad Juárez, and meet with local community members and activists working collaboratively on both sides of the Mexico-US border. Travel into Mexico is not required for participation in the 2024 spring break trip. Meaningful programming will be arranged for students who select not to cross the border.

Course Learning Outcomes

By the close of this course:

1. Students will gain firsthand knowledge of political, cultural, and socioeconomic challenges and opportunities at the US-Mexico border.
2. Students will develop expertise in how individuals and institutions are addressing challenges and opportunities at the US-Mexico border.
3. Students will sharpen their understanding of the competing information narratives around migration and how these narratives shape national as well as global understandings of migration and human security.
4. Students will develop their own policy responses to address challenges and advance opportunities at the US-Mexico border.

Enrollment

Students are responsible for verifying their enrollment in this class. Schedule adjustments should be made by the deadlines published in the Registrar calendar: <https://registrar.gmu.edu/calendars/>

Course Texts

- Martínez, Oscar J. 2018. *Ciudad Juárez: Saga of a Legendary Border City*. University of Arizona Press. (Available through the course site Blackboard Reading Packet link as well as through GMU library electronic collections)
- Course Reading Packet (Available through the course site Blackboard Reading Packet link)

- Jonathan Blitzer, “Do I Have to Come Here Injured or Dead?,” *The New Yorker*, January 28, 2024.
- Lillian Cunningham, “White Sands National Park,” Field Trip Podcast, *Washington Post*, July 12, 2023.
- Brian Elmore, “The Price of Title 42 Is the Battered Bodies of My Patients,” *The Atlantic* (blog), June 9, 2023
- Reyes Mata III and J. David Goodman, “In El Paso, Migrants with Nowhere to Go Strain a Welcoming City,” *The New York Times*, September 27, 2023.
- Pati Jinich, “On the Border, the Perfect Burrito Is a Thin, Foil-Wrapped Treasure,” *The New York Times*, November 27, 2023.
- Eli Saslow and Erin Schaff, “A Family Ranch, Swallowed Up in the Madness of the Border,” *The New York Times*, February 18, 2024.

Instructor-Student Communication

I will respond to emails within 48 hours. If I will be away from email for more than one day, I will post an announcement on the Blackboard course homepage.

Before sending an email with a class logistics question, do see if your question is addressed in one of the following (available on your Blackboard course menu):

1. Syllabus
2. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
3. Blackboard tutorials
4. Blackboard Q&A, and
5. Technology Requirements

Mason EMAIL

- Mason requires that university email be used for all course communication. I will be sending messages to your Mason email and you are responsible for making sure you have access to these messages.
- Please include “GOVT Spring Break IRTF” in your email subject heading to alert course instructors that your message relates to our class. Please sign your email with your full name.

Course Logistics

This course will meet in person during spring break. Prior to spring break students are asked to read the Martínez text. Two weeks following our return to George Mason, students will submit a 5-page policy paper on a cross-border topic of their choice.

To Access Blackboard

1. Go to <https://mymasonportal.gmu.edu>
 2. Login using your NETID and password.
 3. Select on the “Courses” tab.
 4. Select **Competing Narratives and Human Security at the Border GOVT 319 Schar, Spring Break 2024** under course listings Technical Help
- If you have difficulty with accessing Blackboard, please contact the ITS Support Center at support@gmu.edu or 703.993.8870.
 - If you have trouble with using the features in Blackboard, email courses@gmu.edu.

Course Requirements

The following requirements are designed to promote an optimal learning environment. This syllabus is a contract. Your continued enrollment in this class constitutes your acceptance of these requirements.

1. Students are required to read the syllabus.
2. Students are expected to complete assigned readings.
3. Students will complete a 5-page reflection paper.
4. During the spring break trip, students will complete daily group debriefs and reflections (discussion-based).
5. Accommodation for missed or late assignments may be granted only following office hours discussion with the instructor. Students can schedule office hours appointments through the instructor's [MS Bookings](#) link. An accommodation may be extended only if students have proper documentation that can be verified. If you anticipate you will have a conflict due to medical / health care, religious holidays or travel, please inform me the first week of class. In the absence of proper documentation, late work will be assessed a 1/3 of total grade penalty for each day the assignment is late.

Student Responsibilities

Honor Code: Students must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code. The GMU Honor Code states: "Cheating and attempted cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing of academic work and related materials constitute Honor Code violations. To maintain an academic community according to these standards, students and faculty members must report all alleged violations to the Honor Committee." Students are encouraged to read the full Honor Code: <https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/> and to remain vigilant against any violation of the Code in their own work. Any cases of academic dishonesty in this course will be pursued according to the guidelines detailed in the University Catalog. **Time Conflict:** George Mason University is committed to creating a welcoming, respectful and inclusive educational environment that values diversity. Students should review the syllabus at the beginning of the term to determine if there are any conflicts between class time and religious observance. It is the student's responsibility to inform the instructor of these conflicts within the first week of the semester. <https://ulife.gmu.edu/religious-holiday-calendar/>.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the George Mason University Office of Disability Services (ODS) and inform their instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester. See: <https://ds.gmu.edu/>

Student Services

Counseling and Psychological Services: The George Mason University Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) staff consists of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors who offer a wide range of services (individual and group counseling, workshops and outreach programs) to enhance students' personal experience and academic performance. See <https://caps.gmu.edu>.

Grading, Assignment Description, and Deadlines

Assignment	Points	Description	Deadline
Reflection Paper	50	5-page reflection paper on topic of your choice	April 10
Daily Reflections	25	Evening group debriefs and discussions (not written)	
Participation	25	Active participation in study abroad programming	

Grading Scale

A+: 98-100	A: 92-97	A-: 90-91
B+: 88-89	B: 82-87	B-: 80-81
C+: 78-79	C: 72-77	C-: 70-71
D: 65-69	F: 0 - 65	

Class total scores are rounded to the nearest whole number. A score of 89.49 rounds to 89, a B+. A score of 89.50 rounds to 90, an A-.

Course Schedule / Itinerary

Week 0 (Online): Course Introduction

- Martínez, Oscar J. 2018. *Ciudad Juárez: Saga of a Legendary Border City*. University of Arizona Press.
 - (Available through the course site Blackboard Reading Packet link as well as through GMU library electronic collections)
- Articles in the Blackboard Course Reading Packet

Spring Break Trip (March 3-9)

Sunday, March 3rd | Arrival in El Paso | [Abara](#) Check-in

- Participants arrange own travel to El Paso, TX
- [Abara](#) check-in any time after 12noon
 - Abara address: 1228 Wyoming Ave, El Paso, TX 79902
 - Abara is a short ride from the airport – Uber / Lift works well
- Dinner in El Paso on your own
 - Many dining options available in downtown El Paso, a 12-minute walk from Abara

Monday, March 4th | Narrative Change | Historias del Camino

- 9:00am** Orientation + Introductions at Abara
Sami DiPasquale - Executive Director, Abara
- 9:45am** Migration Root Causes + Central American Realities
Sami DiPasquale - Executive Director, Abara
- 11:00am** Recent Border Policies
Nancy Lam - Training and Advocacy Specialist, Abara
- 12:15pm** Lunch at Abara
- 1:30pm** Border Fence, Historic Markers + La Hacienda
Sami DiPasquale - Executive Director, Abara
- 3:00pm** Historic + Current Border Realities at Sacred Heart
Michael Debruhl - Southwest Border Expert
- 4:30pm** Sacred Heart / Holy Family Shelter Visit
- 6:00pm** Return to Abara
- 6:30pm** Dinner at Abara

Tuesday, March 5th | Juárez Day | [Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez](#)

- 10:00am** Depart Abara
- 10:30am** UACJ pick us up from the bridge, host Professor [Luis Alfonso Herrera Robles](#)
- 11:00am-1pm** GMU/UACJ students meeting / presentations at the university
- 1:30-2:30pm** Instituto Municipal de Investigación y Planeación (IMIP)
- 3pm** Return to UACJ for Coffee House
- 3-4:30pm** Coffee House
- 5pm** Return to bridge

5:30pm Abara picks group up at bridge

Wednesday, March 6th | Juárez Day | Visit to [El Colef](#) and [COESPO](#)

8:30 Depart for [El Colef](#)

9:40 Welcome by Dr. Alejandro Bruges, Director of the Ciudad

Juárez Unit of El Colef and presentation of institutional video about El Colef

9:55 Presentation by Dr. Jesús Peña with the title; Irregular Migration and Human Trafficking in the United States-Mexico Border: Research, Data Collection and Intervention

10:25 Questions and comments

10:55 Presentation by Dr. Emiliano Díaz and Dr. María Inés Barrios with the title; Migratory flows and border security in the Mexico-US border (tentative)

11:25 Questions and comments

12:00 Meeting between MAPDS and GMU students

12:30 End visit to El Colef

14:30 Visit with [COESPO](#) (Program of the Chihuahua state government to address the migration crisis)

16:30 End visit to COESPO

5:00pm Return to Abara

6:30pm Dinner at Abara

Thursday, March 7th | Personal Change | Voces del Camino

8:45am Morning Coffee and Connect

9:00am Dignified Storytelling + Ethical Volunteerism

Clara Duffy - Shelter Connector + BE Facilitator, Abara

10:00am Depart for Juárez

10:30am Juárez Office

11:30am Shelter Visit

Rosa Mani - Juárez Shelter Initiatives + Microenterprise, Abara

1:30pm Panaderia Rezizte

4:00pm Immigration Law 101

Nancy Lam - Training and Advocacy Specialist, Abara

6:00pm Dinner at Abara

Friday, March 8th | Systems Change | Justicia del Camino

8:45am Morning Coffee and Connect

9:00am Border Patrol Presentation

Nicole Galvan + Victor Macias - NGO Liaisons, Border Patrol Agents

11:30am Lunch at Abara

1:00pm Border Servant Corps

3:00pm Leave for White Sands

5:15pm Debrief + Survey

6:00pm Dinner at Abara

Saturday, March 9th | Return to George Mason

- Participants arrange own travel from El Paso, TX back to George Mason

Wednesday, April 10 | 5-page Reflection Paper Due