

SOCI 2361-900 Mexican American, Latinx, & Borderlands Studies

Professor: Dr. Jennifer G. Correa

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Office: 350D Central Academic Building (CAB)

Class Meetings: Tuesdays | 2:00–3:15 p.m. | MADLA 205

Student Office Hours: Tuesdays 12:30–1:30 p.m.

Course Overview

The U.S.–Mexico borderlands are more than a dividing line—they are a living space shaped by migration, cultural exchange, conflict, and resilience. This course centers the histories and experiences of Mexican-origin communities, whose stories are often missing from mainstream narratives of the Southwest. Today, over 10 million Latinas/os live in Texas, 87% of Mexican origin, with some counties—such as Laredo and the McAllen–Edinburg–Pharr–Mission area—reaching 90–95% Mexican-origin populations and Bexar County at nearly 60%. Through an interdisciplinary lens, we will look at topics such as the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, identity and belonging, immigration, *curanderismo* (folk healing) and health, environmental challenges, and border militarization. Using scholarly readings, films, and class discussion, we will explore how history, culture, and politics intersect to shape the past, present, and future of the borderlands. Throughout the semester, students will strengthen transferable skills in critical analysis, interdisciplinary thinking, evidence-based reasoning, and written, visual, and oral communication while learning to apply course knowledge in an academic and professional settings. SOCI 2361 also serves as a foundational course in the interdisciplinary Mexican American, Latinx, and Borderlands Studies (MALBS) minor housed in the department of Sociology and Communication.

Learning Objectives

- (1) Explore the historical, cultural, social, and political–economic dimensions of the U.S.–Mexico border, centering the lived experiences and contributions of Mexican and Mexican American peoples.
- (2) Engage with diverse disciplinary perspectives—such as history, sociology, anthropology, political science, and cultural studies—to investigate the U.S.–Mexico border and its impact on Mexican and Mexican American communities.
- (3) Understand and explain the deep historical roots and complex trajectories that have shaped Mexican and Mexican American communities and the formation of the U.S.–Mexico borderlands.
- (4) Apply interdisciplinary concepts and course evidence to analyze contemporary issues affecting Mexican American, Latinx, and borderlands communities and communicate those analyses in academic and professional settings.

Major Course Themes

Theme I: Making the Borderlands

Manifest Destiny, Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, identity and belonging

Theme II: Living the Borderlands

Curanderismo, health access, healthcare, environmental challenges

Theme III: Power, Violence, and Human Rights in the Borderlands

Immigration and detention, femicide/gender-based violence, border militarization, human rights

Course Format & Student Expectations

- This hybrid course meets in person on Tuesdays, with any remaining coursework completed online independently via Blackboard. Attendance and participation are essential for success.
- Weekly class meetings emphasize discussion, collaboration, and reflection as part of active learning.
- The syllabus serves as our course roadmap and may be adjusted as needed. Any changes will be announced in class and on Blackboard.

Student Strategies for Success

- Attend and engage in every class—your presence supports learning and discussion.
- Stay current on assignments and confirm submission receipts.
- Regularly review the syllabus, personal notes, and assigned course readings.
- Ask questions—engaged learners grow the most.

Required Readings

- Students will be provided with scholarly journals and/or selected chapters via Course Content in Blackboard.

Blackboard

Grades, assignments, announcements, and course materials will be posted in Blackboard.

Course Policies & Conduct

Academic Freedom and Classroom Discussion (Student Handbook, 8.5.1 & 4.2.4)

Students are encouraged to think critically, ask questions, and engage respectfully with differing perspectives. Sociology often examines complex and contentious social issues, and students are not expected to agree with every idea discussed in class. Rather, students are expected to examine social issues using a sociological lens grounded in course materials and discussion. Under university policy, students are free to take reasoned exception to views presented in the course and withhold judgment regarding matters of opinion, but they remain responsible for learning course content and participating within the scope of the course. Student performance will be evaluated solely on academic criteria as outlined in this syllabus and university policy.

Academic Integrity & Generative AI Policy

Developing your own voice in writing, analysis, and critical thinking is central to this course. All work must be your own; unauthorized use of outside assistance, including generative AI tools such as ChatGPT, may constitute academic misconduct under university policy. When in doubt, consult with me before submitting your work.

Attendance & Communication

Consistent attendance is important to success in this course, especially because much of our learning occurs through discussion and Sociology Lab activities during class meetings. If an emergency or illness prevents attendance, communicate with me as early as possible. Use your A&M–SA email account for course communication. I typically respond to emails within 24–48 hours during weekdays. Emails sent over the weekend may receive responses the following Monday.

Late Work & Assignment Submission

Late work is generally not accepted unless advance notice and valid justification are provided. Students are responsible for confirming successful Blackboard submissions. Blank, incorrect, or unreadable files may receive a zero. If you are struggling with deadlines or course expectations, communicate early so we can discuss possible options.

A&M–SA Student Resources

Disability Support Services

Texas A&M University–San Antonio is committed to equitable access for all students. Students with disabilities or learning barriers may be eligible for accommodations and are encouraged to contact Disability Support Services early in the semester.

Location: CAB 210 | [DSS Email](#) | Phone: (210) 784-1335.

Jaguar Writing Center

The Writing Center provides free support for writing, presentations, reading strategies, and academic skills.

Location: CAB 208 | [Jaguar Writing Center Email](#) | Phone: (210) 784-1332.

Course Grade Assignments (At a Glance)

Assignments	Brief Description	Points
Essay Exam 1	Traditional holistic essay questions based on course readings	40 pts
Essay Exam 2	“Professional Application Analysis” exam addressing one example scenario, informed by course readings	40 pts
Concept Memo	Typed + verbal discussion of a key concept from assigned reading	20pts
Thematic Analysis Map	Visual + verbal analytical explanation of two themes from a course reading & New York Times article	60 pts
Participation	Consistent attendance and meaningful engagement with course readings, discussion, and activities.	20 pts
Total Points		180 pts

Grading Scale: Points to Letter Grades

162 – 180 = A

144 – 161.5 = B

126 – 143.5 = C

108 – 125.5 = D

Below 108 = F

Course Grade Assignments (Detailed)

Essay Exams 1 & 2

The course includes two essay exams designed to assess different dimensions of your learning. Exam 1 focuses on your understanding and analysis of key concepts, evidence, and historical contexts from the first half of the course. Exam 2 builds on these skills through a professional application exercise in which you use course knowledge to analyze a real-world scenario and develop a reasoned response or recommendation. Students may use the [American Sociological Association’s \(ASA\) citation style](#) or the recognized citation style of their major discipline. Whichever style is selected should be used consistently.

Exam 1 (Critical Analysis & Reasoning Skills) (40 pts)

Exam 1 may consist of four holistic essay questions (100-word minimum response for each numbered question). You will apply any important related concepts, evidence, and historical contexts from Weeks 1–5 readings. Given the nature of the exam, grading and feedback may take up to two weeks.

Exam 1 Grading Criteria (10 pts for each numbered question)

- a) Conceptual Understanding: Clearly demonstrate knowledge of a key concept or theoretical framework from the readings. – 2 pts
- b) Analysis: Apply and interpret the concept using evidence and insight from assigned materials. – 4 pts
- c) Communication: Organize your response with logical flow, clear grammar, and strong structure. – 2 pts
- d) Requirements: Meets at minimum the 100-word count (per question), uses proper formatting, and is submitted by the deadline. – 2 pts

Exam 2: Professional Application Analysis (Analytical & Application Skills) (40 pts)

Instructions: In this exam, you will step into a real-world professional role and respond to a specific scenario affecting Mexican American and Latinx communities in the U.S.–Mexico borderlands. You will apply any important related concepts, evidence, and historical contexts from Weeks 6–10 readings to explain the situation and recommend solutions. Read each scenario closely and choose only one scenario. Using at least two course readings, respond to the corresponding question prompts by applying any relevant course concepts, historical knowledge, and sociological analysis. Given the nature of the exam, grading and feedback may take up to two weeks.

Scenario 1 – Immigration Policy and Detention

You are a consulting expert advising a state lawmaker about immigration detention in Texas. Some people say that detention centers and private prisons bring jobs to communities; others say they violate human rights and cost too much.

Answer these question prompts:

1. Using Patler & Golash-Boza and one other assigned course reading, explain how U.S. immigration policies, detention centers, and profit-making are connected.
2. Suggest one approach to immigration that could keep communities safe but cause less harm to immigrant families.

Scenario 2 – Stopping Violence Against Women

You run a non-profit organization in El Paso–Ciudad Juárez that helps families affected by femicide (the killing of women because they are women). You're applying for a grant and need to explain the problem and what should be done.

Answer these questions:

1. Using Afifi and one other assigned course reading, explain how femicide in border cities is linked to bigger issues like unfair labor conditions, border militarization, and lack of justice for victims.
2. Suggest one way your organization could help prevent this violence and support families seeking justice.

Exam 2 Grading Criteria (40 pts total)

- a) Understanding of scenario: Demonstrate competence of the example scenario – 10 pts
- b) Sociological Analysis: Uses concept(s)/theoretical framework(s) in readings to address prompts – 10 pts
- c) Sociological Conclusion & Recommendation: Makes meaningful connections between the scenario and broader systems, structures, or inequalities and provides a reasoned response or recommendation – 10 pts
- d) Communication: organized, clear writing, correct grammar, & professional tone – 5 pts
- e) Requirements: meets at minimum the 400-word count, proper formatting, submitted on time – 5 pts

Concept Memo (Synthesis & Communication Skills) (20 pts)

Purpose: Breaking Down Big Ideas – You’ve been engaging with complex ideas in this course. This memo asks you to choose one key idea or concept from an assigned reading and unpack it — what it means, why it matters, and how it connects to broader social patterns. You’re practicing an important professional skill: translating complex academic ideas into clear, accessible language while highlighting the sociological significance of the concept. **What to Do:** 1. Choose a concept from an assigned reading (e.g., *border militarization*, *human rights*, *abrogation*); 2. Break it down: Explain the concept in plain language, step by step; 3. Contextualize it: Use examples from the reading (and your own words) to illustrate how it works in real life; 4. Make the sociological connection: What larger systems, power structures, or inequalities does this concept reveal? Why is it relevant to understanding the Mexican American/Latino/a experience or border issues today? 5. Present concept to your peers by breaking down a big idea (or concept) into accessible language. Submit typed analytic memo via Blackboard by noted deadline. Concept Memo options & deadline are noted in Course Schedule – memo must be over an upcoming reading, not yet lectured on. If a guest speaker is scheduled on the day of your discussion, it will be rescheduled for the following week.

Concept Memo Grading Criteria (20 pts)

1. Identification of key concept – 5 pts
2. Explanation of concept via use of example(s) from reading – 5 pts
3. Sociological significance – 5 pts
4. Requirements: clear organization, length (150-word minimum), & communication – 5 pts

Thematic Analysis Map (Analysis, Information-Literacy, Mapping Skills) (60 pts)

For your final project, you will work individually to create and present a Thematic Map using Canva. This is your chance to dig deep into our course materials, connect them with a *real-world* example from the *New York Times*, and then visually map out the connections you find. A thematic analysis is a way of spotting patterns, connections, and underlying ideas in what we read. Your thematic analysis will consist of the following: (a) Identify a theme from one of our course readings; (b) Identify a related theme from one New York Times article; (c) Analyze how they connect, differ, or complicate each other; (d) Explain why this connection matters sociologically—especially in relation to Mexican American and Latinx communities; (e) Turn your findings into a visual thematic map that presents this story clearly and creatively. Students may select any assigned course reading and connect it thematically to a New York Times article. See the grading criteria below.

Thematic Analysis Map Grading Criteria (60 pts)

1. Identify two themes: one from course assigned reading/one from NYT (*the what*) – 12 pts
2. Analyze and explain the link between the two themes (*the how*) – 12 pts
3. Discuss the sociological relevance or importance (*the why*) – 12 pts
4. Thematic map presentation (communication, organization, etc.) – 12 pts
5. Follow the instructions and submit by deadline. – 12 pts

Getting Started on Thematic Analysis Map

Step 1 – Access the New York Times

As A&M–SA students, you have free NYT access:

1. Go to the A&M–SA Homepage → search “Library.”
2. Scroll down and click “Databases by Type.”
3. Click “Newspapers” from the list.
4. Select the letter “N.”
5. Choose “New York Times All Access Digital Pass (The New York Times Company).”
6. Log in with your university username and password.
7. Follow the instructions to register your free NYT account.

Step 2 – Theme Brainstorming

You should:

- Pick one key theme from a course reading.
- Pick one related theme from a NYT article (you can choose any article that connects in some way—historically, culturally, socially).
- Look for links—do they highlight similar struggles? Opposing viewpoints? Generational shifts? Intersectional factors?

Step 3 – Building the Map

Your Thematic Map should:

- Clearly label both themes.
- Show how they connect (similarities, differences, nuances).
- Include short explanatory notes for context.
- Be visually clear and engaging – color, spacing, and structure matter!

Participation (Active Listening, Civic Awareness, Communication Skills) – 20 pts

Participation is based on consistent attendance, preparation, and meaningful engagement throughout the semester. Students are expected to complete assigned readings and course materials, listen actively to others, contribute relevant ideas or questions, and make connections between course content, contemporary issues, and the lived experiences of Mexican American, Latinx, and borderlands communities. Participation may include class discussion, collaborative activities, reflection, and other forms of active learning. Your grade is based on both the consistency and quality of engagement, not simply how often you speak. Attendance is necessary for participation, but attendance alone does not constitute active participation.

Participation Assessment Criteria:

- a.) High Participation = 20 pts Consistently attends class prepared and actively engages in meaningful discussion and course activities. Contributions demonstrate familiarity with assigned materials, make thoughtful connections to course concepts, evidence, or contemporary issues, and help advance class discussion. The student also demonstrates active listening and respectful engagement with others' perspectives.
- b.) Moderate Participation = 15 pts Regularly attends class and periodically contributes to discussion and course activities. Contributions are generally relevant to assigned materials and course themes, although engagement may be less consistent or developed throughout the semester.
- c.) Low Participation = 10 pts Attendance and/or engagement is inconsistent. The student seldom contributes to discussion or course activities, asks questions, or demonstrates meaningful connections to assigned materials and course themes.
- d.) No Participation = 0 pts The student does not meaningfully participate in course discussions or activities or demonstrate sustained engagement with assigned materials throughout the semester.

Course Schedule: Readings, Exams, & Due Dates

WEEK 1

Course Introduction

August 25, Tuesday (In-Class Meeting 2–3:15 p.m.)

- Course Introduction
- Read via Blackboard Course Content: Richard Griswold del Castillo's "Manifest Destiny," pp. 31-43.

August 27, Thursday (Independent Coursework)

- Read via Blackboard Course Content: John L. Sullivan "The Manifest Destiny," pp. 1-3.
- Watch discussion on "[Where did the term Manifest Destiny come from?](#)"

WEEK 2

Manifest Destiny | Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo

September 1, Tuesday (In-Class Meeting 2–3:15 p.m.)

- Lecture highlights and guided discussion over Griswold del Castillo & Sullivan readings.
- Concept Memo Discussants: Up to 3 students @ 3 minutes each over Griswold del Castillo OR Sullivan.
- Read via Blackboard Course Content: Pablo Vila's "Constructing Social Identities in Transnational Contexts: The Case of the Mexico–US Border," pp. 75-87.

September 3, Thursday (Independent Coursework)

- Watch discussion on "[Living in Dual Cultures on the U.S/Mexico Border](#)."

WEEK 3

Identity Formation on U.S.-Mexico Border

September 8, Tuesday (In-Class Meeting 2–3:15 p.m.)

- Lecture highlights and guided discussion over Vila reading.
- Concept Memo Discussants: Up to 3 students @ 3 minutes each over Vila.
- Read via Blackboard Course Content: Rebecca Lopez's "Use of Alternative Medicine by Mexican American Women," pp. 1-9 & Maritza Tafur et al. "A Review of Curanderismo and Healing Practices among Mexican and Mexican Americans," pp. 1-8.

September 10, Thursday (Independent Coursework)

- Watch discussion on "[Curanderas: Awakening the Spirit](#)."

WEEK 4

Spirituality & Curanderismo (Folk healing)

September 15, Tuesday (In-Class Meeting 2–3:15 p.m.)

- Lecture highlights and guided discussion over Lopez & Tafur et al.
- Concept Memo Discussants: Up to 3 students @ 3 minutes each over either Lopez OR Tafur et al.
- Read via Blackboard Course Content: Pisani et al. "Substitution of Formal Health Care Services by Latinos/Hispanics in the US-Mexico Border Region of South Texas," pp. 885-889.

September 17, Thursday (Independent Coursework)

- Read about [Latinos in Texas Health Outcomes and other groups in the Dallas News](#) and see the report used via [The Commonwealth Fund 2026 State Health Disparities Report](#).

WEEK 5

Health & Illness/Essay Exam 1

September 22, Tuesday (In-Class Meeting 2–3:15 p.m.)

- Lecture highlights and guided discussion over Pisani et al.
- Concept Memo Discussants: Up to 3 students @ 3 minutes each over Pisani et al.
- Essay Exam 1: Questions are informed from lectures during Week 1 to Week 5 (Griswold del Castillo to Pisani et al.)

September 24, Thursday (Independent Coursework)

- Students will continue to work on Essay Exam 1.
- Read via Blackboard Course Content: Joseph M. Simpson and Jennifer G. Correa's "Abrogation of Public Trust in the Protected Lands of the Texas Lower Rio Grande Valley," pp. 1-18.

WEEK 6

Environmental Challenges/ Essay Exam 1 Due

September 29, Tuesday (In-Class Meeting 2–3:15 p.m.)

- Lecture highlights and guided discussion over Simpson and Correa.
- Concept Memo Discussants: Up to 3 students @ 3 minutes each over Simpson and Correa.
- Essay Exam 1 Due Today: Please submit Exam 1 via Blackboard in Exams & Quizzes under "Essay Exam 1 9-29-2026."
- Read via Blackboard Course Content: Walter Ewing's "Opportunity and Exclusion: A Brief History of US Immigration Policy," pp. 1-7 and Kelly Lytle Hernandez's "Mexican Immigration to the United States," pp. 25-29.

October 1, Thursday (Independent Coursework)

- Read via Blackboard Course Content: Caitlin Patler and Tanya Golash-Boza's "The Fiscal and Human Costs of Immigration Detention and Deportation in the United States," pp. 1-9.
- Watch discussion on [Who Makes Money from Private Prisons? From CNBC.](#)

WEEK 7

Brief History of Immigration & Immigrant Detention

October 6, Tuesday (In-Class Meeting 2–3:15 p.m.)

- Lecture highlights and guided discussion over Ewing, Hernandez, and Patler and Golash-Boza;
- Concept Memo Discussants: Up to 3 students @ 3 minutes each over either Ewing or Hernandez or Patler and Golash-Boza.
- Read via Blackboard Course Content: Malak Afifi's "Understanding the Racial and Political Dimensions of Femicide in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico," pp. 152-165.

October 8, Thursday (Independent Coursework)

- Read about "[Understanding the Dynamics of Femicide in Mexico.](#)"

WEEK 8

Femicides/Gender-Based Violence

October 13, Tuesday (In-Class Meeting 2–3:15 p.m.)

- Guest Expert Speaker: David J. Trevino, Immigration lawyer based in San Antonio
- Lecture highlights and guided discussion over Afifi on following Tuesday, Oct. 20th.
- Concept Memo Discussants: Up to 3 students @ 3 minutes each over Afifi (rescheduled for Oct. 20).
- Read via Blackboard Course Content: Timothy Dunn's "Border Militarization via Drug and Immigration Enforcement: Human Rights Implications," pp. 7-24.

October 15, Thursday (Independent Coursework)

- Watch documentary film (to complement Dunn) on "[The Ballad of Esequiel Hernández](#)."

WEEK 9

Militarization of U.S.-Mexico Border & Human Rights

October 20, Tuesday (In-Class Meeting 2–3:15 p.m.)

- Lecture highlights and guided discussion over Dunn and connection to documentary film "The Ballad of Esequiel Hernández."
- Concept Memo Discussants: Up to 3 students @ 3 minutes each over Dunn.

October 22, Thursday (Independent Coursework)

- No further readings assigned.

WEEK 10

Work on Thematic Map Project / Essay Exam 2

October 27, Tuesday (In-Class Meeting 2–3:15 p.m.)

- *Professor will begin guiding students with developing their Thematic Map Project ideas.
- Essay Exam 2: Questions are informed from lectures during Week 6 to Week 10 (Simpson and Correa to Dunn).

October 29, Thursday (Independent Coursework)

- Students will continue to work on Essay Exam 2.

WEEK 11

Work on Thematic Map Project/ Essay Exam 2 Due

November 3, Tuesday (In-Class Meeting 2–3:15 p.m.)

- *Professor will be guiding students with developing their Thematic Map Project ideas.
- Essay Exam 2 Due Today: Please submit Exam 2 via Blackboard in Exams & Quizzes under “Essay Exam 2 11-3-2026.”

November 5, Thursday (Independent Coursework)

- Students will continue to work on their ideas for the Thematic Map Project and come prepared to discuss them with professor next in-class meeting – November 10th, Tuesday.

WEEK 12

Work on Thematic Map Project

November 10, Tuesday (In-Class Meeting 2–3:15 p.m.)

- *Professor will be guiding students with developing their Thematic Map Project ideas.
- **Volunteers for presenters on Tuesday in-class meetings from Week 13 to Week 15 will be sought by Professor – any absent students will be automatically listed on a date that has availability.

November 12, Thursday (Independent Coursework)

- **Students will work toward finalizing their Thematic Map Project and be prepared to present them in class – November 17th, Tuesday.

WEEK 13

Thematic Map Presentations Kick-Off (Day 1)

November 17, Tuesday (In-Class Meeting 2–3:15 p.m.)

- 5 students are each scheduled to present for 10 minutes (max) – these scheduled students are to submit their presentations in Blackboard under Exams & Quizzes “Thematic Map Presentations 11-17-2026” by 11:59 p.m. deadline.

November 19, Thursday (Independent Coursework)

- Students who are scheduled for November 24th need to ensure their presentations are complete and ready to present on that date.

WEEK 14

Thematic Map Presentations Kick-Off (Day 2)

November 24, Tuesday (In-Class Meeting 2–3:15 p.m.)

- 5 students are each scheduled to present for 10 minutes (max) – these scheduled students are to submit their presentations in Blackboard under Exams & Quizzes “Thematic Map Presentations 11-24-2026” by 11:59 p.m. deadline.
- Students who are scheduled for December 1st need to ensure their presentations are complete and ready to present on that date.

November 26th – November 28th Thanksgiving Break

WEEK 15

Thematic Map Presentations Kick-Off (Day 3)

December 1, Tuesday (In-Class Meeting 2–3:15 p.m.)

- 5 students are each scheduled to present for 10 minutes (max) – these scheduled students are to submit their presentations in Blackboard under Exams & Quizzes “Thematic Map Presentations 12-1-2026” by 11:59 p.m. deadline.