Sul Ross State University

Criminal Justice 4309
Current Issues in Criminal Justice
Spring 2019

Professor: Martin Guevara Urbina, Ph.D.
Classroom: Web
Class Meeting: Online
Office: 201 (Faculty Building)
Phone: 830/703-4820 (office, direct line)
Hours: Monday and Tuesday, 12:00 to 5:00p.m. Even though this is an online course, you are welcome to visit the Professor’s office anytime.
E-mail: murbina@sulross.edu

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs):
1. Demonstrate proficiency in the application of legal concepts, theoretical applications, scientific principles, and historical trends in the criminal justice arena.

2. Demonstrate competency in the application of basic research methods, to include: research design, statistical analysis, and uses of empirical findings and interpretations.

3. Demonstrate the application of organizational principles, cultural, social and behavioral knowledge, critical thinking skills and cognitive thought processes within the criminal justice arena.

Course Description and Objective: Current Issues in Criminal Justice will offer a criminological, historical, philosophical, sociological, and theoretical analysis of the nature and scope of the ethnic and American experience over the years, focusing on various pressing historical issues, like conquest, colonialism, law, and social control, including immigration in the United States. Specifically, the intent of this course is to provide the student with a detailed understanding of 14 main topics, which are best expressed in the following questions:

1. What are the driving “forces” shaping and reshaping the ethnic experience? What are the major factors/forces governing the overall American experience?
2. How are ethnic minorities situated within America’s main institutions (e.g., education, politics, employment, health care, and media)? How have America’s main institutions impacted the everyday life of minorities, and how have ethnic and racial minorities influenced U.S. institutions?

3. In the quest for social transformation, what has changed, what has not changed, how much have things changed over the years?

4. Analyzing the historical record, from conquest to the new millennium, what are the pressing shifts, trends, and issues?

5. Considering shifting demographic trends, what’s the America of tomorrow?

6. With various social control movements currently in place, what are the primary motives behind social control, particularly immigration laws?

7. What philosophical, theoretical, and ideological forces have driven and/or continue to drive immigration laws, enforcement, and discourse in America? And, by extension, why?

8. Who has played the most significant role in “shaping” and “re-shaping” the anti-immigration movement? What is the driving force behind anti-immigration movements?

9. What influence has social control legislation played on immigration? Again, there are a series of related questions that help shape our response to the first one: What have been the main “benefits” of past social control legislation? What, if any, have been the ramifications of prior social control legislation? How do the “benefits” compare to the “negative consequence” of past legislation? What is the significance of current social control legislation, especially since immigration is currently a hotly debated issue?

10. What has been the role of immigration laws? Secondary questions include: What do advocates of anti-immigrants legislation see as its main utility and function? What do the critics see as its main weaknesses? Is there a need for strict or specific immigration control?

11. How successful have immigrant laws been in achieving intended goals? What myths surround immigration? And, what are their implications? What role has the media played in the evolution of immigration laws? What is the future of immigration laws, enforcement, and discourse?

12. What are the origins of the American police? How has policing evolved in the United States over the years? What are some of the major historical events influencing law enforcement, crime, public safety, and community relations? What role do external and internal factors play in policing?

13. What are the links between law enforcement, social control polices, and practice? What philosophical, theoretical, and ideological forces have driven and/or continue to influence policing in America? Why? Who has played the most significant role in “shaping” and “re-shaping” the police force? What is the driving force behind the police force?

14. What do advocates of law and order see as its main utility and function? What do the critics of the American police see as its main weaknesses? What role has the media played in the evolution of policing, particularly in critical areas like racial profiling, police brutality, and shootings? Is there a need for a larger police force? Is there a need for a militarized police force? How
representative is the American police force? What are the benefits of having a more diverse and representative force, at all levels of policing? What is the future of the American police?

The next set of questions is essentially definitional in nature. It is essential that we share the same definitions of issues, events, situations, or problems if we are to come to a common understanding of both the problem and any possible remedies or solutions. As such, the class’s first segment deals with defining Current Issues in Criminal Justice, as it pertains to the ethnic/racial experience in the U.S. and placing it in a global context.

The last set of questions is more analytical. A particular truism about the American experience, human behavior, criminal justice, criminological, sociological, and theoretical aspects of the nature of society is as follows: There are many typologies of criminological, sociological, and legal theories as there are authors writing textbooks about the subject.

The final question has policy overtones. First, we must briefly look at the nature and process of human behavior, in the context of American history and the U.S. criminal justice system, with a focus on safety, due process, equality, and justice, as well as civil, statutory, and constitutional rights. Next, we turn to the more difficult task of linking the ethnic (and American) experience with criminal justice policy, sociological, psychological, and criminological theory, particularly those we will review, to human behavior, legal rights, research, and practices.

Overall, this course is designed to introduce you to the twists and turns of the minority and American experience as well as the nature and dynamics of social control (i.e., immigration laws) within the context of the criminal justice system and, by extension, social interactions in a broad context and, ultimately, human behavior in the world. By introducing you to influential issues that provide the frameworks to studying a wide variety of phenomena, I intend this course to be a basis for further, more in-depth study in the areas that interest you.

**Course Context:** As an upper-level course, this class may include controversial, sensitive, and/or adult material. Students are expected to have the mentality and readiness for upper-level content and rigor.

**Course Structure:** This course will be presented in modules. Please note that the ENTIRE course will be taught online via Blackboard.

**Required Texts:**

Optional Readings:


Recommended Readings

Books:


Book Chapters:


Refereed (Peer-Reviewed) Journal Articles:


**Encyclopedia, Magazine, and Other Publications:**


Weekly Assignments: There will be ten (10) Weekly Assignments, each worth 10 points for a total of 100 points. The “Weekly Assignments” will be discussed further the first week of class. Please do NOT panic! Handouts will be posted to assist you as you prepare your weekly assignments.

Activities/Participation: Please complete the reading assignments as assigned to avoid falling behind, and, more fundamentally, to capture the essence of the class. During the semester, I will be posting a question or a statement for you to respond (100 points) and post for ALL students to read. Again, please do NOT panic! If you do the reading, you should be fine. Participation in these “exercises” will be equated into your final grade.

Reviews (Book, Article, Movie):

Required Book Review (50 points): For your Book Reviews you are asked to read and make critical judgment about one book. Here is the complete citation for the required book review:


The Book Review is limited to 3 to 5 typed pages. The logistics of the Book Reviews will be discussed in class and handouts will be provided to assist you with the writing assignments.

Article Review (50 points): An article will be provided (or posted online) your review and assessment.

Movie Review (50 points): A movie title will be provided (or posted online) for your review and assessment.

Required Project: The logistics of the project, which will be submitted as a formal paper, will be discussed in detailed during the first part of the class. Illustration: some agencies allow citizens to go in and observe. Some law enforcement agencies, for instance, allow “ride alongs.” Hence, you could arrange to participate in a series of “field” activities. At the end of the shift/session, write down what you observed. Describe how it compares with what you have learned in class (like ethnic/racial profiling or police brutality, policy implications, and consequences). For instance, based on your observations, what are the links between social control, media, age, gender, race, ethnicity, research, and practice?

Your project, which is required (100 points), will be shared with the rest of the class at the end of the semester, allowing other students to provide feedback (vis-à-vis a short reaction comments), if time allows. Papers (approximately 8 to 12 pages in length) must be typed. Late papers will not be accepted. Do not submit (post) your only copy of any paper without saving your essay in case
assignments are lost or destroyed. In effect, make sure that you have a backup copy of the latest version. Note: The project will be discussed further in class.

**Mini-project:**

This should be a fun exercise that allows you to explore (critically) some aspect of the minority or overall American experience in greater depth with less evaluation anxiety than you would have in a full-length paper assignment. I would like you to try to and choose a project that you will enjoy, and that will stimulate your thinking about the concepts covered in this course.

Mini-projects are **optional.** You will receive “extra credit” points for completing mini-projects. If your mini-project is **adequate,** you will receive one percentage point. This point(s) will be added on to your final grade at the end of the semester.

You may turn in your mini-projects any time during the semester. The projects will be of greater value if they are done thoughtfully. Thus, you may not submit more than three (3) mini-projects.

There is no minimum or maximum length requirement. Typically you will submit a three to five page typed paper as the final product of each mini-project. Some projects, however, may require longer (or shorter) write-ups. Your analysis should illustrate or explore some phenomenon relevant to the course, while knowledgeably using concepts, principles, and language in the context of *Current Issues in Criminal Justice.*

Attached to the end of the syllabus are descriptions of some mini-project options. Some of them will make more sense to you as we progress through the course. If you think of an alternative you would like to do as a mini-project, please feel free to ask me about it. Again, I am looking for you to implement class material—especially critical issues/perspectives—when describing the phenomena you choose to explore.

**Make-up Work:**

A **tentative** schedule of assignment will be provided (posted) at the beginning of the semester. However, it is possible that the schedule will be **modified** during the semester. Hence, if you fail to log on as discussed herein, it is the student’s responsibility to check with the Professor (or the Professor’s website) regularly to determine the deadlines for weekly readings, assignments, and activities. To this end, as noted above, make-up exercises will **NOT** be given, unless otherwise specified. For missed readings, weekly assignments and activities (i.e., “special circumstances”), it is the student’s responsibilities to find out what make-up work is required. If you have any difficulties getting the assignments or making the deadlines, please contact me right way.

**Note:**

Unless otherwise specified, all assignments and activities are due on the scheduled due date. **No late assignments will be accepted.**
Grades: There are a total of 450 points available in this course. Grades will be based on the total points for the semester. Specifically, grades will be assigned by comparing your performance to the best possible score (450) as follows:

- Weekly Assignments: 100 points*
- Book/Article Reviews: 150 points
- Required Project: 100 points
- Activities/Participation: 100 points**

Total: 450 points

*Tentatively, Weekly Assignments will count for 100 points. However, it is possible that the total possible points (i.e., 100) will be increased, or reduced. If increased, the TOTAL POSSIBLE points discussed herein (i.e., 450) will add to more than 450 points. If reduced, the TOTAL POSSIBLE points discussed herein (i.e., 450) will add to less than 450 points.

**Similarly, if the 100 Activities and Participation points are either increased or reduced, only the total possible points for Activities/Participation that are utilized will be equated in the final grade distribution. In such case, the TOTAL POSSIBLE points discussed herein (i.e., 450) will add to less (or more) than 450 points. Note: Mini-project points will be added to your point total at the end of the course.

Grade Distribution:

90-100% = A (Excellent)
80-89%  = B (Better than Average)
70-79%  = C (Average)
60-69%  = D (Below Average)
Below 60% = Failing

Please be aware of class expectations, rules, and University/College Policies, which follow:

Attendance Policy: This course is “Web” based. Students are expected to log-on regularly, check the calendar for due dates and respond to all emails. Thus, it is to your advantage to log-on regularly. For instance, if you do not participate, you cannot learn the discussed material. Additionally, you will not be able to discuss the assigned readings. Much of the learning in class is through discussion with other students. In the process, feel free to ask questions and/or make comments that might enhance our understanding of Current Issue in Criminal Justice. Also, do not hesitate to share experiences that may help to enhance our understanding of the nature and significance of the American experience within the context of the criminal justice system. (Please reference Sul Ross State University—Rio Grande College Catalog for additional information.)

Punctuality: It is of extreme importance that you complete the readings and writing assignments on time to avoid falling beyond. I understand that it is not possible at times, but please do not make it a routine.

Classroom etiquette: Above all, always respect yourself and others; be patient; be willing to explore new ideas (perspectives); and restrict questions and comments to the topic being discussed.
Incomplete Grades:
PLEASE AVOID INCOMPLETE GRADES. ALL ASSIGNMENTS ARE DUE ON THE DATES OUTLINED IN THE SYLLABUS. It is the responsibility of students to notify the Professor if they cannot make an assignment or will not be able to log-on to the class. Please call me at 830/758-5017 if you do not plan to participate in a class discussion question or feel you will be missing an assignment. If I do not hear from you in regards to missed assignments, I will not allow an excuse for the missed work.

Class Responsibilities and Conduct:
You will be responsible for all information posted anytime during the semester. You will be responsible for obtaining announcements or amendments you may have missed. Any student who is intentionally abusive, disruptive, or disrespectful vis-à-vis posted discussions, activities, or emails will be asked immediately amend such communication, AND possibly dropped from the course. Any student who has been asked to amend “unjustified” communication twice will be reported to the Department Chair or Academic Dean. You are expected to show respect to yourself, other students, and your Professor.

Academic Honesty (Reference Sul Ross State University—Rio Grande College Catalog):
Rio Grande College expects its students to maintain high standards of personal and academic conduct. Students who take part in academic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary action. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work, plagiarism, collusion, and the abuse of resource materials. The faculty member is responsible for initiating action for each case of academic dishonesty. Discover any academic dishonesty by a student, may be reported to the Department Chair or Academic Dean.

Disability Services:
Students who have special instructional needs because of a physical handicap or a learning disability should discuss their special needs with the office of Student Disabilities Services. You may also see the University/College Catalog for more information. Please do so before the end of the first week of class.

Drop Policy:
If you discover that you need to drop this class, you must contact the Records Office and ask for the necessary paperwork. Professors cannot drop students; this is always the responsibility of the student. The Record’s Office will give a deadline for which the paperwork and form, if required, must be returned, complete and signed. If you discover that you are still enrolled, FOLLOW-UP with the Records Office immediately. You are to attend class until the procedure is complete to avoid penalty for absence. Should you miss the deadline or fail to follow the procedure, you will receive an F in the course.

Library Services:
Library information and technology focus on research skills that prepare individuals to live and work in an information-centered society. Librarians will work with students in the development of critical reasoning, ethical use of information, and the appropriate use of secondary research techniques including: exploring information resources such as library collections and services, identify sources such as subject databases and scholarly journals, executing effective search strategies, retrieving, recording, and citing relevant results correctly, and interpreting search results and deciding whether to expand the search.
The Rio Grande College Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP):
Sul Ross State University Rio Grande College is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). As part of the reaffirmation process, SACS requires every institution to develop a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) that enhances student learning. Rio Grande College has developed a QEP called Putting Your Words to Work that requires students to write different kinds of papers and deliver oral presentations for courses in all departments. Rio Grande College is committed to enhancing students’ written and oral communication skills which means that students should be writing and speaking significantly more in courses across all departments.

To prepare for the increased number of written assignments, students should make every effort to enroll in English 3312 in their first semester at RGC. Students should expect to write and speak professionally in all courses, not just English classes. In this course, Seminar, students will write various papers and present student work to other students and the Professor, as discussed herein.

Again, I want this class to be useful to you in your future careers. As such, if I can assist you in any way, please stop by and see me or call/e-mail me. If a problem is to arise during the semester, please contact me immediately so that we can work out a solution. Do not wait until it is too late to remedy the problem.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td><strong>Lecture focus:</strong> Detail class expectations; provide a foundation for</td>
<td>The “Urbina Links” will be provided!</td>
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<td>the study of the history of the U.S. criminal justice system and related</td>
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<td>issues; &amp; provide an introduction &amp; broad overview of the subject matter:</td>
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<td>history of criminal justice.</td>
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<td>Explore “Urbina Links”:</td>
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<td>Week 2</td>
<td>“Situating the Current State of Research on Latino Police and Ethnic</td>
<td>Preface</td>
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<td>Community in Twenty-First Century America”</td>
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<td>“The Need for Latino Police Officers: A Challenge for the New Millennium”</td>
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<td><strong>Focus:</strong> Situate the current state of research on Latino officers, law</td>
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<td>enforcement, and the Latino community; and detail the need for</td>
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<td>additional Latino officers in the American police.</td>
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<td>Week 3</td>
<td>“Employment of Latino Officers by Federal, State, and Local Law</td>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
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<td>Enforcement Agencies in the United States: Emerging Trends and Issues”</td>
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<td>“Chicano Police Officers Working in the Latino Community: Diversity,</td>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
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<td>Police Culture, and Unique Perspectives and Challenges”</td>
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<td><strong>Focus:</strong> Statistically delineate the employment by race, ethnicity,</td>
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<td>and gender; and analyze emerging trends and issues in law enforcement,</td>
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<td>while situating Latino police within a broader context.</td>
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<td>Document the hiring of Latinos in law enforcement agencies across the</td>
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<td>U.S.; and detail the experience of Chicano officers working in Latino</td>
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<td>(or Mexican American) communities across the country, exploring issues</td>
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<td>like diversity, multiculturalism, language, and challenges.</td>
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<td>Week 4</td>
<td>“Latino Officers, Policy, and Practice”</td>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
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<td><strong>Focus:</strong> Explore race/ethnicity difference in policing; discuss the</td>
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<td>police and immigration; and review existing policies and practices in</td>
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<td>law enforcement.</td>
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<td>Week 5</td>
<td>“Mexican American Law Enforcement Officers: Comparing the Creation of</td>
<td>Chapter 6</td>
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<td>Change Versus the Reinforcement of Structural Hierarchies”</td>
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<td><strong>Focus:</strong> Explore major historical and contemporary forces defining,</td>
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<td>shaping, and re-shaping the dynamics of policing, including police</td>
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<td>shootings, in the United States: cultural, financial, political, legal,</td>
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<td>philosophical, ideological, and the like.</td>
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<td>Week 6</td>
<td><strong>Reflection Week</strong>:</td>
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<td><strong>Focus:</strong> “Reflection Week” is designed to give students the</td>
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<td>opportunity to reflect (think and act) on what has transpired during</td>
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<td>the first half of the semester, and, more fundamentally, how things</td>
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<td>“fits” into their broader academic career, professional life, and</td>
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<td>personal life.</td>
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<td>Week 7</td>
<td>“Bridging the Gaps and Future Research: Thinking Ahead”</td>
<td>Chapter 7</td>
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<td><strong>Focus</strong>: Analyze the fundamental of governance, equality, and justice; detail existing challenges in policing; discuss the significance of a balanced system; and provide recommendations for future research studies.</td>
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<td>Week 8</td>
<td>“Policy Recommendations: Toward a New Police Force”</td>
<td>Chapter 8</td>
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<td><strong>Focus</strong>: Detail mechanisms for bridging existing gaps in Latino policing and law enforcement across the country; and provide recommendations for a reformed police force for the twenty-first century.</td>
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<td>Week 9</td>
<td>“The Future of Latino Officers in the American Police”</td>
<td>Chapter 9</td>
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<td><strong>Focus</strong>: As the final week of class, the various topics discussed during the semester will tied together, placing them within a broader framework, while seeking to gain insight into the future of Latinos in the American police. Concluding with recommendations for the future, as we continue the discourse on policing.</td>
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<td>“Beyond the Wall: Race and Immigration Discourse”</td>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
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<td><strong>Focus</strong>: Provide a foundation for the study of immigration and related issues; &amp; provide an introduction &amp; broad overview of the subject matter: immigration laws, enforcement, and discourse.</td>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
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<td>Week 11</td>
<td>“Exposing Immigration Laws: The Legal Contours of Belonging and Exclusion”</td>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
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<td>“Divided Lines: The Politics of Immigration Control in the United States”</td>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
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<td><strong>Focus</strong>: Detail historical contours of immigration laws and examine the politics of governing immigration laws over time—drawing divided lines shaping exclusion/inclusion.</td>
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<td>Week 12</td>
<td>“Immigration, Illegality, and the Law: Governance, Equality, and Justice”</td>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
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<td>“Building America: Immigrant Labor and the U.S. Economy”</td>
<td>Chapter 6</td>
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<td><strong>Focus</strong>: Explore major historical forces defining, shaping, and re-shaping the dynamics of immigration, particularly illegality, in the U.S. (cultural, financial, political, legal, philosophical, ideological, and the like), and delineate the actualities of immigrant labor.</td>
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<td>Week 13</td>
<td>“Always Running: La Migración, Detentions, Deportations, and Human Rights”</td>
<td>Chapter 7</td>
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<td>“Challenges to Integration: The Children of Immigrants and Direct and Indirect Experiences with the Law”</td>
<td>Chapter 8</td>
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<td><strong>Focus</strong>: Document the historical realities of immigrant detention, deportations, and human rights; and investigate the challenges facing Latino children for integration.</td>
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| Week 14 | “Borders and Dreams: Immigration, Diversity, and Multiculturalism in the New Millennium”  

“Five Myths about Immigration: Immigrant Discourse, Locating White Supremacy, and the Racialization of Latino Immigrants in the United States”  

**Focus:** Detail the significance of diversity and multiculturalism since the early days in America, and delineate the critical implications and ramifications of various myths about immigration. | Chapter 9  
Chapter 10 |
| Week 15 | “Covering the Immigrant Story: Immigration Through the Lens of the American Media”  

“Immigration, Criminalization, and Militarization in the Age of Globalization”  

**Focus:** Detail the life of an immigrant and illustrate the powerful influence of the American media; and situate immigration laws, enforcement, and discourse within the criminalization and militarization movement in the global era. | Chapter 11  
Chapter 12 |
| Week 16 | “Immigration Laws and Social Control Movements: Situating the Realities of Immigration in the Twenty-First Century”  

**Focus:** As the final week of class, the various topics discussed during the semester will tied together, placing them within a broader framework. Concluding with recommendations for the future, as we continue the discourse on immigration law.  

**Final Exam:** TBA | Chapter 13 |

*The syllabus is likely to be amended during the semester at the discretion of the Professor!*

**Note:** Please check Calendar on Blackboard for **due dates!**
Mini-Project Suggestions

1. With fellow students, family members, or friends, discuss the issue of what could possibly be the DRIVING force behind immigration laws, enforcement, and discourse in the U.S.

2. With fellow students, family members, boy-friends, or girl-friends, discuss the issue of whether issues like politics, culture, religion, morality, and the media are influential in the dynamics of anti-immigration movements. WHY? Or, WHY NOT?

3. Find interesting stories in newspapers and magazines pertaining to immigration in your community, like Del Rio, Eagle Pass, Del Rio, or other community, and detail a brief report. Explain what you find interesting about the stories, as projected through the lens of the media.

4. Watch a documentary, video, or movie that vividly documents that history of immigration or policing, and write a brief reaction paper.

5. With fellow students, family members, or friends, discuss the nature and scope of immigration or policing within an historical, theoretical, and philosophical context.

6. With fellow students, family members, boy-friends, or girl-friends, discuss the utility and ramifications of immigration laws.