

**U.S. Latinxs, Labor, and the Law**  
**PLSC 22677/RDIN 21677**

Fall Quarter, 2023  
University of Chicago

**Time:** Mondays 9:30 AM – 12:20 PM.

**Room:** Pick Hall 506

**Professor:** Ramón Garibaldo Valdéz, Ph.D. (“Professor Garibaldo,” He/Him/El)

**Contact:** [rgaribaldo@uchicago.edu](mailto:rgaribaldo@uchicago.edu)

**Grader/Teaching Assistant:** Jorge Secades ([secades@uchicago.edu](mailto:secades@uchicago.edu)). Office Hours on Tuesdays + Thursdays, 12 PM – 1 PM @ Pick Hall 407

**Office Hours:** Mondays and Wednesdays 4 PM – 5 PM (Pick Hall 519). *Please sign-up for 20 minute slots in the following Google Doc:*

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1QmTQhZmMZ6bn9CaPYH7ic2jxIljfMbM4Tk-557FsXTk/edit>

*Should the time not work, or the pre-set hours fill up, feel free to email me. I am willing and able to arrange for an alternative meeting time. You are strongly encouraged to meet me in office hours at least once in the quarter to talk about the reading, assignments, or general questions about the course. There are no bad questions to be asked in office hours!*

## **I. Course Description**

In this course, we will explore the role that economic relations, legal codes, and immigration policing have had in shaping the group identity and life experiences of Latinx people in the United States. We will pay particularly close attention to the position of Latinx citizens and noncitizens alike as (a) subjects whose marginalization has taken place at the intersection of U.S. imperialism in Latin America and changing American racial orders, (b) an essential part of the American labor force in all sectors, from service to agriculture, that has historically been excluded from governmental protection, and (c) the prime target of immigration restrictions and their enforcement, via policing and incarceration, since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The class will begin in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, exploring the role that imperialism had in establishing unequal, exploitative relationships between the United States and Latin America, planting the seeds for Latinx migration into the U.S. as well as for the coercive treatment of these migrants. The first three weeks of the course will trace the establishment of governmental control over two key sites in the development of U.S. Latinx identity: the American Southwest and Puerto Rico. The course will also draw parallels between U.S. policy abroad and the domestic integration of Mexicans and Puerto Ricans – the two most numerous Latinx subgroups in the United States – at home. We will also emphasize the intersectional gendered and racialized dimensions of U.S. subjugation of Latinx peoples through an exploration of reproductive violence as well as present-day efforts to undo these harms.

The study of U.S. pan-Latinidad will mark the course's middle point: how did the U.S. come to embrace a collective ethnoracial identity that groups together peoples with experiences as different as Cubans exiles in Florida, third generation Mexican Americans in California, and Puerto Rican climate refugees in Connecticut?<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, what are the different visions of who "Latinxs/Latinos/Hispanics" are and what their political agendas should be?

The second half of the course, from Weeks 6 to 9, will explore the experiences of Latinx immigrants as simultaneous members of the country's "essential" labor force as well as targets of overpolicing. Rather than contradictory positions, the class will show that the "deportability" of Latinx noncitizens underpins their exploitation. We will explain how it is that, following the civil rights movement and the elimination of explicitly racialized forms of segregation, the U.S. nonetheless built a "color-blind" immigration apparatus that overwhelmingly targets Latinx people.

The course will end on a hopeful note, illuminating the ways that Latinx immigrants have seized on their historical experiences to create one of the most thriving social movements in contemporary American democracy: the immigrant justice movement. In analyzing the movement, I hope to emphasize the ever-present potential of bottom-up social change, led by populations who are creating more reactive and just government institutions despite being denied citizenship.

### ***Some Notes on Language***

You may have noticed by now that the class title, as well as most of this very document, uses the word "Latinx" to describe peoples of Latin American heritage living in the United States. The term is meant to address the emphasis on masculinity implied by "Latino," while also recognizing people whose identity extends beyond the traditional gender binary. The term is controversial, in the same way that every other term used to describe this population has been. Such controversies will be discussed in class!

While acknowledging their distinct cultural and political implications, you can use the term that you best believe applies to this population, including "Latino/a," "Hispanic," or "Latine." Furthermore, I encourage you to be as specific as possible, using specific ethnonational origin descriptors (e.g., "Mexicans," "Mexican Americans," or "Cuban Americans") and gendered terms (e.g., "Latinas" to refer to women). During class, I may use different terms or ones that I believe best apply to our population of interest.

You are not required to have any knowledge of Spanish to take this class. All materials will be provided in English, with Spanish-language options in only a few occasions. Whenever Spanish-language phrases appear in texts, I will make sure to translate, contextualize, and explain them. If you know Spanish, feel free to also weigh in!

Finally, throughout the class we will discuss unauthorized migration and the lives of undocumented immigrants. We will avoid use of the term "illegal immigrant," "illegal alien," or

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<sup>1</sup> I thank Cristina Mora (2014) for this insightful puzzle, as posed in her book *Making Hispanics*. We will read Prof. Mora's research in the class!

any derivative expletive. Such language perpetuates a social stigma that itself sustains criminalization and mistreatment of a large population of U.S. noncitizens. When in doubt, undocumented immigrant is the most accurate descriptor.

## II. Assignments

### (A) Participation – 20%

Every student is expected to participate in class discussions. Students who do not feel comfortable speaking in front of others will get the chance to share their thoughts in smaller groups. Furthermore, there are multiple ways of participating, beyond making explicit arguments: asking questions, sharing ideas with your colleagues, or making for a good group experience overall. To quote my colleague Angela García at the Crown School, “Quality is more important than quantity” when it comes to participation.

### (B) “Where I’m From” Poem – 10%

See Week 2 of the course for more detail.

### (C) 3 Response Papers (and Discussion Questions) – 30%

- ❖ You are required to submit response papers for one third (1/3) of the class sessions. Why am I assigning these papers? I believe that writing requires you to engage with the material at a deeper level than simple reading does. Writing and reading are part of the same practice of learning and knowledge-production.
- ❖ What makes for a good response paper? I believe a good response paper summarizes an argument, synthesizes knowledge, and contributes a new layer of analysis.
  - You may reflect on one reading or any given set of them for a week. You may also connect the weeks with one another.
  - The grader and I will use two guiding questions to grade the response papers: (1) Does it show a good understanding of the material? Is your summary/synthesis of the argument(s) an accurate one? (2) Does the reflection paper contribute a piece of analysis that was not present in the reading? This may be a critique, analysis, or even new piece of evidence related to the material (e.g., historical event, news, art piece)
- ❖ Papers are required to be two (2) to three (3) pages long. Double-spaced, 12 point, Times New Roman font. To be submitted via Canvas.
- ❖ Reflection papers are due the Sunday prior to our class meetings at 5 PM. At the end of your response paper, you should also add one question to facilitate discussion for next day’s class.

### (D) Class Paper – 40%

- ❖ Rather than a “final paper,” the class’ chief assignment is to spend the next nine weeks working on one 10 – 12 pp. paper on a topic of your choice related to the class material.
- ❖ How to choose your topic? Think of why you are taking this class! You may write about a work of art, be it a short story collection, a music album, or a painter’s

work. You may explore a specific episode in U.S. Latinx history, like the 2006 immigrant rights marches, Hurricane María, or the 1980s Central American migration crisis. Autoethnographic explorations, family histories, and local community studies (say, about Latinxs in your hometown) are welcomed and encouraged. If in doubt, ask!

- ❖ The class paper will be divided into three specific deliverables, due the Tuesday of the week indicated below.
  - On Week 3, you will turn in a 2-paragraph proposal about your topic, including the research question/topic and the motivation for your essay.
    - Following Week 3, you are required to meet with either the grader or myself to talk further about your topic! We will hold extra office hours for this purpose.
  - On Week 7, you will turn in an outline of your paper along with 3 – 5 annotated academic sources.
    - What's a valid academic source? We will have a member of the UChicago library team come on Week 4 or 5 to explain!
  - The due date for the final paper is yet to be determined, though you should expect it around finals week.
- ❖ Please know that you are not expected to turn in a perfect product from the get-go. Your grade will depend on effort, improvement, and engagement!

### III. Attendance and Late Work

#### a. Attendance and Missing Classes

Please note that due to our schedule, we only have a total of 9 class meetings for the quarter. Therefore, class attendance is paramount. In line with university policy, I do not require medical documentation to corroborate health problems, including those related to mental health. I only ask that you tell me ahead of time if you are planning to miss class. Should emergencies arise, please get in touch, so we can work out a plan for you not to be “left behind.” I do not recommend missing more than two class meetings in the semester, so keep this in mind when deciding whether the course is right for you.

#### b. Late Work

There is a penalty of 10 assignment points (out of 100) for every day past the due date. This is in the spirit of fairness, as all class members should get the same amount of time to complete their work. However, you can reach out to me if you need extra time to turn in an assignment without penalty. Students with disabilities and health issues will be provided with due accommodation and support.

### IV. Required Texts and Materials

Most class material will be made available through Canvas, using the Library Reserves menu. Material will be organized by week. Podcasts, web pages, and news links will also be provided for free.

You are only required to purchase one book for Week 3: Denis, Nelson A. 2015. *War Against All Puerto Ricans: Revolution and Terror in America's Colony*. New York: Bold Type Books.

I am afraid the UChicago Bookstore and the Seminary Co-Op may not be able to secure copies on time. However, Denis (2015) is a trade book, so it costs around \$15 via most online retailers. Furthermore, the library will obtain license for one online copy that up to three users may check out at a given time. Otherwise, I recommend placing in requests through Interlibrary Loans or Borrow Direct. Please make plans to secure the book soon!

## **V. Class Norms and Resources**

### **Respectful Class Discussions**

Class discussions will be the most important part of this course. Therefore, I want to foster an environment permissive of diverse perspectives, experiences, and backgrounds. Disagreements are welcomed and encouraged. I hope discussions will be rooted in respect for one another as well as tethered to the discussion topics and rooted in evidence. As this class deals with identity formation, arguments and comments may also be rooted in personal experience, though they should also connect to the class material. Furthermore, people should feel free to disagree or agree with a point regardless of the speaker's identity. I welcome suggestions for how to make discussion more dynamic, respectful, and effective.

### **Technology in Class**

Screens are not allowed in class save for accessing reading materials. This rule may sound harsh and even luddite. However, research consistently shows that handwritten notes are more effective for learning than typed notes – or for that matter, phone pictures. Furthermore, phones and computers encourage distraction during lectures and discussion. Since all readings are available online, you are welcome to have the reading open during lecture; otherwise, I will ask that this remain a screen-free classroom.

### **Academic Integrity**

In line with university policy, plagiarism, cheating, and general academic dishonesty will result in an automatic fail and reported to university administrations. Others' ideas must be properly cited and acknowledged. Please reach out to me if you have doubts about academic integrity.

### **Accommodation and Disability**

If you have a documented disability (or think you may have a disability) and, as a result, you need accommodation to fully participate in class, please contact Student Disability Services, located at 5501 S. Ellis Ave., as soon as possible. You can call the office at 773-702-6000/TTY 773-795-1186, or email [disabilities@uchicago.edu](mailto:disabilities@uchicago.edu). Please provide me with a copy of your Accommodation Determination Letter (provided to you by the Student Disability Services office) as soon as possible to discuss accommodation in a timely manner.

### **Immigration Status**

The university offers free and anonymous support and programming for students who hold undocumented or otherwise vulnerable immigration statuses. If you would like to learn more, please reach out to Ileri Rivas at Student Support Services, located at 5710 S. Woodlawn Ave. You can contact this office at 773-702-5710 or via email, [mirarivas@uchicago.edu](mailto:mirarivas@uchicago.edu). More information is here: <https://inclusion.uchicago.edu/studentssupport/undocumented-documented/>

## **Class Structure**

- ❖ The class meetings for this course are nearly 3-hours long. Therefore, they will be informally split into two or more parts.
- ❖ The first part of each meeting will for the most part consist of lecturing on my part, with due time for questions.
- ❖ The second part of each meeting will, except for counted days, consist of seminary-style discussion. The discussion will be led by people who wrote reflection papers the day prior.

## **VI. Course Schedule**

### **Week 1 (October 2<sup>nd</sup>). *De aquí y de allá* / From Here and There: Introduction to the Class**

#### Class Questions

How has U.S. intervention in Latin America set the stage for the mass immigration of Latinos in the 20<sup>th</sup> century? How did the governmental logics of 19<sup>th</sup> Century Manifest Destiny influence the settlement of the American Southwest? How does the treatment of Mexicans in the U.S. Southwest mirror the present-day realities of Latinxs in the country? What is the relationship between legacies of U.S. imperialism abroad and the socioeconomic standing of Latinxs at home?

#### Required Material

Gonzalez, Juan. 2011. *Harvest of Empire: A History of Latinos in America, Revised and Updated Edition*. Penguin Books.<sup>2</sup>

- ❖ Chapter 2. “The Spanish Borderlands and the Making of an Empire (1810 – 1898)”
- ❖ Chapter 3. “Banana Republics and Bonds: Taming the Empire’s Backyard (1898 – 1950)”

Muñoz Martinez, Monica. 2018. *The Injustice Never Leaves You: Anti-Mexican Violence in Texas*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- ❖ (Excerpt from) Chapter 2: “From Silence” (ONLY pp. 76 – 96).
- ❖ (Excerpts from) Chapter 5: “Idols” (ONLY pp. 227 – 246, 261 – 263).

### **Week 2 (October 9<sup>th</sup>). Home Is Where the Hatred Is: Mexican Exploitation, Racialization, and Resistance in the American Southwest, 1900 – 1965**

#### Class Questions

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<sup>2</sup> There is a more recent (2022) edition of *Harvest of Empire*; however, chapters 1 and 2 have remained virtually the same across editions.

At a time when U.S. immigration law favored the migration of people from Western Europe, why did it make an exception to allow for the mobility of Mexicans? How did economic relations structure the position of Mexican ethnics within the social order of the Southwestern borderlands? How did Mexicans and Mexican Americans organize in defiance of intertwined gender, class, and racial oppression?

### Required Material

Kim, Joon K. 2012. "California's Agribusiness and the Farm Labor Question: The Transition from Asian to Mexican Labor, 1919 – 1939." *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies* 37(2): 43 – 72.

Ruíz, Vicky L. 1987. *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930 – 1950*. The University of New Mexico Press.

- ❖ Chapter 1. "Community and Family" (pp. 3 – 20)
- ❖ Chapter 2. "The Cannery Culture" (pp. 20 – 39)
- ❖ Chapter 4. "A Promise Fulfilled: UCAPAWA in Southern California" (pp. 69 – 85)

### Assignment Due: "Where I'm From" Poem

In order to get to know each other better, every class participant – including myself and the grader – will write "Where I'm From" poems. For examples and loose instructions (it is, after all, a poem), see the following link: <http://www.georgeellalyon.com/where.html>

At its most basic level, you will write a poem with at least six lines that start with the sentence "I am from." What follows can be as concrete or abstract as you would like: are you from a certain place? A certain experience? A videogame scenario? A flavor? This class deals with identity creation, so it is only appropriate that we introduce ourselves by going beyond our schooling year or major.

## **Week 3 (October 16<sup>th</sup>). Puerto Rico and Its Diaspora**

### Class Questions

What are the economic and political interests that have shaped the relationship between the United States and Puerto Rico? How has this relationship shaped the Puerto Rican state's response to the economic and natural crises of the 21<sup>st</sup> century? What conditions has the Puerto Rican diaspora encountered in the United States, and how did they organize in response?

### Required Material

Denis, Nelson A. 2015. *War Against All Puerto Ricans: Revolution and Terror in America's Colony*. New York: Bold Type Books.

- ❖ Read from Chapter 1 ("La Princesa") TO Chapter 8 ("It's Only Chinatown"); and
- ❖ Chapter 12, "The Nationalist"

Fernández, Johanna. 2020. *The Young Lords: A Radical History*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.

- ❖ Chapter 1. "Beginnings: José 'Cha Cha' Jiménez and the Roots of Rebellion" (pp. 13 – 48)

(Podcast) *La Brega*. February 24, 2021. “Season 1, Episode 7: *Se acabaron las promesas*/The End of Promises.” WNYC Studios.

- Podcast episode available for free on Spotify, Google Podcasts, Stitcher, and other platforms. Available in English and Spanish. May also be found online in the following link:  
<https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/la-brega/season-one/2>

Assignment Due (Tuesday): Class Paper Proposal, 2 – 3 paragraphs. Please schedule a meeting with the grader or with me after submission.

**Week 4 (October 23<sup>rd</sup>, Guest Lecturer: Daniela Juarez, Ph.D. Student @ UChicago).  
Reproductive (In)Justice in Latinx/a Communities**

*Class materials TBA.*

**Week 5 (October 30<sup>th</sup>). *¿El pueblo unido?: Pan-Latinidad and Its Discontents***

Class Questions

How were U.S. pan-ethnic understandings of Latinidad created? What interests, private and public, had a hand in its shaping? What are the different visions of a unified Latino/x identity that have been put forth by its proponents? Who has been included in these visions? Who has been left out?

Required Material

Beltrán, Cristina. 2010. *The Trouble with Unity: Latino Politics and the Creation of Identity*. Oxford University Press.

- ❖ Introduction. “Sleeping Giants and Demographic Floods: Latinos and the Politics of Emergence.” (ONLY pp. 1 – 13).
- ❖ Chapter 1. “*El Pueblo Unido*: Visions of Unity in the Chicano and Puerto Rican Movements” (pp. 22 – 55)

López Oro, Paul Joseph. 2020. “Garifunizando Ambas Américas: Hemispheric Entanglements of Blackness/Indigeneity/AfroLatinidad.” *Postmodern Culture* 31 (1-2). <https://muse-jhu-edu.yale.idm.oclc.org/article/800016>

Mora, Cristina G. 2014. “Cross-Field Effects and Ethnic Classification: The Institutionalization of Hispanic Panethnicity, 1965 to 1990.” *American Sociological Review* 79(2): 183 – 210.

- ❖ Skim pp. 183 – 188. Focus on pp. 188 – 204, starting with the subheading “Organizational Adoption of Hispanic Panethnicity.”

(Poem) Ruben Darío’s (1904) “*A Roosevelt*” (Spanish Original) / “To Roosevelt” (English Translation) [Available Online]

(Poem) Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales’ (1967) “I Am Joaquín.”  
<https://www.latinamericanstudies.org/latinos/joaquin.htm>

**Week 6 (Nov. 6<sup>th</sup>). Criminalizing Immigration in the Post-Civil Rights Era**



### Class Questions

Following the decline of explicitly race-based policymaking in the 60s, how did the United States build a large-scale immigration state that has largely impacted Latinx immigrants and even citizens? What legislative, political, and social changes have contributed to the merging between the criminal justice and immigration enforcement systems? What are the effects of immigration policing on the everyday lives of Latinx immigrants and their citizen kin? What is immigrant detention, and how does it exemplify the governmental logics of the immigration state more broadly?

### Required Material

Arriaga, Felicia. 2023. *Behind Crimmigration: ICE, Law Enforcement, and Resistance in America*. The University of North Carolina Press. (Excerpts TBD)

López, William. 2019. *Separated: Family and Community in the Aftermath of an Immigration Raid*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. (Excerpts TBD)

Kassie, Emily. September 24, 2019. “Detained: How the United States created the largest immigrant detention system in the world.” *The Marshall Project & The Guardian*.  
<https://www.themarshallproject.org/2019/09/24/detained>

- ❖ *Instructions:* Please watch the full digital documentary and peruse through the governmental data provided.

Dreisbach, Tom. August 16, 2023. “Government’s own experts found ‘barbaric’ and ‘negligent’ conditions in ICE detention.” *NPR (National Public Radio) News*.  
<https://www.npr.org/2023/08/16/1190767610/ice-detention-immigration-government-inspectors-barbaric-negligent-conditions>

## **Week 7 (Nov. 13<sup>th</sup>). Essential and Excluded: Immigrant Labor in the American Economy**

### Class Questions

How did the transformations undergone by the U.S. economy in the 70s and 80s structure the incorporation of Latinx immigrants into the country’s blue-collar, so-called “unskilled” sector? What forms of precarity do Latinx immigrant workers face across sectors? What is the role of deportability in the exploitation of immigrant workers?

### Class Dynamic: Jigsaw Discussion

Rather than one common, required reading for the class, Week 7 will feature a “jigsaw” exercise where you and your colleagues will compare the working conditions of immigrant labor across various sectors of the U.S. economy. You will be provided – via Canvas – with pre-selected journalistic and/or academic readings about the following labor sectors:

- Housecleaning/Domestic Work
- Rideshare Food Delivery (e.g., Uber Eats, Grubhub)
- Agriculture
- Poultry Work/Meatpacking

- Street Vending

Students will sign up to read and discuss one specific sector only. Following my opening lecture, based on the work of Milkman (2020), you will be paired into a group with other colleagues who did their readings on the same sector as yourselves. After sharing reflections and notes, you will then be split into five completely different groups, such that each group will have one person who read about distinct labor sectors. The purpose is to educate your peers about a specific labor sector, and ultimately, to bring knowledge of these different work conditions together to obtain a holistic picture of immigrant labor in contemporary America.

#### Suggested Reading (and Basis for the Lecture)

Milman, Ruth. 2020. *Immigrant Labor and the New Precariat*. Polity Press.

- ❖ Ch. 1. “Brown-Collar Jobs: Low-Wage Immigrant Workers in the Twenty-First Century”
- ❖ Ch. 3. “The Eclipse of the New Deal: Labor Degradation, Union Decline, and Immigrant Workers”

Also Due: Part II of Class Paper, including the outline and annotated sources (3-5).

### **Week 8 (Nov. 27<sup>th</sup>). “País mío, no existes” / “Country of mine, you don’t exist”: Central American Migrants and the North American Arterial Border**

#### Class Questions

What role has the U.S. played in setting the political and economic stage for the mass exodus of Central American migrants since the 1980s? What are the experiences faced by Central American migrants as they migrate across North America? How and why has U.S. immigration enforcement expanded to the point of being “externalized” through collaboration with the Mexican state? What forms of resistance and survival have Central American migrants devised to survive the perilous journey through the North American migrant corridor, often described as an “arterial border”?

#### Required Material

Abrego, Leisy. 2014. *Sacrificing Families: Navigating Laws, Labor, and Love Across Borders*. Stanford University Press. (Selection TBD)

Díaz de Leon, Alejandra. 2023. *Walking Together: Central Americans and Transit Migration Through Mexico*. University of Arizona Press. (Selection TBD)

(Poems from) Zamora, Javier. 2017. *Unaccompanied*. Copper Canyon Press (Selections TBD).

### **Week 9 (TBA). Replenishing American Democracy: Latinx Immigrant Organizing in the 21st Century**

#### Class Questions

What resources do Latinx undocumented immigrants have at their disposal to mobilize politically against nativist political threats? How has the immigrant justice movement developed from the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century to today? How can these immigrants create long-term political infrastructures to advance their interests at various levels of government, in defiance of their criminalization?

### Required Reading

Garibaldo Valdéz, Ramón. 2023. *La Lucha de Cada Día: Immigrant Justice Organizing and the Political Remaking of Illegality in the United States*. Ph.D. Dissertation, Yale University. (Selection TBD).

Zepeda-Millán, Chris. 2017. *Latino Mass Mobilization: Immigration, Racialization, and Activism*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

- ❖ *Introduction*
- ❖ *Chapter 2: “Weapons of the Not So Weak”*