

# “Greater Mexico”

**Professor:** Emron Esplin

## **Course Description**

Mexican culture—food, language, religion, politics, music, etc.—manifests itself not only throughout Mexico and the U.S.-Mexico borderlands but throughout the United States in general. Américo Paredes and several others refer to this region of Mexican cultural influence as “Greater Mexico.” This course will serve as an introduction to this concept and as a broad, transnational survey of the literatures of this region.

In this course, we will read the works of several Mexican-American and Chicano/a writers who question both Mexican and U.S. identities; various Anglo writers from the U.S. who share cultural, political, and/or linguistic affinities with the borderlands and/or Mexico; and several Mexican authors whose work resonates either thematically or stylistically with the two previous groups. Our course will attempt to illuminate the possibilities and limitations of reading authors outside the national and/or political traditions in which they are typically interpreted. What can we gain and what might we lose by approaching norteña author Nellie Campobello as a border writer, Chicano writer Tomás Rivera as a Mexican author, and Anglo writers Katherine Anne Porter and Cormac McCarthy as Mexican and Chicano writers, respectively?

We will seek to answer, among others, the following questions: What are the historical points of contact between the U.S. and Mexico? Where/what are the borderlands? Where/what is “Greater Mexico,” and how does it differ from and exist within the borderlands? We will also enter the realm of identity politics to ask what points of tension exist between Mexican and U.S. American identities; between U.S. American and Mexican-American or Chicano/a identities; and between Mexican and Mexican-American or Chicano/a identities. The course brings these diverse texts into conversation with each other, and by doing so, it seeks to reveal the problems of dividing literature simply by nation and/or language while recognizing the valuable differences between these rich histories and literary traditions.

## **Required Texts**

Amando Álvarez *Rising River: The Blackfoot Chronicles*

Nellie Campobello *Cartucho*

Sandra Cisneros *Woman Hollering Creek*

Rolando Hinojosa *Partners in Crime*

Cormac McCarthy *All the Pretty Horses*

Américo Paredes *George Washington Gómez*

Katherine Anne Porter *Unpublished Early Prose of Katherine Anne Porter*

Tomás Rivera *Y no se lo tragó la tierra/And the Earth Did not Devour Him*

Juan Rulfo *Burning Plain, and Other Stories [El llano en llamas]*

Michele Serros *How to Be a Chicana Role Model*

B. Traven *The White Rose*

José Vasconcelos *La rasa cósmica/The Cosmic Race*

Guillermo Verdecchia *Fronteras Americanas*

## **Calendar**

**Week 1 Introductions; Syllabus; Greater Mexico**

**Week 2 U.S.-Mexico Relations; Oil; Intervention**

-B. Traven The White Rose

**Week 3 The Mexican Revolution**

-Nellie Campobello Cartucho

**Week 4 The Mexican Revolution; U.S.-Mexican Relations**

-Katherine Anne Porter Uncollected Early Prose of Katherine Anne Porter (28-37, 45-73, 86-130, 204-217, 256-271)

-Katherine Anne Porter "María Concepción"; "Flowering Judas"; "Leaving the Petate"; "Why I Write About Mexico"; "The Mexican Trinity"; "Where Presidents Have No Friends"

**Week 5 Mexican-American Identity**

NO CLASS TODAY

Read Paredes to be prepared for next week

-Américo Paredes George Washington Gómez (Parts 1-3)

**Week 6 Mexican-American Identity**

-Américo Paredes George Washington Gómez (Parts 4-5)

**Week 7 Post-Revolutionary Mexico; The Rural Poor**

-Juan Rulfo El llano en llamas [Burning Plain, and Other Stories]

**Week 8 From Mexican-American to Chicano Identity; Migrant Labor**

-Tomás Rivera Y no se lo tragó la tierra/And the Earth Did not Devour Him

**Week 9 Mexican Identity; Repression of and Nostalgia for Mexico's Indigenous Past**

-Octavio Paz "The Day of the Dead"

-Elena Garro "It's the Fault of the Tlaxcaltecas"

-Carlos Fuentes "Chac Mool"

-José Vasconcelos La raza cósmica/The Cosmic Race

**Week 10 Mexican-American Crime Novel**

- Rolando Hinojosa Partners in Crime

**Week 11 Various Chicana Voices and Experiences**

-Sandra Cisneros Woman Hollering Creek (1-23, 43-56, 68-113)

-Michele Serros How to Be a Chicana Role Model (1-47, 93-137)

**Week 12 Various Chicano Voices and Experiences**

-Amando Álvarez Rising River: The Blackfoot Chronicles

-César A. Preciado-Cruz Revenge of the “Illegal Alien”: A Mexican Takes on the Empire

**Week 13 Texas/Mexico; The Borderlands; Reverse Border Crossing**

-Cormac McCarthy All the Pretty Horses (Parts I-II)

**Week 14 Texas/Mexico; The Borderlands; Reverse Border Crossing**

-Cormac McCarthy All the Pretty Horses (Parts III-IV)

**Week 15 Holiday**

Watch one of the following Films

Giant directed by George Stevens

Lone Star directed by John Sayles

Selena directed by Gregory Nava

Zoot Suit directed by Luis Valdez

**Week 16 Identity Politics**

-Guillermo Verdecchia Fronteras Americanas

**Finals Week Exam 2**

\*\*Exam 2