

The New Border



“Teeter-Totter Wall,” designed by Ronald Rael and Virginia San Fratello. The three pink seesaws joined El Paso and Anapra communities for just under 20 minutes on July 28, 2019. It won the Beazley Design of the Year award administered by the [London Design Museum](#). *Two days later, queer migrant and formerly undocumented poet and artist Jennif(fer) Tamayo wrote over a similar shot in bright blue lettering on [LG](#): “This is how contemporary art colludes with the State.” In her comments, she added: “Allowing play on the border is part of its enduring maintenance by the State. Joy can be powerful - but whose joy is being centered here?”*

This syllabus is dedicated to the refugees whose lives and deaths¹ have been affected by U.S. custody.

In Memory of Darlyn Cristabel Cordova-Valle (10 years old)

In Memory of Jakelin Caal Maquín (7 years old)

In Memory of Felipe Gomez Alonzo (8 years old)

In Memory of Juan de León Gutiérrez (16 years old)

In Memory of Wilmer Josué Ramírez Vásquez (2 years old)

In Memory of Carlos Gregorio Hernandez Vasquez (16 years old)

In Memory

In Memory

In Memory

In Memory

In Memory

In Memory

In Memory

This syllabus is also dedicated to Óscar Alberto Martínez Ramírez and his daughter, Valeria Martínez Ramírez (1 year old) and to all those rendered numberless, nameless, stateless, and documentless in the empire of borders. Y a todxs que siguen la lucha—

¹ Selected sources: “[In Custody Deaths](#),” *New York Times*; “[Deaths in CBP Custody](#),” American Immigration Lawyers Association.”

Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, 12:20 p.m. - 2:10 p.m. EDT
Blow Memorial Hall 333
Professor Scott Challener (sdchallener@wm.edu)
Office Hours by appointment
(<https://calendly.com/challener-scott/office-hours-summer-term-1?month=2022-05>)
Office: College Apartments 217
Course Twitter handle: @border_new

LAND AND SLAVERY ACKNOWLEDGMENT

As the author of this syllabus and as a faculty member at William & Mary, I join the [Decolonizing Humanities Project](#) in the following acknowledgement.

The land on which we teach and we live was stolen from the Cheroenhaka (Nottoway), Chickahominy, Eastern Chickahominy, Mattaponi, Monacan, Nansemond, Nottoway, Pamunkey, Patowomeck, Upper Mattaponi, and Rappahannock people. We acknowledge that the [Pamunkey](#) and [Chickahominy](#), along with other tribe within and outside the Powhatan Confederacy, were dispossessed and dispersed with the signing of the Treaty of 1646, which legally assigned them as subjects of the Crown who did not hold the same rights as “free white men.”

William & Mary established the [Brafferton Indian School](#), which was responsible for inculcating indigenous peoples with the values of the colonizing English settlers with the intent of converting them to Christianity and degrading indigenous spirituality, identity, social practices, and culture.

William & Mary is 35 miles from Old Point Comfort, where the first black Africans, kidnapped from the Kingdom of Ndongo (present day Angola), were sold by English privateers to English settlers in the eastern territory of what is now known as Virginia. This occurred in 1619 not long before the College was chartered in 1693. We recognize the relationship between these two dates. Williamsburg and William & Mary were built by the labor of kidnapped and enslaved Africans. We highlight that the university acknowledges that it “owned and exploited slave labor from its founding to the Civil War; and that it had failed to take a stand against segregation during the Jim Crow Era.” But we also stress how the United States remains built on social, political and governmental structures that perpetuate racial violence and inequities. We understand the role that higher education plays in perpetuating and shoring up racial capitalism in the country now known as the United States and globally.

Therefore, we seek to dismantle forms of settler-colonialism and racism, with special attention to anti-black and anti-indigenous racism, and how they continue to structure our lives in the university, Virginia, and the settler-colonial state now known as the United States.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is a study of the contemporary literature of the U.S.-Mexico border. How does this literature understand the changing dynamics of what scholar John Alba Cutler calls “the new border,” a zone defined by an increasingly punitive regime of militarization, criminalization, mass detention and mass deportation? How does this literature disclose the structures of relation that underlie the mediation and spectacularization of the border? How does it respond to the ideologies of white supremacy and anti-Mexican and anti-Latinx prejudice? In addition to these questions, we will consider how the literature of the new border engages the legacies of earlier border writing by Pat Mora, Gloria Anzaldúa, and others. Texts may include Yuri Herrera’s *Signs Preceding the End of the World*, Sara Uribe’s *Antígona González*, Valerie Martínez’s *Each and Her*, Javier Zamora’s *Unaccompanied*, Wendy Trevino’s *Cruel Fiction*, and Valeria Luiselli’s *Tell Me How it Ends*.

REQUIRED COURSE TEXTS (with the exception of *Each and Her*, all course texts are available digitally for free via our course website; if you would like to purchase printed editions, consider using [Bookshop](#))

Yuri Herrera, *Signs Preceding the End of the World*, translated by Lisa Dillman (And Other Stories, 2015).

Valeria Luiselli, [Tell Me How it Ends](#) (Coffee House P, 2017).

Valerie Martínez, *Each and Her* (Arizona UP, 2010).

Wendy Trevino, [Cruel Fiction](#) (Commune Editions, 2018).

Sara Uribe, *Antígona González*, translated by John Pluecker (Les Fignes Press, 2016).

Additional assigned texts will be provided on the course website.

COURSE WEBSITE

Our class has a Blackboard site that contains the syllabus, assignments, and other course-related materials. You can log in to our Blackboard site at blackboard.wm.edu.

REQUIREMENTS

25% PARTICIPATION

Regular attendance and active, thoughtful participation are required. Our classroom will be a mix of lectures, small-group and large-group discussions, and asynchronous writing. Discussion requires every student to take the intellectual risk of offering observations, ideas, and arguments

in class in response to one another and to the instructor. You aren't supposed to know all the answers in advance, but you are required to come to class prepared to join in a communal effort to figure things out. If you are apprehensive about speaking in class, please see me before or after class or during office hours at the start of the term. If you have a special obligation that will interrupt your participation, please talk with me. If you fall ill or miss class for a family emergency, please contact me as soon as possible. Lateness, lack of preparation, and disruptive behavior will affect the participation grade.

25% "CRITICAL" BLOG POSTS

Weekly critical reading responses due Wednesdays and Sundays by midnight EDT to our course blog on Blackboard. These posts practice key ideas and skills from the class. Each week, assigned students will summarize, synthesize, and frame posts as questions for further inquiry and discussion. Graded complete / incomplete. See the [assignment sheet](#) for more details.

25% ESSAY (5-7 pp.)

An interpretive essay (5-7 pp.) making an argument about one text, making appropriate use of sources. Choice of topics distributed in advance. See the [assignment sheet](#) for details.

25% FINAL PUBLIC-FACING PROJECT

This project may be print or digital. In the past, students have made both digital and handmade zines (see the "[Zine Assignment Sheet](#)" for more details), podcasts, animated videos, interactive lesson plans, posters, and multimedia essays; they have also written more traditional "public-facing" op-ed articles for a general audience in the digital public sphere. The project should engage with some aspect—troubling, special, distinctive, dense, problematic, provocative—of Border Studies. This project may grow out of the concerns of your writing assignments, or it may engage with a different problem or question. See the [assignment sheet](#) for details.

HEALTHY TOGETHER COMMUNITY COMMITMENT

By taking this course you agree to William & Mary's [Healthy Together Community Commitment](#). As the website states, this agreement means that "you affirm that you understand what is required in order to be physically present in our community this year and that you will fully comply. You also acknowledge that an inability or failure to comply with our Healthy Together Community Commitment may impact your ability to remain on campus and/or participate as a member of the William & Mary community. Accordingly, there will be consequences for non-compliance, for both employees and students." Specifically, you agree to three key actions: 1) you will mitigate risk of transmitting COVID-19; 2) demonstrate care and concern for the physical and psychological well-being of others; and 3) support W&M's mission.

GRADING

William & Mary uses a four-point [grading system](#). The general standards for grades are as follows:

A range: Outstanding work, demonstrating thorough mastery of course materials and skills.

B range: Good work, demonstrating serious engagement with all aspects of the course but incomplete mastery of course materials and skills.

C range: Satisfactory work, meeting requirements but indicating significant problems mastering the course materials and skills.

D range: Poor or minimally passing work, meeting the basic course requirements, but frequently unsatisfactory in several major areas.

F: Failure due to unmet course requirements or consistently unsatisfactory work.

The final grade is subject to my discretion. Unsatisfactory work in all areas of the course will result in an F even if the numerical score corresponds to a passing grade. If you do not complete the major assignments, it is not possible to pass the course.

CONTRACT GRADING

In this course we will use an evaluation method known as contract grading. Please read the [Grading Contract](#) and sign it. Email signed contracts to me. If you breach the contract, the final grade is subject to my discretion. If you do not complete the major assignments, it is not possible to pass the course.

RECORDING OF CLASS LECTURES & DISCUSSIONS

Students may not record class lectures and discussions without permission. Permission will be granted on a case-by-case basis.

WRITING RESOURCES CENTER

The [Writing Resources Center](#) (Swem Library, 1st floor) offers one-on-one consultations for students to discuss their work in any discipline with well-trained writing consultants. Consultants will work with you at any stage in your writing process. They will work with you to help you do your own best work, so you should expect to be actively involved in your session. The WRC is a resource for all William & Mary students. Whether you consider yourself to be a strong writer or a weak one, you can benefit from meeting with a writing consultant.

The hours for the current semester are posted on the website. I encourage you to reserve an appointment in advance. You may schedule a session online or in person. In addition to consultations at the WRC, Swem Library offers a number of other resources for students,

including workshops, guidance on research, and physical spaces ideal for an array of projects, from individual projects to group work.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity is at the heart of the university, and we all are responsible to each other and to our community for upholding the ideals of honor and integrity. William & Mary has had an Honor Code since at least 1779. Your full participation and observance of the Honor Code is expected. To present something as your own original writing or thinking when it is not is plagiarism. Plagiarism and other forms of cheating are serious violations of trust. Academic and intellectual dishonesty, including plagiarism, will have severe consequences, in accordance with the student-led honor system. For details about your responsibilities as a student, please see the *Student Handbook*.

STATEMENT ON DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, & BELONGING

You are welcome regardless of status, documentation, gender, race, class, ethnicity, or ability. This classroom is a safe space, but it is not a hermetically sealed environment. Rather, it is a microcosm of our larger community. To begin to make the classroom an equitable space you have to follow a few basic guidelines. You are expected to be respectful in your speech and actions. Intentions matter. Effects do too. Practice self-reflexivity. Consider the positions you inhabit and the positions you take. Recognize the impact you have on others. Active participation does not necessarily mean that you talk; it means that you listen. It means that you recognize both the spaces you occupy and move through and the structures that organize them. Be aware of how much airtime you take up. Prioritize historically marginalized voices whenever possible. Practice critical compassion. Whether you agree or disagree, acknowledge and respond in turn. Justify your perspective with evidence; pose questions from your experience. Learn the names of your peers. And finally, accept and sit with your feelings, whether “bad” or “good” or otherwise. Embrace and explore the full range of intellectual and affective possibilities at hand—including discomfort, confusion, anxiety, insecurity, pleasure, delight, gladness, joy, and all the mixtures thereof, for which we may not have a language. Read my latest “Diversity Statement” [here](#).

CHOSEN NAME & GENDER PRONOUNS

This course aims to be an inclusive learning community that supports students of all gender expressions and identities. Please let me know if you would like to be addressed by a different name or set of pronouns than those listed in the official class roster. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

I assume that all of us learn in different ways. If there are circumstances that may affect your performance in this course, please talk to me as soon as possible so that we can work together to

develop strategies for accommodations that will satisfy both your learning needs and the requirements of the course. Whether or not you have a documented disability, William & Mary provides many support services that are available to all students.

William & Mary accommodates students with disabilities in accordance with federal laws and university policy. Any student who feels they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a learning, psychiatric, physical, or chronic health diagnosis should contact Student Accessibility Services staff at 757-221-2512 or at sas@wm.edu to determine if accommodations are warranted and to obtain an official letter of accommodation.

Student Accessibility Services is the office responsible for assisting students with disabilities. If you have a disability that interferes with your learning (whether visible or invisible, physical or mental), you are encouraged to register with this office. Student Accessibility Services will work with you to determine appropriate accommodations for your courses, such as additional time on tests, staggered homework assignments, or note-taking assistance. This office will give you a letter outlining the accommodations you need that you can share with your teachers; specific information about your disability will remain private. If you have any questions about accommodation, or what constitutes a disability, I invite you to speak with me or to Student Accessibility Services.

WMFIRE (formerly UNDOCUTRIBE) RESOURCES (with thanks to Allen Lopez and the members of [UndocuTribe](#))

ORGANIZATIONS TO GET INVOLVED WITH:

[Virginia Coalition of Latino Organizations](#) (VACOLAO)

- Serves as a working alliance among organizations in Virginia that advocates for Latino communities.

[National Korean American Service & Education Consortium](#) (NAKASEC)

- Grassroots organization founded in 1994 by local community centers to project a progressive voice and promote the full participation of Korean and Asian Americans within the larger society.

[The Virginia Latina Advocacy Network](#) (VALAN)

- Operates as an extension of NLIRH, serving as the voice and advocacy presence in Virginia. The VA LAN works with activists throughout Virginia to organize our communities around issues-based campaigns that impact our families and our lives.

ICE out of RVA

- Grassroots organization with the focus of making RVA a safer community for immigrant families in fear of ICE; uplifts the work of activists, particularly those who are undocumented/QTPOC.

[Sin Barreras](#) (Charlottesville)

- Non-profit that focuses on outreach to the immigrant (primarily Hispanic) community, connecting individuals to services such as workshops in Health, Immigration, Legal affairs, Banking, Education, and others. They also provide individual services, such as low-cost legal counseling and work one on one in daily obstacles immigrants face.

[United We Dream](#)

- The largest immigrant youth-led community in the country.

RESOURCES FOR UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS:

[*Dream Project and Mentoring Program*](#)

- Non-profit organization in Arlington that encourages and supports promising immigrant youth in their pursuit of higher education through mentoring, scholarships, advocacy, and community outreach.

[*Just Neighbors*](#)

- Provides immigration legal services to low-income immigrants and refugees of all faiths and nationalities, especially those who are most vulnerable.

[*Legal Aid Justice Center*](#)

- The Legal Aid Justice Center is committed to providing a full range of services to clients, including services our federal and state governments choose not to fund. Free Informational sessions at Mason for current students are currently under development.

[*Ayuda*](#)

- Serving immigrants in the Washington, DC, metropolitan region. Has 36 full-time, bilingual attorneys and social workers/case managers providing legal, social, and language access services

[*Capital Immigrant's Rights Coalition \(CAIR\)*](#)

- Only legal service provider providing legal representation to detained Immigrants in facilities in DC, MD, and VA.

Tahirih Justice Center

- National non-profit committed to individuals fleeing violence and to serving as many immigrant women and girls as possible.

Edu-futuro

- Empowers immigrant and underserved youth and families through mentorship, education, leadership development and parent engagement.

National Bail Fund Network

- The National Bail Fund Network is made up of over eighty community bail and bond funds across the country.

OTHER RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS

- [Financial Aid and Undocumented Students](#) (U.S. Department of Education)
- [Immigrants Rising](#)
- [UndocuScholars](#)

Social media to follow:

@Undocumedia
@UndocuBlack
@FWDus
@NILC_org
@UnitedWeDream
@TPSAlliance

A NOTE ON COURSE CONTENT

The texts in this course often depict and respond to violence (including sexual- and gender-based violence; rape; anti-immigrant, anti-Black, anti-indigenous, anti-Latinx, and anti-Mexican violence; torture; murder; and dismemberment), trauma, repression, and persecution. It is particularly important, when dealing with this material, that class discussions remain respectful. If you have any concerns, please talk to me.

SOME RESOURCES FOR THE STUDY OF THE LITERATURE OF THE NEW BORDER

- [Undocupoets](#) (Sibling Rivalry Press Foundation)
- “[Undocumented Writers](#)” special issue, ed. Christopher Soto, *Southern Humanities Review*
- [Border and Migration Studies Online Database](#) (William & Mary Libraries)

- [Antena](#), “A language and justice collaborative founded in 2010 by Jen Hofer and John Pluecker”
- [The Fronteras Desk](#), a project of KJZZ
- [NACLA](#), the North American Congress on Latin America
- [Letras Latinas Blog](#), the blog of the literary initiative of the Institute for Latino Studies (U Notre Dame)
- [El Faro](#), the first online Spanish language newspaper in Latin America (El Salvador)

SCHEDULE (subject to change)

Week 1: HISTORY AND THEORY OF THE BORDER FROM THE 80s TO THE PRESENT

Tuesday, May 31: Introductions, Syllabus, [Essay and Final Project Assigned](#).

Read:

C.J. Alvarez, “[The U.S.-Mexico Border](#).” Read from the “Introduction” section through “Culture.”

In class:

Listen: Kimiko Hahn, “[After Being Asked If I Write the ‘Occasional Poem’](#)” (*The New Yorker*, Sep 16, 2019).

Recommended:

John Alba Cutler, “[The New Border](#)” (*College Literature*, vol. 44, no. 4 Fall 2017).

Watch: John Begley, “[Best of Luck with the Wall](#)” (*The Intercept*, Oct 26, 2017).

Wednesday, June 1. [Chronology](#). [Blog posts due by 8pm EDT](#).

Read:

Cristina Henríquez, “Everything Is Far From Here” (*The New Yorker*, 17 Jul 2017) (PDF available via course website; listen [here](#)).

Recommended:

Dawn Marie Paley, “[Mexican Disappearance, U.S. Incarceration](#),” *Commune*, Fall 2019.

Thursday, June 2. [Presentations on blog posts: Caroline Thompson and Teresa Clark](#).

Read:

“Catching Fire: Preface to the Fourth Edition,” “Acts of Healing,” “Foreword to the First Edition, 1981,” “The Bridge Poem,” “La Jornada: Preface, 1981,” “Introduction, 1981,” *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, Fourth Edition, SUNY P, 2015.

Sunday, June 5. **Blog posts due by 8pm EDT.**

Weeks 2 & 3: LITERATURES AGAINST FEMICIDE AND “NEOLIBERAL DISAPPEARANCE”

Monday, June 6. **Presentations on blog posts: Hannah Dow and Elizabeth Parson.**

Read:

Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands / La Frontera*, first two chapters, “[To live in the Borderlands means you.](#)” “I Want to Be Shocked Shitless,” “When I Write I Hover,” “Enemy of the State,” “Postmodern Llorona.”

Debra A. Castillo, “[Anzaldúa and Transnational American Studies](#)” (*PMLA*, 2006).

Recommended:

Gloria Anzaldúa, “Speaking in Tongues,” “[Speaking Across the Divide.](#)”

Tuesday, June 7.

→ COLL300 Noticing party, micha cárdenas, “[We Want More than Just to Live.](#)”

Read:

Yuri Herrera, *Signs Preceding the End of the World*, 11-62.

Wednesday, June 8. **Blog posts due by 8pm EDT.**

Read:

Yuri Herrera, *Signs Preceding the End of the World*, complete.

Aaron Bady, “[Border Characters](#),” an interview with Yuri Herrera.

Thursday, June 9. **Presentations on blog posts: Shaun Johnston and Kane Everson.**

Read:

Valerie Martínez, *Each and Her*, 1-35.

Cristina Rivera Garza, "[On Our Toes: Women Against the Femicide Machine in Mexico](#)," *World Literature Today*, Winter 2020.

Sunday, June 12. **Blog posts due by 8pm EDT.**

Monday, June 13. **Presentations on blog posts: Kyle Mahoney and Aashni Jain.**

Read:

Valerie Martínez, *Each and Her*, complete.

[An interview with Valerie Martínez](#) (Library of Congress, 2014).

Tuesday, June 14.

Read:

Sara Uribe, *Antígona González*, 1-97.

Sara Uribe, "La traducción como forma de ayudar a levantar el cadáver" [Translation as a Way to Join to Take Up the Body, trans. John Pluecker], 188-205.

Wednesday, June 15. **Blog posts due by 8pm EDT.**

Read:

Sara Uribe, *Antígona González*, complete.

Thursday, June 16. **Presentations on blog posts: Elinor Klee and Jaime Wegener.**

Read:

[A Manifesto for Discomfortable Writing](#), Antena collective (founded by Jen Hofer and John Pluecker in 2010).

María Rivera, "[Los muertos](#)" [The Dead], trans. Richard Gwyn (2016); see also Jen Hofer and Román Luján's [co-translation](#) (2011).

Recommended:

["The Silence ... Is Our Most Unyielding Creon": Five Questions for Sara Uribe & John Pluecker about Antígona González](#)," *Queen Mob's Teahouse* (13 Jun 2016).

Sunday, June 19. No blog posts due; work on draft of Essay.

Weeks 4 & 5: CRUEL FICTIONS, CRUEL FUTURES: LITERATURE FROM THE
“EMPIRE OF BORDERS”

Monday, June 20. Draft of Essay due by the beginning of class. Peer review.

Read:

Wendy Trevino, *Cruel Fiction*, 13-38.

In class:

Peer review: Introductory paragraph(s), motivating problems, focusing concepts, tentative title of Essay due.

Tuesday, June 21.

Read:

Wendy Trevino, *Cruel Fiction*, 43-72.

“[On Thinking Cruelty: An Interview with Jean Franco](#),” *American Quarterly*, vol. 66, no. 3, 2014.

Wednesday, June 22. Final blog posts due by 8pm EDT.

Read:

Wendy Trevino, *Cruel Fiction*, complete.

“[Mexican Is Not a Race](#),” an interview with Wendy Trevino.

Thursday, June 23. Presentations on final blog posts: Liam Fish and Salli Sanfo.

Read:

Óscar Martínez, *The Beast*, [Chapter 5](#).

Recommended:

Listen: Alt.Latino [interviews](#) Salvadoran Journalist Óscar Martínez.

[Q&A with Óscar Martínez](#), Author of *The Beast* (Texas Observer).

Watch: [Speech](#), Duke Humanities Institute, 2014 Human Rights Award.