
COMPOSITION II: IMMIGRANT NARRATIVES OF THE U.S.

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INTRODUCTORY ESSAY

Being an immigrant and a native of a decolonized country, it is always interesting to see how Americans perceive other countries. Immigrant Narratives of the US was the result of living, studying, and working in the US. It started off as something that I would like to read and became something that I would like to teach to students to understand diversity, multiculturalism, and the benefits of immigration. While talking to students in my freshman classes, I hear that the University is often the most exposure to the outside world that they have received. And this situation makes teaching these narratives, of the minority, the other, and the marginalized, more urgent and more necessary.

Immigrant Narratives of the U.S. is a class that I taught last spring and is a part of the Special Topics that the university offers every spring semester. It was a face-to-face class that met twice a week. It is similar to an Honors Freshman Composition class or an advanced section of composition that can only be taken after passing/completing the first part. This course taught students the research and writing strategies and processes through application in the field of contemporary immigrant narratives. America is an extremely diverse country with people from various countries, races, cultures, and ethnicities. The students studied immigrant literature of the U.S., discussed issues of race, ethnicity, multiculturalism, feminism, and nationalism, and analyzed American political rhetoric. Students read, discussed, and wrote about contemporary American immigrant literature and related texts from different genres, becoming conversant in issues surrounding recent immigration to the United States and how authors respond to these issues in literature, understand the reasons and circumstances surrounding immigration to America, the contrasts in the experiences of different generations in immigrant families, the challenges of adjusting to life in a new land, and overall the role of storytelling in coming to terms with the immigrant experience.

As far as the learning objectives, course goals, aims, and outcomes for this course are concerned, they were the same as any other composition class: rhetorical analysis, critical writing and thinking, audience expectations, research, synthesis, and effective communication. However, I do want my students to be more aware of their lives outside the classroom and to think deeply of the issues that surround them: racism, propaganda, gender gap, and a change in their attitude to be more understating of differences. Some of the ways that I do this include 10-15 minute class discussions and lectures on the text and its historical and geographical contexts, addressing ways that students have been a part or a victim of racism and prejudices while conversing my own personal experiences, examining how social and other media exhibit propaganda and bias, and reviewing how popular culture perpetuates stereotypes of race, gender, and class. As this class focused on immigrant narratives, students made a list of the countries that immigrants came from and also contrasted how the relationship between the country of origin and the U.S. had changed over time. I wanted students to understand the problems that immigrants face and the hardships that they encounter when they arrive in a new country and during their stay. One way that I did this was to consider how the media portrays immigrants versus how immigrants actually live and

contribute to the economy through facts, statistics, articles, and videos. The readings were from reputed websites but were short and easy to understand.

The fact that the students understood the literary texts, their projects, and the things outside the classroom was evident in their choice of topics for their assignments. For instance, some of the topics for their final paper were: are immigrants bad for the economy, psychological effect of migration, importance of diversity at institutes of higher education, media representation of migration, sexual assault and trafficking of illegal immigrants, effects of the American diet on immigrants, police brutality towards minorities, identity creation of the immigrants, pressure on immigrants to speak in English, racial profiling, and the economic contributions of illegal immigrants.

The students had to submit journal entries every Tuesday based on the readings for that week. The assignments in the syllabus are arranged chronologically. They also had to actively participate in class discussions and in-class low-stakes assignments. Lesson plans involved presentations on the literary texts as well as their historical contexts and backgrounds. For the different assignments, they had to brainstorm in class, attend conferences, and be present at peer-review workshops. The first two assignments were pretty standard, with a rhetorical analysis of the different essays in the textbook or any other argumentative opinion piece that the students found online. In the second assignment, the students had to identify a topic or idea in a literary text and find supporting texts based on the topic. So, if the text dealt with the harsh treatment of immigrants at the hand of the police, the student researched on articles focusing on instances of police brutality at detention centers. A food science major analyzed the different diets that an immigrant eats in his/her native country and in the U.S. and its health effects, based on how food was portrayed in a text. Students also connected mental health issues faced by immigrants and how crossing borders affect women and children the most, especially the crossing from Central America on board freight trains known as "La Bestia."

Their third major writing assignment was the group project focusing on a community analysis. They also had to work in a group to formulate the questions and write the analysis. The project involved students interviewing immigrants from a particular country and discussing the problems or issues that the immigrants faced in the U.S. The assignment also included a short background section for each interviewee. The data analysis consisted of examining the answers and the issues that the community faced, be it perceptions and stereotypes, racism, communication barriers, lack of cultural knowledge, or representation in popular culture. The project also provided the students' own opinion and solutions, if any, to the problems. The assignment asks the students to show a clear understanding of what immigrant communities are and to demonstrate their ability to analyze their expressive choices and forms of community relationships, problems that they face, and solutions that they can propose, carefully and thoughtfully. The student evaluations proved that this class was successful in giving students something more to write and think than just a writing class that they were required to take. The evaluation included comments about the community analysis where interviewing immigrants allowed them to use what they had read in class in the world outside, learning about the hardships immigrants faced, and the overall issues raised in class discussions.

The readings for the class are arranged to be appropriate for the connected assignments but I would arrange them geographically if I teach this class again. So, readings that focus on Mexico would be one unit, readings that focus on Iran would be another, and so on. The goal of the readings was for students to have an idea of what immigrants have to go through to come to the U.S., to live here, and maintain their lives to be a model immigrant. Students also analyzed the reasons why immigrants left their countries which could be as simple as getting a job or an education or as complex as war. The class units are built to help students scaffold their writing skills. Consequently, the students start with a rhetorical analysis, followed by a critique where they utilize the rhetorical analysis but also add in their opinion.

Next, their community analysis helps them analyze their own rhetorical stance regarding the interviewees, the questions, and their analysis of their data findings. Lastly, their research paper helps them to brainstorm, research, argue, examine their sources, and cite. With each reading, the students build on their writing, thinking, and reading skills, while also understanding the reasons behind immigration, how diverse America is, and how the politics behind immigration work.

If I have an opportunity to teach this class again, I would modify the assignments to include a rhetorical analysis of images and videos of how immigrants are represented in media, and another assignment to incorporate a multimedia presentation, be it a video, a podcast, or an infographic, focusing on any one country's waves of immigration to the U.S., especially from a historical perspective. I would include a short assignment before the community analysis, like a narrative interview on the structure of these two websites, and a few more recent texts on immigration like *My Immigration Story*: <https://myimmigrationstory.com> and *I am an Immigrant*: <https://www.iamanimmigrant.com/stories>. I would also update the reading lists by adding the following works: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's "'The Arrangements': A Work of Fiction": <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/03/books/review/melania-trump-in-chimamanda-ngozi-adichie-short-story.html>, Junot Diaz's "How to date a brown girl (black girl, white girl, or halfie)": <http://engl-boston-culture-course.wikispaces.umb.edu/file/view/Diaz,HowTo.pdf>, and Yaa Gyasi's "Inscape": <https://www.guernicamag.com/inscape>.

SYLLABUS

COMPOSITION II: IMMIGRANT NARRATIVES OF THE U.S.

COURSE PURPOSE

To continue to teach students the research and writing strategies and processes emphasized in Composition I, but doing so through the analysis of the discursive and writing practices in their chosen fields of study. Students will reflect on writing as a communicative practice and will write critical essays that demonstrate sound argumentation, development of ideas, clear organization, effective analysis, awareness of writing conventions, and mastery of standard linguistic forms.

SPECIFIC GOALS

In accordance with the stated purpose of the course, students will learn, among other things, how to

- analyze rhetorical situations and identify persuasive appeals in written and visual texts;
- evaluate and experiment with a variety of rhetorical strategies and genres;
- recognize the demands that particular audiences place on written communication;
- use electronic resources to support library research; and
- synthesize a variety of sources in the development of critical essays.

PROCEDURE OF THE COURSE

Reading; discussions; workshops; lectures; formal and informal analytical writing; exercises and activities that promote metadiscursive awareness. The quality of writing will largely determine the final grade.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- *Crossing Into America: The New Literature of Immigration*. Louis Mendoza and S. Shankar, eds. New York: The New Press, 2005. Available on Amazon and Half EBay.
- *The St. Martin's Handbook*, 8th ed., by A. Lunsford. (Bedford/St. Martin's).

ASSIGNMENT GRADE DISTRIBUTION

Rhetorical Analysis: Of an essay either from the "Debates" section from <i>Crossing into America</i> , pp 272-293 or online resources of the student's choosing.	15%
Critique and Response Synthesis: Students synthesize their critique of an overall idea/ theme of the literary text and connect that to a political speech, a public document, or a historical event. They will then synthesize their critique and respond to both the text and the source, both connected to immigration.	20%
Group Project Community Analysis: Students will interview members of a particular immigrant community with help from the various registered student organizations on campus. The students will use the interviews to create a project that will focus on issues in the particular immigrant community.	25%
Research Argument and Bibliography: Students choose a topic that is related to immigration and the texts that have been read in class along with substantial research.	35% (25+10)
Journal Responses	5%
Total	100%

COURSE GRADE SCALE

A: 90-100; B: 80-89; C: 70-79; D: 60-69; F: 0-59

ASSIGNMENTS

RHETORICAL ANALYSIS: Students will choose an essay, either from the Debates section from *Crossing into America*, pp. 272-293 or online. Some sources/websites to find good essays: *The Atlantic*, *The New Yorker*, *Slate*, *Mic*, *Time*, *Reuters*, *The Washington Post*, *Paris Review*, and *The LA Times*. The only criteria is that the source has to be an argument (no histories, profiles, interview or origin stories) and has to be at least 3-5 pages long if it is printed as a PDF. If you are choosing an online source, clear your choice with me, before you begin drafting your assignment. In critiquing a source, you evaluate the validity of an author's ideas and the overall persuasiveness of the author's argument. Use your summarizing skills to focus on the central ideas found in your source text.

For example, you might work on Richard Rodriguez's "Mexico's Children" and find political speeches or historical events connected to building a border wall, or policies that support bilingual education. Another example could be to work on Helena Maria Viramontes's "Cariboo Cafe" and the US's policy on Central American refugees. Another possibility could also be to work on Sherman Alexie's "Indian Education" and the policies pertaining to Native American reservations and documents that discuss about the rights of

the people living on the reservations. You are welcome to read ahead to find a literary text that you are interested in. Do check with me regarding your texts and we will also have conferences.

The second part of the assignment is your response to the situation. Do you agree or disagree with the speech, how has knowing a historical event or reading a public document affected your understanding of the immigration/refugee/ethnicity/race issue in that text, or what are the changes that can be implemented to make the situation of a group of people better.

CRITIQUE AND RESPONSE: For this task, students will choose two texts: one from *Crossing into America*, and the other that is available online. Some of the texts that you can search for in conjunction with the literary text include a political speech, a public document, or a historical event, connected to immigration and the overall idea/ theme.

COMMUNITY ANALYSIS: For this group project, students will be in groups of three to four members. They will choose an immigrant community, with the help of registered student organizations, on-campus. You will try to find shared experiences that immigrants have, based on your interviews. Write a four-to-five page report that tries to answer your research question based on careful observation of the community and a rhetorical analysis of its expressive choices.

RESEARCH ARGUMENT AND BIBLIOGRAPHY: Your final major writing assignment requires you to conduct substantial research in order to discuss a topic of your choosing. Choose a topic and then locate and read at least two outside sources concerning some issue germane to your topic. These will be peer-reviewed articles or online sources. You also need to mention at least two texts that we have read in class, from *Crossing into America* or the other works (Alexie, Lahiri, or Henriquez). Write a well-developed, coherent essay that synthesizes your four sources' arguments and advances your own position on the topic.

ATTENDANCE: You must provide appropriate documentation for any absence for which you wish to be excused. Moreover, during the first week of the semester, you must provide a list of the religious observances that will affect your attendance. You are permitted **3** unexcused absences in the semester. Any additional unexcused absences as well as consistent tardiness (coming late to class, 10 minutes after class begins, for 5 consecutive classes) will be penalized. **If you arrive in class 15 minutes late, it will be considered an absence. Your overall grade for the course will be lowered 2 points for each absence past the allotted amount.**

COMMUNICATION AND TECHNOLOGY POLICY: If you have a problem, question, or concern that is not on the syllabus, feel free to email me. I check my university email account regularly, and I should be able to respond within 24 hours (usually more quickly than that), but please allow for more time on weekends and during holidays.

You will be asked to type papers so please ensure that you have a laptop or you can access the computer labs on campus. There will be certain days when you will work on your laptops in class. If you do not have a laptop, meet me so that we can discuss alternatives. You can also check out laptops from the library.

ASSIGNMENT SUBMISSION: Each student will be required to write papers on different topics. Papers must follow MLA format and must make proper use of grammar, style, and mechanics. If you have difficulty selecting a topic, or difficulty crafting your paper, ask me for help. A handout explaining each assignment

in more detail will be posted to Blackboard under "Assignments." The papers themselves will be due on the dates listed on the syllabus. Late papers will not be accepted except under extraordinary circumstances.

- **All essays and assignments will be submitted in class and online via Safe Assign on Blackboard.**
- **Late submission:** I do not accept papers via email unless there is a documented reason. You must turn in a **hardcopy** of your paper at all times (even if sent via email for a documented reason). If your paper, both online and hard copy, is late, I will **lower your overall score by 5 points for each day that it is late.**

ESSAY FORMATTING: All essays must be typed with black ink in Roman-based 11 or 12-point font. Lines should be double-spaced on single-sided 8.5x11 inch sheets of white paper. MLA documentation style will be used in this class. The following must appear on the top left corner of the first page of each essay: Student's name, Instructor's name, Course Identifier, Date. Page numbers must appear at the top right corner of each page. You can consult the following resource for MLA formatting: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>.

COURSE SCHEDULE

CiA refers to *Crossing into America* and Handbook refer to *The St. Martin's Handbook*. You will be notified of changes, if any, by email and in class. All the homework assignments are due by the next class period.

UNIT 1: RECOGNIZING IMMIGRATION

WEEK 1

- **Tue** - Welcome and introductions. Explanation of Course Policy and Syllabus. 30-minute in-class written reflection on student experiences with immigration, the role of immigrants in the economy, the experiences of immigrants, and the students' expectations for this course (not graded).
Homework: Read chapter 2, pp. 23-43, in *the St. Martin's Handbook*.
- **Thurs** - Define and discuss key terms: "rhetor," "rhetoric," "rhetorical situation/stance," "exigence," "discourse," "discourse community," "literacy," "research." Discuss ideas and history of immigration, stereotypes, and experiences. Introduce and lecture on the idea of a rhetorical analysis.
Homework: Read CiA, pp. 257-269, Handbook: pp. 40-63.

WEEK 2

- **Tue** - Discuss Leti Volpp's "The Legal Mapping of US Immigration, 1065-1996". Annotation of the text; definition of key terms; identification of central argument; consideration of issues. Present and explain prompt for Essay 1 "Rhetorical Analysis." Lecture on initial drafting and organization.
Homework: Read CiA pp. 272-293. Bring your laptops to class next day.
- **Thurs** - In-class writing exercises for generating ideas and planning Essay 1. Lecture on the opinion pieces.
- **Homework:** Read Rodriguez's "Mexico's Children," CiA pp. 197-219. Bring your laptops to class next day.

WEEK 3

- **Tue** - Discuss Rodriguez. Lecture on the reasons and controversy behind immigration. Work on your draft of Essay 1 in class.
Homework: Finish drafting Essay 1. Read Cárdenas's "The Cariboo Café," pp. 130-146.
- **Thurs** - Lecture on editing, thesis statement, argument coherence, conclusion, and MLA citation. Discuss Cárdenas.
Homework: Complete essay draft for peer review. Read chapters 13 & 14 in the *Handbook*, pp. 276-294.

WEEK 4

- **Tue** - Workshop draft of Essay 1. Discussion of chapters 13 and 14 in class.
Homework: revise draft based on the feedback received in class, and read Alexie's "Indian Education": http://www.mpsaz.org/rmhs/staff/dmsokol/101/files/sherman_alexie.pdf.
- **Thurs** - Essay 1 due. Discuss Alexie in class. Present and explain prompt for Essay 2 "Critique and Response." Discuss the development of Essay 2 by focusing on the pros and cons of immigration: resources, economy, and society.
Homework: Read Perez's "Diary of an Undocumented Immigrant," pp. 3-14 and Alvarez's "Our Papers," pp. 15-20.

UNIT TWO: IMMIGRATION AS SOCIAL PRACTICE

WEEK 5

- **Tue** - Discuss Perez and Alvarez and the major issues of immigration: reasons and consequences, including policies and the recent trends of immigration, including the global refugee crisis.
Homework: Read Hagedorn's "Gangster of Love," pp. 59-67, Codrescu's "Bi-lingual," p. 72. Brainstorm and research ideas on topics and ideas in the assigned readings for Essay 2.
- **Thurs** - Discuss Hagedorn and Codrescu.
Homework: Read Bahrapour's "To See and See Again," pp. 39-56.

WEEK 6

- **Tue** - Discuss Bahrapour. Continue developing Essay 2.
Homework: Read Cisneros's "Gerald No Last Name" pp. 57-58 and Acosta's "Crossing a 'piece of earth,'" pp. 73-75.
- **Thurs** - Discuss the articles by Cisneros and Acosta in matters of style and voice. Consider making reference to the concept in chapters 40, 41, 42 of the *Handbook*, pp. 680-699. Workshop draft Essay 2.
Homework: Read chapter 43, "Memorable Prose," pp. 700-706 in the *Handbook*; revise Essay 2 using revision worksheets.

WEEK 7

Individual Conferences (bring revised draft of Essay 2)

UNIT THREE: RECOGNIZING COMMUNITIES

WEEK 8

- **Tue** - Essay 2 due. Review key concepts rhetorical stance, rhetorical situation, discourse community, genre. Present and explain prompt for Essay 3 "Community Analysis." Discuss ideas for Essay 3, either in groups or as a whole class. Read Tan's "Mother Tongue": http://www.olympen.com/pnkduurr/as/mother_text.htm.
- **Thurs** - Discuss Tan. Library's Research Wizard to manage that schedule. Review the idea of rhetorical strategies and how these influence meaning and perceptions of authority. Continue brainstorming for Essay 3.
Homework: Read Kincaid's "Lucy," pp. 89-96, and Pak's "Hae Soon's Song," pp. 97-111.

WEEK 9

- **Tue** - Class discussion and critical response to Kincaid and Pak. Understand critical evaluations and attention to expressive and persuasive strategies in the selections, making sure to clarify what is meant by "rhetorical reading."
Homework: Read Kambanda's "My New World Journey," pp. 147-155.
- **Thurs** - Use Kambanda to highlight the elements of rhetorical analysis and to identify some common rhetorical features and their effects (i.e., the strategies of persuasion). Each group has to submit the names of the members of a particular immigrant community, with help from the various RSOs on campus, to be interviewed for group project community analysis, and the time, date, and location the interview will take place.
Homework: Read Ali's "Snow on the Desert," pp. 156-160, Obejas's "We Came All the Way from Cuba," pp. 161-177, Kingston's "Absorption of Rock," pp. 183-184, and Nixon's "Dreambirds," pp. 68-71.

WEEK 10

- **Tue** - Engage in class discussion of Ali, Obeja, and Kingston. Emphasize and clarify expectations for Essay 3. Students will collaborate in the development of Essay 3. **Homework:** Generate a draft of Essay 3 and bring your copies for peer review. Bring laptop to class next day.
- **Thurs** - Workshop draft of Essay 3 using a revision worksheet. Use chapter 12, pp. 251-275 in the *Handbook* to introduce/review the concept of an annotated bibliography. **Homework:** Further revision of Essay 3 based on in-class feedback. Each student will work on a report (initial thoughts and comments) on the interview they conducted. The report must include a transcript of the interview.

WEEK 11

Individual Conferences (bring revised draft of Essay 3 and the interview report)

Homework: Read Morales's "Immigrants," pp. 237-243 and Saenz's "Exile," pp. 244-254.

UNIT FOUR: PREPARING FOR AN ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE

WEEK 12

- **Tue** - Essay 3 due. Discuss Morales and Saenz.
Homework: Read "America and I" by Yezierska:

<https://natickenglish.wikispaces.com/file/view/America+and+I.pdf> and "American Dream Faces Harsh New Reality" by Shapiro:

<http://www.npr.org/2012/05/29/153513153/american-dream-faces-harsh-new-reality>

- **Thurs** - Discuss Yeziarska and Shapiro. Present and explain prompt for Essay 4 "Immigration Analysis."

Homework: Think about ideas for research paper. Read Lahiri's "Indian Takeout": <http://www.foodandwine.com/articles/indian-takeout> and Henríquez's "Goodbyes": <https://theamericanscholar.org/goodbyes/#.WuKNntTwblU>.

WEEK 13

- **Tue** - Discuss Lahiri and Henríquez. Discuss research activity for Essay 4.
Homework: Collect data and/or continue research activity for Essay 4. Bring laptop to class next day.
- **Thurs** - Students discuss problems that they have encountered in researching their topic and drafting the essay. Work on draft in class.

WEEK 14

- **Tue** - Annotated Bibliography due.
Homework: Continue drafting Essay 4 and bring copies of the draft for peer review
- **Thurs** - In-class workshop draft of Essay 4.
Homework: Further revision of Essay 4 based on in-class feedback.

WEEK 15

Individual Conferences (bring revised draft of Essay 4).

- Submit course evaluations.
- Researched Argument due via SafeAssign.