Spring 2009
English 660
The Invention of Mexican America
Thursday 5-8:30pm

Professor Jesse Alemán
374 Humanities
Office Hours: Th 3:30-4:30
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Required Texts

Course Description
This graduate seminar examines nineteenth and early twentieth-century Mexican American writings to understand the historical process by which Mexican Americans self-consciously invented their ethnonational identity within and against the United States and Greater Mexico. By “invention,” I do not mean discovery or even creation, per se, but following recent turns in Hemispheric American Studies, I mean invention as a process of historical production that brought Mexican America into being as an idea and an identity marker. This process took place in many arenas, ranging from the U.S. congressional floor and courtrooms to newspapers and Anglo American literature, but the focus of this class is how the people we now call Mexican American scripted their own sense of identity in a transnational (rather than regional) context that troubled the borders of the United States even as it raised its own troubling constructions of race, nation, and citizenship. The reading material will balance between primary texts and recently published material on hemispheric and trans-American studies; Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage Project; and Mexican America and Chicano/a studies. We’ll have a very rigorous reading schedule, but the only course requisite is to write a scholarly article related to the course material and submit it to a peer-reviewed journal by the end of the semester.

Course Requirements
Considerable Reading: The seminar will be reading intensive, focusing mainly on primary texts but incorporating theoretical and critical matter as well. The only evaluated requisite in the class is the production and submission of a scholarly article. This requirement consists of the following:

- Perform one rhetorical analysis of a scholarly journal.
  Each student will distribute to the class a 2-page report on a scholarly journal. The report should include submission guidelines; information about the journal; and an assessment of two recent articles published in the journal.
- Craft an abstract and bibliography for a final essay.
  Each student will prepare a 250-word abstract and an author-text-subject bibliography related to the student’s final essay.
- Write and submit for publication your final essay.
  You will be working towards this goal all semester, so you should start thinking about it very early. The length of an “article-length” essay depends on the journal to which you submit your essay; the style (MLA or Chicago) also depends on the venue you select. You should expect to produce at least one draft of your essay before your final draft.

Participation and attendance are not graded because they are fundamentally expected of someone committed to graduate studies in higher education. You are thus expected to do your work: attend each class session; read thoroughly and prepare to discuss the assigned material; conduct research on your own; and think a lot.
Grading Standard
The final grade for the class will be based on the following point values:

Rhetorical Analysis: 25 points
Abstract and Bibliography: 25 points
Final Essay: 50 points
Getting Published: Fame and Fortune

There are 100 points total for the class. Your assignments will be given a numerical mark and an equivalent letter grade, and final grades will be determined on a traditional percentage system, with the appropriate plus or minus sign: 100-90%=A; 89-80%=B; 79-70%=C; 69-60=D; 59% and below=F.

Grades of Incomplete will not be given.

This course is not necessarily driven by the final grade; its goal is the successful publication of your essay to a scholarly journal, in which case, at the end of the semester, I approach your essay as I would any essay sent to me for review by a journal. Of course, there are two major differences: the process isn’t anonymous, and we will have discussed your topic at least once before you wrote it. Still, I’ll use the usual categories set forth by journals—accept; accept with revision; revise and resubmit; reject, along with comments and feedback—for my final evaluation of your essay.

Codettas:
Any student in this course who has a disability that prevents the fullest expression of abilities should contact me as soon as possible so that we can discuss class requirements.

The English Department affirms its commitment to the joint responsibility of instructors and students to foster and maintain a positive learning environment.

All cell phone equipment must be placed in the “off” position during class time.

Course Schedule
1/22—Introduction: On Mexican America and Hemispheric Studies
   Claire Fox, “Theorizing the Hemisphere” and “Hemispheric Studies”
   Moya and Saldivar, “Transamerican Imaginary
   Jeff Karem, “Postcolonial Panamericanism”
   Donald Pease, “Reinventing the Americas”

1/29—Mignolo, The Idea of Latin America
   *Alcoff, “Mignolo’s Epistemology”

2/5—Ruiz de Burton, Who Would Have Thought It?
   *Murphy, from Hemispheric Imaginings

2/12—de Zavala, History and Legends of the Alamo
   *Limon, “The Other American South”

2/19—González, Caballero
   *Rodríguez, “Caballero’s Global Continuum”

2/26—Gómez, Manifest Destinies
   *Weber, Foreigners in their Native Land
   *From Herencia: “Protest Rally” and “Plea for the Spanish Language”
3/5—Mena, *The Collected Stories of María Cristina Mena*
  *Rich, “Dramatic Irony and Double Voice”*

3/12—Chávez, *The Short Stories of Fray Angélico Chávez*
  *Readings TBA*

3/26—Suárez, *Chicano Sketches*
  *Readings TBA*

4/2—Rivera, *The Emergence of Mexican America*
  *From Herencia: Editorials in CA and Proclamations in TX; The Mexican Question*

4/9—Paredes, *George Washington Gómez*
  *Saldívar, “The Borderlands of Culture”*

4/16—Pérez, *El Coyote*
  *Aranda, “One Nation under New England”*

4/23-4/30—Research and Writing Workshop

5/7—Closing session

5/14—Final essay due.

One copy of your essay for me, plus another copy or copies, a cover letter, and an envelope addressed to your selected journal must be submitted to me or my mailbox by 12pm; I’ll mail it to the journal. If your journal accepts electronic submission, then leave a hard copy of your essay in my box and bcc me on your online submission.