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21H.221 The Places of Migration in United States History
Fall 2006

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Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Migration and Immigration in United States History

21H.221/11.019J Fall 2008

Professor Christopher Capozzola

The idea that the United States is a “nation of immigrants” is one of the fundamental premises of American history and popular culture. Of course, the United States *is* historically a nation of immigrants. Yet cross-border migration characterizes the experience of many nations, and even this nation of immigrants has had a changing and uneasy relationship to actual immigrants in our communities. This class takes up the challenge of examining migration in United States history from both a global and a local perspective. We will examine how ideas and representations of immigration have also shaped politics, economics, and demography in the modern United States.

Chronologically, the class begins in the late nineteenth century, with two founding moments: the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 (the first major federal law regulating immigration) and the establishment of the immigration processing center at Ellis Island in 1891. These events responded to and ushered in an era of mass migration from Europe and Asia that is the focus of the first half of the course. In the semester’s second half, we will focus on the mass migrations since the mid-1960s, returning to many of the sites we studied earlier. We will also visit several area sites to get to examine the history and culture of immigration. Right now two trips are planned: one to New York City, another to Lawrence, Massachusetts. These are not required, but recommended.

Requirements: The success of this class depends on the active participation of all students. Class **participation** (20%) represents a substantial portion of the grade, and will be evaluated in terms of preparation, participation in large and small group discussion, active listening, collaboration, and overall contributions to the class experience during the term. Needless to say, if you do not attend a class it is impossible for you to contribute to it. In preparation for discussion, you may be asked to write short response papers or send me your thoughts and questions by email. Completion of these exercises will factor in your participation grade. An additional portion of the grade will be based on participation, preparation, and presentation of the **collaborative research project** (10%) at the end of the semester.

Everyone will write **one 3-5pp. essay** (20%) and a **longer 11-14pp. essay** (40%) on a topic of your choosing. Preparatory **writing exercises** (10%) will help students develop a topic, a bibliography, and an argument in advance of the final paper itself. There are no midterm or final examinations in this class, but you must receive a passing grade on every portion of the class in order to pass the class as a whole. Adherence to standards of academic honesty is required; if you have any questions about how to go about your writing or cite your sources, don’t hesitate to ask. A selection of valuable information can be found under the Writing Resources link on the class website.

Books: Required books are available at the MIT bookstore. Copies of all books have also been placed on reserve in the Humanities Library. Additional readings are available through the class website or handouts. Readings should be completed by the beginning of the class under which they appear.

PART ONE: THEN

WEEK ONE: INTRODUCTION

Wednesday September 3: Lecture and Discussion: Where Is Immigration History?

READING: Gish Jen, "Who's Irish?" in *Who's Irish: Stories* (1999), pp. 1-16. [handout]

WEEK TWO: LAWRENCE

Monday September 8: Lecture: European Migrants at the Turn of the Century

READING: Bruce Watson, *Bread and Roses: Mills, Migrants, and the Struggle for the American Dream* (2005), 1-118.

Wednesday September 10: Discussion

READING: Bruce Watson, *Bread and Roses: Mills, Migrants, and the Struggle for the American Dream* (2005), 119-240.

WEEK THREE: CHINATOWN

Monday September 15: Lecture: Asian Immigrants at the Turn of the Century

READING: Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown* (2001), 1-104.

Wednesday September 17: Discussion

READING: Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown* (2001), 158-203, 225-258.

WEEK FOUR: MAPPING LAWRENCE, MAPPING CHINATOWN

Monday September 22

Student Holiday. No class.

Optional trip to Lawrence, Massachusetts. Details to follow.

Wednesday September 24: Lawrence Session

WRITING: FIRST PAPER due today.

We will meet with representatives from the MIT@Lawrence program during class.

WEEK FIVE: SOUTH FLORIDA

Monday September 29: Lecture: The Worlds of Caribbean Migration

READING: Gary R. Mormino and George E. Pozzetta, *The Immigrant World of Ybor City: Italians and Their Latin Neighbors in Tampa, 1885-1985* (1987), 43-96. [electronic reserve]

Louis A. Pérez, Jr., *On Becoming Cuban: Identity, Nationality, and Culture* (1999), 16-95. [electronic reserve]

Wednesday October 1: Discussion

READING: In addition to discussing the readings for Monday September 29, students will also have a visual assignment to look at images of southern Florida's immigrant communities in the early twentieth century.

WEEK SIX: THE BORDER

Monday October 6: Lecture: Before There Was a Border

READING: Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (2004), 1-90, 126-166, begin reading.

Wednesday October 8: Discussion and Screening

READING: Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (2004), 1-90, 126-166, finish reading.

SCREENING: *The Jazz Singer* (1927).

WEEK SEVEN: HOLLYWOOD

Monday October 13: Holiday

Happy Canadian Thanksgiving!

Wednesday October 15: Discussion and Screening

READING: Elizabeth Ewen, *Immigrant Women in the Land of Dollars: Life and Culture on the Lower East Side, 1890-1925* (1985), pp. 207-224. [electronic reserve]

Steven J. Ross, *Working-Class Hollywood: Silent Film and the Shaping of Class in America* (1998), pp. 1-33. [electronic reserve]

WEEK EIGHT: LOWER EAST SIDE/ELLIS ISLAND

Monday October 20: Lecture: Remembering Ethnicity in an Age of Multiculturalism

READING: Hasia R. Diner, *Lower East Side Memories: A Jewish Place in America* (2000), begin reading.

Wednesday October 22: Discussion

READING: Hasia R. Diner, *Lower East Side Memories: A Jewish Place in America* (2000), finish reading.

Saturday October 25

TRIP: New York City. Details to be finalized.

WEEK NINE: WAS THE GREAT MIGRATION GREAT?

Monday October 27: Lecture: Migrations from the South

WRITING: RESEARCH PAPER TOPICS due today.

READING: Nicholas Lemann, *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How It Changed America* (1992), pp. 1-221, begin reading.

Wednesday October 29: Discussion

READING: Nicholas Lemann, *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How It Changed America* (1992), pp. 1-221, finish reading.

READING: Jack Temple Kirby, "The Southern Exodus: A Primer for Historians." *Journal of Southern History* 49 (November 1983): 585-600.

WEEK TEN: MANILA

Monday November 3: Lecture: American Imperialism and Filipino/a Experience

READING: Catherine Ceniza Choy, *Empire of Care: Nursing and Migration in Filipino American History* (2003), pp. 1-57.

Wednesday November 5: Discussion

READING: Catherine Ceniza Choy, *Empire of Care: Nursing and Migration in Filipino American History* (2003), pp. 93-192.

Jason DeParle, "A Good Provider Is One Who Leaves," *New York Times Magazine*, April 22, 2007, 50-57ff. [electronic reserve]

WEEK ELEVEN: COLD WAR, CIVIL RIGHTS, AND A NEW IMMIGRATION LAW

Monday November 10: Holiday.

Fall Holiday. No class.

Wednesday November 12: Lecture/Discussion: What's New about "New Immigration"?

READING: Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (2004), 169-224.

WEEK TWELVE: SOUTH FLORIDA

Monday November 17: Lecture: Miami: Capital of the Caribbean

READING: Nancy Raquel Mirabel, "'Ser de Aquí': Beyond the Cuban Exile Model," in *American Dreaming, Global Realities: Rethinking U.S. Immigration History*, ed. Donna R. Gabaccia and Vicki L. Ruiz (2007). [electronic reserve]

Alejandro Portes, *City on the Edge: The Transformation of Miami* (1993), pp. tba. [electronic reserve]

Sarah Banet-Weiser, "Elian Gonzalez and the 'Purpose of America': Nation, Family, and the Child-Citizen." *American Quarterly* 55 (June 2003): 149-178. [electronic reserve]

Adrian Burgos, Jr., "Latinos and Baseball's Global Turn," in *Playing America's Game: Baseball, Latinos, and the Color Line* (2007). [electronic reserve]

Wednesday November 19: Discussion

WRITING: RESEARCH PAPER PROSPECTUS due today.

WEEK THIRTEEN: THE BORDER

Monday November 24: Collaborative Research

We will begin our collaborative research project on the US-Mexican Border today.

Wednesday November 26: Thanksgiving

No class.

WEEK FOURTEEN: THE BORDER

Monday December 1: Collaborative Research

WRITING: ROUGH DRAFT OF RESEARCH PAPER due at the beginning of class today for those students who choose to write one. This is not required.

Collaborative research project presentations.

Wednesday December 3: Presentations

Collaborative research project presentations.

WEEK FIFTEEN: CONCLUSION

Monday December 8: Discussion/Screening

SCREENING: *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* (2002).

Wednesday December 10: Discussion/Screening

SCREENING: *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* (2002).

WRITING: FINAL PAPER due today.