The 2016 presidential election brought a great deal of attention to immigration and immigrants in American society. Much of this debate perpetuated harmful stereotypes, dangerously stoked fears about outsiders, and echoed a nativist rhetoric that many believed had disappeared from public discourse. The debate also ignored how current discussions are deeply rooted in century-long conversations about who is allowed into the country and what it means to be an American. Indeed, anti-immigrant rhetoric and immigrant surveillance, detention, and deportation have been a defining feature of American politics and state and federal policy since the 19th century.

This syllabus seeks to provide historical context to current debates over immigration reform, integration, and citizenship. Many Americans have a romanticized idea of the nation’s immigrant past. In fact, America’s immigration history is more contested, more nuanced, and more complicated than many assume. Then, like now, many politicians, public commentators, critics, and media organizations have greatly influenced Americans’ understanding of immigration and the role that immigrants play in U.S. society.

The syllabus follows a chronological overview of U.S. immigration history, but it also includes thematic weeks that cover salient issues in political discourse today such as xenophobia, deportation policy, and border policing. As there are many ways of teaching immigration history, the topics included here are not intended to be exhaustive. Rather, we have selected readings that directly offer historical context for understanding contemporary immigration politics and have proven useful in our teaching. We also include a short list of primary sources and multimedia to assist in teaching and learning. When available, we link to readings, documents, and teaching resources available online.

We hope that this syllabus will help educators, activists, and citizens in their teaching, advocacy, and public discussions about immigration in the United States historically and today. We also hope that it will assist policymakers who seek to avoid the mistakes of the past.
Follow these instructions on how to set up Google Scholar to access restricted readings through your college/university/other library.

⚠️: Link requires subscription access which may be available via your library.

⚠️: Some preview pages available.

WEEK 1

Why study immigration?

What does the study of immigration reveal about U.S. history and which stories we tell about ourselves as a people?


● Christiane Harzig and Dirk Hoerder, with Donna Gabaccia, “Migration in Human History—the Long View,” in *What is Migration History?* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2009), 8-52


WEEK 2

Settlers, Servants, and Slaves in British, French, and Spanish Colonial America

How does inequality, the freedom to move, and access to citizenship have its roots in the colonial period?

- Paul Spickard, “Immigration, Race, Ethnicity, Colonialism,” in Almost All Aliens (New York: Routledge, 2007), 1-28


- Andrés Reséndez, The Other Slavery: The Uncovered Story of Indian Enslavement In America (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2016)


Primary Sources

- Diary of John Harrower (indentured servant), 1773-1776, Archive.org
- Olaudah Equiano, The Interesting Narrative and Other Writings, 1789, Project Gutenberg Ebook
- 1790 Naturalization Act, Densho Encyclopedia
The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database, Emory University

Multimedia

- "In Motion: The African-American Migration Experience," The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture
- Africans in America: "America's Journey Through Slavery," PBS
- "The Atlantic Slave Trade and Slave Life in the Americas: A Visual Record," Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and University of Virginia

Week 3
Global Migrations, 1830-1930

How did dramatic political, economic, and social changes during the 19th century transform and encourage migration to and within the United States? What were the consequences of U.S. military, territorial, and economic expansion for indigenous peoples, slaves, immigrants, colonized peoples, and native-born and naturalized Americans?


**Primary Sources**

- [Irish Immigrant Letters Home](http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/), Historical Society of Pennsylvania
- [Ellis Island Photographs](http://www.newseum.org/), New York Public Library

**Multimedia**
WEEK 4

Historical Origins of Contemporary Nativism and Xenophobia

Why has immigration been a topic of perennial debate in the U.S.? How has the fear of foreigners and the desire to define and protect an “American” identity evolved over time?

- Moustafa Bayoumi, excerpt from *How Does it Feel to Be a Problem?: Being Young and Arab In America*, NY Magazine, 2008


**Primary Sources**


● Ann Coulter, excerpt from *Adios America: The Left’s Plan to Turn Our Country into a Third World Hellhole* (Ragnery, 2016), published in the *New York Post*, May 31, 2015

● Benjamin Franklin, *Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind, Peopling of Countries, etc.* (Tarrytown, NY: William Abbatt, reprinted 1918)

● *Immigration Restriction League Records, 1893-1921*, Harvard University Library

● U.S. Immigration Commission, *Dillingham Commission, 1907-1911*


● Political Cartoons about Irish immigration from *Harper’s Weekly*

● Samuel P. Huntington, “The Hispanic Challenge,” *Foreign Policy*, October 28, 2009
WEEK 5
Mass Migration and the Rise of Federal Immigration Law

How did policy makers increasingly use race, class, political ideology, health and ability, gender, and sexuality to favor the entry of particular groups and restrict others? How did immigrants and their American-born children persevere during an age of restriction?

- Woodrow Wilson’s Veto Message on the 1915 Immigration Bill, The American Presidency Project

**Primary Sources**

● *Asiatic Exclusion League, "Proceedings," 1908*, University of Minnesota Law Library
● *Chae Chan Ping v. United States (The Chinese Exclusion Case), 1889*
● *Chinese Exclusion Act*, 1882
● Frederick Douglass “Our Composite Nationality,” 1869, Teaching American History
● *Political Cartoons about the “Chinese Question,” Harper’s Weekly*
● Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives* (Dover Publications reprint, 1901)
● Theodore Roosevelt, “True Americanism,” 1894, Teaching American History
WEEK 6
The Closed Gate (1924-1965)? Migration, Immigration, and Citizenship

Who settled in the United States during the 'era of exclusion'? How did the 'era of exclusion' change Americans’ ideas about belonging, citizenship, and labor?


**Primary Sources**

- Immigration Quotas, 1925-1927, History Matters
- “Shut the Door:” A Senator Speaks for Immigration Restriction, History Matters
- “The Senate’s Declaration of War:” Japan Responds to Japanese Exclusion, History Matters
- U.S. v. Bhagat Singh Thind (1923), History Matters
- Repatriation and Deportation of Mexicans 1932-1936, Boulder County Latino History

**Multimedia**

- “14: Dred Scott, Wong Kim Ark, and Vanessa Lopez,” Graham Street Productions (documentary film)
- “A Class Apart,” PBS (documentary film)
- “Chicano!” (documentary film)
- “Dollar a Day, Ten Cents a Dance” (documentary film)
- “Race: The Power of an Illusion,” episode 3 (documentary film)
- “The Jazz Singer” (film)

**WEEK 7**

**World War II and the Cold War: The Geopolitics of Immigration Reforms**

How did international conflicts lead the United States to diminish the rights of individuals categorized as “enemy aliens”? How did foreign relations influence the reform of immigration and naturalization laws for groups who had faced near exclusion from the U.S. and had been denied access to citizenship?


Primary Sources

- *Ex parte Endo (323 US 283)*, U.S. Supreme Court
- John F. Kennedy, "A Nation of Immigrants", Anti-Defamation League Archives
- *Korematsu v. United States, 323 U.S. 214 (1944)*, U.S. Supreme Court
- *Whom Shall We Welcome*, U.S. President’s Commission on Immigration and Naturalization, 1953
- “Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” United Nations

Multimedia

- “A Family Gathering” (documentary film)
- “America and the Holocaust: Deceit and Indifference“ (documentary film)
- “Carlos Eire: A Cuban-American Searches For Roots” (podcast)
- *Densho*: The Japanese Experience during WWII (multimedia website)
- “How to Spot a Jap” (digitized book)
- “War and Peace,” Episode 3, *The Latino Americans* (documentary film)
- “The Legacy of Heart Mountain” (documentary film)
- “The Zoot Suit Riots” (documentary film)
WEEK 8  
**Family, Gender, and Sexuality**

*How does immigration impact gender and family relations?*  
*How has immigration policy, gender inequality, and discrimination against LGBT immigrants affected the freedom to move and the immigrant experience?*


**Primary Sources**

• Births Outside of Marriage Decline for Immigrant Women, Pew Research Center

• Digitizing Immigrant Letters, Immigration History Research Center Archives

• Immigrant Stories (digital stories about transnational families, identity, and second generation experiences) Immigration History Research Center

• Immigrants Write to Families Back Home, Johnstown Area Heritage Association

• Primary Source Materials relating to LGBTQ Immigrants and Asylum Seekers, Immigration Equality

• U.S. border apprehensions of Families and Unaccompanied Children Jump Dramatically, Pew Research Center

**Multimedia**

• Crossing Over (documentary)

• Transgression (documentary)

**WEEK 9**

**The 1965 Hart-Celler Act and the Remaking of Immigrant America**

Which groups of immigrants did the new law privilege, and what contradictions did the new law produce? What was so new about the “new” immigration following the 1965 Hart-Celler Act?


- Muzaffar Chishti, Faye Hipsman, and Isabel Ball, “Fifty Years On, the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act Continues to Reshape the United States,” *Migration Policy Institute*, October 15, 2015

**Primary Sources**
- First Days Project
- Documenting the Southeast Asian American Experience, Documenting the Southeast Asian Experience, UC Irvine
- The 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act (Hart-Celler Act), University of Washington Library

**Multimedia**
- Audio excerpt of Johnson’s speech
- Global Boston: A Portal to the Region’s Immigrant Past and Present, Boston College (website)
- “1965 Immigration Law Changed Face of America,” National Public Radio (podcast and article)
- “Prejudice and Pride,” Episode 5, *The Latino Americans* (documentary film)
- “Peril and Promise,” Episode 6, *The Latino Americans* (documentary film)

**WEEK 10**

**Refugee and Asylum Policy**

*How are refugees and asylees different from immigrants? Why does the United States prioritize their admission? How are they selected? How is U.S. refugee resettlement policy shaped by U.S. international relations?*

- Carl J. Bon Tempo, *Americans At the Gate: The United States and Refugees During the Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008)
Migrants?” in Seeking Refuge: Central American Migration to Mexico, the United States, and Canada (University of California Press, 2006); and María Cristina García, “America Has Never Actually Welcomed the World’s Huddled Masses,” Washington Post, November 20, 2015

- David W. Haines, Safe Haven?: A History of Refugees In America (Sterling, VA: Kumarian Press, 2010)
- Aihwa Ong, Buddha Is Hiding: Refugees, Citizenship, the New America (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003)
- Philip Schrag, Asylum Denied: A Refugee’s Struggle for Safety in America (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009)

Primary Sources

- The 1980 Refugee Act
- Immigrant Stories [digital stories created by recent refugees, including a digital exhibit of Southeast Asian Refugee Stories created by the Immigration History Research Center]

Multimedia

- Amnesty International, 7 Free Short Films About Refugees Recommended by Human Rights Educators
- Amnesty International, “Seeking Safety,” [Eight interactive and adaptable activities to enable 11-16 year olds explore asylum in a participatory way. Includes background information on refugees and asylum-seekers to support teachers in discussions or Q&A sessions]
First They Killed My Father: A Daughter of Cambodia Remembers (documentary film)

Four POV Documentaries to Discuss the Syrian Refugee Crisis

Lost Boys of Sudan (documentary film)

La Jaula de Oro/The Golden Dream (documentary film)

The Betrayal: Nerakhoon (documentary film)

UNHCR, “Against All Odds: The Game that Allows you to Experience what it’s like to be a refugee”

Valeria Fernández, illustrated by Dan Carino, “These asylum seekers are being forced to raise their kids in immigration ‘jails,’” July 7, 2016, Public Radio International

WEEK 11

How Globalization Produces Migration: Immigration Law, Economic Policy, and Global Markets in Skilled and Unskilled Workers

*How do immigration restrictions serve corporate interests? How do immigration laws benefit "skilled" workers and disadvantage "unskilled" workers?*

- Jeanne Batalova, “H-1B Temporary Skilled Worker Program,” Migration Policy Institute, Oct. 7, 2010
- Ryszard Cholewinski, “Protecting Migrant Workers in a Globalized World,” Migration Policy Institute, March 1, 2005
- Jim Hightower, “Immigrants Come Here Because Globalization Took Their Jobs Back There,” Alternet, February 6, 2008


Luka Klimaviciute, “To Stay or Not To Stay: The Calculus for International STEM Students in the United States,” Migration Policy Institute, January 4, 2017

Ronald L. Mize and Alicia C.S. Swords, *Consuming Mexican Labor: From the Bracero Program to NAFTA* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010)


**Primary Sources**


*Top Ten Immigration Myths and Facts*, National Immigration Forum

*Yearbook of Immigration Statistics*, Department of Homeland Security

*Guest Workers: New Solution, New Problems?* Pew Research Center

*Industries of Unauthorized Immigrant Workers* Pew Research Center

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**WEEK 12**

**Undocumented Immigrants / Immigrant Rights**

*How did immigrants become “illegal?” What does it feel like to live in the shadows? How have immigrants and their allies fought for rights, protection, and belonging?*


**Primary Sources**
- Stories from the Define American project
Patrick Radden Keefe, “The Snakehead,” The New Yorker April 24, 2006

Mike Luckovich, “Show me your papers,” Atlanta Journal Constitution, April 30, 2010 (via Flickr)

Jeff Parker, “They say they’re building a wall because many of us enter illegally…”, Florida Today, 2006 (via Imgur)

Lydia Kitahara, “My Life as an Out-of-Status Immigrant, Shared After 32 Years” Huffington Post, April 22, 2016


Multimedia

“History of the Undocumented Immigrant,” Lower East Side Tenement Museum

Crossing Arizona (documentary film)

Documented (documentary film)


WEEK 13
Border Walls & Border Policing

Why do nation-states build walls and police borders? What impact do walls and border policing have on individuals, families, and communities? How do they shape our views of immigrants and our neighbors to the north and south? Why are borders more permeable for some people -- and goods -- than for others?

Peter Andreas, Border Games: Policing the U.S.-Mexico Divide (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009)


• Todd Miller, *Border Patrol Nation: Dispatches from the Front Lines of Homeland Security* (San Francisco: City Lights, 2014)


**Primary Sources**

• *Border Battles: The U.S. Immigration Debates*, Social Science Research Council

• *Bracero History Archive*


• *Report of the Boundary Commission upon the Survey and Re-marking of the Boundary between the United States and Mexico West of the Rio Grande, 1891-96*, includes 258 photographs of the border in the late 19th century, University of North Texas Digital Library

• *Undocumented Migration Project*, University of Michigan


**Multimedia**

• *Border Cantos*, Richard Misrach, Guillermo Galindo, and Josh Kun

• *Borderland*, National Public Radio

• *Raising Barriers: A New Age of Walls*, *Washington Post*

• *Visualizing the US-Mexico Border*, The Intercept

• *Walls of Shame: The US-Mexican Border*, Al Jazeera English
Post-9/11 America

In the wake of the terrorist attacks and the U.S.-led War on Terror, how did concerns for national security affect immigration policy? How did the terrorist attacks - and the U.S. response - influence American attitudes towards immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers? How have the long-standing fears of invasion by populations considered “unassimilable” justified the continued expansion of border controls in the name of national security?

- Moustafa Bayoumi, How Does it Feel to Be a Problem?: Being Young and Arab In America (New York: Penguin Press, 2008)
- Deepa Iyer, We Too Sing America: South Asian, Arab, Muslim, and Sikh Immigrants Shape Our Multiracial Future (New York: The New Press, 2015)
- Tram Nguyen, We Are All Suspects Now: Untold Stories From Immigrant Communities After 9/11 (Boston: Beacon Press, 2005)

Primary Sources

- Five Ways Immigration System Changed after 9/11, ABC News
- Statement of Senator Patrick Leahy, Chairman, Senate Judiciary Committee Subcommittee on Immigration "Effective Immigration Controls to Deter Terrorism"; October 17, 2001, Yale Law School
- Statement of Dr. Demetrios G. Papademetriou Co-Director and Deborah Waller Meyers Policy Analyst Migration Policy Institute Before the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on
WEEK 15
Deportation Nation

Who has been targeted for deportation throughout United States history, and why? How has expulsion shaped who is considered to be an insider and outsider, and who is considered to be deserving and undeserving? How does the history of deportation challenge the United States' reputation as "a nation of immigrants"?

- Francisco E. Balderrama and Raymond Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006)
- Bill Ong Hing, *Deporting Our Souls: Values, Morality and Immigration Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006)


Primary Sources

● *The Bisbee Deportation of 1917* (Web Exhibit with newspapers, photographs, maps, letters, and interviews), University of Arizona Library

● *Immigration Detention Maps and Statistics*, Community Initiatives for Visiting Immigrants in Confinement (CIVIC)

● *TRAC Immigration Project*, Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse

● *War Resistance, Anti-Militarism, and Deportation, 1917-1919*, The Emma Goldman Papers, UC Berkeley Library

Multimedia

● “*Mass Deportation May Sound Unlikely, But It's Happened Before,*” National Public Radio, September 8, 2015

● “*Inside a Georgia Immigration Court, One Man Fights to Stay with His Family,*” National Public Radio, April 28, 2016

● *ICED-I Can End Deportation* (video game that teaches players about current immigration laws about detention and deportation)

● “*Sentenced Home*” (documentary film)

● “*Immigrant America: The High Cost of Deporting Parents,*” *VICE News*, March 19, 2014

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