Comparative US borders syllabus US-Mexico and US-Canada

Adam Arenson
HIST 498 (Independent Study):
Comparing the U.S.-Canada and U.S.-Mexico Borders Since 1880

Dr. Adam Arenson  Office: Miguel 414  Summer I 2018, hours to be arranged
Office Hours: by appt.  Email (best): adam.arenson@manhattan.edu  Ph: 718-862-7317
or cell

Course Description
This course will compare the experience at the U.S.-Canada and U.S.-Mexico borders
since the beginning of border enforcement with the Chinese Exclusion Act through today,
focusing primarily on the lived experience of those crossing both borders in each
direction. Reading primary and secondary sources, we will consider how race, gender,
religion, disability, occupational skills, and other factors affect experiences at the border,
and the reasons for the “thickening” of the border over time, including the Mexican
Revolution, Great Depression, and 9/11.

Assignments:
--Critical analysis assignments about every set of assigned readings (3-page papers)
--Discussions of each set of assigned readings.
--15-page research paper of some aspect of course materials, supplemented with
additional primary and secondary sources.

Sources will be grouped into ten sets of assigned readings.

Primary Sources:
1882 Chinese Exclusion Act
Chinese at the Borders cartoon
1912 Mexican immigration in the shadow of the Revolution
1915 Plan de San Diego
1917 migration restrictions
1917 protesting gasoline baths
1928 John Box on immigration restriction
1965 new immigration law
1993 NAFTA
1994 condemning border enforcement from a Native perspective
2005 Minuteman vigilantes
2008 tribal government condemns border wall
2010 drug trade violence

Secondary Essays:

States, and the Peoples in Between in North American History,” AHR Vol. 104, No. 3
(June 1999): 814-841.


Sheila McManus, *The Line Which Separates: Race, Gender, and the Making of the Alberta-Montana Borderlands* (Nebraska, 2005) - selections


María Cristina García, *Seeking Refuge: Central American Migration to Mexico, the United States, and Canada* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), selections


Ramón Saldívar, The Borderlands of Culture: Américo Paredes and the Transnational Imaginary (Duke, 2006), selections


Amitava Kumar, Passport Photos (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), selections.