

WS 340: The Latina Experience in the U.S.
Professor Guisela Latorre

Time and Days: Mondays and Wednesdays
1:30-3:18
Classroom: SO 0105
Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 3:30-
5pm or by appointment

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Course Description

Throughout this quarter we will explore the various layers of complexity that have historically made up the Latina experience in the United States. Traditionally defined as women of Latin American descent born and/or raised in the United States, Latinas form part of the fastest growing ethnic group in this country yet in most aspects of public, social and cultural life they remain largely underrepresented, often rendered invisible through structural processes of erasure. Through a careful analysis of the specific histories and experiences of Latinas, we will gain a greater understanding of the reasons behind this persistent marginalization while at the same time acquire increased knowledge about their struggles over empowerment and self-determination. In other words, in spite of the multiple oppressions that Latinas have suffered at the intersection of class, race, gender and sexuality, their personal and collective *testimonios* as well as their intellectual interventions provide effective strategies for women of color to survive and thrive in a neo-colonial and patriarchal world.

While the Latina population in the U.S. is deeply heterogeneous and diverse, we will focus primarily on the experiences of Chicanas (Mexican-American women), *centroamericanas* (Central American women) and *caribeñas* (Caribbean Latinas,) for they compose a larger portion of the population in this country. Moreover, this class will not only highlight these women's histories, it will also underscore the intellectual contribution made by Latina feminist scholars to the disciplines of feminism, ethnic studies, postcolonial theory and others. Theoretical concepts like *testimonio*, *mestizaje*, and diaspora, just to name a few, have been critically influenced by Latina feminist thought. We will discover, however, that these ideas are deeply rooted in women's lived experience thus putting theory and practice into an intimate dialogue.

A note on language: Even though knowledge of Spanish is not required for this class, you will find that many Latina feminist writers use code-switching in their writing, that is, they utilize both English and Spanish as part of their intellectual vocabulary. Translations or explanations of Spanish words will be provided in class as the need arises. Nevertheless, you will be expected to familiarize yourself with a few words in Spanish that have become critical components of Latina feminist discourse (*la frontera*, *la familia*, etc.).

Required Texts (available in UBX)

The Latina Feminist Group. *Telling to Live: Latina Feminist Testimonios*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2001.

Milagros Ricourt and Ruby Danta. *Hispanas de Queens: Latino Panethnicity in a New York City Neighborhood*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003.

Antoinette Sedillo López, ed. *Latina Issues: Fragments of Historia (Ella) (Herstory)*. New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1999.

Readings posted on the WS 340 CARMEN website.

Disability Accommodation

The Office of Disability Services, located in 150 Pomerene Hall, offers services for students with disabilities. They can be reached at 292-3307. If you wish to have a disability accommodation, be sure to let me know right away.

Course Requirements

- 1- Midterm Examination (25%): You will be tested on the concepts and ideas covered in class. This will include material from the lectures and the readings. This exam will be comprised of two parts: a) ten fill-in-the-blank and short answer questions, and b) two essay questions. The midterm will cover material from the first half of the quarter.
- 2- Final Examination (25%): This exam will have the same format as the midterm. The final will cover material from the second half of the quarter.
- 3- Quizzes 1 and 2 (5% each): This will be fill-in-the-blank and short answer quizzes meant to prepare you for the midterm and final examinations respectively.
- 4- *Testimonio* Research Paper (25%): You will write a 7-10 page paper based on a real person's *testimonio* account coupled with secondary source research material. Specific guidelines for this paper will be handed out during the second week of class.
- 5- Attendance and Participation (15%): You are required to punctually attend every class meeting and actively participate in class discussion. In order to fully participate in class discussion, however, it will be necessary for you to complete the required readings for that day before you come to class.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a serious offense that is strictly forbidden. Use of another's work without proper documentation, intentional or not, is tantamount to plagiarism and thus unacceptable. For information on plagiarism and how to avoid it, see the following link:

http://cstw.osu.edu/writingCenter/handouts/research_plagiarism.cfm

Class Discussion Etiquette

As many courses on feminism, gender and ethnic studies do, this class deals with numerous controversial and sensitive issues that often elicit heated discussion. I expect that a number of you will disagree with the opinions expressed in the class readings and discussion. I certainly expect you to express your honest opinion. Nevertheless, all in-class dialogue needs to happen within an atmosphere of civil intellectual exchange and mutual respect. Personal attacks, loud speaking and cutting people off before they are done talking will not be permitted.

Personal Emergencies

If you experience a personal emergency during this quarter such as a serious illness, death in the family, accidents and/or other unforeseen circumstances that may potentially prevent you from completing coursework in this class, please contact me immediately. I will deal with these emergencies on a case-to-case basis. Be aware, however, that you will need to provide documentation for any reported

emergency in order to for me to help you. Note that social events such as weddings, vacations, *quinceañeras* and barmitzvahs, to cite just a few examples, are not considered emergencies.

Class Calendar

WEEK 1

Wednesday, September 19

Introduction

WEEK 2

Monday, September 24

The Colonial Legacy (Part 1)

Reading:

Adelaida R. Del Castillo, "Malintzin Tenepal: a preliminary look into a new perspective," *Latina Issues*, 2-27.

Wednesday, September 26

The Colonial Legacy (Part 2)

Readings:

Deena J. Gonzalez, "The widowed women of Santa Fe: assessments on the lives of an unmarried population, 1850-80," *Latina Issues*, 29-54.

Mario T. Garcia, "The Chicana in American history: the Mexican women of El Paso, 1880-1920 a case study," *Latina Issues*, 79-101.

Eileen J. Suárez Findlay, "Motherhood, Marriage and Morality: Male Liberals and Bourgeois Feminists, 1873-1898," *Imposing Decency: The Politics of Sexuality and Race in Puerto Rico, 1870-1920* (2000), 53-76. CARMEN.

WEEK 3

Monday, October 1

Chicanas

Patricia Zavella, "Silence Begins at Home," *Telling to Live*, 43-54.

Norma E. Cantú, "A Chicana Feminist Teacher Who Writes/A Chicana Feminist Writer Who Teaches," *Telling to Live*, 124-131.

Wednesday, October 3

Centroamericanas

Norma Stoltz Chinchilla and Nora Hamilton, "Central American immigrants: diverse populations, changing communities," *The Columbia history of Latinos in the United States since 1960* (2004, ed. David G. Gutiérrez), 187-228. CARMEN.

Cecilia Menjívar, "The Intersection of Work and Gender Central American Immigrant Women and Employment in California," *American Behavioral Scientist*, Vol. 42, No. 4 (1999), 601-627. CARMEN

WEEK 4

Monday, October 8

Caribeñas

Readings:

Lourdes Miranda King, "Puertorriquenas in the United States: the impact of double discrimination," *Latina Issues*, 102-109.

Iris Ofelia López, "The Evolving Life of a Latina Academic," *Telling to Live*, 69-85.

Daisy Cocco De Filippis, "The House that Mamá Biela Built," *Telling to Live*, 90-95.

Wednesday, October 10

State and Cultural Nationalism

Readings:

Adaljiza Sosa Riddell, "Chicanas and El Movimiento," *Latina Issues*, 401-411.

Luz de Alba Acevedo, "Daughter of Bootstrap," *Telling to Live*, 139-147.

WEEK 5

Monday, October 15 – **Quiz 1**

"White" Feminism

Readings:

Luz de Alba Acevedo, "Speaking Among Friends: Whose Empowerment? Whose Resistance?" *Telling to Live*, 250-262.

TeyDiana Rebolledo, "Chicana studies: is there a future for us in women studies?" *Latina Issues*, 382-387.

Celina Romany, "Ain't I a feminist?" *Latina Issues*, 389-397.

Wednesday, October 17

Latinas and Education

Readings:

Celia Alvarez, "Snapshots from my Daze in School," *Telling to Live*, 177-184.

Denise Segura "Slipping through the Cracks: Dilemmas in Chicana Education," *Building with Our Hands: New Directions in Chicana Studies* (eds. Adela de la Torre and Beatriz M. Pesquera, 1993), 199-216. CARMEN.

WEEK 6

Monday, October 22

Latinas and Labor

Readings:

Yolanda Prieto, "Cuban women in the U.S. labor force: perspectives on the nature of change," *Latinas Issues*, 163-181.

Denise Segura, "Labor market stratification: the Chicana experience," *Latina Issues*, 111-145.

Mary Romero, "Day work in the suburbs: the work experience of Chicana private housekeepers," *Latina Issues*, 147-161.

Patricia Zavella, "'Abnormal intimacy': the varying work networks of Chicana cannery workers," *Latina Issues*, 413-429.

Wednesday, October 24

Latina Leadership

Danta and Ricourt, "Introducing Latino Organizations in Queens," "Social Service Organizations," "Cultural Politics," "Formal Politics," *Hispanas de Queens*, 95-147.

Gloria Bonilla-Santiago, "Hispanic women breaking new ground through leadership," *Latina Issues*, 163-181.

WEEK 7

Monday, October 29

MIDTERM EXAM

Wednesday, October 31

Native, Black and Other Intersectionalities

Readings:

Inés Hernández Avila, "Canto de mi Madre/Canto de Mi Padre," *Telling to Live*, 132-138.

Rina Benamayor, "You Speak Spanish Because you are Jewish?" *Telling to Live*, 55-59.
Caridad Souza, "Esta Risa No Es de Loca," *Telling to Live*, 114-122.
Yvette Gisele Flores-Ortiz, "The Prize of a New Cadillac," *Telling to Live*, 201-203.

WEEK 8

Monday, November 5

Women and Pan-Latinidad

Readings:

Ricourt and Danta, "Introduction: the Emergence of Latino Panethnicity," "Introducing Corona," "Women and Convivencia Diaria," "Conclusion: Women and the Creation of Latino Panethnicity," *Hispanas de Queens*, 1-38, 148-152.

Wednesday, November 7

Testimonio as Method

Readings:

Rigoberto Menchú, "The Torture and Death of her Little Brother..." and "Women and Political Commitment..." *I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian Woman in Guatemala* (1984), 172-182, 220-226. CARMEN.

The Latina Feminist Group, "Introduction: *Papelitos Guardados: Theorizing Latinidades Through Testimonio*," *Telling to Live*, 1-24.

Inés Hernández Avila, "Telling to Live: *Devoro la Mentira, Resucitando mi Ser*," *Telling to Live*, 298-301.

WEEK 9

Monday, November 12, Veterans' Day, **No Classes**

Wednesday, November 14

Borderlands and the Mestiza

Readings:

Gloria Anzaldúa, "The Homeland, Aztlán" and "La conciencia de la mestiza/ Towards a New Consciousness," *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987), 23-35, 99-120. CARMEN.

Liza Fiol-Matta, "Beyond Survival: A Politics/Poetics of Puerto Rican Consciousness," *Telling to Live*, 148-155.

WEEK 10

Monday, November 19

Diaspora, Movement and Gender

Readings:

James Loucky, "Maya in a Modern Metropolis: Establishing New Lives and Livelihoods in Los Angeles," *The Maya Diaspora: Guatemalan roots, New American Lives* (eds. James Loucky and Marilyn M. Moors, 2000), 214-222. CARMEN.

Celia Alvarez, "Vignettes of a Working-Class Puerto Rican Girl in Brooklyn, New York," *Telling to Live*, 39-42.

Aurora Levins Morales, "My Name is this Story," *Telling to Live*, 100-103.

Wednesday, November 21 – **Quiz 2**

Gendered Violence

Readings:

Caridad Souza, "The Christmas Present," *Telling to Live*, 169-176.

Latina Anónima, "La Princesa," *Telling to Live*, 286-288.

Carlos G. Velez, "Se me acabó la canción: an ethnography of non-consenting sterilizations among Mexican women in Los Angeles," *Latina Issues*, 183-203.

Antonia Hernandez, "Chicanas and the issue of involuntary sterilization: reforms needed to protect informed consent," *Latina Issues*, 269-303.

WEEK 11

Monday, November 26

Sexuality and Subjectivity

Patricia Zavella, "Talkin' Sex: Chicanas and Mexicanas Theorize about Silences and Sexual Pleasures," *Chicana Feminisms: A Critical Reader* (eds. Gabriela Arredondo, et. al., 2003), 228-253.

CARMEN

Ruth Behar, "El Beso," *Telling to Live*, 196-200.

Wednesday, November 28 – **Testimonio Paper Due**

Queer and Lesbian Politics

Readings:

Yolanda Chavez Leyva, "Breaking the Silence: Putting Latina Lesbian History at the Center," *Unequal Sisters: a Multicultural Reader in U.S. Women's History* (eds. Vicki L. Ruiz and Ellen Carol DuBois, 2000), 403-408. CARMEN.

Cherrie Moraga, "Queer Aztlán: the Re-formation of Chicano Tribe" (pp.) *The Last Generation* (1997), 145-174. CARMEN.

Latina Anónima, "Entre Nosotros," *Telling to Live*, 331-333.

******* FINAL EXAM- Wednesday, December 5, 11:30-1:18pm *******