

• **Covering the U.S. Latino Community** •
• Syllabus • Spring 2012 •



Meeting Time: MWF 10:00 - 11:00

Meeting Place: CMA A3.128

This class is both an upper division undergraduate class and a graduate level class.

J349-- 07550

MAS374-- 36023

Instructor: Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez, Ph.D.

Email: mrivas@austin.utexas.edu

Office: CMA 5.122

Office phone: 471-0405

Office hours: MW 2-4 p.m.

ALSO BY APPOINTMENT

Teaching Assistant: Mario Carrillo

Email: mario.antonio.carrillo@gmail.com

Office hours: MW 2-4 p.m. and by appointment

Office: CMA 5.120

• **University of Texas at Austin** •

Prerequisites

For 349T: Must be an upper division student; must be journalism major, have scored at least a 45 on the GSP test and have had a score of at least 29 on the Journalism Word Processing Test. This class meets with J395.

For J395: Must be a graduate student.

Required Texts

Harvest of Empire: A History of Latinos in the United States by Juan Gonzalez. (New York, N.Y: Penguin Books, 2011). Other readings available on Blackboard.

Required Newspapers

Daily, including Sunday, *The Austin American-Statesman*. Five days a week, the *Daily Texan*.

Suggested Newspapers

The New York Times, Sunday.

Course Description

In a democracy, the press plays a vital role, that of informing citizens of issues so that they may make informed decisions on issues of importance.

In this class, we'll explore the deeper role of the press, that of representing society to itself. In the 1969 Kerner Commission Report, the nation's news media were taken to task for seeing the nation through "white men's eyes." The news media were neither reporting on the challenges and problems confronting the nation's black population to the general society, nor were the mainstream media telling blacks about their own world.

Today, there have been vast improvements. But much improvement can still be made, in particular to the area of reporting underrepresented groups. This class will focus on Latinos as that underrepresented group.

In this class, you'll be expected to challenge current thinking and to adopt a more sophisticated and nuanced view of today's Latino community. You'll see how a standard event story – say the Diez y Seis de Septiembre parade – can be developed into a story that sheds light on issues that confront the Latino population.

We'll look at areas that include politics; education; organizations; immigration; culture.

There will be lots of reading and lots of brainstorming, thinking of ways to incorporate more complicated perspectives into those everyday stories. Where we can, we will invite guest speakers, journalists as well as other experts, to share their insights.

On a daily basis, we will apply readings from that day's news. I welcome suggestions from you on topics of discussion from the day's news: in previous semesters, entire classes have been devoted to student topics of interest – makes for a far more dynamic and interesting environment for all of us.

We'll use a weekly schedule as a guide. But please know that *I reserve the right to make changes in the schedule in order to make full use of every opportunity to make this course more useful to you*. It is likely that the schedule will be revised a few times as we go along.

Course Objective

The immediate goal is for you to learn to cover U.S. Latinos in a more comprehensive and intelligent way. But there is a longer-term objective as well: for you to walk away with a sophisticated arsenal to cover any group and to become a more critical reader of news about any group, in particular under-represented groups, whether they be Native Americans, Muslims, Gays/Lesbians, African Americans, Asian Americans, etc.

This does not ensure that any of those groups will love you. That is not a goal. We will seek to present news in a fair and balanced way, with historical context and a sense of justice.

Attendance

You'll be treated in this class as the professional you aspire to be. Please treat this class as you would a job. One part of being a professional is being in place promptly – prepared to discuss. A sign-in sheet will be circulated at the beginning of class. *It is your responsibility to make sure that you are counted as present*. If you are not in place by the beginning of class, you will be counted as tardy.

Of course there may be times when you must miss class, either because of illness or an emergency. You are expected to notify both your professor and your TA before class, via email. For each missed class, you are expected to write a 3-page summary on that day's readings and give your TA both a hard copy and an electronic copy by the next course period. If you are unable to be in class and contributing, you should drop the class. After three absences, 5 points will be deducted from your final grade. Three more absences, 5 more points, etc.

Format

When you do turn in assignments, please write them in 12-point type, double-spaced. Make sure that any of your assignments are slugged correctly, on your flash drive and hard drive, as well as on your hard copy. This will make it easier to find your story if/when we need an extra copy.

For your final assignment, a feature essay or story about an Austin Latino issue, please make sure to have, at the top of your paper, a BUDGET LINE about your story, and a copy of one piece of art (a photocopy is fine, or a print-out of a graph, etc.)

Budget Lines

OK, I'm a nag about this. But it's a crucial part of working in a newsroom: budget lines are crucial to a smooth newsroom operation. The *slug*, or story name, should be descriptive enough that it can be identified with your story. That slug is what you "save as" your story. So that if I get a copy that says YOURLASTNAME_HispanicImmigrants. I will understand immediately who wrote it and what it's about.

The *budget line* should also include a description of your story, your name, and the length. Without this information, you couldn't put out a daily newspaper, or a nightly newscast.

Your budget line, which you put at the top of your assignment should look like this:

YOURLASTNAME_DESCRIPTIVENAMEOFSTORYORESSAY-- This part is a description of your story, UP TO 3 SENTENCES. YOURNAME. Length:XXX words.

You are required to submit your story both electronically to your TA, as well as on hard copy. We need to make sure you truly understand how to “slug” a story.

Other Assignment Requirements—Keep a Copy

You must retain one copy of your assignments for own files. Not that it happens often, but there is always the danger of your instructors losing a story. For your own safety, keep a copy of your work.

Contact Information

You are required to include the names, telephone numbers, mailing addresses, and (if they have one) email addressees for each person you interviewed for your story, whether or not you quote him or her.

If you do interview someone, you will be sending him/her copies of your stories, either by mail or via email. You’ll find that you will write differently if you know that your words will be read by people you’ve interviewed.

If you have interviewed someone, and you have not included their contact information, 25 points will be deducted from your grade, per day, until the information is provided.

Late Papers

Assignments are generally due at the beginning of class. When you don't make the deadline, you lose 25 points automatically. Twenty-five more points will be deducted for each day after the due date. The only exception is if either I have agreed – *beforehand* -- to extend your deadline. And those extensions are only for very good reasons.

So what happens if you can’t get all the questions answered in time to turn in your assignment? Happens all the time in the real world. We will learn to write around the missing detail, or, if it’s absolutely crucial to the assignment, to let the reader know we don’t have all the answers. Speculation and guessing are lame ways – and completely unacceptable in journalism -- of getting around the time crunch problems and we will not indulge them.

Presentations

You will be required to make an oral presentation on a topic of your choice. And you will all grade one another. You will be given a list of possible ideas, but you may also choose your own. You are required to get prior approval of your idea from me. You will be required to provide me and Mario with your PowerPoint presentation before class, so that I can post it to Blackboard. You submit to me *one copy of three articles* (newspaper, journal, magazine, or Internet is OK) about your issue – *from three different sources*.

Bonus Points

The University offers a wealth of riches of various kinds, including speakers and events that will enhance your understanding of the world. To encourage you to take full advantage of those opportunities, you will be allowed to get credit for some. For select events, available to all students, you may attend one of these events and write a 3-page summary of it, for five bonus points to the assignment of your choice. I welcome ideas for some of these bonus events.

Grading

Assignment #1 REAX Paper—	
Alabama’s immigration law HB56 – how was it covered?	10 points
Assignment #2 Book Review Proposal	5 points
Assignment #3 Book Review	10 points
Assignment #4 Book Review rewrite	15 points
Assignment #4 Austin Latino story proposal	5 points
Assignment #5 Austin Latino story	15 points
Assignment #6 Austin Latino story rewrite/production	25 points
Assignment #7 Group Oral Presentation	10 points
<u>Participation</u>	<u>5 points</u>
Total	100 percent

The traditional A, B, C, D and F

We’ll be using the plus/minus grading system for the final grade.

Honesty

Whether you’re a journalist, or a school teacher, or an accountant, honesty is crucial. It must be clear that we followed standard ethical procedures in using our work. That means that you do your own interviews, use your own notes, write your own prose, attribute information to the right source, stick to the facts you’ve gathered. If you tried unsuccessfully to reach a source, you should say 17 telephone calls were placed and messages left on an answering machine, but no calls were returned.

Some of you aren’t journalists, but the basics of journalism will serve you well, in this class and beyond. For instance, journalists are trained to read a lot of background material and then synthesize it. But there is a difference between using someone else’s work as background in your story and plagiarizing.

There is very rarely a reason to quote from another news outlet, as long as you are able to get the information for yourself. In instances where a news outlet has exclusive information, that is, that the outlet got that information before anyone else and/or that it is impossible to get it for yourself, you are justified inciting that news outlet. It is considered professional courtesy on the one hand, and a cover-your-behind procedure on the other.

It is *not ever* appropriate to cut and paste text from the Web or any other source for any assignment and present it as your own work. It *is* appropriate and essential to read information for your own background, in researching a topic, off the Web, in any magazine,

newspaper, book, or in a broadcast. However, special care must always be taken that the wording is your own, that the work is yours.

Fabricating material is not appropriate – unless it's very clear that you're making this stuff up. (Read John Kelso or another humor writer sometime.)

If we find that you have plagiarized or fabricated your work, you will receive an automatic F for the class and the possible expulsion and a formal complaint in your permanent file. There are procedures in place at UT for the expulsion of serial plagiarizers.

If you have any doubts about what's right or wrong, please contact me – I'm an email away. There is always someone you can turn to if you have any doubts or qualms whatsoever.

Enough already!

This class will move fast and you'll have a chance to really grow quickly. It will also be fun. Mario and I look forward to making this semester as rich and enjoyable as possible. And we look forward to getting to know you better.