

AAEC 4325 The US-Mexico Border Economy

Professor: Dr. Robin Grier

Office: 169D Administration

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Office Hours: 1:00-2:00 Fridays but appointments are also always welcome!

Ian Schlagel is the TA for the class. His email address is: ischlage@ttu.edu Feel free to contact him as well with questions.

Course Description: The US-Mexico border has been a political flashpoint in recent years. In this class, we will go beyond the rhetoric of both parties to hopefully arrive at a much deeper and more thoughtful understanding of this important region. We will study a variety of topics in relation to the border, including cross-border trade, the informal economy, ranching, wildlife and environmental management, water resources, immigration and labor dynamics, and public health.

Prerequisite: ECO 2302, Principles of Macroeconomics

Expected Learning Outcomes

Upon course completion, students will be able to:

- Describe the historical evolution of the border economy over the last two centuries;
- Discuss the role of agriculture, manufacturing, and trade in the evolution of the border economy;
- Identify and assess potential economic and environmental problems in the area;

Final Grade Composition

First exam	25%
Second exam	25%
Reading quizzes	25%
Attendance	10%
In-class questions	15%

Notes on Grading:

I will be taking attendance in class. You get 3 “free” misses. Your attendance grade will just be the percentage of classes you attend after allowing for the 3 misses. If you have illness or disability issues, we can create a modified attendance policy that works for both of us.

There will be interactive questions using Top Hat in many of the classes. Some you are graded for just answering, others will be 50% for answering and 50% for answering correctly. Quizzes are graded the same way.

Schedule

[Readings are available on TopHat. They should be completed before the class period]

Week 1

Thursday, January 15th Introduction

Week 2

Monday, January 19th TopHat quiz on the movie *The River and the Wall* (available to rent on Amazon) due by 11:30 p.m.

Tuesday, January 20th Conceptualizing the border

Uhler, Andy, 2019, "Border life: An apartment in Mexico, a job in the U.S.," *Marketplace*, Feb. 25th.

Davidson, John Daniel, 2018, "Inside The Texas Border Town That Funnels Half Of All U.S.-Mexico Trade," *The Federalist*, August 8th.

Thursday, January 22nd Mapping the physical border

"Chapter 1. A New Map for North America: Defining the Border," in Rachel St. John's *Line in the Sand*. Princeton University Press.

Week 3

Monday, January 26th TopHat quiz on Wildlife and the Border-due by 11:30 p.m.

Tuesday, January 27th Wildlife Management, the Environment, and the Border

Heimbuch, Jaymi, 2018, "How would a border wall between the U.S. and Mexico affect wildlife?"

<https://skyislandalliance.org/our-work/science/borderwildlife/>

Thursday, January 29th Ranching and the border

Dewey, Alicia, "Ranching Across Borders: The Making of a Transnational Cattle Industry in the Texas-Mexico Borderlands, 1749-1945" in Bowman et al., 2017. *Farming across Borders: A Transnational History of the North American West* (Texas A&M University Press), pp. 226-33.

Week 4

Monday, February 2nd TopHat quiz on ranching and the border-due by 11:30 p.m.

Tuesday, February 3rd Ranching and the border II

Hendricks, Tyche, *The Wind Doesn't Need a Passport: Stories from the U.S.- Mexico Borderlands* (University of California Press, 2010), Chapter 3, "Hachita: 'A fence is only as good as its weakest point.'"

Wagner, Dennis, 2019, "Border ranchers, in a world without a wall," USA Today

Thursday, February 5th *Water on the border*

Zoë Schlanger, "[There's a time bomb for US-Mexico relations ticking underground](#)," *Quartz*, August 20th, 2018.

Antebi, Nicole, 2019, "[How I Mapped the Fluid Border Between El Paso and Juárez](#)," *citylab.com*, August 16th.

Bria Suggs, 2024, [Water treaty between Mexico and U.S. faces biggest test in 80 years](#), NPR, Aug. 16

Week 5

Monday, February 9th TopHat quiz on border commerce-due by 11:30 p.m.

Tuesday, February 10th *Commerce on the border: Cross-border trade*

Chapter 5: Informal Cross-Border Trade in Chad Richardson & Michael Pisani's *The Informal and Underground Economy of the South Texas Border*. Univ. of Texas Press, 2012.

Thursday, February 12th *Commerce on the border: Shopping in the borderlands*

Cadava, G.L., 2015. "The Other Migrants: Mexican Shoppers in American Borderlands" In *Race and Retail: Consumption Across the Color Line*. Rutgers University Press.

Week 6

Monday, February 16th TopHat quiz on border smuggling, due at 11:30 p.m.

Tuesday, February 17th *Commerce on the border: Smuggling on the border*

Díaz, Chapter 1: Creating a Contrabandista Community, 1848-1881

Thursday, February 19th *Commerce on the border: Smuggling on the border II*

Díaz, Chapter 3: Smugglers in Dangerous Times: Revolution and War, 1910-1919

Week 7

Monday, February 23rd TopHat quiz on prohibition-due by 11:30 p.m.

Tuesday, February 24th *Commerce on the border: Smuggling on the border III*

Díaz, Chapter 4: Narcotics and Prohibition, 1914-1945

Thursday, February 26th *Maquiladoras*

Economist, Mexico's maquiladoras: Big maq attack: A 50-year-old export industry that provides millions of jobs has to reinvent itself quickly to stay competitive, October 26th, 2013

Excerpt on maquiladoras from Paul Ganster and Kimberly Collins' *The U.S. - Mexican Border Today*. Rowman & Littlefield; Fourth edition (April 12, 2021).

Week 8

Monday, March 2nd TopHat quiz on colonias, due at 11:30 p.m.

Tuesday, March 3rd *Informal Housing Markets on the Border*

“Chapter 6: Border Colonias: Informality in Housing” in Chad Richardson and Michael Pisani’s *The Informal and Underground Economy of the South Texas Border*. University of Texas Press, 2012.

Living on the edges: Life in the colonias of Texas.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2016/11/5/living-on-the-edges-life-in-the-colonias-of-texas>

Thursday, March 5th Exam Review

Week 9

Tuesday, March 10th **First Exam**

Thursday, March 12th **No Class**

Week 10

Monday, March 23rd TopHat quiz on the Bracero Program, due at 11:30 p.m.

Tuesday, March 24th *Immigrant labor: the Bracero Program*

Snodgrass, Michael. 2011. “Patronage and progress: The bracero program from the perspective of Mexico.” *Workers across the Americas: The transnational turn in labor history*: 245-266.

Corchado, Alfredo, 2024, The bones of these camp buildings are the aching bones of my bracero father, *Dallas Morning News*, January 3rd.

Thursday, March 26th *Migration from a Mexican perspective*

Excerpt from Antonio’s Gun & Delfino’s Dream: True Tales of Mexican Migration by Sam Quinones

Excerpt from *Homelands: Four Friends, Two Countries, and the Fate of the Great Mexican-American Migration*, by Alfredo Corchado.

Tonya Malinowski, 2019, “His mom has never seen him play: This is football and life on the border,” ESPN.

Week 11

Monday, March 30th TopHat quiz on immigrant labor in US agriculture, due at 11:30 p.m.

Tuesday, March 31st *Immigrant labor: US agriculture*

Patrick Thomas, 2024, Farms, Meat Plants Brace for Trump Immigration Crackdown, *Wall Street Journal*, November 21st.

José Iván Rodríguez-Sánchez, 2024, [Migrant Workers' Vital Role in Agriculture: A Conversation with Alejandro Gutiérrez-Li](#), April 10th, Baker Institute.

[Walking agriculture's path along the U.S.-Mexico border](#), Farm Progress, June 6, 2013

<https://www.bakerinstitute.org/research/feeding-america-how-immigrants-sustain-us-agriculture>

<https://www.newamericaneconomy.org/issues/agriculture/>

Thursday, April 2nd Public policy on the border: Health

Lauren Villagran, When COVID-19 hit El Paso, Juárez, where was the U.S. - Mexico Border Health Commission? El Paso Times, March 24th, 2022.

Hendricks, Tyche, The Wind Doesn't Need a Passport: Stories from the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands (University of California Press, 2010), Chapter 4: "Nogales/Nogales: 'If they get sick here, we take care of them'"

Bilger, Burkhard, 2025, Mexico's Molar City Could Transform My Smile. Did I Want It To? *The New Yorker*, July 28th.

Week 12

Tuesday, April 7th **No Class**

Thursday, April 9th Public policy on the border: Health

Excerpts from Ieva Jusionyte's *Threshold: Emergency Responders on the US-Mexico Border*. University of California Press, 2018. "Overpaid Tomato Pickers" (pp. 78-83); "Brotherhood" (pp. 89-96) and "Red Tape" (pp. 96-105).

Week 13

Monday, April 13th TopHat quiz on communities on the border, due at 11:30 p.m.

Tuesday, April 14th Communities & economies that span the border

Hendricks, Tyche, The Wind Doesn't Need a Passport: Stories from the U.S. - Mexico Borderlands (University of California Press, 2010), Chapter 5, "Sells: 'O'odham first and American or Mexican second'"

Thursday, April 16th The rise of Mexican food in the American culture & economy

Excerpts from "How Did the Taco Become Popular Before Mexicans Flooded the United States?" and "What Took the Burrito So Long to Become Popular?" in Arellano, Gustavo. *Taco USA: How Mexican Food Conquered America*. Simon and Schuster, 2012.

Week 14

Monday, April 20th TopHat quiz on cross-border collaboration, due by 11:30 p.m.

Tuesday, April 21st Cross-border cooperation and collaboration

Michael Marks, 2024, [Cross-border cattle cooperation benefits beef business](#), Texas Standard, Jan. 2nd.

[Grassland Conservation in Mexico: How and why the US Forest Service supports sustainable ranching to conserve a critically important and shared ecosystem.](#)

[200 Years of Bilateral Relations with Mexico: Protecting Agricultural Resources from Plant Pests and Animal Disease Threats on Both Sides of the Border](#)

Thursday, April 23rd Violence and the Border Economy

Grillo, Ioan, 2024, "How the Gulf Cartel "Taxes" the US Border," *CrashedOut*, Nov. 20th.

Navarro, F.M. and Vivas, L., 2012. Violence, governance, and economic development at the US-Mexico border: The case of Nuevo Laredo and its lessons. *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos*, 28(2), 377-416.

Week 15

Tuesday, April 28th What's next for the border?

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Thursday, April 30th Review for Second Exam

Week 16

Tuesday, May 5th Second Exam

You matter

Any student who, because of a disability, may require special arrangements in order to meet the course requirements should contact the instructor as soon as possible to make any necessary arrangements. Students should present appropriate verification from Student Disability Services during the instructor's office hours. Please note that instructors are not allowed to provide classroom accommodations to a student until appropriate verification from Student Disability Services has been provided. For additional information, please contact Student Disability Services in West Hall or call 806-742-2405. They will help you figure out the best way to enhance your learning, and I will be happy to make any accommodations they recommend. Of course, I will also keep all information confidential.

Please remember that learning is about more than words on a page, or ideas in a classroom. In order to learn, you need to have your basic needs met. If you are having trouble with these needs, please go to the following link for a list of resources: <http://www.depts.ttu.edu/dos/basicneeds.php>

Texas Tech University is committed to providing and strengthening an educational, working, and living environment where students, faculty, staff, and visitors are free from gender and/or sex discrimination of any kind. Sexual assault, discrimination, harassment, and other Title IX violations are not tolerated by the University. Report any incidents to the Office for Student Rights & Resolution, (806)-742-SAFE (7233) or file a report online at titleix.ttu.edu/students. Faculty and staff members at TTU are committed to connecting you to resources on campus. Some of these available resources are: TTU Student Counseling Center, 806- 742-3674, <https://www.depts.ttu.edu/scc/> (Provides confidential support on campus.) TTU 24-hour Crisis Helpline, 806-742-5555, (Assists students who are experiencing a mental health or interpersonal violence crisis. If you call the helpline, you will speak with a mental health counselor.) Voice of Hope Lubbock Rape Crisis Center, 806-763-7273, www.voiceofhopelubbock.org, a 24-hour hotline that provides support for survivors of sexual violence.) The Risk, Intervention, Safety and Education (RISE) Office, 806-742-2110, <https://www.depts.ttu.edu/rise/> (Provides a range of resources and support options focused on prevention education and student wellness.) Texas Tech Police Department, 806-742- 3931, <http://www.depts.ttu.edu/ttpd/> (To report criminal activity that occurs on or near Texas Tech campus.)

Academic Integrity at Texas Tech

Academic integrity is taking responsibility for one's own class and/or course work, being individually accountable, and demonstrating intellectual honesty and ethical behavior. Academic integrity is a personal choice to abide by the standards of intellectual honesty and responsibility. Because education is a shared effort to achieve learning through the exchange of ideas, students, faculty, and staff have the collective responsibility to build mutual trust and respect. Ethical behavior and independent thought are essential for the highest level of academic achievement, which then must be measured. Academic achievement includes scholarship, teaching, and learning, all of which are shared endeavors. Grades are a device used to quantify the successful accumulation of knowledge through learning. Adhering to the standards of academic integrity ensures grades are earned honestly. Academic integrity is the foundation upon which students, faculty, and staff build their educational and professional careers. [Texas Tech University ("University") Quality Enhancement Plan, Academic Integrity Task Force, 2010]

We will commit to acting with academic integrity in everything we write and say this semester, making sure to offer credit to those whose ideas we are articulating. I believe that all of you are fundamentally honest, and I am happy to help you learn what we mean by academic integrity, such as making sure to cite your sources correctly and being clear when you are using your words or someone else's. If you'd like to read more about Texas Tech's Statement on Academic Integrity, please click [here](#)

Religious Holy Days

"Religious holy day" means a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Texas Tax Code §11.20. A student who intends to observe a religious holy day should make that intention known in writing to the instructor prior to the absence. A student who is absent from classes for the observance of a religious holy day shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment scheduled for that day within a reasonable time after the absence. A student who is excused under section 2 may not be penalized for the absence; however, the instructor may respond appropriately if the student fails to complete the assignment satisfactorily.