



Universidad de Valladolid

Migration and Space in American Culture

*3 creds.,
2nd semester*

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Aims and Objectives

From the outset of the American experience, national mythology in the US celebrated the restless individualism of colonists, explorers, pioneers, soldiers, and immigrants who supposedly left home to never look back. To this day, mobility, migration, resettlement, travel and the clashes and confluences of cultures they bring about remain dominant issues in American culture and literature. This course proposes to explore spatial mobility within and across the American social and cultural borders. Though the idea that the United States is a "nation of immigrants" is one of the fundamental premises of American history, the country has had a changing and uneasy relationship to its actual immigrants. Migrants were often perceived as a threat, while their necessary contributions to American society was typically overlooked. The course intends to provide a critical understanding of the long history of mobility and migration, both voluntary and forced, in American culture, and of the variety of cultural and literary texts that respond to and reflect the experience of space and movement within and across the American borders.

When students have successfully completed this course, they should be able to:

- make informed and critical use of central terms like migration, diaspora, trans-nationalism, nomadism, dislocation, cosmopolitanism and globalization as they relate to contemporary American experiences.
- analyze the American experience of space through the use of recent philosophies of space (Bachelard, Lefebvre, de Certeau, Castells, etc.)
- examine how ideas and representations of immigration have shaped contemporary American culture.
- explore the complexity of literary reactions to and representations of the experience of American mobility.
- demonstrate the ability to think critically about the diverse ways Americans have understood and responded to migrants and the idea of migration.
- trace the concept of migration in a variety of literary traditions in the US: Jewish, African American, Chicano, Asian-American, etc.
- generate critical ideas for analyzing contemporary mobility, migration and globalization processes in the US and elsewhere.

Course Program

1. Mobility and/in Space, or Americans on the Move.
2. Migration, Dislocation, (Alien)Nation
3. Occupying the Non-Place: New Geographies of Post-National Identity
4. The Spaces of Hospitality/Hostility: (Un)Welcoming the Other
5. Postapocalyptic Spaces

Required Readings

Week 1:

- Stuart Hall, "Identity and diaspora"
- Marc Auge, "Non-Places"
- Deleuze and Guattari, "The Smooth and the Striated"
- C. Ven, Identity, "Diasporas and Subjective Change"

Week 2:

- Anzia Yezierska, "America and I"
- Sui Sin Far, "Leaves from the Mental Portfolio of an Eurasian"
- Hisaye Yamamoto, "Seventeen Syllables"

Week 3:

- Helena Viramontes, "Neighbours"
- Li Young-Lee's "The Cleaving"
- Tomás Rivera, *...y no se lo tragó la tierra*

Week 4:

- Stephen Frears, *Dirty Pretty Things*

Week 5:

- Cormac McCarthy, *The Road*
- Other texts to be determined.

Methodology

Class meetings will consist of lectures, group discussions, and oral presentations. The course will put strong emphasis not only on oral discussions, but also on activities designed to stimulate the students' critical thinking and writing skills. Since regularly we have an international mix of students in the course, there will be ample opportunity for participants to share their own ideas and experiences of space and mobility, and to bring these to bear on the analysis of American space.

Assessment

A selection of texts (including but not limited to those indicated above) will be specified at the beginning of the course for class discussion on given dates. Students are required to read each assigned text before class and to come prepared to discuss it. In addition, each student will have to prepare an oral presentation.

The students will be evaluated on a combination of their participation in class, an oral presentation and written assignments. There will be a final paper or project.

Participation and oral presentation: 30 %

Written Assignments: 30%

Final project 40%

Bibliography and Resources

- Augé, Marc, 1992, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*. London and New York: Verso.
- Bachelard, Gaston, 1994 (1958), *The Poetics of Space*. Boston. Beacon Press.
- Benito, Jesús, and Ana M^a Manzanás, 2003, *Intercultural Mediations: Hybridity and Mimesis in American Literature*, Berlin: Lit Verlag.
- Castells, Manuel, 1977 (1972), *The Urban Question*. London: Arnold.
- Certeau, Michel de 1984. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Trans. Steven Rendall.
- Deleuze and Guattari, 1992, (1987). *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. London & New York: Continuum.
- Foucault, Michel, 1986, "Of Other Spaces." *Diacritics* 22.7.
- Glazer, Nathan, Moynihan, Daniel Patrick, 1970, *Beyond the Melting Pot*, Cambridge: The MIT Press.
- Lefebvre, Henri, 1991, *The Production of Space*. Trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. Blackwell: Oxford.
- Manzanás, Ana M^a and Jesús Benito, 2011, *Cities, Borders and Spaces in American Literature and Film*, New York: Routledge.
- McNulty, Tracy, 2007, *The Hostess: Hospitality, Femininity, and the Expropriation of Identity*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Molz, J. G. and Sarah Gibson, 2007, *Mobilizing Hospitality: The Ethics of Social Relations in a Mobile World*, Burlington: Ashgate.
- Olalquiaga, Celeste, 1992, *Megalopolis*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Parrilo, Vincent, 1996, *Diversity in America*, Pine Forge Press/ A Sage Publications Company,
- Parrilo, Vincent, 1997, *Strangers to These Shores. Race and Ethnic Relations in the United States*. Boston - London: Allyn and Bacon
- Price, Patricia, 2004, *Dry Place: Landscapes of Belonging and Exclusion*. Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press
- Rosello, Mireille, 2001, *Postcolonial Hospitality: The Immigrant as Guest*. Stanford: Stanford UP.

Soja, Edward, 1989, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*. London: Verso.

Soja, Edward, 2000, *Postmetropolis: Critical Studies of Cities and Regions*. Oxford: Blackwell

Tuan, Yi-Fu, 2008 (1977), *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, Minneapolis: U. Minnesota Press.

Schedule

The course meets once a week, in the seminar room of the English Department. We will have at least 5 three-hour sessions, to be distributed in the five weeks of the third teaching period (second semester). The schedule is on the Internet website for the master's program (<http://masterenglishstudies.eu>).