Welcome to Imagining Borders. The title immediately raises questions: What is a border? Why do borders matter? To what extent are they truly imagined versus real? What and who flow across borders? How permeable are they? What is the relationship of that core political science concept, power, to borders and flows?

On one level, the course is simply about a well known aspect of globalization: as national borders become more porous under conditions of globalization, states are less able to control what comes into and goes out of their territory. But on another level, border is a much more generic concept. Borders are separators, marking the point differentiating inside from outside, us from them, then from now, and more.

We begin this course with questions. I don’t know if we will find any answers, but over the semester we will ask these and many other questions and search for answers. We will focus most closely on governance of borders and flows, by which I refer to the rules that order or fail to order border and flows, who makes those rules, and the extent to which the rules are enforced successfully.

Course requirements

First Brief Paper, due February 24 5% of grade
Choose a news article dealing with a border-related issue and use one of the assigned readings to analyze the situation. For example, what would Mignolo say about the news story you have selected. Turn in the news story as well as your paper. Maximum length: 2 pages, single spaced.

Alternative assignment: If you attend the American Association for the Advancement of Science meeting in Washington, DC (February 17 to 21), you may write a brief paper describing a session you went to at the meeting and its relation to class themes. (You do not need to attend the entire meeting. You do need to be in the audience of at least one session.)

Second Brief Paper, due April 21 5% of grade
See the description of this paper in the class calendar for April 19.

Seminar paper, due May 5 30% of grade
Research and write a paper of about 20 pages in which you address a question concerning borders or flows across borders.

Start thinking about the research paper by identifying a puzzle or a question. Questions should be phrased in terms of “why?” or “how?” (Questions that begin with “what is” are often wholly descriptive. That’s not what we are aiming for here.)

Your paper must include the following:
- An introduction that includes what your question is, why it is important, and what the evidence you present suggests the answer is.
A discussion of how this question (or similar questions) have been discussed in the scholarly literature.

A description of the evidence you are presenting and why you think it answers the question.

An analysis of the evidence.

A conclusion.

Furthermore, your paper must include at least three sources from the scholarly literature and at least one source of empirical evidence. (See the notes I'll provide on empirical evidence.)

Due dates:
Question or puzzle is due on February 17.
Preliminary bibliography and source of empirical evidence is due March 3
Seminar Paper Outline is due on March 31. If you do not use an outline, then please submit your plans (idea map or whatever) that you have for the paper.
Seminar presentations and discussions will be held on April 28, May 3, and May 5. The final paper is due May 5.

Oral Presentation of Seminar Paper, April 28, May 3, or May 5 15% of grade
Toward the end of the semester, I will be assigning presentation days. Although I will take into consideration requests for particular days (because of assignments due in other classes, for example) as well as requests to present on the first day (to get it over with), I will try to assign students writing on similar topics to present on the same day.

Learning from your fellow students is a key component of a seminar. For that reason, attendance on all three days when we're having presentations is mandatory. Roll will be taken. An unexcused absence on any one of these days will have a deleterious effect on your grade on your oral presentation. Positive contribution to discussion of your fellow students' papers will have a positive effect on your grade.

It is essential that you practice your presentation (out loud) so that you can easily stay within the time limits and communicate what you have found. If you wish to write out your presentation, you may, but bear in mind that a reasonable reading speed is 100 words a minute. If you wish to speak from notes, you may do that, but again be sure that you have practiced so that your presentation fits the time allotted. I am happy to consult in advance with you about strategies for honing your presentation.

If you wish to use slides, you must email your Powerpoint or OpenOffice presentation to me the night before your presentation. I will load the presentation on my netbook. That way we won't need to waste time fumbling between computers.

Midterm, March 17 20% of grade
Take home final, due at NOON on Tuesday, May 17 20% of grade.
Class participation 5% of grade

Course Calendar

Introduction
February 1
(no reading)

States, geographical regions, and borders
February 3

February 8
Mignolo, pp. approximately 61-88.


February 10
Lewis and Wigen, pp. 47-103

February 15
Lewis and Wigen, pp. 157-188.


Experience of the borderland
February 17


Seminar paper research question/puzzle is due. Please scan through the syllabus to look for possible topics and feel free to come to office hours to discuss ideas. (Changes will be permitted before Spring break only.)

February 22


Extended borders: diaspora communities
February 24


Brief Paper Assignment due

March 1


Flows across borders
March 3


Kessler, Oliver. 2009. Finance as transnational space and the memory of the gold standard. In Transnational political spaces: Agents, structures, encounters., pp. 185-211.

Preliminary bibliography and source of empirical evidence is due.

Migration
March 8


Some additional readings (not required)


**Illicit flows**

**March 10**


**Illicit flows – people**

**March 15**


**Some additional readings (not required)**


**March 17 Midterm**

Final date to submit changes to your paper topic is Friday, March 18, by EMAIL message to me (marlin@jhu.edu). I will be at the ISA meeting, but I will try to respond quickly.

**March 22 Spring Break**
March 24  Spring Break

March 29


(Date revisions start here)
Illicit flows – bad things
March 31 (Revised date FOR READINGS ONLY, because we got behind: April 5)


Seminar Paper Outline is due on March 31. If you do not use an outline, then please submit your plans (idea map or whatever) that you have for the paper.

Illicit flows – stolen things
April 5 (April 7)


Illicit flows: bad money
April 7 (April 12)


Some additional readings (not required)


**Natural flows**

**Water**

*April 12 (April 14)*


**Some additional readings (not required)**


**Disease**

*April 14  (NOTE: delayed 1 week to April 21; Second Brief Paper due on April 21, as well)*


Some additional readings (not required)


April 19 (Passover) Class will not meet. Instead, you are asked to watch TWO of the following films (please seek approval in advance if you have an idea for a different film) and write a brief reaction essay (no more than two pages, single spaced) that ties the films to the themes in the class and makes specific references to scenes in the films. The films will be available at the MSE Library if they are in the library’s collection. I have also listed a few novels. If you prefer, you can read one novel and write a brief reaction essay on that.

Films dealing with human smuggling


Spare parts [videorecording] / Film Movement and EmotionFilm present ; a film by Damjan Kozole. (DVD 2179) 87 minutes

Fortress Europe. Death on the border [videorecording] / Sveriges Television ; Nordisk Film TV ; [director, Andreas Rocksén]. (DVD 777) 60 minutes

Sky high [videorecording] / Fox Film Corporation. (Video A3903) 58 minutes

Film and books questioning the border between human/non-human

Never Let Me Go (2010) / DNA Films (available on DVD and Blu-ray from Netflix) 103 minutes
Blade runner [videorecording] / Blade Runner Partnership (DVD 275) 117 minutes.

Shrek [videorecording] / DreamWorks Pictures presents a PDI/DreamWorks production (DVD 734) 93 minutes

Brother Bear (2003) / Walt Disney Animation (available on DVD from Netflix) 85 minutes

Battlestar Galactica. The plan [videorecording] / written by Jane Espenson ; directed by Edward James Olmos. (MSE McNaughton DVD collection) 112 minutes


Imagining Different Borders
April 21 (April 26)


Still due on April 21: Second Brief Paper (on the films or novel) due.

The Boundary of Human/Non-human
April 26 (April 28)


April 28 Seminar presentations
May 3 Seminar presentations
May 5 Seminar presentations (Last Day of Class)